



Lexical, Stylistic and Cultural Issues in the select poem of Bharathidasan: A Translation Study

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Abstract: Translation plays an important role in human communication. Translators need to be wellinformed of two languages and ideally to be familiar with the subjects of the texts they are translating. In poetry translation, one of the most essential issues to be addressed by the translator, is whether the translator prefers the form to the content or both. The purpose of the paper is to deal with lexical, stylistic and cultural problems of translating Bharathidasan's select poems into English.

Key Words: Lexical, Stylistic, Alliteration, SL-Source language, and TL-Target Language.

Poetry as a literary genre is an arrangement of words in patterns of sound and meaning. A poet tries to express his own imaginative, emotional and intellectual apprehension of facts and experience in a poem. Matthew Arnold says that to translate a poem is to recreate another poem in another language. Of all branches of literature, the most translated one is poetry despite the claim on untranslatability of poetry. It is also said that to translate a poem is to recreate another poem in another language. It is the duty of the translator to get the feelings of the poet as he has got it in writing the poem. Sir Aurobindo says that there are two ways of translating poetry; 'one to keep it strictly to the manner and turn of the original and the other is to take its spirit, sense and imagery and produce them freely so as to suit the new language (432)'. To Aurobindo, the second method of translating poetry is preferable.

The three major problems namely lexical, stylistic and cultural confound the translators. In this paper, the researcher analyses the three problems in the translation of a select poem of Bharathidasan which is translated by two translator namely Ganapathy and Murugan. J.C. Nida says that 'translation is an operation performed on languages, a process of substituting a text in one language for a text in another (20)'.

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In the poem ‘ஏசுநாதர் ஏன் வரவில்லை?’ ‘Jesus Did Not Come’, Bharathidasan satirizes the people whose purpose is to display jewels to others not giving due attention to prayers in church. This shows the hypocrisy of the people. The principles advocated by Jesus have been totally forgotten by them. One of the social practices of the people of Tamilnadu is to wear jewels. They are fond of wearing jewels made of gold, diamond, silver and other precious metals during the time of festivals, celebration, and even at the time of worship. This type of practice could be seen with both gents and ladies of all kinds of religious sections. Wearing jewels is considered a symbol of status in Tamil society. In the poem ‘Jesus Did Not Come’ the poet attacks how people are giving importance to jewels not for doing prayers at church. The priest in the church tells them that they should not come to church wearing jewels and expensive dresses. The announcement of the priest would make the people to hate church like hemlock. So the priest announces that people could wear jewels even in the eight parts of the body. He will also keep a tall looking-glass to them in the church. It will help them to decorate themselves. The poetsays that people are in the church but the presence of Jesus Christ is not felt in the church because of the attitude of the people. The tone of the poem is ironical and satirical.

Bharathidasan says that the Christians could wear jewels in eight parts of the body including hand. It is said in the SL text as:

‘ தலை,காது, மூக்குக்,கழுத்துக், கை,மார்பு, விரல்,
தாள் என்ற எட்டுறுப்பும் . . . (76)’.

Ganapathy has translated it as:

‘The parish priest proclaimed
“Women should not wear
Jewellery gold, silver and diamond,
On the eight parts of the body -
The head, ears nose, neck, chest,
hands,fingers and feet, . . . (77)’.

Murugan has translated it as:

‘There is a message from the priest:
‘Let not woman come decked with
Ornaments of gold and silver and the gem-studded
On the organs eight known -
Head, ear, nose, neck, arm, chest, finger and
Shoulders . . . (74)’

The word in the SL ‘கை’ ‘kai’ has been translated by Ganapathy as ‘hands’ whereas Murugan has translated it in the TL as ‘arm’. Here the word ‘hand’ refers to the end of the arm including the fingers and thumb. The word ‘arm’ refers to the two long parts that stick out from the top of the body and connect the shoulders

to the hands. In the translation of the word 'கை' 'kai' Murugan has translated it as 'arm' that is the right translation whereas Ganapathy's translation of 'hand' is not the right translation. Another word in the SL 'விஷம்' 'visham' has been translated by Ganapathy as 'hemlock' whereas Murugan has translated the word in the TL as 'poison'. Here Murugan's translation of the word is right and he has used the restrictive term. The word 'hemlock' refers to a 'poisonous plant' and this is not the equivalent of the SL word 'விஷம்' 'visham'.

Another word in the SL text is 'தாள்' 'thazhl' which has been translated by Ganapathy as 'feet' whereas Murugan has used the equivalent as 'shoulders'. According to "KriyavinTarkalat Tamil Akarati (2010)", 'தாள்' means 'feet' (711). Here Ganapathy's translation is right whereas Murugan's translation is wrong. Another word in the SL text 'இமைகள்' 'Immaikal' has been translated by Ganapathy in the TL text as 'eye-lashes' and Murugan has given it in the TL as 'eyebrow'. Both the translations are wrong. According to "KTTA", the right equivalent of the SL word 'இமைகள்' 'Immaikal' is 'eye-lids' (140). The word in the SL text 'நிலைக்கண்ணாடி' 'nilaikkannadi' has been translated in the TL by Ganapathy as 'a tall looking-glass' and Murugan has translated it as 'mirror'. Both of the translations are right.

Bharathidasan has used alliteration in most of his poems. The use of alliteration helps the poet to have rhyming of the poem. In this poem one could see the use of alliteration. In the book "ADictionary ofLiterary Terms and Literary Theory" (2013), J.C.Cuddon defines alliteration as 'a figure of speech in which consonants especially at the beginning of words or stressed syllables are repeated' (22). In the poem 'ஏசுநாதர் ஏன் வரவில்லை?' 'Jesus Did Not Come!', the poet uses alliteration. The first letter of the words of the SL poem, 'தலை' 'thalai', 'தங்கநகை' 'thanganakai', 'வில்லை' 'vilai', 'விடுத்த' 'vedutha', 'நிலை' 'nilai', 'நிறை' 'nirai', 'இலை' 'illai', and 'இனிய' 'einiya'. In the TL text, the use of alliteration, (the first letter of the following words i.e., 'த', 'வி', 'நி' and 'இ') cannot be carried over due to the differences in the SL and the TL languages.

While translating a text from the SL to the TL, the translators face problems based on culture too. In the book "The Horizon of Translation Studies" (1998), Bijay Kumar Das states that 'language is largely culture oriented and therefore, translators face the problem of translating certain culture based words into another language with a different culture (36)'. In the Tamil culture, any function or

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celebration should be ended with a good dinner. For the dinner, meals are served by means of using banana leaves in order to welcome the guests. This is the culture of the people of Tamilnadu and they are known for hospitality too. So the poet has used this word in the SL text as: ‘. . . இலைபோட்டழைத்ததும். . . (76)’ ‘*elaipottuallaithum*’. This has not been translated by the translators and they cannot carry over this cultural aspect in the TL text. The reason is that in the TL culture there is no method of serving food by using banana leaves. The translators might have explained it in the way of using foot-notes.

Thus the translators have carried over the content of the poem into the target language despite the lexical, stylistic and cultural problems. They cannot carry over the form in their translations.

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