PROBLEMS OF TRANSLATING DALIT TEXTS INTO ENGLISH: WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO TELUGU NOVEL ‘ANTARANIVASANTHAM’

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ABSTRACT

The Dalit literature explains the agony of the Untouchables and how they are socially, economically and politically dominated by upper castes. All the people from schedule castes and tribes are treated as Dalits. Many Dalit Novels and works are translated from regional languages into English in these days. It is found very difficult to translate some words related to Dalit culture into English, as there are no equivalent words in English. This paper attempts to focus on some of the unsolved riddles on the political scenes as the text ‘Dalit’ in the process of translation, a translator must set up equivalences between a source text and a target language. If we take some words from the novel Antarani vasantham like ana, beda, dammidde, jamu kunta, gunta, kaliyuga, kamadenuvu etc., we cannot find exact equivalent English words in translation. In the same way while translating English text into Telugu, translators encounter problem because there is no equivalent words in Dalit culture. Finally, what is implicit through the Kalyana rao’s Antarani Vasantham (2000) is that finding exact words is very difficult for translator.

KEY WORDS: Dalit literature, Untouchables, equivalent words, unsolved riddles.
in the target language without distorting the meaning of the source text. The study also analyses the problems emerged at cultural level in translation of ‘Antarani Vasantram’ and tries to provide a possible solution to the research problem.

2. Roots of Untouchability: A Mythological Perspective
   a) Purushasukthka of Rig Veda

   There are many opinions among the scholars regarding the roots of Varna Vyavastha (caste system) and Untouchability, but majority of them trace it back to the Vedas and Puranas, as Thimmapudi Bharathi(2008) mentioned in the History of Telugu Dalit literature.

   Vedas, especially Purushasukthka of Rig Veda, provides the main source for the traditional theory, it is well known, and much criticized and rejected theory. It appears very unscientific and unnatural to accept Brahma to give birth through mouth, shoulders, thighs and feet (Bharathi Thimmapudi, 2008:15).

   If we examine the above mentioned quotation, we get a clear picture of roots of the caste system, and social injustice in the guise of religion. According to Purushasukthka of the Rigveda, the Brahmins were born from the mouth of Brahma, Kshatriyas from the shoulders, Vaishyas from the thighs and Shudras from the feet. Based on this suktha, Brahmans claimed superiority over the other three Varnas. Over a period of time, they monopolized the knowledge which was there in Vedas and declared themselves to be custodians of the Vedas. They were given privilege not only in religious sphere but also in political sphere. They were appointed on the highly respectable post of Rajguru (meaning) Teacher of the King. They also acted as the Chief Priests who would coronate the King and conduct great Yagas (religious sacrifices) like Ashvamedha Yajna and Rajasuya Yajna. At the end of such great sacrifices the Brahmins were given land, gold, cows etc. as dana and dakshina. Apart from this, Land grants called Agraharas were also given to them. The revenue from these lands was meant not only for the maintenance of Temples and the Gurukulas (Educational Institutions) but also for their personal maintenance. Thus the Brahmins gradually became the most powerful Varna who started dominating and exploiting other Varnas especially the Shudras and Antyajas, who were supposed to serve all the other three Varnas, mutely and bear the torture inflicted by the upper castes. Hence the Caste System along with the evil practice of Untouchability and Social Slavery are said to have originated from the Vedas but gradually developed by the upper castes for their vested interests.

   b) Ramayana

   Even during the time of the Ramayana, Varna System appears to have existed in the society. According to the Valmiki Ramayana, in a particular context Rama while explaining the state-craft to the Bharata at Chitrakoot states that:

   “Brahmin, Kshatriya, and Vaishya live in large numbers in Ayodhya doing their own duties; you do protect such Ayodhya, do you not?” (Ramayana 2.100.42)

   Rama does not mention about Shudras even in the general categorization of Varna Vyavastha (Caste System).

   c) Mahabharata

   Injustice appears to have occurred in Mahabharata. In one of the episodes, a tribal prince called Ekalavya, is very much interested in learning archery, so his father takes him to Guru Dronacharya, considered as the greatest teacher of archery in those times. Dronacharya refuses to train him because he was a tribal and according to Varna Vyavastha, it was the prerogative of the Kshatriyas i.e. the ruling class.

   Later while training the Kshatriya princes Kauravas and Pandavas, he takes them to forest where they are awestruck by the mastery of Ekalavya, who silences a barking dog by shooting a series of arrows in its mouth. When the princes report this incident to their acharya he is also surprised. He wonders who must have taught him. When Ekalavya is asked about his teacher he says that it was Dronacharya himself. Everyone is astonished. Then he explains that he made an idol of Guru Drona, meditated on it and started practicing archery. Hence he considers Guru Drona as his mentor.

   Appreciating the talent of Ekalavya and visualizing its social implications, that a Tribal (a Shudra) becoming greater archer than the Kshatriyas princes would lead to imbalance in the existing social hierarchy, and also to keep his promise of making Arjuna the greatest archer, Dronacharya asked Ekalavya to give his thumb as the ‘Guru Dakshina’ even though he had not taught him personally. Since Guru Dakshina was a sort
of mandatory debt/fees which a disciple owed to his teacher, Ekalavya cut his right thumb and offered it to Dronacharya.

Thus we see that Ekalavya was a victim of upper caste domination. Instead of getting recognition for his talent he was forced to annihilate it so as to maintain the balance of Chaturvarna Vyavastha as well as follow the social custom of Guru Dakshina.

3. Methodology

While translating the source text (Dalit literature) into English, the translator should try to understand the culture of the Dalit community very clearly, and then try to provide equivalent meaning in the target language without distorting the meaning of the source text.

In the process of translation, a translator must set up equivalences between a source text and a target language. This process can be expressed as interpreting the meaning of original text and re-encoding this meaning in the target language.

If we take some words from the novel ‘Antarani Vasantham’ like beda, dammidde, jamu kunta, gunta, kaliyuga, kamadenuvu etc, we cannot find exact equivalent English words in translation. It is highly impossible to translate the Dalit culture-specific words which do not have equivalents in English. Here, I would like to look at the problems encountered by a translator. Because of these problems, sometimes, the translator fails to keep up the originality of source text in the process of translation into other language. These problems can be avoided by the following methods.

3.1 Communicative Translation:

Communicative translation is usually adopted for culture specific clichés such as idioms, proverbs, fixed expression, etc. In such cases the translator substitutes SL (Source language) word with an existing concept in target culture. In cultural substitution the propositional meaning is not the same but it has similar impact on target reader. The literal translation here may sound comic. The degree of using this strategy sometimes depends on the license which is given to the translator by commissioners and also the purpose of translation.

3.2 Coining words

Even after using the above method, if equivalent words are not found, then translator may take a step to coin a word in the target language, only if it is essential.

3.3 Tools

The following tools are proposed to be used in this study.

- Texts which are already translated
- Dictionaries [eg: ‘Aadunika vyavahara kosham (2000)’]
- Internet (Machine translation)

4. Scope of the study:

The scope of the study will be limited to ‘Antarani Vasantham’ and its translation ‘Untouchable Spring’ and the available literature on Dalit issues in English articles and books on the process of translation and problems involved in it.

5. Translation of Kinship Words

Kinship terminology describes a system of familial relationships. The family is a natural and fundamental unit in society. According to Schapera (1977), there are five principal kinds of kinship terminologies which one could use to describe people with whom one is connected, either by descent from a common ancestor or by marriage. These can be classified, for example, into members of one’s family, extra-familial kin (relatives of blood) and one’s relative’s by marriage. The relationship terms most commonly used are father, mother, son, daughter, grandfather, grandmother, grandson, granddaughter, uncle, aunt, nephew, niece, brother and sister.

In Telugu language the words like Amma, nanna, thatha, muthatha and mama are examples of kinship words.
The Telugu Dalit novel *Antaranivasantham* has some kinship words for which the translators have not given equivalences even though their equivalence generally available, this is a kind of translation Strategy employed by the translators probably to maintain the flavor of the source text.

The kinship words found in the novel and available equivalents are as follows.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Telugu word</th>
<th>Transliterated into English as</th>
<th>Available Equivalents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>తాతా</td>
<td>Thatha</td>
<td>Grand father</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>అయ్యా</td>
<td>Ayya</td>
<td>may be ‘father’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>అత్త</td>
<td>Attha</td>
<td>Father’s sister</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6. Translation strategies for Cultural terms

Some cultural words which appear in the source text are not given English equivalents. They are transliterated placed exactly in the English translation of *Antatarani vasantham* that is ‘Untouchable Spring’.

a) Mythological words:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Telugu word</th>
<th>Transliterated into English as</th>
<th>Other strategies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>కామధేను</td>
<td>Kamadhenu</td>
<td>Note given at the end of the novel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>వేదాలు</td>
<td>Vedas</td>
<td>No explanation is given</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>శాస్తా తాస్</td>
<td>Sastras</td>
<td>No explanation is given</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>ఋషి</td>
<td>Rishi</td>
<td>No explanation is given</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

b) Geographical words (Area related):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Telugu word</th>
<th>Transliterated into English as</th>
<th>Other strategies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>ఊరు</td>
<td>Ooru</td>
<td>Village. No explanation was given.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>మయలపల్లి</td>
<td>Malapalli</td>
<td>No explanation is given</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>మయదిగపల్లి</td>
<td>Madigapalli</td>
<td>No explanation is given</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>ఎల్లో రుండు</td>
<td>Half kunta</td>
<td>Note given at the end of the page.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>అగరహారాలు</td>
<td>Agrahams</td>
<td>No explanation is given</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

c) Financial words:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Telugu word</th>
<th>Transliterated into English as</th>
<th>Other strategies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

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1 (Internet source) [http://www.uri.edu/iaics/content/2012v21n1/22MunzhedziJamesMafela.pdf](http://www.uri.edu/iaics/content/2012v21n1/22MunzhedziJamesMafela.pdf)
CONCLUSION

The study concentrates on socio-cultural gaps in translating Dalit texts into English. Generally Dalit people have their cultural differences. Their use of languages mixed with the words were not totally accepted by the general society, which means socially, culturally, economically developed people will not accept the village Dalit language. Here in the novel Antarani Vasantham there are so many words associated with the Dalit culture and at the same which are related to the mythology. It is impossible to find equivalence for these cultural specific words of Dalits. Therefore translator uses some techniques and strategies to overcome these problems. So I looked at what are the problematic words and how the translator given solutions for those problems by using techniques and I also looked at the translation gaps between the source text and target text.

REFERENCES

http://www.uri.edu/iaics/content/2012v21n1/22MunzhedziJamesMafela.pdf