

## TRANSLATION AS A BRIDGE IN THE 21ST CENTURY

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### Abstract

*21st century era is an era of translation. "Every act of communication is an act of translation" (If This Be Treason by Gregory Rabassa). Translation is a bridge across various communities, countries and continents and it creates such a condition where cultural and commercial, social and political dialogue can be established and promoted to resolve the age-old conflicts, contradictions and differences. It breaks the culture of silence and builds the culture of dialogue which is essential to cultural development, political progress and bilateral relations in this age of globalization. Translation bridges social, economic, cultural and linguistic gaps which separate us from one another.*

*Language, Literature and culture can play very significant role in promoting international dialogue. Cultural and linguistic awareness can well be disseminated through the translation of literary texts. The study of translated literary texts roots out cultural and linguistic prejudices and biases and helps us to understand one another better. Cultural and linguistic differences hamper the prospects of bi-lateral dialogue and economic relations. Translation enables us to go beyond these barriers and expand, establish and strengthen international dialogue and bi-lateral relations for the development of all nations and for the welfare of whole humanity. If world literature will be translated into Indian languages and vice-versa then we can understand the culture and society properly and in this way we can come closer to one another to enhance and enrich cultural and political dialogue and to promote bi-lateral relations.*

*This paper attempts to explore the prospects and significance of translation to strengthen and promote cultural development and bi-lateral relations. It emphasizes on how translation helps us to change our prejudiced and biased mindset and see the other nations with friendly perspective. It also reflects on why we need translation and role and relevance of translation in the 21st century. The paper discusses how translation functions and will function as a bridge to promote in-depth dialogue and development and how lack of translation creates misunderstanding and misconception among masses which may hamper socio-cultural relations and global dialogue. The paper also tries to examine how translation of world literature into Indian languages and vice-versa can expand our academic engagement and interactive prospects at the level of higher education to encourage mutual*

### Keywords:

*Translation, bridge, dialogue and development, cultural understanding, world literature, knowledge, globalization.*

understanding pertaining to language, literature, culture and society. The effort has been made to explore the problems and prospects of establishing department of Translation Studies separately in Indian universities and to launch UG, PG M.Phil. and Ph.D. courses as we have these courses in foreign languages department to strengthen the project of nation building. So we would have translated world literature from all corners across globe in our syllabus at institutional level. Commercial investment and trade agreement cannot be very well successful and durable without cultural transaction and cultural dialogue and they are only possible through the translation of world literature into Indian languages and vice-versa and its promotion in higher education. The paper seeks to explore how translation opens new doors of employment opportunity for young promising students, scholars and academicians in an era of globalization.

### **Role and Relevance of Translation**

The term translation has been derived from the Latin word “translatum” which is made up of two segments – ‘Trans’ i.e. ‘beyond’, ‘through’, ‘across’ and “latum” means ‘to carry’. Thus the term translation refers to taking/carrying something beyond or across. According to Nida “translating, consists in producing in the message of the source language, first in meaning and second in style”. Translation is such a medium through which we can travel the whole world sitting in our home “*Yatra Vishwam Bhawati, Ek neeram*” (qtd in Agarwal, 1999, p. 15) and it makes us realize “*Vasudhaiv Kutumbakam*” (the whole world is my family). Translation plays a key role in national unity and cultural integration and it is true in the case of India.

Nothing moves without translation (E.S. Bates) in the 21st century. What belongs to nobody, belongs to everybody. No man's area becomes everyman's area. 21st century era is an era of translation because it is an era of knowledge. Translation pervades the whole human history and the entire world. Gregory rightly says "Every act of communication is an act of translation". Every word we utter is a translation of ideas, images and experiences. Where there is word there is translation. Words determine, illustrate and illumine our world. Bhartrihari rightly said "Jagat sarvam shabden bhashte" (We get the cognizance of the world through words) (quoted in Singh: 2014). There is no world without words and without word we can't share and disseminate the inexhaustible source of knowledge. Translation is to know the best that has been said and thought in the world. The knowledge text is written almost in 7000 thousand language of the world. There are more than two hundred members in UNO but there are only six official languages i.e. English, French, Spanish, Russian, Chinese and Arbi. So without translation we cannot disseminate and democratize the information to all in all languages. "No language, no nation is sufficient onto itself. Its mind must be enlarged by the thoughts of other nations or else it will warp and shrivel. In English in other language, many of the greatest ideas we have been brought in through translation. The central book of the English speaking peoples is a translation – although it comes to us as a shock to many to realize that the Bible was written in Hebrew and in Greek, and translated by a

committee of scholars". (Highet, 1994: 106). So it can be said that "Jagatsarvam anuvaden bhashte" (we get the cognigence of the world through translation) (quoted in Singh 2014) in the 21st century. No human activity is possible without translation. Whenever and wherever we use/utter a word there is translation. We translate abstract ideas into language through words. Words construct/make language, language creates knowledge and this knowledge is acquired, preserved, created, disseminated and applied in the world through translation. Translation makes this 'knowledge century' conceivable intelligible, perceivable and perceptible.

### Translation as a Bridge

*“Ati apar je saritbar, jo nrip setu karahin,*

*Chadhi pipeelakau param sukh bin kshram parahi jahin.”*

**(quoted in Verma)**

(If the king builds the bridge across the river then even an ant crosses the vast river without any difficulty.)

Tulsidas’s couplet from the Ramcharitramanas highlights the role of translator and the relevance of translation in contemporary times. Translation is a bridge between two languages, two nations and two cultures of the world. Without translation man will be a stranger or an alien in his own community, country and continent. "India is perhaps the one country, where the citizens visiting a neighbouring state become foreigners in their own land. On the other hand, Indian currency is the only currency in the world to be inscribed with multiple languages" (Ravi 2012:12).

Translation functions as a bridge across different linguistic groups, across numerous cultures, communities, countries and continents, across various caste, colours, and creeds. According to Prof. Avadesh Kumar Singh, "It offers itself as a bridge across different cultures and their knowledge systems and their five basic aspects: acquisition of knowledge, preservation of knowledge, creation of knowledge, dissemination of knowledge and application of knowledge". (Singh 2014: 06).

Tagore's poem also emphasizes on the function of translation as a bridge.

"Thou hast made me known to friends when I know not, Thou hast given me seats in homes not my own, Thou hast brought the distant near and made a brother of stranger..."

Translation makes me familiar and friendly with the stranger and brings the distant very close to us, makes this world a global village in this 21st century and we can easily realize the philosophy of

Vasudhaiv Kutumbakam (the whole world is my family). In the country like India where there is so much differences, divides and diversities such as lingual, cultural, religious. We are / will be strangers and alien in our own community and country without translation India is a diverse land where human happiness, hope and harmony rests on translation. The question arises that what will integrate unite and bridge all the gaps, gulfs and groups and let us breathes the fresh air in an era of knowledge? It is only translation which has capacity to create the culture of clarity, comprehension, unity, amity, friendliness, togetherness and deconstruct the culture of chaos, confusion, clash, conflict, collision, chasm, age-old prejudices and biases, doubts, disbeliefs, discrimination and differentiations. Translation serves as a bridge where dialogue and development, peace and prosperity, education and employment can go hand in hand.

We need translation in the 21<sup>st</sup> century because it is needed for the democratization of knowledge, making our society "a knowledge society and to uplift the society. Translation is needed to know our nation deeper and better. to establish peace and non-violence, to make developing nation, a developed nation and to build the culture of dialogue amongst us. It is also needed to expand the horizons of our knowledge, to make man a superman, to make country, a continent, to convert illiterate and uneducated society into a knowledge society, to make poor nation, a prosperous nation, to transform "mere thinkers" into "man thinking" (Emerson), to awaken sleeping masses, to enlighten the ignorant masses. It is also needed at the international forum to strengthen bi-lateral relations and economic ties, to enhance socio-economic development, to root out racial, cultural, religious and linguistic prejudices and biases, to resolve age-old conflicts and contradictions, to bridge the linguistic gap that divides our society and nation. Translation is a must for nation building, global brotherhood, universal hope and harmony. And the translation of the Bible, the Gita, the Quran has brought peace, prosperity, hope, happiness and harmony in the whole world.

Translation is one of the effective media to extract the best from all cultures and to impart it at school, college and university level. Bhabha asserts that "Translation is the performative nature of cultural communication" (Bhabha, 1994:228). Translation is perceived as a cultural activity and has become a respectable profession. "One does not translate language but cultures" and "in translation we transfer cultures not languages" (House, 2002:92). Jhumpa Lahri also emphasizes that "translation is not only a finite linguistic act but an ongoing cultural one." (Lahri 120). Now like English language, translation is the need of the time. It has become our social, cultural, commercial, professional and above all it is our global need. Like Internet it connects us with the knowledge of the whole world.

Without translation we will have limited and narrow knowledge and information because language puts limit and becomes a barrier in gaining knowledge from diverse domains of language,

cultural and literature. No one can learn all the languages of the world, therefore it is said that “The limits of language are the limits of knowledge” (Wittgenstein). But we have challenged these limits and barriers which have been put upon us since ages with the help of powerful weapon called translation.

### **Teaching of Translated Texts**

Every act of teaching is an act of translation and translation is central to teaching because teaching is "an act of interpretation", explanation. Teaching of translated text can create a powerful bridge across different and diverse social, lingual, political and cultural groups and all can thrive together and can commence a new era.

But teaching translated texts is considered to be peripheral or initiative kind of teaching. We study and teach translated texts as original of foreign authors but hesitate to teach translated text of Indian works.

We have received/are receiving the knowledge of world’s greatest literature through translation. The translation of the Bible, the Gita, the Mahabharata, the Ramayana, the Vedas, the Upanishadas, the Gita, Panchtantra etc. has revolutionized the whole world and history is a witness that translation of the Bible has played a crucial role in spreading Christianity. We have been reading the greatest writers of the world in translation such as Socrates, Aristotle, Plato, Kalidas, Tagore, Tulsi, Tolstoy Dante, Petnarch, Virgil, Horace, Cicero etc.... and it is a long list. "Classical influence flows into the literature of modern nations by three ways- translation, imitation, and emulation." (Hight, 1949: 104). Had Indian sacred texts such as the Vedas, the Upanishads, the Gita been not translated then India would not have emerged as a spiritual leader across the globe. The Gita has been translated in many languages and many times in the same language after the Bible.

"In view of it, if we focus on Indian situation, we find that English classroom is a site of teaching through translation. In reality too we have been teaching much of translated texts but we have never noticed them. The literary criticism paper, for instance, is basically constituted of no-English texts. Plato, Aristotle did not write in English but in Greek. The works of Horace, Cicero and Quintilian are in Latin, which were later translated into English. Later on A.W. Schlegel, AC Schlegel and Schiller wrote in German, not ion English. Ferdinand de Saussure, Claude Levi-Strauss, Roland Barthes, Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault, Jean Francois Lyotart and Pierre Bouriard did not write in English but they are being prescribed and taught in English class-rooms. But nobody questions the issues of their originality nor equips ourselves with new strategies to teach them as translated texts. Why are all these questions raised in case of teaching translated texts in Indian class room? The reason is in the mind-set because these texts happen to be translations of Indian works" (quoted in Singh: 29).

In order to maintain the integrity and unity of Indian the need of the our is to pose the studying / teaching translated texts at school, college and university level and also there is a need to establish the department of Translation Studies with the cases such as B.A., M.A., M.Phil. and Ph.D. in translation studies. This will also enable and expand academic engagement and interactive prospects at the level of higher education to encourage mutual understanding pertaining to language, literature, culture and society. Translation Studies has immense potential in our multilingual society. Translation Studied has emerged as a major discourse in the diverse country like India.

### **Translation and Employment**

There is immense potential and prospect of translation in India as it has been an age-old practical ground of all forms of translation. There is huge job / employment opportunity in India. English is the second official language along with Hindi in India. So the translations are needed to all the central government and state government offices. Apart from it, the employment opportunity is in the court, railway, university and many other government institutions and organizations. There is also job opportunity in the field of interpretation. Interpretations are needed in tourism, in Lok Sabha, Rajya Sabha, meeting with foreign delegates, UNO etc.

Translation creates employment opportunity in the private sectors such multinational companies, publication house, media, mass communication, translation of literary texts, non-literary texts, facebook, dubbing, subtitling, google etc. There is very urgent need of translation of knowledge texts in all the major regional languages of India and NTM (National Translation Mission) is engaged in this pursuit of democratization and dissemination of knowledge.

Without cultural, linguistic and knowledge transaction, commercial investment and trade ties will not be durable because all relations, treaties and ties are based on understanding and translation would help us to understand one another profoundly.

Translation of world literature only will not help us to achieve our desired goal, therefore, we have to also pay attention to the translation of knowledge texts i.e. philosophy, sociology, science, psychology, education etc. which will instill into us with valuable knowledge and enable us to comprehend the social processes and philosophical thoughts cropping up in the societies. We also need to focus on the translation of music and cinema which will have enduring impact on the minds of the people of both the nations. The poorest of the poor and the commonest of the common people have access to music and cinema. Even the illiterate and uneducated those who cannot read or write, but listen, watch and understand message inherent in the music and cinema. Films and movies are the reflection of society's culture and social problems and prospects. So, they would help us to comprehend

social perspectives and correct social and cultural problems. There is a great scope of translation in this field which will lead to socio-economic development and boost bi-lateral relations.

There are three activities from which nations can be developed "War to expand their territory, commerce to accumulate wealth and expand their economic activities and translation to expand their cultural, artistic and economic productions." (Nyongwa, 2012:34)

## Conclusion

The progress of the nation and refinement of culture are centered on the axis of translation. No country can progress or develop in isolation and therefore the unity of the nations is needed for cultural, intellectual, moral and spiritual enrichment and also for socio-economic development and it is possible through translation. Translation is the barometer of nation's advancement in the field of education and employment, culture and literature, cinema and mass media, bi-lateral dialogue and diplomacy etc.... Translation is an effective medium of promoting dialogue and diplomacy, education and employment, bi-lateral relations, socio-economic ties and treaties etc... It is emerging as a global means of communication in an era of globalization. Translation is a powerful weapon through which we can unite all the nations under one banner and establish peace and harmony across globe and ensure bi-lateral dialogue and development in the field of education, tourism etc ..... among all nations.

Translation encompasses various aspects related to language, culture, literature, philosophy etc..... of the society which need to be studied, imparted, incorporated into academic curriculum at institutional level for the expansion and promotion of intense interactive possibilities that will result in strengthening global dialogue, bi-lateral relations, and economic ties. Translators are like Nal and Neel who will build the durable bridge across globe which will lead to nation building through the process of expanding and promoting translation in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

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