

Interdisciplinary Journal of Linguistics
Volume [12] 2019, Pp. 53-61

Translation in the Postcolonial Times

Irshad Ahmad Parray*

Abstract

Postcolonial translation is instrumental in the formulation of culture, identity and the regrowth of regional literature. It plays a significant role in reclaiming the past and resisting the dominant languages and literatures. The cross cultural interaction among the different social groups results in constructing and redefining the marginalized identities. For example, in India the misrepresentation of Indian culture by the British and the lost identity of various religious groups like Hindus and Muslims are being mostly regained through translation. In this context, the understanding of various aspects of the dynamics of translation is essential for the current discourse in postcolonial translation. Moreover, the different dimensions of translation like translation as a creative process, issues related to target audience, readership, application of different strategies, various approaches and theories, issues related to publishing have made the translation process a challenging task in the postcolonial times. This paper aims to highlight the current trends in the postcolonial translations with reference to some short story collections from Urdu and Kashmiri translated into English. It explores some of the prominent features of postcolonial translation. The focus is to explore the various strategies which are in vogue in these translations.

Keywords: *Formulation of culture, Marginalized identities, Regional literature and strategies.*

Introduction

Postcolonialism studies the various practices of colonizers on the colonized. It has exposed the colonial history of colonizers in different parts of the world. The cultural and political hegemony of colonial masters has been exposed rather their civilizing mission in the third world countries. Although, the physical control of postcolonialism had ended long back but its influence on language, culture and knowledge is still there on the third world countries. The dominance of the colonizer's language and culture on the colonized has been interrogated by various critics in Post-colonialism. To understand the basic crux of postcolonialism, let us look into some important definitions on postcolonialism. According to Munday "Postcolonialism is generally used to cover studies of the history of the former colonies, studies of powerful European empires, resistance to the colonialist powers and, more broadly, studies of the effect of the imbalance of power relations between colonized and colonizer" (131). In their groundbreaking book *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures* (1989) by Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin

* Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh

defines postcolonialism as “to cover all the cultures affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day. This is because there is a continuity of preoccupations throughout the historical process initiated by European imperial aggression.” (2) They further made it clear:

Post-colonial theory involves discussion about experience of various kinds: migration, slavery, suppression, resistance, representation, difference, race, gender, place and responses to the influential master discourses of imperial Europe such as history, philosophy and linguistics, and the fundamental experiences of speaking and writing by which all these come into being. None of these is ‘essentially’ post-colonial, but together they form the complex fabric of the field. (2)

The prominent works to comprehend the basic and important aspects of post-colonialism are as follows: Frantz Fanon’s *The Wretched of the Earth* (1963), *A Dying Colonialism* (1965), and *Black Skins, White Masks* (1967), *Discourse on Colonialism* (1972) by Aime Cesaire, Albert Memmi’s *The Colonizer and the Colonized* (1965). However, Edward Said’s *Orientalism* (1978) is considered an important work which has inspired many to contribute further in the study. *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures* (1989) by Bill Ashcroft et al. and Homi K Bhabha’s *Location of Culture* (1994) are equally important for initiating some novel discourses in this field.

Postcolonialism and postcolonial writing in translation are two related disciplines in many aspects. The academic enquiry in both postcolonial studies and translation studies emerged equally in the same period of time when some of the significant works were brought out in these disciplines. As pointed out by Trivedi “Postcolonial studies and translation studies are both new and exciting areas of academic enquiry which have emerged over the last three decades or so, since about the year 1980 when seminal influential publications appeared in each field: *Orientalism* (1979) by Edward W. Said and *Translation Studies* (1981) by Susan Bassnett...” (v). Thus it can be argued here that translation has become the window for the discourses raised in the postcolonialism. Various writers started writing about the different issues in postcolonialism and translation. Presently, Ngugi Wa Thiong’o is considered as the keenest voice in the postcolonial World. “Ngugi had caused a sensation when in the late 1970s, he changed his linguistic horses in mid-career by switching from writing in English to writing in his mother tongue Gikuyu and even changing his name which used to be James Ggugi. He has since written all his works in Gikuyu and then proceeded to translate them himself into English...” (Trivedi v). This kind of attitude and resistance by Ngugi has a great impact on the postcolonial writers and translators. New discourses related to history, culture and power have been touched in their works. Whether it be the distortion of history in India or the unequal balance of power, both postcolonial writers and translators started resisting and articulating their voices. The issues of marginalized communities have been brought at the international level through translation. In the regional literature, translation has played an important role in all the colonized countries. The prominent writers in different regional languages have been translated. For instance in the context of India various writers from the regional languages like

Prem Chand, Ismat Chughtai, Qurrat ul Ain Haider, Tagore, Mahasweta Devi etc have been translated from Hindi, Urdu, Bengali, Marathi, Kashmiri, etc into English. They have generated the awareness about the colonial politics of colonizers on different issues related to language, culture and power. They have revealed the colonial practices of translation by which they established their empire in different parts of the country. According to Bassnett and Trivedi (1993) “Colonialism and translation went hand in hand.” (3) In this context, postcolonial theory and practice of translation plays an important role in the conceptualization of how translation has to be done in the postcolonial times. It guides a postcolonial translator how to translate in the postcolonial setting for the global market. What are the various strategies to employ during the process of translation? The present paper aims to discuss the different strategies employed by the translators in their translation. Some of the select short story collections from Urdu and Kashmiri texts translated into English will be discussed in the paper.

Postcolonial Translation and Indian Paradigm

The postcolonial writing in translation has emerged as an important tool in the formulation of identity and culture. It has broken the hegemonic agendas of the colonial masters. The superiority and hegemony of one literature over the other has been challenged and questioned. The translators in the postcolonial times have made various experiments with language by employing the strategies which are distinct from the normal and standard rules of English language. The postcolonial translators have their own theoretical notions to resist the cultural travesty of the regional literature against the dominance of English. India as a multilingual country has a wider scope and importance to know each other. It is through inter-language translation that we can illuminate ourselves from the cultural diversity of India. It can be instrumental for the younger generation to make them connected to their own history, culture and identity. Moreover, the need to translate the regional literature is to introduce the regional writers of these languages. As pointed out by Susan Bassnett and Harish Trivedi “And there are many Mahasweta Devis in each of the Indian languages whose writings engage with a whole range of post-colonial issues but who are yet untranslated into English and therefore unknown to post-colonial discourse” (11). In this context, Mini Krishnan who has a long experience in translation and publishing provide a good reason why there is need of translations of Indian literature into different languages. She states “Why do I publish translations of Indian writing? Because in them lie our own histories, our sense of identity and belonging. Because we need to breathe our native breath. Because it is our historical duty in a largely illiterate country to preserve our word worlds and slow their disappearance” (Krishnan). One of the challenges to the regional literature is the dominance of the global language i.e English. As pointed out by Guttal and Mathur “The political implication of the act of translation is also evident in the transmission of elements from one culture to another and in the appropriation and the reworking of the colonizer’s language, English, to suit the needs of the postcolonial translator, thus breaking the standard pattern” (ix). Thus creating one’s own identity is one of the features of postcolonial translation by applying the different strategies in translation. Even translating from regional literature into English is the need of the day. As pointed out by Harish Trivedi “A

postcolonial truth that such a practice seems to acknowledge and affirm is that though one cannot perhaps do without English, there are a lot of things that one cannot say or do just in English” (vi). Thus translating in English and writing in your mother tongue, both are important. We cannot do away with English as it has achieved a global voice among all the languages of the world. Moreover, translation in the postcolonial era has become crucial in globalizing the regional literature. It has given the voice to the voiceless communities, as in the case of Mahasweta Devi which has been translated from Bengali into English by Gayatri Spivak. Similarly, there have been hundreds of writers from various languages of India which have been translated into English. It is a rich sign for Indian literature to get world attention. There are lot of writers who got world attention like Tagore, Mirza Galib, Prem Chand, Mahasweta Devi, Manto, Ismat Chughtai and others. Thus, we can say that translation has become important to create the cultural identity of a society. As pointed out by Guttal and Mathur:

Translation has taken on the role of reconstructing the cultural identity of the erstwhile colonized communities and it is now possible to accept the radical view that translation is not a marginal activity anymore. It has proved to be a means of liberating and communicating various forms of postcolonialities. In the multilingual and multicultural Indian context, translation has helped to identify Indian ways of telling stories and voicing cultural specificities. (Guttal and Mathur x)

Thus, postcolonial translation in India has played a significant role in making a regional literature accessible to the world. It has emerged as a separate category to introduce and glorify the regional writers. Moreover, the translation of regional literature helps us in making the subject matter of comparative literature and world literature wide. One gets to know the stories from the societies and cultures which are unknown to the world. In this the scope for regional literature in translation is growing day by day.

Aspects of Postcolonial Translation

As already discussed above that postcolonial writing has emerged as distinctive writing category from the standard writing of English language. Below are some of the prominent features of postcolonial translation texts from regional languages into English:

(1) Ideology/Politics of Translation

The relationship of ideology and translation has been prevalent there for centuries. In the words of Fawcett “...throughout the centuries, individuals and institutions applied their particular beliefs to the production of certain effect in translation” (107). The implication of ideology on translation has also been highlighted by Lefevere in his seminal work *Translation, History and Culture* (1999). It clearly shows how the element of ideology is crucial in translation. The above statements made it quite clear that the ideology has the political overtones. Throughout the history it has been seen that translation has the ideological gains either to impose the dominant ideology of a particular Institution, or group, or the authority. As pointed out by Tahir-Gürçağlar,

“Translation is political because, both as activity and product, it displays process of negotiation among different agents. On micro-level, these agents are translators, authors, critics, publishers, editors, and readers”. (113)

The mechanism through which the ideology of any patronage functions is crucial for the success of any translated text. There are numerous translations in the world which failed to either get readership/reception or are not in the eye of a public. The reason behind it is either the politics of the publisher or the government who do not want the work to be read by the readers. According to House, “Ideology is also believed to be manifested in the ways translations are endowed with paratextual material that are used to frame the text such as prefaces, afterwards and other interpretative ‘aids’” (23). House is also of the opinion “It is also evident in the publication choices made by publishers and others in power” (House 23). Ideology is also embedded through the choice of publication by the publishers which are indirectly controlled by the government in power. Schäffner claims that all translations are ideological since “...the choice of a source text and the use to which the subsequent target text is put are determined by the interests, aims, and objectives of social agents” (23).

Ideology also has a deep relationship with power. It simply implies that the people who have the hold of power can impose their ideas on the lower sections of people in the society. Sometimes this kind of thing can be done by the people without having the control of the social and political system but they can impose their ideology on the people to achieve their vested interests. In translation, the role of ideology works on the same lines. If the organizations like government want to impose some ideology on the people they can use translation as tool to achieve their agendas. As we know at the time of British rule in India, they had made translation as a tool to establish their power as well to strengthen it. Presently, the works of great short story writers of Hindi, Urdu, Kashmiri etc are being translated into English to create new discourses in comparative and world literature. For example, all the short stories of Premchand written in Hindi and Urdu have been translated into English by the name of *Premchand: The Complete Short Stories* in three volumes. The book familiarizes us about the various themes of Premchand’s stories like his idea of nationalism, realism, Hindu-Muslim relations and social and domestic issues of common people in the society. He highlighted the issues of caste system and suffering of women in a patriarchal society. The stories of Ismat chughtai are being translated in English which primarily raised the issues of woman in society. While translating Manto new discourses and dimension on partition are being created and understood through translation. The unity, brotherhood and social ethos are being revived by giving the wider readership to his writings in English. In Kashmiri also the translation of important short story writers like Akhtar Mohiuddin, Amin Kamil, Rattan Lal Shant, Harikrishan Kaul are being translated into English to depict the various social and individual issues in the society. Pandith writers from Kashmir have narrated the loss of their language, culture and brotherhood. They have narrated their pain of separation. All these issues are being facilitated through translations of these writers in English. They not only help us in cross cultural communication but also in the preservation and promotion of these writers and languages. However, the political overtones of translating any writer is to resist and reclaim the dominant discourses of any language and culture.

Thus, postcolonial translation has ideological and political overtones. The reception and readership of any translation depend on the name of the publisher. Publishers play a very crucial role in promoting a translation among the audience. For example if a translation is being published by a well known publisher, there are chances that its readership and reception will achieve success among the audience. These translations are sometimes ideological and politically motivated.

(2) Paratextual Elements

One of the important features of the postcolonial translation is the paratextual elements. In the words of Gerard Genette paratexts refer to those extratextual elements such as the title of the book, book cover, preface, introduction, foreword and afterword, and the reviews which frame the text and prepare the reader for the textual encounter. He highlights the significance of these elements in the following words:

One does not always know if one should consider that they [paratexts] belong to the text or not, but in any case they surround it and prolong it, precisely in order to present it, in the usual sense of the verb, but also in its strongest meaning: to make it present, to assure its presence in the world, its “reception” and its consumption, in the form, nowadays at least, of a book. (Genette 261)

Paratexts play a significant role in understanding the texts in relation with history, culture and language. The complexity of the source text in the form of linguistic and cultural untranslatability, bridging the gap of time and space, showing the relationship between author and translator are all being complemented through paratexts. It serves as an important tool to reach the text with rich content. It cannot be wrong to say that paratexts help us minimizing the loss of the source text as well as to gain the meaning of the source text.

For instance in the light of the above discussion, in the book *Premchand: The complete short stories* (2107) have been translated by M. Asaduddin and others. This is the complete translation of Prem Chand written in Urdu and Hindi. It has been written in three volumes and is a rich example of paratextual elements of translation. The book has been published by Penguin. As far as the paratextual elements of this book is concerned, the book has a foreword by a prominent postcolonial critique Harish Trivedi and an introduction by M. Asaduddin. In a foreword and introduction detailed information about his life and his greatness as a short story writer is being highlighted. Various themes of his short stories is being discussed. Moreover, the need and various difficulties are being highlighted in translating Premchand in English. At the end of the book, it gives profound details about the translators and stories in form of notes and note on translators. Moreover it also gives the important aspect of the translation i.e Glossary. Another book, *A Chughtai Collection: The Quilt and other Stories, the Heart Breaks Free and the Wild One* (2004) has been translated by Tahra Naqvi and Syeda S Hameed. The book has an introduction, notes at the beginning of the book and then it starts with the translation of the stories. At the end of the book, it has list of glossary. Similarly, in book *Kath: Stories from Kashmir* compiled and translated by Neerja Mattoo has been given

introduction, glossary and notes on the authors. In *Vignettes: Short Stories from Kashmir* translated by Tasleem Ahmad War has given a detailed introduction about the origin and development of Kashmiri short stories. It also given us the information about the writers whose short stories have been translated in this collection. It also provides glossary of cultural words. For example in the book *Premchand: The complete short stories* (2107) the translators have given a glossary of cultural words. Some of the examples from the I-Volume of the book are as follows:

Glossary

<i>aanchal</i>	end or corner of a sari
<i>aarti</i>	part of the ceremony of worship when the sacred flame is circled round the holy image
<i>abeer/gulal</i>	liquid colour
<i>adharma</i>	opposite of dharma; anti-religion
<i>aerund</i>	castor plant
winter month in the Indian calendar corresponding to November-December (Asaduddin and others 779)	

In another book *Kath: Stories from Kashmir*, the translator has given the glossary of culture words to explain them for target readers. Following are the examples:

Glossary

Amavas:	The night of the new moon
Anna:	an old Indian coin, worth about 1/16 th of a rupee
Chillum:	a small clay container in which tobacco is lighted for a hookah
Ded:	An honorific for grandmother like person
Dargah:	A saint's shrine
Haak:	A leafy green vegetable
Kangri:	a clay pot in a wicker ware container in which charcoal smoulders and gives warmth

All these paratextual features familiarizes the readers about the background of the writer and various themes of the book. Thus, paratexts play an important role in the translated texts these days. Now translators put a lot of emphasis on these elements.

(3) Strategies

In postcolonial translation, the discourse of hegemony, standard or prestige of one literature over the other, preserving the cultural aesthetics of the source text etc., is closely linked with the various strategies of translation. They play a crucial role in retaining the cultural aesthetics of the source text as well as the ideology of a translator. Postcolonial translators have rejected to accept the western paradigm of equivalence in translation. The trend of finding the equivalent of every word in the target text has been broken. Various techniques like abrogation and appropriation are used by translators. Abrogation refers to

“refusal of the notion of the correctness of usage, fixed meanings and assumptions dictated by the categories of imperial culture. ‘Appropriation’, on the other hand, is the process by which English is adopted and adapted to express cultural experiences which are very different from imperial ones” (Holmstorm 4). Thus, translators are attempting to create their own style of writing, like the postcolonial writers where they give the feel to their readers that they are reading a text of foreign culture.

The two prominent strategies of translation in postcolonial translation have been that of domestication and foreignization given by Lawrence Venuti. Domestication refers to a translation strategy, “in which a transparent, fluent style is adopted in order to minimize the strangeness of the foreign text for the TL readers, ...[while in foreignization]...a TT is produced which deliberately breaks target conventions by retaining something of the foreignness of the original” (Shuttleworth and Cowie 43-59). These are the two strategies which both postcolonial writers and translators employ in their writing. As pointed out by Maria Tymoczko:

An author can choose a fairly aggressive presentation of unfamiliar cultural elements in which differences, even ones likely to cause problems for a receiving audience, are highlighted, or ‘universality’ is stressed and cultural differences are muted and made peripheral to the central interests of the literary work. Similarly, linguistic features related to the source culture (such as dialect or unfamiliar lexical items) can be highlighted as defamiliarized elements in the text, or be domesticated in some way, or be circumvented altogether. (21)

Tymoczko makes it clear that Postcolonial writers make the use of strategies to adapt the cultural elements as per the audience of the text. Similarly, in translation, translators are conscious about the cultural elements of the source text which can be problematic for the target readers. “The use of rare or untranslated words in translation and the inclusion of unfamiliar cultural material are not necessarily defects of translated texts: translation is one of the activities of a culture in which cultural expansion occurs and in which linguistic options are expanded through the importation of loan transfers, calques, and the like” (Tymoczko 26). Thus, the use of the various strategies help the translators to localize and preserve the hybridity of their regional literature. For example, in all the above taken for discussion in this paper, the translators have employed the strategies of foreignisation. The culturally rooted words have been retained and then explained in glossary.

Conclusion

Translation in the postcolonial times makes it possible to have cross-cultural communication across languages and cultures. It is playing a crucial role in making the regional literature as an important tool to resist the hegemony of dominant languages like English. Regional discourses are being highlighted in response to discourses in comparative and world literature. Various strategies are being employed by the translators to get wider readership and reception in the target culture. The use of various paratextual features and strategies help the translators to preserve their unique culture and identity.

Works Cited

- Ashcroft, Bill, et al. *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Postcolonial Literatures* Routledge London, 2002.
- Bassnett, Susan, and Harish Trivedi. "Introduction: Of Colonies, Cannibals and Vernaculars." *Postcolonial Translation: Theory and Practice*, edited by Susan Bassnett and Harish Trivedi, Taylor and Francis e-Library, 2002.
- Fawcett, P. "Ideology and Translation." *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies*, ed. Mona Baker, Routledge London, 1998, pp. 106-110.
- Genette, Gérard, and Marie Maclean. "Introduction to the Para-text." *New Literary History*, vol. 22, no. 2, 1991, pp. 261-272. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/469037. Accessed 3 Sept. 2019.
- Guttal, Vijaya., and Suchitra Mathur. "Translation and Postcolonial Aspirations." *Translation and Postcolonialities: Transactions across Languages and Cultures*, edited by Vijaya Guttal and Suchitra Mathur, Orient Blackswan, 2013, pp. x.
- Holmstrom, Lakshmi. "Issues in Translation." *Kaviya Bharati (Translation Issue)*. No. 9, 1997, pp. 4. www.scilet.in/download/KB/KB9.pdf. Accessed 2 SEpt. 2019.
- House, Juliane. *Translation as Communication Across Languages and Cultures*. London and New York: London, 2016.
- Krishnan, Mini "Why I Publish Translations of Indian Literature" *Scroll.in*, 17 Jan. Sept.2015. scroll.in/article/700904/why-i-publish-translations-of-indian-literature. Accessed 4 Sept. 2019.
- Munday, Jeremy. *Introducing Translation Studies: Theories and Applications*. Routledge: London and New York, 2002.
- Mattoo, Neerja. *Kath: Stories from Kashmir*. New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 2011.
- Ramakrishna, Shantha. *Translation and Multilingualism: Post-Colonial Contexts*. Pencraft International Delhi, 1997.
- Schäffner, C. "Third Ways and New Centers: Ideological Unity or Difference?" *Apropos of Ideology*, edited by M. Calzade-Pérez. Manchester: St. Jerome, 2003, pp. 23-41.
- Shuttleworth, M. & M. Cowie. *Dictionary of Translation Studies*. Manchester, St Jerome Publishing UK, 1997.
- Tahir-Gürçağlar, Ş. "The translation Bureau Revisited: Translation as Symbol." *Apropos of Ideology* edited by A M. Calzada-Pérez Manchester: St. Jerome, 2003, pp. 113-130.
- Trivedi, Harish. "Foreword". *Translation and Postcolonialities: Transactions across Languages and Cultures* by Vijaya Guttal and Suchitra Mathur. Orient Blackswan Hyderabad, 2013. pp. v.
- Tymoczko, Maria. "Post-Colonial Writing and Literary Translation." *Postcolonial Translation: Theory and Practice*, edited by Susan Bassnett and Harish Trivedi, Taylor and Francis e-Library, 2002. pp. 19-40.
- War, Tasleem Ahmad. *Vignettes: Short Stories From Kashmir*. New Delhi: Jay Kay Books,2016.

