
Translating Gujarati Fiction and Poetry: A Study with Reference to Sundaram's Works

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Abstract

The present paper discusses the issues and challenges faced while translating the short stories and poems of 'Sundaram' (the pen name of T.P.Luhar) from Gujarati into English. These issues have wider relevance in the context of the issues in Indian Literature in English Translation. The issues range from the translation of the specific aspect of source culture like kinship and community, address terms, articles of dress and kitchenware, idioms and proverbs, omens and terms from native medicinal and musical systems to syntax, lexis and a host of stylistic features. Concomitantly the paper also talks about the generic translation strategies that could be of use to the translator who sets out to translate a regional language text into English. The paper also deals with issues like the choice of idiom, intended readership and the role of translation in postcolonial India, which are frequently debated, in the context of Indian literature in English translation.

As a complex act that seeks to translocate lingual and cultural properties of an exclusive and unique literary space to a partially or fully disparate space, translation is identified as one of the most unglamorous and enigmatic human endeavours. However at the same time, in a world of inestimable plurality, it makes us aware of the unrealistic prospect of accomplishing unqualified uniformity and of the advantages of a systematic attempt to understand 'the other'. In a country like India with its long-standing multilingual literary tradition, it is a matter of regret that most languages are not perfectly comprehensible even to the speakers

hailing from neighbouring languages. National literature in India is thus separated by semi-permeable cultural and linguistic barriers. Translation activity is indispensable in India as a means to build cross-cultural bridges within the country. In the post-colonial period translation becomes a very important instrument for negotiating social tensions, language conflicts, social transitions and for identifying the plurality of linguistic expressions and cultural experience and also for understanding the remarkable unity underlying them (Choudhury 1997). However, such a practice has its own pitfalls ranging from the political to the artistic. The risk involved in the practice increases a thousand fold when one seeks to bridge the yawning gulf between two languages like Gujarāti and English, which are separated by time and space, and more significantly share a history complicated by colonialism. Consequently as a translator starts off to translate a literary text s/he encounters what in popular terms are called ‘problems’ of translation which in turn problematize the notion of translatability. The problems discussed here are generic in nature in the sense that every translator who translates from an Indian language into English would ineluctably face them, partially or fully. These problems can be broadly grouped under the following categories. i) Translating Culture ii) Linguistics and Semantics of Translation iii) Translating Poetry.

Translating Culture

The concept of total or pure equivalence and the idea of the possibility of inter-lingual synonymy have always dominated translation theory. However, language is not merely a medium through which experience is communicated but something inseparable from the experience it communicates since “we see and hear and otherwise experience as we do because the language habits of our community predispose certain choices of interpretation”(Sapir 1949:207-214). Language by adding meaning to the world of objects helps its users to make sense of the world in its own peculiar and

restrictive way. Consequently, linguistic diversity across the world plays a significant part in the maintenance of corresponding differences and diversities in culture and mentality of the people of various regions. Any attempt at reformulation even within a single language has implications for alterations in meaning which rules out the prospect of having interlingual synonymy. The major stumbling block in the way of interlingual textual transference is culture, which is inextricably woven with the language that governs a literary artifact. The semiotician Julia Kriesteva looks upon a verbal text as an ensemble of diverse modes of cultural signification, that is, a text as a signifying system implicates other forms of signification like myths, fashion, indigenous medicinal system, musical system, festivals, food, metaphysical structure, rituals and religious practices, superstitions in addition to other textual structures. A literary text is a sub-system of the cultural semiotic system and is embedded in the ideological and socio-economic structures of society. Therefore, a translator has to look not only for verbal equivalents but also for socio-economic, ideological and cultural signifiers involved in the creation of a text which being culture-specific are impossible to be replicated in a diverse cultural tradition. As a result the translator may adopt appropriative strategy whereby he would appropriate certain terms in his rendering. Such a policy corresponds not only to a vision of the original work but also to a more or less precise conception of the readers for whom the translations are intended. If a translator has a wider readership in mind, national as well as international, her/his division of cultural properties into distinct categories of the translatable and the untranslatable may spring from a desire to reconstitute the specific socio-political and historical milieu rather than convey specific word-meanings. Very often the target readership faces no appreciable problem in making out these foreign signs because either the context makes the signification easy or the term turns out to be so frequently used that it is appropriated in English-language dictionaries. "Today," says Rimi Chatterjee, "the Indian originals...are now almost universally familiar to most

Western readers. In addition readers have become more tolerant of cultural difference and no longer balk at a glossary of Indian kinship terms, food, flora and fauna and articles of dress and daily use” (Chatterjee Rimi 2002: 25-33). On the other hand, however, such untranslated terms cannot be reduced to the state of pure signifieds because of their ostensible alienness to a disparate linguistic sign-system into which they are transported. Even their lexicalization in certain cases cannot serve to ignore their identity as foreign entities and the resultant co-presence of cultures and languages in the translated text. Such foreign terms, whether italicized or not, and their translations in turn, generate a hybrid space, a space of inquiry. Carol Meier rightly says the end of translation is, “a further investigation of how apparently inexplicable things might be comprehended without making them explicable in familiar terms (and without allowing them to appear simply different)” (1996). However, at the same time a translator should not foreignize the translation just for the sake of doing it. Readability of the translation and its ability to kindle and sustain the interest of the non-native reader ought to be given topmost priority. So, at times, a short descriptive phrase to substitute the indigenous noun can serve the purpose. This is truly the tension, which underscores the translation of Sundaram’s stories and poems: neither to make the translation a seamless English text nor to make it an inaccessible foreign text but rather to constitute a play of familiarity and foreignness so as to produce a text in which they intermingle. Sundaram sets many of his stories in villages and tinctures them with local colour by frequently representing dialects, customs, dress, food items, utensils, and ways of thinking and feeling that are distinctive of rural areas. Words from these signifying practices had to be borrowed in target language by the way of glossary even in the face of its rough source language equivalent posed a tantalizing temptation because at times such words were suffused with different connotations and moreover the method of preparation also varied. For example, to refer to the cloth which covers a woman’s breasts Sundaram uses a variety of terms like ‘*moliyo*’, ‘*kāpadun*’, ‘*katori*’

which are nearly the same as the English 'bodice'. However, such a replacement would sound quite facile and unduly simplistic, as it would connive at all the erotic and sensuous overtones that the original terms carry. The same holds true for 'chuni', 'kānti' and 'nathani' for all of which 'nose-ring' would have been too inappropriate an equivalent. In stories like '*Mājā Velā nun Mrutyun*' (The Demise of Maja Velo), '*Kholki*' (You, Blockhe), '*Māne Khole*' (In the Lap of Moth), '*Min Piyāsi*' (Thirsty Fish), '*Ambā Bhavāni*' and '*Bidio*' (Bidis), the author mentions indigenous kitchenware like *tapeli*, *hāndli*, *doni*, *tāsni*, *padio* and *chulo*, delicacies like *rotlo*, *kadi*, *sutarfeni*, *maisur*, *pendo*, *magas*, *mohanthāl* and *mālpudā*. Many of these words have a metaphorical function in the narrative and fit so well into the overall semantic structure of the story that any attempt at replacing or paraphrasing them would have dealt a shattering blow to its symmetrical build. Sometimes local colour manifests itself in the indigenous medicinal and musical system. Resultantly, words like *dātan*, *tamburo*, *ektāro*, *sharnāi*, *dhun*, and even sounds of tabla-like *dhagina tinak dhin* are transliterated. The fact that sounds of tabla, which are called *bol* in native musical terminology, have to be transliterated contradicts the axiom that the language of music doesn't know cartographic demarcations. Not to talk of the language of music, music itself has various origins and different traditions. For example, in India, we have two traditions of classical music, Hindustani and Karnātak. Each of them has its own distinctive way of tala, metrical arrangement, and specific configuration of notes. Again a community address, that is, a noun derived from the name of a particular caste or community by adding suffixes like 'o', 'an' and 'i' to it, certainly sounds quite bizarre and weird to the Western reader who is not conversant with the hierarchical hereditary divisions established among the Hindus under the banner of jati, varna or caste. Therefore, addresses like *loovāno*, *ghānchan*, *vāniyan*, *vāghri*, *bhangiyō*, *bhangadi*, *kācchiyo*, *muslim vorā*, *thākore*, *patel* etc. have been transliterated and explained in the glossary. The same is the case with certain

conventional societal addresses specific to rural culture like *bāpā*, *bāplā*, *bun*, *mādi* etc. which are emotionally charged terms conveying sentiments of esteem, dignity, intimacy towards the person addressed. Translating them with ‘mother’, ‘sister’, ‘brother’ and ‘father’ would have robbed them of their emotional exuberance. Apart from these, traditional kinship terms and conventional stereotypes prove to be untranslatable because of their being extremely culture-specific. In the poem ‘*Chal*’ the *gopi* sings,

Empty out your pitchers though full of water
Don’t heed *sāsu*’s injunctions

Here the replacement of *sāsu* with ‘mother-in-law’ would strip the term of the connotation it has in the Bhakti literary tradition of the mother-in-law being a severe taskmaster who, in collusion with her daughter, the *nanand*, the sister-in-law, keeps a strict vigil over the activities of her daughter-in-law, the *gopi*. Thus, *sāsu* and *nanand* represent oppressive stereotypes in the Indian familial system. Allegorically they connote the social norms and constricting dictates of the mundane world, which hamper the spiritual growth of a devotee. In the same way, kinship terms like *bhābhi* ‘brother’s wife’ or ‘wife of the husband’s elder brother’ and *vahu* ‘daughter-in-law’ are loaded terms. In India, *bhābhi* and *nanand* share a playful, lively and good-humored relationship. Both of them, if approximately of the same age, are not just legally bonded relations but intimate friends so much so that a *nanand* divulges to her *bhābhi* all her secrets and the issues which she hesitates to discuss with her mother. If the age difference between them is great, *bhābhi* becomes a motherly figure to the young *nanand* apart from being a friend. In the story *Kholki*, the father-in-law calls out for his *vahu*, to bring water for guests. Here the word ‘daughter-in-law’ would have sounded too formal and drab as it fails to convey the feeling of the awe, respect and security on the part of the *vahu* and a distant and yet fatherly attitude on the part of the father-in-law that characterize their relationship. This becomes manifest in the story *Māne Khole*,

where Shabu, the protagonist, pulls a veil over her face out of propriety and decorum in the presence of her father-in-law.

Differences between cultures are not located exclusively at the lexical level, but at the level of culture-specific practices, popular beliefs, myths, omens, superstitions and rituals. In songs elucidating *Premlakshanā* Bhakti, the poet uses the myth of Rādhā or *gopis* and Krishna, which, of course, has no parallel in the English culture. Similarly, in the story '*Min Piyāsi*' the protagonist sings a bhajan, which draws on the myth of the guru Matsyendranāth and his disciple Gorakh. On the metaphysical plane, this myth functions as a backdrop against which the story of the protagonist's life is laid. Much of the charm and force of the story would be lost if the reader fails to relate this myth to the plot of the story. In such situations, the translator has to assimilate them into English by way of a glossary. Omens like 'a cat walking across somebody's path', decorous formalities like 'women pulling a veil over the face in the presence of elders like father-in-law', superstitions like 'pouring a handful of water on the head before entering a holy river' to pay homage to it and 'putting out an oil lamp with the flap of a cloth' (and never with a blow of breath) are extremely culture-specific and the translator has to resort to the paraphrastic approach. However, at times it is quite likely for a non-native reader to get bamboozled at the sight of conventions like 'reserving the lump of cow dung' when the narrative scarcely affords any space for explaining the utilitarian rationale behind the act. In such cases, a translator has to take the help of footnotes and annotations. The same holds true for proverbs and idioms which being repositories of the cumulative inherited wisdom of a speech community carry a freight of historical happenstance and often a plain illogicality which are impossible to map onto another language. In the story, *Evening in Paris* a woman addresses her husband's friend as '*mārā bhāi*', that is, 'my brother'. This would definitely confuse the Western reader who is not aware of the Indian cultural tradition that expects every woman to look

upon every other man except her husband as brother or father. Footnotes are required to resolve such issues. Sometimes translational problems could be resolved by being purely paraphrastic, however, without an elision of the central historical or cultural signifier present in the idiom because it often bears a metaphorical relation to the character's persona or serves as a means to evolve a specific motif in the story. In the story *Kholki*, the protagonist Chandan's pure and unsullied character is emphasized throughout the narrative with the help of a variety of images. The allusion to Ganges in the form of an idiom is a smart way of reiterating the same. The idiom used is *Gher bethān Gangāji āvyān*. It is translated as

“You are lucky for being able to celebrate remarriage at home only; I had to come as far as here leaving home and parents. In your case the waters of holy Ganges have flowed right up to her devotee's feet.”

The foregoing discussion reiterates the axiom that though the quest for exact cultural equivalents is futile, translation remains a feasible activity and can be executed with a lesser or greater amount of accuracy, cultural gaps can be filled and elements of one culture can be integrated into another by relying upon all kinds of innovative devices such as borrowing, substitution, literal translation, neologism, omission, addition and paraphrasing.

The Linguistics and Semantics of Translation

If the problems relating to cultural transference are vexing, the structure of the language poses no less a dilemma to the translator. There is a world of a difference in the syntactical and lexical organization between the Gujarati and English languages. For example, English language has sentences with a rigorous SVO word order, except in the passive voice. But Gujarāti has more inflections by the agency of which the sentence patterns freely vary from SOV

to OSV. Due to this flexibility of the word order and greater possibility for inflections, Gujarāṭi sentence structures become more assimilative in nature. That is, a single Gujarāṭi complex sentence can club together more simple sentences than one English complex sentence possibly can. These differences in the syntactic and lexical arrangement between the two languages call for a number of 'adjustments' while reproducing the message in the receptor language. Sundaram, in many of his short stories, habitually gives prolix descriptions running through a single long complex sentence. While attempting to transfer such descriptions into a comparatively rigid syntactical pattern of English, simplistic and even an editing approach has to be adopted in order to accomplish accuracy and integrity in semantic translocation. For example, the following paragraph from the story *Tārini* (The Saviour), broken into two sentences, originally formed one long-winded sentence.

“From the mystical body of the endless sky stretching several lakhs of miles away, the midday sun, with rapt attention, was concentrating its light and scorching heat pointedly on the earth. Raising her devout self out of unflagging hope and unshakable faith the earth had become a hill - the apex of a mountain - and readily positioned herself right in front of the gaze of the sun as if to receive the gracious prasād of that supreme deity.”

Attempts at translating a long-winded Gujarāṭi description running through a single sentence into an equally long-drawn-out English one prove to be futile. Apart from sounding jarring and stiff, such an attempt causes the problem of determining the noun, which the sub-clause refers to. At the lexical level too the distinction between second person pronouns of address in Gujarāṭi like honorific '*tamey*' and familiar '*tu*' could not be rendered into English. Again, gender determination of certain nouns like 'moon' becomes problematic. In such cases, the contextual, figurative and metaphorical significance of the noun was taken into account. For

example, in the story ‘*Ambā Bhavāni*’, the moon is shown to be viewing the mesmerizing beauty of Ambā and her lovemaking with Amro from above. Moon, which has feminine gender in English, is masculine gender in Gujarati. But this act of secret viewing alludes to the same act performed by Lord Krishna in Vrindāvana. It may also refer to the mythical tale of Indra being bewitched by the ravishing beauty of Ahalyā who lived on earth. In the light of these mythical significations, the noun was inflected with the suffix -god and ‘moon-god’ was given a masculine gender.

Furthermore, in Gujarāti a verb is inflected according to the gender of the subject especially in the past tense, even when the subject is as genderless as the first person. But English verbs are gender-neutral in nature and so when it came to translating the bhakti song ‘*Mere Piya*’ the English verb failed to convey the fact that a woman or a *gopi* is addressing the song to her lover or Krishna. Thus, while the original reads

Mai to chup chup chah rahi

the translation reads

Covertly have I kept on doting

English is not as strong in forming compound words as Gujarati, a faculty that every other Indian language has in abundance. Sanskrit grammar has these *tatpurusha* compounds. Braj B. Kachru the linguist has rightly remarked that Indian English hybrids are formed on the same principle in order to fulfill a perceived need among Indians for such words (welcome address, England-returned), but are unintelligible to native speakers (Braj Kachru 1983:23).

Furthermore, most Indian languages, including Gujarati, use double adjectives, adverbs, and even verbs either to intensify their meaning or to indicate the boringly or annoyingly repetitive aspect

of the action. This comes out very lamely in English. For example in the song, '*Mere Piyā*', *chup chup* had to be rendered as just 'silently' or 'covertly'. Again, typical Gujarati expressions like *dhime dhime*, *unchā unchā*, *marak marak*, *dur dur* and many others could not be conveyed with an equal amount of stress and intensity. The same problems occur with transferring the degree of frequency or amount conveyed by Gujarati and English qualifiers and quantifiers. The expressions *kai ketloy samay* and *kai ketlāye varsho* could have been rendered to a nicety with literal parallels like 'how very much time' and 'how great many years', but on account of their unfamiliarity and oddness they are simply translated as 'how much time' and 'how many years'.

Gujarati is a language that depends on sound to make meaning. Many of its descriptive words are highly onomatopoeic and thus almost impossible to render in English. For example, the phrase for how a small stream (*zarnun*) flows is *zar zar zare*. In Sundaram's poem '*Tran Padoshi*' (A Song of Three Neighbours) the sound of the hand-mill (*ghanti*) *ghar ghar* is rendered with words like 'roaring' and 'rumbling' but with a loss of much of the poetic aural effect.

Care has to be taken not to fall prey to using the 'Babu' English with its stilted, archaic and bombastic idiom, in any form in translations. A translator is invariably faced with the generic problem while translating from a regional language into English. Translating into English is all very well, but whose English? International or Indian? This question once again brings her/him onto the brink of another question. Translating for whom? The Indian reader or the English reader? It is all the time the readership of the target language, which affects the choice of idiom and the structure of the language. Such questions are answered by the translator. However so far as translations from regional language literature into English are concerned, all efforts should be focused

upon evolving an idiom which would be a culmination of one which Raja Rao advocated in the preface to his novel ‘Kanthapura’. Almost six decades after independence a translator should daringly decolonize her/his pen from the exotic and even indigenous frowns over the use of footnotes and glossary. Sundaram’s works were translated for both kinds of readers, nonindian and nongujarati Indian, though primarily for non-Gujarati Indian readers who are in a dire need to familiarize themselves with it. A penetratingly discerning and perceptive non-Indian reader will not have the slightest problem in coming to terms with the idiom. When called upon to render the saucy impertinence, the salty tang of a highly localized language, manipulated especially in dialogues, the translator can take liberties with the syntax of the English language. The following example, from ‘*Mājā Velā nun Mrutyun*’ illustrates the point.

“Mājā Velo burst into laughter. ‘*Sutarfeni!* You better give up your desire to have it. Even its name you can’t pronounce properly.”

It is heartening to note that now the interest of Indian translators is to explore the ways in which the English language can be stretched to contain ‘authentic Indian expressions’ and thus to evolve an idiom which would be exclusively Indian, capable of fulfilling the needs of the native languages and which at the same time would assert the Indian lingual and cultural diversity on an international scale.

Great authors use the imperfections and quirks of language to produce certain startling effects - a macabre pun, a clever witticism, an indigenous half-truth. In the story, ‘*Māne Khole*’, the heroine has a sly dig at her cowardly husband by frequently addressing him as *bhiyā*, a local variety of ‘*bhaisaheb*’ which bears a close resemblance to the English ‘sir’. It is attached to a person in authority exercising power over others. But in the story, Shabu’s

husband is a typical lame father-seeker unable to decide anything on his own. To achieve this satiric overtone in the address I have explained the satire where the term first appears in the narrative and for the rest of its reappearances I have used 'sir'. Thus, I have tried to render the satire, which an equivalent like 'my man' or 'my husband' would have failed to do.

Problems in translation arise when a signifier has more than one unequivocal signified. That is, ambiguity in the meaning of a word or a phrase makes it difficult for the translator to reproduce all the semantic possibilities in the translation. Sundaram's poem '*Mere Piyā*' (O My Love) is an interesting example of ambiguity. In this love-poem, the beloved is singing the glory and supernal exhilaration bestowed upon her by her loving husband. The poem can also be read as a song by *gopi* addressed to her divine lover, Lord Krishna. In the poem, the interesting play on the words *chup chup* produces more than one meaning. The first stanza is,

“O my love I don't know anything
Covertly have I kept on doting.”

Here *chup chup*, in its most immediate sense, means 'silently', 'quietly' or 'without a word'. Not to talk of demands and complaints, the stanza seems to mean that in love even vocalization of one's feelings has no place. Love is an ineffable and inexpressible emotion, which is conveyed without the aid of words. This interpretation gains force and authenticity in the second stanza where the poet affirms that in love one remains happily content with whatever one receives from one's lover.

“O my love how disarming you are
Gratifying is your love's shower profuse as the rains are
Quietly have I enjoyed bathing.”

But as the poem is written in the Gujarati transliteration of Vraj, a dialect of Hindi, one cannot take the possible interpretation of *chup chup* as '*chupke chupke*' which means 'secretly', 'covertly' etc. when it suits the semantic context so perfectly. The poet says that in love one has to save oneself from the vigilant and censoring eyes of the world, as the world is always intent upon snapping the bond of love and intimacy between lovers. Worldly-wise people can indulge in foul play or chicanery, which, in turn, can assume lethal proportions for lovers. On a figurative level, this interpretation can be imputed to a devotee\gopi who wishes to be one with Lord Krishna in spite of being married. Such a gopi also needs to keep everything about her love affair hushed-up because if the *sāsu* or *nanand*, that are a variety of societal codes in the case of a devotee, comes to know about the said contravention, moral and ethical, she will put a stringent check on all the activities of the gopi\devotee. To retain both these opposite nuances I have translated *chup chup* as 'covertly' and 'quietly' respectively in the first two stanzas. To put it in a nutshell, the fluctuating relationship between the signifier and the signified poses problems for the translator.

Some of the hardest riddles in translating a text from an Indian language into English are the literary tense and the authorial voice. In English the simple past tense is the narrative tense. The story, which is believed to have already happened, is recounted by an authorial voice, which either is a character in the story or an omniscient and omnipresent force. Though in Gujarati the narrative tense is unequivocally simple past, sometimes authors out of their zeal to make the narration sound lively and dramatic purposely switch over to simple present tense. However, a story, which vacillates between present and past tenses in the course of the narrative, is likely to fuddle a reader who is not accustomed to such time fluctuations. Tense causes problems when one attempts to map Gujarati tenses onto English ones because the time reference conveyed by them is different. That is why most Indian speakers of English use tenses wrongly, the common errors being using past

perfect for simple past and present continuous for simple present. Such errors are passable or sometimes inevitable from a stylistic point of view, but they definitely impair the message. The problem is that a translator rendering a text in the present tense from Gujarati into its English counterpart is technically correct but her/his wayward handling of tense may rob the target text of its validity as a discrete work of art. Moreover, in Gujarati the authorial voice maintains much less distance from the voices of the characters. In '*Māne Khole*', the omnipresent authorial voice is often intercepted by the thoughts of the character that are meant to be overheard. Such a muddle of intertwining voices is likely to be intelligible to the native Gujarati reader but to a non-native reader it would be bewildering. The following passage exemplifies this:

“Tears welled up in her eyes. Damn it, why do I remember all these today? She became uneasy. You don't like going to the in-laws' house, is that why? After how many years, you are going to the in-laws!”

Translating Poetry

The biggest challenge a translator faces while rendering a poem into English is the challenge of translating a song meant to be sung in a specific religious, conventional and literary context. Some of Sundaram's poems have a typical Wordsworthian flavor and the rest verbalize the exuberance of the feelings of a devotee\gopi for Krishna, the divine lover. Even his narrative poems like '*Bhangadi*, and '*Tran Pādoshi*' throbbing with a vibrant activist and reformist agenda are no less rich in aural properties. The major predicament, in addition to the one pertaining to the cultural embeddedness of the songs, is the abundance of features, which characterize them as oral performative texts; features like consonance, internal and end rhymes, refrains, repetitions and so on. The beauty of his compositions lies in the meticulous word music elicited by means of

assonance, alliteration, consonance, internal and end rhymes, repetition, parallelism and refrains. The poet makes a prolific use of what is called *sabdālamkāra*, the ornaments of sound, in Indian aesthetics. They are characteristic of medieval Indian poetry. While handling such poetry, so enchantingly rich in aural properties, if the translator goes impulsively on to follow the advice of Riffaterre, which is, to substitute all 'literariness-inducing' devices in the source text with the parallel devices in the target text, he would end up crippling the semantic content of the original to a disastrous extent (1992:204-207). In such a case, Aurobindo's advice comes to the translator's rescue. Aurobindo talks of two ways of translating poetry, "One is to keep it simply to the manner and the 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" (Aurobindo 1953:43). He favours the latter. W. H. Auden rightly points out that the sound of words, their rhythmical relations and all meanings and associations of meanings, which depend upon sound, such as rhymes and puns, are untranslatable. He further adds, "Poetry is not, like music, pure sound. Any elements in a poem which are not based on verbal experience are to some degree, translatable into another tongue, for example, images, similes and metaphors which are drawn from sensory experience" (Auden 1964:34). In translating Sundaram's poetry, the phonetic texture and superb word-music had to be forfeited in order to conserve the semantic import, which figures topmost on the list of a translator's priorities. However, wherever possible, an attempt has been made to supplant the sound effect of the source language with that of the target language, though without much success. In addition to these there are problems of meter. Indian languages, in contrast to the accentual English language, are quantitative, that is, it is the length of the syllable rather than the stress that gives them their distinctive character. Therefore, Sundaram's songs are translated into free verse in order to do better justice to the semantic subtlety as well as to retain the poetic quality. An attempt has been made to reproduce the lyrical quality of the compositions by reproducing approximately some

refrains, repetitions, and some consonances wherever it is possible. Some instances are quoted below:

O in the village of Brahmins, there lived a *bhangadi*
Truly, she was a *bhangadi*, with eyes shaded with
collyrium,
Wearing green glass-bangles,
O four bangles and a colourful *chundadi* as her costume.

She wore a large, closely pleated *ghāghro*
O such a *ghāghro*, and silver anklets on staggering legs,
Round her neck a silver ring,
O she wore a ring and tightly braided were her tresses.
(“Bhangadi”, *Kavyamangala*, p.10)

O my love I don't know anything
Covertly have I kept on doting

O my love how disarming you are
Gratifying is your love's shower profuse as the rains are
Quietly have I enjoyed bathing

O my love you are my eternal hubby
Blessed with you I am greatly lucky
Every moment of my life is a ceremony of wedding.
(“Mere Piya”, *Yatra*, p. 199)

Besides, certain expressions typical to Gujarati songs like *re* coming at the end of a musical phrase and which are vocal gestures of endearment, had to be dropped as their expressive power could not be reproduced in English. In certain places, expression *O* is used.

Thus in the final analysis a translator of poetry has to come to terms with the annoying fact that total fidelity to the original text

is will-o-the-wispish and the translation of poetry can at best try to attain approximation. Krushna Srinivasa speaks on the same lines when she remarks, "In ultimate sense (sic) poetry cannot be translated but its magical web of meanings and imagery can be brought out in the translated version...Translation need not be just a mere translation; it can also be a transcreation" (cited in Pathak 1996:27). Thus it is very difficult to render the richly suggestive plurivalency of signifiers in another language and that the formal properties of language and culture are usually 'lost' in translation. However, translation is possible and even indispensable in a country like India. One completely agrees with A.K. Ramanujan when he comments, "One can often convey a sense of the original rhythm but not the language-bound meter; one can mimic levels of diction, even the word play, but not the actual sound of the words. Items are more difficult to translate than relations, textures more difficult than structure, words more difficult than phrasing, linear order more difficult than syntax, lines more difficult than pattern. Yet poetry is made at all those levels - and so is translation" (Ramanujan 1993:xvi). No doubt, there is no single formula or a general catalogue for translating various texts from various languages, registers, idiolects, cultures and historical periods. However, a set of practical guidelines and systematized standards for the ongoing practice of translation in the Indian subcontinent is urgently required. The happy marriage of theory and practice is essential in order to reap a crop of good, usable and honest translation of Indian literature into English.

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