

Punjabi-English Literary Translation: Challenges and Possibilities

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Abstract

Translation activity in modern Punjab predominantly flows 'downstream' from other languages into Punjabi, with comparatively little output of translated works from Punjabi into other languages. Despite this, the translation of Punjabi literature into English has created a valuable space for dialogue between languages and cultures. This article presents a synoptic view of the problems, principles, and possibilities involved in Punjabi-English literary translation. It explores different translation theories and approaches commonly used in Punjabi-English literary translation, highlighting critical studies available in both Punjabi and English.

Keywords: Literary translation, Translation Studies, Poetry, Fiction, Culture, Mistranslation.

Introduction

Literary translations help different cultures and literatures to flourish beyond borders marked by the constraints of a language. The encounter between the Punjabi and English languages began during the period of British colonial rule in India which started in the mid-18th century. The earliest translations of Punjabi literature into English were done by British colonial administrators and scholars, who were interested in understanding Punjabi culture and society. These translations were often done for academic and scholarly purposes, and were focused on capturing the cultural and historical aspects of Punjabi life. Despite the colonial context in which these translations were produced, they laid the groundwork for the development of Punjabi-English literary translation. They also played a role in promoting cross-cultural understanding and providing a window into the rich cultural traditions of Punjab.

However, it was not until the 1960s and 1970s that the translation of Punjabi literature into English gained momentum, with the efforts of writers and translators such as Mohan Singh, Sant Singh Sekhon, Amrita Pritam, Khushwant Singh, Shiv Kumar Batalvi, Kartar Singh Duggal, Dalip Kaur Tiwana, Gurdial Singh and many more. These writers and translators were part of a broader movement towards the promotion and preservation of Punjabi culture and literature, and they played a key role in the development of Punjabi-English literary translation as a distinct field of study. Today, Punjabi-English literary translation continues to be a growing field, with many new writers and translators creating a dialogue and continuing relevance of Punjabi literature to readers around the world.

While a considerable amount of Punjabi literature has been translated into English, there remains a significant lack of translation theory and constructive discussions in the field of Punjabi-English literary translation. The contention is born out that the translators face many practical and theoretical challenges; there are possibilities available to systematically evaluate the quality of literary translations by considering how a translator tackles cultural, lexical, syntactical and stylistic challenges.

Review of Literature

A comprehensive survey of the critical studies available in the field of Punjabi-English literary translation reveals that, despite some notable achievements, this area of research is still in need of further inquiry and exploration. The following review aims to identify and evaluate some of the key works that have contributed to the development of this field, and to outline the main areas of inquiry that require further attention and investigation.

In January 1987, *Punjabi Dunia* magazine published a special volume dedicated to the challenges of translating poetry and fiction. The volume included an article by Sant Singh Sekhon titled “Anuvad - Ik Kala”. Later, Tejwant Singh Gill translated the article into English as “Translation is an Art”. which was published in *Sant Singh Sekhon: Selected Writings* (2005). In the article, Sekhon examined Punjabi translations of Kalidasa’s plays and expressed his concern that “maybe their Punjabi translations do not rise to the

level of their counterparts in Hindi or some other Indian languages” (Gill 2005: 388). He attributed this issue to the lack of interest in classical literature among Punjabi readers, stating that “Punjabi people are less concerned with their own language and they lack interest in classical things” (2005: 388). This critique raises important questions about the role of readership in shaping the quality of literature. The lack of interest and engagement from Punjabi readers in classical literature may hinder the quality of Punjabi translations and ultimately impact the vitality of Punjabi literature. Literary translation is important in revitalizing a literature by bringing in fresh perspectives and ideas from foreign cultures.

In the article “Galap da Anuvad”. Gurbaksh Singh Frank discusses the challenges of translating fiction (Singh 1987: 11-21). However, in “Galap Sahit de Anuvad dian Samasiawan ate Sambhabnawan”. Gurmukh Sing Jeet argues that each text has its own set of unique challenges that require different solutions in the translation process (Singh 1987: 40-45). In a similar vein, Karam Singh Kapur in his work “Kavita da Anuvad” compares two Punjabi translations of *Light of Asia* by Gurbaksh Singh Preetlari and Mohan Singh (Singh 1987: 60-80). These critical studies reveal the complex nature of Punjabi-English literary translation and the importance of carefully considering the nuances of each work being translated.

Max Arthur Macauliffe’s translation of *Guru Granth Sahib* appears as a part of *The Sikh Religion: Its Gurus, Sacred Writings and Authors* (1909), published in six volumes by Oxford University Press. Gurbachan Singh Bhullar in his essay “Bani da Sidakvaan Angreji Anuvadak Max Arthur Macauliffe” (2020) discusses several aspects of the translation such as why it is important, how Macauliffe choose the project, who helped him to complete it and what kind of problems he faced while working on it. In his autobiography titled *Arsi* (1980), Principal Teja Singh also writes about Macauliffe’s work undertaken over as many as 16 years.

Gurbachan Singh Bhullar in his book *Kalam-Siahi* (2020) shares examples of some poor translations under the title “Anuvadakan de Kuch Hor Karname.” Harishankar Parsai was a satirist in modern Hindi literature. Bhullar noticed that one newspaper translated satirist as “sitarvadak. In another newspaper, leukemia was

mistranslated as “leucoderma” (Bhullar 2020: 140). Additionally, “keynote lecture” is always translated as “kunjivat bhashan” (2020: 142). These examples highlight the importance of accurate translation and the potential consequences of mistranslation in literature.

Ajmer Rode translated Gurdial Singh’s novel *Marhi da Deeva* (1964) into English as *The Last Flicker*. The first edition of the translation was published in 1991 by the Sahitya Akademi. In *Introducing Translation Studies: Theories and Applications* (2001) Jeremy Munday carries one study of *The Last Flicker* (1991). Munday discusses how “the postcolonial theories help to understand the power relations that operate around the translation process” (Munday 2001: 138). In this study, Munday questions the translation of “social dialect of small village community” by means of “[the] sociolect of urban working-class North America” (20021: 138). In response to this, a revised edition of *The Last Flicker* appeared in 2010, published by the National Book Trust. Rode explains his approach to translation, stating that his translation is focused on the audience. He had an international audience in mind while translating. His primary objective was to preserve and convey the emotional essence of Punjabi expressions, without being overly concerned about cultural dislocations. Additionally, he chose to utilize English idioms that he was most familiar with.

It indicates that the translator is mainly concerned with making the translation emotionally impactful for an international audience, rather than worrying too much about cultural nuances or using a literal translation of Punjabi idioms. The translator prioritizes using English idioms that they were comfortable with, which may have resulted in some cultural dislocations or departures from the original text. It is important for the translator to also consider cultural nuances and differences in order to maintain the integrity and authenticity of the preceding text¹. The decision to use a particular

¹ According to Avadhesh Kumar Singh (2016), the preceding text is a more appropriate term to denote the text to be translated, which is also known as the Source Text (ST); the term “succeeding text” refers to the text as translated. The use of the terms “preceding text” and “succeeding text” is intended to challenge the binarism implicit in the terms “source text” and “target text” because this

English idiom should also be made with careful consideration of the target audience and the context in which the translation will be read.

Hardilbagh Singh Gill di Sirjana ate Anuwad Kala (2016) edited by Sikander Singh is a collection of essays written on Gill's art of translation. Gill is known for translating Punjabi works into English and vice versa. One of the articles in the book is "H.S. Gill's Translations of Shakespeare: The Art of Double Assimilation" by Rajesh Sharma, which likely discusses Gill's approach to translating Shakespeare's works. Additionally, the book includes an interview of Hardilbagh Singh Gill conducted by Sawarnjit Savi.

While there is substantial amount of literature on translation in general, and some specific studies on Punjabi literary translation in particular, there is a lack of systematic and sustained analysis of the problems, principles, and processes involved in Punjabi-English literary translation. In other words, there is a gap in the literature when it comes to a systematic and sustained analysis of the challenges and techniques of Punjabi-English literary translation. Such an analysis would require a more in-depth examination of the linguistic, cultural, and literary differences between the two languages, as well as the cultural and social factors that influence translation practices in the Punjabi-English context.

Establishing Principles and Guidelines for the Translation Process

Literary translation is an arduous undertaking as it involves the question of cultural as well as verbal translatability. The domain of the literary text is multi-dimensional and multi-layered. A literary text is an experience. Any good translation has to capture as much of the richness of that experience as possible. David Damrosch, in his book *What is World Literature* (2003) writes that "a text is read as literature if we dwell on the beauties of its language, its forms, and its themes, and don't take it as primarily factual in intent" (Damrosch 2003: 288). He suggests that a literary text is not meant

binarism privileges the "source text". The terms "succeeding" and "preceding" take away the advantage of one text against another, i.e. they temporally precede and succeed but otherwise they are on an equal footing.

to merely convey an idea or some information. A good translation adds value and significance to the text translated and, further, it strives to produce an echo of the original.

A literary text “either gains or loses in translation” (Damrosch 2003: 289). Sometimes a literary text has a significant value in its own language and culture but its translation diminishes that value in the receiving language². However, sometimes a text gains in translation and becomes even more esteemed work in the receiving language. A text loses in translation when the “language of the preceding text is not translated well or when the cultural assumptions do not travel well” (Damrosch 2003: 287). But the loss in translation does not mean that the practice of translation should be stopped. In this connection, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe has memorably remarked that “literary translation is impossible but important” (qtd. in Cook 2003: 56). The reason he gives is that “left to itself every literature will exhaust its vitality, if it is not refreshed by the interest and contributions of a foreign one” (qtd. in Damrosch 2014: 350). In addition to this, some writers have received recognition only after their works were translated into other languages. The Latin American “boom”³ writers, for instance, attained visibility in the global literary arena only after their works were translated into French and acknowledged by French critics. Similarly, Jorge Luis Borges is often regarded as a creation of France due to the recognition he received there. Danilo Kiš’s international acclaim coincided with his elevation through translation into French, which helped him transcend the confines of his native Serbo-Croatian language. Rabindranath Tagore’s universal recognition, epitomized by his Nobel Prize, can be traced back to the translation of his own writings from Bengali into English (Casanova 2004: 135).

² By receiving language means the language of the succeeding text in which a text is being translated.

³ The term denotes a literary movement which started in the 1960s when the works of Latin American novelists Julio Cortázar of Argentina, Carlos Fuentes of Mexico, Mario Vargas Llosa of Peru and Gabriel García Márquez of Colombia began to circulate throughout the world.

In “Notes and Queries for a Better Understanding of West-Eastern Divan”. Goethe differentiates between three “epochs” of translation. The first epoch, he says, “acquaints us with a foreign country in our own terms; a translation in plain prose serves this purpose the best” (Goethe 2002). This kind of translation fulfils the need to understand a foreign tongue in terms of one’s own language and culture. It is used to quickly read a text in order to grasp its principal ideas and arguments. Martin Luther’s translation of the Bible is an example of Goethe’s first epoch. In the second epoch, Goethe says, “one is indeed able to imagine oneself in the circumstances of the foreign country, yet is only concerned to adopt foreign ideas and reproduce them in one’s native style.” Goethe names this phase as “parodistic.” He notes that the English translation of Kalidasa’s *Meghadūta* by Horace Hayman Wilson is “from the second epoch of translation, being paraphrasing and supplementary”. The translation is in iambic pentameter. Goethe describes the third and most important epoch as one in which “one wishes to make a translation identical to the original, not in such a way that the former replaces...the latter, but rather occupies the place of...the latter.” He favours the preservation of style, images and language used in original text. He says that a good translation “approaches interlinearity” (Goethe 2002).

Goethe’s idea of “interlinear space” refers to resonance or suggestion by means of words which suggest but do not directly express something. To illustrate this with the help of Avtar Pash’s poem “Sab ton Khatarnak”, one can take the word “khatarnak” (Pash 2015: 371). In English language, the word “khatarnak” is denoted as “menacing” or “terrifying”. But Pash has used the word in the sense of “dangerous”. Translators are supposed to catch the resonance of literary expression and exercise the necessary freedom to produce a translation which has fidelity to the preceding text. It is important to aim for a translation that is as faithful as possible to the preceding text while also being effective in the receiving language.

When it comes to literary translation, fidelity is often discussed in terms of how closely the translation adheres to the original text. However, this does not mean that the translation should be a literal copy or imitation of the original. Instead, fidelity means capturing the essence of the original text and conveying it in a way that is faithful to its meaning and spirit, while also taking into account the

linguistic and cultural differences between the source and target languages. In some cases, this may mean that the expression used in the translation may appear different from the literal meaning of the words in the original text. This is because certain words and phrases may not have direct equivalents in the target language, or may carry cultural connotations that cannot be fully conveyed in a literal translation. In these cases, the translator must exercise their judgment to determine the best way to convey the intended meaning of the original text in the target language.

Avadhesh Kumar Singh in his “Translation Studies in the 21st Century” says that the idea of discourse as the basic unit of translation emphasizes that words cannot be considered as independent entities in translation. Instead, words should be viewed as part of a larger context and discourse, which can influence their meaning and significance (Singh 2016: 36). In some cases, this may require leaving behind strict notions of equivalency and instead focusing on conveying the overall sense and impact of the original text. By treating discourse as the basic unit of translation, translators can work towards producing translations that capture the essence of the original text, rather than simply providing a word-for-word rendering.

Lydia Davis emphasizes the importance of three factors in determining the quality of a translation: the translator’s knowledge of the source language (in this case, French) including its language, history, and culture, the translator’s understanding of the task at hand, and the translator’s ability to write fluently and expressively in the target language (in this case, English) (Davis 2021: 496). Cultural familiarity and insight, a clear view of one’s work as a translator and flawless command of the language of translator are, according to Davis necessary for a good translation. The translator should have the ability to read the text not only correctly but also deeply. The literary translator has to be a meticulous reader, for then she will not under-interpret and over-interpret a text.

As Lydia Davis has remarked, any linguistic system is rooted in a cultural system. Punjabi culture, for example is not the culture normally and directly available to an English writer. Even if the translator is from Punjab and is translating into English, is using a

linguistic and cultural system which is very dissimilar to Punjabi. In such conditions, translation is a real challenge because the translator has to try to approximate and recreate the symbolic universe in which the literary work exists. A literary work is an experience; as an experience, it is inseparable from its implicit symbolic universe. One enters a book and lives in it. It is like one has entered in another period, another place and another culture. It is a part of the difficult task of the translator to comprehend the various dimensions of a text and to appropriately evoke its symbolic universe in order to resolve the problems of translatability where the linguistic and cultural systems have few correspondences.

Establishing principles and guidelines for the translation process is a crucial first step in Punjabi-English literary translation. These principles and guidelines serve as a roadmap for the translators to navigate the complexities and challenges of translation. It is important to understand that translation is not simply a matter of finding equivalent words or phrases in the target language, but rather an art that requires sensitivity to the nuances and cultural context of the source text. By following these principles and guidelines, translators can produce high-quality translations that are both faithful to the original text and effective in the receiving language.

Identifying Specific Translation Problems

Literary translation poses certain peculiar problems to translators. J. C. Catford observes, “Untranslatability occurs when it is impossible to build functionally relevant features of the situation into the contextual meaning of the TL text” (Catford 1967: 94). For example, the title of the Punjabi novel *Marhi da Deeva* has a specific cultural significance. The word “marhi” has no equivalent in English language. “Deeva” is an earthen lamp but it has certain connotations in Punjabi language and culture, which may need explanation in translation. Contextual translation of certain culturally specific terms is thus a challenge for translators. When translators leave a word untranslated, it may pose hindrances for the reader of the translated text and so an explanatory note may be of help. This is what Vladimir Nabokov did while translating Alexander Sergeevich Pushkin’s *Eugene Onegin*. However, as Avadhesh Kumar Singh

writes that the issue of untranslatability lies with the translator rather than the act of translation itself. Furthermore, what may be considered untranslatable by one translator could be rendered translatable by others. Every text that is created has the potential to be translated. If a text proves to be untranslatable for a translator currently, it is possible that a more skilled translator in the future will be able to tackle the task successfully (Singh 2016: 34).

Such is the difficulty of cultural translation that sometimes a translator errs by choosing an inappropriate word. In *The Skeleton*⁴, Khushwant Singh translates “gurh di rodi” as “sugar candy”. “Gurh” is jaggery in English and “gurh di rodi” could be translated as a piece of jaggery (Singh 2017: 6). “Jaggery” (gurh) has a special resonance in Punjabi culture; when a father offers a piece of jaggery to a boy, it may mean he is considering the boy as a match for his daughter. But sugar candy has an altogether different significance in English culture. As a consequence, readers unfamiliar with the Punjabi context would most likely misinterpret the meaning.

Mistranslation also occurs when translators misread or misrepresent the preceding text and the translation diverges significantly from the preceding text. In such cases, translators simply fail to build bridges between cultures. Moreover, the nature of content, form, words, images, tone, sounds and rhythms in the preceding text is a major challenge in literary translation. In *Alms in the Name of a Blind Horse*⁵, mistranslation is the major problem. In English translation, a character named Beer Kaur first occurred as Beero (Nayar 2016: 48) and was then translated as “brother” (p.55). “Basaar” is turmeric powder in Punjabi but is translated as “besan” (p.69), which is gram flour. “Salari” is a woven cloth like a dupatta, used to cover the head. It is translated as “salwar” (Nayar 2016: 118). The given examples suggest that there are issues of accuracy and consistency in the translation process, particularly with regards to the translation of specific words and terms. The correct translation of words is essential to convey the intended meaning and maintain

⁴ Amrita Pritam’s *Pinjar* (1950) translated as *The Skeleton* by Khushwant Singh.

⁵ Gurdial Singh’s *Anne Ghore da Daan* (1975) translated as *Alms in the Name of a Blind Horse* (2016) by Rana Nayar.

coherence within the text. While there may be a range of translation choices available to a translator, it is important to justify and correspond these choices with the writer's intentions and the broader context of the work.

Omission can be a valid strategy in translation. According to Eugene Nida "there are cases where omission is required to avoid redundancy and awkwardness and this strategy is particularly applied if the source language tends to be a redundant language" (Nida 1964: 228). Thus, omission used to present the information in a concise manner is acceptable. However, it is important for the translator to ensure that the essential meaning and message of the original text are not lost in the process of omission. In the handbook of the Chartered Institute of Linguists (which trains professional translators) it is mentioned that "translation with 5% or more of the source text missing will automatically be awarded a fail mark" (CIOL 2017: 9).

It is common for Punjabi-English literary translators to omit sections of the original text, especially if they are deemed difficult or problematic to translate. In the early 20th century, Charles Fredrick Usborne translated Waris's Heer as *The Adventures of Hir and Ranjha* (1905). In her analysis of Usborne's translation, Suzanne McMahan commented that "he skipped some of the more difficult sections of Hir, and the version contains many mistranslations" (McMahon xx). Similarly, in his translation of Heer, first published in the late 90s, Sant Singh Sekhon also omitted many sections.

According to Mona Baker, a renowned translation scholar, omission in translation can occur in different forms. The first form is the omission of a word or an expression. This happens when a translator intentionally or unintentionally skips a word or an expression from the source text while translating it into the target language. The second form is the omission of idioms, which can be challenging to translate since they are unique to a particular language and culture. A translator may choose to omit idioms to avoid confusion or mistranslation. The third form of omission, as described by Baker, is the omission of information in the content. This occurs when a translator leaves out crucial information from the preceding text while translating it into the receiving language. Such

omissions can significantly impact the meaning of the text and lead to a misinterpretation of the original work. When analysing *The Skeleton* (2017), an English translation of Amrita Pritam's *Pinjer* (1950), it becomes apparent that all three forms of omission have occurred in the text. The translator has omitted certain words and expressions from the source text and has also left out some idioms. Furthermore, a complete chapter has been omitted, which raises questions about the quality of the translation. The omission of a complete chapter in a literary work is a severe form of omission and can have a profound impact on the reader's understanding and interpretation of the text. However, it is important for translators to justify their omissions and provide a clear rationale for why certain sections were omitted. Although omission can sometimes be an effective strategy in translation but it is important for translators to exercise caution and responsibility when omitting sections of the original text.

Translation of regional dialects is another problem in Punjabi-English literary translation. If the translator is not familiar with the dialect, it can lead to a loss of meaning, ambiguity, or even distortion of the original text. Hence, it is important for the translator to be proficient in both the source and target languages, as well as familiar with the regional dialects of Punjabi, to accurately translate the original text. For example, in *Alms in the Name of a Blind Horse* (2016), Rana Nayar renders the phrase "paharh wale paseon" as "from the direction of hills". The preceding text *Anne Ghore da Daan* (1975) is written in Malwai, a dialect of Punjabi in which the phrase "paharh vale paseon" is actually used in the sense of "north direction". However, in *Gurdial Singh: Sandharabh Kosh* (2014), Tarsem Singh has compiled a list of Malwai words and phrases used by Gurdial Singh in his fiction, which can be a valuable resource for translators seeking to accurately capture the nuances of the original text. This demonstrates the importance of considering the cultural and linguistic context of the source language when translating literature.

Form of the preceding text poses a challenge to any translator who has to negotiate the onerous task of preserving the artistic beauty and rendering the sense in the receiving language. Translators have

responsibilities towards the preceding text; the freedom they exercise should be in order to extend the meaning of the text. Kafka calls Milena Jesenska's translations "faithful". It means they are faithful to the form, tone, and seemingly eccentric sentence and paragraph length i.e. to what Milan Kundera calls the "author's personal style" (Woods 2013: 16-18). But, sometimes form demands change in translation. Take two versions of Avatar Pash's Poem "lārḥē hōē varatamān dē rū-b-rū" to understand the importance of form.

ਲੜੇ ਹੋਏ ਵਰਤਮਾਨ ਦੇ ਰੂ-ਬ-ਰੂ
 ਮੈਂ ਅਖਬਾਰਾਂ ਤੋਂ ਬਹੁਤ ਡਰਦਾ ਹਾਂ।
 ਜ਼ਰੂਰ ਉਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਵਿੱਚ ਕਿਤੇ ਨਾ ਕਿਤੇ
 ਕੁੱਝ ਨਾ ਹੋਣ ਦੀ ਖ਼ਬਰ ਛਪੀ ਹੋਵੇਗੀ
 ਸ਼ਾਇਦ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਜਾਣਦੇ ਨਹੀਂ, ਜਾਂ ਜਾਣਦੇ ਵੀ ਹੋਵੋ
 ਕਿ ਕਿੰਨਾ ਭਿਆਨਕ ਹੈ ਕਿਤੇ ਵੀ ਕੁੱਝ ਨਾ ਹੋਣਾ
 ਲਗਾਤਾਰ ਨਜ਼ਰਾਂ ਦਾ ਹਫ਼ਦੇ ਰਹਿਣਾ
 ਤੇ ਚੀਜ਼ਾਂ ਦਾ ਚੁੱਪ-ਚਾਪ ਲੇਟੇ ਰਹਿਣਾ ਕਿਸੇ ਠੰਢੀ ਔਰਤ ਵਾਂਗ-
 (Pash 2015: 161)

Face to Face with the Fought-Out Present

(1) I am much afraid of newspapers these days
 There must be in them somewhere the news
 That nothing has happened whatever
 You may not know, perhaps, or you may also know
 How terrible it is 'happening nothing whatever'
 The constant panting of sight
 And things lying mum, like a frigid woman-
 (Mohi 1992: 46)

Face to Face with the Time Fought For

(2) newspapers frighten me so much
 these days
 I fear
 they must be carrying
 somewhere
 the news

Kulveer Kaur

of nothing
having happened
maybe you don't know
but perhaps you do
how terrifying it is
when nothing happens
the eyes
breathless panting
run up and down
not able to stop
and things lie inert
like a woman cold...
(Sharma 2023: 96)

The English translations differ in terms of form and tone. The first version is a close translation, whereas deviation in form in the second version brings the reader to the inherent core of the poem or the poet's intention. To present a Punjabi poem in English while keeping the rhythm and tone close to the original text, the translator may need to make necessary changes. The pauses in translation force the reader to think and understand the meaning of the poem. The translator is like a chained artist who chooses words, sounds, and syntactical structure based on the cultural, textual, and historical context of the poem.

Translation and interpretation are not separate activities. A person can make sense of a text but to rewrite or recode it in another language one needs exceptional interpretive and writing skills. It does not mean that translators must also be creative writers, but translation at its best demands creativity. Walter Benjamin rejects the idea that only a poet can best translate poetry; he cites the instances of Martin Luther, Johann Heinrich Voss and August Wilhelm Schlegel, who "are incomparably more important as translators than as creative writers." In the words of Benjamin "the task of the translator is distinct from the task of the poet" (Benjamin 2002: 258). The poet selects a particular form and content to write a poem. He negotiates between imagination and concepts.

Translators have to take certain decisions when the meter, rhyme scheme, sound, tone, form and metaphors used by the poet are not available or have different association in the culture of the

succeeding text. It is the responsibility of the translator to preserve the beauty, power and essence of the preceding text. It is this peculiar responsibility which distinguishes the translator from the author of a literary work. A.K. Ramanujan considers a case of poetry in translation, “translations are transpositions, reenactments, interpretations” and “nothing less than a poem can translate another” (qtd in Mehrotra 2019: 10). He acknowledges that translations are not exact replicas of the original, but rather interpretations that involve transpositions and reenactments of various elements. Some elements, such as language-bound meter, may be impossible to convey in translation. However, Ramanujan suggests that it is still possible to convey a sense of the original rhythm and levels of diction. He also notes that textures are harder to translate than structure, linear order more difficult than syntax, and lines more difficult than larger patterns. Poetry is created at all of these levels, and therefore, translation must also address these different levels. Ramanujan contends that successful translation of poetry necessitates the talent and sensibility of a poet and that a poem is the only viable medium to translate another poem.

Punjabi-English literary translation presents a range of challenges that need to be carefully considered by translators. These challenges include linguistic differences, cultural nuances, regional dialects, and the translator’s subjective interpretation of the original text. Translators need to be well-versed in the source and target languages, as well as the cultures from which they originate. They must also have a strong grasp of the principles of translation and be able to make difficult choices regarding language, style, and tone.

Conclusion

Translation theory and constructive discussions are the most required and yet absent parts in the field of Punjabi-English literary translation. As an academic discipline “translation studies” focusses on both the theory and the practice of translation. Susan Bassnett writes that it examines the translation’s influence on the formation of a literary canon, the methods used by translators, the prevailing norms during a specific period, the discussions among translators, the challenges in assessing the impact of translations, and, more

recently, the dilemma of establishing an ethical framework for translation are all significant aspects to consider (Bassnett 2002: 4).

Various organisations have also been established to study the challenges before translators, to resolve the vexing issues, to promote research in the field of translation and to produce resources and tools for translation such as bilingual and multilingual dictionaries and translation software. The European Society for Translation Studies, American Translation and Interpreting Studies Association, National Translation Mission of India and many other organisations aim to systematically promote translation. The training of translators at various levels is also a part of this effort.

Creating a theoretical foundation for Punjabi-English literary translation is crucial, taking into account the intricacies of both languages and cultures in question. This framework plays a vital role in tackling the difficulties encountered by translators, including the identification of suitable counterparts for culturally specific ideas or idiomatic phrases. Moreover, engaging in critical conversations about the translated works, aids in assessing the efficacy of the translation and its influence on the intended readership. Through the exploration and refinement of a theoretical and critical framework, the quality of Punjabi-English literary translation can be enhanced.

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