

Caesar in Translation A Comparative Study



* Dr. A. S. Nathrekar

* Assot. Prof. Dankunwar College, Jalna

" In spite of his best intentions a translator may fail to preserve the poetry of the original because he does not see where it lies." (Sarang 1988 : 135)

The act of translation most properly belongs to semiotics. Semiotics allows to have multiple translations of the same work of art. Such multiple translations are possible because the relationship between sign and object is always inadequate. In fact every text is a sign and so also a dramatic text.

Every culture and the language related to that culture has its own semiotics that is used extensively in its literature and obviously in translation. Therefore translation becomes not merely an interlingual act of communication; the ethnolinguistic, ethnohistorical factors are equally important and more challenging. Especially drama translation is different from any other form of literature since it covers auditive as well as visual aspect, verbal as well as theatrical aspect and even non-verbal semiotic aspect.

At a certain point, a drama becomes a drama when language becomes superficial and linguistic translation in case of drama becomes progressively unimportant. However Shakespeare's is a verbal theatre and here language aspect is quite important. Shakespeare has an impeccable ear for language. Shakespeare's dramas are difficult to translate because of the rhetorical web, especially the use of puns and metaphors, ironies and ambiguities that run throughout. The deliberate use of verbal elements predominates his dramas.

Thus a good drama, a good performance is a multiplicity of language and yet there is something beyond language. A good performance is a compendium, moreover a syncopation of sign system; only semiotics works here. The paper is a comparative study of the problems the translators have faced while dealing with the semiotics of the Shakespearean text of the play wherein we are concerned with the translator's potentialities in understanding the use of language, rhetoric, images, phrases and proverbs, colloquial idioms and the overall cultural context. For the translators, Shakespeare's dramas are a challenging activity both on surface as well as deeper levels. Comparatively surface problems are easy to overcome but even in that it is not always possible to retain Shakespearean

semiotics. It is on these grounds, with these parameters that the translations of Shakespeare's dramas can be thought of. To speak about the general translation activity from English into Marathi, it is in full swing at present though not with commitment and proper direction. In the field of drama translation especially that of Shakespeare's, V. D. Karandikar's *Raja Lear* (1975) proved to have a seminal validity. It influenced a plethora of translators such as Anant Kulkarni, Parashuram Deshpande, Arun Naik, Mangesh Padgaonkar, to mention but few. In spite of the heterogeneity in terms of culture and the inherent differences in terms of the nature of these two languages, (i.e. English and Marathi) the rich encounter with the foreign culture, especially with the European literature and the Shakespearean literacy in particular gradually changed the notions of translation.

The earlier rigid ideas of creating Indian equivalents for words, phrases, idioms allusions, locale and the names of the characters seem to be diminishing. The circumlocutory passages detrimental to the stage almost disappeared. The translators after 1970 found it no more difficult to catch the contemporary idiom retaining the English names unlike Shirwadkar's ideas about proper nouns. Now they are no more interested in adaptations. In their literal translations they are striving for cultural specifications though it is not always possible for them to catch the Shakespearean semiotics satisfactorily while dealing with the ethnohistorical ethonolinguistic factors and also the Shakespeare with all his potentialities. Arun Naik who translated *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, *Othello* is a performing artist. There are a nine performances of *Macbeth* and fifteen of *Othello* in translation. His translation of *Hamlet* was prescribed for Bombay University syllabus. *Macbeth* and *Othello*'s translations are on the way of publication. He also has some more translations to his credit and is engaged in the programs like 'Shakespeare in Marathi' in front of the students. Recently, he has translated Shirwadkar's *Shodh Shakespearecha* into English. Parshuram Deshpande's literal translation of *Hamlet* is in free verse. Anant Kulkarni's Translation of *Julius Caesar* is a prose rendering showing his better understanding of Shakespeare's potentialities. After

2000, the Marathi renowned poet Mangesh Padgaonkar translated three Shakespearean texts; Tempest, Julius Caesar a Romeo and Juliet. All these are - as he himself puts it - Shakespeare verbatim. Being aware of his own limitations to catch the Shakespearean idiom and the poetic sensibilities of Shakespeare he made it Shakespeare verbatim. Thus he concentrates upon fidelity to the verbal construct. Since free verse is the most common form of contemporary Marathi verse, it appears to be the natural choice for translation into Marathi. These translators are fully aware of their limitations. Of course even such literal translation can be a transcreation with the translator's linguistic as well as cultural competence. Thus a translator must not only be bilingual but also bicultural in the sense he must have deep knowledge of the other culture.

The present paper studies the two translations of Julius Caesar that were done after 1970. Julius Caesar was first translated in 1872 by K. G. Natu as Vijay Sing, by Ramkrishna Pavaskar in 1883, by Belsare in 1912. Anant Ambadas Kulkarni translated it 62 years after in 1974 and 25 years after in 2002, it was translated by Mangesh Padgaonkar. Thus the two translators under consideration are Kulkarni and Padgaonkar. Theirs are literal translations. Kulkarni's is a prose rendering whereas Padgaonkar replaces the Iambic Pentametre in free verse. Both are Shakespeare verbatim as they claim, striving for cultural inwardness by retaining names of the characters allusions, story and the overall architectural design. Being literal, there are no additions but some explanations and few convenient omissions though their fidelity to the original is controversial in the larger context of the term.

They haven't Indianized the play but Marathicized it. Their lengthy introductions show their attempts to understand Shakespeare which unfortunately does not seem to be reflected in translation. With his Sanskritized diction, Kulkarni's attempt to interpret Shakespeare is far better if not satisfactory. Probably these translators found it difficult to adhere to Shakespeare's logic of using prose and poetry though they seem to be aware of it. Their strategy seems to be only to bring Shakespeare into Marathi. Therefore there is a least concern for performance and the necessary theatrical discourse unlike that of Arun Naik. The circumlocution which was there in earlier Marathi literal translations like that of Kolhatkar's Othello is not seen. In fact their skilful concise language is close to the contemporary idiom and suits to the changing notions of dialogue delivery. Julius Caesar is a play with political theme which revolves round the power of rhetoric and in which poetry moves with incredible grandeur which should invariably be reflected in trans-

lation. The translation should retain not only the semantics but also the oratory of the characters which itself becomes the technique of the play. Besides the political and historical awareness what is of prime importance is Shakespeare's artistic integrity, his profound knowledge of characters, his deep poetic insight, the connotative richness of metaphors, the persuasive wielding of words, the puns, ironies, ambiguities and the overall semiotics. The translator should adopt his own strategies to retain all these. The illustrations may prove the translator's strategies;

In Act I, Scene I, when the workers are celebrating Caesar's victory, Marullus and Flavius talk to them--

Marullus - What trade art you ? (page no. 03)

In answer to the question the worker says--
mender of bad soles.

dyd.khZ % fc?kMyY; kulk rG nAu rKG; koj vk.k.kkjk vkg
eh] egjkt- ¼ ku ua 2½
i kMxkodj % egjkt] eh rppa ik; r.k Bkdu nskj]
ik; r.kkpk m[kMyk rG Bkdu nskj- ¼ ku ua 91)

The connotative richness of the pun in the word soles / soul seems to be reflected in Kulkarni's Translation but not in Padgaonkar's. The parenthesis or brackets which are very significant and symbolize a lot in Shakespeare are absent in the translation e.g. when Cassius is enraging Brutus against Caesar.

(Except immortal Caesar) (Act I, ii page 59)

dyd.khZ % ; k vej l h>j okpu-
i kMxkodj % vi okn QDr ver; l h>jpk
or in Antony's Speech.

(For Brutus is an honourable man) (III, ii)

So are they all, all honourable men.
dyd.khZ % cMl gk vki.kk l okuk oal vkg r'k gh ckdhph
eMghgh oal p vkg-¼ ku ua 84] 85½
i kMxkodj % r l k cMl vkg l Uekuuh; i #k- r l p gsbrj l xGs
l Uekuuh; i #k vkg- l xGs ¼ ku ua 160½

The brackets which show the most sarcastic jibe of Cassius and irony by Antony are not reflected in both the translations (Kulkarni page 66, Padgaonkar page 160) with that much significance as is in the original.

Yet the other example:

Cassius - Why, man, he doth bestride the narrow world
Like a Colossus. (I, ii) (page no. 19)

dyd.khZ % i pM dykl l i rG; ki ek.ks ; k l adfpr txkyk
nku ik; kauh t.kw i knkØkar d: u rks mllk vkg ¼ ku
ua 11½
i kMxkodj % rks mllk vkg <kakr l kekou gs {kuz tx
, [kk] k fojkV i rG; kl kj [kk- ¼ ku ua 101½

The jerky language of Cassius is reflected nowhere. Padgaonkar even drops the allusion losing the intensity of the original. It seems that the nuances

of language are difficult to get translated. The translators face difficulty in translating them.

Cassius : Is it Rome indeed and room enough. (page no. 18)

When there is in it but the only man (I, ii)
dYd.kh% tFks vkt , dk i#*kokpau brjkaik tixkp ukgh vl a
gp jkeuxj vkg% ¼ ku ua 10½
i kMxkodj % jkepk jktekxZ QDRk , dkp ek.kl kus 0; ki yk vkg%
¼ ku ua 101½

The clinching pun in 'Rome' and 'room' is difficult to get translated in Marathi.

In Portia's speech,

Portia: I grant I am a woman (II i) (page no. 57)

dYd.kh% eh , d vcYk vkgsgs [kjs! ¼ ku ua 38½
i kMxkodj % dcy] eh , d Oh vkg% ¼ ku ua 129½

The repetition showing the intensity and urgency in Portia's language is absent in both.

The speeches of Brutus & Antony in the Third Act are the best examples of Shakespearean rhetoric.

In translation they appear to be too prosaic losing the arresting intensity of the original. The hyperboles, the tone of irony do not seem to be retained in translation. These speeches are supposed to be at the core of the drama and should be translated responsibly.

Antony :Friends, Romans, countrymen, lend me your ears.I come to bury Caesar, not to praise him. The evil that men do lives after them. The good is oft interred with their bones. So let it be with Caesar. The noble Brutus hath told you Caesar was ambitious. If it is were so, it was a grievous fault. And grievously hath Caesar answered it. (Act III, ii page no. 110)

dYd.kh% fe=gk% jkeu ykdgt% vkf.k Lon'sk cktkogt% ek>sHk'k.k
y{k nAu , dkh ?; k- eh t'ks vkyks vkg% rks Lkh>jyk

eBekrh ns; kdfjrk R; kph Lrph dj.; kdfjrk ukgh-
ek.kl sT; k okbV xkSVh djrkr R; k rh eY; koj ekxs
jkrkr- i .k R; kuh dcyyh I RNR; s ek= cgdkk R; kP; k
vifkicjkjcp /kGhl feGrkr- I h>jpggh rlp gkA
nr- I h>j egRokdkkh gkrk vl sFkkg cW/ usvki .kkI
I kixrys gs tj [kjsvl sy rj I h>jpk rks ekBk nkskP
gkrk] vl s EgVys ikfgts vkf.k R; kps I h>jyk tcj
'kkI u Hkxskos ykxys¼ ku ua 66½

i kMxkodj % fe=gk% ns'ckakokuk% jkeugk% vo/kkuk |k-
I h>jyk eBekrh |k; yk eh vkyks vkg%
R; kph Lrph dj.; kdfjrk uOg%
Ekk.kl kpa dpeZ R; kP; k ekxs mjra
I RdeZ cgdkk xkMya tkra R; kP; k gkMka I kcr-
rp gkA |k I h>jP; k ckrhrgh!
Fkkg cW/ ua rfgkyk I kixry; a dh
I h>j egRokdkkh gkrk
gs tj [kj] rj I h>jpk rks Fkkg xtgk gkrk-
R; kl kBh I h>jyk |koh ykxyh r'khp tcj fdæ- ¼ ku
ua 160½

It seems that in spite of the changes, the flexibility in the field of translation, the compromises that are made to encourage the very activity of translation, we can't make compromises with the invariable aesthetics, the semiotics of Shakespeare. The natural flow and flavor of Shakespeare's language, his deep poetic sensibility, his dramatizing, the rhetoric that is very significant in this play are difficult to get translated. The story is communicated even for a layman. However, the connotative richness of images and the value of vivid details are the essential parts of Shakespeare's poetry. Really language is a signaling system par excellence. To conclude,

"If poetry is what is lost in translation, what is it that is to be preserved."

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