

Travelogue, Translation and Production of knowledge: A Comparative Study of the Travelogue *England ni Musafari nu Varnan* (An Account of Travel to England) and *Garet Baritan Khate ni Musafari* (Travel to Great Britain)

Zarana Maheshwary

Assistant Professor

Centre for Comparative Literature and Translation Studies,
Central University of Gujarat, Gandhinagar.

Received June 2, 2015

Accepted June 7, 2015

ABSTRACT

Any narratives, be it ontological or collective, works as means in the construction of knowledge. Translation plays a crucial role in sustaining, promoting, and naturalizing such narratives and the knowledge constructed by such narratives. Travel writing is a kind of narrative which produces knowledge about various constituents of the society and its organization. There has been a proliferation of travel writing in Indian languages. However, travel narratives which came out in the nineteenth century and played a keynote role in construction of knowledge about the East by the West and about the West by the East captivate the attention. In the nineteenth century, a number of elite Indians undertook a journey to Europe and produced written narratives of their experiences. They encountered new culture, society, industries, educational institutions etc and experienced modernity in different domains. These travelers made an attempt to translate that culture for the Indians. In their translations, they were sometimes monolingual and sometimes bilingual. Along with the translation they often indulged in comparison between two distinct cultures, Eastern and the Western. Moreover, the influence of Colonialism also becomes conspicuous in their translations and comparison. The present paper makes an attempt to undertake a comparative study of the cultural translation undertaken by a Gujarati traveler Mahipatram Rupram Nilkanth (1829 to 1891) in his travelogue *England ni Musafari nu Varnan* published in the year 1864 and *Garet Baritan Khate ni Musafari* by Dosabhai Karaka published in the year (1860). The paper will analyze how both the travelers become bilingual and sometimes switch over to monolingualism and after translating a newly encountered culture, how they undertake a comparison between two cultures (Indian and the Western). The focus of the paper will also be on the strategies adopted by the travelers - com the translator in their translation and their use in the production of knowledge.

Key words : Travelogue, Translation and Production of knowledge

In the introduction of *Between Languages and Cultures: Translation and Cross-cultural Texts* Anuradha Dingwaney articulates:

In seeking to transport words, sentences or the texts from one language into another, translator

should not search for equivalence of the words to render the meaning but must attend the culture, the context or the world from these words arise and which these words evoke or express. (Dingwaney, 03).

The above quote by Anuradha Dingvani emphasizes the meta-linguistic aspect of translation and that is cultural translation. However, in decoding the culture, in translating it and in expressing it, translator requires to take refuge of linguistic means which many a time do not help in fulfilling the task. Moreover, the lack of linguistic means impedes in referring to a particular referent. As a result, the translator devices various strategies to decode, translate and express the culture.

This paper undertakes a comparative study of the travelogues *Garet Baritan Khate ni Musafari* (Travel to Great Briton) published in the year 1860 by Dosabhai Karaka and *England ni Musafari nu Varnan* (1864) by Mahipatram Rupram Nilkanth (1829-91). It makes an attempt to analyze the processes of interaction which the travelers cum translators indulge in while translating the culture which is distinct from that of their own. The paper also focuses on the strategies device by both the travelers in translating the culture and thereby representing it.

Indira Karamcheti argues that any cross cultural text by definition is translative. (Karamcheti, 185) She further posits that all acts of representations are perforce act of translation from being to saying, experience to memory, presence to absence (Karamcheti, 185). Like translation, it is a twice-written discourse transforming the original by supplementation. Like translation,

representation is always referential and like translation, it negotiates dominant subversive relationship. Unlike linguistic translation, it does not deface, displace and replace but supplements it.

If one considers any travelogue in the light of the above argument, one can consider it a kind of cross culture text and therefore translative. What the traveler does in his account is representation, representation of what he sees, perceives and experiences and hence, travelogue because of its act of a representation, becomes perforce act of translation. The traveler himself first deciphers the source culture which he encounters and then makes an attempt to translate that culture for the readers who may or may not be acquainted with it. However, Karamcheti's argument on representation supplementing the "original" is problematic if we consider the complexities involved in the representation of culture. First of all, culture is not a material phenomenon so that its representation can be achieved through supplying words for the material things in that culture. But since the superstructure of culture which includes practices, institutions, ideas etc, translating them goes beyond merely supplying words for material things. Further travelogues throw up a considerably complex set of questions if we take into account the case of specific travelogues written in the mid nineteenth century by Mahipatram Rupram

Nilkanth and Dosabhai Karaka, the question belonging to the representation of an alien culture which is at the same time an already imagined culture (through print technology) but now marked by an actual travel, an “empirical perception”. Further, the fact that these travelogues are in Gujarati language bring out the problem of a shifting relation between familiarity of both the language and its referents. Even more importantly, the location of the travelogue writers, both physical as well as epistemological and the act of writing must direct our attention to textual strategies like circumlocution, omissions, substitutions or definition (Spivak, 53).

Some of the above problems are addressed in the essays by Vishnushashtri Chiplunkar, written in 1880s. Chiplunkar, a scholar of Sanskrit, Marathi and English and an art critic as well as essayist takes up the questions of representation and translation specifically in his two essays: “Bhashantar” and “Taranatak”. Chiplunkar expresses contemporary views on how to assimilate cultural expressions into our language. His views are led by his subject positions both Native position and inhabited hegemonic subject position. There are two sides of his personality. The one accepts subject position. The other indulges in the negotiations through use of similar tools of British translators. Chiplunkar argues that People like William Jones tried to understand Indian

culture by translating from hegemonic/orientalist perspective. In it, translation was deployed as a major tool. Chiplunkar advocates for doing the same i.e. translating to understand the hegemony. His Act of understanding ‘the other’ is same but it does not do the same way as the Orientalists can do. Because, his subject position as a native has an access to limited language in order to understand ‘modern’ culture. On the other hand, this language must aspire to produce the words that can assimilate the modern culture. People like Chiplunkar, Nilkanth and Karaka do not exhibit their subject position which is hegemonic. they displace themselves and use their language. Chiplunkar goes through English knowledge from there, he brings out the translations. Anuradha Dingwani states:

In the translation of non-western cultures and languages, it is imperative that translators/ethnographers make their power or privileged vantage point evident. This task entails not only that they remain aware of their own locations with respect to the cultures they study, but also that they be constantly aware of institutional conditions and disciplinary demands that impinge on their translations, that they understand fully whom they write for, within what context, and more than anything else, the mediated status of their accounts (Dingwaney, 10).

Both Nilkanth and Karaka translate from their position of native subject as well as hegemonic subject. Their shifting positions influence their translation. Both of them translate for the monolingual readers. Here the term monolingual refers to the concept of monolingualism put forward by Chiplunker. Urmila Bhirdikar in the essay refers to this term as following. Urmila Bhirdikar states:

In his essay entitled Bhasantar (Translation), he discusses other kind of translations, one which is useful for bilingual students and the other which brings out the khubi (special significance) of a foreign work but leaves out ideas (and terms and concepts) that are not easily accessible in Marathi; thus it is useful for monolinguals jignasu (curious knowledge seekers). (Bhirdikar, 81)

Thus, as Nilkanth and Karaka act as mediators by translating for monolingual readers and this very act displace them from the native subject position. They project themselves as selective natives as they contribute to formulating a literate sphere and belong to the private body of people working for the common interest of the people. Vishnusastri Chiplunkar In his essay, points out that the word 'Bhashantar' is an English word. According to him, until now, people produced texts in Marathi through tika which is commentary or they were called chhayaa- shadow. The idea of literal

translation- to take same into other language Anya Bhashayeti Bhashataram is according to him is an English way of Bhashantara. (183-203) Nilkanth's and Karaka's act of translation follows an English tradition of translation as both of them make attempts to render meaning from one language into another. Moreover, using the same tool, the cultural translation, used by the Orientalists, they attempt to understand the hegemony. This act also refers to their subject position as hegemonic as they make an attempt to displace their native subject position. However, the limitation of the native subject position intervenes. This becomes evident if we get insight in their translation. Nilkanth and Karaka undertake cultural translation by translating objects, institutions, rituals and customs which are alien to the readers. They devise the strategies like definition, circumlocution, comparison, borrowing etc. However, they encounter various problems in their act of translation. Chiplunker discusses the problem of untranslatability in his essay. He argues that there are some limitations in translation because this act is not easy. In his essay, he gives examples of the words than can't be translated from English into Marathi. For example, he refers to swallow (unfamiliar bird), hearth (unfamiliar object) and draws one's attention to their untranslatability. He also provides an example of democratic parliament and provides available form of given practice in Marathi. However, he argues

that it will be difficult for translator to translate it in terms of mode of subjectivity. This is how, he reaches the heart of the concept of cultural translation. According to him, this is the problematic of translation.

Both Mahipatram and Karaka translate the facilities provided to the passengers on the ship going to England and France. Both of them use the strategy of comparison as they compare the facilities to 'home' while translating. However, Nilkanth describes a little what kind of facilities are provided. For instance, he mentions the provision of separate cabin for passengers, food, bed and quilt, tools for entertainment like newspaper and magazine etc. however, Karaka does not go into detail and merely mentions that a kind of facilities which we have at home are provided on the ship. Both of them do not describe a kind of home they compare. Moreover, Nilkanth states: "They get the same fresh and warm food which the English people have at their home" (1). Nilkanth leaves up to the readers to imagine what kind of fresh and warm food English people have at their home. He tries to translate for monolingual readers but due to unavailability of words in Gujarati language, he fails in translating them.

Both Nilkanth and Karaka make attempts to translate restaurant. Nilkanth translates it by comparing them with the shops. As he says: "The shops for eating and drinking are scene at many places. They are

constructed in such a manner that we can eat sitting right there' (12). Moreover, he gives the reason for the existence of restaurant by saying that people in England have to eat for three or four times a day due to cold and hence, they have to eat outside. Karaka on the other hand, compares restaurants to Lanka. He further says that a family dining at the restaurant appears as if knights of the emperor are dining. Moreover, he posits that people in France don't eat at home but at restaurants and therefore, there are numerous restaurants In France. Thus, two different comparisons of the restaurant are likely to mislead the monolingual readers. The former produces an ordinary image of the restaurant in the minds of the readers whereas the later produces a grandiose image. Anuradha Dingwaney posits: 'An explicit translator of an alien society, customs, rites, and believes is no longer mistakable for "real" things, it is a version or account of another culture familiarised for us through the agency of translator or ethnographer' (Dingwaney 04). Here both the translators produce their versions based on their own understanding and previously imagined culture they are translating. Some theorists posit that word is a minimal unit of translation and any linguistic sign is translatable into other alternative signs, which it feels most comfortable in. Roman Jakobson in his essay, 'On Linguistic Aspects of Translation' posits that cognitive

experience can be expressed in any language by making the use of various means such as lone words, semantic shifts or circumlocution. Nilkanth uses the strategy of circumlocution for translating several objects as well as concepts which are the products of nineteenth century modernity. For example, he describes the object door-bell by undertaking circumlocution in the following manner: “bahar thi under java na kamad ne ughadva mate andar na ghanat ne khenchava mate bahar hatho hoy chhe” (In order to enter the house by making the door to be opened from inside, There is a handle outside to pool the bell lying inside (10).

Here, in spite of availability of the word ‘Ghanat’ (bell), in Gujarati language he is unable to translate it in adequate terms as the use of bell differs in both the cultures. Thus, even by translating it in alternative linguistic signs, and using the strategy of circumlocution, he is unable to refer to the particular referent. Moreover, both Karaka and Nilkanth use the strategy of translating the linguistic sign element by element in order to translate the objects or the concepts referred by that linguistic sign. Karaka translates steam engine as ‘Baf no sancho, thermometer as ‘Para ni sisi’ (bottle of mercury. Nilkanth translates steam engine as ‘varal yantra’, foot ball as ‘pag thi marva na dada ni ramat’ (a sport of ball to be kicked by feet). Here the translation of linguistic sign element by element doesn’t succeed in giving

a clear idea of the objects referred to. The game of football does not give the monolingual readers an idea about the game i.e. how it is played. The unavailability of the object or the concept in the Gujarati language makes both of them struggle a great deal. Both Nilkanth and Karaka make an attempt to translate certain concepts which are absent in the culture of the readers they translate for by defining in their own ways. Nilkanth in chapter 3 entitled as ‘Political Practice of England’ defines democracy. He doesn’t use the word democracy but he translates its features like liberty, equality etc. He translates these features by contrasting them to the features of monocracy like tyranny. However, due to the lack of the experience of being the subject of democracy, he finds difficult to translate it. He uses the word ‘parliament’ and compares the houses, House of Lords and House of Commons to ‘Divane aam’ and ‘Divane Khas’. However, looking similar at surface level, they differ from each other in terms of their functioning. If the readers take ‘House of Lords’ and ‘House of Commons’ to be ‘Divane Khas’ and ‘Divane Aam’, it may happen that they may confuse the idea of democracy with monocracy and they will be led to misconception. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak in her essay ‘Politics of Translation’ states that translation is not something like most accurate synonyms strung to gather in most approximate syntax. According to her, it is difficult to attain the

specificity of language being translated because it gets disrupted by the rhetorical nature that every language has. She also argues that logical specificity allows to jump from word to word by means of clearly indicating connection but to capture the rhetoric which underlies between and around the words; one has to surrender to the text and develop a close intimacy with the language of the original. Nilkanth does not succeed in developing intimacy with the original and hence, fails in capturing the silence that underlies between and around the words.

Karaka defines democracy of England by contrasting it to the existing political agency in the past. He traces the history and explains how it came into being. Nilkanth refers to the designations of lord, emperor, minister, Mayer, Magistrate etc but does not explain their duties. Whereas, Karaka explains in detail their duties. Thus, Kara makes it little comprehensible for the monolingual readers. However, he also does not define the key word democracy and does not refer to the concept referred by the term democracy.

Both Nilkanth and Karaka also adopt the strategy of borrowing in translation. When they do not find equivalent words in Gujarati language which can refer to the modern objects, they borrow English words. For example, while translating the machines producing clothe, glass, umbrella etc, both of

them use English words. Nilkanth clearly mentions that it is difficult to translate the machines and their functioning without studying engineering. He translates the functioning of machines which he for the first time confronts with. He uses the English words like 'sheet glass', screw, button etc and thereby borrow them in the Gujarati language. This strategy indicates their limitation of occupying a position of a native subject.

Nilkanth and Karaka exhibit their hegemonic position when they use the same tools adopted by nineteenth century Orientalists travelers. They both use their own language to describe the ethnography or various institutions of the West. They produce the knowledge about the West by being observers and thereby acquire a dominant position over those who are being observed. Though both of them lack words to translate the concepts of the modernity of the west, they make use of the means which are available in their own culture.

Both Nilkanth and Karaka compare the gas-lamps to the lamps lit on the festival of Diwali. To Nilkanth it appears that there is Diwali in England every day. Karaka is also of the view that the gas-lamps at the restaurants appear as the lamps lit on Diwali. Thus, both of them go back to their own culture and translate the objects or the concepts which are alien to the monolingual readers. Nilkanth in translating the customs and manners of

English people, make use of the registers of Hindu religion and social customs. While describing the Christian rituals, he translates Pope as dharmacharya, bride and groom as var and kanya gifts as paheramni etc. he translates the wishes of the relatives to the bride and groom as ashirvachano. He translates the prayer performed by the Christians as stuti, their god as permeshvar, church as dev-mandir.

Karaka also uses the registers of religion of Persian language to translate the culture which is alien to the monolingual readers. He translates God as Khuda and prayer as bandage. Thus, both the travelers come translators by using the tools deployed by the British orientalist i.e. using one's own culture to translate the other exhibit their hegemonic subject position.

The translations of Nilkanth and Karaka are also governed by their pre-existing knowledge and already imagined knowledge which result from their textual knowledge caused by the advent of printing. Before reaching their destination i.e. England, they start contrasting Egypt to England. Karaka without seeing Manchester compares it to Lien and Liverpool to Marseille. Hence, for monolingual readers, it becomes difficult to imagine the above mentioned cities. Both the travellers produce knowledge which contributes to already existing knowledge. Thus, both Mahipatram Nilkanth and Dosabhai Karaka undertake a cultural

translation by adopting various strategies. Their strategies reveal their native subject position and hegemonic subjective position. They on one hand make attempts to displace their native subject position and display hegemonic subject position by undertaking translation and on the other hand, negotiatethe problems of untranslatability which emanate from their native subject position.

Works Cited

1. Bhiridkar, Urmila. "Gam Sakuntal Racito: Annasaheb Kirloskar's Sangeet Shakuntal as Marathi Opera" Revisiting Abhijnanasakuntalam: Love, Lineage and Language in Kalidasa's Nataka Eds. Saswati Sengupta and Deepika Tandon. New Delhi: Orient Blackswan, 2011. Print.
2. Chipalunker, Vishnushashtree "Bhashantar in Nibandhamaletil Visayak Nibandha", compiled by the manager, Pune: Chistrashala Press, n.d. 183-203.
3. Jakobson, Roman. "On Linguistic Aspect of Translation" The Translation Studies Reader. Ed. Lawrence Venuti. London: Routledge, 2000. Print.
4. Karamcheti, Indira. "Aimecesaire's Subjective Geographies; Translating Place and the Differences it Makes" Between Languages and Cultures; Translation and Cross-cultural Texts. Eds. Anuradha Dingwaney and Carol Maier. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1996. Print.
5. Karaka, Dosabhai F. Garet Baritan Khateni Musafari. Mumbai: Daftar Ashakara Chhapkhanu, 1861. Print.

6. Rani, K. Suneetha. "Translating Hayavadana: Translation as Interpretation" Translation Poetics and Practice. Ed. Anisur Rahman. New Delhi: Creative Books, 2002. Print.
7. Said, Edward. Orientalism. New York: Vintage Books, 1979. Nilkanth, Mahipatram R. England ni Musafari nu Varnan. Gandhinagar: Gujarat Sahitya Akademy, 1862. Print.
8. Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. "The Politics of Translation". Outside in the Teaching Machine. New York: Routledge, 1993. Print.

Endnote:

I am grateful to Urmila Bhirdikar for translating Chiplunkar's essays from Marathi into English.

Courage is the power to let go of the familiar.

- Raymond Lindquist