

CHAPTER THREE

**ARUN KOLATKAR'S POEMS IN MARATHI
AND ENGLISH VERSIONS**

Besides Arun Kolatkar's English and Marathi poems there exists a third category of poems that are available in both the versions. Some of these poems are translated by the poet himself. A close analysis of such poems gives us one more focal point for studying Arun Kolatkar's bilingual poetic vision. It raises some acute problems about the thematic and stylistic transfer that has taken place in this complex process.

That the linguistic medium renders the poem artificial becomes clear from the following comparison of Marathi poems with the English versions of these poems by the poet himself. For example, see the following poems:

मै. मॅनेजरको बोला मुझो पगार मंगता है
 मॅनेजर बोला कंपनीके स्लसे पगार एक तारीखको मिलेगा
 उसकी घडी टेबलपे पडी थी
 मैने घडी उठाके लिया
 और मॅनेजरको पुलीस चौकीका रस्ता दिखाया
 बोला अगर कॅप्लेट करना है तो करलो
 मेरे स्लसे पगार आजही होगा

मै भाभीको बोला
 क्या भाईसाबके ड्यूटीपे मै आ जाऊँ
 चलाव गोली गौडू
 मै बर्मा गया उधर आग पिक्चर लगा था
 पिक्चर देखने गया

अइक गयी साकी
 रहमल बोके गोला चलाऊँगा
 मै बोला एक अइके वास्ते ?

उधर टिकटके वास्ते कुछ पासपोर्ट वगारा दिखाना पडता है
 टिकटवालेने पूछा पासपोर्ट किधर है १
 मै बोला भंनचोद
 मुझे टिकट मांगता है

 उन लोगोंने वापस मणिपूर भेज दिया
 पुलिस कमिशनरने पूछा बर्मा कायको गया था १
 मै बोला अबे लौडाके बच्चे
 इंडियामे रख्खाही क्या है १

The English version of this poem reads as follows:

Three Cups of Tea

1

*I want my pay i said
 to the manager
 you'll get paid said
 the manager
 but not before the first
 don't you know the rules?
 cooly, i picked up his
 wrist watch
 that lay on his table
 wanna bring in the cops
 i said
 cordin to my rules
 listen baby
 i get paid when i say so*

2

allow me beautiful
i said to my sister in law
to step in my brother's booties
you had it coming said rehman
a gun in his hand
shook me punk
kill your brother i said
for a bloody cunt

3

i went to burma
i was arrested and sent back
to manipur
no passport
the police commissioner asked
why did you go the burma?
prickface i said
what is there in India?

In these two poems we come across a man who doesn't bother about relations, ethics and his own motherland. Though the original content in the Marathi poem is conveyed in English version, there are some distortions and artificialities in it. The Marathi poem is written in Bombay Hindi which is quite realistic, the English one is written in American English familiarised by pulp fiction. Secondly, Marathi poem doesn't have a title and English title 'Three Cups of Tea' symbolizes three distinct experiences of the protagonist. It is interesting to note how the poem in English medium fails to bring in the spirit of Marathi one only to prove that the poet's

vision is conditioned by the use of different language. For example, in the first stanza, the translation of मुझे पगार मांगता है । into, 'i want my pay' is not proper since the arrogance and urgency in Marathi is totally lost in English. The phrase 'listen baby' is an addition in English version which appears to be superfluous. In the second stanza the line 'मडक गई साली' in Marathi doesn't appear in English at all. The immediate angry response of the protagonist's sister-in-law in Marathi is not found in English. Again the Marathi words like, "साली", "रंडी", "गांडू" are found typically in the slum culture of Bombay and naturally, therefore, they are untranslatable in English. In the last stanza of Marathi poem there is a reference to the protagonist's visit to a cinema theatre where he intends to see a film called 'Aag'. His visit to the theatre is altogether dropped in the English version. It does lessen the original effect of the poem. Again the typical slum phrases, which are abusive innative, like "भौनचोद", "लौंडीके बच्चे", "रंडी", etc. are not translated into English. It all drives home the fact that the English version of Marathi poem fails to bring in the original spirit and therefore, the English version becomes an artificial recreation. This fact can also be seen in the following poem as well:

मी किती स्वच्छ झालो आहे
मला हातगाडीवर आडवे टाका
व माझ्यावर शुभ्र चादर पसरा
घशापासून गुडघ्यापर्यंत
माझी पोट पंथरादा विसळून काढलेले आहे

रनिमा देऊन माझी आतडी घून टाकलेलो आहेत

मला धुतल्या तांदळासारखे वाटतय

मला तो रुमाल देता का

माझ्या नाकात जरा शेंबूड आहे

तो मला शिकरू घा

मग मला हातगाडीवर आडवे टाका

आणि माझ्यावर ती शुभ्र चादर पसरा.³

The English version of this poem reads as follows:

GASTROJEJUNOSTOMY + VAGATOMY +
APPENDICECTOMY + HYDROCELE

How clean am i become
now you can lay me down on that pushcart
and cover me up with the clean white sheet
from neck to knee have;
been shown clean
a stomach pump has washed my stomach out
fifteen times
enema have purified my intestines

i feel sinless
like a grain of white rice
cooked in the holy water of the ganga

please
will you be good enough to pass me
that handkerchief
thank you there was a bit of dirt
in my nose

yes
 now you can lay me out on the push cart
 and cover me up with that clean white
 sheet⁴

How language and culture are closely connected with each other is clear from the title of the poem itself. The title, which consists of the names of some diseases, cannot be translated into Marathi because the science from which they are chosen is completely western. Hence the English title for a Marathi poem.

A close comparison of the two poems brings to our mind that the syntactical units in both the texts bear identical construction principles. The Marathi cultural content expressed in the phrase ' धुतल्या तोंदकासारखा' that is sinless, is not conveyed through the English phrase, 'like a grain of white rice'. Here the poet has to use an additional phrase 'sinless'. Similarly the Marathi noun ' शेबूड ' and the verb ' शिकरणे ' are closely associated. This association is not maintained in the English version. It all points out the limitations of a foreign medium to express the native content. Therefore, what S.H. Deshpande says of Kolatkar's use of English language appears to be superfluous in the final analysis. He says that Kolatkar has achieved such a mastery over English that even if it is foreign language it seems to belong to Kolatkar.⁵

Here Deshpande forgets that whatever the degree of linguistic achievement is there on the part of the poet, he cannot either separate himself from his native culture nor transplant his linguistic ability

on his own cultural ethos and if he tries to do so he is reduced to nothing but a split personality.

REFERENCES

- 1 Arun Kolatkarchya Kavita, p. 56.
- 2 Dilip Chitre (Ed.) An Anthology of Marathi Poetry (1045-1865), (Bombay: Nirmala S. Publishers, 1967) pp. 133-34.
- 3 Arun Kolatkarchya Kavita, p. 99.
- 4 Kavi India (Jan. 1978) p. 5.
- 5 S.H. Deshpande, 'Sinikal Gartha' Chandrakant Patil (Ed.) Richa (Aurangabad, 6.1.78) p. 84.