

CHAPTER III

Specific Problems :
Translating Bali into English

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Translation is a communicative activity like any other linguistic activity. But translation is not merely the transfer of meaning from one linguistic system into another, it involves a whole set of extralinguistic criteria too.

Translating a theatre text poses many problems as stated in Chapter I which can be summarised as,

1. Problem of producing a performable text in the TL.
2. Choice of equivalents.
3. Problems in stylistics.
4. Acceptability of SL features in to TL
5. Translation of dialects, registers, idioms and puns.
6. Translation of culture specific item.

The essence of any theatre text lies in its performance. A theatre text is not a novel or a poem which is normally meant for private reading, where the reader himself is related to the text and therefore to the author. A theatre text written with a view to its performance is essentially a team activity. So the author of the theatre text has to take extra care in sequencing the acts and the scenes, the use of music and lights and the setting to create interaction and action in the play.

The specific problems that were dealt with in the process of translation of Bali in to English, can broadly be put into

three categories : Semantic, Syntactic and Cultural. An important point to be noted here is that, this division of problems is for the sake of convenience rather than for the compartmentalization of these problems. For example, a semantic problem can be both semantic and cultural, because of its culture related references.

In translating Bali in to English the performable aspect of the text is taken into consideration. This point has been already emphasized in Chapter I . Firth also has pointed out,

In translating ... it is the function that ... is to be taken up and not the words themselves ... the translation procedure involves a decision to replace and substitute the linguistic elements in the TL.¹

Semantic Problems

According to Nida, there are three fundamental presuppositions that state,

1. No word (or semantic unit) ever has exactly the same meaning in two different utterances;
2. There are no complete synonyms within a language ;
3. There are no exact correspondences between related words in different languages.²

The semantic problems encountered and dealt with in this translation have been treated with a functional view. They are subdivided into categories like 'word', 'sentence', 'idioms' and 'gestural movements' as illustrated below :

१. कमलाबाई : तुमची अशी "समजूत" झालेली दिसते की मी अपराधी आहे.

Kamalabai : It seems that you perceive me guilty.

The literal meaning of "समजूत" changes according to the context. "समजूत घालणे" is 'to console somebody' or 'to advise somebody' and "समजूत होणे" literally means that one understands something in a particular way. 'You understand me as guilty' would have looked odd in the flow of the translation. So to retain and convey the sense of the word, in TL 'perceive' is used as an equivalent.

२. कमलाबाई : (चूक) ... ती "सावरून" घेणं तुमच्या हाती आहे.

Kamalabai : ... It is up to you to amend it.

In SL "सावरणे" means 'to put in order'. Here Kamalabai is accepting her mistake and wants the doctor to help her and straighten it out. So the word 'to amend' had to be used to show as expectation of improvement in the situation.

३. कमलाबाई : रोगाप्रमाणेच असत्याची पण चांगली "पारख" आहे तुम्हाला डॉक्टर

Kamalabai : You diagnose not only diseases but lies too, Doctor.

The literal meaning of "पारख" would be 'to judge'. But 'to judge' would have looked unfit in the flow of the translation. Secondly, Dange being a doctor, his job is to diagnose and prescribe medicines. So the word 'to diagnose' blended finely in the contextual flow and hence it was used in the TT.

A type of linguistic ambiguity is due to 'polysemy' that is 'an item having a wide or general contextual meaning, covering

a wide range of specific situational features ... and only one feature is functionally relevant.³ Here is an example;

४. डॉक्टर : पोलीस असले तरी तुझा "धीर" खचता कामा नये.

Doctor : Even if they are police, you shouldn't lose your bearings.

In Marathi, "धीर" is a fine example of polysemy item because it takes many meanings according to the context; like 'consolation', 'boldness', 'waiting' and so on. Here, contextually it has been translated as 'outward behaviour'.

Translating common nouns which take different meanings in different contexts is also an important semantic problem.

In Marathi, "बाबा" takes many contextual meanings. For example, 1. माझे बाबा means 'my father' here "बाबा" substitutes for "वडील" 2. कोणी तरी बाबा होता would be referring to someone who is not known or familiar and a male. 3. बाबा रे, जरा गुप्प बसतोस का? here "बाबा" doesn't take any particular meaning but is used as a noun for the person who is troubling the speaker.

५. पाटोळे : झोप "बाबा" मजा कर

Patole : Sleep, my pal enjoy yourself.

६. पाटोळे : झोप "बाबा"

Patole : Have a good sleep, my dear

Here Patole uses "बाबा" for his friend with affection so the words like 'my pal' and 'my dear' are used which show the intimate relationship between the friends.

Sometimes, there are three terms meaning the same object. For example; "शव", "प्रेत" are literary and unbane usages while "मुडदा" is rustic usage for 'corpse' or 'dead body'.

In the play, these words are used by a police inspector. Continuing with the tone and flow of his earlier dialogues, the word used in the translation for both "प्रेत" and "मुडदा" is 'body' and 'corpse'.

७. पाटोळे : मॉर्च्युअरीत खाना केलंय "प्रेत" ... "मुडदे" पहायची सवय आहे मला.
Patole : I have sent the 'body' to the mortuary ... I am quite used to seeing corpses now.

Both words 'body' and 'corpse' are used here in the sense explained above.

Rhyming words which can be described as 'minimal pair' present another problem.

८. सॉलिसिटर : हा "पाटोळे" ... गंमतीनं आम्ही याला "वाटोळे" म्हणत असू.

Solicitor : This is Patole ... we used to tease him as Watole.

In Marathi, "पाटोळे" and "वाटोळे" rhyme. "वाटोळे" means 'roundish'. so, teasingly schoolmates called him 'fattish'. But in English, the word 'Watole' doesn't convey the same meaning and therefore the humour of the sentence is lost in translation.

One more example of this kind is,

९. पाटोळे : ... वहिमीबद्दल .. तुमच्याबद्दल नाही वहिनी — वहिमीबद्दल

Patole : ... for the suspects ... oh, not for you Vahini, I said it for the suspects.

Have obviously, 'vahini' does not rhyme with 'for the suspects'. In the TL, there are no words which would be equivalent and as rhyming for "वहिली and "वहिली" the 'suspect'. So an important hint for the audience, that Kamalabai might be the murderer because she is getting startled and scared with every reference to the murder is lost in the translation.

Not only words, but 'phrases' too pose problems;

१०. डॉक्टर : "दुसरीतिसरी" असती तर तिला जमलं नसतं हे

Doctor : Had there been anyone else she could not have managed this.

In the SL, "दुसरीतिसरी" is a colloquial usage. The literal translation 'If second-third' would look odd. So the equivalent construction 'anyone else' is used.

The following example is of the colloquial usage in SL which sounds unfit in TL and thereby had to be translated according to the context.

११. सॉलिसिटर : ... आदरानं "मन जड" होतं, डॉक्टर, "मस्तक नम्र" होतं.

Solicitor : ... You know, Doctor, one feels humble before her ...

The literal translation of the phrase would be 'the mind gets heavy and the head bows'. This construction would look 'heavy' and 'odd' in English. 'Humble' conveys the meaning of the phrase quite adequately, hence the word is used in the TT.

Colloquial usage of one's daily activities sometimes pose problems. Here is an example;

१२. डॉक्टर : ... मी जरा "चूळ" भरून येतो

Doctor : ... I will just get freshened up.

The literal translation of the phrase would be 'to gurgle and wash the mouth' which would sound funny. So the contextual meaning 'freshening up' is used. This is an example of a problem which is semantic as well as cultural.

As 'poligosemy', another kind of linguistic untranslatibility is 'Oligosemy', where an SL item has a particular restricted range of meaning which may not be possible to match the restriction in the TL.⁴

An example is ;

१३. पाटोळे : ... काही "उणं अधिक" बोललो असेन

Patole : ... if I have hurt your feelings unconsciously.

In Marathi, "उणं अधिक" means 'minus and plus' "उणं अधिक बोलणे" means speaking without any previous thinking and hurting others' feelings. This sense had to be worded in 'to hurt one's feelings unconsciously' in the translation, to make it possible to match the SL restriction to the TL restriction.

Expression that is natural, colloquial to TL but sounds odd in SL had to be handled in the following manner;

१४. सॉलिसिटर : Luck dog! भाग्यवान कुत्रा!

Solicitor : Lucky Dog!

Here is an expression from the TL which is translated in to the SL in the source text as "भाग्यवान कुत्रा" It really looks odd and out of place in the SL. That's why it is used only once and not repeated as in the ST in TT.

A similar example is;

१५. पाटोळे : Do I sound cruel? फर कूर वाटतो का रे मी?
Patole : Do I sound cruel?

The above expression in the SL in the text is acceptable. But there was no need of the repetition of the expression in the TL.

Use of interjections in a dialogue is normally as markers of agreeing or disagreeing or showing that the listener is attentive. So interjections like "अ", "ह", "बर", "बर तर मग" are used in Marathi which has very few equivalents in English. Because, interjections are a part and parcel of the particular language. So these interjections in the SL had to be translated or supplemented by using 'well', 'oh', 'eh', 'er' and 'I see.'

Stage directions are an inherent part of a theatre text. A simple movement of hand, feet, head, eyes can convey the innermost emotion of the character. An actor or actress can speak volumes if the right gestural movement instruction is followed. The culture specific stage directions pose a problem before the translator. A fine example of it is;

"पदगत तोंड लपवते"

This expression can be used only for a lady character. It is a particular action of Indian women to cover face with the hanging end of a sari, when feeling shy or very sad and weepy. Here in the play Kamalabai covers her face while she is narrating the incident of her husband's death. There is no corresponding lexical item for 'पद' in English.

'Oxford dictionary of current English' describes 'palla' as a 'hanging end of a sari'. 'Palla' or 'Pallu' means the same. There by in translation according to the context the translated stage direction is,

'She buries her face in her pallu'.

Syntactic Problems

Sentence structure, changes in the grammatical forms, prepositional differences are the main areas where syntactic problems are located. No two languages can be exactly similar in their structures. Sentence structures in Marathi and English are vastly different. A simple example to prove the point is, in English, the sentence construction is normally S V O/C where as in Marathi, it is S O/C V. There is difference in question formation too. So the changes in sentence structures, while translating a text must be made accordingly.

Here are some of the examples of the syntactic problems encountered in the translation of Bali. The basic principle to follow a functional view is used while dealing with these problems. As Susan Bassnett McGuire states in her book Translation Studies,

'What the translator must do .. is to first determine the function of the SL system and then to find a TL system that will adequately render that function.'⁵

१. कमलाबाई : इथं बोलावलं तुम्हाला हे चुकलचं म्हणायचं
Kamalabai : So it was my mistake to call you here.

There are two segments in the sentence in ST

"इथं बोलावलं तुम्हाला/हे चुकलच म्हणायचं"

Also there are two segments in the TL sentence.

So it was my mistake/to call you here.

In SL, the two segments are two complete sentence, in TL, the sentence has been shortened to a phrase.

Secondly the position of the segments is derermined according to the emphasis based on the semantic aspect of the segments. Whereas in SL, the first segments seems to be emphasized; in TL it is the second. Randolf Quirk explains it,

'the part that needs to be stressed or which seems to convey greatest information is given the special prominence of end-focus'⁶

So the changes in the word order have been made accordingly to put 'calling' at the end focus.

२. कमलाबाई : मला कल्पनाही नसताना त्यांनी विष घेतलं आणि ते गेले.

Kamalabai :: I could never imagine him taking the poison and dying.

"कल्पना नसणे" means 'to have no idea'. Had this been used in the TT,

I had no idea that he would take poison and die.

the meaning would have implied that the lady has no idea about the man taking poison t die, but,

1. She had an idea of his dying.

2. She thought he would do something else but not take poison to put an end to his life.

To avoid such confusion a change in syntax is made and 'to have no idea' is substituted by 'to imagine'. Because as Nida states;

' ... within the limits of the particular contexts two different words (or semantic units) may be recognized as completely equivalent, and thus freely substitute one for another.'⁷

३. कमलाबाई : ... फक्त ते, तेच होते घरत

Kamalabai : ... only he, he was there in the house.

Honorific pronouns are simply not used in English, while they are specific in Marathi.

"ते", "त्या", "हे", "ह्या" are the honorific pronouns, which describe the status of the addressee and the relationship between the addressee and the addresser.

Catford points out,

'Two languages might possess a roughly corresponding set of styles; but cultural factors may dictate the use of a non-corresponding style as translation equivalent.'⁸

So, in the place of "ते" in SL a non honorific pronoun 'he' has to be used.

४. कमलाबाई : सकाळचा टाईम्स वाचत होते. पडल्या पडल्या.

Kamalabai : He was lying idly and reading the morning times.

In SL, apparently, there is no subject; which is understood, since it is with reference to Kamalabai's husband, and any reference to husband is suppressed by the wife while

speaking about him, while is a cultural specific. But in the TL, the sentence cannot be meaningful unless the subject is provided; and so, in the TL, for the purpose of syntactical necessity, the subject, 'he' has been provided.

Secondly, in Marathi, the language being inflexional, the word order is not rigid, where as in English the word order is rigid. In the above example, the Marathi sentence can be jumbled, where as this is not possible in English.

Problems of adverbs is one more area where syntactic problem can be located. The equivalence does not convey the appropriate expression. In the above stated dialogue 'पडल्या पडल्या' is an adverb of manner which means 'lying' and the repetition adds a sense of relaxation, comfort to it. The word 'lying' would look funny if repeated.

५. कमलाबाई : जसं घडलं तसं सांगितलं तर पोलिसांना ते पटणार नाही असं तुम्हीच म्हणालात आता.
Kamalabai : If we reported to the police, now it really happened they won't believe it; that's what you said now.

This sentence poses problems of connectives as well as of complex clauses. So with a functional view to make sentence acceptable in the TL and to make it natural some changes have to be made. Firstly, the ST didn't have an NP serving as subject. So the addition of 'we' is made. Then, in order to avoid the repetition of the common noun 'police', a third person plural pronoun 'they' has to be added.

The literal translation of "जसं घडलं तसं" would be 'as it happened'. But to fit the translated sentence in the flow of the play it is translated as 'how it happened'.

A problem of elliptic utterances too is encountered.

६. कमलाबाई : .. पुन्हा त्या खोलीत गेले - त्यांच्या बिछन्यापाशी, त्यांच्याजवळ

Kamalabai : ... So again I went to his room .. to his bed, close to him.

Quirk points out,

'Ellipsis of subject is normal when the subject and the auxiliary are identical.'⁹

But here in the ST, there is no subject at all. So a subject 'I' has to be added. As Quirk states;

'often the effect of ellipsis is no more than to suggest a closer connection between the contents of the clauses, but sometimes the effect is to indicate that there is a combined process rather than two separate actions.'¹⁰

Prepositional difference in SL and TL too pose problems.

७. "बिछन्यावर पडले होते"

has the preposition "वर" - 'on' in Marathi. But in English the correct usage of preposition would be

'He was lying in the bed' and not 'on the bed'.

The idiomatic expression in each language are unique in nature. The reason is in the different cultural and social reference of each language and the society that uses it.

As Susan Bassnett states,

'the substitution (of the idioms) should not be made on the basis of linguistic elements in the phrase but on the function of the idiom.'¹¹

८. कमलाबाई : ... त्यांच्या तोंडावरून हळूच हात फिरवला.

Kamalabai : ... I caressed his face.

"तोंडावरून हात फिरवणे" is a typical Marathi idiom, which conveys the love of mother for her child and the wife's love for her husband. 'Caress' does not convey the same meaning but is a close equivalent.

Cultural Problems

Juri Lotman declares that,

'No language can exist unless it is steeped in the context of culture; and no culture can exist which does not have at its centre, the structure of natural language.'¹²

The translator can't treat a text in isolation without its relationship to culture. Each language has a culture of its own and it is unique to it. As Nida states,

'Language can not be properly treated except in terms of its status and function as a part. a process and to some degree, a model of culture, with a high degree of reciprocal reinforcement.'¹³

Languages that are geographically as well as culturally distant are quite difficult to translate. The distance makes it

difficult to understand the norms and customs which are part and parcel of a language for the users of another language. English and Marathi are culturally as well as geographically distant languages. But the advantageous point is if the SL text is in English, for a Marathi translator, it would be easier to translate it into Marathi. But if it is in Marathi, for a Marathi translator, it would not be easy to translate it into English.

The target readership for this translation is assumed to have an idea of relationship in Indian or rather Marathi culture. So the common nouns like 'Vahini' is not translated as 'sister-in-law'. Similarly, greetings like 'Namaskar' too have been retained for the cultural flavour in the play. The play is quite flexible to fit in the English translation as it has many references like professions of the characters; as Solicitor Karmarkar, Inspector Patole and Doctor Dange which are familiar to the audience in the TL.

Problems that can be categorised as cultural arise; as Nida states,

'When a situational feature, functionally relevant for the SL text is completely absent from the culture of which TL is a part.'¹⁴

The efforts of locating similar expression or interpretation do not always suffice. Nida further points out,

'The co-relation between language and culture is perfectly obvious when we are dealing with isolated words which reflect unusual cultural objects, activities or attitudes.'¹⁵

In the translation process of Bali such culture specific words were difficult to translate. For example, a word like "काळझोप" has to be explained as 'death like sleep'. Similarly, words like,

१. करंटी
२. अबला
३. चांडाळणी

Which are typical to Marathi culture. The solution used to solve this problem is to substitute the word with the most possible equivalent word in the TL. So these problematic words are translated as

1. miserable
2. 'weaker sex'
3. 'ingrate'

With regard to the problematic phrases, we are obliged to make some compromises. Especially in the translation of idioms and phrases that do not have equivalent structure in all languages.

४. पाटोळे : ... अगदी खडखडीत बरा होईल बघा.
Patole : ... He will be fit as a fiddle.

In Marathi, "खडखडीत बरे होणे" conveys the meaning that 'the patient is fully recovered of the illness and is fit for work'. To convey the similar meaning the TL idiom, 'fit as a fiddle' is used.

Similar example is,

५. पाटोळे : ... अगदी रामबाण उपाय आहे हा.

Patole : ... This is of course a sure shot and tested remedy.

In Marathi, "रामबाण" refers to Lord Ram whose mythical skill in archery was perfect. But in English, there is no such equivalent and corresponding lexical item. So in the TT two words 'sure shot' and 'tested' have to be used to convey the meaning of certainty of the remedy prescribed by Inspector Patole.

Catford points out,

'... any possible TL near equivalent of a given SL item has a low probability of collocation with TL equivalents of items in the SL text which collocate normally with the given SL item, is called collocational untranslatibility.'¹⁶

An example of the problem can be

The phrase is typical to Marathi Culture and has collocation with Marathi words.

६. पाटोळे : ... मागच्या जन्मीचं पाप म्हणून पोलीस सर्व्हिसमध्ये जॉईन झालो.

Patole : ... seems that it was the sin of my previous birth that has made me join the police service.

English culture does not have the concept of cycle of births. So it has been translated literally, hence the phrase looks out of place in the TT.

७. कमलाबाई : त्यांच्या पाठोपाठ जायचं होतं मला

Kamalabai : I wanted to follow him.

This is a similar example of the above stated problem in translating culture - dipped sentence. To grasp the real meaning of such phrases and sentences, an idea of Indian culture is necessary. A human being has many lives and he carries the weight and fate of his good as well as bad deeds, in his successive incarnations, is quite understandable and easy to express in any Indian language but not in English.

Similarly, a wife does not want to live and enjoy life after her husband's death and wants to follow him . This is also expressionable in any Indian language and acceptable in Indian culture .But ,because of the distant cultural background translation of such phrases and sentences sounds odd in English.

The specific cultural problems dealt with in the translation of Bali confirm the view that languages that are geographically as well as culturallty distant need explanation or interpretation for certain culture soaked terms, phrases and concepts.

The specific problems inherent in any translation always pose the problem of conveying the cultural context to each problematic item; may it fall under semantic or syntatic category. The problems encountered while translating Bali too posed the same problem. The solution used to solve these problems is to deal with every problematic category with a point of view to make it a functional translation.

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