

# Translation and the Plays of Himendra Borthakur: A Study

(Special reference to *Gandhir Sobi*)

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## Abstract :

Translation is the change of one language medium to another one where feeling, language or speaking has been converted. It is a kind of communication of the meaning of a language by means of an equivalent language. Translation in Assamese literature has been running since the medieval age. Himendra Borthakur was a renowned playwright who has contributed a lot through plays. His play the *Portrait of Mahatma Gandhi* has been translated to Assamese as *Gandhir Sobi*. The objective of the paper is to examine the dramatic features and the literature aspects of the play *Gandhir Sobi*.

**Index terms:** Translation, drama, language, dramatic quality.

## Introduction:

Translation is the change of one language to another. Changing of feeling, language or speaking from one language to another is called translation. Translation in Assamese literature can be traced back to the pre-Sankardeva era that has been continuing till the date. Himendra Borthakur was a renowned playwright of the 70s of the 20<sup>th</sup> century who contributed a lot to literature through his plays. *The Portrait of Mahatma Gandhi*, *Dena Paona*, *The Journey of Dinkar Mehta* are some of the remarkable plays written by Himendra Borthakur.. Translation of drama seems to be tough for its linguistic aspects as it has its own language form and structure. The Assamese version of the play *The Portrait of Mahatma Gandhi* is named *Gandhir Sobi* translated by Dr Jayanta Tamuly.

## Scope, objective and methodology:

The topic 'Translation and the plays of Himendra Borthakur: A study (Special reference to *Gandhir Sobi*) primarily deals with the literary aspects of the Assamese version of the play *The Portrait of Mahatma Gandhi*. The scope of the research is limited to the text *Gandhir Sobi* while analysing the plays of Himendra Borthakur.

The objective of the paper is to analyse and examine the dramatic feature of the play *Gandhir Sobi* with other literary aspects.

Basically it is a library research and analytical method has been used to it.

## Introduction to the playwright:

Himendra Borthakur was one of the renowned dramatists of the later part of the last century. He was an engineer by profession who worked in various places of Assam and Nagaland. He migrated to America in 1973 due to his service and turned a resident of Boston. His significant plays written in Assamese are:

- i) *Bagh*
- ii) *Dweep*
- iii) *Sorpil*
- iv) *Momor Ghor*
- v) *Bindu*

And his plays in English are:

- i) *Dena Paona*
- ii) *The Journey of Dinkar Mehta*
- iii) *The Portrait of Mahatma Gandhi*

**Discussion:** Translation is a communication of the meaning of a language by means of an equivalent language. The translator risks inadvertently introducing source language words, grammar into the targeted language rendering. Translation of drama is somewhere different than that of other genres of prose. A play is performed by the actors in front of the audience following the instructions of the director. The substance and linguistic texture of the play is dependent not only the language but also on the stage decoration, dialogue delivery, costume, direction, bodily gesture, acting and also on the kinds of the audience. As, a play is a performing art, the translator must observe all the aspects associated to it. Some techniques may not be comprehensible to the translation of the plays like other common prose. The meaning and significance of the dialogue is expressed through the acting. A play can be studied both as a literary text and a performing art form. The dialogues of a particular play have its own sense and meaning. Therefore, the translator must conceive the dialogue and the acting of the play while translating it. Without the necessary knowledge on drama, translation of a play would be inappropriate. For instance:

Sarojini : Did you hear the security bell, Ramu chacha ?

(*Sarojini : Tumi security bell tu bojar hobdo hunisila neki Ramu khura?*)

Ramu : Security bell ? No, Sarojini didi, I didn't hear any bell ringing?

(*Ramu: Security bell? Nai huna Sarojini Baideu, moi eku bell bojar hobdo huna nai*)

Sarojini : I just don't know why he is so late?

(*Sarojini: Moi buibo pora nai teu kiyo eman polom korise?*)

Ramu : He ? Who? Who are talking about choti memsahib.

(*Ramu: Teu? Kun? Apuni kar kotha koise horu aaideu.*)

In this translation, the dialogues do not lose its essence. The modulations of the dialogues are well expressed in it. The translator must emphasis on the language of the play while translating. Translator must organise the dialogues that cope to the characters appropriately. These tasks also depend on the source language. Another instance can be observed:

Sarojini : I got my name Sarojini from my grandmother. I learnt all the stories of Mahabharata and Purana from my grandmother - now she is dead and I am all by myself!

(*Sarojini: Moi mur ei Sarojini namtu mur aaitar pora palu. Teur pora Mahabharata, Puranor kahini huni dangor holu. Etya aaitai muk okle eri thoi juar pisot moi ni jei mur hokolu.*)

Ramu : Last one month you have been crying and praying every day. You should now try to forget your grandmother; otherwise her soul will not have peace.

(Ramu: *Aji emah dhoru apuni kewol kandie ase aru bhogowanor nam loi ase. Etya ontoto apunar aaitak pahoriboloi sesta korok baideu. Tenekoi thakile jua gorakir atmaiu hanta napabo.*)

In this translation, keeping the dialogues in view, the sentences are arranged in such a way that genuine flow of the language remains balanced. If it had translated like a common prose, the original flow of the dialogues would have been lost. Sometimes, the translator needs to add words in order to make the sense clear. Drama falls in the category of performing art; it can be translated for textual purpose and also for stage and for both too. The translator must possess sound knowledge on the history and tradition of drama and socio-cultural aspects of the languages. In order to make a play performable on stage, a translator can add words in need. Instance can be mentioned:

Mishra : Oh, don't shoot me ! I have money in my Swiss Bank account, I will give you anything you want. Don't shoot me ... don't shoot me ...

(Mishra: *Muk guliai namariba, please, moi mur swiss bankor accountot thoka hokolu poisa tumak di dim. Tumi ji bisara moi take di dim. Matra muk namariba*)

(The portrait of Mahatma Gandhi, P - 56)

#### **Conclusion:**

In a course of a discussion, Sujan Bessnete opined that the translator should listen to the dialogues if these would be appropriate to deliver in the performance or not. Strange and melodramatic dialogues would not be suitable for the performance of a play. The play *Gandhir Sobi* is successful so far as the aspects of the translation and performance are concerned. The translated dialogues are well suited to performance as already shown in the examples.

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