

Translation of the Poem *Ghās* of Jibanananda by France Bhattacharyya: A Study

Amalendu Chakraborty

Department of French, Assam University

Abstract: *the translation of literary texts are difficult. Especially if the two languages are distal ones. Here a study has been done on one of such cases where source language is Bengali and target language is French.*

Key words: adequate, equivalent, changes, omission, addition.

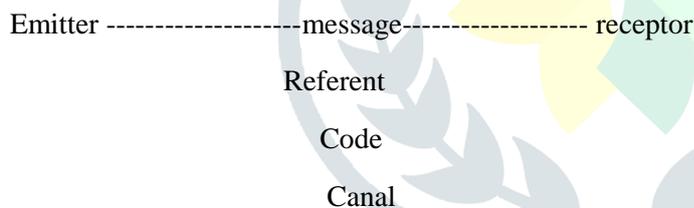
The poem *Ghās* (grass in English) by Jibanananda Dash was translated into French by France Bhattacharyya, published first in the very first edition of French journal of the Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India in January 1972 and in bilingual edition of *Confluence 11* 1981, where Bengali poems and French translations were side by side and with an introduction by the translator. For the original Bengali poem, we may say that it is a “difficult poem of a difficult poet”: difficult to understand and to translate.

Jibanananda is a poet of Bengal and Bengali language. He “does not seek the world’s beauty as he has (already) seen the face of Bengal”. His thinking, expressions and technique in his poems are typically Bengali, concentrated on—geography, climate, flora, fauna and above all the Bengali culture that has built up over thousands of years.

These poems can be translated retaining the above elements stated above in a **proximal** language, which shares like geography, climate, flora, fauna, same traditional and cultural elements and above all a lexicon that is very much common to both the *source* and the *target* languages as sound effect is one of the most important aspects in a poem. But when the *source* and the *target* languages are **distal** ones, we can say that these realities/aspects of the source language may be difficult to translate into the target language. For example, Jibanananda’s poems are easier to translate into Odia or Assamese or Maithili; but very difficult in a European language.

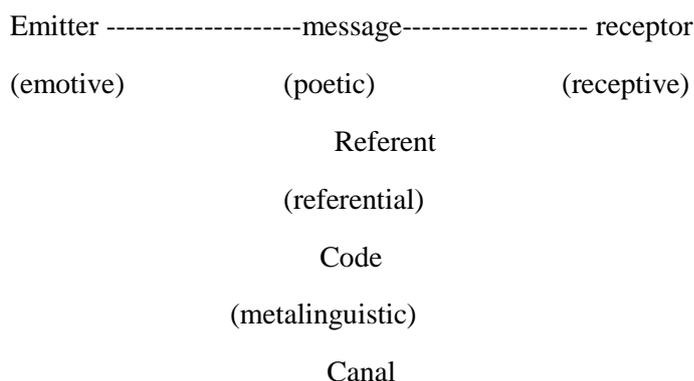
Before going into our target, i.e. analysing and evaluating our envisaged translation, let us have a look into the theoretical aspects of the translation of a literary text.

According to Roman Jakobson, every verbal communication has six aspects or poles. This may be represented like followings:



This can be told in plain language like—someone (emitter) tells something (message) on something /somebody (referent) to somebody else (receptor) which passes through some channel (canal, generally air when we speak) in a code (generally in a human language).

All of these poles have functions each and they are manifested when the message concentrates on one of the poles. Let us have a look:



(phatic)

Let us have examples of such functions:

1. I want to say—emotive
2. Are **you** listening? —receptive
3. Every message has a **referential** function.
4. Code is mainly a human language. Good example of this **metalinguistic** function can be explained by example of a dictionary where a word is explained in terms of other words.
5. Canal maintains the continuity of the message. For explaining this phatic function, we may cite “hello”, “well” etc. in a conversation or deliberation.
6. When the message concentrates on itself, **poetic** function is manifested. All the literary texts are good examples of it; or in other words, the literality of a text depends upon this function.

If we see the different types of meanings according to Indian poetics, which explained beautifully three types of meanings, we see in our texts are:

1. **Abhidhā**—denotation or direct meaning.
2. **Lakṣaṇā**—connotation or an envisaged meaning slightly apart from the regular meaning.
3. **Vyañjanā**—a meaning with some other effect. This term has been translated as—suggestion, indication and implication. But actually, all three of these terms are active here together with suggestive, indicative and implicative meaning together in a literary text. Let's see which type of text is dominated by which kind of meaning.

We can divide the nature of texts according to functional aspects as practical text and creative literary text. They are dominated by the following set(s) of meaning(s) as stated by Pushkar Dasgupta :

Nature of text	<i>Abhidhā</i>	<i>Lakṣaṇā</i>	<i>Vyañjanā</i>
Practical texts	+	-	-
Prose	+	++	(+)
Poem	(+)	++	+++

From the table above, we can see that to translate a poem is always more difficult as not only the denotative meanings, but also the connotative meanings are pushed to a secondary place.

With this, the elements like style of the poet, the *écriture* he belongs to, his school of thought, his view for life, the era of the poet (if not a contemporary one)—all these make it difficult along with the:

- 1) Surface structures of the source and target languages—mainly for the syntactic structure.
- 2) Meaning level—often it is to get impossible to find even an *adequate* and to find an *equivalent* for a term.
- 3) Lexicosemantic level—as in a poem, source language may express more than one meanings simultaneously at the same time that creates and add another dimension. But we can seize/ grab only one of those meanings at a time in the target language. This happens often when the translation is between two distal languages.

Now let us look at the original poem and its translation in French by France Bhattacharyya.

Ghās

Kaci lebupātār mato naram sabuj āloy

Pr̥thibī bha're giyeche ei bhorer bela;

Kācā bātābir mato sabuj ghās—temni sughrāṇ--

Haroṇerā dānt diye chīḍe nicche .

Āmaro icchā kare ei ghāser ghrāṇ harit mader mato

Gelāse gelāse pān kari;

Ei ghāser śarīr chāni—cokhe cokh ghaṣi,

Gher pākhnāy āmār palak,

Ghāser bhitar ghās ha'ye janmāi kono ek nibiḍ ghās-mātār

Śarīrer susvād andhakār theke neme.

L'HERBE

*A l'aube la terre s'estemplie de lumière vert tendre comme
De jeunes feuilles de citronnier;
Une herbe verte comme un pamplemousse, tout aussi
Parfumé—les biches la déchirentà belles dents.
Il me prend l'envie de boire coupe après coupe cette odeur
De l'herbe comme un vin vert,
De pétrir le corps de cette herbe—de frotter mes yeux conte
Ses yeux, mes plumes contre son plumage,
De descendre des délicieuses ténèbres du corps profonde de
mère-herbe pour nîtreherbe à l'intérieur de l'erbe.*

We know that, in bengali language there is no “definite article. But, in Romans languages, the uses of articles, both definite and indefinite are abundant. Here we can see that the word *ghās*, in translation took definite article and became *L'HERBE*. Here it also can be marked that the translator deviated from “French style” of giving the title in “upper case” or “all capital letters” in lieu of putting it in the “sentence case”.

*The order of starting of the poem is “reversed”. But the original order could have been maintained like: “comme de tendres jeunes feuilles de citronnier, la terre s'est emplie de lumière vert”. it can also be written like—comme de jeunes feuilles tendre. Here it may be said that in Bengali language, only the natural gender system exist (as it does in every human language), but in French language every noun is either feminine or masculine. So the grammatical gender system of the target language here are manifested in each step. Here, we may observe something strange and interesting—although the equivalent for light (ālo in Bengali) in French (lumière) is feminine, the adjective for sabuj (green) is translated in masculine vert and not verte in feminine. The reason behind it can be stated that the light of dawn is, we can say famous as *les rayons verts* and dawn is often described as *le moment vert* in French; and the translator caught it as the source language used *sabuj ālo*.*

Next she did not translate kāncā, perhaps sabuj ghās and kācā bātābi, if translated in French like l'herbe verte and pamplemousse vert, there may arise some confusion for the French readers. But there was an option to translate kāncā as pas mûr. She also added belles—beautiful for teeth which may be found by the readers who understand both the language as unnecessary. Sughrāṇ in Bengali poem appears to be a noun. But the translator made it adjective—tout aussi parfumée. The noun words like l'arome, la fragrance etc. could have been substitute for it. Gelās, derived from English glass is verre in French. But coupe (cup) has been utilized.

There are two words for *hariṇ* (deer) in French—*cerf* (masculine) and *biche* (feminine). She used the latter as the feminine *hariṇī* is a favourite term in Dash's poetic world as well “tearing grass by teeth by them”.

She translated *pākhṇā* as *plumages*, not *ailles* and remarkably in plural just as *pālak* is also translated as *plumes* in plural. She chose to use the plural forms as well as to create alliteration, that we have in the original poem. For *andhakār* (darkness), she chose *les ténèbres* over *l'obscurité*.

We can say that if clarity is a property of literature, ambiguity is also a property of it. The adjective *nibiḍ* (deep/profound/compact) may be for either *śarīr* (body) or (mother -grass). This ambiguity added to the beauty of this small poem. But, while translating, she chose it for body (*corps*). Perhaps here also in the Bengali poems all the three means intermingled/mixed and created another dimension along with the ambiguity which can not be translated into a distal language.

BARTHES, Roland, 1972, *Le degré zéro de l'écriture suivi nouveaux essais critique*, Paris, éditions de Seuil.

BASSNETT-McGUIRE, Susan, 1983, *Translation Studies*, London & New York, Methen.

CARRY, Edmond, 1956, *La traduction dans le monde moderne*, Genève, Georg S.A.

CATFORD, John Cunnison, 1965, *A Linguistic Theory of Translation*, London, OUP.

DASGUPTA, Pushkar, 1998, *Kabitar Anubad O Aro Duti Prabandha*, Kolkata, Raktakarabi

_____ et al (Ed), 1981, *Confluence 11*, Kolkata

VINAY, Jean-Paul, 1987, *Stylistique comparée du français et de l'anglais*, Paris, Didier

