

ANALYSIS OF THE ENGLISH TRANSLATION OF BASHEER'S "MUCHITTUKALIKKARANTE MAKAL" BY K M SHERIFF

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Abstract: This study investigates the translation of the Malayalam writer Basheer's short story "Mucheettu Kalikkarante Makal" by K. M. Sheriff. A comparative reading of Malayalam and English text will be done in order to understand the similarities and the differences between the two. My focus is to study how far the translated text is faithful to the original.

Index Terms – Translation Theories, Source Text, Target Text.

I. INTRODUCTION

Muchittukalikkaranthe Makal presents a series of adventures that culminated in Mandan Muthappa's marriage to Zainaba. The short story is crafted in such a way that each component part; setting, character, language needs to be individually considered. Basheer's "Muchittukalikkaranthe Makal" centres on Sthalam, an imaginary village in Kerala. Sthalam could be deemed as an 'anti-world,' from a 'modern' viewpoint: the protagonist Mandan Muthappa is a crook, and the police are compliant in whatever mischief he is up to; they take money from him out of his day's 'business.' Despite the 'anti'- image given to Sthalam, Basheer presents it as a normal world: here is an anti-world where 'romance flourishes' and even criminals are capable of 'generosity.' Sthalam could be conceived as the Foucauldian "the more intimate medieval descriptions within society" about madness, wherein there was not much harangue on the prospect of being mad, rather those who were mad was accepted and constituted part of society. Similarly, Mandan Muthappa has done his apprenticeship in his profession as a thief, and even though he is well known in Sthalam as a thief he is accepted in the society; invited for marriages and other such occasions.

The narrator presents the story as written for Students of History. This is done to create a special effect of the burlesque. The parody is made evident through instances such as the selection of theme (a prosaic subject matter), use of language ("...Basheer then proceeds to narrate the event in a grand inflated tone, using rhetoric drawn from the 'discourses of national and international politics, particularly the Marxist discourse which was extremely popular at the time in Kerala. So we find words and phrases like 'reactionary,' 'foreign regime,' 'comrade-in-arms,' 'politically conscious,' 'bourgeois' and so on, liberally sprinkled throughout the narrative."), and validation or authentication of what is written (use of footnotes).

The characters in the story are equally poignant. For Zainaba, Muthappa is not a 'mandan,' and she says that 'Bappa says that simply out of spite.' Mandan Muthappa, when calls Zainaba as "'Zainaba!' There were love and anguish in Muthappa's voice (35)." Even, Ottakkannan Pokkaru, who is vehemently opposing to their union even though entire Sthalam stands in support of them coming together, is attributed with a quality that could be called humane: his only desire for life is to get his daughter married. The narrator tries to justify why Pokkaru is not allowing the alliance of his daughter with Muthappa: he is a crook with no brain (Mandan). The Mandan Muthappa gets to marry Zainaba, by betraying Pokkaru. Even Zainaba was compliant in it. Hence, the narrator asks: "Would you ever trust your daughters if you knew what they were up to?...What do daughters know of the agonies of the fathers?"

It is interesting to note the sobriquets associated with each of the characters: Pokkaru is 'Ottakkannan,' Muthappa is 'Mandan,' Zainaba is 'Stahlathe pradana sundari,' Thoma is 'Ponkurussu,' Ramannayar is 'Anavari.' This adds to the element of humour in the story. Basheer's employing of the colloquial diction in the short story is characteristic of his writing style. For example, Pokkaru says 'Poda Kayithe [instead of kayuthe]! Chiri [ithiri] tahlachoruvayittu vada," or the way Pokkaru tries to entice his customers, "Hai!... vecho Raja vecho...onnu vecha randu...randu vecha nalu (12). Another example can be given from the situation when Pokkaru comes to know that Zainaba has fallen in love with Mandan Muthappa: Pokkaru says to Zainaba "edi, haramperannole." This type of language is characteristic of the Malayalam dialect spoken in some parts of Kozhikkode.

K. Kelappan in "Basheerinte Katha" presents Basheer as a writer who understands the pulse of his characters: the readers are made to feel that "Basher has become part of that society." This is evident in how he gives significance to individual details in his work: every aspect of his works has a story to tell.

II. PROBLEMS OF TRANSLATION

CULTURAL EQUIVALANCE

ORIGINAL	TRANSLATION	EXPLANATION
Umma, bappa	Mother, Father	There are no cultural equivalent for these words
'Poda Kayithe [instead of kayuthe]! Chiri [ithiri] tahlachoruvayittu vada,' (11)	"Get lost, you donkey. It needs boys with brains to do that stuff" (30, Para 2)	There is no way possible to facilitate exact translation. Basheer has employed colloquial diction (language barrier).
"Hai... vecho Raja vecho...nokkivecho" (12, Para 2)	"Hai Raja... come on every body...double your money folks... Hai Raja." (30)	Colloquial diction
"shrrrrr..."	"flick"	In the original the onomatopoeic expression for flicking the cards is given. This is not retained in the translation
"Ottakkanann Ibleese" (15)	"You one-eyed devil." (32)	Cultural equivalent is not there in English for 'ibleese'
"alla," "hilla" (20)	"Noo," and "No" (35)	The translator might have brought in the change for an English speaking audience.
"athu shumma Bappayum mattum parayanatha" (20)	"Bapa says that out of spite" (35)	There is no cultural equivalent for "shumma."
"kalal harami" (22)	"thieving scoundrel" (36)	No cultural equivalent for 'harami'

MEANING CHANGE

ORIGINAL	TRANSLATION	EXPLANATION
"Penpillerude arogyathinu athu atra pattiyathilla." (7)	"Girls will find it neither amusing nor enlightening." (27, para 1)	It could have been translated as, "it is not so good for the health of girls."
The narrator in the original uses "pradhana netavu" to refer to Pokkaru (7)	'tragic protagonist'(27, Para 2).	Here, 'netavu' is a word that has Marxist overtones. This is completely lost with the expression 'tragic protagonist.' Sherrif could have used 'leader' instead of 'protagonist.' 'Tragic' is nowhere in the original.
"aa kathayanu ini parayan pokunnathu" (16)	Let me begin at the beginning." (32)	Adaptation
"Bapa!" ennu paranju Zainaba urundu perandu eyunnettu. (21)	"Zainaba leapt up in terror as she pushed Muthappa away." (36)	"Urundu perandu" is changed to "terror." There is no mention of Zainaba having 'pushed' Muthappa away as she saw her father.
"thoyilali veeran" (24)	"universally acclaimed leader" (37)	K. M. Sherrif could have used "the proletariat hero"
"chettakkum vekkam"(26)	"sucker" (38, Para 4)	The intensity of the word 'chetta' is not retained in 'sucker.'
"injiim" (28) [iniyum]	"Let that Mandan have another try." (39, second last para)	No cultural equivalent for "injiim"
"Pemmakakle onnine engilum jheevanode vechekkavo?" (32)	"Can you ever trust your daughters?" (42)	The idea of murdering your daughter due to their untrustworthiness is reduced to a single word 'trust' which is insufficient to capture the intended meaning.

MISSING FROM THE ORIGINAL

ORIGINAL	TRANSLATION	EXPLANATION
“Anchara anaye... pathara anaye”	-	In the original Basheer gives explanation to it in foot notes: “naya paisa ayi kanakkakkuvan charithra vidyardhikalodu apekshikkunnu.” (10- ORIGINAL)
-	“Thorappan Avaranand Driver pappunni...” (27)	-
“arikkum vekkam” (12, para 1)	-	Colloquial diction
-	“ancient silk-cotton tree” (32, last part)	Missing in the original
“pukilu” (31)	-	-

ADDITION

ORIGINAL	TRANSLATION	EXPLANATION
“ethengilum pathrathinte oru payaya lakkam” (11)	Malayala Manorama (30, Para 2)	In the original Malayala Manorama is not suggested. This is a clear case of interpolation
“paripoorna nishabdhatta palikkuka” (13)	“Silence is golden.” (31)	K. M Sherrif could have used “maintain complete silence.” Instead, he has used a maxim to convey the idea.
“Ayiram rupaayude powwer” (16)	“air of a millionaire” (33)	adaptation

RETAINED

ORIGINAL	TRANSLATION	EXPLANATION
“Hai Raja...” (12)	“Hai Rja” (30)	cultural equivalence.
“davundu” (13)	“strategy” (31)	The translator could have used ‘trick’ instead of strategy.

K. M Sheriff has attempted a ‘free translation’ of the short story “Muchhetu Kalikkarante Makal.” Eugene Nida in “Principles of Correspondence” delineates that in certain modes of translation, especially in those involving verse compositions, the poetic quality of the work should be retained. This is not achieved in Sherrif’s translation of “Mucheetukalikkarante Makal.” He has given significance to content, sacrificing its subtle nuances. The poetic nuances of the short story come from the colloquial diction employed by the author: examples to the point include words like “umma,” or “bappa,” which Sherrif could have maintained in translation. He could have given footnotes explaining such usages. Nevertheless, it needs to be acknowledged that certain words escape translatability: “kalla jussana” (Jew), “Pukilu.” The entire short story is a genre apart due to its various cultural significations. This might be the reason why the translator has given significance to content: it might be difficult for a non-native speaker of Malayalam to understand the usages. His intended reader might be a non-native speaker.

The reason why he has avoided footnotes might be that he did not mean to translate it as a text for academic purposes. Instead, he might have weighed more to entertainment or pleasure quotient of the work, than trouble the reader with facts. No texts are original. That is why Barthes has mentioned in his “Death of the Author” that “Literature is that neuter, that composite, that oblique into which every subject escapes, the trap where all identity is lost,....” Every text, whether it is translation or else the original of the translation, should be read in its own right. The obviousness of the nature of translatability posits that the cultural specificities, the ifs and if not’s of two languages can be entirely different. This facilitates the translator to bring in interpretations, and modulate changes in accordance with the envisioned audience.

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