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Linguistic problems in translating Himanshi Shelat's 'Platform No-4' from Gujarati to English

Ms. Nayna D.Rangwala

Lecturer in English

Ashvinbhai A. Patel Commerce College,
Gandhinagar.

naynarangwala2008@gmail.com

It is generally observed that Gujarati Literature has not received prominent place or fame in comparison to literature written in other Indian languages. One of the probable reasons for that is lacking of good translation of essential Gujarati works.

As the partial fulfillment of the M. Phil course, the researcher has translated 'Platform No-4' written by prominent post-independence Gujarati writer Himanshi Shelat into English. Himanshi Shelat (8-1-1947) is one of the major contributors of contemporary Gujarati Literature, especially in short-stories. She works for the upliftment of neglected, deserted class of the society with true concern. She also takes interest in activities which can bring a little knowledge and a lot of happiness to such people. (Patel 7)

The act of translating this memoir has enabled to understand the concepts and process of translation in better way. It has given insight into the relation between SL (source language) and TL (target language), making sensitive to the various linguistic and cultural problems in translation process.

'Platform no-4' is a peep into the world of have-not children. 'Platform No-4' is a world of those children who consider platform as their home. The author has shared her experience of teaching such children. We can feel her satisfaction and pleasure which she has experienced through the process. The railway platform no. 4 is in the center of all these activities. Her activities further expand to the children of Red light area and Remand home also. This book gives us pain sticking reality from which no one can escape. The book has been awarded by Nanjangudu Thirulamba Award.

The form here more resembles to the memoir. A memoir is a piece of autobiographical writing, usually shorter in nature than comprehensive autobiography. The memoir may be more emotional and concerned with capturing particular scene, or a series of events, rather than documenting every facts of a person's life. The linguistic beauty of work is fabulous which can attract anyone towards it to read. Here, the author Himanshi Shelat has presented each character with the tang of his/her locale.

The aim of the present paper is to bring out some problems which are encountered during the translation. As the translation is a complex process, many problems regarding culture and language are encountered. While rendering from SL to TL one understands about the impact of cultural difference on the process of translation. Other than that some other problems like sentence structure, tense, use of language etc. are also noticeable hindrances. Various methods are adopted at different times to solve the complex problems of languages.

Translating Himanshi Shelat's memoir 'Platform No. 4' is a wonderful experience for the researcher. This is a story of deprived world. The author has created totally different world here. The text is rich in many ways. This is one of the remarkable works of Gujarati literature.

Generally translation of poetry is considered higher than prose (Kalyani 81). However it does not mean that while translating a prose one has to just open a book and start translation. It also needs quite a hard work. Translator has to open up the secret layers of meaning. One has to get acquainted with certain issues like language of the text, tense, connotative and denotative meaning of each word, its form etc. In prose also the researcher must view every individual sentence, every word as the part of a whole. Translator must be able to identify the symbolic, metaphoric terms, their purpose and role in making up the text.

There have been certain problems while translating 'Platform No. 4'. Very first problem which is found here is the problem of equivalence. There are so many instances where finding out a similar word is almost impossible. For example, typical expressions like, 'કચ્છા-બચ્છા' (Shelat 15), 'મરઘડો' (15), 'બાવા-ગંજેરી'(1), 'અડધો-પડધો', 'આવન-જાવન', 'છૈયા-છોકરા', 'સરસામાન', 'ઊથલપાથલ' etc.

The use of words like 'મી' (Shelat 73) having typical flavor in Gujarati cannot be recreated in English with its equivalent 'mother'. In Gujarati, one also finds other colloquial words like 'માડી', 'માતા', 'નેતા', which really pose problems during the translation as it can only be translated by 'mother' in English.

The word 'બેન' (Shelat 46, 121) is used for relation as well designation for a lady. It is used affectionately as well as officially. In English, it has to be differentiated by two words 'sister' and 'madam'. Hence, the author going to platform becomes 'madam' for children, while at other instances she turns out to be a 'sister'.

Untranslatability is another important problem which the translator faces here. Some words cannot be translated due to their cultural significance. They are some forms of dance, for example 'કચ્છલી' (80), 'ગરબા' (104) 'દાંડીયા-રસ' (71), etc. Here, the translator cannot replace them with some western dance names like 'belle' or 'salsa'. Similarly, some dishes like, 'રોટલી' (109), 'રોટલા' (109), 'સુખડી' (28), 'ભજિયા' (34), 'ગાંઠીયા' (28), etc. cannot be translated as 'pizzas' or 'spaghetti'. It has to be retained in its local flavor. Therefore, the researcher has used the method of italicizing them. Such words are italicized in text along with their meaning in glossary. Other such words are 'આરતી' (123), 'પાનમસાલા' (85), 'પટપટીયું' (2), 'બીડી' (36), etc.

Another problem area in the text is use of some idioms. For example ‘લોઢાના યણા યાવવા’ (7), which literary means ‘to munch the iron-grams’. Keeping the importance of such idioms, researcher has taken liberty to translate terms like ‘*not an easy task*’. ‘ઠંડુ પાણી રેડવુ’ (34), ‘બાંયો યઢાવવી’ (51), ‘સૂંડલો ભરીને’ (79) etc, are other such examples of idioms.

‘Platform No. 4’ is linguistically a rich work of art. Here, the author has narrated many characters. Among them some belong to southern part of Gujarat and some are from various parts of India. The author has maintained their flavor by using their own language in their speech. For example, Madhubhai:

‘એ તો જાણે બરાબર પણ આટલા દા’ડા ની ભઈણો તો હું આભ તૂટી પઈડું? યાવતું જ છે બધું આરમથી તીમાં નક્કામી ભેજા ફોડી હેના હારુ?’ (46)

In another dialogue Devi says:

‘મેં તો છે ને મોટી થેઈને બંગલે કામ કરવા જાવા’ (92)

Or where Kalu utters:

‘રફીક સે જ્યાદા તો મેં જાનતા હુ બડી બડી ખતમ હી ન હો ઈતની લમ્બી...’ (37)

Or Chhotu describes:

‘બેન એ તો બો ભણેલો છે...’ (22)

Even the language which Prostitutes speaks is also different:

‘ચહાં આને કે લીયે કીસને બોલા આપડુ?’ (58)

In utterance of Hermaphrodites:

‘પઢકે સબ હુસિયાર બનેગે. અપને જૈસા કુકટકા ધંધા તો નહીં’ (49)

One can see that the author has recreated a fine texture of many languages and dialects. This makes the text very interesting and rich. However, the translation here creates problem, as any of these varieties cannot be retained in translation. If it has been translated directly in English, it would have looked flat, and may have lost its charm. To make reader aware of this richness of language the researcher has adopted the technique of transliteration. Such sentences are transliterated and italicized and their original meaning in English is written in bracket.

For example,

‘અમે અવે ચકલાં મારતાં નહી. ગલોલ જ રાખતા નીને હોડે...’ (107)

Such sentence is translated thus:

‘*Ame ave chakala marata nathi. Galol j rakhata nine hode...*’
(Now we don’t kill sparrows. We don’t even keep pellet-bow.)

‘Platform No. 4’ is full of many incidents. Different moods of life and festivals are also described here. In the celebration of 15th August, some patriotic songs are played. Such songs are also transliterated as they cannot be translated.

For example,

‘જહાં ડાલ ડાલ પર સોને કી ચિડીયા’ (28)
(Jahan dal dal par sone ki chidiya)

Sentence pattern often arise problems during translation. In Gujarati, some sentences can make sense even without proper subject or verb, whereas in English, the proper syntax of SVO becomes important.

For example,

‘અરે એકએકને જાણુ’ (8) is translated as:

‘Oh! I know each and every of them’.

A boy selling groundnuts announces his sale thus:

એ...બે રૂપિયા ભાઈ બે રૂપિયા...

તાજી તાજી બદામ જેવી...

કિંમત જુઓ તો મફત જેવી... (70-71)

In translation of this triplet, the researcher has taken some liberty to match the rhymes at the end:

‘Hey...two rupees brother two rupees...

Fresh and crisp almond like...

See price, pebble like...’

In conclusion, the researcher would like to express that despite the problems mentioned above, ‘Platform No.4’ is pleasure to translate into English. Here, the text is not translated in literal sense only but used various methods like transliteration somewhere or transcreation at many instances, to create a completely new text. It is privileged to translate such a substantial writer as well work. It is hoped that translation done here would be able to communicate the style and substance of the writer to a reader.

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