
Translating the Untranslatable: Socio-Cultural Problems of Translation with Reference to the Vachans of Basavanna

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ABSTRACT

Every language has a unique essence that is shaped by its cultural context. Translation of regional literary works into English is therefore a difficult assignment for a translator. Together with language and literary difficulties, there is also a difference in aesthetics that is very noticeable. The English translation of Basavanna's Vachans is an enormous undertaking since the beauty of the Vachans is not only attained through word choice and figurative language, as in novels and short tales, but also through the development of certain expressions and structures. In the current paper, a selection of Vachanas from Basava Vachanajali, published by Sri Taralbalu Jagadguru Dr. Shivamoorthi Shivacharya Mahaswamigalu, will be studied after being translated from Kannada into English. This study focuses mostly on the process of translation and its reconstruction. It focuses on how the translation addressed socio-cultural obstacles that were present in the source text.

Introduction:

"Translating a text into a different language usually entails converting an original or source text." (Richard, Wordguist translator). Translations can never be made outside of the cultural and political context in which the original texts are anchored, nor can they be unachievable (Dingwaney and Maier, 1995:3). "The translator is a bilingual mediating agent between monolingual communication participants in two different language communities," as David Katan states in *Translating Cultures* (2004: 16).

Consequently, translators must act as both intercultural and linguistic mediators; in other words, they must be "bilingual and bicultural," as noted by Aniela Korzeniowska and Piotr Kuhniewicz in *Successful Polish-English Translation Tricks of the Trade* (2006: 71). Thus, translation is essential to our comprehension of the "other" cultural perspective. (Bernacka (2012)

In facilitating the exchange of ideas across national and cultural barriers, the translator plays a critical mediating role. To access indigenous cultures and experiences, translation becomes advantageous. Between two distinct languages, it serves as a bridge. As an integrating agent, it makes an impression. There are things to consider while working on this project, too. Finding out if translation is a science or an art is important. It's important to consider if cross-linguistic equivalency is feasible, regardless of whether it has anything to do with linguistics.

A branch of the Veerashaiva movement, Vachana literature is written in Kannada and dates back to the 12th century. In this distinctive literary form, the sharabas of this movement have documented their experiences and the journey towards divinity; one well-known sharana is Basavanna. Kudalasangama was the personal deity of the rebel Basavanna, who authored thousands of vachans under the sign name Kudalsangamadeva (Lord of Rivers Meeting). As a symbol of identification, this name occurs at the conclusion of each vaccine. Writing religious and ethical literature in Sanskrit was customary before the advent of Basavanna. Basavanna started writing them in Kannada, nonetheless.

The literature in Kannada was enhanced by this technique. Poetry writing was the norm for Kannada writers up until that point. Basavanna used prose to write in the vachana form. Like Basavanna, several Shaiva saints (Sharanas) composed vachanas. The people began to propagate these vachanas. They outlined the proper structure of society and included moral and religious teachings. People began to awaken as a result of these concepts. The moral lessons were now simple for them to understand. A new social structure emerged. Thus, Basavanna brought about a major reformation in every sphere of human endeavor, including language, literature, economy, social life, morality, and religion. (S.S. Malawad, 2010). Translating Basavanna's Vachans into English is an enormous undertaking, as the beauty of Vachanas lies not only in the figurative language and word choices employed in novels and short stories but also in the construction of distinct expressions and structures. The goal of this work is to examine some of the translated Basavanna's Vachanas from Basava Vachanajali, which was published by Sri Taralbalu Jagadguru Dr. Shivamoorthi Shivacharya Mahaswamigalu, from Kannada into English. The

translation process and its reconstruction are the main topics of this work, with particular attention paid to sociocultural problems that arose in the source text and how they were handled during translation.

A nation's culture is often regarded as a crucial component of its identity. It significantly influences the lexicon and structure of that nation's language, meaning that every statement in any language has a distinct regional flavor. (Mallik, Arsheed Ahmad) The translator's job is extremely important because transferring cultures is a difficult endeavor. A culture has a domain that is both larger and more expansive than its vocabulary. A culture word is never as context-bound as a regular word, and multiple cultures can exist within a single language (Newmark: 1988). As a result, it is not as difficult to deal with grammatically. Cultural differences are one of the most challenging translation issues. A given culture's members view the world through unique lenses. Many terms appear similar but are not. They carry particular meanings or, depending on the culture, have distinct purposes.

“nudidare muttina haradantirabeku
nudidare manikayda diptiyantirabeku
nudedare spatikada salakeyantirabeku
nudeidare linga mechhi hahudhude'nabeku
nudiolagagi nadayadidde,
kudalasangama-devanentolivanayya?”

If you should speak, your words should be
Pearls that are strung upon thread.

If you should speak, your words should be
Like lustre by the ruby shed.

If you should speak, your words should be
A crystal's flash that cleaves the blue.

If you should speak great god must say
Ay, ay that's very true!

But if your deed betrays your word,

Can Kudala – Sangama care for you? (Nudi-Nade, Basava Vachanjali, 803)

Although the aforementioned vachana has been painstakingly translated, it retains much of the original language's cultural significance. Non-native readers might find this challenging. The term "Linga" in Hinduism, especially in Karnataka, refers to Lord Shiva, a well-known Hindu deity. However, translators translated "Linga" as a "great god," a closer equivalent of the Linga that could not be translated literally into English. These kinds of sociocultural barriers frequently arise when translating regional literary works into English. The translated Vachans that follow exhibit the same sociocultural issues.

“tuppada savige alag nekkuva
sonaganante enna baluve!
samsara-sangava bidadu nodenna manavu.
i nayitanava manisu
kudala-sangamadeva, nimma dharma!”

My life is like a dog
Licking a sword's sharp edge
For ghee!
My mind will not forsake
The bother of this world!
O Lord Kudal Sangama,
Out of thy mercy, rid
Me of this doggish life! (vishayavasane, Basava-Vachanajali 34)

Even though words appear to have the same meaning in different cultural contexts, they actually carry baggage from their own cultures. In the case of the vachana mentioned above, the translator attempted to translate Veerashiva's philosophy using a metaphorical example, but the same philosophy does not apply to other contexts; for example, doggish life is a deplorable condition in Indian contexts, but it may not be applicable in European or African contexts. In every culture, some actions are symbolic. The action could have the wrong meaning if it is translated literally.

“druthigettu anyara bedadante
matigettu parar hogaadante

parasatiyar ratige mana haradante
shiva-pathavolladavardadante
anya jatiya sangava madadante
enna pratipalisu kudalasangamadeva.”

Teach me, kudalasangama lord
That I should never beg
Of others with faint heart
That I should never praise
Others too foolishly;
That I should not covet in my heart
Another's wife to lust
That I should never mix
With such as turn their backs
Upon the shiva-path;
That I should never seek
The friendship of such men

As boast another caste. (Durvesana, Basava-Vachananjali,263)

Every religion and culture has always placed a high value on its customs and traditions. Without them, human civilization cannot fully develop. Since the middle of the 12th century, Veerashiva has been the oldest religion in Karnataka. Combining 36 basic Tattvas (religious concepts or principles) from the Agamas with five materials (mantra, padodaka, prasada, teertha, Rudrakshi, and Vibhuti) is the Veerashiva religion. An important religious symbol, Shivalinga has been transformed into Istalinga. These rituals and traditions are commonly seen in Vachanas; whether it is a festival or a burial, the translator often finds it difficult to understand the significance or latent symbolism behind them. In Chinese, the dragon is protective and benevolent; in English, it is malicious. The Chinese wear white during mourning, while the English wear black (Newmark, 1991). Cultures differ in their beliefs and emotions. Shiva-Path, as used in the Veerashiva faith, refers to the road that unites oneself with Lord Shiva. The author of the Vachana passage above warns against mixing with people who reject the Shiva Path. The term Shivapath in the source language (SL) is culturally mixed and cannot be translated into a

target language (TL). Understanding how to translate culture-bound aspects from subtitles into a foreign language is one of the hardest things a translator has to do.

As Newmark puts it: "Translation is a craft consisting in the attempt to replace a written message and/or statement in one language by the same message and/or statement in another language" (Newmark, 1981, p. 7) That's frequently not feasible with terms that are culturally restricted. The significance underlying these types of statements is, in fact, invariably closely associated with the particular cultural environment in which the work finds its origins or with the cultural context that it seeks to recreate. Idioms and fixed phrases cover a wide range of cultural elements, including religious convictions, objects unique to a particular culture, superstitions, and the various ideas of individuals from other communities and countries. As Newmark puts it: "Translation is a craft consisting in the attempt to replace a written message and/or statement in one language by the same message and/or statement in another language" (Newmark, 1981, p. 7) That's frequently not feasible with terms that are culturally restricted. The significance underlying these types of statements is, in fact, invariably closely associated with the particular cultural environment in which the work finds its origins or with the cultural context that it seeks to recreate. Idioms and fixed phrases cover a wide range of cultural elements, including religious convictions, objects unique to a particular culture, superstitions, and the various ideas of individuals from other communities and countries. Idioms fall under the category of figures of speech, which are described as "an expression such as a simile, in which words do not have their literal meaning, but are categorized as multi-word expressions that act in the text as units" in the Collins English Dictionary (2006). Translation of Basavanna's vachans into English is challenging since they contain deeply ingrained Veerashiva cultural idioms and set terminology. According to Newmark, lexical rather than grammatical issues are the primary causes of difficulty when translating idioms and fixed expressions (Newmark, 1988).

There are thousands of languages spoken throughout the world, and each one is unique in a few ways. The people of Karnataka follow a variety of beliefs, and because each member of the society has a unique perspective on the world, the ideologies have an impact on language and how meaning is expressed. The collocations and idiomatic expressions used in Kannada ultimately differ from those in other cultures as a result, making it difficult to translate Kannada idioms into another language while

maintaining the same conceptualization, connotation, and shades of meaning. The translation attempts to convey this difficult procedure in the following vachans.

“sasaveya mele sagaravaridantayitta..
anandadinda nalinalidaduve
anandadinda kunikunidaduve
kudala-sangama sharanaru bandade,
ubbi, kobbi harushadaloladduve!”

It's like ocean rushing over mustard seed
I sing and gambol with delight,
I leap and dance in glee:
When Kudala Sanga's sharanas come,
I swell and puff, ay, roll with joy! (Durvesana, Basava-Vachananjali,266)

The literal translation of the first phrase of the vachana mentioned above, "sasaveya mele sagaravaridantayitta," is "It's like ocean rushing over mustard seed." The unique national character of a culture is lost when its specific expression is translated into another language. Kannada idioms and expressions are culturally embedded in their original language and cannot be translated into English. The peculiar word arrangements that have arisen in a certain dialect are difficult to explain. Long use has made the idiom stable. Idioms come from these several sources. The majority come from idioms, proverbs, dialects, and jargon phrases—that is, from everything that is directly associated with a nation's national heritage and constitutes its language. The majority derive from proverbs, jargon phrases, dialects, and common sayings—that is, from everything that constitutes a nation's language that is inextricably linked to its cultural heritage. Every nation's national background is made up of its history, religion, culture, and customs (Ewa Horodecka &Waclaw Osadnik, 1980-90). Veerashaivism also has a strong influence on the Basavanna sign name "Kudala Sangama," which means "The Lord of Rivers Meeting." When the author states that the Kudala Sanga is a manifestation of Lord Shiva, it is unclear to readers outside of India what the Kudala Sanga means. The author also states that the Kudala Sanga's Sharanas When the nonnative reader reads it, he becomes perplexed and asks many queries, like "Who is Kudala Sanga?" Come, I swell and puff, ay, roll with glee. Sharanas: who are they? As a result, unless it is translated correctly, the following vachana does not express the content or the philosophy of why

the poet would swell and puff if they were to visit his home. A multifaceted strategy is needed for cultural transfer. It is about the relationship that the writer has with both his or her readers and the subject matter that they write about. It is the translator's responsibility to convey this unique cultural characteristic from one language to another.

For a translation of a work from a foreign culture, historical knowledge is a prerequisite. To be a professional translator, one must possess more than just a thorough understanding of the vocabulary and syntax of a foreign language. Before attempting to construct any kind of bridge between the two cultures, one should be cognizant of both their own and the source language culture. Should the audience be unfamiliar with the reality being depicted, the translation will falter and become challenging to read. The translator would need to take into account whether the target language's literary subculture has any parallel or comparable linguistic resources. The question of relevance to the intended audience is more important to the translator than it is to the original author when translating a literary-rich culture. It is the responsibility of a translator to search for relevant counterparts in the target language and use judgment when choosing to replace rather than translate specific passages in a text. A translator can establish equivalency by using resources wisely, despite all the apparent cultural barriers (Mizani, Samira).

Some strategies introduced by Newmark for dealing with the cultural gap:

Naturalization: The process of transferring an SL word in its native form into a TL text. At the word level, neutralization is a type of paraphrase. It would be a paraphrase if it were at a higher level. A few culturally neutral terms are used to summarize the SL item once it has been generalized (neutralized).

Couplet, triplet, and quadruplet: This is an additional tactic the translator uses when transferring, naturalizing, or calques to prevent misunderstandings. In his words, it's a combination of several approaches applied to a single issue.

Descriptive and functional equivalent: There are two components to the description of a cultural item in the source language: a descriptive component and a functional component. Comparative descriptive equivalents discuss composition, size, and color. The functional equivalents converse. The functional equivalents discuss the meaning of the word that is peculiar to the culture of SL.

Explanation as a footnote: The translator might want to provide the target reader with more details. He would include a footnote outlining this additional information. It could appear at the bottom of the page after the book or the chapter.

Cultural equivalent: A cultural term from TL is converted into a word from SL.

Compensation: A tactic applied when a text's meaning, auditory effect, pragmatic effect, or metaphor is lost in a particular section. The term or idea is made up for in another section of the text.

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