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A CRITIQUE OF MISCELLANEOUS ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS OF SELECTIONS FROM IQBAL'S URDU AND PERSIAN POETRY

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ABSTRACT

This article investigates miscellaneous English translations of Selections from Iqbal's Urdu and Persian poetry. These translations have been done by both foreign as well as indigenous translators. The textual data consists of English translations of Iqbal's selected verses from his different Urdu and Persian poems. Moreover, it also includes Iqbal's self-translation of his poetry. After a critical evaluation of these translations, it is revealed that the translators have used a variety of strategies to transfer the content of source text into target text. These include, rendering the selected verses and leaving out the others, making prose translation rather poetic translation, with no pattern of rhythm and rhyme scheme, or going for poetic translation and preserving proper rhythm and rhyme and, sometimes, the translator has decided to translate in free verse. The same goes for meaning which has been occasionally lost in some of these translations. Finally, the study ends with an understanding that the translators' knowledge of the source text and target text as well as their skill in poetry translation results into different products.

INTRODUCTION

This research endeavours to investigate the miscellaneous English translations of the selections from Iqbal's poetry. As translation is fundamentally a linguistic activity, the success of translation project depends on how the translator transfers the content from one language into another. In other words, translatability of the source text has to do with the knowledge and skill of the translator. Moreover, translation usually involves two languages and, therefore; translatability depends on similarities between the two languages. Like human beings, languages are also connected in groups, incorporating religions, cultures and history. Hence the smooth and simple translations are those in which there is linguistic, cultural and historical affinity. For example, all the modern languages of Europe, including French, Spanish, Italian and English have close similarities that makes them easily translatable. But the great difficulty is encountered when there are differences between culture, language family, and

historical period. Chinese, Arabic or English and Asian languages are exponentially different from one another, and, therefore, interlingual translation becomes difficult.

However, no language in the world is untranslatable, since all languages share some common features that we call language universals. Thus, translators render what is best in the world literature. For instance, Aristotle's classical work, *Poetics*, that was originally written in Greek, has been rendered into several other languages, including Syriac, Arabic, Italian, English, and finally into Urdu. These multiple translations are a sufficient proof of the imperishable nature of classical literature.

Iqbal wrote his poetry in two Asian languages: Persian and Urdu. English is a completely different from these languages in its cultural background, etymology and language family. Therefore, English translations of Iqbal are not without inadequacies. However, various translations of both his Persian and Urdu works show the love and attachment of the translators towards his poetry.

One reason of translating Iqbal's poetry is his personality. He was not only a poet, but also a thinker, a philosopher, a politician, a jurist and a religious reformer who tried to bring revolution through his pen. His poetry is a reservoir of his revolutionary ideas. He is generally known as the poet of the East, but he was also a cosmopolitan poet. Thus, he must not remain within the lingual barricades of Urdu and Persian; rather his universal ideas must be globalized. For this purpose, rendering his poetry into English is an act of globalizing his message.

However, English is a horizontally different language from both Persian and Urdu which creates problems in the act of translation. Moreover, poetic translation is a kind of controlled re-creation of the rhyme scheme and rhythmic patterns of the original author (Iqbal in the present case). Therefore, the translator enjoys no freedom of thought like the original poet does. Secondly, semantic complexities, particularly, synonyms, cultural symbols and idiomatic expressions create difficulty in translating Iqbal. The fact that his poetry is deeply rooted in the Islamic, Asian and contemporary culture, makes it hard to reproduce in English. Further, Iqbal's thoughts are deeply wrapped up in philosophy, and nearly all fields of philosophy interact into it. This particular feature also presents problems in translation. This research work explores whether different miscellaneous translations of Iqbal keep the meaning of the original text or deviates from it.

Because of Iqbal's enormous services towards Persian and Urdu literature, he is credited with the title of Allama which means extraordinarily learned. In fact, his works reflect the core of the patriotic Muslim identity in South Asia. Further, he is reckoned as the "ideological founder" (Mehmood, 2021, p.67) of Pakistan. Consequently, his poems have been rendered by both foreign and indigenous translators.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In the act of communication between two nations using diverse languages, translation acts as a bridge and a medium of communication (Shafie, 2012). While translating the text, the translators adopt different strategies. According to Yang (2010), translation scholars are divided in their positions concerning the two-popular strategies: domestication and foreignization. Sometimes, the translators inform the readers about their strategies in the prefaces, also called paratexts, which help the translation researchers in the analysis of translation (Tolendano, 2013). The rendition of poetry is usually considered to be a taxing task as the translators have to consider transferring both content and form. Moreover, not only each word, but every line in a poem is significant in terms of meaning and sound. Therefore, a translator's knowledge, and artistic skills are put to test in the act of translation. However, despite these issues, the rendition of poetry can help introduce the poet as a literary character at national as well as international levels (Lefevere, 1975).

The first English translation of Iqbal's poetry was done by Iqbal himself in 1901. He rendered his poem اشک خون - Ashk-i-Khoon as "Tear of Blood" which is an elegy written on the death of Queen Victoria. Since then, different translations of Iqbal's Persian and Urdu works have been done by both foreign and indigenous translators. Thus, we have got more than a century of a large number of translations. The list includes Arberry, Kiernan and Mathews. These translators did an admirable work to render Iqbal's poetry. But, at some places they replaced the ST elements with the discourse that was comprehensible to the target audience (Asghar, 2014). In other words, they did not transcend political and socio-historical barriers in order to gain an informed standpoint. Next to Nicholson stands Kiernan whose famous rendition titled; "Poems from Iqbal" were published in 1999. It is a verse-to-verse rendition in which Kiernan has endeavored to transfer the meaning of the source text. Another notable feature of the translation is the language and style which creates a good impression on the mind of the reader. However, the translator has occasionally failed to transfer the sense of the original in the translation.

Another orientalist who rendered Iqbal's selected poems is Mathews. These poems include selection from Bang-e-Dara, Bal-e-Jibril and Zarb-e-Kalim. An evaluation of these poems reveals the cultural, political and religious themes of Iqbal's contemporary life. One notable reason for this selection seems to be the translator's interest in comparing Iqbal's thoughts with European poets on a similar topic. The translation shows no addition and deletion on the part of the translator and the poems are rendered into fluid and simple prose. Moreover, the translator has also given four appendices as vocabulary guide to the readers. However, in spite of all these qualities, the translation shows occasional deviation from carrying across the contextual meaning of the source text.

Among the indigenous translators of Iqbal, Altaf Hussain translated "Shikwa and Jawab-i-Shikwa as "The Complaint and the Answer. It was published for the first time in 1954. The translator appears to have a sound knowledge of English prosody as he perfectly renders six-line stanzas of Shikwa into twelve lines of English iambic tetrameter and he keeps the same rhythmic form

throughout the poem. However, he changes the meter in the second line that is similar to the pattern of "Ancient Mariner" written by Coleridge.

Syed Akbar Ali Shah translated *Bal-i-Jibril* that was published under the title of 'Gabriel's Wing' in 1979. The translation shows not only the translator's command of language, but it also reveals his knack and art in verse translation and lucidity of expression. Moreover, the translation also reflects the translator's utmost awareness of the difference between prose and poetic diction as the entire translation is replete with poetic words such as bard (poet), clime (climate), firmament (sky), meads (meadows), perchance (by chance), betwixt (between) (Ghani, 2000). These words speak of the translator's deep study of English poetry and his fondness for maintaining rhythm through the choice of befitting words. One notable feature of his translation is that his selection of words is associated with his choice of metre. Shah has experimented with different metres, including trimeter, hexameter and iambic meter. Although, the translator has used some superfluous words to meet his poetic requirement, he handles this problem by using synonyms, prepositional phrases and apposition. Overall, he has been able to transfer the essence of Iqbal's thought in his translation.

A translation of "Masjid-i-Qortoba" appeared in 1976 under the name, "The Mosque of Cordova" (Ghani, 2000). The translator, Abdul Haleem appears to be very sincere and serious in his effort. He has juxtaposed Iqbal's Urdu text with the English translation, though the number of lines of the translated stanzas is more than the Iqbal's Urdu lines. Moreover, the translation lacks a regular rhythm and rhyme scheme. However, the vocabulary is quite impressive which indicates the linguistic competence of the translator. Further, he has occasionally used redundant words in explaining Iqbal's imagery through a number of self-created images.

Iqbal's poetic Creation, *Armaghan-i-Hijaz*, has witnessed only one complete translation under the same title. The translator, Kabir, calls it a verse-to-verse translation, but it can be placed between poetic and prose translation, since it is neither completely poetic, nor prose. Such pseudo-rhyming pattern goes on throughout the book. Some syntactical errors are also observable as the translator seems to impose rhythm which also distorts the meaning of the translation. A reader in general will have to resort to the original text in order to understand the meaning.

Another translation of Iqbal's famous poem *Iblis Ki Majlis-i-Shura* was done by Ashraf. Due to its simplicity, clarity, validity and lucidity of expression, this translation can be ranked among the successful faithful translations of Iqbal. The translation was first published under the title, "Devil's Conference" in 1951, after which the revised version came in 1974. The first edition contains 158 pages and the revised edition contains 360 pages which show a big difference of content in two editions. However, the additional material in the second edition is due to the commentaries and interpretations as the translator's primary aim was annotations and interpretations of the poem. Overall, the translation is worth considering and its annotations are immensely important.

ANALYSIS

The textual data consists of miscellaneous works of Iqbal, including selections from Iqbal's translations of his own poetry and those translations that were published in two leading Journals of Iqbal studies:

1. Iqbal Review: The quarterly of Iqbal Academy, Lahore.
2. Iqbal: The quarterly of Bazm-i-Iqbal, Lahore

Iqbal's English Translations of His Own Poetry

Iqbal did not translate any of his books or complete poem except his poem اشک خون - Ashk-i-Khoon. This poem of 10 stanzas has not been included in Kulliyat-i-Iqbal as its theme does not agree with his subsequent revolutionary ideas. It was just an experiment in writing an elegy, expressing an intense grief over the death of Queen Victoria and the main idea is not relevant to the understanding of Iqbal's actual message conveyed in his Kulliyat.

In Iqbal's succeeding writings, we find some of his own translations of important couplets taken from three books, Zaboore-i-Ajam, Javid Nama and Payam-i-Mashriq

The following last couplet of ghazal no.11, part-II has been translated by Iqbal.

گرفتم این کہ شراب خودی بسے تلخ است
بدردخویش نگرزبر ما بدرماں کش (Zaboore-i-Ajam, p. 183).

The wine of egohood is no doubt bitter, but do look to the
Disease and take my poison for the sake of the health
Another extract has been translated from Gulshan-i-Raz-i-Jadid

مرا دل سوخت تنہائی او کنم سا مان بزم آرائی او
مثال دانہ می کارم خودی را براے اونگہ دارم خودی (Zaboore-i-Ajam, p. 174).

My heart burns on the loneliness of God!

In order, therefore, to maintain intact His Ego-Society

I sow in my dust the seed of selfhood

And keep a constant vigil over my 'I'.

Iqbal also translated 15 couplets from Javid Nama. One of them has been reproduced as under: -

خواست نا از آب و گل آید بروں خوشه کز کشت دل آید بروں
(Javid Nama, p. 153) آنچه او جوید مقام کبریاست این مقام از عقل و حکمت ما وراست

The 'I am' which he seeketh,

Lieth beyond philosophy, beyond knowledge.

The plant that growth only from the invisible soil of the heart of man,

Groweth not from a mere heap of clay

Iqbal's self-translations of the selected verses are highly significant because the Persian couplets and their English meanings both come from the same source

i.e. Iqbal mind. The translation is largely in prose form and is similar to R. A. Nicholson's translation style of *Asrar-i-Khudi* (The Secrets of the Self). Despite the philosophical and complex themes of the source text, Iqbal has tried to remain as simple as possible in the translation.

Rubaiyat Of Iqbal

An anthology of the translations of 201 selected quatrains of Iqbal was presented by Tariq, in 1973 under the title of *Rubaiyat of Iqbal*. Out of these translations, 77 have been taken from *Payam-i-Mashriq*, 93 from *Armaghan-i-hijaz* and 31 quatrains have been taken from *Bal-i-Jibreel*. It is pertinent to note that the translator has not rendered all the quatrains; therefore, he has given an index of those which he picked out for translation at the end of the book. This index is very useful in finding out any quatrain that he translated.

One significant point regarding the translation is that it is very simple, precise and lucid. Moreover, the translator has used interpretive style as he has added phrases and clauses wherever he has felt the necessity. Consequently, majority of the quatrains have been translated in ten or more than ten lines. Overall, the translation is precise and accurate in simple prose and is easily understandable, particularly to the readers in English speaking world.

Another compilation of miscellaneous translations was done by Mirza, in 1991 that was titled as "A Selection and Translation of Iqbaliyat". The translations are compiled in a book form. Total 185 couplets have been rendered out of seven books and the detail is as under:

1. *Bang-i-Dara* - 60
2. *Bal-i-Jibril* - 41
3. *Zarb-i-Kalim* - 33
4. *Javid Nama* - 10
5. *Pas Cheh Bayad Kard* - 4
6. *Payam-i-Mashriq* - 35
7. *Armaghan-i-Hijaz* - 2

Out of these seven books, the translator has picked out different short poems. The translation is not poetic as there is no proper rhythmical pattern and rhyme scheme. Following is the example of an ill-fixed rhyme where the translator uses the conjunction 'and' as a rhyme:-

Again, it is I, who made mirror out of sand,
Out of Thy poisons, I made medicines and (Iqbaliyat, p. 132)

Similarly, the translator has made some mistakes in understanding the meaning of the original. This can be seen in the translation of the following lines.

تجھے کتاب سے ممکن نہیں فراغ
کتاب خواں ہے، مگر صاحب کتاب نہیں

Relief from the book is not possible for you,

You are a reader but an author you are not

In the above line, the word صاحب کتاب has been used by Iqbal in the meaning of the person knowing the secrets of the Quran, whereas the translator has used the word 'author' in translating the same.

Likewise, there is a semantic gap in the translation of the following line:-

دوڑ پیچھے کی طرف اے گردش ایام تو (Bang-i-Dara, p.23)
O Misfortune! Turn round-Run as fast as you can.

Iqbal simply expresses his desire to regress into the past in order to study the life of the predecessors of mankind. However, the translator has taken it in the meaning of misfortune. So, in all of the above cases, there are mismatches between the meanings of the original text and the translations.

Journals

A ghazal was translated by Amin Khorasaneer under the title of "A Ghazal of Iqbal". This is exquisite poetic translation in iambic pentameter. Moreover, the translator has not only maintained the rhythm, but he has also accurately transferred the meaning. This can be seen in the following example:

کبھی اے حقیقت منتظر، نظر آلباس مجاز میں
کہ ہزاروں سجدے تڑپ رہے ہیں مری جبین نیاز میں (Bang-i-Dara, p. 280)

O! Long awaited Truth for once express
Thyself in golden garb of Shape and Form
For at my brow, that it Thy Feet may press,
A thousand fealties have stirred a storm.

Five poems of Bang-i-Dara have been translated by Rajindhar Singh Verma.

These are:

Naya Shivala- New Shrine
Tarana-i-Hindi - India's National Anthem
Hindustani Bachon Ka Geet - Anthem of Indian Children
Haqiqat-i-Husn - Quintessence of Beauty
Nanak

These are poetic translations which show the translator's knowledge and dexterity in English versification. He creates a beautiful rhythm as well as a balance throughout the translation. Moreover, another significant point about the translation is that he also manages to convey the meaning of the original without distorting the rhythm. This is exhibited in the following example: -

خدا سے حسن نے اک روز یہ سوال کیا
جہاں میں کیوں نہ مجھے تو نے لازوال کیا (Bang-i-Dara, p. 152)

One day beauty asked
Maker of the world,

Why didn't You, Lord!

Make me immortal?

In the above translation, even a small child can sense the rhythm, simplicity and lucidness of expression.

An Italian expert of Iqbaliyat, A. Baussani, has written an article in the Italian language in which he has collected all those poems of Iqbal's poetical works where Satan is a major theme. This article was further translated by Buttler from Italian into English. Although this work is the translation of a translation, yet, Butler's renditions are precise and clear. By combining prose with poetry, he has used the dramatic style that suits the situation. Following is the example of his translation:-

جمہور کے ابلیس ہیں ارباب سیاست
(Bal-i-Jibril, p. 162) باقی نہیں اب میری ضرورت افلاک

For fiends its rulers serve the populace
Beneath the heavens is no more need of me.

An excellent poetic rendition of Saqi Nama under the same title has been done by M. Hadi Hussain. The translation is in blank verse and its rhythm and diction both indicate the skill of the translator in English prosody. The prominent characteristic of his translation is its similarity to the original text. The translation of the first two couplets is given below as an example:

ہوا خیمہ زن کاروان بہار
ارم بن گیا دا من کہسار
گل و نرگس و سوسن و نسترن
شہید ازل لاله خو نیں کفن

Spring caravan has pitched its tent
At the foot of the mountain, making it
Look like the fabled garden of Iram
With a riot of flowers—rise, rose,
Narcissus, lily, eglantine,
And tuplip in its martyr's gory shroud.

A philosophical poem, Nawa-i-Waqt has been translated by Sharif. It is a clear prose translation in which philosophic complexities have been very skillfully handled. This can be seen by the beautiful translation of a seemingly confusing hemistich of the second stanza of the first couplet:

درمن نگری ، بیچم ، در خود نگری جا نم
(Payam-i-Mashriq, p. 89)
If thou looketh within me, I am nothing; if looketh thou
Within thyself, I am life itself.

A ghazal of Zaboar-i-Ajam has been rendered by Owais. This translation seems very adequate, correct and convincing as all the elements of prosody have been incorporated. This can be seen in the translation of the first couplet:

خضر وقت از خلوت دشت حجاز آید بر وں
 کاروان زین وادی دور و دراز آید بروں (Zaboor-i-Ajam, Ghazal, 12, Part-II, p. 73)

Oh, Hark! The Guide of Age is up and risen
 From cloistered waste of Desert Araby!
 And now from that far-off lonely wild Vale,
 The Caravan starts and hastens marches on!

K. N. Sud's Translations of Rubaiyat

An Indian journalist, K.N Sud, has given the renditions of 32 poems under the title of "Selections from Ghalib and Iqbal", published in 1978. These translations have been taken out of the following four books:

1. Bang-i-Dara - 21
2. Bal-i-Jibril - 9
3. Payam-i-Mashriq - 1
4. Armaghan-i-Hijaz - 1

The translation has been done in free verse and the translator has also added the biographical sketch of Iqbal. However, out of the total 32 verses, the rendition of 32 verses is incomplete. Moreover, similar to Saqi Nama, Shikwa Jawab-i-Shikwa has been translated in fragments. As a result, the basic theme has been missed out. In addition, the translator has given his own headings to 9 ghazals. A quatrain Armagan-i-Hijaz has been given the title 'Epilogue' and is changed into a short poem. The poem Hamalya has been rendered in a shortened form and an untranslated stanza of this poem has been changed into a separate poem, with a title, "An Evening Scene". In short, a reader cannot comprehend the overall concept of Iqbal's philosophy.

The Sword and the Sceptre by Riffat Hussain

The Sword and the Sceptre is a translation of poetical works of Iqbal by Hussain. It is a combination of articles in the form of a book. One notable feature of the book is that the translator has also juxtaposed the original Urdu/Persian text with the English translations of Iqbal's verses. The book is an excellent source of Iqbal's poetry. A significant point of the book is an article "Iqbal's message of the East" written by Nicholson in which he has included the translations of 20 verses (poems, quatrains and extracts) from Payam-i-Mashriq. These translations are clear and precise. Comparing Nicholson's translation of Asrar-i-Khudi which was in prose, this translation shows the translator's art and skill in poetry. In other words, he has used different metric compositions, ranging trimetric to hexametric lines, as shown in the following lines.

1. Our infinite world of old
 Time's ocean swallows it up (trimeter) (The Sword and the Sceptre, p. 307)
2. Feast not on the shore, for there
 Feast not on the shore, for there
 Softly breathes the tune of life (tetrameter) (The Sword and the Sceptre, p. 306)

3. I asked a lofty sage what life might be.

“The wine whose bitterest cup is best”, said he (Pentameter) (p. 305)

4. Clad in cotton rags I toil as a slave for hire

To earn for an idle master his sild attire (hexameter) (p. 319)

Apart from the variety of meter that the translator has used, the translation reflects the meaning of the original. Moreover, the translation also precisely replicates the major themes of Iqbal, including life, time and space, struggle for existence, self-realization, philosophy and politics, love versus reason and the environment of Europe (Ghani, 2000, p. 272).

CONCLUSION

This research has focused on the miscellaneous English translations from the selections of Iqbal's poetry. I discussed that the success of translation is associated with the similarities between the source text and the target text. This includes the linguistic, cultural and historical affinity between the two languages. In the present case, the Source languages are Urdu and Persian, whereas the Target language is English, which is completely different from Urdu and Persian. However, translating Iqbal's poetry, despite all these inadequacies, show the love and attachment of these translators towards Iqbal. The translators list included both foreign and indigenous translators of Iqbal. Among the indigenous translators, the prominent translators include, Arberry, Kiernan and Mathews. Translating Iqbal's poetry into English shows their interest in comparing Iqbal's ideas with European poets on similar topics. The indigenous translators include, Shah's translation of *Bal-i-Jibril* (Gabriel's Wing) Haleem's translation of *Masjid-i-Qortoba* (The Mosque of Cordova), Kabir's translation of *Armaghan-i-Hijaz* and Malik Muhammad's translation of *Iblis ki Majlis-i-Shura* (Devil's Conference).

The analysis included selections of Iqbal's translation of his own poetry in two prominent quarterly translation journals: “Iqbal Review” and “Iqbal”. Moreover, it also included selected translations from Rubaiyat of Iqbal by Tariq, a compilation of miscellaneous translations of Iqbalyiat, a translation of a ghazal of Iqbal by Amin Khurasanee, Buttler's translation of of Iqbalyiat, a poetic rendition of *Saqi Nama* by Hussain, Sharif's translation of a philosophical poem — *Naw-i-Waqt*, a translation of a ghazal of *Zaboor-i-Ajam* by Owais and Sud's translation of Rubaiyat.

A critique of these translations has shown that the translators have used different strategies to covert the source text into target text. The analysis has shown that in case of self-translation, even the complex themes have been made simple as well as easily understandable to the readers. In translating Rubaiyat, different translators have used diverse strategies, such as translating the selected verses and leaving out the others (Tariq's translation), making prose translation rather than poetic translation, with no rhythmical pattern and rhyme scheme (Mirza's translation) or going for poetic translation and maintaining proper rhythm and rhyme. Sometimes, the translator has decided to translate in free verse such as Sud's translation of Rubaiyat. Similarly, in translating ghazals, some of the

translators have accurately transferred the meaning of the original, in addition to preserving the rhythmical pattern (Khorasanee and Verma's Translations). Further, sometimes the translators have used a dramatic style and have combined prose with poetry (Butler's translation). I conclude this study with an understanding that verse to verse translation is difficult (if not impossible). But the quality of translation depends on the skill of the translator in translating poetry and his knowledge of the languages involved in the translation.

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