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“A study of the novel *Nirmal Bhakat* by Rajanikanta Bordoloi from the perspective of Adaptive Translation”

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Abstract

Translation acts as a connecting link between different languages, cultures, and works of literature, nations and tribes. In this multilingual world, it plays a great role in establishing international harmony among different nations. Although translation has been studied from the ancient ages, it was specifically studied in the seventeenth century. Among numerous theories of translation one type of translation is adaptive translation. In this kind of translation, the translator has the freedom to create his literature in the context of the primary subject. In adaptive translation, the translator adds new elements to the story which depend on his perception, local forms, social and cultural norms alongside continuing the original story. In the Pre-Sankari era, many poetical works were created following this type of translation. In modern Assamese literature, numerous novels are based on this technique of translation.

Introduction

The topic chosen for discussion is “a study of the novel *Nirmal Bhakat* by Rajanikanta Bordoloi on the context of adaptive translation”. Rajanikanta Bordoloi's *Nirmal Bhakat* is among one of the historical novels of Assamese literature. This novel is based on “Enoch Arden”, a narrative poem composed by English poet Tennyson. This research paper aims to analyse those sections in which Bordoloi differs from the English poem and indulge in his own artistic creation. Moreover, this paper attempts to examine if Tennyson's poem “Enoch Arden” and Bordoloi's *Nirmal Bhakat* follows the technique of adaptive translation.

Range of discussion:

The subject matter of this research paper is limited to a certain extent i.e. a comparative study of “Enoch Arden” with the novel *Nirmal Bhakat* along with the discussion of social, political as well as religious conditions of that time.

Research Methodology:

In this research paper, a comparative, as well as an analytical method, are used to study the subject of this discussion.

Source of data collection for this research paper:

The data has been collected from major and minor sources.

Main subject matter:

In Assamese literature, Rajanikanta Bordoli is known as the pioneer of historical novels. With the publication of his debut tribal novel *Miri Jiyori* (1894), Rajanikanta Bordoloi (1869-1939) became one of the most eminent novelists of Assam. In the Junaki period, he added a unique dimension to the world of Assamese Literature by his novels- *Miri Jiyori* (1894), *Manomati* (1900), *Rongalo* (1925), *Nirmal Bhakat* (1926), *Rohdoi Ligiri* (1930), *Tamleshwari Mandir* (1926), *Donduadruh* (1929), *Radha Rukminir Ron* (1925), *Thamba Thambi'r Sadhu* (1932). Apart from *Miri Jiyori* and *Thumbair Sadhu*, he presented a similar description of the splendid and dreadful stories of ancient Assam through his novels. Bordoloi who wrote numerous novels from the viewpoint of historical consciousness is entitled as “Father of Assamese Novels”, “Scot of Assamese Literature”, “Assam Bankim Chandra” etc. The story of his novel *Nirmal Bhakat* is as given below-

Janardhan Medhi, a resident of Lahon village of Panidihing Mouza in Rangpur District was childless, so he prayed to a priest in Dakhinpat Satra and was blessed with three sons. Among his three sons, Nirmal was the eldest. Rupohi the daughter of Maniram and Aniram were Nirmal's childhood playmates from the same village. Together they played various amusing games like- picnics on the river bed, the bride and groom play etc. However, their childhood friendship turned into love. Nirmal expressed his feelings to Rupohi but shy Aniram was not able to express his feelings. However, Bormedhi, father of Nirmal never agreed to his son's choice and fixed Nirmal's marriage to a Bormedhi girl from another village. Nirmal didn't openly refuse his father's decision, but he knew Rupohi's heart; therefore he eloped with her to his childless widow aunt's house at Jajimukh of Sonikoi Village. Eventually, Nirmal's parents agreed to their relationship so they were married according to Hindu rituals and lived happily. Despite everything, the Burmese invasion shattered their home. Nirmal was captured in the second Burmese invasion when he fought for Lahon village and was taken to Burma as a war prisoner. While Nirmal was imprisoned in Burma, Assam was turned into a cemetery by the third Burmese invasion. On 24 February 1862, the Treaty of Yandaboo was signed and the Assamese prisoners in Burma got a chance to return to their homes. Nirmal got the chance to return to his home,

his own country, his people and his beloved wife. But after waiting for twelve years, the villagers arranged Rupohi's marriage to her previous lover. When Nirmal found out about this, he visited Rupohi and Anirma's house in the guise of a monk for the last time, before going back to Dakshinpat Satra where he lived and atoned as a sad monk.

Comparison between Tennyson's "Enoch Arden" and the novel *Nirmal Bhakat*:

In this comparative discussion, various similarities and dissimilarities were compared between English poet Tennyson's "Enoch Arden" and Rajanikanta Bordoloi's *Nirmal Bhakat*.

Similarities between "Enoch Arden" and *Nirmal Bhakat*:

In the poem "Enoch Arden", Tennyson painted a childhood picture of Enoch and Philip Ray and Annie Lee playing the bride and groom. These children lived in the coastal town of England. On the first day while playing Enoch insisted on being the groom and Philip protested. But Enoch became the groom based on Annie's decision. Similarly, In *Nirmal Bhakat*, When Nirmal wanted to be the groom, Aniram protested but Rupohi wanted Nirmal to be the groom so Aniram agreed.

In the narrative poem, "Enoch Arden" as well as in the novel *Nirmal Bhakat* the childhood game of bride and groom turned into love. The portrayal of a love triangle is prominent in both the works.

The similarity between the characteristics of Philip from "Enoch Arden" and Bordoloi's Aniram is evident. Philip was comparatively shy than Arden. As a result, he was not able to express his love for Annie Lee so he remained single throughout his life. Likewise, Bordoloi created Aniram as a timid character in contrast to Nirmal's. Therefore Aniram was never able to express his love for Rupohi.

Bordoloi's *Nirmal Bhakat* portrayed Rupohi as a faithful and patient wife similar to Annie Lee. Both waited for their husbands and they decided to marry for the second time.

When Enoch heard about Philip and Annie's marriage from Miriam he was devastated. He wanted to see them. Therefore, he visited them in disguise but when he saw them living happily he decided to walk away without revealing his true identity. Similarly, Bordoloi's Nirmal heard about Rupohi's marriage from the head of the village and visited Rupohi and Aniram in the guise of a monk before joining the Satra.

Difference between “Enoch Arden” and the novel *Nirmal Bhakat*:

In the narrative poem “Enoch Arden” Tennyson portrayed Arden as a fisherman who was happily married and three had children before a tragedy struck him. To provide a better life to his family Enoch left his family to work as a sailor. However, during his voyage, Enoch is shipwrecked on a deserted island with two companions; both eventually die, leaving Arden alone there. On the contrary, Bordoloi created the character of Nirmal as a resident of Lohan village and a son of Bormedhi.

Enoch Arden went to make a living and spent thirteen years of his life on a deserted island. However, in Bordoloi’s novel *Nirmal Bhakat*, Nirmal fought against the Burmese invasion and was imprisoned in Burma for twelve years.

In Enoch Arden Annie patiently waited for ten years before she agreed to marry Philip. On the other hand in the novel *Nirmal Bhakat*, Rupohi waited for Nirmal for twelve years but on receiving no news of Nirmal she married Aniram. According to the villagers knowledge, a woman can marry again if her husband is absent from the household for twelve years. In this context, Govind Prasad Sharma said- “*Christian bidekhi kahanik aidore Bharotiyo kahini kori tula hoise*”(By this way foreign Christian stories are turned into Indian stories) (Sharma 314)

In Tennyson’s “Enoch Arden” there is no mention of history. On the contrary, Rajanikanta Bordoloi’s novel talks about historical events like the second and third Burmese invasions.

Moreover, Enoch came to know about Annie’s marriage with Philip from the tavern keeper Miriam but in Bordoloi’s novel, Nirmal came to know about Rupohi’s marriage with Aniram from the head of the village.

In Tennyson’s story, Enoch had to leave Annie to earn a living but in Bordoloi’s story Nirmal came from a prosperous family but he had to leave Rupohi for the sake of his country.

The story of Enoch Arden doesn’t explore the theme of childhood love, patriotism or spiritual growth but rather ends romantically. The novel *Nirmal Bhakat* explores the protagonist Nirmal’s childhood love, his love for his country which contributed towards his spiritual growth at the end of life. Therefore when his beloved wife Rupohi, who married again, came to know about Nirmal’s real identity, she said in Nirmal’s reference, who was hiding his identity as- “*Bir sestha, ji ghor sarthoku tyag korisil*”(Greatest hero is the one who can sacrifice his greatest urge). (Bordoloi 57)

Picture of Social, Political and Religious directions in Rajanikanta Bordoloi’s novel *Nirmal Bhakat*:

Even though the novel is based on the story of Enoch Arden, yet Bordoloi has included the concept of social norms of Assamese people, the political conditions

of the Ahom Dynasty in that period and the Vaishnav religion. By looking at the social life of Assamese people, from Middle age to the Pre-British period of the nineteenth century, it can be said that people of Assam believed that travelling abroad was an act of losing one's caste. This novel borrows such episodes of caste discrimination. Nirmal went to Burma after fighting in the Second Burmese invasion. After twelve years, he returned to his nation, own people, his beloved wife and his relatives. But the people of his village home offered him food outside their house, as they considered him to be impure because he was imprisoned in Burma.

Nirmal arrived at Dakhinpat Satra seeking shelter when his people called "Jaat-Bhrasta Malach"(a foreigner). He was also treated like an untouchable by the monks of the Satra.

"Moi Jati-Bhrosto Melech, porachit nuhuwakoi xotrot probekh koribo nuwaru" (I am a foreigner who can't enter Satra without being purified.)(Bordoloi-33)

The imaginary love story based on historic events also reflects the political conditions of the Ahom Dynasty. The novel portrays the period from the coronation of Chandra Kanta Sinha to the British domination of Assam. Moreover, it also records the events like the banishment of Satram by Purnananda Buragohain, violence among the executives, disposal of kings which led to the downfall of the Ahom kingdom. The weak king Chandrakanta Singho and Badanchandra Borphukon and the executives Puranada borgohain and Rajma are all responsible for the downfall of the kingdom. Jealousy among the Ahom ministers and clash among each other turned Assam in a death valley during the Burmese invasions. Even though Bordoloi had no clue about historical evidence, he has skillfully created a historical novel. In the novel, Bordoloi expressed the splendour and concept of Vaishnav religion through the notion of Satra, Namghar and Kansh-Badh Bhaona which are usually played in Namghar. He has given a significant explanation to the word "Guru". Actually without a "Guru" one can never achieve ultimate wealth in Hinduism. The idea of Hinduism depends on the concept of Guru and Brahman. For reference, he has mentioned about the Durga festival of Ahom Royal Court.

Literature is the mirror of society. Even if writers are influenced by the literature of different countries, different languages, different cultures, it is true that a writer unconsciously ends up reflecting his own cultures and traditions. The subject matter of this research paper is *Nirmal Bhakat* whose story is based on the narrative poem "Enoch Erden" by Tennyson. Bordoloi gave the English culture, language, traditions a Regional touch. Even if the characters Annie Lee and Philip have been changed to Rupohi and Aniram, and similarities among the characters are lucid, yet they are just a shadow of the main story. To sum up, "Nirmal Bhakat" is a novel that is based on the narrative poem Enoch Arden. However, it was skillfully recreated following the regional traditions, local politics etc using the technique of adaptive translation. It is one of the spectacular and unique creations in Assamese adaptive translation Literature.

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