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Towards the Name and Nature of Translator Studies: a Case Study of Shakespeare's Translators in Gujarati.

¹Dr. Sunil Sagar ,²Anjali Ramnani.

¹Associate Professor & Head, Department of Communication Skills, Marwadi University, Rajkot, Gujarat, India

²Academic Associate, Indian Institute of Management, Udaipur, Rajasthan, India.

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Abstract

Translation history in Gujarat has been focused on addressing objective questions pertaining to translations, such as which translation occurred in which year and sometimes, who translated them. However, in order to arrive at a holistic and fuller account of translation history, we need to delve deeper into these facts and derive newer interpretations. This paper argues that by focusing on the human dimension of the translation, i.e. translator studies, we can get a more authentic and complete account of translation history of these translations. For the purpose of substantiating this claim, we have taken up the case study of Shakespeare's translators in Gujarati. This paper shows that by studying about the life and works of these translators in detail, we can understand the translations of Shakespeare's plays in Gujarati in a more comprehensive way. It concludes by emphasising on the need of translator studies and how this study can open up new vistas of research in the field of translation studies.

1. Introduction

Translation history in India so far has been all about focusing on facts and putting together bibliographies and lists, which delineate who translated what and when. However, it is equally important to focus on the translator, who makes the translation possible in the first place. While it is necessary to find out the date of a translation, it is also imperative to shed light on the translator and his life. In other words, it is necessary that we trace not only the story of the text in translation but also trace the story of the translator. It was Andrew Chesterman who used the phrase in the title of his celebrated paper, "The Name and Nature of Translator Studies". When it comes to translation history of Indian languages, translations are generally documented in a superficial way and translators are barely acknowledged in the process. However, the fact of the matter is that it is impossible to produce a complete account of the translation as it exists without taking into consideration the translator and his myriad motivations. The reason for pursuing translator studies is that, at times, it is the only way to decode the translation history of a particular translation. The process of translation is far from being an objective act; in fact it is a process that entails subjectivity at each stage – selection of the text, poetics deployed by the translator, form and style

chosen by either the translator or his patron, etc. Translators, at times, work under various influences and have various motivations to render the translation in a particular form. Until and unless we decode why and how the translator translated in a particular manner, several aspects of translation history such as choice of the text and methods adopted for translation would never be clear to us. The nuances which emanate from choices and inclinations of the translator form the locus of translation history which would shed more light on the translations, translation process, the translators and agencies/individuals which patronized translators. The pursuit of translation history in Gujarati is far from being rigorous. There are multiple volumes on Gujarati literature depicting the seminal and ordinary works of Gujarati literature. In these volumes, there are vague details of some, and not all translations which were undertaken over the course of history. However, the role of the translator and details about his/her life await due acknowledgement and appreciation. We barely know anything about these individuals, their life, their works, what motivated them to take up translation and why they chose a particular form to translate the text. In this way, 'translator studies' in Gujarat is a rich site that can lend meaningful insights into translation history of the state. For the purpose of substantiating this claim, a case study of Shakespeare's translators in Gujarati has been undertaken.

2. The need for 'Translator Studies' in India and Indian languages

An endeavour to uncover translation history in its entirety mandates us to view the translator as an individual who is accorded a complex presence shaping and being shaped by diverse factors. S/he is no longer just an objective medium of cultural transfer. In the process of translation, his inclinations and external factors that influence him/her play a major role in the way translations take form. Translators can have myriad motivations to translate a particular text in a particular way. As Andre Lefevere conveys explicitly and emphatically that translations are not 'produced in a vacuum' and the translators operate in 'a given culture'. It is how the translators perceive their roles, their culture, and the culture of the source text that determines the way they translate. It is also pertinent to note that the way they understand these aspects evolves with the change of time period. It is no longer held true that there are no power relations involved in a translation and that the translator acts freely and translates without being influenced. There's a growing need to understand the role played by patrons, powerful individuals, agencies, publishers, translation scholars etc. which influence the translator and shape the translation in different ways. Hence, it is imperative to explore the life and work of translators which can help us to reconstruct the historical context of the translation. In fact, Lieven D'hulst in his paper Translation History states that the first object of translation history is the translator; it is necessary that we unearth the translator's "intellectual and social backgrounds (training, gender, socio-economic, ideological and cultural profile)" as he puts it (399). Genzler and Tymoczko assert that translators are not just translators but they, 'as much as creative writers and politicians, participate in the powerful acts that create knowledge and shape culture'. (Genzler/Tymoczko xxi) In a similar vein, Luise Von Flotow states, "the modest, self-effacing translator who produces a smooth, readable target language version of the original has become a thing of the past" (76) We can no longer continue to believe that the translator is on a quest to produce a faithful translation of the source text in an innocent fashion. There are nuances to the way translators undertake translation and we need to rigorously examine the same in order to shed new light on the existing ways translation history is interpreted. Lefevere quotes Du Bellay who offers the 'bluntest statement' which refers to curtailing the translator's freedom when he says: "the obedience one owes to patrons admits of no excuse".

In the light of these insights, it is evident that mere listing down of translations with superficial details does not serve the purpose of writing translation history. In order to work out a detailed translation history, we will need to delve into the human dimension of translation and analyse the way the translator behaved and made crucial choices during the process of translating a text. In order to reconstruct translation history in an accurate fashion, we will need to find out the translator's motives and inclinations to undertake the translations as well as the influence of

individuals and agencies around the translator. For this, we need to focus upon issues related to power relations between translator and the patron(s), support and guidance offered by individuals, and the control mechanisms such as censorship if it existed and affected the translation.

Even the poetics of translation is determined by the literary choices made by the translator. The translator has the power to shape the translation in a particular way. More importantly, he/she has the liberty to deviate from the source text and s/he can adapt it to the receiving culture so that it is received well. Merely studying a translation in isolation eliminates the possibility of studying how a translator deviated from the source text and rendered a translation that is more palatable to the readership s/he has in mind. As Andrew Lefevere states in *Translation, History, Culture*:

Patrons circumscribe the translators' ideological space; critics tend to circumscribe their poetological space. To make a foreign work of literature acceptable to the receiving culture, translators will often adapt it to the poetics of that receiving culture. De la Motte, for instance, justifies his cutting down of the *Iliad* to a work half the size of the original by remarking: "Would a theatre audience accept having characters come out during the intervals in a tragedy to tell us all that is going to happen next? Would it approve if the actions of the principal characters were interrupted by the business of the confidants? Certainly not". He was merely adapting the epic to the requirements of the genre that was dominant in his day and age: the tragedy. Any elements in the Homeric epic that went against the poetics of the tragedy quite simply had to be deleted for the translation to find any audience at all. (07)

It would yield interesting insights if we tried to discover the way Gujarati translators tried to adapt to the receiving culture while translating Shakespeare's plays. For instance, in order to provide a Gujarati equivalent for Shakespeare's blank verse, different Gujarati translators have used different methodologies for translation. Mohamed Rupani employed a sort of blank verse for his translation of *As You Like It*. Hansa Mehta chose to maintain it as a verse translation and employed a metre called *Anushtup* to translate Shakespeare's plays into Gujarati. Krushnashankar Ambashankar Vyas improvised a form called *Gadhyapadhyatmak*, a translation that is in prose but carries the rhythm of verse. This is only a specimen of the different literary choices that translators make in order to make their translations palatable for their audience. It is pertinent to bear in mind that translators, at times, have a specific readership in mind, which decides their translation strategies and literary choices for their translation.

Hence, a chronological list of translations or comparing the translated text with the source text does not suffice as translation history. As a matter of fact, without the study of the core literary choices that the translator makes, the cultural and intellectual climate of his times, and his life, translation history would be incomplete. As Anthony Pym remarked, "study the translator first, then the translation" (30)

3. Shakespeare in Gujarati Translation: an overview

Gujarat's tryst with Shakespeare began in the year 1852, when an adaptation of Shakespeare's *Taming of the Shrew* titled as *Nathari Firangiz Thekane Aaviin* Gujarati was performed by a Parsi theatre group at Andrews Library in Surat in 1852 (Mehta 1964). This was the first ever adaptation of a Shakespearean play in any modern Indian language. Every major writer, poet, scholar, and critic in Gujarat read, commented and engaged with Shakespeare in one way or the other. Keshav Dhruv, a renowned Sanskrit scholar, conceptualised *Vanvelimetre* which could lend itself to the translations of Shakespeare. It was a kind of breakthrough in Gujarati literature because translating Shakespeare's blank verse in Gujarati was deemed difficult before that. The eminent Gujarati critic R.V. Pathak had translated a scene from the play *Romeo and Juliet* incorporating *Vanvelimetre*, which inspired Jaswant Thakar to render a full-fledged translation of *Macbeth* in 1964 using the same metre. Umashankar Joshi was one of the most influential Gujarati scholars in terms of his contribution towards facilitating Shakespeare in Gujarati. Although he did not provide a full fledged translation of any of Shakespeare's plays, he was instrumental in ushering three translations of Shakespeare's plays in Gujarati. He had conceptualized a series of 15 translations

under KavitaSangam: NisheethPuraskarGranth Mala - 22 published by Gangotri Trust, which was established by Joshi himself. This project was initiated with the intent of introducing literature and poetry from other languages into Gujarati, including the works of Shakespeare. He reached out to fellow scholars such as MansukhlalJhaveri and NalinRaval, and requested them to translate Othello, King Lear and The Tempest for the same. He was the editor of a Gujarati literary magazine named Sanskriti, and on the occasion of the 400th birth anniversary of the Shakespeare, Joshi decided to dedicate the publications of all issues of Sanskriti of an entire year to Shakespeare. Santprasad Bhatt, another Shakespearean scholar and Joshi's friend, contributed articles on Shakespeare for each issue, starting from January 1964 until April 1965. These articles talk not only about Shakespeare's life and works, but also carry salient translations of some lines and titles of Shakespeare's plays as well as sonnets by Bhatt. Since Shakespeare was born in the month of April, Joshi had prepared a special issue on Shakespeare in April issue of Sanskriti in 1964. Joshi had written a poem on Shakespeare which was included in the index of the issue, followed by excerpts of translations by the well-known scholars such as MansukhlalJhaveri, Hansa Mehta, etc. It also carried scholarly articles on Shakespeare by Santprasad Bhatt, C. C. Mehta, Jayant Pathak and NiranjaniBhagat etc. It also had a translation of Hamlet's famous soliloquy "To be or not to be, that is the question" by Umashankar Joshi himself. On the occasion of 400th anniversary of Shakespeare's birth, Chandravan Mehta had conceptualized Drashyavali, an anthology of scenes translated from Shakespeare's plays to be performed in schools. It was an effort to pay tribute to Shakespeare through performance on stage. For that volume, he contributed a translation of a scene from A Midsummer Night's Dream. His article titled, "Shakespeare and Gujarati Stage" was published in Indian Literature Vol. 7, Issue I in 1964 which succinctly documents translations and adaptations of Shakespeare's plays in Gujarati from 1852 until 1964. These are few of the many instances where various scholars, writers, critics, and poets engaged with Shakespeare in myriad ways by translating, critiquing and discoursing on his works.

Translations proper began only at the onset of the last quarter of the 19th century, when BhanjiGokal Parekh provided the first ever translation of a Shakespearean play in Gujarati, Julius Caesar in 1874. It was followed by five translations done by NarbheshankarPranjivan Dave, under a project funded by the Princely State of Bhavnagar, a series titled Shakespeare Mala. As a part of this project, Dave translated Othello, Julius Caesar, Measure for Measure, The Merchant of Venice and Hamlet during 1898 to 1917. After a gap of 25 years, Hansa Mehta's translated into Gujarati Hamlet and The Merchant of Venice in 1942 and 1944 respectively. Jayant Patel, a lecturer in Gujarati at MTB Arts College translated Othello, Macbeth, The Merchant of Venice and As You Like It during 1963-64. JashwantThakar translated Macbeth and Richard III in 1964 and 1969 respectively. The noted Gujarati scholar, MansukhlalJhaveri translated Hamlet, Othello and King Lear in 1967, 1978 and 1983 respectively. KrushnashankarVyas translated The Merchant of Venice in the year 1975. Mohamed Rupani translated Shakespeare's 159 Sonnets and As You Like It in 1977 and 1979 respectively. NalinRawal translated The Tempest in 1992.

4. A Case Study of Shakespeare's Translators in Gujarati

a. BhanjiGokal Parekh

BhanjiGokal Parekh was the first ever translator to translate Shakespeare's play in Gujarati in 1874, which was titled Karunaras Julius Caesar Natak. There is very little information available about him except what is mentioned in the preface to the translation. It states that he was the Principal of Anglo-vernacular school at Vala, near Vallabhipur in Gujarat. However, the translation was printed at Kathiawad Printing Press, Rajkot. He states in his preface that while he was in Rajkot for 20 days, he wanted to spend his time doing something constructive, and that's how the translation of Julius Caesar came into existence. He also mentions that before the translation got published, he wanted to find out if it would be well-received by the readers. So he decided to convene a meeting of like minded scholars and read out aloud the first act of the play. Various scholars argued with him that the language seemed highly Sanskritised to which he replies in the preface by saying that

Gujarati is derived from Sanskrit only, so there is no harm if the language is Sanskritised. It is also stated that the verse portion of the play was translated by BalwantrairRamchandraJunnarkar. There is barely any information about him except this bit, mentioned in the text itself. The preface also hints at how Parekh must have received some sort of patronage and support in order to get this translation published. The translation is dedicated to W.W. Anderson, the then Political Agent. It also enlists the names of those people who bought copies of the translation in advance, including Junnarkar's brother.

Parekh had also translated a book titled Rajkumar Law Lectures into Gujarati, which consisted of a series of elementary lectures on law addressed to the students of Rajkumar College, Rajkot by George Clifford Whitworth. In the preface to the translation he states:

... it would behove the upper classes to patronize and encourage the publication of learned and useful books in Gujrati for the enrichment and elevation of their native works. Without their patronage there will be no inducement to men of merit to write useful works. (4)

This translation also bears the names of various influential people who had placed an advance order to purchase multiple copies of the book. Like his first translation, this translation was also printed at Rajkot. It is a mystery as to how this person working at Vala got interested in translating an English play and lectures on law. Not only that, he was well-connected to powerful people in Rajkot who funded his translations. However, the details about his life are scarce and it would entail rigorous research to uncover more facts. A deeper analysis into his life and works would help us shed new light on the cultural and intellectual times of the latter half of the 19th century Gujarat. Since he was the first ever translator of Shakespeare's play in Gujarati, reconstructing the story of his life is even more significant.

b.NarbheshankarPranjivan Dave

The case of the second translator of Shakespeare's plays, NarbheshankarPranjivan Dave is an equally intriguing study. He had translated five plays, namely Julius Caesar(1898), Othello(1898), Measure for Measure (1906), The Merchant of Venice(1911) and Hamlet(1917) under Shakespeare Mala series which was funded by the Princely State of Bhavnagar. He was the only Gujarati translator who achieved the feat of translating five plays of Shakespeare. However, there are barely any details available about him or his life and how he turned towards translation. If one refers to volumes of history of Gujarati literature, s/he would not find any details about Dave, his life or his works. A small passage in a volume of GranthaneGranthkar(a Companion to Gujarati Literature) is all we have regarding Dave that describes his life in brief. Every known scholar of Gujarati literature, who was cognizant of Dave's work, has maintained till date that he was a lecturer in the renownedSamaldas Arts College at Bhavnagar and subsequently, he translated Shakespeare's plays into Gujarati. It is mentioned in this same sequence too. At first, it appears to be a plausible explanation that Dave first acquired a job at Samaldas Arts College and then he translated. This sequence that is proffered by the historians and scholars of Gujarati literature will seem convincing to most. However, the preface to Dave's third translation, Measure for Measure(1906), challenges this sequence propounded by everyone. In the preface Dave expresses his gratitude towards HH Sir BhavsinhjiGohil for helping him to complete his graduation, post-graduation, and assisting him in getting a job at Samaldas Arts College in 1905. But as the chronology of his translations suggests, he had translated Julius Caesar and Othello in 1898, which is way before he did his M.A. or got a job as a lecturer. Thus, it becomes imperative to examine the facts of this instance. The facts about his life are as follows: he enrolled in Samaldas Arts College in 1899 as a student and continued his studies up to 1901. Thereafter he went to Deccan College and Ferguson College, Pune to complete a part of his graduation and post-graduation from 1901 to 1904. He returned to Bhavnagar and joinedSamaldas Arts College as a lecturer in 1905. As evident, these facts reveal a completely different story from what was believed till date. Dave had brought out the first translation of Julius

Caesar in 1898 well before he enrolled in Samaldas Arts College in 1899. This seems to suggest that he had hardly completed his matriculation in 1898 when published first translation, at the tender age of 16. However, the scholarly preface to his first translation seems to suggest that he was much older than 16. It becomes critical to determine his age at the time of the first translation publication. College records at Samaldas Arts College wherein he enrolled as a student in 1899 shed some light on his age. According to the college records, he was born in 1870, which means he was 28 years old at the time of publication of the first translation in 1898.

Dave was an exceptional translator of Shakespeare because he had not even enrolled in the college at the time of publication of the first translation and managed to bring out two more translations before he took up the job of a lecturer at Samaldas Arts College. He not only translated but also wrote long and educative introduction to the first translation in which he explains the thematic aspects and characterization. The fact is we know so little about this prudent man who translated Shakespeare without even an undergraduate degree suggests the dire need to focus on the translators while trying to understand the translation history of any translation. As mentioned above, he was born in the year 1870 at Chuda near Surendranagar in Gujarat. He appeared for the matriculation exam in 1885 and failed in it. Later, he got married and took up a job in railways and also worked in a cooperative firm after that. He reappeared for the matriculation examination in 1890 and managed to clear it. It is evident that he was struggling to make ends meet and that is why he took up various odd jobs. It is worth researching as to how he left everything and negotiated Shakespeare's art during 1890 to 1898, a period that is unaccounted for. It is also worth researching as to how he acquired the credibility as a translator that HH Maharaja Sir Bhavsinhji who placed his trust in him for the translation of not just one but five plays of Shakespeare. Tracing Dave's journey from Chuda to Bhavnagar and his career progression from a clerk in a cooperative firm to the translator of Shakespeare's plays can also explain how he got inclined towards literature and how these translations came into existence. It is for reasons like these and more, the life of this translator of Shakespeare deserves a deeper analysis.

c. Hansa Mehta

Hansa Mehta's translations of Hamlet (1942) and The Merchant of Venice (1944) can be deemed as a breakthrough in the history of translation in Gujarat. There are several facts that bear testimony to this statement. To begin with, she was the first ever woman translator of Shakespeare's plays; as a matter of fact the only woman translator to have translated Shakespeare's plays. Before her translations came into existence, it was deemed difficult to render Shakespeare's blank verse in Gujarati, as Gujarati does not have an equivalent for this form. However, she discovered a metre suitable for rendering the blank verse in Gujarati. She was the first and the only translator who attempted to translate the said plays using anushtup metre. Hence she changed this notion and paved way for several other translations in verse and other forms. She can be credited for filling a vacuum that was believed could never be filled. Prior to her attempt, there were only two translators, Bhanji Gokal Parekh who translated Julius Caesar in 1874, and Narbheshankar Dave, who translated five plays of Shakespeare, namely Othello, Julius Caesar, Measure for Measure, The Merchant of Venice and Hamlet (1898-1917), but they all were in prose form. From 1917 until 1942, there was not even one translator who undertook the task of translating Shakespeare's plays into Gujarati. However, Mehta took up the translation of Hamlet as a response to the criticism of eminent critics as B.K. Thakore and R.V. Pathak who remarked that it was disheartening to see how major Gujarati poets have failed to usher in Shakespeare in Gujarati. She also incorporated upjatichand from Sanskrit language to translate certain parts in the play. In the preface to her second translation, Venis no Vepari, she states that to conclude that translation from Gujarati into English is not possible altogether due to differences in sentence construction and other such aspects is not appropriate. In a way, she inspired all her successors to take up translation in forms apart from prose and also proved that translation in verse was very much possible. As opposed to her predecessor Dave who did prose translations for the masses of gurjar community, she did this verse

translation for the ardent lovers of Gujarati literature. If as translation historians, we were to just compare her versions of translations with the original text, we would miss out on knowing about her contribution to Gujarati literature, and also why these translations exist in the particular form that they do.

d.MansukhlalJhaveri

MansukhlalJhaveri was a Gujarati critic, literary historian writer and poet from Gandhian era. He is a unique instance in translation history of Gujarat and deserves a special mention because he was arguably the only translator to have translated the works of both Shakespeare and Kalidasa into Gujarati language. He had translated Kalidasa's *Shankuntala* in Gujarati as *SmritibramshaathvaShapitShakuntala* (1928) and Shakespeare's *Hamlet* (1967), *Othello* (1978) and *King Lear* (1983) into Gujarati. Although he was primarily not a translator, he was well-versed in at least three languages namely English, Sanskrit and Gujarati and translated works of two of the greatest playwrights in literary history of English and Sanskrit. As mentioned in the previous section, it was at the behest of Umashankar Joshi, Jhaveri translated *Othello* and *King Lear* into Gujarati. Not only did he translate, but his translations are ranked to be the best by Joshi himself among all other preceding translations of the same plays by other translators. In his book *Isamu Shideane Anya*, Joshi in his article titled "Mansukhbhai" states:

He was very good at translating. The reason being he studied two great languages – Sanskrit and English since his childhood. Very few translators showed the accuracy and insight that he did. His translation of *Shakuntala* is quite good but I have no qualms in stating that his translations of Shakespeare's plays can be ranked as the best translations of Shakespeare of all times. His translation of *Hamlet* was received quite well. When I read that, I requested him to translate as many Shakespeare's plays as he could. In his translation of *Othello*, the way Iago misleads Othello-manipulates Othello's thoughts about Desdemona, and that scene - wherein Othello smothers Desdemona-- when we read that in Gujarati prose, in Mansukhlal's prose, we can hear Shakespeare's voice in it!(158)

Although he is best known for his poems and books on criticism, he is yet to be acknowledged as a prolific translator who made a lasting contribution to Gujarati literature by translating these seminal works of Kalidasa and Shakespeare. A comprehensive study of this sort can place a translator in history and provide us with a fuller account of translation history than what we would have if we look at his translations of Shakespeare's plays alone. His evolution as a translator entails a deeper analysis of his life and tracing his journey starting from his birth place Jamnagar, to studies at Samaldas Arts College, Bhavnagar and eventually working in Mumbai can perhaps lead to newer insights about his works. During this time, how did he develop an interest in translating texts of two of the greatest playwrights in the history of literature – Kalidas and Shakespeare? An answer to this question would not be possible without reconstructing the story of his life and works in its entirety.

5. Conclusion

Translation history should not be simply an account of known facts. We must attempt to present a new interpretation of these known facts. Though translation history in Gujarati is richly endowed with facts, little effort has been made to interpret them. Moving in the direction of translator studies will help us uncover newer interpretations from history that is believed to be a chronological list of facts, so that we can present a more authentic and fuller account translation history in Gujarati.

Focusing on translator studies would also shed light on the cultural contribution of translators. Translators such as Hansa Mehta or MansukhlalJhaveri translated because critics and scholars such as R.V. Pathak and Umashankar Joshi requested them to do so. They volunteered and extended their service as translators in order to usher in different texts into Gujarati thereby enriching Gujarati literature. Merely listing the texts that Mehta or Jhaveri translated would not suffice the purpose

of translation history. It would entail a rigorous analysis of what transpired before these individuals took up translation of these texts in the first place. If we focus on the human aspect of translation history in Gujarati, it would enrich our understanding of how these works got translated into Gujarati. It is for a deeper and fuller understanding of why and how these translations occurred that one needs to resort to translator studies in Gujarati. It will enhance our understanding of who these individuals were, how they carried out their work and why they did it in a particular way with regards to translation. It will also enable us to understand the cultural and historical context better which is important for understanding translation history.

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