

The Gnomes and Gremlins of Translation with Reference to Lalithambika Antharjanam's novel "Agnisakshi" and Rajam Krishnan's Tamil Novel Translated into English- "*Lamps In The Whirlpool*".

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Abstract: "*Without translation, I would be limited to the borders of my own country*" said Italo Calvino, Italian novelist, and short story writer. To enter the literary landscape of thoughts & imagination of another land, language, culture, and history, "Translation" is the only bridge. Translations evolved and impacted the society differently in different eras. Carrying across the values and communicating through literary translations broaden our own thought process and understanding. There are many literary ethos hidden in every work of writing for us to find and translate. The treasure troves of literary creativity will find light only through translation. But to enjoy and avoid the loss of literary moments in translation, we need to identify the elves that hinder the flow. The local myths, beliefs, sound patterns, significance of words, dialects, use of idioms and phrases, nuances, rituals, and the likes would alter the very essence of the original work. So, in the process of re- drawing the boundaries, interpreting, and localization, the translator is a holding pin. The translator should understand the impact of his translating responsibility and the repercussions his faulty understanding can bring about. The role of a translator is critical to bring out an authentic closeness to the source work. This paper gives an insight into the new world that opened because of translation, the challenges to translate the absolute meaning of the source work with reference to Lalithambika Antharjanam's novel

"Agnisakshi" translated from Malayalam into English and Rajam Krishnan's Tamil novel translated into English- "*Lamps in the Whirlpool*".

Key words: Translation, interpretation, translator, cultural nuances

"Literature is where I go to explore the highest and lowest places in human society and in the human spirit, where I hope to find not absolute truth but the truth of the tale, of the imagination, and of the heart." said Salman Rushdie. If Literature reflects life, then Literary Translation is an ocean of complexities of people beyond our boundary and comprehension.

Though there are conflicting and contradicting theories about the origin of translation amongst the translators, it is commonly accepted that it originated from Mesopotamia, Anatolia and Egypt. We can possibly believe this origin as there are clear references and proofs of women writers like Enheduanna around 3400 BC in Sumeria. The first translation was a poem called 'The Epic of Gilgamesh', written in Sumerian and translated into a many languages. Many translators have done tremendous work yet not many names are known unlike King Alfred the great and Geoffrey Chaucer who translated Boethius' 'Consolation of Philosophy' from Latin.

From history we observe that translation was initially carried out to disseminate religious text. More primarily to create wider audience or readers. In the beginning, the Mesopotamians and Egyptians initially were translating only religious, cultural, and judicial texts, until the Romans began to translate literary text. Livius Andronicus translation of Homer's Odyssey into Latin in 240 B.C. was historical because it enhanced and enriched the Latin literary culture by giving access to the Greek works. Another turn of history in the Western world was the

translation of the Hebrew Bible into Greek in the 3rd century BCE. Most Jews had forgotten Hebrew, their ancestral language, and needed the Bible to be available in Greek. Arabs took to large-scale translation to offer Arabic versions of all the major Greek philosophical and scientific works after they conquered the Greek Empire.

With the flow of the centuries, translation became a huge gateway to explore the realms of the worlds mind that included fields beyond literature. In this discovering journey of translation, the translator became an important companion. The Translators throughout the 18th century omitted what they did not understand or thought that it would bore the readers as the watchword for them was the ease of reading. In the 19th century there were new standards for accuracy and style. Though a debate is on for centuries if we should apply a sense-for-sense translation or a word-for-word translation most agree that a clear and straightforward translations focused on conveying the meaning than the precise literal rendering is a good approach. Some believe “Faithfulness” and “transparency” are the dual ideals in translation. Yet in spite of all the techniques, theories, ideas and guidelines, we note that the translated works cannot match the original in its Ethos. This is because of the numerous Elves; like an equivalent word or a syntax that is not available in the translating language, failure to bring out the nuances and meaning of the regional dialects and the emphasis of the meaning it connotes; that pull out the wires of understanding the artistic quality of the original work. Translators find it difficult to re-create the paradoxes, metaphors, syntaxes, play of words, tongue twisters, and culture specific expressions.

Phrases unacceptable by Romans had to be changed to please them and hence the original got lost in translation from Greek to Latin. The first English epic, Beowulf is a story about Scandinavians facing off against hideous, nightmarish creatures. While it's possible to preserve the poem's rhythm in modern English, the same can't be said for the characters' names. In the original, they add a whole new level of meaning to the story. The name “Beowulf” alone is significant. Literally, the name means “wolf of the bee”—a sentence that makes little sense until you realize “wolf” also means “foe.” “Bee-foe” was a northern European nickname for bears, thanks to their habit of raiding hives for honey. The name Beowulf is meant to conjure both images of wolves and bears, indicating that our hero is the manliest man in a book about some very manly men. Unlike modern English, ancient Greek had multiple words for expressing love. Greeks could express their feelings using *Eros* (sexual love), *Philia* (friendship), or *Agape* (selfless love). The challenge of getting these double and triple meanings across in a different language frequently drives translators mad. Repeated use of adjectives is a significant trait for Russian readers while for the English it a bore. Specific words that belong to the source text cannot be translated. Like for example, in Kafka's “Metamorphosis” ‘Ungeziefer’ meant an creature unfit for sacrifice while in English it just meant unwelcome in the house. A Turkish word ‘Yakamoz’ meant reflection of moon in water and no translation can render the meaning of the original. So, it is very necessary for a translator, to not just familiarise but delve deeply into, to absorb the local colours before he paints a translated work that can look closer to the original.

Agnishakshi was originally written in Malayalam by Lalithamibka Antarjanam and is translated into English in the same name as Agnisakshi Fire, My witness by Vasanthi Sankaranarayanan. The writer has expressed anguish against the status of women in the society and family. It is no different from each of the states and the culture they came from. In the name of religion and tradition, customs were created and enforced to subordinate woman in all walks of their life. She is refused identity and is reduced to be a tool in the hands of man, family, and society to fulfil the men designed traditional Indian values of dharma, artha, karma and moksha. Writing to express is itself empowerment and translation further disseminates the seeds of empowerment beyond the boundaries. The translated works are a sense-to-sense translation in most chapters and in some word to word in the novels. In the process, what we find lost is the literary aesthetics of the language though the content and in some cases the context as well is brought out. This is because some words like “madi”, “antharjanam”, “tharawad”, “upanayanas” cannot be translated. The Malayalam novel speaks about the social customs and the shackles of antiquated traditions of Kerala in the 20th century especially of Namboodri women. The debilitating impact and the insidious exploitation on women are brought about through the protagonist Thethi and the other women characters in the novel. In spite of the good translation from Malayalam to English, the translators are unable to bring out the pathos and the pain of the living status of the women from the Namboodiri Tharawad. The extent of cultural ethos that is choking and clipping women's independence and dignity certainly cannot be translated even with fine words

of translation because there is no word equivalent and as intense as the word Antharjanam. Some of the words used in translation like Chowa dosham, Cheruthali, Anthapuram, Sudra, Marakuda, Edathi, have a deeper psychological and cultural colour and oppression exercised on women in Kerala.

Suzhalil Mithakum Deepangal was originally written in Tamil by Rajam Krishnan and translated into English as *Lamps in the Whirlpool* by Uma Narayan and Prema Seetharaman. The writer Rajam Krishnan has expressed anguish against the status of women in the society and family. It was no different from each of the states and the culture they came from. In the name of religion and tradition, customs were created and enforced to subordinate woman in all walks of their life. She is refused identity and is reduced to be a tool in the hands of man, family, and society to fulfil the men designed traditional Indian values of dharma, artha, karma and moksha.

Writing to express is itself empowerment and translation further disseminates the seeds of empowerment beyond the boundaries. The translated works are a sense-to-sense translation in most chapters and in some word to word in the novels. In the process, what we find lost is the literary aesthetics of the language though the content and in some cases the context as well is brought out. This is because some words like “madi”, “antharjanam”, “tharawad”, “upanayanas” cannot be translated. The Tamil novel by Rajam Krishnan translated into English as “Lamps in the Whirlpool” by Uma Narayanan and Prema Seetharam speaks about the problems and the shackles of an archaic Brahminical traditions like “madi” and “aacharam” that are followed in Tamil Nādu. The debilitating impact and the insidious exploitation on women are brought about through the protagonist Girija. In spite of the good translation from Tamil to English, the translators cannot bring out the pathos and the pain these two words evoke. The extent of cultural ethos that is choking and clipping women’s independence and dignity certainly cannot be translated even with fine words of translation because there is no word equivalent. The title in the original work in Tamil is “Suzhalil Mithakum Deepangal”. It has a deeper impact than the one in English “The Lamps in the Whirlpool”. The custom of floating leaf lamps into the sacred waters is very much a festive part of the Indian culture and this cannot be equated to the word Lamps in English which just denotes a device that produces light. Likewise, ‘Mithakum’ is floating which conveys the strength and the lightness of the lamp. The word ‘suzhal’ in Tamil is used to communicate the extreme danger unlike what it denotes in English. How can a reader comprehend the complexities of the customs that do not allow the mother to touch her own young children if they are clothed in the name of madi customs. Or practices that prohibit servants’ entry through the main door. The male dominated practices of the family expects women to serve her husband and all else is secondary, her own likes and status is not to be considered at all. Will the readers understand the depth of neglect when a translation states that Girija ate only in the kitchen room after everyone finishes their food on the dining table. Girija’s journey away from home and her self-realisation against the backdrop of the cultural age and customs becomes crucial and, in this novel, the translation is only a fraction of what the words signify in the original work. Not because the translators do not know the language but because the essence of the land cannot be completely transferred in translation. And the translators have put in every effort to match the original flavour of the culture and content.

At a time when feminist ideas were propagated and was only a topic for discussion, Rajam Krishnan through her protagonist Girija presented the issues to highlight that they are real, and the victims of subjugation are also the educated and the employed women. How would a reader understand the rigid belief system and the patriarchal dominance in family and outside unless he understands the cultural fabric of the writer, her environment that seeps into her writing? Liberty, Equality and Freedom were the slogan of many women not just in Andhra but across the Indian states and around the globe. The translator must take on the responsibility to bring out the message of the novel correctly in the translation into English. Girija’s struggle for social and political emancipation against the chains of tradition that bind her can be felt only when we realise the weight of the chain that fetters. For the readers to understand the rules of the ‘madi’ and its implications the translator must immerse into the history of the customs, traditions, and habits of the culture and how the practices are enforced upon women. Translation is an art, and the translators play the key in opening up the vast arsenal of literary and creative spheres to readers around the world. With translation readers and people get access to the accumulated wisdom and ancient knowledge of other cultures.

In this paper presentation Gnomes and Gremlins are used metaphorically. symbols of good luck represented by a small humanoid figurine wearing a tall, pointy red hat. Gnomes provide protection, especially of the buried treasure in the ground; the minerals. Gremlin is a folkloric mischievous creature that causes malfunctions in aircraft or other machinery. Cultural differences, local traditions, laws, social standing of women, use of words and phrases that carry meaning beyond, are a few Gremlins that impede translation as much as language does. The role of the Gnomes is simple; to protect the creative treasure but the role of a translator to face the gremlins and recreate is tough. The breadth and depth of creative expressions and expansions are not fully explored. They are still hidden and protected by the literary Gnomes for translation so that the newer perspectives and approaches can be spread afar. So let us equip and continue to translate.

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