

ROLE OF TRANSLATION IN COMPARATIVE LITERATURE: ASPECTS AND CONTRIBUTION

Ms Sonia Rani

Research Scholar, Amity University Rajasthan, Jaipur
soniakashyap42@gmail.com

Dr Manoj Kumar

Assistant Professor, Amity University Rajasthan, Jaipur
mkumar1@jpr.amity.edu

Abstract

Comparative Literature is a broad phrase that refers to all literary texts across boundaries. It is interdisciplinary in nature as it comprises the study of texts across national boundaries, time periods, language, and genres, furthermore providing a deeper and broader perspective to analyse various literature. However, this is possible only by the easy availability of translated texts. So, Comparative Literature, in one sense, is dependent on translation studies as the entire gamut of literary texts is not accessible in one language. Translation Studies cultivate relationships between people and nations. Translation Studies, which earlier had been put in oblivion and was considered a part of the language learning program, has now taken the form of a distinct discipline in the latter part of the 20th century. This paper aims to demonstrate the relationship between translation and comparative literature.

Key-words: *comparative literature, translation, cultivate*

Introduction:

If comparative literature is an account of the “foreign trade of literatures” (Wellek, “The Crisis” 163), translation is one thing it cannot do without. (Monnet and Saussy)

The aforementioned statement makes a bold point in depicting the significant role played by Translation in Comparative Literature. Comparative Literature is a broad phrase that refers to all literary texts across boundaries. It is interdisciplinary in nature that comprises the study of texts across national boundaries, across time periods, across language and across genres furthermore providing a deeper and broader perspective to analyse various literature. However, this is possible only by the easy availability of translated texts. As no literary text exists in a single language, translation studies must focus on conducting translations. And there would be no language diversity if Translation Studies were not conducted. Moreover, the most prominent languages, such as English, French, and German, dominate minor languages, and common people would be unable to access them. Comparative Literature and Translation Studies go hand in hand in this age of globalisation and multiculturalism, as Translation Studies cultivate relationships between people and nations. Translation tries to bridge the gaps between people and nations. Therefore, translation now has become an integral part of Comparative Literature. This paper aims to answer a few questions:

- What is Comparative Literature?
- What are Translation Studies?
- What are the viewpoints of different critics?

- How translation is indirectly embedded in literature?
- What are the various problems underlying translating the texts?
- How has translation become an integral part of Comparative Literature?

Meaning of Comparative Literature

In a layman's view, Comparative Literature is 'literature without boundaries.' Comparative Literature is a broad term to define as it involves the study of two or more than two kinds of literature simultaneously. It is interdisciplinary as it comprises the study of texts across national boundaries, periods, language, and genres, furthermore providing a deeper and broader perspective to analyse various literature. Comparative Literature cannot be considered as creative literature like poems, short stories and novels as the most significant tools in the hands of a critic are comparison and analysis. One can't ignore the statement given by Susan Bassnett, a British Scholar and Historian of Comparative Literature, in her book entitled *Comparative Literature: A Critical Introduction* this regard:

"Most people don't start with Comparative Literature, they end up with it in some way or the other, travelling towards it from different points of departure. (Bassnett)

Comparative Literature and Translation go simultaneously as translation provides food for comparison through translated texts. It is entirely dependent on translation. While comparing, the literary texts belong to the same literature or other literature. For example, a French writer writes in French and a German writer writes in the German language. However, learning all the languages is not practicable for everyone. Consequently, one has to rely on translated texts.

Meaning of Translation Studies

The process of translation entails converting the source text into the target text. A translator is primarily concerned with two things. The first is that both writings should have the same meaning, and the second is that both texts should have the same structure. However, if he needs to make some changes, he can do so without even distorting the target language's structure. Some scholars, such as Theodore Savory, refer to translation as an "art," while others, such as Eric Jacobsen, refer to it as a "craft," and still others, perhaps more logically, refer to it as a "science." (Bassnett)

Susan Bassnett, a renowned critic in Comparative literature and Translation, says that translation focuses on the replacement of linguistic items between two languages. Translation has been regarded as a process in which necessary changes are done in the source language by retaining the original sense.

Translation in the hidden form

Translation Studies, which earlier had been put in oblivion and was considered a part of the language learning program, has now taken the form of a distinct discipline in the latter part of the 20th century. The most influential works of literature are not considered original productions but they are treated as translations. We can't ignore what Haun Saussy had said in his book *Introducing Comparative Literature: New Trends and Applications*:

English literature cannot be imagined without the King James Bible (1611), the Arabian Nights (translated in 1706, 1859, 1885, etc.), Don Quixote (translated by Shelton, 1612; Smollett, 1755, etc.), the Grimm Brothers' Fairy Tales (1823), or the Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyam (translated by Edward Fitzgerald, 1859, 1868), to mention just a few of the works that are taken for granted as part of the linguistic and cultural background of everyone who uses

English. (Monnet and Saussy)

The translation is, overtly or covertly, embedded in the core of our literature. We can't imagine even a single text without translation. It already exists in Comparative Literature and more precisely, a part of it.

Problems underlying Translation

The translation is no longer a part of Comparative Literature and now has assumed a new shape. Some writers consider it would be fairer to call it 'literature three' or 'another literature.' It has become a distinct discipline in the latter part of the 20th century. However, it has to face numerous problems and some are continuing. The translation is a process of replacing the source text with the target text. While translating, the major problem lies with the originality of the text as the surface meaning can never remain the same even after choosing the appropriate linguistic components. India is a multilingual and multicultural country having 22 languages. The readers can access the regional literature only through translation. Therefore, translation plays an important role here. However, some writers write in their regional languages and the target language as well. R.N. Tagore, Sarojini Naidu, Kamla Das, R. K. Narayana, Ruskin Bond etc are some names of those who have left an indelible mark in the history of Indian English Literature with their masterpieces. In the post-colonial era, the translators started translating regional texts into a link language-English. But there were some native English writers also. As a result, there grew a conflict between both the writers. Everyone is trying to prove his supremacy over another. But at the same time, there were some self-interpreters as well like Tagore and Girish Karnad. The regional writers believe that there is more originality in their texts than those who are writing in English as they portray India in its true and original sense.

Earlier translation studies have been considered the weakest discipline. Though we cannot imagine what Goethe said 'Weltliteraturin' without translation. It provides a base for the comparatists to compare different texts from different geographical lands. But it was not given due respect earlier. Even the translators were not honoured even after doing some commendable works. Their texts have been taken for granted considering them as a part of the cultural background.

Opinion of Different Critics

With the advent of Comparative Literature in Europe, Translation studies, also, came into vogue at that time. Some critics were accepting the ideas propounded by translators and some weren't. Initially, some critics were discarding the importance of translation studies. However, the same lot of critics started appreciating and supporting them. We find Hilaire Belloc's disgusting and controversial perspective towards translation in which he thinks that the art of translating is a derived and subsidiary art. On this basis, it has never been accorded the status of an original work. translation as a subsidiary art, (Bassnett)

Though some critics knew the importance of translation in Comparative Literature. Susan Bassnett deftly portrays it and has left no stone unturned in convincing people to rethink the marginalisation of translation in comparative studies. She says that with the emergence of Translation Studies as a distinct discipline, complete with a methodology based on comparative studies and cultural history, the moment has come to reconsider. Translation has shaped the development of international literature, and no comparative literature study can be completed without including translation. (Bassnett)

Emily Apter proposes the idea of reducing otherness through translation. The translation is the

medium through which different nations come closer and it brings unity and harmony among nations. Language and national identities are the two entities that are closely related to each other. However, translation brings solidarity among nations. Apter considers translation to be a method of denationalising literature. She agrees that language belongs to people first and then to a country. She considers language to be a universal tool for human understanding.

A group of scholars headed by Itamar Evan-Zohar emerged in 1970 and defined the status of translation studies. According to him, every nation has two types of literature-high and low. The first one is the developed one and the latter one is in its thriving position. The one which is developed and in vogue has been read by all but as far as the other one is concerned; it has been given a secondary position. People are unable to access it due to the unavailability of content. Translation provides them with a significant base and they are translated into the desired language and are cognized by people all around the world.

Translation: An Integral Part of Comparative Literature

Comparative literature studies texts transnationally and transculturally. However, translation facilitates comparative literature by providing translated texts in abundance. As discussed above, we cannot find all literary texts in one language. We may be able to communicate in two or three languages, but we are unable to access all of the literature from diverse countries. Translation brings unity among nations. All the nations come closer through translation. Earlier, we hadn't have an access to the literature of distant and unfamiliar countries but it now has become possible only through translation. Now, we have access to various writers who write in their mother tongue like- Haruki Murakami, Dostoevsky, Coetzee etc. This cosmopolitan attitude brings harmony among nations and fosters a sense of fraternity. For example, most readers have come in contact with the works of some influential personalities like- Shakespeare, Kabir Das, Kalidas, Maharishi Valmiki, R.N. Tagore, Tolstoy, Goethe, Premchand etc. All these texts belong to different geographical lands. It is only through the dedication and hard work of translators that we may have an access to them. The ancient epic Valmiki's Ramayana is originally available in the Sanskrit language. We can approach it only if we have mastery of the Sanskrit language. But the translators have converted this gigantic task into a simpler one by translating it into many languages. Moreover, there would not be language diversity, if we don't have translated texts.

Comparative Literature and translation studies are interlinked. Comparative Literature compares texts across geographical boundaries. The task becomes even more grave when a comparatist has to take the multidimensional aspects- linguistic, cultural, religious, economic and social of comparative literature into consideration. However, translation studies make this task easier. One can access the literature written in minor languages and can have an understanding of writers of different regions. It leads to the transmission of culture. The affinity between different nations and their cultures can be strengthened through translation. It reduces cross-cultural differences. One can comprehend the related cultures, traditions, perspectives and behaviour of other people. It cultivates mutual understanding and broadens the horizon. Every source text is replete with its socio-cultural elements. The translated texts give a deeper insight into the literature. Through these translated texts, we come to know about the cultural background of translators as well. We have an access to the literature of some foreign languages-African, Chinese, Japanese, French, German, Russian, Italian etc only through translation. For example, the English translation of Valmiki's *Ramayana* by Manmatha Nath Dutt has opened a door for readers to analyse and conduct research on Indian Mythology. Comparative Literature is about the comparison of two

or more pieces of literature and with the development of Translation studies, Comparative Literature is flourishing more peacefully with a broadened scope.

Conclusion:

To sum up, we can say that Comparative Literature and Translation Studies are intertwined. Comparative Literature can't gain prominence without the growth of translations. In order to have a deeper understanding of multiple texts throughout the world, one needs to take the help of translation as the entire literature can never be found in one language. Though translation studies have faced a number of problems for being establishing itself as a distinct discipline. However, it has become a dominant part of Comparative Literature. People in comparative literature would not be able to comprehend each other without translation, and hence would not be able to recognise the distinctions and similarities between them. We come across various writers and their masterpieces. We have language diversity only because of translation studies. If translation studies do not exist, then Comparative literature would replete with some influential languages only. Hence, they both are complementary to each other.

Works Cited:

- Bassnett, Susan. "Translation Studies." *Translation Studies*, 2013, doi:10.4324/9780203488232.
- Monnet, Jean, and Haun Saussy. *Introducing Comparative*. 2014.
- Bassnett, Susan. *Comparative Literature: A Critical Introduction*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd., 1998.
- Engle, Paul. Translation in Comparative Literature Dr Sunitha Anilkumar. 1968, pp. 32–33.
- Kir, Nuran. "The Effect of Translation Studies on Comparative Literature." *İstanbul Aydın Üniversitesi Dergisi*, vol. 4, no. 14, 2012, pp. 47–56.
- Tee, CG. "Towards a New and More Constructive Partnership: The Changing Role of Translation in Comparative Literature." *Fu Jen Studies: Literature & Linguistics*, no. April, 2012, <http://www.questia.com/library/journal/1G1-326982569/towards-a-new-and-more-constructive-partnership-the>.
- Wang, Lun. The Essence of Literary Translation in Comparative Literature. no. Emim, 2018, pp. 391–94, doi:10.2991/emim-18.2018.79.
- Warwal, Surjeet Singh. "Role of Translation in Comparative Literature." *Translation Today*, vol. 8, no. 2, 2014, pp. 40–60, doi:10.46623/tt/2014.8.2.ar3.