

THE VERACITY OF THE TRANSLATOR IN INDIRA GOSWAMI'S NILAKANTHI BRAJ: AN ANALYSIS OF THE CONSTRAINTS INVOLVED IN IT

Nandini Baruah

Asst Prof.
Dept of English, Golaghat Commerce College, Assam.

Abstract

The word "translation" comes from the Latin '**translatio**', which itself is derived from the root **trans-** and the verb **fero**, whose supine form is **latum** and which together suggest "**to carry across**" or "**to bring across**." 83 (Kasperek, 1983). According to Cohen (1986: 12), it "began only after the emergence of written literature." It involves the "communication of the meaning of a Source-Language text by means of an equivalent Target-Language text" (Bhatia, 1992: 1,051). In a nutshell, translation denotes to decant meaning from one vessel to another that is identical to the original. However, some problems have emerged in the translation debate. The precision and reliability of a translator's work are referred to as translator's reliability. While assessing a translation's quality and considering whether it can be relied upon for a specific purpose, is a vital factor to take into account. The degree of the translator's competency in the Source and Target languages, their expertise with the text's subject matter, and their aptitude for using the right translation resources and tools are all variables that can affect the translator's dependability. Testing methods like back-translation or double-checking with a native speaker can also be used to assess the quality of a translation. In my paper an attempt is made to analyse Gayatri Bhattacharyya's translation of the famous Assamese author Indira Goswami's novel **Nilakanthi Braj**, which was released under the title **The Blue-necked God**. The study focuses on the level of subject-specific knowledge, degree of SL and TL proficiency, unconscious personal interference on the translator's part, and difficulty in identifying the right counterparts that needs to be taken into account in the translation process.

Keywords: Translation; source language; target language; equivalence; inappropriate and incorrect transference; literal translation; semantical translation; etc.

Translation theory is the study of the correct translational principles. Translation theory emphasizes that various languages encode meaning in different forms, but it also directs translators to look for suitable ways of preserving meaning while choosing the most suitable versions of each language. It is based on an in-depth understanding of how languages function. The principles for translating figurative language, how to handle lexical inconsistencies, how to handle rhetorical questions, how to add cohesion signals, and many other important aspects of effective translation are all covered in translation theory.

There are essentially two opposing philosophies of translation. While the primary goal of one is to accurately convey the entire force and meaning of each word and phrase in the original, the goal of the other is to create a product that does not appear to be a translation at all, but rather flows seamlessly in its new form. With an experienced translator, neither of these two methods can ever be completely overlooked.

According to convention, translators should have familiarity with three specific elements in order to do their jobs well: the source language; the target language; and the subject matter.

Using this as a foundation, the translator identifies the meaning hidden beneath the forms of the source language and makes every effort to convey the same meaning using the forms and structures of the target language. Therefore, what is intended to modify is the content and the meaning should not change while the form and code are intended to change. Wilson (1984)

Étienne Dolet, a French translator and humanist, made one of the initial attempts to establish a set of major rules or principles to be referred to in literary translation when he published "La Manière de Bien Traduire d'une Langue en Aultre" in 1540. These fundamental principles are typically regarded as providing guidelines for the practicing translator.

The translator should have a complete understanding of both the material and intention of the author whose work he is translating. The best method to get there is to go through the text entirely so that the translator can convey what he has accomplished. The translator should resist the urge to translate each word individually because doing so distorts the original meaning and ruins the beauty of expression. This is a crucial issue, and if it is translated literally, the translation may convey an alternate idea.

Gayatri Spivak presents herself as a postcolonial critic whose radical exposure to imperialism drove her to rethink the tenets of Marxism, Feminism, and Derridean deconstruction. Spivak works with the dual settings of gender and cultural identity in her theories on translation, looking at how each is entangled in the other. According to her, a translation is not just a reproduction of syntax and regional accents or a simple question of

synonymy. The translator must actively interact with the textuality of a work, with the conditions of meaning, rather than just the concept of a work. Spivak saw a translator faces a text as a director directs a play, or an actor interprets a script. It is an active role, insisting on the agency of the translator, the choice that a translator can exercise to free the play of meaning in a text.

Translation is the representation of a text from a source language (SL) into a target language (TL) so that the grammatical structures of the SL and TL are roughly equivalent.

Indeed, the discipline of translation is independent. It is neither a little branch of comparative literature or a narrow area of linguistics, but rather a vastly complicated subject with countless, far-reaching implications. The examination of Walter Benjamin by Jacques Derrida has opened the door to a new understanding of the importance of translation, both generally as a means of communication and interchange and specifically as a method of tenacity. A text's longevity is guaranteed through translation, which informally serves as the text's "afterlife" or "resurrection."

Translation can play a crucial role in helping people understand the vibrant global culture in the 21st century's increasingly fragmented world. Irish academic Michael Cronin has emphasized that a translator is similar to a person who embarks on a journey that connects two sources. Contrary to the widely held belief that translation is a mirror of the original, André Lefevere has proposed the novel notion that translation is "refraction rather than reflection." He claims that a translator's appointed role is to "decode" something before "re-encoding" it.

In his book *On Linguistic Aspects of Translation*, Roman Jakobson distinguished three categories of translation:

- (1) Intralingual translation or –rewording|| (-an interpretation of verbal signs by means of other signs in the same language||).
- (2) Interlingual translation or -translation proper|| (-an interpretation of verbal signs by means of some other language||).
- (3) Intersemiotic translation or -transmutation|| (-an interpretation of verbal signs by means of signs of nonverbal sign systems||). Jakobson (2004:139)

With the objective of presenting a critique of the issues associated with the English translation of *Nilakanthi Braj* by Indira Goswami, a humble attempt has been made in my paper. The novel is the realistic representation of the misery of the widows in Vrindavan, which was initially released in Assamese and afterwards translated into several other languages, triggered many questions. **Gayatri Bhattacharyya's** translation of the novel into English has the heading *The Blue-necked God*. Translation involves mainly a decision-making process that calls for an array of linguistic proficiency, subject-matter expertise, intuition, research prowess, and judgment. The question raised in this paper is how successful is the translator in converting an Assamese-language text into English, how successful she is in transmitting what was originally intended in the SL text, and the amount of justification done by the translator to the original author while recoding the original text.

A number of concerns have been raised against the translated title of the book. *Nilakanthi Braj*, the title as it originally appeared in Sanskrit, is translated as *The Blue-necked God* in English. Now, the obvious question is: who is Nilakanthi or the Blue Necked God? Lord Shiva is known as Nilakanthi in Hindu mythology by dint of owing blue Adam's apple. This is because he drank Halahal, a fatal poison that sprang from the sea's core during Sagar-Manthan in order to rescue the universe. The boyhood home of Lord Krishna, Braja or the Braja Dham, is located in Vrindavan, a sacred site for the Hindus. The question that arises next in our mind is why Vrindavan, a sacred location, is called Nilakanthi. It must be as a result of Indira Goswami's revelation of the darker facets of the city, including the young widows' struggle and mental anguish, as well as the lethal poison of depravation — of physical, emotional, and financial kind. In this way, the original title is upheld. *The Blue-necked God*, the title of the translated version, which refers to Lord Shiva, has nothing to do with the story as a whole. Consequently, the title derived from this attitude is completely false and misleading. This is an immediate consequence of the translator having an inadequate subject-specific knowledge. Inclusion of inappropriate expression and inaccurate transference raises concerns about the translator's level of SL ability. An authorized translator has the right to recode the SL text, but he/she is not allowed to do it incorrectly or by excluding any of the TL material. The translator's level of Assamese language skill is demonstrated by the fact that she exercised her freedom to carry out both in the Blue-necked God.

Decoding the source text (ST) means figuring out the meaning, message, and purpose that the original speaker or writer intended. After that, the translator should find out how the same meaning, message, and intention are encoded in the target text (TT). However, the author of *The Blue-necked God* has surprisingly left off the majority of significant phrases, which finally prevents the target text (TT) from conveying its intended meaning. However, much of *The Blue-necked God's* For instance, when Saudamini first encounters the first repulsive face of the Braja life in *Chapter 1 (pp. 9, Nilakanthi Braj)*, when she enters her dark chamber and opens the window of the isolated room, she resolves not to open the window again. Unjustifiably, the translator skipped over the entire phrase (*pp 15, The Blue-necked God*) that conveys the feeling that occurs afterwards. The reader of the TL text will not be able to comprehend Saudamini's emotion when she witnesses such awful acts. As in Chapter Thirteen, certain particularly challenging sentences have also been eliminated. Sashi is approached by the Kesighat priest near the charred remnants of Alamghari. He advises her that the moment is

right to determine whether she wants to live in a shack with the radheshyamias or work as a nurse under Dr. Roychoudhuri's supervision (pp. 128, *The Blue-necked God*). The phrase *Morāxo etā āgot thākile tripāpor bixoye sikshā diyā jene-dore pholdiok somoy* (pp. 83, *Nilakanthi Braj*) which means "just as it is an appropriate time to give a lesson on tripap if there remains a dead body in front" has been changed with a simple ellipsis after that, which is found on page 83 of *Nilakanthi Braj's* translation of the text. A crucial issue that continually crosses Saudamini's thoughts in Chapter 15 (pp. 98, *Nilakanthi Braj*) has been regrettably omitted in the translated version (pp. 151, *The Blue-necked God*). Another instance of this is found in Chapter Seventeen (pp. 106, *Nilakanthi Braj*), when the radheshyami who attends on Anupama reproachfully instructs Saudamini to restrain her passion until her mother passes away, after which she is free to associate with whoever she pleases—Christian, Muslim, Sikh, or Punjabi. The phrase "olop samoi dia bhaktimati tirota keijonimanor hadot bon gagiboloi mtro olop samoi dia tomaloke," which means "you people patiently wait for some time, just for a little while for a few pious ladies to die and decompose," has been unexpectedly skipped (pp. 165, *The Blue-necked God*). Once more, several words have been startlingly deleted, including plant names like "kabuli, romona," "bon dimoru," and "kolgos," as well as words like "chandratap," "bisarchatri," and "tanzam." Without these phrases, the scent of Vrindavan is definitely inadequate.

Translation provides an array of possibilities to comprehend a foreign culture through its literary works. But a misrepresented or inaccurate translation might paint a false and warped picture of a specific culture. One can clearly see a similar issue in *Nilakanthi Braj's* translated work. Numerous terms, phrases, and even idioms have had their codes misinterpreted. For instance, the word *noirāshya* (Chap 1, pp. 3, *Nilakanthi Braj*), which means "disappointment," has been translated incorrectly as "intoxication" (Chap 1, pp. 4, *The Blue-necked God*); *ātmasamarpan* (Chap 17, pp. 107, *Nilakanthi Braj*), which literally means "surrender," has been translated incorrectly as "sacrifice" (Chap 17, pp. 166, *The Blue-necked God*); *boliā* (Chap 13, pp. 73), which literally means "mad" or "crazy," has been confusedly transferred as "possessed" (Chap 13, pp. 113, *The Blue-necked God*) etc.

In recent times, translation is viewed as an artistic pursuit. This is due to the fact that only the tale itself may be taken from the source text; everything else is up to the translator's creativity and ability to maintain the same meaning in the target language without distorting or enhancing it. He has the most effort to put in in order to identify the TL equivalency failure, which causes the ornateness of language to disappear. However, *The Blue-necked God* confronts the same issue. In Chapter Eight, Saudamini abruptly gets up, runs downstairs, and sits down on the ground, where she starts to cry as soon as Anupama begins sharing her experiences. It has been said of her crying style that *tāi eti sishuor dore dore hāo-hāokoi kāndibo dhorile* (She starts bawling like a child) in the SL text (pp. 46, *Nilakanthi Braj*). However, the image has been swabbed away in the TL text while avoiding the simile and recoding it as —She sobbed as if her heart was breaking (Chap 8, pp. 71, *The Blue Necked God*)

In addition to this, it appears that the translator failed to go to great lengths to add creative frills to the source text (such as personification, image creation, and simile use). Goswami has skillfully depicted the woodlands of Lilabarg, which are depicted as being in the delicate embrace of the prickly *Kābuli ramanās* (a type of shrub), if we look at Chapter 1 (pp. 6, *Nilakanthi Braj*). The woods of Lilabarg were filled of all types of dry, prickly shrubs and bushes, according to the TL text, which gives a dull description of the area (Chap 1, pp. 10, *The Blue-necked God*). We may also point to another instance in the same chapter, where Goswami depicts a dismal sky using the color of a weaver bird's nest (pp. 106, *Nilakanthi Braj*). However, the translator has skipped using any such hue and has instead simply written, "The sky has been downcast since the morning" (Chapter 17, pp. 166, *The Blue-necked God*).

Being a prolific writer, Indira Goswami will continue to occupy a place among the famous writers of India for her skilful choice of words and ability to evoke strong emotions in her readers. Unfortunately, the translated version presents a completely different image of her, her literature, and Assamese culture, which is regrettable. Examples have been taken from a select few key chapters (Chapters 1, 7, 8, 13, 15, and 17) because it is not feasible to cover the entire book in a limited space. When the original text and the translated version are compared, it reveals the translator's lack of subject-specific expertise, her lesser proficiency in Assamese language competency, and her lack of aesthetic sensibility and understanding of the creative use of words. To sum up, we might conclude that *The Blue Necked God* is the deformed image of *Nilakanthi Braj*.

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