Chapter VII

Conclusion

The journey of a (literary) translator from antiquity to the present has been courageous and eventful yet mostly unheard of. This ‘invisible’ hero whose conscious or unconscious intention has always been to provide a fruitful cultural mediation so that the psychological and physical barriers and wars between people and cultures can be removed has been fighting for his rights. Although he puts nearly as much effort as the source language author might have put in writing the original text, he is often overlooked and denied his due by the readers, the readers who should be thankful to him for making available to them the foreign text and culture. Usually he is known as a mere scribe of the source language text, not a creator of the target language text.

The survey of the history of the translation studies in India and the West in Chapter I indirectly verifies the above point. It states that historically the role of a translator is seen differently in India and the West. While the Indian tradition appreciates his creative labor and sees him as a ‘co-creator’ of a new text in the target language, the Western tradition sees him as a traitor, a bearer of a divine punishment or a mere scribe. However, the survey also reveals that with the effect of global change in the 1960s, these outlooks also begin to change and translators, translation theorists and scholars start to be taken more seriously. From the 1970s onwards, Translation Studies (TS) as an academic discipline is acquiring initial acceptance, and new research and systematic theories both in India and the West mark their presence. Further developments bring forth many translation associations, departments and publications.

With these developments, the Indian and the Western approaches to the translation and to the role of the translator also come closer: Indian academia appears to accept that Western approach of thinking that a translator is a ‘traitor’ is not completely wrong because
there is a lot that a translator loses in recreating the source language text. And the Western translation scholars and theorists come to realize that since a translator puts in much effort and creativity while translating, he should be given his credit, his visibility.

But this change in academia does not appear to revolutionize the popular approach, the approach of the reviewers and readers who, maybe, are not interested in the history of a translator or do not necessarily read the publications about translation. In this popular approach, it is still the original author who is important; a translator is like a mediator in an arranged marriage who may be happily forgotten once the marriage ceremony has been performed.

This approach is well reflected in Chapter II when the four English translations of Godaan and Nirmala lack even a good and substantial review; hence one should forget about a full length discussion. Nevertheless, the translations succeed in getting a few reviews, perhaps because the journals and the newspapers abide by their general liability to inform their readers about the new publications. It is also well thought of TLT2, TLT3 and TLT4 translators that they do not primarily depend on external criticism. They make the readers aware of their translation practices and techniques in the introductions and translators’ notes.

But, reviewers and scholars cannot completely be accused for not substantially writing about the translations and not giving them as much academic coverage as they would have given to an SLT. The simple reason is that the field of Hindi English translation is not fully developed and there is scarcely a study which specifically talks about the issues, problems and possibilities involving translation from Hindi to English. Chapters III, IV, V and VI can be seen as fulfilling this gap.

The stylistic analysis of the four translations of Godaan and Nirmala in Chapters III and V explore the places where, and the ways in which, their translators have problems and issues in translating two Hindi texts, and lose meaning. The analysis reveals that the four
translations are not at par with their originals in the creative use of a language, and there is a lot of meaning which the translators lose in recreating SLTs textually and cognitively.

Chapters IV and V study the same translations on the same stylistic model but point out the places, and the ways in which the translators gain meaning. The study demonstrates that the translators gain significantly as they preserve complex SLT meanings, make them TL reader friendly or improve upon them. It also establishes a hope that further inquiry in this area may be fruitful.

Thus, in the four chapters, the four (five) translators—two (three) domestic translators and other two foreign translators—both lose and gain meaning. However, the ratio between the loss and gain is not same, approximately four to one, and the chances of loss in translating from Hindi to English are more than those of gain. This loss of meaning in Hindi English translation takes place mainly because of three reasons:

First and the primary reason for causing loss of meaning in the English translations of the Hindi texts is the translators themselves. It appears that, at times, the translators do not take the act of translating seriously and see it as a task which only needs to be completed, regardless of its exactness. It is possibly because of this tendency that they do not revise the texts properly and leave words, phrases and sentences untranslated. There is nothing that can be done to solve this issue except that the translators should have genuine feelings of academic honesty and responsibility. They should have a sense of ethical duty to translate the SLTs most faithfully and creatively for their readers. In the long run, this sense might earn them an appreciation from both the readers and the scholars—a positive sign for the development of Hindi English translation tradition.

The question of ethical duty and academic honesty leads to another component, a component which is just indicated in the previous four chapters. There are textual clues in the translations which show that probably TLT2 and TLT4 translators initially consult TLT1 and
TLT3 to draft their translations. It is practically possible because any translator may like to study another translation of the same text before he ventures out on his own. In this process, at times TLT2 and TLT4 translators present an improved version of their predecessor’s. There is nothing wrong with this, except that neither of them acknowledges the borrower’s source. Though it is not plagiarism, simply giving credit might give a professional and serious touch to this emerging field.

Furthermore, in the case of TLT4, it appears that the translation is not done by a single translator but at least two because in the translation, there are two distinct styles; one is mature and careful and the other amateur and extravagant. The mature and careful style also corresponds to that of the introduction and the afterword, while the other style is similar to that of the glossary. There are also usage differences in these two styles. For instance, on page 94, a speech is translated as “It’s only I, my son” where “I” is used in its subjective form. However, in another usage on page 154, this use changes to its objective form: “Jiyaram pretended surprise—me?” If it is true that the translation has been done by more than one translator and the other translator(s) has not been given credit, this is unethical, thus should be unacceptable, and something very dangerous for the development of TS.

In the study, it is also apparent that there are times when the translators do not understand correctly some SL textual and cognitive references; or if they do, they do not know how to recreate them in the TLTs. In such cases, they mistranslate those references. This view highlights that mere knowing the SL and the TL is not enough to be a successful literary translator; it requires more than that. When such instances occur in the translations, it appears that all the four (five) translators require better exposure to the SL and its culture, and perhaps some professional and academic training in the act of translating from Hindi to English. A self-study of the existing research in TS, and some discussions with a few linguistic and literary experts of the source texts may also help them.
Second, an equally important factor, which causes loss of meaning in the four translations, is the different linguistic natures of Hindi and English. In the stylistic study it appears that the translators do not have control over this loss. Still, this loss is vital in Hindi English translation because it happens on a larger scale in at least three levels of the text: sound system, grammar and syntax, and semantics.

In the sound system, this loss occurs when the translators translate accent, alliteration, assonance, homonym, onomatopoeia, song,¹ and narrative tones. Although translating these sound units seems difficult in the context, it also presents a ray of hope for the future research in the field of Hindi English translation. How? In Chapters III and V, the translators lose meaning when they translate alliteration, assonance and onomatopoeia, but in the following chapters they also gain meaning on these levels. Moreover, they lose meaning in the same way in translating onomatopoeic words but gain slightly differently. Among three examples discussed in Chapter IV, one time TLT2 translator gain meaning when he transcribes an SL onomatopoeic word in his TLT. The gain of meaning in translating onomatopoeic words also happens in the three examples in Chapter VI, but the above mentioned technique of TLT2 translator is not repeated. In Chapter VI, one time TLT3 translator gains meaning when he recreates an onomatopoeic expression with two rhyming words joined by the conjunction “and”.

Thus, all in all, four different techniques to translate a Hindi onomatopoeic expression appear which a future English translator can utilize while translating any other Hindi text.

Loss of meaning in recreating SL grammar and syntax is more complex. Under this category, the linguistic difference between the SL and the TL induces the translators to lose meaning when they translate SL voice type, participle in a reporting clause, intensifiers, honorific pronouns, suffix “ji”, gender specifications, and stylistic inversions. In the

¹ Only in Chapter III.
discussion of the translations, there seems no possibility in the translation of honorific pronouns and gender specifications. However, even though the translators badly lose meaning in recreating others, they also show hints that further research might find a solution to them. In Chapter IV, there appears almost no mode to translate Hindi intensifiers, except the use of the English Intensifier “do”, but in many places in Chapter VI, TLT3 and TLT4 translators find a way to solve this issue as they successfully recreate the effect of the SL intensifiers with some TL words and phrases.

Similarly, in translating the honorific suffix “ji”, they indicate that transcribing the suffix is the best possible option available right now.

The discussion of semantics in Chapters III and V shows that the SL has a rich and complex vocabulary. It is also open for borrowings. The chapters also show that since these three features of the SL vocabulary together create a distinct effect in the SLTs, the effect created by them in the SLTs cannot be recreated in TLTs by just giving a word from Standard English or a word close in sense. In such a case, the only conclusion is that the translators should think creatively and carefully while recreating it in their TLTs, which they do at times when they go for usages like coinage, poetic and archaic words.

The third reason which makes the translators lose meaning in Chapter III and V is the almost untranslatability of the SL cultural setting and references in the TLTs. Because of this almost untranslatability, the translators lose meaning in translating cultural terms and references, allusions, idioms and proverbs, slangs, and euphemisms in semantics. Their failure to recreate many ideological references in the cognitive part of the stylistic analysis also accounts for the same reason.

However, this untranslatability does not arise in every instance. There are instances when it appears that TLT1 and TLT4 (domestic) translators do not put enough effort into translating these instances because they think that they have an added benefit of having
readers from the same cultural setting i.e. Indian English speaking readers. This approach is hard to appreciate because it not only excludes global English speaking readers but also is an easy way out for them not to face the challenge. Nonetheless, TLT2 and TLT4 (foreign) translators courageously face this difficulty. In both the translations, it appears that the only way their translators can tackle the SL culture is to provide footnotes or glossary.

Since idioms and proverbs are universal, these show a promise that the future translators (or the researchers) can explore this field as to give more literariness to their translated texts. The translators can either use equivalent English idioms and proverbs for those from Hindi or can employ them for normal Hindi constructions if they convey the same idea.

Unlike the three reasons which cause loss of meaning, there are only two reasons which make the gain of meaning possible in Chapters IV and VI. These two reasons are translators’ creativity and imagination and the nature of the TL. Even though categorized separately, these two elements generally work together in the translations because the translators creatively utilize the TL properly and in a best possible way. This also applies to the places where the gain of meaning primarily happens because of the nature of the TL as with alliteration, assonance and target language expressions.

The discussion of the four translations in Chapters IV and VI reveals that the translators do not always give up when confronted with coercive factors; they also try to win over these. At such moments, it is their creative faculties and constructive imagination which work as their weapons. It is with these metaphoric weapons that in the textual part they create an engaging sound pattern and atmosphere in the reading of the translations with rhythm, euphonic effect, alliteration, assonance and onomatopoeia. At other times in the textual part, these weapons also help the translators gain meaning with grammatical and syntactical arrangements as in voice type, punctuation marks, intensifiers, verb contractions, gradation,
minor clauses, parentheses, italics and capitalization. In fact, the creativity of the translators marks their presence also on a semantics level as in the use of TL idioms and proverbs, poetic and archaic words, and target language specific words and phrases.

Moreover, it is the cognitive side of the stylistic analysis in which the translators’ creativity and imagination play a larger role. In the cognitive aspect, these two factors assist TLT2, TLT3 and TLT4 translators in making some good decisions. Under these decisions, these translators (not every translator every single decision) add introduction, list of characters, footnotes and glossary to their translations and make structural changes too. These decisions not only help the three translators gain meaning, they also make their translations complete works of art, which TLT1 does not appear because it does not add any of the above elements. TLT1 appears a mere photocopy of SLT1.

However, all the four translators gain meaning in the cognitive part of the stylistic analysis when they correct some SLT errors and foreground some SLT meaning for TL readers. But, again, even with these they do not gain parallelly; their approaches differ. This distinction, which shows divergence in their decision making, possibly arises because of their individual thought processes, creativities and imaginations.

In addition to the above mentioned observations about the loss and gain of meaning in translation from Hindi to English, there are two more conclusive remarks which can be made here.

The four translations under review historically cover almost half a century, 1957 to 1999, in Hindi English translation tradition. An overall look at the translation practices of the translators in their translations shows that Hindi English translation tradition is gradually developing. However, it is very important in the continuation of this development that the

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2 Nonetheless, since it is the oldest translation under review, it can be excused from this lack. Its importance lies in its pioneership.
future translators take the task more seriously and consider it a new type of writing, a creative writing rather than a mere copying.

After extensively discussing the fields where the translators lose and gain meaning, it appears that a literary translation can be best accomplished by two scholarly translators. These two translators can either be (preferably) a combination of a domestic and a foreign translator or a combination of two creative writers from the SL or the TL. If this is not possible, an intensive review and editing by an editor would also be beneficial. In fact, regardless of the number of the translators, the editor’s role remains vital.

Thus based on these remarks and other previous observations, it can be concluded that although Hindi and English are two different languages, their belonging to the same family group, Indo-European family, makes translation between Hindi and English possible. All future translation needs is further research, a research which not only explores the areas where any kind of loss of meaning is possible but also finds out the possibilities where a English translator of a Hindi text can gain meaning. In such a way, perhaps someday Hindi and English translation tradition will not only provide proper and accurate cultural mediation and dialogue among English and Hindi speaking people, but it will also help future English translators reach a place where they can be remembered as creative masters.