Appendix

Interview with Dr. Sukumar Azheekode

Q.1 Would you please explain the factors that fascinated you into the field of translation?

A: Your question makes me recall that the first piece that I published in Malayalam was a translation - a bit of exposition by Shri Aurobindo of Dayananda Saraswati's Vedic interpretation. About a half century ago it was. The ardour to become an original writer overcame my primary impulse for doing translation.

It was there lying dormant which got surfaced in my mind when 'Mathrubhumi' offered me Pandit Nehru's 'A bunch of letters' for rendering into Malayalam. I felt a different type of creative delight in the role of the translator. I did two more translations, one being that of 'The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn'.

Q.2 What are the aims and values of translation?

Translation is described as 'intertraffic among languages'. It is not only linguistic or literary intertraffic, but it is an activity
that facilitates that intertraffic by bridging the gulf between languages. It satisfies the basic urge of a language to overcome its limitations to become one with another language. It is through translation we realise the great objectives of 'welt literature' expounded by Goethe.

A.

What were the problems you had to face and how did you solve them?

The first and the last problem in translation is to get the right words for the appropriate linguistic context. A genius in translation gets it spontaneously. The 'ungifted' traduce while translating. Hence the cynical aphorism in Italian: 'traduttore traditore'.

I solved this problem by trying to blank my mind by diverting it of all scholarly verbal junk and allowing it catch the spontaneous word that emerges as a result of this exercise in mental reversion.

Compared to this basic problem, the problems relating to the theme, content and linguistic and cultural peculiarities are secondary. The impressionistic approach to secure the adequate word in the target language the most competent,
in my experience to give equivalent effect in translation.

1.4 What were the circumstances that led you into translating 'Huckleberry Finn'?

The VSIS which was an action wing to the cultural sector of the American embassy had in those days a big project to get the American classics rendered into the Indian languages. I was offered by the USIS this masterpiece of Mark Twain. I took it up enthusiastically, perhaps on the strength of the ability to translate from English into Malayalam gathered from my previous experience in translation.

1.5 Is there any reason for giving the title 'Huckleberry Finn'ite Vikramangal' instead of 'Sahasangal'?

The lexical meaning of the word 'adventure' is 'Sahas' and not 'Vikrama'. I went in for the latter for two reasons, the one being that 'Sahas' has greater reference to thoughtless, hazardous deeds. Secondly the word Vikrama means adventure in the colloquial idiom. To me it suited the style of Mark Twain.
Though you have mentioned in your forward of HFV that we do not have the proper vehicle of equivalent language, of Mark Twain's Jim, Huck etc., don't you feel sorry for this inability?

In the face of the highly varied and colourful Black colloquial expression, I felt overmastered with the meagre verbal equipment in Malayalam. What made me stand up to the challenge was my mental reversal or withdrawal which gave me easy access to my childhood vocabulary. It helped me to cope with the situation more than my scholarship in Sanskrit.

Do you think that the usage of ungrammatical and franchised Malayalam language would have been a suitable substitute for the language of Jim?

I think I had at times fallen back on broken phrases and grammatical falterings. I may be wrong as I am answering without any reference to my work just now.

Mark Twain used variance of American English to represent different classes. Don't you think this effect could not be achieved in Malayalam?

Surely the repertory of any language has innumerable unique and unmatched expressions which
cannot be met in equal terms by any other language. American Black English is very richly endowed with this linguistic wealth. Malayalam has little chance for success in the face of such heavy odds.

Do you agree that the humours and jokes conveyed by the characters of Mark Twain by their registers could not be expressed in Malayalam translation and consequently the readers are deprived of the pleasure of enjoying the humour in the original novel?

The nicest and the loftiest graces and beauties inherent in original writing in one language just vanish in the process of translating. None can help it. It is better to turn your attention to what has been salvaged in translation than in what has been jettisoned.

Though you have successfully translated from the beginning to the end, at least a few sentences are seen to be omitted for example, 'he said, it weren't no use talking, he thence don't amount to shucks alongside of pirates, to work camp meeting with.' (See chapter 20.) Is there any peculiar reason for this omission?
Omissions could occur, even glaring omissions. I could not subject the first draft to a critical revision for reasons I can't recollect now. I have noted such omissions in translators who are more gifted than myself. I have noted the inclination of the urge to jump over sentences; thus creating occasional lacunae, in the translation.

Q.11 It is seen that the word to word translation of some English proverbs create confusion in the minds of the readers. Have you ever had such a feeling? For example, you have translated:

a) I was at a stump - /archive/ കാലിലെ അവശ്യം

b) I was hard and right aground - ഒന്നു തുറന്ന എന്നാൽ ഒരു പെയ്യൽ
c) I'd got to throw up my hand - പൊട്ടിക്കായ കൊത്തി കൊയ്ത്തി എന്നാൽ

But would it have been better if they were translated as follows:

a) പരിമിതം പരിമിതം

b) അവശ്യം പിന്തുടർന്നം

c) കൊമ്പുകളാണ് കൊമ്പുകൾ

A. I plead guilty on this conscious effort to import certain alien proverb expressions in my translation. To my way of thinking, it is an important function of the translator to import new idioms and expressions from the donor language. Nalappatt Narayana Menon was blamed for having been liberal
in this way, but later criticism got itself mellowed to appreciate it. I admit some of my idiomatic imputations might have fallen flat. The alternative proverb usages you had suggested had struck me and than were rejected as I feared they would evoke quite different understones of meaning which could prove to be less profitable to the receptor language.

12 Translation of 'goose milk' (P.365) is given as ' കോട്ടപ്പാളി '. How do you justify the use of such an unfamiliar word in Malayalam translation? Do you think that ' കോട്ടപ്പാളി' would have been better?

I can offer you only a conjecture at this distance of time on this fauxpar. I must have put down this literal rendering for checking later which never happened. The lack of proper revision retained it as a monument of my carelessness.

13 Is it proper to give Malayalam translation of the name of a book, which has not been translated as you have given the translation of John Banyan's 'Pilgrims' progress 'as പില്ലിക്ക്രാണം പ്രസംഗം'? The translation given for 'The Pilgrims Progress' is not my innovation as you seem to suggest. It is a sufficiently well known title in Malayalam of an adaptation of the work (Published in 1968 by
Even if it is my coinage, I am sure that it would leave none in doubt about its reference.

14 Many portions of the novel, like the initial sentence has been translated word by word. On such occasions, have you tried to use the same style of Mark Twain or was it your own? At the same time you have done your own way of translation given more beauty to *Huckeberry Finnite Vikramangal*. Is there any reason for using these two styles occasionally?

eg: "I didn't care no more about him" is translated as, "ഓന്നില്ലെന്നു വാണാനെന്ന് മാറ്റിയിരിക്കുന്നു".

The obvious explanation for this clue in style in the course of the translation could be that the style naturally got more refined from the experience already gathered by the translator. If translation is the development of a language skill, the stylistics shift is quite natural.

15 Long sentences have been split beautifully into short different sentences in order to show various ideas contained in the original long sentence, making it clear to the Malayalam readers. Is it the only motive behind the division of sentences?

eg:- *Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn*’ Page 202, 4th para "Her sisters ... " see your translation
A This trait also is traceable to the change in style due to better understanding to the art of translation. Mark Twain is fond of long winding sentences which was a characteristic of the prevalent American way of unwinding a tall tale at that time. Malayalam prose sentence turns more elegant and effective when it is made simple and short.

Q.16 You are a prolific writer. Have you got the same satisfaction on completion of Huckleberry Finninte Vikramangal' as you have had in other works like 'ഓരുവനെ'?

A: As each book is a different work, the final feeling on completion of the work would be different. In this case I experienced two distinct feelings of contentment - one that I did translate completely a classic in American literature; secondly I was delighted that I finished the arduous work in a very short time.

Q.17 Would you mind giving some advice to the future translators of English novels to Malayalam?

I do think that my random remarks alone are informed with many suggestions and disclosures which might be useful to the diligent practitioners of the art of translating into Malayalam from English. That should be sufficient.