

Cases of “Domestication” and “Foreignization” in the Translation of Urdu Short Story into English: A Preliminary Inquiry

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Abstract:

Translators use different strategies while translating the same text depending upon the translator’s ideology, the purpose of translating and his interpretation of the cultural elements that are represented in the text for translation. This paper analyses two different translations into English of a short story, “Chauthi Ka Jaura” originally written in Urdu by Indian Urdu Progressive Writer Ismat Chughtai. The story is translated by many but this paper specifically deals with the translations of M. Asaduddin and Tahira Naqvi. This paper delineates how Asaduddin acts as a cultural ambassador and how his translation reflects Venuti’s approach of “foreignization” and how Tahira Naqvi becomes “invisible” while translating “fluently” into English and fits in Venuti’s theory of “domestication.”

Key words: Cultural Translation, Target Language (TL), Culture, Invisibility, Source Language (SL), Domestication, Foreignization, Translation Strategies.

“There has of course always been translation, for almost as long as there has been literature.” (Trivedi 188)

Translation studies as an academic subject has begun only in the past sixty years. James S. Holmes described the discipline as being concerned with “The complex of problems clustered round the phenomenon of translating and translations” (qtd in Munday 6). Translation studies earlier mainly focused on linguistics on the basis that translation was a transaction between two languages. Sooner major studies noticed that literary texts were representative primarily of a culture rather than of language and language being in effect a mere vehicle of culture. Translation of a literary text became a more complex negotiation between two cultures in addition of being a transaction between two languages. The unit of translation was no more a word or a sentence or a paragraph or even a text, but instead the whole language and culture in which that text was constituted. Susan Bassnett and Andre Lefevere in their book *Translation, History and Culture* (1990) aptly described this new awareness as “The Cultural Turn in Translation Studies.” The formulation and recognition of this cultural turn in Translation Studies revived the discipline and released it from mechanical tools of analysis available in linguistics.

In translation studies a new trend started whereby a ‘translator’ was identified as a “cultural broker (Mukherjee 125)”, one who opens out the richness of native culture to foreigners. The translator as a cultural ambassador is in an incessant search for “particularizing and indigenizing” (Rehman 179) his literary representation. He incorporates his rich tradition by seeking an idiom and expression that is clearly distinguishable from the target language. An Indian translator, for example, while translating has to incorporate heterogeneous perceptions, multi-cultural richness and diversity as Indian literature is stored in two thousand dialects, eight hundred languages, out of which twenty three are official languages. While translating he has to define his location, express his ideology and construct the myths of his nation. Many translators unconscious of the theoretical postulations translate

instinctively and try their best to hand over the literary curiosity of India to the West in respect of taste and style.

Translation was started by colonizers but gradually taken over by the colonized. The translation of Indian literature into English belongs to the same cultural brokerage like, for example, Pratapchandra Roy was a typical “cultural broker” publishing the first complete and faithful translation of the Mahabharata in English in eleven volumes from 1888-1896.

A single literary work can be translated differently by different translators. Few adopt the strategy of retaining information from the source text and involve deliberately breaking the conventions of the target language to preserve its meaning while others try to make the text closely conform to the culture of the language being translated to, which may involve the loss of information from the source text. There are theorists who support each of these strategies and foreground the limitations of both. These strategies have been debated for many years and Lawrence Venuti in his ground breaking work *The Translator’s Invisibility: A History of Translation* (1995) uses the terms, “Domestication” and “Foreignization” to define these strategies.

According to Venuti, domestication refers to —an ethnocentric reduction of the foreign text to target-language cultural values, bring the author back home, while the foreignization is —an ethnodeviant pressure on those (cultural) values to register the linguistic and cultural difference of the foreign text, sending the reader abroad.

Generally speaking, domestication designates the type of translation in which a transparent, fluent style is adopted to minimize the strangeness of the foreign text for target language readers, while foreignization means a target text is produced which deliberately breaks target conventions by retaining something of the foreignness of the original (qtd. in Yang 77).

Ismat Chughtai is one of the four pillars of Urdu short story, the other three being- Manto, Krishan Chander and Rajinder Singh

Bedi. Her stories chronicle the Uttar Pradesh Muslim culture and become living documents of traditional linguistic patterns, in all their colloquial, idiomatic, and dialectic richness. The subject matter was delivered in a style which was bold, innovative, rebellious, and unabashedly realistic in both its portrayal of character and its analysis of the human condition. Translating Ismat Chughtai is equally challenging and demanding on translator’s part. The translator not only has to convey the meaning but also to translate the culturally loaded words and humorous expressions which if translated literally may run the risk of misreading and aesthetic compromise.

Discussion in this paper will focus on strategies used by two translators in translating the same story. The translators include:

M. Asaduddin- an author, critic and professor in department of English, Jamia Millia Islamia and Tahira Naqvi- an author, novelist and Urdu language lecturer in the Department of Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies at New York University. The story discussed is entitled, “Chauthi Ka Jaura” originally written in Urdu by a prolific writer of Progressive Movement, Ismat Chughtai.

Bhaba says, translation is essentially cultural communication. To him, language is a form of intercultural communication, which always has to deal with ‘foreignness’, in the sense that there are always elements that are untranslatable (qtd. in Machali 75)

Analyzing both the translations it becomes clear that Asaduddin retains different aspects of Indian culture and its traditions. Most of the times he is ‘foreignizing’ by preserving Indian expressions which when translated into English lose all their savour and flavour reducing it to mere perfunctory and emotionless expressions while Tahira Naqvi is ‘domesticating’ by finding English equivalent for almost all cultural expressions and limiting the cultural exchange.

The table below will explicate the assumptions made above:

Original (Ismat Chughtai)	T1 (Asaduddin)	T2 (Tahira Naqvi)
Muhalle	Mohalla	Neighbourhood
Chawal soop	Winnowing tray	Winnowing basket
BiAmmah	BiAmmah	Amabi
Chowki	Chowki	Couch
Hakeem	Hakeem	Allopath
Muunh boli behan	Muunh boli behan	Adopted sister
Sewaiyaan	Sewaiyaan	Vermicelli
Kofte	Kofte	Fried meat balls
Joshanda	Joshanda	Medicine
Aanchal	Pallu	Dupatta
Shehnai	Shehnai	Wedding trumpet
Mynah	Mynah	Starling
Khala	Khala	Auntie
Fajar namaz	Fajar namaz, the dawn	Morning prayers
Naayan	Naayin, the barbar woman	Matchmaker

The table below gives glaring examples where Tahira Naqvi tries to omit the expressions which are loaded with cultural meaning.

Original (Ismat Chughtai)	T1 (Asaduddin)	T2 (Tahira Naqvi)	Comments
Na to iski aankhoon me pariyaan naachi	Fairies never danced before her eyes	Never put a sparkle in her eyes	Dancing fairies omitted – a typical Indian expression
Abba kitne duble patle jaise muharram ka alam	Abba was tall and frail, like muharram’s alam	Abba was as slight as a pole	Alam is associated with muslim shia culture
Kati hui murgi	Gaze of a slaughtered chicken	Look of a slaughtered animal	Original expression altered
Sab ko yakeen tha ki aaj to kubra ki maa ki naap tol haar jaye gi	Everyone was sure that kubra’s mother would fail to show her wizardry this time round	Everyone everyone was quite sure kubra’s mother would fail to accurately measure and cut this time	Phrase show her wizardry manifest Indian sensibility
Manipuri aur bharat natiyam ke	May not show the Manipuri and	They won’t twist and turn in the	

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mudra khelna nai naseeb hua	bharatnatyam mudras	poses of Manipuri and Bharatnatyam	
Wo issi tarah roz dopahar ko sehdari me rang birange kapde phela kar gudiya ka khel khela karti	She would spread the colourful snippets in the same way on the sehdari and continue her doll game	She scattered about her in the the sehdari all the colourful remnants and snippets from her sewing box	Doll game omitted- a typical cultural trait of young girls
Unhoon ne abi dulhan ki maang ki afshaan bi nai katri	She had not yet chipped the gold leaf for the bride's hair parting	She hadn't even chipped up the gold for the bride as yet	The ornament for hair's parting is mainly related to Indian bride
Joshunda pia kare	To take joshunda for her cough	Take something for her cough	
Badi mom ki bani hui ki haath lagaaya aur pighal gayi	As though you are made of wax and would melt at his touch	You are not going to melt with the first touch	

Whereas Asaduddin translates the story with a monkish adherence to original work, Tahira Naqvi imagining the naivety of her audience of her audience to understand the original cultural specific expressions and words indulges in detailed explanations. Her translation becomes more an interpretation and less a translation of the original. For this reason we can find long sentences in Tahira Naqvi with elaborate explanations whereas Asaduddin's sentences retain the beauty of brevity and originality.

The table below exemplifies the same:

Original Ismat Chughtai	T1 (Asaduddin)	T2 (Tahira Naqvi)
kaampte haathoon se muqadas maliide ka niwala bana kar iss ne raahat ke munh ki taraf badha diya	With shaking hands, she made a lump of the sacred malida and held it towards Rahat's mouth'	With trembling hands <u>she rolled some malida between her fingers</u> and moved it towards his mouth
ja nigodi maari, are dekh to sahi wo kesa munh banata he	You wretched girl, just go and see how he reacts	You fool, go and see how he reacts <u>to the kababs</u>

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Allah tobah kya khunas aankhein he	Oh my God, what piercing eyes he had	What a <u>fierce expression</u> he had in his eyes
aey to pardah tudwaane ko kon kahe he	‘O dear, no one’s asking her to come out of purdah	My dear, no one is suggesting that <u>she come before Rahat</u>
aur phir dono me khusur phusur hui	Then the two women began their hushed whispers	<u>Putting their heads together</u> the two women whispered <u>conspiratorially</u>
rahat police ki training ke silisile me aaraha tha	Rahat was coming to stay with the during his police training	Rahat was <u>going to be in town</u> for police training
chote kapde ki ghoont to utar aaye gi	The border of the underwear can be taken off this	You will get from the smaller piece <u>without any difficulty</u>
jaise inhe pakka yakeen hoki doosre jodu ki tarah chauthi ka ye jauda seenta na jaye ga’	Unlike the other suits of chauthi this one would not have to be stitched	As if she were absolutely certain that like the other suits for chauthi <u>which had always remained incomplete</u> , this one too would be discarded

The main conclusion that can be drawn from the above comparative analysis is that Tahira Naqvi chooses to domesticate meaning making the translation smooth and highly readable in the target language whereas Asaduddin by retaining the foreignness in the target text contrast the foreign cultural elements against target-language cultural values. Tahira Naqvi’s domesticating strategy ‘violently’ erases the cultural values and thus creates a text as if it had been written in the target language while as Asaduddin highlights the foreignness of the source text and doesn’t allow the source culture to be assimilated in the dominant target culture but rather signals its difference. Asaduddin’s translating strategy strongly echoes Dryden’s theory of translation where he says:

I thought fit to steer betwixt the two extremes of paraphrase and literal translation; to keep as near my author as I could, without losing all his graces, the most eminent of which are in the beauty of his words (Munday 26).

Tahira Naqvi tailors the message to the receptor’s linguistic needs and cultural expectations. She aims at complete

naturalness of expression and does as Newmark aptly says, “hand everything to the target reader on a plate” (Munday 44) by explaining everything for him by bringing the author home.

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