

Retranslation as Re-vision and Self-Reflective Criticism: A Comparative Analysis of Two Translations of Agnisakshi from Malayalam to English by Vasanthi Sankaranarayanan

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Abstract

Agnisakshi by Lalithambika Antharjanam (1976), a significant work in the landscape of women's writing and social novel in Malayalam, was translated into English by Vasanthi Sankaranarayanan and published by Kerala Sahitya Akademi in 1980. In a rare instance of self-retranslation, with 35 years between them, Vasanti Sankaranarayanan rendered a fresh translation of the same novel in 2015. Retranslations, according to Lawrence Venuti, establish their differences from the previous versions and these are guided more by ideological premises than by literary or linguistic lack in the previous translations. In contrast to the uncritical, adulatory position assumed by the translator in the first translation of Agnisakshi, the second one points to a translator who acknowledges the politics of the text, critically approaches it and, in her own words, "adds new dimensions from a feminist perspective". This paper, by closely examining the conscious interventions Sankaranarayanan makes as a feminist translator, attempts to conceptualize retranslation as an act of re-vision and self-reflective criticism, wherein the translator makes herself more visible through her translational interventions. The attempt here is to understand how the politics of the text is engaged with through retranslation by an ideologically empowered translator.

Keywords: Retranslation, Agnisakshi, Malayalam Novel, Gender, Translation.

Introduction

Considered a landmark novel that documented the social evils and oppression within the Nambuthiri community, *Agnisakshi* by Lalithambika Antharjanam, is also an epochal work in the history of women's writing in Malayalam. An English translation of the novel by Vasanthi Sankaranarayanan was brought out by Kerala Sahitya Akademi in 1980. In a rare instance of self-retranslation, with 35 years between them, Vasanti Sankaranarayanan rendered a fresh translation of the same novel in 2015 with the title *Agnisakshi: Fire, My Witness*. The paper undertakes a comparative analysis of the two translations and an evaluative reading of the translator's rationale behind the retranslation project. By doing so, the attempt here is to understand how the translator's shift in ideological premises substantiates the retranslation as a critical act of 're-vision'; understanding how, in the translator's strategic interventions as a 'critic', the retranslation also comes to be a critical lens for the reinterpretation of the original, and in this case, the Malayalam text.

A Brief Outline of the Theoretical Background

Over the past few decades, retranslation has come to be recognized as a significant domain of study within the theoretical inquiries of the translation landscape. An important contribution in the area was the 'Retranslation Hypothesis' that was born from the articles written by Antoine Berman (1990) and Paul Bensimonn (1990) in the French journal *Palimpsestes*. Berman proposes that the translation of literary texts is an "incomplete act" in itself and only through retranslations can it achieve completion, which, for him, meant coming close to source text. Retranslation, for Berman, is an ongoing process of improvement, wherein the journey is towards reaching a "translation that is self-aware" (Deane-Cox 2014:3). In this regard, Berman points out that the initial translations are characterized by 'la defaillance' or 'shortcomings (1990: 5), which can be counteracted by "the restorative, corrective and illuminating properties of retranslation (Deane-Cox 2014:3). More importantly, the Retranslation Hypothesis also claims that the subsequent translation of the text is free from the task of introducing the original text into the language, and hence, is at the freedom to retain the style

and letters of the original text and allow the foreignness of the text to show through.

This paper's objective is not the verification of the retranslation hypothesis whose arguments have been tested several times and limitations identified by translation scholars. Nevertheless, the retranslation hypothesis provides the necessary theoretical background for our enquiry and the identification of process, reasons and products of retranslation. Though the term 'retranslation' gives the general idea of having multiple translations towards a single source text, the developments in the theoretical conceptualisations of the same have seen several attempts at definition. According to Koskinen and Paloposki, retranslation (as a product) denotes a second or later translation of a single source text into the same target language. Retranslation (as a process) is thus prototypically a phenomenon that occurs over a period of time, but in practice, simultaneous or near-simultaneous translations also exist (Koskinen & Paloposki 2010: 294).

Retranslation, as Susam-Saraveja defines it, refers to the subsequent translations of a text or part of a text, carried out after the initial translation that introduced this text to the same target language' (2003: 2). For the purpose of this paper, these definitions are adhered to. Apart from the conceptualization of retranslation and the 'retranslation hypothesis', retranslation's other concerns of inquiry include the motivations and reasons for retranslation, the distinction between retranslating and revising and approaches to retranslation. What we consider here is a rare instance of the first translator herself making a retranslation and with a long interval that has witnessed several shifts and progressive waves in the ideologies and politics of the source text between them, the challenge to discern the classifications 'revision' and 'retranslation' only becomes more intricate. There have been several attempts by Translation Studies scholars to draw a clear distinction between the both by way of concrete definitions. The attempt to examine Sankaranarayan's translations of *Agnisakshi* bears the encumbrance of determining if the later translation qualifies to be a 'retranslation' or just a 'revision'. The earlier theories of retranslation guides, as Chesterman points out, to an understanding that while revision focuses on a previous translation, retranslation does it on original.

Outi Paloposki and Kaisa Koskinen in their article titled “Reprocessing Texts: The Fine Line between Retranslating and Revising”, raise objections to “neat categorizations” of revision and retranslation. They argue that some so-called revisions are actually retranslations because there are so many substantial revisions that the first translator’s voice gets lost in the new revised translation. Similarly, Anthony Pym also views revision as a kind of retranslation. He observes that “[t]he retranslation may return to the ST [source text] and start from scratch, or modify existing translations but with significant reference to the ST” (quoted in Tian 2017: 3). However, he further claims that “a retranslation is not just a modified or corrected edition of a previous translation”.

Given that Paloposki and Koskinen’s criterion to identify a retranslation requires one to “compare bibliographical entries and look for one source text with at least two target texts with different translators” (2010: 36), a comparative study of Sankaranarayanan’s translations presents a complicated case of enquiry. A resolution of the same can be reached by deciphering the diverging approaches and ideological positions she assumes towards the source text in the process of translation. If the first translation of the novel reveals Sankaranarayan to be an admiring translator in awe of the author’s prose, the second translation shows an almost ‘different’ translator, who is ideologically empowered and ready for a “reinterpretation” of the text through her critical eyes. ‘Revision’ might, after all, be inadequate to describe the second translation in this context. Notably, neither Mini Krishnan, editor of OUP nor Sankaranarayanan refers to the project as revision but as “fresh translation” and “retranslation” (2015: xvii) respectively. The situation of self-retranslation, Wenqing Peng says, presents the translator and the retranslator as the same physical body, but with two different egos involved. Here, Sankaranarayan’s retranslator ego is a product of changing historical and social context and the ideological clarity and perspective achieved thereof. Thus, the translator reflects and re-examines his/ her previous works from a different self, resulting in a different interpretation (Peng 2017: 121).

A significant point of enquiry among the several, regarding the concept of retranslation, is the motivation behind the project of retranslation. Is it merely a matter of aesthetic concern or does it

harbour reasons that are ideological, political and cultural? Recognizing the tacit interests is also an imperative to assert the term 'retranslation' for Sankaranarayanan's project.

Siobhan Brownlie observes that, "retranslations are undertaken because there has been a change in ideologies and/or norms in the initiating culture (usually the target culture), and the translation is thought to have aged or is unacceptable because it no longer conforms to the current ways of thinking or behaving. The study of retranslations can thus reveal changing norms and ideologies in society" (2006: 150).

Berman, as the earliest proponent of the 'retranslation hypothesis', attributes the appearance of retranslations to the idea that translations become old and decay. Berman and Bensimon suggest that more source-oriented translations are called for because of the assimilating qualities in the initial translation. Besides this observation, Berman also imparts an ontological cause for the existence of retranslations, which is the obliteration or diminishing of the failures (*la defaillance*) of the initial translation. Theoretical arguments for the motivations behind retranslations range from shifts in linguistic and stylistic norms to shifts in the context of text reception.

Talking about bringing out a fresh translation and the factors necessitating the same after a considerable period after the initial translation, Mini Krishnan, editor of Oxford University Press (OUP), attributes both ideological and aesthetic reasons for the publication. While mentioning about feeling the need for a "better and careful rendering of the novel with proper contextualization and closer attention to different registers in the book", Krishnan also recollects about feeling the first translation to be an amateurish work of translation in terms of readability. Evaluating the motives for retranslation, translation theorists have reviewed the situations where the publisher plays the crucial role. One of those is when the publisher expects that a retranslation may introduce a new interpretation of the source text or address a different readership (Gürçağlar 2009: 235).

Krishnan's justifications for a retranslation and Sankaranarayan's own words about translating the same text a second time are not dissimilar to Adrienne Rich's idea of 'Re-vision', which serves as a

powerful concept in the historicization of female narratology. It must be noted that the concept does not bear a reference to the categorizations that vexed the retranslation theorists. The strategy with which Sankaranarayanan approaches retranslation reiterates Rich's conceptualization of writing as re-vision, which, as "the act of ... entering the old text with new critical direction" is "an act of survival". Sankaranarayanan, in her note to the second translation, points out her updated knowledge on gender politics acquired over the years as the motivating force and justification for her retranslation.

Agnisakshi

Agnisakshi, with its accurate depiction of the social evils and oppression faced by women within the upper caste Nambuthiri¹, is a remarkable text in the history of Malayalam Novel. Set in the backdrop of community reform movement and nationalist movement, it narrates the story of a Nambuthiri woman, Devaki Manampalli/ Thethikutty, who breaks the patriarchal norms which restrict the life of Nambuthiri women within the four walls of 'Illams'². The importance of Antrajanam's writing in the landscape of feminist literature is her characterization of a female subjectivity whose empowerment does not lie entirely with the benevolence of a 'Reformer Man'. She presents a woman who refuses to be a passive subject waiting to be reformed by the Reformer Man. Thethikutty, the protagonist in the novel, who walks out of the oppressive domestic spaces and asserts her vocal presence in public spaces and political movements and later calmly embraces spirituality, and does so on her own.

The Self-Reflexive Retranslator: Ideologies and Motivations

An in-depth reading of the translator's note which Sankaranarayanan provides for the first translation reveals that no reference is made to the politics the novel embodies or its significance. While proclaiming her admiration for Antharjanam's

¹ One of the dominant Brahmin castes native to Kerala.

² Term used to refer Nambuthiri dwellings.

prose which is ‘poetic’ and rich in ‘stunning imagery’, she also points out the challenges she had to face during the translation process. Apart from the obvious hurdle posed by the linguistic translation of colloquial words and ideas specific to the Nambutiri community, Sankaranarayanan also points out the particularities of Antharjanam’s literary language, comprising of ‘short, pithy words’ in place of complete sentences. The translation was done, in translator’s words, by paying attention to the language and the particularities of it which make it an ‘extraordinary’ novel. In all of this, she assumes an uncritical, adulatory approach towards the original.

On the other hand, the translator’s note in the second translation points out how the retranslation project was conceptualized with the idea of reinterpretation of the classic novel through fresh translation. Contrary to the first translation, Sankaranarayan, in her note, alludes directly to the literary, political and social significance of the novel. She refers to the politics of gender central to the text by referring to the female protagonists of the novel who dare to break the shackles laid by customs and traditions of the community and make a place for themselves in the world under the tutelage of no man. Identifying herself more closely with the author, Sankaranarayanan also reveals her familiarity with the traditions of the Nambutiri community owing to her grandfather who belonged to the caste. Unlike before, she asserts her identity, both as a member of the Nambutiri caste and a feminist here.

In the translator’s note as given in the second translation, Sankaranarayanan herself comes to terms with the idea of translation as a political activity, central to the historicization of female narratology as it renders a reinterpretation. In her words, retranslating the novel would be “honoring her charismatic presence in Malayalam literature, especially in the early women’s writing of Kerala through retranslation and reinterpretation” (2015: xvii). “I have tried to put into words my own estimation and analysis of Agnisakshi as a literary product”. What transpires from a comprehensive analysis of her translator’s notes is her employment of the same as a translation strategy in itself. Referred to as choices made from a “sociocritical standpoint”, feminist translation

interventions, in Flotow's words, "becomes an educational tool supported by scholarly research" (Flotow 1991: 77). The preface or translator's note becomes the platform where Sankaranarayanan pronounces the ideological standpoint and the critical approaches behind the choices she makes.

Sankaranarayanan does not hesitate from criticizing Antharjanam's characterization and she points out a final succumb to the tradition, the sanctity of family, marriage and motherhood. As she critically analyzes Antharjanam's representation of gender politics, Sankaranarayanan differentiates between the languages given to both the female characters and points out how the language is used by the author to divide compassion unequally between them. Comparing the translator's notes Sankaranarayanan provides for the two translations, a transformation of the translator from an admiring reader to a politically contemporary critic can be observed. It is this transformation which makes the transference of gender questions as raised by Antharjanam in the original, into English possible.

Sankaranarayanan, in her later translation, presents herself as a translator who is aware of the flaws of the author's feminist writing. She points out that while Antharjanam undeniably wrote from a woman's point of view, she was unable to "completely free herself from the norms of patriarchy" (xxi) and "Lalithambika was a product of her times" (2015: xxi). In addition to a critique of the gender politics the text advocates, Sankaranarayanan also does not hesitate to criticize the literary style of Lalithambika Antharjanam. She says, "Language loses its literary quality and turns into didactic prose" and this is incongruous with the admiring preface she provides in the first translation.

Retranslation as 'Re-vision' - A Comparative Analysis of the Two Translations

While her writing exposes the harsh realities of lived-in experiences of Nambuthiri women, Antharjanam's prose is replete with the grammar and imagery evoking the ritualistic life of the community, the very institution that her protagonist seeks emancipation from. Reading through the stylistic features of her writing, rich in references from the traditions and Puranas, her

writing can itself be seen as a translational act of subversion where she exports a female subjectivity rebelling against the Brahminical patriarchy into the language of the latter. The language becomes a political site of resistance, wherein the female author has to “translate themselves into or out of the language of patriarchy” (Bose). Understanding the nuances of Antharjanam’s manipulation of language is central to the acknowledgement of the politics of gender it embodies and thereby to an analysis of its translations into another language.

In the first translation, Sankaranaraynan had translated most of the culturally specific Malayalam terms, to English. As she mentions in the translator’s note, the motivation for her decision to translate the novel emerged from the admiration and empathy for it and wanted it to be “read and appreciated” not just in India but outside the country as well. Hence, she takes the course of domestication strategy for her translation, wherein the foreignness of the text, here the jargon specific to the Nambutiri community, is minimized as much as possible. Though she does retain some specific terms with explanatory footnotes provided, many significant terms, including all the kinship terms, are retranslated. In Bensimon’s arguments constituting the Retranslation Hypothesis, he describes first translations as ‘naturalizations’ whose function is the introduction of the source text in the target culture. In the attempt to increase the readability of the text in the target culture, as Gambier says, “a first translation always tends to be more assimilating, tends to reduce the otherness in the name of cultural or editorial requirements”. What gets diminished in the process is the ideological foundation of Antharjanam’s writing and the politics of gender she espouses in her novel. For example, thematically significant terms like *antharjanam*, *ghosha* and *marakkuda* are translated as Nambutiri bride, purdah system and umbrella, respectively in the first translation. ‘Antharjanam’, literally means ‘people who live in the interiors’ and indicated the lives of reclusion they were forced to lead. Ghosha, is the system of veiling among Antharjanams. Meanwhile, ‘marakkuda’ (or the cadjan umbrella), the symbol of their chastity, was a mandatory object to be carried by Nambudiri women to conceal their face and body while stepping out in public. These were significant markers of the repressive lives Nambutiri women had to

lead within the darker interiors of their illams. While Sankaranarayanan's translation may not be totally incorrect in its meaning, it effaces the historical and cultural markers and traditions that made up the everyday living reality of Nambutiri women and, thereby, undermines the politics of the original text which was a groundbreaking attempt to represent in literature the oppressed lives of Nambutiri women. A critical comparison reveals that her most noticeable interventions are in the cases of markers constituting domestic spaces. Her retention of terms 'tharavadu' and 'naalukettu' in the retranslation compared to the initial superficial translations as 'family' and 'conservative family dwelling' highlights the concreteness of the restrictive spaces they occupy. Compared to the abstractness of family, 'tharavadu' and 'nalukettu' stresses upon the physicality of the domestic space and thereby the impositions enforced on them. In a similar vein, she retains most of the culturally specific terms pertinent to the politics of the text in the second translation. These revisions to reflect the context better are all the more significant because the novel also dons the role of a historical commentary on the life and culture of the Nambutiri community.

An example for the conscious choices she makes in her retranslation is the translation of the phrase 'നമ്മൾ ഒന്നാണെന്ന്' (*nammal onnanennu*) in chapter 6 which is translated in the first as 'one in spirit' but translated as "one in body and spirit" in second translation. The first translation hides the physicality of the relationship between a wife and her husband while the latter exposes that. Even if Antharjanam's writing, probably owing to the then moral conventions, does not explicitly refer to it, the pathetic situation of Thethi, the protagonist, points to the unsatisfying conjugal relationship she had. This is an instance of feminist translational activity wherein a deliberate intervention is made to unveil the gendered discourse implicit in the text and make it explicit to the reader. Thethikutty, the protagonist who is forced to give up her desires in the presence of a husband who devoted his entire life to studying and carrying on rituals demanded by the Nambudiri community, yearns for romantic companionship and a fulfilling conjugal life. Instead, she is denied the physical pleasures of marital life by a repressive community system that encourages physical relationships with the sole purpose of production of an heir.

A similar contextual example of re-translation can be seen in the case of ‘ഭർത്തൃസംഗമം’ (*bharthrusangamam*), which is translated as ‘cohabitation’ in the first translation and ‘union’ in the second one. Sankaranarayan’s conscious choice in the retranslation is also suggestive of the idea of translation as ‘rewriting’ where, as Eleanora Federici says, “the visible translator is faithful to her reading of the ST, her understanding of the author and her capability as an interpreter of words”.

While the orthodox Nambuthiri community at the time was observed to be against modern education in general and women’s higher education in particular, the narrator Thankam, the offspring of a traditional marital arrangement between a Nambuthiri man and a Nair woman called *sambandham*³, is a woman who has broken that taboo through her relentless persuasion. Looking at some of the revisions Sankaranarayanan makes in the context, it bears witness to a translator who feels much stronger about women’s education in those orthodox times than the author. Providing basic education is described by the author in the common Malayalam phrase as “*naalaksharam padippikkunnath*” (Antharjanam 1976: 23), a literal translation of which means ‘teaching a few words’. While the first translation of the phrase shows “some formal education” (1980: 34), in the second translation it is given as “suitably educated” (2015: 26). English education was looked down with scorn by the elders of the community “*parishkarathil valarthunnath*” (Antharjanam 1976: 23) which was translated as “brought up in a sophisticated way” (1980: 34) in the first gets changed to “being educated in modern ways” (*Fire, My Witness* 25). The context in the novel shows the narrator who stands up to the conservative ways of the community to assert her demand for higher education. Her uncompromising stance, referred as “*vittuveezhchayillayma*” (Antharjanam 1976: 37), is translated as “stubbornness” (1980: 52) in the first and “unyielding” (2015: 44) in the second. Along the same lines, “*thannishtam*”, which has a negative connotation in the context of Malayalam, gets translated as “selfish stubbornness” in the first but unapologetic,

³ Casual alliances, condoned by the prevalent social system, wherein Nambuthiri men formed liaisons with women from other castes like Nairs, Ambalavasis and Kshatriyas.

“stubborn self-willed” in the second. The word, which is used by the character as she introspects her own stubborn stance to her father is rendered free of the negative subtext suggested by both the author and Sankaranarayanan herself as the first translator. Through these choices of correction, Sankaranarayanan brings more clarity to the character whose fierceness gets her desire to get educated, fulfilled.

A further example of the revision made in the retranslation is that of the word ‘മാനഭംഗപ്പെടുന്നു’ [*maanabhangappedunnu* - *maanam* (honor) + *bhangappeduka* (ruined)], which is translated by Sankaranarayanan as ‘dishonored’ in the first translation and as ‘raped’ in the second. Though the literal meaning of the term does not go against her first translation, the change she made in the second indicates the gender-conscious intervention she makes as a feminist translator. The same example is seen repeated when Sankaranarayanan translates ‘*manabhangapetta sthreekal*’ (Antharjanam 1976: 95) as “outraged women” (1980: 135) in her first translation but ‘corrects’ it to “raped women” (2015: 123) in the second one. A deliberate intervention is made by the translator to correct the patriarchal understanding, of where the honor of a woman lies and how it is brought to its ruin by an act of sexual violence perpetrated against her, which her first translation uncritically carried over from the source text. When the corrective interference from the part of the translator discards a concept no longer agreeable to the socio-political currents of the contemporary world, translation here becomes a historically-conscious process declarative of the shifts and turns that transpired in the trajectory of politics of language and gender. By doing so, an unequivocal feminist statement is made by the translator, asserting the retranslation project to be an act of activism. Sankaranarayanan’s choices support Tymozcko’s words, “even when a translator is not a political activist, the translator’s agency is notable and powerful because of inherent ethical and ideological vectors of textual choices at all these levels” (2014: 216). In her second translator’s note, Sankaranarayanan bases her reanalysis of the novel’s content on the clarity and awareness she has acquired about feminist ideologies over the years. Therefore, her translation here stands as a testimony of her ideological empowerment on account of what Tymozcko

identifies as ‘self-reflexivity’. In her argument that “self-reflexivity about translator’s place of enunciation and affiliation is the guide to actual choices in translation”, she pronounces self-awareness to be the imperative for the ideological, political and ethical agency (2014: 219), which is decisive in the process and product of translation.

Even though the novel has gained a status of significance in literary history, Antharjanam has not gone uncriticized. Limited within a heterosexual framework of domesticity and bearing several markers of her caste, class and elite social location, the feminist discourse in Antharjanam’s writing may be found questionable by contemporary feminists of Kerala (Devika 2013: 108). As already mentioned, Sankaranarayanan, in her note, reiterates her criticism of Antharjanam being a “traditionalist” and her attempts to strike a balance between tradition and modernity. A nuanced intervention she makes in this regard can be read in her translation of Antharjanam’s “*aacharalanghanakkuttangal*” (1976: 53), the phrase used to refer all the violations of traditions that happened before Thethi’s acts of rebellion. By translating this as “previous crimes consisting of violating the existing customs” (1980: 73) in the first translation, Sankaranarayanan concurs with the author’s grammar of tradition that attaches culpability. In her second translation the phrase is retranslated “previous shocking act that broke social codes”, highlighting translator’s critique of author’s strict adherence to ‘traditionalism’ (2015: 66).

Sankaranarayanan’s note in the retranslation also carries criticism for Antharjanam’s languorous representation of lower castes considering the depicted time period which saw the struggles for freedom and social justice by all groups. The representation is further enfeebled in the first translation when the mentions of names of lower castes are diluted as just ‘lower castes’. In the second translation, the retranslator, Sankaranarayanan, takes care to retain every non-Brahmanical caste name like ‘Sudra’ mentioned in the ST, indicating a nuanced approach that is conscious of the politics of caste. Moreover, the retention of the names, for example ‘Variar’ community, also becomes relevant for the readership to have a better knowledge of the system of *sambandham* practiced by Nambuthiri men.

In her own words, Sankaranarayanan's first translation had an 'element of hero worship' and even in the absence of any acknowledgement of the social significance the text upholds, she expresses her veneration for the beauty of Antharjanam's prose and the literariness it exudes. As her priority as a translator was the transference of that literary quality, several cultural markers particular to the ritualistic life of Nambudiris were translated to increase the readability. While doing so, she attempts to use ellipsis, otherwise absent in the text, to bring out the poetic quality of Antharjanam's prose. Used at the beginning of the narrative, it can be comprehended as an attempt to suggest the fragmentariness of protagonist's thoughts. Antharjanam's original text is divided into 18 chapters, each with a title indicative of the content. While her first translation lacks chapter titles, Sankaranarayanan, in her second translation, provides a free translation – not always word-to-word – based on her own reading of the chapters. This is a reiteration of her claims of translation as 'reinterpretation' and announces a 'visible' translator who is distant and independent.

Analyzing the two translations, it can be inferred that the transference of the sense of socio-cultural context and linguistic markers becomes a priority rather than the word-by-word meaning. Translator also becomes a critic as the relevance of the gender questions raised by Antharjanam are not to be isolated from the socio-cultural realities particular to the Nambuthiri community. The retranslation by Vasanthi Sankaranarayanan can be seen as an instance of Godard's conceptualization of 'womanhandling', wherein the "feminist translator affirming her critical difference, her delight in in-terminable rereading and rewriting, flaunts the signs of her manipulation of the text. 'Woman handling' the text in translation means replacing the modest, self-effacing translator. The translator becomes an active participator in the creation of meaning" (Godard 2021: 50).

Conclusion

While discussing the 'creation of value' of retranslations, Lawrence Venuti argues that "retranslations justify themselves by establishing their difference from one or more previous versions"

(2003: 25). The retranslation project of *Agnisakshi* undertaken by the same translator validates Venuti's observation that it is assumed that the differences are guided more by social or ideological premises than by the literary or linguistic lack in the previous translations (2003: 25).

A close examination of Sankaranarayanan's second translation in terms of the motivations behind the project and the choices she makes as a translator shows that the 'defaillance' in this case is the diminishing of the politics of social progressiveness that drove the writings of Antharjanam. In Carol Maier's words, "it is the responsibility of translators to reflect on their thinking in political terms, to reflect on their motives and on the effect their work might have on the reader". Following the same in this context, Sankaranarayan, by way of retranslation, "adds a new dimension to its contents from a feminist perspective". Retranslation, in this case, becomes the act of 're-vision' of the gender discourse highlighted by the novel and the demonstration of how the ideological empowerment of the translator plays out in the process of retranslation.

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