

Translation as Cultural Revitalization: Translation of a Classical Text *Pygmalion* into Kannada Language and Culture

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The paper focuses on the translation of a dramatic text from English to Kannada. The paper discusses George Bernard Shaw's English play *Pygmalion* (1914) along with its translation in Kannada titled *Mysura Malli* (Malli of Mysore, 1963) by Kerodi Gundu Rao. This paper tries to explore primarily the ways in which *Pygmalion* has been translated or adapted, the translation strategies deployed by the translator, the changes wrought in and reasons, techniques of domestication and the cultural aspects that determine the translation. The study considers the translation strategies of foreignization and domestication to answer the question on how they are important aspects in translation process in translating a text from English to Kannada, why the translator thought it was important and why he brought changes in terms of plot, characterization, language and environment. The study also looks into the literary functions of the translation in the Kannada literary culture.

Keywords: source-text, target-text, domestication, foreignization, culture.

Introduction

Kerodi Gundu Rao (1922-2010) translated *Pygmalion* into Kannada, titled *Mysura Malli*, (1963).¹ He was a teacher and has written several plays. He also directed plays. He had moved from Karnataka to Hyderabad (erstwhile, Andhra Pradesh) in 1950, he established a theatre group called *Kannada Natya Sangha* (Kannada Drama Troupe). Gundu Rao translated plays for his theatre group and directed them himself. His troupe performed the plays across the country. His plays deal with the social issues such as child marriage, poverty, unemployment and so forth. As a writer he penned more than ten dramas. Notable among them are *Vichithra Samaaja* (Strange Society, 1970), *Visha Kanya* (Poison Girl, 1971), *Mysura Malli* (Malli of Mysore, 1963), *Hoysalara Yereyanga* (Yereyanga of Hoysala, 1977) *Muppina Maduve* (Marriage of the Old, 1935), *Dhana Prabhava* (Effect of Money, 1941), *Mane Aliya* (Son-in-law, 1970) and so forth. This research focuses on

¹ Mysura Malli is the name of a girl. She is the protagonist in the play. She sells jasmine flowers at Mysore, a city in Karnataka.

his translation of the English play, *Pygmalion*, as *Mysura Malli*, into Kannada, which was performed in the year as it was released, in 1975.

Kerodi Gundu Rao belongs to what is generally considered by the literary historians as the *Navodaya* (New-dawn, Renaissance, and Awakening) period of Modern Kannada literature. Though the period between 1920 and 1945 was the heyday of the *Navodaya*, writers with that perspective were active and writing till the second half of the twentieth century. The desire of the *Navodaya* writers was to bring in Western genres into Kannada language. Languages and literatures of India came in close contact with English language and literature during the period. Many writers of Kannada literature were inspired by English literature and started experimenting with it. Though the beginning of Modern Kannada literature can be traced back to the early 19th century, the major modern literary genres except the novel, began to appear only in the second decade of the 20th century. Hence the *Navodaya* period is a time when new literature flourished in Kannada in a significant way. This was an age of prolific writing in Kannada literature. Modern poetry influenced by European romantic poetry, short stories, novels, modern plays, biographies, travel literature and translations were increasingly appearing on the Kannada literary map. It was a new awakening and a new dawn fashioned by the cultural elite of Karnataka. They wanted to bring in all genres of world literature into Kannada language in order to strengthen the language and culture.

Modern Kannada literature was influenced by Western education and early prose narratives. Modern Kannada drama gained through translations from Sanskrit, English, and Bengali literatures. Translations from English into Kannada became the new trend in Kannada during this period. Translations from English began with the translations by B.M. Srikantaiah. He was considered as the ground breaker of Modern Poetry in Kannada literature and he created and introduced several meters² and translated some of the best poems of English poets into Kannada. He translated a collection of poems from English into Kannada in 1921, using standard Kannada and new idioms which was the first of its kind. His *English Geetagal* (English Poems) was an instant hit and became a model for modern Kannada poetry. He is believed to have laid the foundations of modern Kannada literature through his translations of English poems to Kannada. *English Geetagal* became the model for the latter writers in Kannada to discard the old conventions of writing and produce literary works on modern thematic line. Through the transcreation of English poetry into Kannada language and culture, B. M. Srikantaiah stressed on need for the influence of English literature. Modern Kannada literature began with B. M. Srikantaiah's *English Geetagal* that appeared first in 1921 and acquired a canonical status in 1934. The translation

² Meter is the basic rhythmic structure of a verse or lines in a verse. Many traditional verse forms prescribe a specific verse meters, or a certain set of meters alternating in a particular order.

set the trend for *Navodaya* Kannada poetry and it breaths a new style, spirit, and enthusiasm into Kannada literature. Western thought through English literature offered a new outlook of life to Kannada literature.

During the *Navodaya* period, a large number of English poets like Shakespeare, Milton, Burns, Wordsworth, Arnold, Coleridge, Goldsmith and so forth were immediate inspiration for the Kannada poets. The works of Novelists and playwrights like Jane Austen, Walter Scott, Dickens, Ibsen, Tolstoy and others made their way into Kannada. These writers made a significant impact in Kannada literature. The *Navodaya* period was the period of experiment and innovation in Kannada literature. Novel, short story and other literary forms aroused a national consciousness in keeping with the political developments of the time. The period produced realistic novels and also saw the rise of lyricists whose works combined native folk songs, the mystic poetry under the influence of Modern English romantics. Best known among them are D. R. Bendre, Gopalakrishna Gokak, Masti Venkatesh Iyengar, D. V. Gundappa, P. T. Narasimhchar, G. P. Rajarathnam, K. S. Narasimha Swamy, Sri Ranga, Goruru Ramaswamy Iyengar and so forth.

There are certain important aspects that characterize the *Navodaya* period. Firstly, the *Navodaya* writers wanted to come out of the shackles of old literature and Sanskrit. They thought that English literature would provide them a new window to look into the world outside. They attempted to introduce themes of literature that were available to them through English language and literature. Establishing modern genres of world literature was their one of the most important and cherished goals. Through such endeavors the *Navodaya* writers were trying to establish a new literary sensibility and forge a new Kannada identity in the context of the literary culture of Karnataka. Translation came in handy to them as a literary tool not only to expose themselves to the foreign culture but also to understand, experiment, practise and establish new literature in Kannada.

Discussion

It is important to note here that though the translation of *Pygmalion* by Gundu Rao appeared much after the *Navodaya* (Renaissance) movement, the sensibility that informs this translation belongs to that period. However, we need to account for why Gundu Rao translated the play *Pygmalion* and why he thought it was important. The purpose of translating Shaw's *Pygmalion* into Kannada serves the process of cultural assimilation. Kannada lacked intellectual plays, a gap which Kailasam and Sriranga tried to fill in. However, there was a lot of scope for bringing in new issues and especially social issues. Social hierarchy and class difference were some of the issue addressed by the writers.

It is interesting to note that out of more than forty plays of Shaw, the Kannada translator picked up only one play, *Pygmalion*, to translate into Kannada. One noteworthy feature about *Pygmalion* is its dramatic quality. It is not only a social satire but also a real social drama with characters like

Professor Higgins, Alfred, Eliza and so on with the plot happening in different social settings and with its bringing together of different classes of people. The play provides an opportunity to create drama for performance. The study assumes that it is this dramatic quality that attracted Gundu Rao, a playwright and director, to *Pygmalion*. Shaw's *Pygmalion* earned reputation across the world and was staged many a time in England. The film version of the play, titled *My Fair Lady*,³ was broadcast on radio and television. In Shaw's writing one notices, there is humor, sharpness, liveliness, fearlessness, detraction and social criticism. Compassion, human kindness, brotherhood towards people and rationality are the subject matters of his plays. Shaw wanted to eliminate social problems and inequality through his writings. He severely criticized social evils in his plays. His plays are generally dialogue oriented with scintillating dialogues and are generally staged without excessive music or lighting. However, *Pygmalion* gives scope for a musical production.

Gundu Rao looked at the famous dramatists of Western world, especially those who composed social plays. He was of the opinion that the Kannada dramatists needed to translate them into Kannada as the Western dramatists used modern themes in their plays. He argued that there is much to learn from these plays and Kannada writers should start writing new kinds of plays in Kannada to enrich Kannada language and literature. (Niranjana Rao and Sumathi Niranjana 2014: 14). These were the reasons why Gundu Rao thought Shaw's play *Pygmalion* was important to Kannada literature. These ideas were derived from the Kannada *Navodaya* writers because their desire was to bring all the Western literary genres such as novel, poetry, drama, and short stories etc. into Kannada. The *Navodaya* writers believed that translation bridges the cultural gap by bringing the two cultures involved closer to each other. One notices that through the *Navodaya* movement, translations fashioned the modern Kannada literature in its early phase. The hope was to revitalize the language and culture through translations from English literature.

One notices while reading the play *Pygmalion* that the dramatic features of *Pygmalion* held a lot of promise for the modern Kannada theatrical tradition. The play was translated into many languages across the world because of its historical significance as well as its dramatic qualities. It is a problem centered play which depicts the social problems of England of the time, social superiority and inferiority that underlie the British class system. Social hierarchy was an unavoidable reality in Shaw's time of England. The British society was much characterized by the extreme class distinctions and the

³ The film is based on *My Fair Lady*, the musical adaptation of the play *Pygmalion*. The film is one of the greatest films ever made. The film has won eight Oscars and remains as a favourite romantic comedy. The film played successfully on Broadway at New York and it still broadcasting at different parts of the world. All the characters of the original play have been retained and performed by the British actors.

language separated the elite class from the lower classes. It was a society where social status was determined by the language that people used and their social behaviors. Therefore, the play explains the superficiality of the upper class society of England. Shaw brought all the members of the social classes into his play including upper class characters and lower class characters. *Pygmalion* is also a critique of the education system of that time. The condition of women was very miserable and they were denied the right to be educated. Shaw believed that education should create productive and good human beings instead of creating household pets (Griffith 1993: 149). The play raises a serious issue on the different English accents in the British society and Shaw points out that the reason to write this play was that the English people should speak their language correctly and to teach their children to speak good English. Perhaps these were some of the reasons behind Gundu Rao's choice of *Pygmalion* as an important play to be translated into Kannada. Another reason to translate this play was its scope for performance for Kannada stage. The theme of *Pygmalion* is the universal truth that all human beings are worthy of respect and dignity whether they belong to elite or lower class. The social problems such as illiteracy, caste system, poverty, gender inequality that the society where faced with provided ample thematic space to be explored through this play. After discussing the reasons for translating *Pygmalion* into Kannada, further the study discusses the differences between Gundu Rao's *Mysura Malli* in Kannada and the Shaw's original play *Pygmalion*.

Gundu Rao who adapted the English play *Pygmalion* into Kannada, particularly translated every dialogue of the original into Kannada by following the methods of adaptation and substitution. He changed the English setting into Kannada. London is represented by Mysore. The ending of the play is typically Indian with the lovers, Malli and Raju getting married. Gundu Rao used the regional dialect of Mysore in his translation. He changed the original title to *Mysura Malli* and the backdrop for all the acts was Mysore in Karnataka. In his Kannada version there are five acts and each act has sub-scenes (Kerodi 2014). According to Katharina Reiss and Hans J .Vermeer (1984), the top ranking role for any translation is the Skopos rule. The Skopos rule is explained by Vermeer as follows;

Each text is produced for a given purpose and should serve this purpose. The Skopos rule thus reads as follows: translate/interpret/speak/write in a way that enables your text/translation to function in the situation in which it is used and with the people who want to use it and precisely in the way they want it to function (Nord 1997: 29).

Gundu Rao domesticated the characters of the original play into his target text *Mysura Malli* in Kannada. He used Mysurian dialect of Kannada and its cultural context in his translation. The source-text, *Pygmalion's* characters such as Prof. Higgins, Colonel Pickering, Alfred Doolittle, Freddy, Mrs. Higgins, Elisa Doolittle, Mrs. Pearce, Mother Eynesford Hill and Clara

Eynesford Hill are replaced in Gundu Rao's target-text as Prof. Puttanna, Major Mahajan, Maddhura Madappa, Raju, Rao Saheb Ramaiah, Smt. Nanjamma, Mysura Malli, Papamma, Jayalakshamma, Tara and Siddha. The Kannada characters are familiar to the people of Karnataka i.e. the English source text is close to the Kannada target language. The translator made the changes in the target text according to the Kannada language and culture to reach the common people.

We can also find additions in Gundu Rao's translation. He added three to four lines of songs at the beginning of every act of the play which could have been keeping the performability of the play in mind. The English play is about Eliza Doolittle, a cockney flower girl who takes English speech lessons from Professor Henry Higgins, an expert in phonetics, so that she may pass as a duchess and she may work in the flower shop as a lady. In Gundu Rao's adaptation, Professor Puttanna teaches Kannada speech to Malli so that she learns good Kannada and she may work in a flower shop or she can be a teacher in a school instead of selling flowers on the streets of Mysore. As he was translating for the stage, Gundu Rao has given elaborate stage directions in his translation. He has given four to five line explanations and directions which are necessary for bringing the play to the stage.

If we reflect on this translation, it is clear that the purpose of the translator and the literary function of the translation in the target culture are the ones that have determined the translation strategy. According to the *Skopos theory* of Hans J Vermeer, translation is an action. As with any action, it has an aim, a purpose. And any 'action leads to a result, a new situation, or an event, and possibly to a new object.' (Venuti 2000: 221). Gundu Rao cut out some sections and added short poems in very act of the play. Then there are elements which he translated according to Kannada language and culture to fit the requirements of the stage performance. He assumes the role of a negotiator between two languages in a process of intercultural communication and in the production of the translation. According to Christiane Nord,

Translating means comparing cultures. Translators interpret source-culture phenomena in the light of their own culture-specific knowledge of that culture, from either the inside or the outside, depending on whether the translation into the translator's native language and culture (Nord 1997: 34).

We can understand by the above definition that Gundu Rao made the changes in his translation according to the target Kannada language and its culture. One can notice that the source-text and the target-text belong to different cultures and language community. The source text *Pygmalion* represents the English language and the English culture. The target text *Mysura Malli* represents the Kannada language and culture. One notices that according to *Skopos theory* the function of target-text in its target culture is not necessarily the same as in the source culture. The translator can change the source culture according to the target language and culture. Gundu Rao's

decisions as a translator of not offering the same amount and kind of information in the Kannada translation as is there in the source-text can be understood better in the light of *Skopos theory*. To translate, according to Vermeer, is to produce a text in a target setting for a target purpose and target addressees in target circumstances. Gundu Rao has not changed the source-text completely; there is some kind of relationship with the source-text.

The Polysystem theory focuses on the question of why some texts are being translated and what their role is in the target literary system. It proposes the socio-literary conditions of the receptor culture are the deciding factors in the choice of a text to be translated and if the receptor language is lacking in certain forms or styles or genres then it is likely to fill up that empty space through translations from other languages (Zohar 1990: 73-78). We observe this being the case in early modern Kannada literature. Firstly, there was no tradition of drama. Secondly, even in the sixties, seventies and eighties of the last century, as the theatre movement gained momentum, there was dearth of good independent Kannada plays. Thirdly, the Kannada literary sensibility shaped by the Progressive, the Modernist, the Protest and the Dalit literary movements saw, in the works of Shaw, Ibsen, Brecht, Lorca and the likes, something that Kannada culture could emulate.

The strategy employed by the Kannada translator to render English play *Pygmalion* into Kannada is one of domestication. A concept introduced into translation studies by the American translation theorist Lawrence Venuti in 1995. The concept was defined in the modern sense and given a name first by Venuti. However, the practice has existed for a long time. Also, according to Venuti, foreignization is the ethical choice for a translator. Gundu Rao domesticated many aspects and minimized strangeness of the foreign text and culture for the Kannada target audience. In other words he brought the author closer to the Kannada readers of the target-text.

A brief explanation of aspects of domestication is pertinent here. The line 'your native language is the language of Shakespeare and Milton and the Bible' (Shaw 1916: 18) in the source text is translated into Kannada as 'your native language is the language of Pampa, Ranna, Janna, Ponna, Kumaravyasa, Kumara Valmiki, Purandara Dasaru, Kanakadasaru, Kavi Muddanna and the Bhagavad-Gita' (Gundu Rao 2014: 539). 'I want to be a lady in a flower shop instead of selling at the corner of Tottenham Court Road' (Shaw 1916: 26) is translated in Kannada as 'I want to be a teacher in a school or I can work in the Mysore palace as a maid instead of selling flowers in the market of Mysore' (Gundu Rao 2014: 556). 'I can spot an Irishman or a Yorkshire man by his brogue. I can place any man within six miles and two miles in London. Sometimes within two streets' (Shaw 1916: 17) is translated in Kannada as 'I can point out when people speak in Kannada language the different dialects of Kannada such as Dharawad, Mangalore, Ballary, Kodagu' (Gundu Rao 2014: 539). (Translations from Kannada to English are mine). These are some of the examples of domestication aspects in the Kannada translation. What we can understand through the discussion is that in

domestication, Kannada translation adheres to the culture of the Kannada language. It conforms to the literary and cultural traditions of the target language, Kannada. The translator has applied the domestication strategy to the Kannada translation which makes it more readable and communicative. Venuti rightly points out,

Domestication is transparent and adapted to minimize the strangeness of the original foreign text for the convenience of the target text. Foreignizing translation signifies the differences of the foreign text only by disrupting the cultural elements those prevail in the target text which means that to take the reader to the foreign culture and to make him/she feel the linguistic as well as cultural differences (Yang 2010: 78).

Therefore, the Kannada translation is easier for the Kannada readers to understand and accept because in the process of translation alien characters, plot, events, narrative styles, places etc. were transformed into a familiar environment of the Kannada language. Through domestication, the foreign text *Pygmalion* is effectively rendered as the target text *Mysura Malli* in Kannada. The detailed aspects of domestication in Kannada translation are given in the appendix.

Conclusion

It is clear through the discussion that Gundu Rao transformed every dialogue of the original play into the Kannada context. He played a major role as translator in bringing Western drama, rationality and radical thinking of Bernard Shaw into Kannada literature. Therefore, the Kannada translation played a significant role in the Kannada theatre tradition. The study focused on four questions, which are, the probable reasons for attempt to translate *Pygmalion*, the ways in which the translator handled the plot, style and environment of the play. Translation strategies of foreignization and domestication used by the translator and the literary functions have been dealt into. It is clear that the translation has played a significant role in shaping modern Kannada literature as well as modern Kannada theatre in the latter half of the twentieth century.

A detailed analysis of the problems of translation in terms of equivalence, stylistic issues, translating satire and so on has been taken up in this study. Secondly, this is a descriptive analysis as suggested by the early translation studies scholars like James Holmes, Lefevere, Itamar Evan Zohar and others. A theorization of this translation within the framework of postcolonial translation studies discussing issues related colonial and postcolonial contexts is possible. There is also much scope to study the translation purely based on the theatrical perspectives.

Appendix-1

The Aspects of Domestication in Gundu Rao’s Kannada Translation

Shaw’s Source Text Pygmalion	Gundu Rao’s Target Text
Pygmalion	Mysura Malli.
Piano, taxi, plate, post card, photo, park, slipper, nonsense, hat.	rāgamālike pettige, jatakagādi, tatte, anche kagada, bhavachitra, udyanavana, kyara, mōrkhatana, topi
Buy a ham and a stilton cheese at Eale and Binman’s shop.	ondistu sebu mattu kodagina kittale hannugalannu ā annina angadiyalli kondu bā.
Take all her clothes off and burn them. Ring up Whiteley for new ones.	avala battegalannu tegedu hāki suttu, kishan chellaram angadige kare mādi hosa battegāgi.
Your native language is the language of Shakespeare and Milton and the Bible.	ninna huttu bashe Kannada. Pampa, Ranna, Janna, Ponna, Kumaravyasa, Kumara Valmiki, Purandara Dasaru, Kanakadasaru, Kavi Muddanna bareda tili Kannada and Bhagavad-Gita.
Penny, Shilling, Koruna, Pound	rupāyi
I can spot an Irishman or a Yorkshire man by his brogue. I can place any man within six miles and two miles in London. Sometimes within two streets.	Dharawadadavaru, Mangalōrinavaru. Ballariyavru, Kodaginavaru, avara bai mātinda yarembudannu gurutisuve. Mysōrina Kempunanamma Agrahara, Ontikoppalada nivāsigala matannu gurutisaballe
I could even get her a place as lady’s maid or shop assistant, which requires better English.	Mysōru Mahārājara satkara kōtadalli srimantiniyante nadesaballe adakke avalige bekagiruvudu uttama Kannada bāshe.
Charlie, angel court, drury lane, round the corner of Micklejohn’s oil shop.	jatka sabi, kurubra halli hatra, itge gudy chowka, Basavannora yanne angdi hatra muleke.
I have got all the records. I want of the Lisson Grove lingo.	Madduru uchāranegala bagge sakastu mudrikegalu nannalive.

I want to be a lady in a flower shop instead of selling at the corner of Tottenham Court Road.	mārukatte raste muleyalli hō maro badlu iskulu teacher āgo, armaneyallo kelsa madbeku.
I will offer myself as an assistant to professor Nepean Clean young Japanese lady in a simple blue cotton Kimono printed cunningly with small white jasmine blossoms.	Nanjundayyanavara balige hogi sahashikshakiyagutene. Jayapurada sēreyannuttu, high hēld chappali, lipstick, vyaniti bag hididukondu taleyalli mallige mudidukondidāle
Sits down in the Elizabethan chair	bethada kurchiyalli kulituko.
Let's take her to the Shakespeare exhibition at Earls Court	Basappashastrigala Shākuntala nataka pradarshanakke avalannu karedukondogona.
Copper's nark	ondu bageya suddi koduva policinavaru.
Eliza, Elizabeth, Betsy and Bess. They went to the woods to get a bird's nest': They found a nest with four eggs in it: They took one apiece, and left three in it.	Malli-mallige-mallika. Muvaru kadige hodaru, hakkiya gudannu taroke. Allondu hakkiya gudannu kandaru adaralli motte murittu, ondannu tegedikondu murannu alliye bittaru.
Charring Cross, Ludgate Circle, Trafalgar Square, Hammersmith area.	Devaraja mārukatte, Mysuru railway nildāna, Madduru, Unasōru.

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