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AUROBINDO'S PSYCHO-SPIRITUAL THEORIES OF TRANSLATION

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Abstract:-The theory of translation in the Indian languages has always been something essential in practice. In the ancient period, no specific theory of translation was recorded since creative writing and translation were never considered as two separate processes in India. But with the passage of time some difference has been noticed in this course as many individual translators have recorded their experiences and reflections. Sri Aurobindo's development of psycho spiritual theory has also donated remarkable contribution in this context. He has given various theories to support his idea in different ways. My present paper aims to elaborate his ideas in detail to explain their depth and uses in the field of translation.

Keywords:psycho-spiritual theories , Indian languages , specific theory , analysis.

INTRODUCTION

Translation theory in the Indian languages has always been something inherent in practice. In the ancient period, no specific theory of translation was recorded as creative writing and translation were never considered as two separate processes in India. But the modern period has shown some difference as many individual translators have recorded their experiences and reflections. Sri Aurobindo (1892-1950), a philosopher, poet, spiritualist and one of the greatest translators of India, developed the psycho spiritual theories of translation in the context of modern Indian languages. He recorded the theoretical framework of his own translations in his articles like *On translating Kalidasa*, *On translating the Bhagavad Gita*, *On translating the Upanishads*, *The interpretation of scripture*, *Freedom in translation*, *Importance of turn of language in Translation*, *translation of Prose into poetry*, and *Remarks on Bengali translations*. Since these theories have emerged from his own practice of translation, they have a sound basis of intellectual philosophy and psychology. His own philosophy is based on the psycho-spiritual interpretations of the ancient Indian thinking in the upnishads. He seems to have been especially influenced by the cognitive philosophy of ancient India, the tradition of which goes back to the pre-Buddhist and the Buddhist period. Some of the theories put forward by him are as follows.

TRANSLATION AND THE LEVELS OF CONSCIOUSNESS

About the cognitive process of translation like analysis and comprehension of the literal and the suggested meaning of the target text and finding of suitable equivalence in the target language, Sri Aurobindo has mentioned three basic things in his essay *The interpretation of Scripture* i.e. name (*nama*), form of meaning (*rupa*) and the image of the essential figure of truth (*svarupa*). Here, Sri Aurobindo indicates the different levels of consciousness and the role of intuition in grasping the meaning at the higher levels. Sri Aurobindo, gives a psycho-spiritual division of the levels of consciousness at the physical, mental and the supramental levels. According to him "Our ordinary human mind is only a fraction of our entire consciousness, which ranges from the mind levels to the superconscious above and the subconscious below. . . Our mind is only a middle term in a long series of ascending consciousness". In the light of this view of Sri Aurobindo, it can be said that a text can be analysed linguistically and intellectually at the two levels of word and its form of meaning, but at the highest level, the analysis can be done only intuitively and perhaps at this level, the actual translation takes place.

Some cognitive linguists consider that translation equivalence is possible at the level of imagery. This idea seems to be very near to the level of the 'Essential Figure of Truth' mentioned by Sri Aurobindo. In translation, the process of text analysis, comprehension of the literal as well as the suggested meaning, and the process of decision making will also have three levels. The flashes from the 'Supermind' through the medium of intuition will be of great help for the translator. The use of the mechanical mind of the translator will produce only a mechanical type of translation, whereas a translation made by the proper use of the intuition will produce better results. Translator, in the search for effective equivalent goes through an inner struggle like the scientist in his experiments. Like the discovery which often comes to the scientist from above as a flash and not as a result of mere intellectual search, a translator also often gets insights into the possible equivalence like a flash from his Supermind through his intuition. According to Sri Aurobindo, consciousness can ascend or descend at the various levels and can integrate the lower one to the higher. The lower stages do not disappear, but are transformed, and continue under new conditions. This he calls *the principle of integration*. In the light of this view, we can say that the decision making process in translation starts from the superconscious level of the image or the 'essential figure of truth'. Then the mental level of the figure of meaning or *rupa*, and the physical or material level of *nama*, or word are also integrated. It is the finding of the appropriate expression at the surface level which can suggest the meaning. This extends its dimensions towards the third level of consciousness. Then translation becomes more communicative, especially when the higher meaning of the text is significant. The translation of any text is taking place at the three levels, as Sri Aurobindo indicates. At the super conscious level, it may not be purely linguistic, but soon at the mental and the physical level, it becomes linguistic and conceptual. He refers to supreme level by the ancient term *Sabdabrahman*, word as God. In the light of these views, it can be said that while analysing and comprehending the meaning, the translator should reach the mental level (or the deep level of the modern linguistics) from the surface linguistic level and then to the highest (or the deepest) level where the text exists in a *language without language* form. While finding the equivalent, the translator will have to go to this *language without language* form first and then opt for appropriate name and form in the translated language. Hence the process of translation can be said to be linguistic, intellectual and intuitive at the same time. Comparison also will be going on in the translator's *human translating machine*, consciously and unconsciously at all the three levels. Therefore, the empirical methods for analysing and evaluating these processes also should be three dimensional, linguistic, intellectual and intuitive.

The Problem of 'knower, knowledge and the known' in translation

Sri Aurobindo writes that in the interpretation of the Scripture, the standards of truth are three, the knower, knowledge and the known. He explains that the known is the text itself that we intend to interpret (translate). The knower in the case of texts like the Upanisads is the original *drasta* or seer of the hymn. In the case of other key texts, he will be the author. The ancient Indian scholars of cognitive philosophy discussed basic problem of the unity of 'knower, knowledge and the known' under the technical name of *triputi* or triad. Surendranath Dasgupta explains the interpretation of the unity of this triad by the Vedanta school of philosophers as follows:

According to Sri Aurobindo, the translator ought to be in spiritual contact with the original seer (author). He represents the logical basis of the empathy of the translator with the author. He says that "if knowledge is a perishable thing in a perishable instrument, such a contact is impossible but in that case the scripture itself must be false and not worth considering. If there is any truth in what the scripture says, knowledge is eternal and inherent in all of us and what another say I can see, what another realised I can realise. The *drasta* was a soul in relation with the infinite spirit and I am also a soul in relation with the infinite spirit. We have a meeting place, a possibility of communication".

In effect, this communion between the original author, the translator and the knowledge which is revealed by the text form the triangular cognitive basis of translation. This will again continue as the triad of translator (who by the perceptive process identifies with the original author), knowledge revealed by the target text and the reader of the target text who will have a communion with the two. According to Sri Aurobindo, knowledge is the eternal truth, part of which the author expresses to us. He says that not only words, but also ideas are no more than symbols of a knowledge which is beyond ideas and words. Therefore he instructs that the translator must transgress limits and penetrate to the knowledge behind. This knowledge must be experienced before it can be known, and the realisation in the self of things is the only knowledge. Text alone should be the guiding factor for the translator.

The translator of the Vedas should prefer to know what the Veda has to say for itself. At the same time, out of the two main instruments of cognition suggested by the ancient Indian philosophers, namely the authority of word and direct perception, Sri Aurobindo prefers perception in understanding the true meaning of the text. In his essay, *the foundations of the psychological theory*, he advocates for finding out the 'right psychological function' of the symbols which should be founded on good philosophical justification and fitting naturally into the context wherever it occurs. Sri Aurobindo says that the translator should exceed the scriptures (texts) in order to be master of their knowledge. He also says that the capacity of man is unlimited, and if we can get rid of our *ahankara* or ego, if we can put ourselves at the service of the infinite without any reservation or predilection or opinion, there is no reason why our realisation should be limited. He is of the firm conviction that to understand the scriptures, it is not enough to be a scholar, one must be a soul. This is a hint on the ideal nature of the impersonality of the translator about which Sri

Aurobindo has commented at various occasions. He has practiced this impersonality as a translator himself in the translations of so many spiritual texts and great authors.

In the light of the above discussion it can be concluded that through such an identity of the original author, translator and the text, the unification of 'knower, known and the knowledge' becomes possible. This can be the cognitive basis of not only the scripture translation but of any kind of translation of literature or a work of spiritual nature.

The problem of communicating new concepts through translation

Sri Aurobindo in his preface to the translation of the Upanisads writes: "The mind of man demands, and that demand is legitimate that new ideas shall be presented in words which convey to him some associations with which he should not feel like a foreigner in a strange country where no one knows his language, nor he theirs. The new must be presented to him in terms of the old, new wine must be put to some extent in old bottles."

This statement is of great cognitive significance since the problem of translating the cultural terms from other cultures has been a crucial one before the translators all over the world. Sri Aurobindo does not advocate for total replacement by the available target terms. On the basis of cognitive philosophy and psychology, and also based on his own experience as a translator, he is suggesting a more natural and psychological method of approaching the problem. The Nyaya philosophers of ancient India had accepted analogy (*Upamana*) as one of the valid sources of cognition. It is a concept of associating a thing unknown before with its name by virtue of its similarity with some other known thing. A famous example given by them is that a man of the city who has never seen a wild ox goes to the forest, asks a forester -- "what is a wild ox?", and the forester replies -- "oh, you do not know it, it is just like a cow". Afterwards when he finds a wild ox, he compares it with a cow and understands that it is a wild ox. Similarly when a new concept or new cultural term which is unknown to the reader of the target language can be made familiar to him through the existing terms, although there can be limitations. This is in fact a psychological method of making use of the images already existing in the minds of the target reader.

The problem of word value and image transformation

In his essay On translating *Kalidasa*, Sri Aurobindo suggests that the translator of aesthetically important text must give preference to 'closeness of word value' and not closeness of meaning. The problem discussed here is of utmost importance in the context of cognition of the culturally dissimilar items in translation. Sri Aurobindo is of the opinion that what is perfectly familiar in the original language must not seem entirely alien to the foreign audience. There must be some complementary strangeness, an attempt to bring home the association to the foreign intelligence, to give at least some idea to a cultured but not orientally scholarly mind. In this context he suggests two devices which he himself adopted in his translations. One way is to discard the original image and replace it by a more intelligible image in the target language, when it is indispensable. This is a creative device and it calls for the application of translator's creative intelligence. In replacing the image, the aesthetic and cultural value of the original image may be taken into account. The second technique suggested by him is to render the word or image by some neologism which will help to convey any prominent characteristic of idea associated with the thing it expresses. Blossom of ruby may render, for instance *bandhoula*, a flower associated with its redness. Such a device is expressively declaring the characteristics which the source text only indicates. The process of such device is a kind of demetaphorisation or decoding of the images and then finding a suitable equivalent which can communicate the value of the images.

Sri Aurobindo's theories of translation and philosophy have influenced many translators like Sumitranandan Pant, Vyohar Rajendra Singh and Vidyapati Kokil in Hindi and Subramania Bharati in Tamil.

Concluding the above discussion on the psycho-spiritual theories of translation in the modern Indian languages we can conclude that the theories of translation are only evolving through the process of critical analysis and evolution. The tradition of transcreation has its roots in India's very ancient culture and it is still influencing the writers.

The psychospiritual theories of Sri Aurobindo have deep impact on many modern Indian writers and translators and is futuristic in nature. Dhvani or the theory of suggestive meaning and 'Auchitya' are being applied as yardsticks of translation.

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