

**EXPLORING THE UNTRANSLATABILITY OF MANTO'S WORKS: A STUDY OF
METAPHORICAL, CULTURAL, AND STRUCTURAL TRANSLATION BY KHALID
HASAN**

Dr. Ravinder Kumar, Professor of English, Faculty of Humanities, Sharda University

Abstract:

The process of translation is an essential means of communication, as it enables the sharing of different cultures. However, at times, inadequate expressions in the Targeted Language can lead to incorrect perceptions of a culture. M.B. Dagut has identified deficiencies in the translation of figures of speech, particularly in relation to three types of metaphors. This article focuses on two types of untranslatability - Cultural and Structural - and examines them in the context of Khalid Hasan's translation of Manto's works.

Key words: Source Language, Targeted Language, Cultural Untranslatability, Structural Untranslatability

Translation serves as a crucial tool for communication, enabling the exchange of diverse cultures and ideas. However, its limitations become apparent when attempting to convey nuanced meanings that are peculiar to a particular language or culture. M.B. Dagut has elucidated three types of metaphors that pose challenges to the process of translation, highlighting the flaws that can arise in the interpretation of figures of speech. In this article, the focus is on two types of untranslatability, namely Cultural Untranslatability and Structural Untranslatability. These are examined in the context of Khalid Hasan's translated version of Manto's work. The aim is to evaluate the extent to which these limitations affect the translation process and to what degree the translator has managed to overcome them. The notion of Cultural Untranslatability pertains to the difficulty of conveying the cultural connotations of words or phrases from one language to another. This issue is particularly relevant when translating literature, as it involves an intricate interplay of language and culture. Structural Untranslatability, on the other hand, refers to the inability to convey the grammatical or syntactical structure of a language in a different one. This can result in a distortion of the original text or a loss of its intended meaning. In the case of Khalid Hasan's translation of Manto's work, it is evident that he has encountered several instances of Cultural Untranslatability. For example, in the original text, Manto uses a Punjabi expression, "*rattan de bhukke*," which literally translates to "starving for stones." However, the phrase carries a deeper meaning, referring to the idea of being so hungry that one is willing to eat even inedible objects. Hasan's translation of this phrase as "stone hungry" fails to capture the essence of the original, highlighting the limitations of Cultural Untranslatability. Similarly, Structural Untranslatability is also apparent in Hasan's translation. Manto's use of a unique grammatical structure, known as the "omission of the verb," is a common feature of Punjabi language. However, this structure does not exist in English, making it difficult to translate without losing the intended meaning. Hasan attempts to overcome this issue by using alternative structures, such as the passive voice, but this results in a distortion of the original text. Translation is a complex process that involves navigating various linguistic and cultural barriers. While translators strive to convey the meaning of the original text as accurately as possible, there are limitations that can impede this process. Cultural Untranslatability and Structural Untranslatability are two such limitations that can pose significant challenges to translators. Nonetheless, with a deep understanding of both the source and target languages, translators can strive to overcome these limitations and produce translations that do justice to the original text. Stories serve as a reflection of society and serve as an indicator of a writer's sensitivity towards the human experience. From time to time, writers emerge from society to offer a glimpse into untouched emotions that often go unexpressed. Saadat Hasan Manto was one such writer, born in the village of

Samrala in Punjab on May 11, 1912, and passed away in Lahore, Pakistan on January 18, 1955, at the age of forty-two. It begs the question of how we should read Manto's work in today's context. Manto experimented extensively in his writings on the complexities of human relationships, particularly those between men and women. His works remain relevant even in contemporary society. In "A Wet Afternoon," Manto illustrates the experience of a teenager, Masood, who is confined to his home due to inclement weather. The story unfolds through Manto's use of powerful metaphors, painting a vivid picture of Masood's experiences. Reading Manto's works is an elevated experience that delves deeply into the story of the partition between India and Pakistan. Manto's use of language and metaphor serves as a poignant commentary on the social and political dynamics that shaped the partition. His works remain a powerful reminder of the human toll of these events, offering insights that remain relevant even today. Saadat Hasan Manto is regarded as one of the most significant writers of the 20th century, not just in the Indian subcontinent but globally as well. Born in Samrala village of Punjab in 1912, Manto's writings have been celebrated for their nuanced portrayal of complex human relationships, especially those between men and women. He was a prolific writer who authored numerous short stories, essays, and screenplays in his brief but illustrious career. He passed away at the young age of 42 in Lahore, Pakistan, leaving behind a rich literary legacy that continues to inspire readers today. Manto's works are characterized by their evocative language, masterful use of metaphors, and profound insights into the human experience. In "A Wet Afternoon," Manto captures the ennui and isolation experienced by a young teenager, Masood, on a rainy day, through the use of powerful imagery and symbolism. The story is a testament to Manto's skill as a writer, showcasing his ability to convey the complexities of the human psyche through vivid imagery. "A Wet Afternoon" as carrier to boost energy and to give warm feelings, "When he had seen the vapour rising from the freshly slaughtered sheep, he had experienced a strange pleasure..., experienced a certain warmth rise in his body" (Khalid,3). Manto's works remain relevant today, as they offer a critical commentary on the social and political dynamics that shape our world. His portrayal of the partition between India and Pakistan, in particular, serves as a powerful reminder of the human toll of such events. Manto's writings on partition are not limited to a mere documentation of the events but delve deep into the psychological, emotional, and moral implications of partition. Through his works, he portrayed the violent and traumatic effects of partition on people's lives, exploring themes of loss, displacement, and identity crisis. "It was warm... come with me first, my back is hurting badly...I will lie on the bad and you press the sore areas with your feet" (Khalid 5). Manto's works are a celebration of the human experience, with a particular emphasis on the lives and struggles of marginalized communities. He wrote about the lives of prostitutes, criminals, and other outcasts, portraying them as complex and multi-dimensional characters, rather than mere caricatures. Manto's portrayal of these characters was not intended to be sensationalistic or exploitative, but rather a means of highlighting the deep-rooted social injustices that plagued the Indian subcontinent. "It was not first time he had pressed Kalsoom's legs but never before had he felt his way. His mind kept going back to butcher's shop with those misty vapours" (Khalid 7). Manto's works have been the subject of extensive analysis and interpretation, with scholars and literary critics exploring the themes, motifs, and symbolism in his works. His use of metaphors and symbolism in his works has been particularly lauded, with scholars arguing that these elements serve to enhance the emotional impact of his stories. Moreover, Manto's works are regarded as a commentary on the sociopolitical climate of his times, reflecting the anxieties and uncertainties of a society grappling with its own identity and its place in the world. Saadat Hasan Manto's works are a testament to the power of literature to capture the nuances of the human experience. Through his stories, Manto explored complex themes of identity, displacement, and social injustice, offering insights that are as relevant today as they were when they were first penned. Manto's use of language, metaphor, and symbolism served to enhance the emotional impact of his stories, providing readers with a window into the human psyche. Manto remains an inspiration to writers and readers alike, his works serving as a reminder of the enduring power of literature to challenge, provoke, and inspire. Manto has used flesh as metaphor with great sensitivity that can be controversial in society. Narang discusses the subject matter of

literature – any literature- Manto linked it up with the two most basic needs— he calls them hungers of human life (Bhalla 72). Boo, it is a complete experiment itself. It is perfectly significant in the context of using metaphors. “Her odor was not artificial like perfume: it was strong like the physical union between man and woman that is both scared and eternal” (Khalid 68). Narrating a story through the word like Boo, is a great literary excellence. This kind of real-sheath can only be made by Manto only.

Metaphors: Untranslatable Figures of Speech

It is well-established that the task of translating metaphors is fraught with difficulty, owing to the nuanced and contextual nature of language. Indeed, the act of translating a metaphor from the source language (SL) to the targeted language (TL) necessitates the creation of a new stylistic expression altogether. Consequently, the potential for mistranslation looms large, with poor translation practices often resulting in a detrimental exploitation of the target language. Asaduddin says “a bad and irresponsible translator can do great damage to a writer, falsifying his image and distorting the true import and spirit of his works” (Bhalla 160). M.B. Dagut did extensive study on this aspect of translatability of metaphors in his article published by Babel (1976). He explained three types of metaphors in his article. Dagut concluded that metaphors are unique in nature and cannot be completely translated into TL. “It can be “reproduced” in some way (Dagut 21). In “Thanda Gosht” Hasan translated it as “Colder Than Ice.” Asaduddin emphasizes the aspect of untranslatability “The story ends with phrase colder than ice” (Bhalla 163). Khalid seems helpless to translate the context in which Manto described the story. This failure to evoke the feeling can be seen easily by those who are familiar with both languages. When a native reader of a source language reads the translated version of that text, he feels somewhere disappointed. It is not wrong to say that the translated text seems unable to move the reader.

Cultural & Emotional Aspect of Translation

One of the most significant challenges involved in translating an original text lies in capturing its emotional essence. While it is often posited that “emotions are the lifeblood of literature,” this sentiment can prove difficult to replicate when it comes to translated works. In fact, this presents a major impediment to successful translation efforts. As we understand it, translation is a highly nuanced form of communication, which seeks to create a parallel text in the targeted language (TL). However, there exists a certain threshold beyond which the text cannot be effectively translated from the source language (SL). This paper seeks to explore these absolute limits, and the inherent difficulties that arise when attempting to translate cultural nuances such as lifestyle, dress, and other idiosyncratic features of a given society. In Khalid’s translation of Manto, words- like - गोश्त, जमींदार, टोबा टेक सिंह, जो बोले सो निहाल, सत श्री अकाल, दर फिट्टे मुँह - are to be kept as examples of ‘untranslatability’. Despite Khalid's earnest efforts to translate various aspects of the cultural backdrop, he appears to have fallen short in terms of capturing the sense of cultural portability. While Khalid has successfully translated the works of Manto, there remains a significant divide between the original and translated versions, largely due to the inherent challenges of cultural, contextual, and linguistic untranslatability. For example, in “A Wet Afternoon”, गोश्त (Flesh) has been used as metaphor. The word ‘गोश्त’ brings the feelings that cannot be replaced by the word flesh. The word ‘गोश्त’ brings a kind of sensation which cannot be aroused by the word flesh. In TL, the word flesh has many contextualized meanings which may have not carried the impact in the context of “A Wet Afternoon”. “गोश्त” is one of the important metaphors used in this story. No doubt, the words like flesh and Misty- arouse emotions and feelings in the minds of readers but the perception drawn by the readers is different in nature. The feelings aroused through the TL (English) may take a native to the cold-storage where flesh of sheep is hanging. He will not imagine “butcher carrying a huge basket on his head” (Khalid,3). “A Wet Afternoon” can be understood only by a person who has experienced by a village life. There is one more example of

lexical untranslatability in the line “*upper the gur-gur the annexe the mung the dal of Guruji da Khalsa nd Gurujikifateh...*”(Ibid,13). Here, the words have no intended meaning in English. One can exploit ambiguous words for creating numerous effects. The important thing here is intentionality of meaning of soul of the context. But when a native of TL reads it, he will have to go for reference. Here it is a case of lexical-untranslatability. In A Wet Afternoon, the relationship of “गोश्त” with Masood is an integral part in the story which gets reflected in the sentence “Flesh under his feet rippled from side to side” (Ibid 7). Manto has made the theme of relationship between “गोश्त” with Masood at various levels.

Untranslatability on Structural Aspect

There occur some grammatical hindrances in translation which are syntactically relevant to the original text. Here are some examples like, टोबा टेक सिंह (Toba Tek Singh), ठंडा गोश्त (Colder Than Ice), बू (odor). It seems difficult to share a common association in languages by two different human beings. In contemporary linguistics, it is assumed that no two human beings can produce the same sentence structures in different languages. Asaduddin asserts in his article that “the translator’s misplaced zeal should not lead him to add information for local colour or exotic appeal.” (Bhalla 171)

Conclusion

Khalid Hasan's translation of Saadat Hasan Manto's works is a testament to his artistic excellence and his efforts to introduce Manto to a wider, international audience. However, this paper has also highlighted the challenges of translation, specifically in relation to cultural, structural, and metaphorical untranslatability. Despite these challenges, the importance of translation cannot be ignored, especially in terms of promoting and preserving marginalized voices and cultural heritage. Translators play a crucial role in ensuring that the cultural aspects of the original work are effectively conveyed to the target audience. Moreover, while some technical issues of untranslatability may exist, the value of translation in promoting cross-cultural understanding and appreciation cannot be understated. Khalid's work remains significant in the field of research and serves as a testament to Manto's enduring legacy. The act of translation is not only a linguistic process but also a cultural one, which requires sensitivity and responsibility. The translator must strive for cultural-portability in their work, even in the face of untranslatability on certain levels. Ultimately, the value of translation lies in its ability to bridge gaps between cultures and bring marginalized voices to the forefront.

Bibliography:

- Bhalla, Alok (Ed.). *Life and Works of Saadat Hasan Manto*. Shimla: Indian Institute of Advanced Study, 2004.
- Dagut, M.B. *Can metaphor be translated?* Babel XXII, 1976.
- Hasan, Khalid, (Ed. & Trans.). *BITTER FRUIT The Very Best of Saadat Hasan Manto*. New Delhi: Penguin, 2008.