

The Study Of Character Speech In Indian Translation Studies

Nazrullayeva Gulnoza Karimbek kizi

PhD, Tashkent state university of oriental studies, Uzbekistan

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Abstract: This article analyzes the study of character speech in Indian translation studies, focusing on its theoretical and practical aspects. In today's era of globalization, preserving the uniqueness of character speech during the translation of literary works is of great importance. This is because a character's speech is one of the key elements that conveys the artistic value of the work, its national color, and the author's style. In Indian translation studies, the scholarly investigation of the concept of “चरित्र भाषण” (charitr bhāṣaṇ)—that is, character speech—and the issue of rendering it accurately and naturally into another language remains a complex and pressing problem. The purpose of the article is to explore the study of character speech in Indian translation studies, to elucidate its theoretical and practical foundations, and to identify the factors that influence the accurate transmission of character speech in translation. In addition, based on the views of Indian scholars, the article examines stylistic, semantic, and cultural challenges involved in recreating character speech in literary translation and highlights the importance of preserving national color in translation.

Keywords: Character, translation, translation scholar, national color, speech, Indian.

Introduction: In Hindi, the term “character speech” is expressed as “चरित्र भाषण” [charitr bhāṣaṇ]. The term “चरित्र” [charitr] is derived from the English word character and, in literary studies, denotes the notions of a character or protagonist. The component “भाषण” [bhāṣaṇ] means speech and is used to describe a character's manner of speaking and expressive style in literary texts. Thus, the concept “चरित्र भाषण” [charitr bhāṣaṇ] represents one of the key terms in literary studies for understanding and analyzing the phenomenon of character speech on a scholarly basis.

The term पात्र [pātr], meaning hero or character, refers to an invented figure in a story. A character may be entirely fictional or based on a real person. In this sense, it is possible to distinguish between a “fictional character” and a “real-life-based character.” In the literature, the term पात्र का भाषण [pātr kā bhāṣaṇ] is also encountered. This term means character speech.

According to K. Sobti, a story does not belong solely to the author; rather, it is shaped through its characters.

The speech of the characters constitutes the essential component of the narrative, and without it, the story would lose its coherence.

S. Chaudhari emphasizes that recreating character speech in translation is a complex process. According to him, the presence of dialogues reflects the existence of the characters, and in a well-written work, each character's speech possesses a distinctive personality. This is because characters speak in different ways. Therefore, the translator must also convey these speech differences in the translation. However, this is not an easy task, as character speech may include idioms, dialects, curse words, and grammatical variations. The translator must find appropriate equivalents for these elements during the translation process.

“The translator must think in the same way as the author during the translation process. The work chosen for translation should spark interest in the translator; translating an uninteresting work is inappropriate. The translator must also perceive the characters as if they were real people. It is essential to be able to render the characters' actions, gestures, words, and voices in

translation. In other words, the translator must imitate the characters. The ability to authentically reproduce character speech is crucial. Character speech often includes jargon and dialect words. The conversations of children or ill-mannered characters cannot be rendered directly into standard language. Therefore, it is necessary, at the very least, to select words that closely correspond to the original”.

According to translation scholar M. M. Mulik, characters are an essential component of literary works, much like the plot. In his research, the scholar classifies literary characters into three groups: 1) main characters, 2) minor characters, and 3) antagonists.

According to the Indian linguist R. Varma, “A translation can only be considered good if it is rendered exactly as the original. No element of the original text should be omitted or distorted. The speech of characters reveals a large part of a literary work. If character speech is not conveyed accurately in translation, the meaning intended in the original is completely lost. It is natural for character speech to include idioms and words reflecting national color. If the translation does not convey the original meaning, it can never be regarded as a good translation. It should be kept in mind that even seemingly minor aspects may lower the quality of a translation. A translation must convey the joy and essence of the original text in every respect.

The first requirement for this is knowledge of the source language, while the second is a thorough understanding of the nature of the target language. If either of these is lacking, the resulting translation will be unclear or crude. If a translation is rendered so faithfully that one cannot determine which language it was translated from, then it can be considered truly skillful; otherwise, it will fail to meet expectations.

Many of our translators appear to forget the true nature and structure of their own language during the translation process. Wherever the original language leads them, they imagine themselves being taken there as well. The weaknesses of such translations become evident at every step. However, those who fully command their own language and understand its nature will never fall under the influence of another language. Texts from almost all languages of the world have been translated into English, yet upon reading such translations, one can rarely tell which language they originated from. Their syntax, use of verbs, idioms, and phraseological systems remain distinct. All of these elements constitute the foundations of a perfect translation”. Thus, the scholar emphasizes the importance of character speech in the translation of literary works.

The Indian writer R. R. Prasad emphasizes that the

process of translation is extremely difficult, stating the following: A writer creates in one language, whereas the translator must simultaneously manage two languages and two cultural environments. Moreover, it is essential for the translator to understand the people’s culture and social environment. This is especially evident in the speech of characters in literary works. If we attempt to translate character speech word-for-word, the meaning becomes even more distorted. Every language has its own unique characteristics. Literal translation is a dangerous practice, as words taken from one language often have no precise equivalents in another. Sometimes words are not merely words; they carry certain concepts and cultural associations. Translating such culturally embedded concepts into a foreign language that lacks them is not only difficult but sometimes impossible. A skilled translator must be aware of these problems. Otherwise, culturally specific terms found in character speech will fail to be reflected in the translation.

In Hindi, the concept of translation has a very broad meaning and is expressed through several different terms. The most widely used term today is अनुवाद (anuvād), meaning translation. Besides this, various other terms are also employed, including: भाषांतर (bhāṣāntar), परकाया प्रवेश (parkāyā praveṣ), स्वीकरण (svīkaraṇ), पालतू करण (pāltū karaṇ), रूपांतर (rūpāntar), तर्जुमा (tarjumā), छायानुवाद (chhāyānuvād), ट्रांसलेट (trāṇslet), दुहराव (duhrāv), दुभाषिया (dubhāṣiyā), उल्था (ulthā). These terms encompass meanings such as transfer of language, the soul entering another body or transformation, appropriation or acceptance as one’s own, and domestication. From a literal and etymological perspective, अनुवाद (anuvād) means subsequent speech. The prefix अनु (anu) denotes following, while वाद (vād) signifies speech.

The development of Indian translation studies includes the following periods:

1. Ancient Period (4th century);
2. Medieval Period (pre-colonial, 11th century);
3. Colonial Period (17th–18th centuries);
4. Post-colonial Period (20th century);
5. Modern Period (21st century).

In the Ancient Period, that is, the 4th century BCE, translations in India were notable for their renderings of famous individuals and place names. For example, the capital city known to Indians as Gandhāra’s

Takshashila was referred to as Taxila by the Greeks. During this time, instead of the term “translator,” the word *kātib* (scribe) was used, which indicates the status and role of translators of that era.

In the Classical Period, two great epics—the Ramayana and the Mahabharata—served as the primary sources for translations into regional languages. These works were translated from Sanskrit and Prakrit into various vernaculars. Such translations were referred to as “the shadow of the original text.”

During the pre-colonial and medieval periods, Sanskrit texts were translated into various regional languages of India in order to preserve culture and literature. For instance, Sanskrit works were translated into Hindi, Punjabi, and several other languages. Beginning from the 11th century, translating Sanskrit texts into emerging modern Indian languages became widespread as a means of safeguarding texts. Additionally, some Sanskrit works began to be translated into Persian. Sultan Firoz Shah commissioned translations of Hindu Sanskrit manuscripts into Persian and Arabic in 1357. The Kashmiri ruler Zain-ul-'Abidin (1420–1470) established a translation bureau to facilitate two-way translation between Sanskrit and Persian.

During the Colonial Period, some English literary works were translated into Indian languages—for example, those of Shakespeare, Byron, and others. K. Prasad translated Thomas Gray's “Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard” into Hindi. Translation scholar G. N. Devy describes the difference between medieval translations and those of the colonial period as follows: “The difference between translations/copies from Sanskrit during the medieval period and those produced under colonial rule lies in the fact that medieval translations were intended to liberate society”.

During those years, Warren Hastings, the Governor-General of Bengal of the East India Company, ordered ten prominent scholars to prepare a compilation of Hindu laws for judicial use. This work was first translated from Sanskrit into Persian, and then from Persian into English. William Jones translated Kālidāsa's Śakuntalā from Sanskrit into English. In the 17th–18th centuries, the great spiritual leader Guru Gobind Singh established a translation bureau, whose members translated numerous Sanskrit texts into Punjabi. By the late 18th and early 19th centuries, Sanskrit served as a donor language for translations of philosophical, linguistic, and religious texts into English and other European languages. Religion was one of the principal domains of translation.

In the post-colonial period, the situation changed

entirely. With the emergence of modern Indian languages, translation activity intensified, and the principle of “Translation as the shadow of the original text” continued to be strictly upheld. In the 20th century, for early-generation writers such as Sri Aurobindo, P. Lal, and others, Sanskrit remained the primary source language. However, for modern bilingual poets like Rabindranath Tagore and Dilip Chitre, the source language was usually their regional language. Most translators such as A. K. Ramanujan, R. Parthasarathy, and Arun Kolatkar translated works belonging to the bhakti literary tradition. Tagore translated Kabir, Aurobindo translated Vidyapati, while Dilip Chitre translated Tukaram and Dnyaneshwar.

Today, translation is recognized as a major academic discipline—an educational field concerned with recreating the world of one language within another. When speaking about India, one must remember that it is a multilingual nation. In earlier times, translators paid little attention to translation norms and principles, partly because theoretical frameworks had not yet been developed. As speakers of multiple languages, Indians could effortlessly shift from one linguistic system to another.

Indian translation theorist G. N. Devy categorizes Indian literary translations into three types:

1. translations of ancient literary works;
2. translations of Westernized literary works;
3. translations of modern literary works.

Sri Aurobindo developed psycho-spiritual theories within the field of translation studies. In the process of his own translation practice, he applied these theoretical foundations to the discipline. He articulated these principles in his translations of Kālidāsa, the Bhagavad Gītā, and the Upanishads, as well as in his essays on the interpretation of prose into poetry and on translations into the Bengali language. After translating a number of works, Aurobindo formulated these theories on the basis of India's cognitive philosophy and traditions, particularly those influenced by pre-Buddhist and Buddhist thought, integrating philosophical and psychological insights into his approach to translation.

In the 19th and 20th centuries, competition began to intensify among writers and translators who created works both in regional Indian languages and in Indo-English. Some authors even translated their own works. For example, R. Tagore translated his writings from Bengali into English, while G. Karnad translated from Kannada into English.

India is also home to a number of bilingual authors, such as K. Das, J. Mahapatra, and others. The

translation of literary works has become a matter of global importance. Translation theorist S. Alex notes: "There are more than three thousand languages in the world, and literary works are written in nearly all of them. No individual can possess perfect knowledge of every language. In such circumstances, translation becomes the only means that enables us to become acquainted with literature written in the world's languages."

Indian writer R. Varmma, discussing the development of translation in India, its history, methods, theory, and practice, offers the following remarks: "A few years ago, translations into Indian languages experienced a noticeable decline. In reality, modern Indian prose literature began with translations. This was how it should have been, and it was, in many respects, useful and necessary. Today, the emergence of a new language requires integration and harmony with other languages. The period of creating original literary works generally comes only after a period dominated by translation. First, high-quality translations from other languages are introduced. Through translations, readers expand their knowledge and stay informed about new developments. They also become acquainted with the worldview of speakers of other languages. Seeing this, writers themselves develop a desire to create literary works, and this greatly contributes to the development of literature. If we compare the literary corpus of India from 30–39 years ago with the present-day corpus, the truth of this statement becomes absolutely clear".

In conclusion, it becomes evident that research on character speech in Indian translation studies is extensive and multifaceted. In the modern era, the importance of translation has increased significantly, and it has even begun to be regarded as a form of art. In contemporary independent India, translation is considered essential for establishing unity, as it becomes a powerful means for the dissemination and flourishing of culture. It breaks down the boundaries that separate nations and societies, serving as a great tool that unites people and transforms diversity into unity.

Symbols:

[1] – साहनी भ। बसन्ती। - नयी दिल्ली: राजकमल प्रकाशन, 1982. – P. 32.

[2] – Саҳний Б. Басантий. (Ҳиндий тилидан Амир Файзулло тарҷумаси). – Тошкент: Turon-iqbol, 2010. – Б. 25.

[3] – प्रेमचन्द। सेवासदन। - इलाहाबाद: हंस प्रकाशन, 1919. – P. 81.

[4] – Премчанд. Фидойи. (Ҳиндий тилидан Амир Файзулло тарҷумаси). – Тошкент: O'zbekiston, 2012. – Б. 71.

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