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Translator

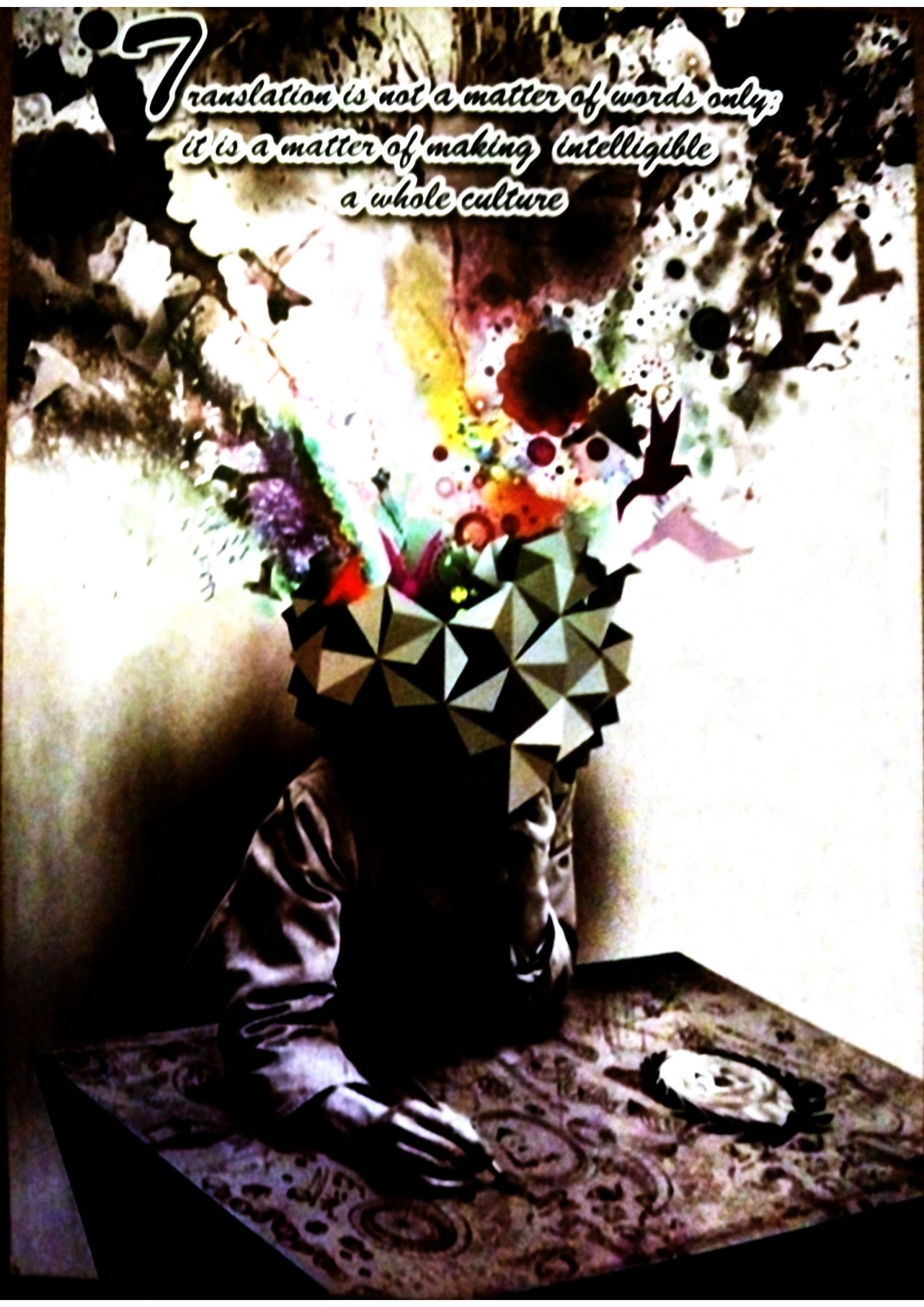
மொழிபெயர்ப்புக் கலைக்கான இதழ்



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7 Translation is not a matter of words only;
it is a matter of making intelligible
a whole culture



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*Translation of article

- சன்னங்கள் தாண்டிய சன்னதம்
- சுதந்திரத்தின் பெறுமதி

Why translation of poetry is so difficult?!

By: S. Sheliyna.

According to T.S. ELIOT "poetry is not a turning loose of emotion but an escape from emotion; it is not the expression of personality but an escape from personality". poetry deals with narration or lyrics. Narrative poem deals with story or action whereas lyric poems stress emotion and songs. Translation is not an easy task and can be define as

"Translation is the communication of the meaning of source language text by means of an equivalent target language text". Translating literary work particularly translating poetry is ,perhaps, most difficult than other genres. That is why Robert frost once described poetry as "what gets lost in translation". Of course, it is very difficult or can be say as impossible to carry the special qualities like rhyme, syntax, connotation etc.

Further, Rabindranath Tagore also have the same thought on poetry translation (learning a language through translation is loving a girl through an agent). There are some reasons for why translation of poetry is so difficult. Now let's focus on those reasons.

Form of the poem is the very first thing which will draw the attention of the reader. It is necessary for the translators to move closer to the original. For example if the translator translates a haiku poem then the short meaningful condensed form should be preserved. The second reason for the difficulty in poetry translation is the shape of the poem. Every poem has its own shape but there are some poems which are in special shapes. For example mouse tail poem of Lewis carol is the best example. Other poems will appear with couplet, tercet, quatrain, quintain, sestets etc. so their target text should have the same shape of the poem. Third matter to focus attention is the nuances of the words meaning. Here the translator will face the problem in words denotative and connotative meanings, denotative meaning means dictionary meaning and connotative meaning means the associated meaning that have build up around the word. In addition, grammatical difference between the languages also cause problem in translation of poetry. Grammatical rules are very strictly followed in prose but they are not compulsory for poems. Therefore, this feature cause problem when the translator starts to translate a poem.

Finally, culture of both source and target language also cause problem in poetry translation. Each language has it own peculiar culture so the translator should act as a cultural ambassador .This intention should be preserved in every translation work whether it is poetry or prose or even any other type of genre. The fine example for poetry is as follows,

Kavimani desigavinayagam pillai's transcreation on Edward Fitz Gerald's translation of Omar Khayyam poem.

"Here with a loaf of bread, beneath the bough
A flask of wine, a book of verse and though
Beside me singing in the wilderness
And wilderness is paradise".

" வெயிலுக்கேற்ற நிழலுண்டு, வீசும் தென்றல் காற்றுண்டு
கம்பன் கையில் கவியுண்டு, கலசம் நிறைய மதுவுண்டு
தெய்வ கீதம் பலவுண்டு, தெரிந்து பாட நீயுண்டு
வையம் தருமிவ் வளமின்றி வாழும் சொர்க்கம் வேறுண்டோ".

Here, it can be noted that when transcreated into Tamil kavimani followed the flavor of Tamil culture. Particularly in the second stanza when "a book of verse" was translated he transcreated it as "கம்பன் கையில் கவியுண்டு". Culture plays a major role in translation work so the translators should have the sound knowledge in both cultures, then only their translation will sounds better.

When going back to the theme-poetry is difficult to translate, the translator can achieve a translation only nearest to the original but not same as the original. Though there are poets who did translation and self-translation successfully (self translation is the translation of a source text into a target text by the writer of the source text) . For example Rabindrana Tagore did self- translation of Gitanjali from Bengali to English. Moreover, our mother tongue Tamil has a long history about poetry translation. Tholkapiyam -a great book of Tamil literary world give proof to that as follows

"பனிபடு சோலை வேங்கடத் தும்பர்

மொழிபெயர் தேயத்தர் ஆயினும் நல்குவர்"

(மொழிபெயர்ப்பு எனும் தொடர் மொழிபெயர்த்தேயம் எனும் அடியைக் கருத்திற்கொண்டு

அமைக்கப்பட்டது எனக் கூறப்படுகின்றது).

and further the legendry poet kavichakravarthi kambar adapted Valmiki Ramayana into Tamil as kamba Ramayana. Villipuththur Aalvar adapted Mahabharata of Vedha Viyasar into Tamil .These are a few examples of everlasting translations of poetry in Tamil, In addition, it's very essential to maintain the same sense or the emotions of the source poetry into target language. The following example is a translation of Sangam period poetry.

“யாயும் ஞாயும் யாராகியரோ
 எந்தையும் நுந்தையுதம் எம்முறைக் கேளிர்
 யானும் நீயும் எவ்வழி அறிதும்
 செம்புலப் பெயல் நீர் போல
 அன்புடை நெஞ்சம் தாங் கலந்தனவே”

-குறந்தொகை -

The same poem is translated by M. Sahanmugam Pillai and David E. Ludden as follows:

“Your mother and my mother,
 How are they related?
 Your father and my father,
 What are they to one another?
 You and I,
 How do we know each other?
 Like the rain and red earth,
 Our loving hearts are mingled as one. ”

This translation gives the same vivid picture of the source poem to the reader but such types of translations are rare.

Therefore, translation of poetry is one of the most difficult and challenging tasks for the translators. It is clear from Robert frost quotation that is poetry is what get lost in translation. This statement could be considered as a truthful one because there is no accurate equivalent when comparing two languages. Even though the translator has adequate knowledge in both languages they will not create a absolute translation of the source poem.

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