

THE CONTEXT IN TRANSLATION: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF SL AND TL TRANSLATIONS OF COLERIDGE'S KUBLA KHAN

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Abstract

Translation in its simplest sense is defined as rendering of the source language text (SL) with utmost fidelity into the Target Language (TL) without any change in meaning intended by the SL author. The translator while translating should bear in mind that he/she should not make any alteration in the SL which leads to relegate or embellish the original text. Any literature from past to present gives us the clear picture of the society that prevailed in that period. The main purpose of translation is to expose the society, people and their lifestyle, culture, tradition etc., to the TL readers. It should also enable the TL readers to taste the essence of the literariness of the SL. The translator at any cost must not become the author i.e. he/she should not give his/ her viewpoints in translation. This paper aims to translate and discuss the problems encountered while translating the literary piece Kubla Khan by the romantic poet S. T. Coleridge from English (SL) to Tamil (TL). At times the translator needs to be creative too. The translator in some places has used alliterations and few others figures of speech which are not present in the SL without altering the meaning of the SL. While translating the translator should keep in mind his/her own culture and society. Word to word translation disturbs the essence of the text. For instance, a foreign author may write "She is happy in her White dress". In the Indian context, especially in the South, a woman wearing white dress is a Widow. The real intention of the SL author is to tell that the woman is going to be married. When the translator translates it by word for word then it alters the meaning. Sense for sense translation will provide success in most cases. The usages of footnotes are very helpful while providing extra information which is not so important to be included in the text.

Keywords: Creative, exposing the culture and society to TL readers, sense for sense translation, word for word translation.

Source Language Text

Kubla Khan (first thirty lines)

- S.T. Coleridge

In Xanadu did Kubla Khan

A stately pleasure-dome decree:

Where Alph, the sacred river, ran

Through caverns measureless to man

Down to a sunless sea.

So twice five miles of fertile ground

With walls and towers were girdled round;

And there were gardens bright with sinuous rills,

Where blossomed many an incense-bearing tree;

And here were forests ancient as the hills,

Enfolding sunny spots of greenery.

But oh! that deep romantic chasm which slanted

Down the green hill athwart a cedarn cover!

A savage place! as holy and enchanted

As e'er beneath a waning moon was haunted

By woman wailing for her demon-lover!

And from this chasm, with ceaseless turmoil seething,

As if this earth in fast thick pants were breathing,

A mighty fountain moment was forced:

Amid whose swift half-intermitted burst

Huge fragments vaulted like rebounding hail,
Or chaffy grain beneath the thresher's flail:
And mid these dancing rocks at once and ever
It flung up momentarily the sacred river.

Five miles meandering with a mazy motion
Through wood and dale the sacred river ran,
Then reached the caverns measureless to man,
And sank in tumult to a lifeless ocean;
And 'mid this tumult Kubla heard from far
Ancestral voices prophesying war!

Problems Encountered:

Coleridge's poem Kubla Khan is purely an outcome of a dream. He have used many strange things to describe nature. The words such as Xanadu and Kubla Khan; are nouns so they are presented as it is. There is no reference to a palace in the SL, but in the TL the Dome, as it refers to an ice cave, is rendered as an ice Palace. It is revealed later in the poem that it is a palace. One can infer that a king will not order a simple cave to be built so I should be a palace. The Word's sunless, literally means; sea without sun; but here it means the light of the sun; so it is translated. The word such as so and is used many times in SL. In translating it into TL they are ignored in some cases or reproduced in a way denoted by punctuation to maintain the structure. English allows the use of and many times even in a sentence (especially in poetry). But it looks odd when translated into Tamil. The words like sinuous, rills needed a dictionary. After deciphering the meaning from the dictionary an equivalent was placed for those words. 'Enfolding Sunny spots of greenery is the last line of the first stanza which needs perfection. The translator does not do justice to it, as it is quite difficult to be conveyed but somehow it is translated. The very first line of a second stanza was the challenging one because it has adverbs, adjectives followed by nouns. It took one and a half a day to find out the exact word to place. Only during the final draft the word deep was translated, before it was. The word savage place cannot be literally translated here because the word means a place which is uncivilized and uninhabited. But here it denotes a strange and wild place. The word haunted too has multiple meanings but listing that would disturbs the flow of the poem.

So simply it was difficult the comparisons such as Earth are breathing, huge fragments vaulting like a grains falling from a flail. While reading and even comprehending it looks so simple but in the process of translation it needed the mind to be blasted. The translator found the most difficulty in rendering the comparisons.

The words lifeless ocean and Sunless convey the same gloomy idea, but in different words. The poet has used internal rhyming and alliterations but rendering the same in translation is quite difficult, but the translator in a few places attempted some alliterations. After making the translation of SL completely in Tamil it is better to avoid looking back at the SL text, it always misleads. Developing and perfecting the TL version alone would lead to perfection.

The footnotes are also given below as it will be useful for a reader to comprehend.

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