

## Oh! Dear, how should I translate you.....?

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### Abstract

This paper is based on my personal experience of translating a novel, *Andha Diganta (Darkness before Dawn)* of Surendra Mahanty, a central Sahitya Academy award winning writer, a versatile genius in Odisha and Odia literature. The aim of the paper is to show the problems and possibilities of translation from a regional language which was influenced by culture and tradition of people to English language.

**Key words:** culture, 'Heiti Sunucha', Pakhala, gamucha, Kadamba

Translation is basically an unnatural act. The whole premise of translation seems problematic. However unnatural, it is a necessary transgression. Our complex globalization demands it. In a way, a translator shares Hamlet's dilemma. But luckily, it is not the world, but only its mirror, language; the translator has to put it right for his/her audience. Unnaturalness and necessity, loss and gain, destruction and harmony, integration and difference are all properties of translation. The most important literal issue that a translator of literal work has to struggle with is "culture". Every word in a given language has a cultural history behind it. It gathers rich associative and connotative meanings with the passage of time. An Indian translator faces a peculiar problem when he or she translates from Bhasa literature to English. A regional text is imbued with the regional culture and some words which have cultural nuances of the regional language.

While translating *Andha Diganta (Darkness before Dawn)*, I came across a word 'Heiti Sunucha' & I cannot move forward as I am not able to translate it.

Generally in Indian culture the wives are advised not to call their husbands by their names because they believe that by doing so their husband's life will be shortened. Even some wives do also follow the footsteps of their goody –goody husbands. So while they are addressing their husbands/wives, they call them with the name of their eldest child or 'Heiti Sunucha'. Even when the women talk with their mother in law they address their husband as 'your son'.

'Heiti sunucha' this word has different connotation in Indian Culture & in different Community. It may be addressed by the wife to her husband or husband to his wife. The plain translation will be 'Darling, do you hear me' or 'do you hear me, Darling'. There may be a question mark or may not be a question mark. In the Question mark Husband / wife wants a categorical answer. Also this term is very endearing term. So the intention of the speaker is more important.

Translation must be as per intentions. For that if the Translator intends to reach for a western audience he/she is free to translate it 'darling' but in Indian context as said earlier the word 'darling' may be endearing but not appealing to Indian ears. In fact how many Indians address their wives/husbands 'Darling' (even in upper class)? They don't take darling as a very common word not also very much appreciated by the relatives. They would rather like to address it privately. So what should a translator do? These are the problems of cultural translation. It is because as E.M. Foster says culture is not a hot cake to be handed over from generation to generation. It is built on long tradition, myth.....

What I would like to say culture specific words should be left untranslated. But 'heiti sunucha' is not a cultural specific word. In different community they use this word differently though the meaning remains unchanged. In Bengali we say 'Ogo Sunchha', in Hindi 'Aji Sunte Ho', and in Odia 'Heiti Sunucha'.

There is passion & emotions behind this utterance. Even there is wide difference between hear & listen. Listen is mostly private affair or a sermon. Hear is more public. We can say listen my boy but we can't say listen my wife. We can use their nick name to call them. Or we can say 'hear me, dear'.

It would be out of place to refer to I.A Richards four principles to read a poem: sense, feeling, tone, intention. So in what sense it is set; what is the emotional feeling when the word is expressed; the tone of the speaker- whether ironical, whether it is a comic vein or is a melancholic undertone. Then intention- a translator must have the power to perceive the intention of the writer. Naturally translation further matter. A good translation is not a hard nut to crack.

So, there can't be an exact translation of "Heiti Sunucha". We have to depend on the tone, intention, sense and feelings. In what sense either the husband addresses his wife or the wife addresses her husband.

This little expression creates a problem for the translator. So the problem is sorted out by the translator. For whom it is being translated. If it is not an Indian, he can easily translate it according to mood & intention. If it is intense, the translator may use "darling", "My Sweet-heart would you listen to me", but never a translator should dare to translate it "Darling, May I have your pleasure/attention to hear me/ to listen to me. An average Indian may translate it "hey are you listening to me.... Or listen to me". A translator must read the easy by Bernard Shaw "Spoken English". I.A Richard must have understood how the principles of reading poetry can be used effectively by the translator in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century or early 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Similarly we have specified relationships within or beyond our blood relationships. A network of familial relationships is an essential feature of Indian society. This is indicated by the number of kinships terms that exist in our vocabularies. For example, an individual would address her mother's brother, father's elder brother, father's younger brother, mother's sister's husband and father's sister's husband by different terms. In the English context, however all these relatives would be commonly addressed as uncle. Moreover the use of kinship terms differs from one caste group to another, a common feature in Odia. As we believe in "Basundhaiva Kutumbakam", the whole world is one family. So sometimes outside the family relationships are forged as a symbol of intimacy. For example, all the children of the village addresses Nidhi Das's wife as "Bada Maa" i.e father's elder brother's wife. Even though there is no indication of any blood relationship between them. To highlight the close knit feature of the community living, the original kinship terms have been retained.

The objective of the translation should be to recreate Odia story in English & not produce a parallel English version. The meaning of the Odiya words were however, footnoted for better understanding. If we translate the Odia words like "Pakhala torani, Saga" in to English, it lost its identity. Though for pakhala we use water rice. But in real it is not water rice. Pakhala is prepared by soaking cooked rice in water which gets fermented by the next day. Pakhala with saga (fried leaves of a shrub) is a staple food of Odisha. There is verity of "saga" in India. Saga is one of the important items either in lunch or dinner. Again in the eastern part of India, specially Bengali, Odia, Asami, they didn't take saga in their dinner or supper. Supper is more appropriate word than dinner. Supper is more homely. In fact still now British people used the term supper where as the American English it is turned in to dinner. Dinner refers to – to eat at a public place with friends and relatives. So in odia 'Bhojibhata' is not a supper or dinner. It should be translated as 'feast'. We called marriage feast but of late in the Invitation card it is written lunch and dinner. In India also we have feast after the death of somebody. We didn't

usually call it feast like marriage feast or sacred thread feast. Usually in Odisha when somebody dies we have bhoga or abhada. (Mostly abhada from Jagannath temple or bhoga from a temple where the village diety presides.) But in Bengali culture the feast is almost the marriage feast. If a woman dies before her husband there must be fish. It is because the woman dies as a married woman (sadhava). There is no non-veg when a widow dies. But for a male there is no restriction. It is immaterial whether the man dies as a widower or as a husband. Then the consideration comes what were his favorite items. So a translator has to face difficulty in translating the text from different parts of India. But it is not in the west where dress and food are almost same. The culprit here is climate which decides the habits and guides an individual. I cannot translate an Odia farmer put even dress before going out to his relation or fair. We have to describe each item of his dress. His dhoti and kurta, sometimes his umbrella or a stick and chapel. The same description of the farmer is not applicative of a Punjabi farmer or a farmer in Shimla. There is no difference between a farmer and a common man in the west so far as the dress is concerned. Farmers are rich people having their own car to drive. They are suited and booted. But in India we can never think a farmer with a tie, suit and boot, at best a cycle, rickshaw or a bullock cart. Ambiance is different between the east and the west. So a translator should be authentic in describing the ambiance in proper words.

Usually very few Indians, I mean middle class Indians used towels. We use gamucha. It is not as thick as a towel. It may be hand spun or machine spun. This gamucha is essential part of Indian culture. It is not only used for cleaning and wiping but also to cover nudity. So gamucha is a word which has different connotation for an Indian, especially eastern part of India. So gamucha is a cultural commodity and it should not be translated. It should remain untranslated. Similarly of flowers. There are many flowers in India which should remain untranslated like “Tarat”, a white colored flower mostly used for the temples and offered to gods and goddesses in India. Flowers have different connotation for Indians. We first think for offering flower to our god and goddess. Then it is used for decoration of a woman’s hair. In the South India, women used flowers to decorate their hair. Flowers are supposed to be very sacred thing in India. They are considered auspicious for any festival. So we don’t have any translation for champak flower. Golap is translated as rose. But what is the translation of “Kadamba” flower? We have other connotation for Kadamba flower. It is associated with Krishnan and Gopi. The flowers only bloom in rainy season. It has sweet fragrance. Kadamba should be kept as Kadamba. Even a botanical name will mar the beauty of translation. There are many things which should kept untouched, unchanged in translations.

So Heiti sunucha should be translated as “Do you hear me? Or would you hear me please?” without any address like dear and darling.

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