

The Necessity of Translating Urdu Literature into English: A Plea to Rend the Iron Curtain

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Abstract

Today, for any literary tradition to establish its recognition at the global level, the most compelling condition is to get translated into English. At present only those literary traditions are known the world over which either have the works directly written in English such as American, Canadian, British, etc., or have managed to get translated into English. From this perspective, Urdu literature is at a serious disadvantage and, in spite of its remarkable artistry and amazing sweep, remains largely confined to its four walls. Historically the asymmetrical power relations between Urdu and English always have had their bearings upon the translation tendencies between the two languages. As a result the number of works translated from English to Urdu is incredibly higher than the one translated from Urdu to English. This lopsidedness has more to it than an initial thought may suggest. Today, if in the international academia and publishing industry Urdu literature is lost in anonymity, it is because it has not been communicated to the world as such. Whereas there are legions of English-Urdu translators; there have been really very few skilled Urdu-English translators. The present paper takes into consideration some of the linguistic, literary, historical, and sociopolitical concerns and makes a plea for the greater visibility of Urdu literary works at the global level through translations which are not just linguistically accomplished but also culturally viable.

Keywords: English, Urdu literature, translation, colonialism, Pakistan.

Introduction

“Translation as a practice shapes, and takes shape within, the asymmetrical relations of power that operate under colonialism”, said Tejaswini Niranjana, one of the leading contemporary translation scholars (1992, p. 2). While discussing Urdu literary tradition and its translations into English, Niranjana’s observation should always be borne in mind as the question of translation with reference to Urdu and English is deeply linked with the notions of asymmetrical power relations and other greater colonial constructs. The tradition of translation could not strike deep roots in Pakistan. Indeed there are quite a few respectable names but most of them are just English-to-Urdu translators and not Urdu-to-English. This has made the translational traffic into Urdu and from Urdu considerably lopsided i.e. the sheer amount of works being translated from English to Urdu is far greater than the amount of works being translated from Urdu to English. The present paper is a plea to address this imbalance both quantitatively and qualitatively.

In our world, if a literary tradition does not get translated into English, its introduction at the international level will always be a remote possibility. How translation into English can invest a literary tradition with greater, worldwide visibility can be appreciated from the book *Second Turn (Modern Indian Novels in Translation)*—Macmillan’s India’s New Series (first published in 1996). This is a translated work and in more than one way, it proved to be a “modern-day gateway to India” (Sherry, 2001, p. 247) not just from literary viewpoint but also from cultural, social and political viewpoints. This work is a collection of the translations of acclaimed Indian post-1947 novels into English. The work was hailed as a “patriotic duty” by the critics and publishers (Sherry, 2001, p. 248). Even outside the Indian subcontinent, the workings of the same *patriotic duty* can be traced. When the French-Quebec literature was translated into English in Canada it was prompted by the same kind of patriot duty which was dubbed as “ambassadorial considerations” (Bednarski & Ferron, 1991, p. 34). And these were the English translations of the French-Quebec literary works which gave that

tradition a far greater visibility and a far vaster readership than it previously had (Ben-Zion, 1991).

This is not specific to just Indian or French-Quebec writers. Today almost every renowned writer owes his or her repute to the English translations of his or her work. Today if countless millions relish reading Garcia Marquez, Orhan Pamuk, Svetlana Alexievich, Mo Yan, Mario Vargas Llosa, Herta Müller, J. M. G. Le Clézio, Imre Kertész, Gao Xingjian, Günter Grass or José Saramago, it is largely because of the English translations of their works. None of them wrote in English and yet each one of them was fortunate enough to find some good translator who *internalized* him, so to speak. So these were not the original works as such but their translations which won them worldwide popularity and provided them a global readership.

This is how translation has been playing a critical role not only in internationalizing these writers but also in lending credibility and prestige to their respective literary traditions. On the other hand, the Urdu literary tradition is unfortunate in the sense that a large number of its writers and poets are yet to be translated into English and, therefore, this literary tradition is not adequately introduced beyond Pakistan and India. So much so, that even the stalwarts of this tradition like Mir Taqi Mir, Mirza Asad Ullah Khan Ghalib, Muhammad Iqbal, Faiz Ahmad Faiz, etc., have quite a few good and competitive translators, let alone the junior or second-rate writers. On the other hand, writers (even the second-rate writers) belonging to such literary traditions as French, German, Spanish, etc., can boast of sizeable translations of their works into English.

Lamenting the Lacunae

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak once said, “The role of literature in the production of cultural representation should not be ignored”(Tisha, 2011, p. 310). Spivak was right as literature is one of the most viable ways to promote the cultural representation in the contemporary world and in the context of Urdu literary tradition this cultural representation is considerably missing due to a lack of translation. In one of his writings,

prolific writer and travel enthusiast Mustansar Hussain Tarar highlighted this issue in these words:

How many people are there in Pakistan adept in the art of translation? How many people are there to translate from Urdu to English, or Chinese or French? How many? Very few, rather, such people are non-existent...The tradition of translation could never strike roots in Pakistan. Thus our literature got confined in our own four walls (2015, p. 8).

These apprehensions are also shared by those writers and scholars of Urdu who are working in the Euro-American academia. Muhammad Umar Memon, renowned Urdu scholar, translator and Professor Emeritus at the University of Wisconsin, remarked when he came to know about Barack Obamas' compliments on Urdu poetry: "Notwithstanding President Barack Obama's delightful disclosure that he likes Urdu poetry, few in the West know anything about this language and even less about its otherwise vibrant literature" (Memon, 2010, p. 6). In a somewhat more nuanced tone, Uzma Aslam Khan, an acclaimed Pakistani English novelist, echoed the same concerns during an interview:

Outside the subcontinent, Urdu literature is deeply overlooked. We should absolutely be seeing more translations in English. But this is not true only for Urdu. The indigenous languages – such as Sindhi, Seraiki, Punjabi, Balochi, and Pashto, to name just a few – are even more overlooked, even within Pakistan, though they existed on the soil that became Pakistan long before Urdu or English did (Khan, 2010, p. 13).

In response to a question that whether Urdu literature is being overlooked in the English-speaking world, she said:

I don't think we've had as many good translations as we deserve...One of the greatest Urdu writers of the 20th century, Qurratulain Hyder, who began her career in Pakistan in the 1940s and moved back to India in 1960, actually translated several of her own works into English including her magnum

opus *River of Fire*. They've been published in the States by New Directions. Manto is known, too. Some of Pakistan's finest, like Intizar Hussain and Fahmida Riaz, haven't been as well served and still remain almost entirely unknown except to specialist audiences (2010, p. 14).

This is precisely the crisis of representation which Urdu literature suffers at international level today. At present even such languages as Hindi, Bengali and Persian are far better off than Urdu in terms of the availability of the English translations of their works. This lack of representation of Urdu literature at the world level has its roots in the colonial history and, as compared to Sanskrit, Persian or Arabic, Urdu was a late starter in the field of translation.¹ During the 18th and the 19th centuries, there was no mentionable presence of the translation of Urdu literary works into English. In 1857 the first English translation of an Urdu work came out when Duncan Forbes rendered Mir Amman's *Bagh-o-Bahar* into English (Friedlander, 2006).

The pre-1947 era of Urdu literature was marked by extreme obscurity and provinciality in terms of its English translations. The number of English translations during that period was extremely small—almost negligible. Moreover, most of those translations were incomplete, deficient and done mostly by the non-native English translators. Even after 1947, most of the works which were translated into English were the ones dealing with the theme of the independence and the subsequent agony. Most of this fiction was in the form of short stories but this however is obviously not enough. For a greater and more proportionate representation, it is important to translate the great works of Urdu literature both preceding and following the independence.

The role played by translation in internationalizing literary writers can be seen from the examples of such figures as Ghalib, Mirza Hadi Ruswa,

¹ Initial translations were made of Sanskrit and Persian works. Mir Amman's *Bagh-o-Bahar* was the first Urdu work to be translated into English in 1862 by Duncan Forbes. Whereas the translations of Sanskrit and Persian works had appeared much before it.

Qurratulain Hyder and Intizar Hussain. All these writers owe their worldwide recognition today to the English translations of their works. Ghalib was translated into English for the first time as late as 1957 by J. L. Kaul and the last few decades have been specifically remarkable with reference to the spread of Ghalib's fame due to his translations into English. In the words of Ahmed Ali: "...his [Ghalib's] reputation has spread far and wide during the last two decades through translations into English and appraisals in other languages"(Ali, 2003, p. 374). Mirza Hadi Ruswa's *Umrao Jaan Adahad* to wait for 71 years to be translated into English. It was published in 1899 but its first and so far the only translation came out as late as 1970 by Khushwant Singh which spread his fame far beyond India and Pakistan. Similarly, the only introduction of Qurratulain Hyder available to the Nobel Laureate J. M. G. Le Clézio was former's self-translation *River of Fire* which made the latter pay great tribute to one of the greatest Urdu novels (Chambers, 2015).

Likewise, it was the translation of Intizar Hussain's *Basti*(1979) into English by Frances W. Pritchett in 1995 which brought him to world's attention. And it was after this English translation that Intizar Hussain was shortlisted for the Man Booker International Prize in 2013. This fame made him immortal and when he died he was declared to be the "best-known Pakistani writer in the world" after Manto (Ahmed 2014, p. 11). All this became possible because of the English translation of his works and quite a few literary giants who paid tribute to him did not know Urdu.

However, of late, there have been some promising developments but still there is a long way to go. In 2006, Mohammad Asaduddin translated some of the famous Urdu stories into English and brought out *The Penguin Book of Classic Urdu Stories*. He brought together sixteen of the most memorable tales by the renowned Urdu short story writers such as Manto, Premchand, Qurratulain Hyder, Ismat Chughtai, Ashfaq Ahmad, Intizar Hussain, etc. A similar work was produced even earlier in 1998 when Muhamad Umar Memon translated selected stories from such writers as Manto, Rajinder Singh Bedi, Ismat Chughtai, Muhammad Ashraf, Ilyas Ahmad Gaddi, Salam Bin Razzack, Upender Nath, Altaf

Fatima, Ashfaq Ahmad, Intizar Hussain, etc. The book was titled *An Epic Unwritten* and was also published by Penguin Books.

Both of the works have quality translations and have received favorable response from the readers and critics. More of such handy and standard works should be produced and efforts should be made to get them printed by top-ranking publishers such as Penguin, Wiley, Harper Collins, Oxford University Press, etc.

Difficulties and Challenges

To have an appraisal of the issues and challenges which characterize the practice have Urdu-English translation have their roots in the colonial past. It was precisely during the colonial period that the English translators formally adopted domesticating strategies while translating from such languages as Urdu, Hindi and Persian. Under the influence of this domesticating tradition, texts from Urdu and other languages were cut, condensed, *simplified, improved upon, refined*² and published with extensive anthropological commentaries and sociological footnotes. This had extremely far-reaching implications which are outlined below:

In this way, the subordinate position of the individual text and the culture that had led to its production in the first place was established through specific textual practices. The Arabs, Edward Lane informed [his] readers, were far more gullible than educated European readers and did not make the same clear distinction between the rational and the fictitious. In similar vein, Edward Fitzgerald...could accuse the Persians of artistic incompetence and suggest that their poetry became art only when translated into English (Bassnett & Trivedi, 1999, p. 6).

² Such condescending, domesticating and overtly patronizing attitude has been more of a norm than an exception and mostly whenever the literary or legalist works were translated from the local Indian languages into English, the translators took it upon themselves to go to great lengths to make their translation more and more acceptable to the target readership. In the meanwhile whatever damage was caused to the source text was taken as an inevitable corollary of a worthy intellectual enterprise.

Today, the heirs to the Urdu literary tradition should not lose sight of these translation strategies which got canonized during the colonial era. This, however, is one dimension of a very complex problem. The Urdu literary tradition, given its richness of content, thematic diversity, innovative artistry, complex treatment of the subject matter, exceedingly hyperbolic temper and figurative lushness, poses a special challenge to its translation into English. Siraj Aurangabadi, for example, has exceptionally vivid descriptions, highly elliptic language, delightful wit, alluring paradoxes and kinetic energy of imagery. Ghalib exhibits a highly individualistic, a Baudelaire-like comprehension of his age. Noon Meem Rashid displays a Donne-like metaphysical approach, a highly fused perception, a Hopkin-like incomprehensibility. All this calls for an exceptionally great competence and skill on the part of a translator.

Similarly, in such poets as Faiz, Miran Jee, and Amjad Islam Amjad one finds wit, conceit, hyperbole all strewn together. An imagery of abstractions coupled with a robust symbolism characterizes Jaun Elia's poetry. All these things raise the proverbial bar considerably high for translators.

Let us discuss Ghalib's characteristic brevity which has occupied dozens of his translator ever since. One of the most authoritative translations of Ghalib is by Yusuf Hussain who produced arguably the most comprehensive translation the former rendering all his 234 ghazals and fragments including those works which were discovered after his death. Here is how Yusuf Hussain falls into excessive padding while translating a very pithy thought:

وحشتِ آتشِ دل سے ، شبِ تنہائی میں

صورتِ دُود ، رہا سایہ گریزاں مجھ سے

In the night of loneliness, my own shadow

Takes fright at the frenzied fire of my heart,

And runs away from me

Like smoke drifting from the flames

(Hussain, 1996, p. 25).

The translation is double the size of the original. The original verse contains 14 words; whereas, translation consists of 28 words. This is way too much and it takes a considerable toll of the aesthetics and semantics of the source text. This is a very common issue with most of the translations not just of Ghalib but of other figures also. This is what the French translation scholar Antoine Berman calls *expansion* which he considers one of the twelve *deforming tendency* in translation(2004, p. 256). He notes:

Every translation tends to be longer than the original. George Steiner said that translation is “inflationist”. This is the consequence, in part, of the two previous tendencies. Rationalizing and clarifying require expansion, an *unfolding* of what, in the original, is “folded”. Now, from the view point of the text, this expansion can be qualified as ‘empty’ (p. 97).

Another problem with the translators is their deliberate and indiscreet use of archaic register. True, Ghalib belongs to the high classical period of Urdu but mostly his language is not archaic and quite often we see him employing a register which still sounds fresh. However, the translators have sometimes used highly dated language while translating him which not only injected a linguistic anachronism in the target text but also misrepresented the source text. This is particularly true of the Indo-Pakistani translators who are the non-native speakers/users of English. Meandering syntax, choice of awkward equivalent, archaic and longwinded phraseology are some of the problems found in the Indo-Pakistani translators. It is quite rare to come across a translation from a Pakistani or an Indian translator which does not suffer from such problems. For example look at Khawaja Tariq’s translation of one of Ghalib’s famous distiches:

سب کہاں، کچھ لالہ و گل میں نمایاں ہو گئیں
خاک میں، کیا صورتیں ہو گی کہ پنہاں ہو گئیں

Here is Khawaja Tariq’s translation:

Full many a fine form that went into entombment
Not all but some in flower form resurfaced for enticement
(Varma, 2002, p. 13).

One can easily notice the problems with this sort of translation. The original distich is written in surprisingly modern Urdu which still falls fresh on the modern ears. But the translator has employed a highly archaic register evidenced by the phrase “Full many a”. Besides, the self-imposed compulsion to produce a rhymed translation also appears to be detrimental for the semantics of the source text. The phrase “لالہ و گل” has been translated as “flower form” which is not only lexically inept but also syntactically awkward. Moreover, look at the phrase “for enticement”. It is utterly an addition to the source text made by the translator as it has no basis in the original distich as such. One can understand that the translator has included it just to maintain rhyme.

Compare Khawaja Tariq’s translation with a considerably better rendition of the same verse by Ralph Russell who not only retained the linguistic freshness of the source text but also its lexico-syntactic patterning:

Where are they all? Some bloom again as tulips or as roses
There is in the dust how many forms forever lie concealed
(2002, p. 23).

Ralph Russell was an extremely erudite and widely respected scholar of Urdu but he was an *outsider*, so to speak. No literary tradition can expect to achieve enduring and wide-ranging popularity just by relying on foreign translators. Foreign scholarship is not substitute for indigenous erudition. Therefore, the real onus of responsibility in any case lies on the Indo-Pakistani translators who belong to and speak from the inner core of this tradition. The level of empathy and understanding which they, being the heirs to this tradition, can have a claim to, is not quite readily available to the foreign translators. How Western/foreign scholarship can at times pathetically fail to deal even with the most obvious aspects of Urdu literature can be seen the way Ghalib’s name

has been spelled in the authoritative *Gale Contextual Encyclopedia of World Literatures*. In this multi-volume and multi-authored encyclopedia the full name of Ghalib has been spelled as Hsadullah Khan Ghalib (Ali, 2000, p. 356). There is no way that the Urdu name “اسد” could be translated/ transliterated as “Hsad”. One stands in awe as to according to which morphological or phonological principle this spelling has been decided. Such blatant inaccuracies and misrepresentations abound in the so-called encyclopedias, anthologies, and companions written on the subject of World Literatures and in which most of the time Urdu literature is dealt with as a mere footnote to Hindi/Indian literature.³

Another remarkable translation of an anthology of poetry and the one with a great breadth is by K. C. Kanda, namely *Masterpieces of Urdu Ghazal from the 17th to the 20th Century*. This work consists of the translations of selected the ghazals of renowned Urdu poets stretched over four centuries—from Wali Muhammad Wali to Faiz Ahmad Faiz. The translation, however, is deeply flawed on account of multiple problems the most crucial of which are absence of fidelity, lack of linguistic proficiency on the part of the translator and a thorough domestication of the source text. Look at these examples:

سرفروشی کی تمنا آج ہمارے دل میں ہے
دیکھنا ہے زور کتنا بازوے قاتل میں ہے
(موبائی)

The spirit of martyrdom stirs our hearts to-day,
We are dying to test the might of the tyrant's arm
(Kanda, 1992, p. 8).

The phrase “we are dying” is an addition by the translator. As such it has no origin in the source text and it seems that the translator is interpreting more than translating the source text. Moreover, in the second line the

³Obviously people like Ralph Russell are exception to this rule. But the problem is that people like him are extremely rare.

word “قاتل” (slayer, executioner) is more than a *tyrant*. However, a more subtle problem characterizes the following instance:

مقام فیض کوئی راہ میں جچا ہی نہیں
جو کوئے یار سے نکلے تو سوے دار چلے
(فیض)

My heart could not approve, Faiz, any place en route

Forced out of my love’s lane, I made for the gallows straight

(Kanda, 1992, p. 9).

The use of the so-called “royal we” is very common in Urdu poetry, especially in the classical Urdu poetry. The “royal we” which is also called “majestic plural” is the use of first person plural noun to refer to a singular person. This is a common literary convention in Urdu which shows the poet’s *narcissistic pride* (شاعرانہ تعلی) which implies a harmless self-importance on the part of the poet or writer. It is also widely used in English literature. In *King Lear*, while talking to Goneril, the King discloses his intention while making use of the “royal we” and says:

Meantime we shall express our darker purpose.—

Give me the map there.—Know that we have divided

In three our kingdom, and ’tis our fast intent

To shake all cares and business from our age,

Conferring them on younger strengths while we

Unburdened crawl toward death

(King Lear, Act I, Scene I, Lines 34-40).

In the Urdu verse above there is an implied and covert use of the “royal we” which is evidenced by such words as “نکلے” and “چلے”. This is elliptical because, though it is not explicitly described, it is there. However, in the translation this fantastic linguistic and literary subtlety is gone. Rather, there is an explicit foregrounding of singular first person pronoun “I”. Let us move to the next instance:

تیری وفا سے کیا ہو تلافی کہ دہر میں
تیرے سوا بھی ہم پر بہت سے ستم ہوے
(غالب)

How can your fidelity recompense? I have
Suffered many blows besides those of love
(Kanda, 1992, p. 7).

The phrase “besides those of love” is not what the poet is saying; rather he is implying something like “besides those of you”. This is evidenced by the phrase, “تیرے سوا”. Moreover, the phrase “دہر میں” (Eng. “in the world”), is left untranslated. Lastly, there is “royal we” in the source text which the translator cavalierly turns into first person singular *I*. The next example also suffers from similar problems.

دونوں جہاں تیری محبت ہار کے
وہ جا رہا ہے کوئی شب غم گزار کے
(غالب)

Having lost both the worlds in the game of love
There goes a lonesome man, ending his night of grief
(Kanda, 1992, pp. 308-309).

Ghalib is talking of losing both the worlds “in your love” but the translator is talking of losing both the worlds “in the game of love”. This shows how a *personal* reference is turned into an impersonal in the translation. Similarly in the source text, the lover is not “lonesome”, but in the translation he is. This is the same deforming tendency which we have discussed above and which Antoine Berman calls *expansion*.

These are just a few problematic instances from the book. There are many more which we cannot discuss here due to space constraints. What specifically alarms the researcher is that A. C. Kanda is hailed as one of the accomplished translators. A former Reader in English at Delhi University, he has published 10 books of Urdu poetry translations and is

the recipient of the Urdu Academy Award for excellence in translation. If such glaring slips are coming from a translator of his caliber, what will be the quality of other legions of lesser known translators? Moreover, such issues are not confined to just the translations of poetry. The prose translations are also marred by such lapses, slips, over-translations and under-translations. Here we have analyzed just one case—the translation of Ismat Chughtai’s short story *Chauthi Ka Jorra* by Tahira Naqvi as *The Wedding Shroud* (Rahman, 2014, pp. 249-250).

The translation of the very title *Chauthi ka Jorra* as *The Wedding Shroud* is erroneous or, at least, quite far-fetched. The more appropriate translation should have been *Dress for the Fourth Day of Wedding*. However, there are more serious problems in the translation and to have a glimpse of them look at these equivalent words/expressions:

No.	Tahira Naqvi	Ismat Chughtai
1	medicine	جوشاندہ
2	slaughtered animals	کٹی ہوئی مرغی
3	allopath	حکیم
4	aba was as slight as a pole	ابا اتنے دبلے پتلے جیسے محرم کا علم
5	Matchmaker	نائن
6	never put a sparklein her eyes	نہ تو اسکی آنکھوں میں پرریاں ناچیں

A cursory look at the English equivalents is enough to bring out their problematic nature. By translating “جوشاندہ” as *medicine* and “حکیم” as *allopath*, the translator is Anglicizing the source text. This is precisely the technique which according American translation scholar Lawrence Venuti “leaves the reader in peace as much as possible and moves the writer to him”(Paploposki, 2011, pp. 40-42). This is an interesting case of target text sensibilities taking over the source text nuances. The

traditional Subcontinental “hakeems” were and still are the very antithesis of “allopaths” and rendering “جوشانده” as “medicine” is to lose the sight of source text specificity.

Similarly “گتھی ہوئی مرغی” is not exactly a *slaughtered animal* as such. The Urdu word “تائیں” means a “lady barber” or a barber’s wife. Matchmaking is one of the many tasks traditionally performed by a lady barber in the rural Indo-Pakistani culture but that does not mean that a lady barber is reducible to just that task. Likewise, the analogy of father’s slenderness with “محرم کا علم” (*a flagstaff of Muharram*) has been rendered too generally by employing the word, “pole” which does not have the accuracy or the iconicity (Mayoral, Kelly & Gallardo, 1988) of the source text. The same loss of specificity and iconicity characterizes 6 as the dance of fairies (پریوں کا ناچنا) implies far more than *putting a sparkle in one eyes*.

The Daring Experimentation of Aijaz Ahmad: An Appraisal of Pros and Cons

Aijaz Ahmad, a well-known Marxist literary critic and writer, embarked upon an unprecedentedly daring and inventive enterprise and a unique translational experiment in his *Ghazals of Ghalib* (1971). He made prose translations of 37 ghazals reducing each of them to only five distiches. He added minimum commentary to his translations and gave them to seven American poets: William Stafford, David Ray, Mark Strand, William Hunt, W.S. Merwin, Thomas Fitzimmons and Adrienne Rich. The latter keeping in view the prose translations by Aijaz Ahmad prepared their own poetic versions of them. They took utmost care to keep as near to the prose translations as possible by maintaining a close correspondence. All this resulted in an extremely exciting “translation” (transposition?) of Ghalib (Taylor, 2015, p. 179) as it brought about a cross-cultural combination of modernism (evidenced by the American literary idiom) and high classicism (underpinned by the Urdu literary tradition). The translation was published by Oxford University Press in 1995. Here is an example:

وحشتِ آتشِ دل سے ، شبِ تنہائی میں
صورتِ دُود ، رہا سایہ گریزاں مجھ سے

Here is Ahmad’s prose translation:

In my night of loneliness, owing to the ferocity/grief of the fire in
my heat,
The shadow eluded me like a waft of smoke
(Ahmad, 1971, p. 87).

W.S. Merwin's version:

In the lonely night because of the anguish
of the fire in my heart
the shadow slipped from me like smoke
(Ahmad, 1971, p. 87).

Andrienne Rich's version:

Through the bonfire my grief lit in that darkness
the shadow went past me like a wisp of smoke
(Ahmad, 1971, p.87).

Mark Strand's version:

That lonely night fire inhabited my heart
And my shadow drifted from me in a thin cloud of smoke
(Ahmad, 1971, p. 89).

This is indeed an unprecedentedly daring experiment but it has its own pros and cons which must be weighed meticulously before adopting this strategy at any wider scale. The unmistakable advantage of the translation/transposition produced by this strategy is that linguistically it will have a native-like ring to it. The syntax of all the translations given above has been cast with remarkable proficiency and artistry. Yet another advantage of this strategy is that it provides the reader with multiple parallel translations of each verse and thereby it offers varied perspectives to appreciate the source text.

However, the chief defect of this kind of translation is its freewheeling and loose nature coupled with a tendency to treat the source text as a mere raw material. In short, this strategy has a far greater tendency to domesticate the source text as it is based upon indirect translation.

The Way Ahead

The Urdu literary tradition needs to be translated into English and there are many challenges both qualitative and quantitative which the translators have to overcome. Unless more and more literary works are translated into English, the Urdu literary tradition bears slim chance of introducing/representing itself at the world level. This has extremely far-reaching consequences which are not just literary but also cultural, sociological and political. However, the Pakistani translators, while responding to this daunting challenge of making their literary tradition

available to the international readership, should be careful as not to get the literary distinctiveness and cultural recognition of Urdu works obliterated in the process of translation. The practice of translation has a built-in tendency to *domesticate* the source texts i.e. to assimilate the source texts to the flat denatured ordinary language of the target text culture (Baker, 2009). This apprehension appears all the more warranted when we take into consideration the colonial history and the long-standing asymmetrical power relationship between Urdu and English. In short, English translations of the Urdu works should not coopt with the (neo) colonial agendas. Unfortunately most of the translation presently being done from Urdu to English suffers from the problem of domestication as discussed above. With reference to the Urdu-English translations, the asymmetrical power relations have always been operating at multiple levels (Bassnett & Trivedi, 1999). Time has come to get rid of such colonial characterizations and to embark upon a journey of carrying one of the richest literary traditions to all corners of the world.

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