

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TRANSLATION, RELIGION AND CULTURE IN A GLOBALIZED WORLD

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Abstract:

Translation Studies has emerged as one of the most dynamic fields in the twenty-first century. It is no longer limited to linguistic transfer but has become a crucial intercultural practice that connects diverse societies. This paper examines the expanding role of translation in a globalized world, highlighting how translators function as cultural mediators who bridge languages, customs, and worldviews. It also explores the growing academic recognition of translation as an interdisciplinary discipline and discusses its importance in shaping cultural identities, knowledge exchange, and social harmony.

Keywords: translation studies, intercultural exchange, language, culture, translation practice

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Introduction:

Translation is almost as old as human language itself. Since it is impossible to know which language existed first or who first spoke it, we can only understand translation as the act of carrying ideas, explanations, styles, and meanings from one language into another.

In India, translation became an organized activity after the arrival of the British. Many Western scholars came to study India's ancient knowledge system and its literature. They learned Sanskrit so they could read the original texts, and some of them began translating these works into English. Max Müller is a well-known example. He greatly admired Kālidāsa's *Shakuntala*. William Jones, an officer of the East India Company, was the first to publicly claim that Sanskrit and English share many similarities. This led to the theory of "language families," which suggests that although languages appear different on the surface, they originate from the same deeper source. With this realization, translation activities in India became stronger.

Literal translation tries to translate every single word, sentence, and paragraph exactly as it appears in the original text. Although it looks faithful and sincere, it

has several limitations. Strict word-for-word translation often destroys the artistic spirit of a text. Literature contains many elements beyond vocabulary—such as style, tone, cultural references, and character portrayal—which literal translation may fail to convey.

Another approach is **sense translation**, which focuses on the meaning rather than the exact words. Here, the translator captures the overall sense of the source text and expresses it clearly in the target language. Unnecessary or repetitive parts are avoided. People often say that literal translation is faithful but not beautiful, whereas sense translation is beautiful though less faithful.

In 1931, Hilaire Belloc commented that translation is secondary and depends on the original. Because people often undervalued it, translation standards declined in some periods. Romantic poets also did not give translation much importance. But today, translation has grown into a respected field, and scholars debate whether it should be considered an art, a science, a craft, or a combination of all these.

Some major contributors to translation theory include **J. C. Catford, Eugene Nida, and Peter Newmark.**

Catford, in his book *A Linguistic Theory of Translation*, defined translation as replacing source language material with equivalent material in the target language. His approach is mainly linguistic. However, literature is not made of language alone—it contains characters, dialects, cultural settings, and emotional environments. In many cases, the “book writes itself,” meaning the story flows beyond mere words. For such texts, Catford’s linguistic theory is not enough.

Modern translation studies recognize that **culture** plays a central role. Therefore, translation has become closely connected to cultural studies. Earlier, translation was treated as a simple or shallow task. Later, it focused on linguistic equivalence. After that, meaning became more important. Today, translation is understood as a cultural activity that involves both language and society.

Different historical periods had different reasons for translation. In ancient times, translations were meant to make religious texts accessible. Greek and Latin works were translated into English. The Bible, originally written in Hebrew, reached different countries through Latin translations. Similarly, in India, Sanskrit was considered divine and holy, but was inaccessible to many people. As a result, scholars translated Sanskrit scriptures into regional languages. These translations were not strict or literal; they conveyed the general ideas so ordinary people could understand them.

A language associated with political power becomes desirable. English entered India with political intentions. English education began mainly to produce clerks. Over time, Indian reformers realized the value of English writing. Theories of politics and economics written by British thinkers helped transform Indian society. Mahatma Gandhi, for example, was deeply influenced by John Ruskin’s *Unto This Last*. He felt that English works should be translated into Indian languages. Through translation, Shakespeare and many Western writers reached Indian readers. These

translations aimed to bring new knowledge into Indian society, even if they were not strictly faithful.

The twentieth century brought large-scale migration. Many Indians travelled abroad for education, employment, business, and some settled permanently in foreign countries. Intercultural marriages increased, and multilingualism became necessary. India itself has hundreds of dialects and many languages. English education has been present for more than a century. Naturally, people wanted to read English books written by both Indians and foreigners. Thousands of works on politics, science, history, philosophy, and literature were translated into Indian languages. The Bible has been translated into many Indian languages. Shakespeare’s plays and several Greek tragedies exist in Marathi. A major trend has been the translation of Hindi literature into regional languages; for example, Premchand’s works are widely available in Marathi. Such free movement of literature between languages has reduced tensions and strengthened cultural understanding.

Conclusion:

Translation is central to the democratization of knowledge, promotion of cultural harmony, and enrichment of global society. In an era shaped by technology, mobility, and international communication, translation is no longer optional—it is essential. As Mallikarjun Patil reminds us, a translator must possess not only linguistic competence but also creative and cultural sensitivity. Adaptation and translation have brought world literature, such as Shakespeare’s works, to millions of readers across regions.

Translators act as mediators between cultures, shaping literary traditions, influencing identities, and contributing to global intellectual exchange. Their role in the twenty-first century is not only relevant but indispensable.

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