

# Translation: An Act Of Creativity

Dr. Leena B. Chandnani

*Associate Professor, Dada Ramchand Bakhru, Sindhu Mahavidyalaya, Nagpur,  
Maharashtra, India - 440018.*

*Email: profleenabc@yahoo.com, advbhushan@yahoo.in*

***Abstract : Translation is one of the most creative activities. Generally it is believed that the translator has no freedom of creativity or thought as he has to confine himself to the text of the original author. It is believed that the translator has no right to bring about any kind of changes in the contents of the original text. He has no freedom to change the meaning or purpose of the text. He has to commit himself to literally recording the original's ideology from language which has got its own assets of culture and tradition as well as social norms into another different language. He is considered a slave to the original text. So the question asked under such circumstances is that where is the scope for creativity. However such a view does not hold good simply because unless a translator has an inner urge of creating something new in the language apart from the language of the original text and unless he applies his own mind, the translation would never see the light of the day. That inner urge and instinct of creating something new in a different language and keeping the faithfulness is an art of creativity. Creating something new in a given framework using the mindset of somebody else needs more creativity than what is required for creating an original piece of art. So translation and creativity are deeply related to each other. This paper is an attempt to explore how translation is an act of creativity.***

***Key Words: subjection, content, subtleties, substituting permutation***

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The manifestation of creativity is the long-long history as recorded by archaeologists. Many cultural concepts have taken a remarkable shape in various societies of the world at different times. The meaning of creativity must have undergone a sea change through the pages of history with the passage of time. The ancient Greek concept of art, with the exception of poetry, involved the subjection to rules rather than freedom of action. In Rome, the Greek concept was a little different and visual artists were viewed as sharing with poet's imagination and inspiration. Medieval Christianity believed God's act of creation ex nihilo and designated it as creation. The people of this age believed in the divine creativity of its creator. They did not consider any activity of human beings as creative. But with the passage of time man started understanding how to exploit nature for his use. By utilising the already existing resources of Mother Nature, man initiated the process of germination of the seed of creativity. Passing through the ages this seed of creativity has now penetrated with its deep roots and bloomed into a huge tree with its branches spread throughout. Creativity keeps on blooming with new flowers and buds adding new dimensions to itself and bringing newness in the existing society all over the world. In the present context creativity refers to creating something new and valuable. As defined by wikipedia, "Creativity is an act of turning new

and imaginative ideas into reality. Creativity is characterised by the ability to perceive the world in new ways, to find hidden patterns to make connections between seemingly unrelated phenomena, and to generate solutions. Creativity involves two processes: thinking, than producing.” (<https://www.creativityatwork.com>>...)

Creativity can be described as a phenomenon whereby a person creates something new which bears some value. But this new does not mean that it has no history. Even describing an already existing piece of art or writing in a new manner can be considered as creative. A beautifully drawn and painted picture if is again created as its replica by another artist, it can also be called creativity. The replica of the Taj Mahal in Aurangabad in Maharashtra can be called as an act of creativity. Ramanand Sagar's dramatization and picturization of the age-old scripture, the Ramayana and B.R. Chopra's Mahabharata are nothing but supreme examples of creativity. The same Mahabharata that we have been reading, studying and digesting for centuries together has now been recreated by one of the greatest poets of our age Prof. K. Shiv Kumar in the poetic form. It would not have been possible if the poet had no ability to create something new out of the already existing one. An article on wikipedia defines, “Translation is an act of adaptation and of negotiation, and, as such it is a creative act. ...The complex and creative process of adopting one text into a new reality, mediating between your source and target language insinuates that a translator’s task is not only an intricate and a demanding one, but highly creative.” (<https://www.globalme.net>blog>7...>)

Today creativity means not only making something novel but also trying to create something different and valuable from already existing original. Even the imitation of something in a unique way is creativity. Creativity attains its zenith when we explore some world renowned popular texts that have been translated into many global languages. Hence translation is a creative art.

## **2. TRANSLATION OF THE BHAGAVAD GEETA**

Bhagwad Geeta originally written by Ved Vyasa is composed of eighteen chapters with almost seven hundred verses. It was first translated from Sanskrit into English by Charles Wilkins in 1785 followed by many other translators who translated it into many languages spoken throughout the world. In India it has been translated into almost all the languages of various states and communities. There are various translations of Bhagvad Geeta. Simple translation is the abridged version containing Sanskrit text with word to word translation and meaning of each word is rendered in English. Another type of translation is complete translation where there is the word to word translation of Bhagvad Geeta with complete text translation and detailed comprehensive explanation. Yet another kind is free translation which contains only meaning of each word in English. This work provides simple reading and very competent understanding of the meaning, message and significance of Bhagvad Geeta. Even the essays are available where critical analysis of the philosophy of Bhagvad Geeta and its relevance from ages till date of the human life has been explained. All these different types of translated forms of Bhagvad Geeta are available in not only printed form but also on internet which has served as magnum opus for the entire man kind to understand the essential principles, concepts and philosophies of life and doctrine of Lord Krishna.

As explained on one of the website, “The Bhagavad gita was first translated in 1785 by Charles Wilkins. After that there have been many translations. The following is a translation done by Jayaram V in 2000. This is a free translation in the sense that it is not a word to word

translation. This is different from the recently published translations by the same author, namely The Bhagavad gita Complete Translation and its abridged version, The Bhagavad gita Simple Translation. The Complete Translation also contains a comprehensive commentary.” (<https://www.hinduwebsite.com>cha...>)

While translating Bhagvad Gheeta, creativity attains its peak as it is herculean task to translate the verses and explain the subtle meaning of the sacred text. While translating this text, translators must have undergone through various phases of difficulty. Looking for proper words and phrases appearing in the source language and to be translated into the target language by itself is a creative job. In the course of achieving something new, the translators have to resort to new ways of conveying the contents of the text. Generally the means of the target language are not the same as those of the source language and therefore applying new resources becomes imperative. The act is not possible without the translator's creativity. As far as translation of a poetic work is concerned, the task becomes all the more difficult simply because it is not easy to maintain the rhyming scheme as is given in the source language. Maintaining the music and the rhyme is of utmost importance to retain aesthetic value and physical beauty of the poetic work. Therefore anyone who translates a piece of poetry into any language has a tremendous job at hand to find suitable rhyming scheme. This also requires a tremendous amount of creativity on the part of the translator. Hence translation of Bhagvad Geeta is an art of creativity at par excellence.

### 3. TRANSLATION OF GITANJALI

Rabindranath Tagore's Gitanjali, Song Offerings, is a collection of 157 poems written in 1910 which fetched Gurudev Nobel prize for literature in 1930. Gitanjali was originally written in Bengali. Later it was translated into English by W. B. Yeats. It has been translated into many languages globally and locally. 'Gitanjali is a part of the UNESCO collection of Representative Works'. Song Offerings is a reflection of Tagore's faith in supreme, consciousness of self, sagacity of experience, wisdom of mind and philosophy of life. It is the poet's feelings towards Almighty in the form of prayers by deep sense of gratitude through acknowledgement of words.

When we speak of translation of Gitanjali it does not imply only transformation of the original text into its literal equivalent. It must successfully convey the overall meaning of the original text with the text's surrounding cultural significance. The various shades of meanings, subtleties and nuances should also be conveyed without looking into their aesthetic sense.

Tagore belonged to Bengal region of pre independent India. In those days there was high spirit and passion of attainment of liberty among freedom fighters, politicians, philosophers, scholars, social activists and even common men and women. Tagore was not an exception. So while writing Gitanjali his frame of mind was conditioned to shed off the slavery of Britishers and dream of an independent India. These feelings are reflected in one of his poems of Gitanjali,

*“Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high....*

*In to that heaven of freedom, My father, let my country awake.”*

Song Offerings comprises of such emotions and feelings. So while translating these verses it must have been very difficult task for the translators to maintain and express such cultural and historical background as portrayed in the original text.

Such views are substantiated in one of the article on wikipedia which says, “Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941), the first Nobel Prize winner from Asia, is known to the West for *Gitanjali: Song-Offerings* (1912), an anthology of assorted poems translated by the poet himself. But what is not known to the West is that he also began, for the first time, the discussion of the myriad aspects of translation after the publication and worldwide popularity of *Gitanjali* (1912). It needs also to be mentioned here that *Gitanjali* (1912) was regarded as ‘a miracle of translation’ and that it fetched Tagore the Nobel Prize for literature in 1913 making him overnight the literary ‘superstar’ of the time. But when he began to discuss his own translations, there was no such discipline either in the East or in the West known as Translation Studies. Nobody could even dream of such a separate discipline at that point of time simply because translation was still considered a ‘secondary’ activity traditionally known as the foreign language-learning method. Hence the question of studying translation or of discussing it was not considered worthwhile either in India or elsewhere before the publication of *Gitanjali* (1912).” (<https://translationjournal.net>rabin...>)

#### 4. TRANSLATION OF SHAKESPEARE’S NOVELS

Shakespeare is one of the eminent play-writer of the English literary field whose plays have ruled the globe for more than six hundred years. His plays have been translated into more than hundred languages all over the world. This proves that his plays hold a special space in the hearts of millions of readers and theatre audience as they touch the core feelings like ambition, conflict, love, hatred, revenge, suffering, betrayal, evil, good and corruption, the qualities possessed by common man in a common setting. Though the plays have been written in the old English of 15<sup>th</sup> century Britain, they have been not only translated in many languages of the world but also been adapted to the situations, circumstances, geographical boundaries and cultural habitat of the region the translator belongs to.

Though Shakespeare had written these plays in the British background, translators all over the world have translated his works according to their own dialect and region adapting them into their own cultural background and existing demands of the audience and readers of their society. Adaptation which means recreating the effect entirely from the source language transferred into the target language requires high sense of creativity in the translator. Specially, in the case of an emotional piece of writing where a certain word, a certain phrase or a certain sentence or situation creates emotion, it becomes all the more difficult on the part of the translator to recreate the same with the same effect and the same intensity of the feelings in the target language. At such times, the translator to recreate the same with the same effect and the intensity of the feelings in the target language will have to use his talent and intelligence to maintain the same.

An article on wikipedia says “Shakespeare has been performed in India for over two centuries now in various Indian languages. Although Shakespeare’s presence was felt the most in cities like Calcutta and Bombay, his plays were not limited to these regions. His plays have travelled across the length and breadth of India. The 1964 survey of Shakespeare translations and adaptations by The Indian National Library, Calcutta, records 128 in Bengali, 97 in Marathi, 70 in Hindi and 66 in Kannada. It is difficult to count the innumerable Parsi productions either based partially or completely on Shakespeare plays. The data clearly reveals that Shakespeare had influenced diverse theatrical traditions in India in different degrees.” (<https://thetheatretimes.com>shakes>)

## 5. QUALITIES OF TRANSLATOR

A good translator should have some basic qualities like passion, curiosity, rich vocabulary, clarity, translation skills and quality. He should be familiar with his resources and accurate knowledge of the time, space, society and the knowledge of the author whose work he is attempting for translation. Addition, substitution, deletion and permutation have to be resorted to by the translator to retain the content value and the aesthetic dimension of the text being translated. Unless the translator has that heightened sense of creativity, perception of aesthetic value and respect for the content meaning, the translation would be a failure. In the process of translation he has to add units of meaning where ever necessary and change the meaning to achieve the intended effect, substituting words, phrases, idioms, proverbs whenever necessary has to be done by him. He has also to exercise his right to deletion if the situation demands to maintain certain decency and decorum in the target language.

He has to retain the original framework of thoughts, ideas, concepts and various other newness of the language. The translator has also to resort to condensation which involves shortening certain things or putting them into a nutshell but certainly not at the cost of the contents and the aesthetic beauty which the translator must retain at all cost which in its turn test the creativity of the translator.

## 6. CONCLUSION

What matters in creativity is its newness in reference to the individual creator or to the society or domain within which its novelty is appreciated as something valuable and enriching in the field of art and aesthetics. In the way translation is a great act of creativity. Employing is also a great act of creativity. Employing freedom within the given framework requires more creativity than that of creating a piece of writing. Thousand of words are being translated every day. Translation studies have occupied a separate subject domain in the curriculum. For many aspirant individuals this field has become their source of bread and butter. Hundreds of students are opting for this course. In the contemporary era when world has become a global village and the original texts are available online it becomes not only an easier job for people to become professionals in Translation studies but also there is a lot of scope for expansion of knowledge in this domain. Now translating any text has been given the status of creativity. With slight adaptation and modification many texts can be translated to the desired language. So now people all over the globe can exchange and learn the culture and tradition of any country or community by reading translated texts. The social, historical, economical, political and cultural background is no more a barrier. Now translation and creativity complement each other. Thus we can say that translation is an act of creativity.

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Dr. Leena Chandnani(B.Sc., B.Ed., M.A.(English), M.A.(Psychology), SET (English), Ph.D.(English) is an Associate Professor, Department of English in Dada Ramchand Bakhru Sindhu Mahavidyalaya, Nagpur. She has been teaching English for last 16 Years to under graduate students. She is a well known researcher and has published many research papers in National and International journals and authored a book. She is one of the editors of Dew Drops, a literary annual which is published by Forum for Creative Writers in English. She is member in the subject Linguistics, Board of Studies, Rashtra Sant Tukdoji Maharaj Nagpur University, Nagpur, Maharashtra.

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