On Some Aspects of Translating Children's Literature in Contemporary India

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Abstract

For the last two and a half decades, translation research has witnessed a boom. Beginning with the 'cultural turn' in the 1990s, translation research is now characterized by an informed cultural and political awareness supplemented by a host of deconstructionist methodologies. As a result, quite a sizeable quantity of insightful and controversial studies on translation is being published regularly. Riding on the back of conceptual advancements in the structure and function of language; aided by theoretical insights such as poststructuralist, feminist, and system theory approaches and so on, translation research today has created a niche for itself in (re)interpreting and (re)directing the prevailing value systems across disciplines. Following this trail, again from the early 1990s onwards, a few scholars began to create a specialized field of inquiry within translation research called translating children's literature. This article focuses on this evolving field. However, most of the research on translating children's literature is being undertaken in the west. Translation scholars in South Asia and more particularly in India have not paid the required attention to this growing field. The neglect is startling for the region continues to produce a significantly high quantity of children's books across different languages. Therefore, the primary aim of this article is to encourage research on translating children's literature in the Indian context. The article exemplifies and substantiates its call by providing a theoretical account of translating Marathi children's literature into Hindi. For its material and discussion, the article draws from Kisson Ki Duniya: Marathi Baal Kahaniyon Ka Pratinidhi Sankalan (2019) (The

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Landscape of Tales: Selections from Marathi Children's Stories), which this author has co-translated and edited.

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Introduction

Translating children's literature and translating for children

Unlike South Asia, the last three decades in western academe have seen unprecedented growth in the amount of scholarly attention that is being paid to the practice of translating texts for children. However, Paul Hazard (1878-1944) –a French professor of comparative literature at Sorbonne, was one of the first to have mooted the idea of the international exchange of children's books in his 1932 groundbreaking book *Les Livres, Les Enfants, et Les Hommes* (Books, Children, and Men, 1972). Through *Les Livres* Hazard advances a (romantic) vision regarding the possibility of an international understanding as well as that of aesthetic appreciation through children's books. Similarly, Jella Lepman in her autobiographical narrative titled *A Bridge of Children's Books* (1964) proposed to counter the horrors of the Second World War by juxtaposing children's books as reconciliatory tools. It is not difficult to infer that both Hazard and Lepman carry idealistic notions about children's books which they wish to realize by providing them with an international reach.

A significant departure from this idealistic and international notion of children's books was initiated by a symposium entitled *Children's Books in Translation* (Klingberg, Orvig and Amor 1978) that paved the way for a nuanced understanding of translated children's books. In other words, scholars, here, proposed to discuss translated children's books as linguistic, ideological, and economic exercises, among others. Further,

during the same symposium, Richard Bamberger –an Austrian scholar, urged that serious attention should be given to the role of translation while negotiating children's literature. According to him, the role of translation had 'hardly been touched upon …in spite of the fact that translations, as a rule, are of even greater importance in children's literature than in adult literature' (1978:19).

Consequently, the subsequent work in the translation of children's literature began to pay serious attention to hitherto neglected domains. Gote Klingberg taps some of these in his book entitled *Children's Fiction in the Hands of the Translators* (1986) in which he pays attention to cultural context adaptation, the importance of read-aloud exercise and also that of visuals in children's books. Further, the appearance of two significant works in the early 2000s heralded a new turn for this growing field by exploring possible ways in which translation of children's books could be evaluated and critiqued. These two monographs are: *Translating for Children* (2000) by Riitta Oittinen and *Comparative Children's Literature* (2005) by Emer O' Sullivan. In their studies, O' Sullivan and Oittinen ask new questions regarding the history and poetics of the translation of children's books. At the same time, both these authors throw significant light on the author-translator dialogue while handling the translation of children's books. One of the significant aspects of both these studies is that they put emphasis on the implied child-reader in the translation of children's books.

Recent research in translation of children's literature discourse borrows liberally from scientific terminology, comparative literature, psychoanalysis, media and so on. Gillian Lathey's book *Translating Children's Literature* (2016), for example, addresses the adult-child duality as a major challenge in the translation of children's literature. However, the most

enterprising aspect of the current research in the translation of children's literature is its penetration into specific questions. For instance, Vanessa Leonardi in her monograph *Ideological Manipulation of Children's Literature Through Translation and Rewriting* (2020) lays bare the capital of 'manipulation' or, phrased more neutrally, 'intervention' inherent in the translation of children's literature. Another volume, edited by Anna Kerchy and Bjorn Sundmark entitled *Translating and Transmediating Children's Literature* (2020) addresses a host of conjunctures involved in adapting, translating, and transmediating children's literature. *Negotiating Translation and Transcreation of Children's Literature* (2020) edited by Joanna Dybiec-Gajer, Riitta Oittinen, and Małgorzata Kodura brings novel insights to the field by applying the concept of transcreation in translating for children and the young audience. The volume pinpoints a number of transcreative strategies used by translators while addressing issues like humour, dual address, nonsense, the interplay of words etc. in the translation of children's literature. A recent study by Marija Todorova entitled *The Translation of Violence in Children's Literature* (2022) discusses the role of violence in the translation of children's literature. Though Todorova advances her arguments with specific reference to the historical neglect of the Western Balkans in the imagination of the Global North, her study, nevertheless, is applicable to many other societies and cultures that have been similarly neglected.

The quick survey of research conducted in the translation of children's literature so far delineates a few important points for consideration. Firstly, research in the translation of children's literature is gaining acceptance and recognition within Translation studies. Secondly, as we can see in our later part of the discussion –it is now getting more nuanced and sophisticated. However, the majority of the research is being

conducted by scholars in the Global North and most of the texts/ authors/objects of studies belong to that region. A careful survey of literature informs us that there is a paucity of similar research in South Asia in general and India in particular. This is a serious gap in translation research which needs urgent attention.

However, the existing research in the field follows a unidirectional trail. In other words, its approach is that of '*translating children's literature*' and not '*translating for children*'. To the uninitiated, both these approaches might look similar but there is a difference. The former approach smacks of an inherent 'adultist agenda' whereas the latter has the intention to reach out to children and militate against the (sub) conscious adult authority. In fact, the Finnish scholar and translator Riitta Oittinen in most of her works and more particularly in *I am Me – I Am Other: On the Dialogics of Translation for Children* (1993) has argued that translators should 'translate for children'. Such an approach by Oittinen not only breaks with the pattern of traditional research but also provides a new turn. It is pertinent to mention here that in *Kisson Ki Duniya: Marathi Baal Kahaniyon Ka Pratinidhi Sankalan* (2019) (The Landscape of Tales: Selections from Marathi Children's Stories), we attempted to translate Marathi short stories *for* the (Hindi) children. Consequently, the translation project of *Kisson Ki Duniya* feels closer to Oittinen's proposal theoretically.

Oittinen, in the same book, foregrounding the theoretical advancements of the Tel Aviv group and Russian philosopher Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of Dialogics, views the practice of translation as a dialogue. Likewise, according to her, translation is a continuous dialogue between the text and the translator's understanding of the text and of the target audience. Further, 'the concept of childhood underlying and

affecting Oittinen's study is the "wise and able" child who lives in a carnivalesque subculture, translators should dive into the children's carnival' (Metcalf 1995: 292). In other words, Oittinen creates an analogy between *carnivalism* and the translation process by claiming that every act of translation is a carnivalistic process and, likewise, the entire children's culture is carnivalistic in nature. Therefore, in Oittinen's schema, the task of a translator is not only to translate the different aspects of the target language and culture but also a parallel running culture – a child's culture (Oittinen 2006: 84-141). Another significant undercurrent in Oittinen's work is her unapologetic stance regarding the empowerment of (child) readers along with the empowerment of translators and illustrators (Metcalf 1995: 293). She proposes that the translator's subjectivity, 'humanity, personality and worldview should openly enter into the dialogic process of translation' (1995: 293). Taking on from this insight, it will be in the fitness of things to briefly chalk out the translator's subjective position with regards to *Kisson Ki Duniya* –our point of reference in the present article.

I – The Subjective Position of the Translator

In retrospect, I believe that my first lessons in translation began in the company of my mother. While still in the village, it was my responsibility from second grade onward to answer the Inland letters sent by my father –a serving soldier in the Indian army. Mother and I would sit down to discuss the general theme that the letter should address. Later, she would go silent and wait for me to convert the theme into full-grown sentences. In a way, it was my job to translate her thoughts into sentences. Usually, it would not end there. She would also demand a reading of what I have written, which would always be at the back pages of my school notebook first, before turning them finally on the Inland letters. She had an eye for detail, clarity, tone and the presentation of the message. Her

dissatisfaction would require me to revisit and revise my draft a number of times. Unknowingly, she has done a great favour to me. Her obsession with the nuances of language and its usage has taught me 'tentative' language habits –indispensable for translators, one would like to believe.

Later, we began accompanying my father from one state to the other or rather, from one language to the other. Within a span of every two or three years, I was being introduced to a new language. And mother would create the testing ground to check on the quality and quantity of my acquisition. For example, while in Vadodara she would ask me to speak Gujarati and read stories to her in that language. The exercise would demand that I first translate those sentences from the 'alien' (Gujarati) language and present it finally in a language that she would understand. Looking retrospectively, I call those attempts as examples of '*tatkal'* translations. The same exercise would be in force from the English language as well, besides readings from Hindi –comparatively easy to translate because of the syntactic similarities between Hindi and Haryanvi –my mother tongue. In a way, my mother took her three-language formula quite religiously! But the major faultline of this ever-alternating language acquaintance model was that I was never made to invest much time in a single language. My father's frequent transfers were a major hindrance. At the age of fourteen, I entered the Kendriya Vidyalayas. With this, my encounters with new languages stopped altogether. Hindi and English were the only two languages that I studied thereafter. However, whatever little familiarity I nurtured with different Indian languages went a long way in defining my language taste buds. It can also be inferred from the discussion that my acquaintance with Indian languages at that stage was only at the level of (textbooks) children's literature in that language.

Attending the University of Pune from 2005-2010 was a turning point in my life in many ways. The most important among these was the realisation of my fascination with a new language –Marathi in the current case. In a way, it was the re-discovery of my childhood exercise. Most of my friends there were native Marathi speakers. Listening to them familiarised me not only with the vocabulary, and sentence constructions but also with the often hidden 'secrets', the 'twists and turns' of Marathi. In my friends' company, I began to speak and became relatively confident in the next five years. The newly acquired spoken abilities gave me a lot of confidence to pursue some sort of career in Marathi language. To embark on it, I decided to learn Marathi officially now. Fortunately, around the same time, I started to work at Banaras Hindu University (BHU). I enrolled in BHU's Marathi Department to do a two-year part-time Diploma where I would meet my teacher and future translation collaborator Pramod Padwal. The line of study in the course was simple but quite effective. In four semesters, the learners would be required to cover the Marathi textbooks named *Baal Bharti* from the first to the eighth standard. It was rather a fair exposure that I got towards the institutional usage of the language during the diploma years. Needless to say, the verbal background covered already helped a great deal.

One day, during one of our routine discussions, I asked my Marathi language instructor about the compilation of Marathi language textbooks, especially the *Baal Bharti*. There it came out that quite a lot of material in these language textbooks is drawn from the state-funded children's magazine named *Kishor*. On further probing, I came to know that the magazine is in continuous monthly circulation for more than five decades, besides having special issues on Diwali. All the issues of the magazine are digitized and available for free on its website. With high circulation and good editorial quality to go,

the magazine has created a niche for itself in Marathi Children's literature and commands equal respect among adults. In a moment of epiphany, we decided to collaboratively select and translate a select bunch from *Kishor* to Hindi and put together an anthology.

Here, please, notice that the reasons behind this individualized account of the translator's subjectivity are much more than a self-reflection activity. The author is aware of the prevailing (read normative) stance where 'I' does not sit well with any attempt that seeks to engage in an objective piece of writing. This biasness with 'I' and its validity in translation practice needs to be handled more carefully. More so, since (literary) translation is a very subjective enterprise and the empirical objectivity of other disciplines might not exactly fit the bill here. However, the 'I' of the translator, in the case under discussion, is factored into the general exercise of translating children's literature. Thus, the subjective account of the translator is foregrounded with an assumption that it is one of the important metalinguistic and paratextual elements that influence the translation of children's literature. Through the socio-cultural baggage of the translator accounted above, it is not difficult to discern that his development during childhood also had a place for translation practice albeit through his mother's (adult) intervention. Speaking differently, subjective accounts of the translators can go a long way in determining their concept of childhood which is at work while they translate children's books. It is also their individual concept of childhood that 'will determine the translator's approach to translation and impact the final outcome' (Metcalf 1995: 293). However, before we launch into the discussion and impact of our final outcome, it is important to have a brief discussion regarding the urgent need for translating children's literature in India.

Why Translate Children's Literature across Indian Languages?

Barring the routine translations from English to other Indian languages, translation of children's literature across Indian languages is rather neglected. We were asked many a time – why translate children's literature among Indian languages? What is the need? To answer this question here, I wish to make the following submissions. Quite often we hear that the English language is determined and eager to cannibalize Indian languages. It is not unfamiliar to listen *angrezi hatao, bhartiya bhasha bachao* (remove English, save Indian languages). However sad, it is also true that such utterances remain mere slogans within the larger language politics of the country. For a moment, by refraining from accusing English, will it not be a thought exercise to see how much actual communication is happening among Indian languages themselves? I have noticed that my students of M.A. English literature generally remain oblivious about the literatures of their counterparts studying the same course in the departments of Indian languages. In the same way, for example, the students of M.A. Hindi are hardly aware of what is going on in Marathi, Bengali or Nepali literature and vice-versa. It still remains a mystery why comparative studies never took off massively in our context. At the same time, one should not discredit that however microscopic, some communication can still be seen among Indian languages primarily at the research level. But is it enough to keep in mind the sheer quality and quantity of languages that we have?

Through our translations in *Kisson ki Duniya* (Padwal and Kumar 2019: Translators' Note), we contend that the feasibility of dialogue among children's literature of different Indian languages will not only nurture children's literature in India but also Indian languages per se. There is a lot of

emphasis on language learning until a child remains in school. Unfortunately, these language textbooks suffer from a glaring deficit. For instance, a surface evaluation of a Hindi textbook will reveal that most of the material in it is drawn from the north Indian context. The textbook is a living embodiment of the writers and culture of north India. The same observation can be applied fairly and uniformly to the textbooks of all other Indian languages. Through such textbooks, our students get familiarity with the linguistic component of the language per se but they almost remain comparatively illiterate about the pluralistic character of our country in terms of her languages, cultures, and alternative ways of life. Because of this comparative illiteracy, there is a danger that our youth may develop cultural chauvinism. There is an urgent need that we revisit our language textbooks to make them more accommodative so that jingoistic sentiments about one's own region, language, culture and tradition are not nursed through them. The real self of our nation can only be realised in its heterogeneity. To cater for that self, proper pedagogical choices should be made keeping in mind the multicultural and multilingual needs of our nation. Consequently, the first step towards it would be to produce inclusive reading material for children. And translation, without doubt, could be the most potent tool for the creation of inclusive reading material. Jackie Kay, the well-known Scottish poet, once said that it takes more than one language to tell a story. Through translations in *Kisson ki Duniya*, a modest attempt is made to tell Marathi children's stories in one more language.

Having enough translated material though is not enough in itself. In spite of recommending a major push for the Indian languages in the New Education Policy (NEP, 2020), our preparations remain rather haphazard on the issue of mutual enrichment of Indian languages. For example, when NEP 2020 was put up for public debate and discussion, there was hardly

any mention of using translation as a potential bridge among Indian languages. It was disheartening to see NEP putting a lot of emphasis on children's education, especially early education, without turning a favourable eye towards Indian children's literature. Over the years, the missing case of children's literature and its translations constitutes a major lacuna in India's language debate. In other words, we are yet to deal with two questions: a) is there a place for children's literature –as a (major) stakeholder in India's language debate? b) Can translation be foregrounded as a pedagogical intervention in addressing India's linguistic complexity? While working on the Marathi material of *Kisson Ki Duniya*, we realized the huge potential that translation of Indian children's literature has for (Indian) translation scholars and theorists. The scholarship will not only bridge an existing gap within (Indian) translation studies but has the potential to go a long way in creating a possible industry of children's literature in translation. One could debate regarding what should be translated and what not. However, it is still in the fitness of things to propose that the cross-linguistic translation of language textbooks should be the first step in this direction. In fact, this translation exercise, it is proposed, should be considered a segment of knowledge text production.

What follows in the rest of the article is an account of major outcomes from our experience of translating children's literature into the Indian context. In other words, it is an attempt to put forth the descriptive case study of the translation of *Kisson ki Duniya* into Hindi and argue for generalizations that might replicate in similar translation attempts.

Discussion of Case Study

a) *The issues of copyright material*

The first task for us was to go through the potential material available for translation. Once twenty-five items were

shortlisted by us (for which we had our own methodology), the next task was to trace and address the copyright component of the select material. When we approached the office of the director, the Maharashtra state textbook development and curriculum revision committee, we were faced with an awkward situation. The office, after going through our request remained silent and did not reply at all. However, one of the translators of the project decided to approach the office in person. Off the record, it was revealed to us that the staff has looked into the rules and regulations that regulate the production of *Kishor* magazine with care and did not find anything related to the copyright. Likewise, it was not difficult to deduce that those who founded *Kishor* never thought that a day might come when somebody would endeavour to translate this Marathi material into any other language!

Nevertheless, we were verbally assured to go ahead with our translations. *Kishor* is a state-funded journal and has regularly paid the authors whose work has appeared in its pages –we were told. For a moment, one may think it to be an individual problem of the translators. But I am sure there could have been a number of translation projects that never really took off because of acopyright entanglements. Any contemporary publisher would be scared to touch a translated material in the absence of a copyright permission. As translator-editors, we were aware of this fact. Approaching the original authors was no solution either as they had already relinquished the right over their creations. They, in fact, were excited and wanted us to carry on with the project. It is after long perseverance and patience that we finally managed to receive copyright permission in writing.

The theorisation of translation practices has not given adequate attention to the issue of copyright elements in translation. The general preoccupation of translation scholars assumes

copyright to be a personal issue between the translator and the author or the translator and the publisher. Indeed, the usual capital exchanges involved in the process make it a personal issue between the two parties. As translators, my collaborator and I too held the similar view. However, the negotiations we had with the operators of *Kishor* for copyright permission changed our perspective. Here was a state-run journal – subsidised entirely on public money, having no (overt) intentions of making a profit. During our private conversations, the Marathi authors agreed to our project of translation instantly. For them, the 'honour' of being printed in a different language was much more rewarding than usual capital gains. However, their verbal agreement and moral support to our work was in no way a substitute for the issue of copyright. In exchange for the money received from Kishor, these authors had already surrendered their rights over their works. It was beyond their good intentions now to solve our problem.

Here, one was witnessing a peculiar hurdle for translation –not from the author or the (money-spinning) publisher but from the steel-framed bureaucracy. If we have to create a translation of children's literature as an industry, the copyright hurdle needs to be addressed first. It is not a hidden fact that the school curriculum in India is still in the hands of the state. Both the centre and the states control it in their respective domains. The state machinery owns the copyright of the language textbooks in almost all cases. In such a scenario, instead of keeping a tight-lid copyright restriction on the language textbooks, the state would do well by following the 'copy left' stance on the language textbooks. It would encourage potential translators to undertake the exercise of translation freely without the overwhelming fear of copyright violations. In fact, it is in the interest of the general public to declare school textbooks as one of the constituents of the public domain. The translations

so undertaken should be called as exercises in 'knowledge texts' production and should generally be advertised as contributions to the manufacturing of knowledge society.

b) *The collaborative translation exercise*

The new proposals in translation theory are seeking an increased share of collaborative work among translators, especially in the context of south-Asian languages (Kamal 2019; Ramaswamy 2022). The basic premise that governs such an understanding is the greater 'inherent cultural similarities' among the south-Asian languages. In the Indian context too, languages display linguistic divide –say for instance between the Indo-Aryan and the Dravidian ones. However, they depict similar cultural milieus, if not identical, through their usage. At the same time, the interaction between the languages of the same family may also provide interesting results. The language pair –Marathi and Hindi –in our case belongs to the Indo-Aryan family. We could infer that the cultural and linguistic transfer between the two languages was comparatively 'easy'. It is likely that the usage of the identical script (Devanagari) bridges the linguistic distance between Marathi and Hindi. In addition, the cultural and physical distance between Marathi and Hindi regions has always been positively negotiable. Having these common linkages as background, one is better placed to engage in a direct translation between the two languages.

But still there is a lingering problem. It is a common knowledge that for any meaningful translation to happen, the translator(s) need to be fairly competent at least in two languages. However, one submits humbly that in the contemporary scenario, such competence is not that common. The world around us is increasingly becoming monolingual where equal working competence in two languages is becoming rare. Equal working competence should not be

confused with familiarity. One can be equally familiar with more than one language –and people are –but the point, however, is, whether they can translate that familiarity into competence. I intend to submit a random thought experiment that I conducted.

Banaras Hindu University has the facility to teach almost all the modern Indian languages. However, a random web page survey of the respective departments provides a sorry picture when it comes to the translation output. Surprisingly, many teachers list translation/translation studies as their specialisations. During personal interactions, one could notice that there was no dearth of intent in them as far as commitment to translation exercise is concerned. They are highly competent in their chosen language and adequately familiar with one or more languages. For instance, a teacher teaching in the Marathi department is found to be highly competent in Marathi besides high familiarity with Hindi and English at the same time. But her Marathi competence does not match equally with the other two languages and hence a major hindrance, in an attempt of potential translation at the individual level.

It will not be wrong to infer that situations like these cast a shadow on India's multilingual ethos. Speaking on this in an interview with the present author (Kumar 2020: 201-210), noted Odia short-story writer Dipti Ranjan Pattanaik connects multilingual proficiency with society's material and utilitarian needs. According to him, today, most teachers/scholars are trained in such a way that they are extremely competent in one language and not much in the second. People in the past learnt multiple languages with equal proficiency because it was their need. Pattanaik maintains that with the kind of social engagements that we make today, we can live 'meaningfully' with one language only. However, for the sake of creating meaningful intellectual capital we need more and more

scholars who are conversant in one global language and at the same time deeply rooted in the culture and literature of their own language(s).

Perhaps this is one of the reasons why we should advocate collaborative translation practices as one of the mechanisms to address this dearth of multilingual competence. Through this method, two translators collaborate in such a way that one is competent in the source language (the language *from* which translation is done) and other has strong hold over the target language (the language *to* which translation is done). While engaged in such collaborative practice, one could theorise the modus operandi as well as the sociology of collaborative translation instead of assuming it to be an innocent and benevolent act. In other words, there is a need to understand these collaborations from the perspective of the material as well as the agents of translation –the translators. However, such an exercise, I submit, could be a topic of separate discussion.

c) *The practical part*

Before we began the translations, my collaborator and I had no idea regarding the approach we were to adopt in undertaking the task. In a moment of spontaneity, we sat down having our individual photocopies of the Marathi version (source text). We read the text together –a number of times. My collaborator led these readings as he had a superior hand in handling the source text. The effort was not only to familiarize ourselves with the narrative but also to experience the twists and turns of the language, authorial intentions and usage of vocabulary –for these were stories primarily written for children. After that, before every translation, our first exercise invariably constituted of reading the Marathi source text together. As soon as the reading of a particular sentence used to get over, my immediate job was to translate the sentence into Hindi –the

target language. However, the transition from the source text to the target was not devoid of conflicts and problems. Let me share a few examples.

During one of the book discussion events of *Kisson Ki Duniya*, a couple of attendees asked if we ever disagreed with each other's position, choice or method while translating collaboratively. It is difficult to provide a direct 'yes/no' to such a query. However, there were many moments of conflict that I can recall. Sometimes, a single word or sentence would not transfer that easily in translation. We realised that the 'failure' was occurring broadly at three levels: linguistic, cultural and at the translators' level. The first two reasons are fairly recognized in the field of translation studies, but the failure of the translator(s) has not got much attention. Consequently, one might ask if the so-called 'failure of the translator(s)' is independent of linguistic and cultural failures in translation.

For the moment, I mention a couple of words, among many, that emerged in Marathi during our translation exercise and critically foregrounded our roles as translators. These two words were *gubgubit* and *faataa*. The first word was used for Vaibhav –the child protagonist of the short story titled *Chhota Recharge* (Small Recharge) (Padwal and Kumar 2019: 17-21) –in order to describe the physical dimensions as well as some hard-to-miss traits of his personality. My immediate response to the word in Hindi was *gol-matol*. The choice did not satisfy my collaborator. Though he expressed his inability to give me an alternative but nevertheless refused to accept my version. We had marathon discussions to find a suitable alternative in Hindi that can preserve the sense and 'joy' it conveys in Marathi. We were aware about the cultural connotations of the said word in Marathi. Apart from signalling a plump face, the word also implies a 'fairer' skin complexion. Whereas in the

word *gol-matol* the sense of rounded facial structure was much more predominant and the complexion part was missing altogether. Eventually, by roping in a word called *gulgula gora-chitta* we could hope to cover it 'all'. The association of the word *gulgula* with food was an added advantage (for there is a food named *gulgule/a* in north-India –the Hindi speaking region). Needless to say, the word also highlighted the interconnection between the plump face and food.

In another story titled *Aaba ki Kahani* (Aaba's Story) (Padwal and Kumar 2019: 31-35), the Marathi word *faataa* underwent a similar deliberation. In the events of the story, the narrative was referring to an intersection –leading the way to different villages. An intersection of this kind is called *faataa* in Marathi. Initially, the onomatopoeic resonance of the word *faataa* with the Hindi word *faatak* (gate?) seemed quite a tempting option till my collaborator intervened regarding the word's one-dimensional character. In other words, *faatak* revealed just the stoppage segment (gate) of *faataa* and not the corresponding ways that emerge from it. Eventually, we had to use the Hindi word *tiraha* (leading to three different ways) in order to accommodate the essence of the narrative discussion. It wasn't the most apt word for *faataa* but somewhat compensatory under the circumstances. Meanwhile, with my limited research, I could discover that there was no word for *tiraha* in Marathi.

The two instances discussed so far testify to our inclination towards adopting a TT-oriented translation strategy. However, there were occasions when we adopted the ST-oriented translation strategy. The anthology is, to a great extent, full translations of the source texts derived from *Kishore* magazine with no additions, omissions, or footnotes. In fact, retrospectively, we realise that we made conscious and unconscious efforts in 'safeguarding' the ST at every possible

juncture. Theoretically speaking, scholars too identify two main trends in the practice of (children's) translation: source-oriented translation and target-oriented translation. 'The first approach advocates the preservation of the source language and cultural characteristics (being faithful to the form and meaning) whereas the latter favours the "merging" of the source text into the target language culture, bringing it closer to the readership' (Alla 2015: 16). However, the safeguarding approach that we adopted should be understood in the larger socio-pedagogical context in which I have located our translation exercise in the beginning of my discussion. Nevertheless, it also needs to be mentioned that while safeguarding the interest of the source language and culture, we intended to produce acceptable translation rather than adequate translation. By 'acceptable' translation, I mean acceptable to the child reader whereas 'adequate' could be a term that is more suited to adult readers. In other words, the translators' intention has been to reach out to children rather than impressing the adults even while adopting a source-oriented translation. Let me cite some examples to build on this perspective further.

One of the crucial features of the source text, like in most of the children's literature anyway, is related to the names of the characters and the nomenclature of relations. Usually, the names of the characters are not changed in literature translated for adult readers. While discussing the problematic of names in the translation of children's literature, Gillian Lathey notes, 'translators writing for children often adapt them, for example by using equivalents in the target language such as Hans/John/Jean, William/Guillermo/Guillaume, Alice/Alicia' (Lathey 2016: 44). But negotiating with names in children's literature could be a contentious issue. Names are powerful markers of varied social and cultural contexts. If the translator doesn't translate or improvise on names, the younger readers

will have a continuous reminder that they are reading an unfamiliar text; a text that is situated in a different location. On the other hand, if the translator provides equivalent/new names, the young readers might experience a mismatch between names and the setting/plot of the text. Anthea Bell addresses this conundrum:

The idea behind all this is to avoid putting young readers off by presenting them with an impenetrable-looking set of foreign names the moment they open a book.

It's the kind of problem that constantly besets a translator of children's literature (Bell 1985:7).

However, in *Kisson Ki Duniya*, we have retained the source names in the translation. In Marathi cultural context, the name proper of an individual includes three components, almost without exception. The first component is the name of the individual followed by his/her father's name and finally ending with the surname. In formal situations, say for instance –school certificates or recruitments etc. the surname is written first, followed by the name of the individual and thereafter his/her father's name. As a matter of fact, in most of the Marathi language forms, there is no separate column for the father's name unlike in the Hindi-speaking regions of north India. In our translations, we made no effort to shorten the names of the characters/writers in order to acclimatise them according to the Hindi language norms. As a matter of fact, the Hindi language carries only the name of the individual accompanied by his/her surname –in official/unofficial setups both. In other words, Yadunath Dattatray Thatte is mentioned as it is from ST without becoming Yadunath Thatte in the Hindi version. Likewise, while handling the nomenclature of relations, we deliberately did not change them in the Hindi version. So the Marathi words Aai (mother), Baba (father), Kaka (uncle) etc. have been retained in Hindi without explanation. The context

of the narratives was so self-explanatory that such an explanation was not needed. In other words, we made a conscious choice against domestication at this juncture.

However, it is important to submit that while translating children's literature, domestication and foreignization carry much more complicated and complex choices. Most children do not master all foreign (Indian) languages. In such a scenario, translation is the only medium through which they form (any) genuine contact with foreign languages, cultures and customs. Further, a trend has started in translation practice, more particularly from the 1980s that increasingly questions the 'domesticating' tendency. Today, translators also display a tendency to retain a certain degree of 'foreignness' in their translations. In fact, in his book *Children's Fiction in the Hands of the Translators* (1986), Gote Klingberg is highly critical of the source-oriented method and calls it a rather common way to translate children's books. According to him, the translated children's book should enhance the (child) reader's range of foreign culture, language and customs.

Another significant challenge that we faced was that of ambivalence. A few stories were addressing dual readership – child and adult reader both. For instance, the story *Gachak Andharee* (Padwal and Kumar 2019: 22-26) is an apt example of ambivalence and duality. The duality of the text was a major challenge in the translation of this story. In order to keep multiple levels of the text, we decided not to 'over-translate' any of the source text elements. In other words, we were careful about the possible semantic surplus/deficiency in translation. For starters, the name *Gachak Andharee* has no meaning in the story. It is an empty signifier invented by adult Sada to scare and control his child Gajanan. As we read on, *Gachak Andharee* comes 'alive' to unsettle Gajanan but eventually ends up haunting Sada –its inventor. The story

undertakes a fluctuating crossover from the world of children to that of adults. The story lays bare the vulnerability of adults in a world they presume to lord over. In fact, the relationship between children's and adult literature at times could be very fluid and there is an absolute potential for 'crossover'. Consequently, scholars have questioned the feasibility of children's literature. According to Jack Zipes, "There has never been a literature conceived for children, a literature that belongs to children, and there never will be" (Zipes 2001: 40). In the same vein, Riitta Oittinen too seems unsure about the possibility of defining children's literature because literary works have a dormant potential to be redefined multiple times. Literature written for adults today might be tomorrow's children's literature (Oittinen 1993: 42-43). Indeed, the same holds true for some of the international bestsellers for children that were not written for children in the first place. *Panchtantra*, *Arabian Nights*, *Aesop's Fables,* Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels,* The work of Lewis Carroll etc. are a few clichéd examples that have migrated from the adult world to that of children.

Any discussion around children's literature and its translation will be incomplete without discussing the pedagogical and didactic elements surrounding it. Puurtinen has pointed out in his research that adults anticipate children's literature to aid the linguistic acquisition of the child reader. Therefore, the tendency of authors and translators of children's books toward normalization and standardization of grammar and language cannot be ruled out (Puurtinen, 1998). Closely aligned with pedagogical and didactic elements is the 'risk' of ideological manipulation. Vanessa Leonardi has already demonstrated that children and young adult literature is subjected to cultural and ideological changes (Leonardi, 2020). In *Subversive Innocence* (2002) Pattanaik too had argued earlier that "children's literature cannot be ideologically neutral. For all children's

texts assume a particular view of childhood forged by the culture to which they belong. Either way, in ratifying or negating the dominant cultural values, texts for children acquire a particular agenda" (Pattanaik, 2002: 2). Indeed, in *Kisson Ki Duniya* there are stories such as *Padosi Dharm* (Help thy Neighbor) (Padwal and Kumar 2019: 59-61), *Mehnat Ka Mantra* (The Mantra of Hard Work) (2019: 62-64), *Salaam Namaste* (2019:47-51) that can be classified as didactic but as we could note during our selection, they promote childhood values more than they promote adult didacticism. Pattanaik draws our attention to a trend in the west where "critics in the recent times have often embarked upon the task of building a canon of children's literature by banishing the texts that seem to be *overly* didactic, and of promoting those texts which glorify the values that define childhood" (Pattanaik 2002:2, Italics mine). The crucial question at this juncture, however, is how one will make a distinction between didactic and *overly didactic* children's texts? Further, can there be a text not at all didactic? Pattanaik argues that some form of (adult) persuasion or didacticism, "is inherent in all literature including literature for children" (Pattanaik, 2002:3). However, it needs to be accepted here that in *Kisson Ki Duniya* there were some ideological considerations at work. I would restrain from calling it ideological manipulation and will be comfortable with what Leonardi would call ideological 'intervention'. Let us elaborate on this point a bit further.

Kisson Ki Duniya has individual chapters on B. R. Ambedkar (Padwal and Kumar 2019: 72-73); Mahatma Jotirao Phule (2019:74-75); Savitribai Phule (2019:76-77); Sant Gadge Baba (2019: 78-80) and Rajarshi Shahu Maharaj (2019: 81-83). Even a cursory (historical) glance at the books produced for children in India will intimate that the thinkers and social activists just mentioned have always been neglected. However,

that neglect has not been exclusive to children's literature alone. As translators, we decided to intervene and ensure that the young readers are acquainted with the life stories of these modern thinkers. Consequently, during selection, we ensured that the child reader is not bombarded with the thinkers' high-end philosophy or complex thought processes. On the contrary, we have selected those instances of their lives that the child-reader can easily visualize and relate too.

Open-ended Conclusions

The article has taken a stock of scholarship available on translating children's literature, more particularly in the western academe. Even in the west, it had been in an embryonic stage till recently. However, in the last two decades, theorists have made rapid strides and are now penetrating into multiple specifics of translating for children. Having looked at the proposal of translating *for* children, the article foregrounded the subjectivity of the translator and his concept of childhood as an important consideration in translating for children. The article has also highlighted the paucity of translation exercises amongst Indian languages with a specific focus on Indian children's literature.

To recapitulate, the primary intention of this article has been to provide an introductory view on translating Indian children's literature and the peculiar challenges the potential translators might encounter. Even though an attempt has been made to theorise and address the most common issues in translating children's literature into the Indian context, I am mindful that a plethora of issues still remain to be addressed. It is hoped that translation scholars will address all such issues in the future.

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