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## **Reviewing the English Translation of *Akoopar***

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### **Introduction:**

There can be seen a trend of regional Indian literary works being translated into English in the last two decades (Kothari 2). Gujarati literature is not an exception in it. One can see canonical Gujarati literary novels such as *Manvini Bhavai*, *Karan Ghelo*, *Malela Jiv*, *Angaliyat*, *Akoopar*, to name a few, being translated and showcased along with main stream Indian writing in English. There has been a rise in the proposals for doctoral research on translating Gujarati literary works into English. However, there is a dearth of research pertaining to the evaluative aspects of the translated texts keeping in mind the best practices of translation.

The present paper aims at studying translation of *Akoopar*, a Gujarati novel by Dhruv Bhatt, into English. While translating an Indian text into English, a translator has to consider difference of two language systems, cultural and social dimensions and usages of both the respective languages. As *Akoopar* is written in distinct dialects of Gir and Ghed regions of Gujarat, it would be interesting to study whether or not, the translation has come up with the acceptable equivalence into the target language i.e. English; what are the creative solutions the translation has offered in the cases of untranslatable terms? Does the translation stand as a creative text in itself into the target language?

### **The Text and Context:**

Dhruv Bhatt has been a prominent name in the contemporary Gujarati fiction writing. His works represent his personal life experiences and acquaintances of the common people. However, these common people's tales have the universal appeal. These tales also depict the collective wisdom that these common people have contributed in every walks of life. On the other hand, various regions of Gujarat find their vivid descriptions with their cultural, social and geographical peculiarities in his novels.

*Akoopar* by Dhruv Bhatt has come out not only as a canonical text representing the forest region of Gir and the coastal area of Ghed in Gujarat but also a detailed anthropological study

of the harmonious coexistence of mankind with nature. The novel documents the sociocultural aspects of the people, dead and alive, aesthetically and authentically. Unlike the imaginative world of the romantic nature with shades of truth in it, the author recreates the real world of his first-hand experience and adds shades of imagination to his novel. He eulogies the inclusive nature of the mother Earth and also of those larger than life characters who live with harmonious coexistence with nature rather than against it. Owing to its universal appeal, it is indisputable that the novel deserves to be translated into other languages in order to unleash the treasure that it carries within for the English reading world. Hence, translating *Akoopar* into English is a welcome idea.

### **The (Mis)Translation:**

The first impression that the translated text gives is that of a poorly and hastily done endeavor. It has got typo-errors on pages after pages starting from the cover page itself. There are numerous lapses of contexts from the text and sentences are left incongruously incomplete every now and then. It is not only that the issues of equivalence have been compromised, but in many instances the meanings are tempered so poorly that they badly require repair. These issues of inadequate translation can be summarized into three broad categories: viz. 1) Grammar-typo Errors, 2) Contextual Errors and 3) Issues of Equivalence.

#### 1) Grammar-typo Errors:

In the era of MS word, English typing (if not writing) is felicitated greatly with spell-check and grammar-check facilities. Many of the present day authors have openly acknowledged the assistance of MS word. However, it is surprising to see that the English translation of *Akoopar* consists of many typo-errors that could have been rectified merely by a right-click of a mouse. It is even more surprising that some of these errors are so trivial that they can be easily spotted by a novice in English language. One of the striking instances appears on the cover page itself: “*The writer creates a narrator which is a unnamed painter...*” (Joshi, Piyush et al. cover page). Further, on the same para: “*...characters dead and alive presents the life on the Gir and the Ghed region.*” Here one can see that the errors are as basic as that of articles, numbers and that of subject-verb-agreement which can be rectified by either of the filters available to the user i.e. MS word spell and grammar check facilities or the basic

knowledge of English language as a user if not a translator. Other such minor but vital errors – “in to” (Joshi, Piyush et al. 16, 87) for “into”; “sweat” (Joshi, Piyush et al. 249) for “sweet”; “It is all right, Have complete rest.” (Joshi, Piyush et al. 264) for “It is all right, have complete rest.”; “stoed” (Joshi, Piyush et al. 287) for “stopped”, “can not” (Joshi, Piyush et al. 295) for “cannot” or “can’t” – could have been avoided by the help of the aforesaid filters. At several instances punctuation marks are missing or used unnecessarily. Yet another recurring typo-error is the word spacing. There can be seen one or more spaces left between two words that are visible from a bird-eye-view which also could have been spotted and rectified.

As a result of these grammar typo errors the flow of the reading gets interrupted and the translated text does not create the statute of flawless first impression. The narrative, developed in the source text so beautifully by the author, fails to create itself as a twice removed from reality version in the target language.

### 2) Contextual Errors:

Translation is not just replacing one language structure with other, it is transformation of one cultural, social or emotional manifestation into another language. The translation of *Akoopar* seems to have failed in transferring most of these manifestations into the other language. One comes across many instances of translation where the translation fails to transfer even syntactical elements of the source text. For instance the anonymous narrator of the novel expresses his surprise when Lakshmi unpretentiously mocks at him. The translation goes like this: “*This Lakshmi I had just met, I was her guest and yet she was taking liberty of making fun of me comparing me with a buffalo.*” (Joshi, Piyush et al. 17). It reads as if it were an assertive sentence. There is no element of surprise no exclamation (mark) expressed. Many of the sentences such as: “*Close to her was another one sitting beside.*”; “*For stay you have a large region, why only in the Gayr?*” (Joshi, Piyush et al. 26); “*Should I walk up and down the bazaar?*” (Joshi, Piyush et al. 69); or “*And he has to stay put wherever a lion is seen.*” (Joshi, Piyush et al. 36); convey neither context not syntax. Further, the literal translation leads to not only miscommunication but to the misinterpretation. For instance, while referring to the men of dark complexion, the transition goes as, “*dark coloured young men*” (Joshi, Piyush et al. 27), without realizing that in English speaking world the expression ‘coloured’

men is referred as a racial comment! At yet another instance, the transition goes as: “*Has ever any tourist been attacked or molested?*” (Joshi, Piyush et al. 81). Now the fact is that this question was asked by the narrator with reference to the lion. How does it make sense? Can or would a lion ‘molest’ a tourist? One does not need to be a scholar or linguist to avoid such blunders.

The grandeur of the source text, thus, does not get reflected in the target language. There can be seen a few sparkle of good pieces of translations here and there. However, the translation does not achieve the continuous flow of thoughts as an independent text.

### 3) Issues of Equivalence:

While translating cultural, regional or unique linguistic expressions, there are many strategies applied by a translator such as equivalence, substitution, retention to name a few. Perhaps one of the most challenging aspects of translating is to find an equivalent counterpart of the source text expression into the target language. The translation of *Akoopar* has offered all the above mentioned strategies while translating cultural and dialectical features of the source text. For instance the very first expression that opens the novel, “‘*Khamā Gayrne*’ (May the Gir be blessed)” (Joshi, Piyush et al. 7) is retained with explanation of the expression given in the bracket. Further, many dialectical and regional features are also retained in the same manner: “*jhok*”, “*nes*”, “*sui jā*”, “*Bas*” (Joshi, Piyush et al. 13), “*dātan*” (Joshi, Piyush et al. 19), “*Rotlā*”, “*shirāman*” (Joshi, Piyush et al. 21). However, some retention are inappropriately explained that change the connotation of the terms significantly. “*Tapa*” (Joshi, Piyush et al. 65), for instance, is explained as ‘penance’, which stands for ‘a punishment undergone in token of penitence for sin’ (Webster’s Random House Dictionary). However, the term “*Tapa*” does not stand for an act of ‘punishment’ to purify oneself from ‘sin’ but a dutiful pursuit of once work devoid of the worldly expectations. While referring to the dressing of the women of the regions, the words are retained, but either without explanation “...*she should now dress herself in pernu instead of jimi?*” (Joshi, Piyush et al. 185) or have been translated creating grotesque miscommunication, “*Clad in black undergarment, covering the upper part of the body with brown coloured odhani.*” (Joshi, Piyush et al. 21).

One of the purposes of the translation is to carry forward the replica of the source text into the target language. It may not convey the whole of the source language grandeur into the target language but it must provide the glimpse of source text to the second language so as to inspire the second language reader to read the original text. Nevertheless, the translation of *Akoopar* seems to fail in inspiring the target language reader towards the source text due to above mentioned blunders and illogical and inconsistent retentions and inappropriate equivalence of dialectical and other socio-cultural features.

**Conclusion:**

Starting from its first reading as a separate entity in a target language, i.e. English, to the second and detailed reading the translated text appears to be disastrous. It seems to be neither 'beautiful' nor 'faithful'. If at all the endeavor serves any purpose then it is in the fact that it enlists blunders of translation. It may help in proving once again that while translating the rich dialectical features of a language into another the quick fix solutions at the cost of intelligibility would not help. The translation of *Akoopar* offerings a few 'Don'ts' for the future translations if not 'Dos'.

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