



THE AESTHETICS OF TRANSLATING BASHEER

Anjana Nair Y.R., Post Graduate student, Department of English, Amrita Vishwa Vidyapeetham, Amritapuri, India.
anjanayr@am.students.amrita.edu

Arathy J, Post Graduate student, Department of English, Amrita Vishwa Vidyapeetham, Amritapuri, India

Dr Gayathri MV, Assistant professor, Department of English, Amrita Vishwa Vidyapeetham, Amritapuri, India,

Abstract- Vaikom Muhammad Basheer was widely known for his love towards the underprivileged class of the social sector. He attained universality through the sentiments of the neglected. He was a revolutionary in Malayalam literary history. Basheer's works were translated into 18 languages by many translators, from Ronald Asher to Vanajam Ravindran. The need for translation of a text that belongs to the Indian language has its significance since it is perceived with degradation in eyes of the Orientalists. The Malayalam language is finding its place among many dominant ones. As it is seeking not to be owned but to co-exist certain languages, translating works from Malayalam can regain its importance in the arena of Indian languages in particular and world languages in general. This paper discusses Basheer and his works which made world recognition with the help of linguists and translators into English. Published under UNESCO, Basheer's works possess a charm in language as well as the story within. The writer is acknowledged not for his grand style, but his simplicity, not imagination but the bitter reality, and for the North Malayalam touch to the words in This colloquial touch is what gives his rather simple stories its humor, and when one reads between the lines, its underlying philosophy. Basheer and his love for nature are also discussed in the paper. A work of translation requires something to connect with the world and nature plays an important role. The words are hard to translate to a foreign language as they are very Indian. The rich culture of Kerala and its emotions might not find the right voice in a western language, but the translations, however, have so far done justice to the writer in the most possible way. The paper attempts to look deep into the writer's translated works and into Ronald Asher who was Basheer's first translator.

Keywords: Translation, Malayalam Literature, Orientalists, Underprivileged class, Nature

I. INTRODUCTION

Translation of Indian Languages

Kerala, though vibrant and distinct in its vastness of thought and intellect is always connected to Tamil and Sanskrit as they had a formative role in shaping the language Malayalam. The need for translation here has a higher goal. To find its identity among the dominant languages, translation paved the way to resist influences of culture and to bring a native emotion to the community. Vaikom Muhammad Basheer influenced language by his narrative techniques and satire and became an irreplaceable figure in Malayalam literary history. He often mocked himself with the remark that he did not know the alphabet in Malayalam. Be it his humbleness or his lack of knowledge of the literature Malayalam, he has presented the world, the language in its most innocent form; without any curtains and with all its ugliness which in turn has brought out its beauty. He talked about the corners of dark dirty streets and gave voice to the unheard cries that no other writer in the language dared to. He walked into Malayalam literature with no festivity, a simple man with his simple language. The simplicity created a revolution in the literature of Malayalam. The journalist in him never clashed with the writer he is, as his stories and his words always found their way back to the ordinary streets. Basheer found himself in the peaks of world literature through Ronald Asher. Though he wrote about the life of rural Kerala, they resonated with the pain of every being struggling for existence. Translating Basheer is a challenge as his language is quaint and often, he writes the way it is spoken.

Gauri Vishwanathan in her *Masks of Conquest* states "Western literature is often Described in missionary publications as a form of intellectual production, in contrast to Oriental literature, which allegedly set itself up as a source of divine authority." The English Language was seen as a representation of modernity and Indian languages were considered backward and obscure. E.V. Ramakrishnan rightly points out

"If one examines the role played by translation in Malayalam literary history, the critical function played by translations in the projection of New Horizons of expectations for readers will become amply clear.

The standardization of literary language itself took place through translations. The publication of original novels in Malayalam was preceded by translations of various prose narratives. The advent of realistic fiction and modernist poetry was accomplished by a large number of translations from various European, African, American, and Latin American languages. During the period between 1900 and 1975 344 of the 3367 novels were published in Malayalam where translations... A new literary sensibility often uses translation as a means of breaching the hedge money of prevailing literary tastes. For instance, the translation of Victor Hugo's *Les Miserables* into Malayalam by Nalapat Narayana Menon marked a breakthrough in general fiction because it prepared readers for representations of lower-class life and social conflicts."

Asher and The Barriers in Translating Basheer

Basheer was a revolutionary in language structure and the whole approach to language, he is just born to write. Asher's encounter with Basheer, he is not held in Kerala obviously so he finds it hazardous to get into the integrity of the average Muslim household and that story which Basheer dole. Asher is fascinated by his writings and spill in love with him like all his bibliophiles, and he is an incredible human being too. For him, Basheer deserves to be translated and he has very consciously done the role and he discusses with Basheer, the time it took to formulate the work is much longer. His translation of Basheer, is an enormous challenge any translator in the world could face because Basheer used to improvise so much, he used to take liberties with language like a credible writer ought to, like Shakespeare is one writer who has seized maximum liberties with the language. To an incredible extend Basheer has taken considerable liberties with language and with substantial success. Asher tries to grab the effects he produced and his vocabularies, the way he wields his language and Asher strives to overcome it. Asher is a conscious editor and he constantly struggles to enhance his translation by assigning footnotes and sometimes he tries to find an equivalent and sometimes he would delete it. The constant worry of the translator is always having done justice to the original, especially it's a relevant question to the psyche when the translator comes from two different cultures. He skims work from the regional composition you can't take the footnotes to the translated approach and he tries to go for the equivalent effect, there are particular things in Basheer's works which you can't do a plain straightforward translation and the riskiest one for Asher is the translation of 'Ntuppuppakkorenendarnnu' and the word 'Kuzhiyana', there is no English translation for the word, and particularly when he adopts another word like 'elephant' the punch mislaying and the whole narration bygone. Several pages and words are not transpired in the printed books too. The University of Edinburgh published the translated works, and in a way, it's an insignia of prestige occasion. Malayalam literature is literature with lots of vitality, vigor, and life and it ought to be known competently in world literature.

Asher collectively translated Vaikom Muhammed Basheer's three works; "Balyakalasakhi" as "Childhood Friend" in 1944, "Ntuppuppakkoranendarnnu" as "My Grandad Had an Elephant" in 1951 and "Pathummayude Aadu" as "Pathumma's Goat" in 1959 and 1980 he compiled it all and published as "Me Granddad's an Elephant: Three Stories of Muslim Life in South India".

Basheer is one soul where, when you meet as an author, there is no disparity between the author that we envisage through the writings and the person when you meet. He is a spontaneous writer and a meticulous craftsman, which is concealed under the spontaneity, and he wrote down the way it came to him. Basheer has simplicity in his approach to whole life and rather a philosophical detachment.

One of the barriers we encounter in Asher's translation is the cultural difference, as a credible translator, he faces the difficulty of excavating the equivalent term for Beypore Sultan's usage. Asher's coauthor is Achamma Coilparambil Chandrasekaran. Asher has done a lot of interactive discussions with Basheer to resolve the essence of the Mappila dialect and his works are autobiographical. The translation of words such as 'Uppa', 'Umma', 'ikkakka' were deciphered to exact English words such as father, mother, and elder brother and 'nossu' as mad, it dropped the punch and soul of the translated works. As a foreigner Asher dine a good job, he saps to crack the rock, but we can't say that he solely cracked it and stole the essence. The pinnacle of Basheer's work is the existence of him, consciously or unconsciously it's all like an interaction between him and his psyche, as a heart core fan of him we implore that may that shade never fade. In the translation of Asher, we can't find the presence of our Sultan, it's just words without any emotion and feeling. For Keralites, Basheer is an emotion and he creates an environment in his work inwardly and it becomes a mold that forms why he was. His works are his experiences, moments of life that held to change him and to teach him and it is core for the bibliomanias, they love firmly the environment he constructs and he taught how to live. Many of the critics say that Basheer has a mental illness, but if that illness makes the ordinary Basheer as the 'Beypore Sultan', an absolute craftsman we love that illness. Perfection in literature is not just meant how you behave,

it's all about how you are thinking and reciprocate it, as a person and as a writer, he smashes all the stigmas, he never gives up and through his writings, he replaced 'my' by 'we' and change his illness becomes wellness.

Basheer's role in creating Eco critical outlook

Objects in nature were important characters in Indian classical literature. Mountains, animals, plants, birds, etc. were prominent characters in Indian classics particularly in epics like Ramayana, Mahabharata, works of Kalidasa, the ancient romanticist who was often compared with William Shakespeare. But we rarely see this kind of natural objects as characters in modern literature, particularly in Malayalam. In "The Inheritors of Earth" by Vaikom Mohammed Basheer, he presents nature with shocking simplicity and magical beauty. Only Basheer did this in Malayalam. No ecologists of any stature have ever championed for the well-being of all creatures like Basheer did years back when the word ecology was not even heard of in our country. To emphasize the dominance of nature over men Basheer says that there are sections in our society who worshipped the sun, the moon, the rivers, etc. He explains how to live with nature. When his wife complains of her cough he advises her to eat the leaf of "Aadalodaga" with some common salt. Words like this reflect the cultural aspects of Keralites and the copresence of Kerala and do not have an equivalent word in English to which the story is translated. The husband is concerned about nature alone while his wife is the only one who's concerned about running the family. When he expresses his concern in killing the bats which destroyed the tender coconuts, his wife says that she will learn how to use the gun and will kill the bats with the help of her niece. She is concerned about running the kitchen rather than protecting the environment. Words of wisdom on ecology will not help in making food for the family. As a woman, she is bothered about the family rather than the philosophy of her husband. The philosophy is right but no philosophy can be a substitute for food in the kitchen. She is presented as a typical Indian housewife. She is fully aware of the right of all creatures on this earth. But unlike her husband, she gives more importance to her family than other creatures. She is worried about the destruction of tender coconuts by bats. She is upset about snakes which may harm her children. But her husband is not at all bothered about it, which makes a difference in perception between men and women. Through such instances on translating Basheer, Abdulla opens doors to those who would not otherwise have access to the ecology of Kerala. "The Inheritors of Earth" is full of philosophical content his experiences during his travel conditions that existed in Kerala at that time particularly in the neighborhood of his home among the Muslim community etc. can be widely seen in his works. The fictional works of Basheer can be read in the context of the concepts of eco-criticism. The events in life which he had gone through made him write about general matters such as preservation of nature, water, and forest. Through his works, he gives a true portrayal of the existence of the world. No creature on the earth is weak or useless. Every living creature attempts hard to keep the balance of the Ecosystem. Basheer realizes the rights of trees, birds, and animals in his novel "Bhumiyyude Avakashikal" translated to English as "The Inheritors of Earth". It is an inheritance given by God. He made this prediction many years back and now human beings are facing murderous threats from nature. Through his works, Basheer pointed out the necessity of harmonious coexistence and providing equal significance to other creatures on the earth. Basheer's Inheritor's of Earth and "Trees" are good examples of modern Eco consciousness. At present, the modern world can be found very much involved in debates related to the protection and perseverance of nature. Before forty-eight years, Basheer prophesied about the ultimate need of protecting Nature in his work, Inheritors of Earth. This book is renowned as the 'Bible' of trees, birds, and animals. In this story, he points out a variety of trees and their love and affection for fellow human beings. The initial scene of the plot is very artistic. Basheer gives an attractive explanation of his two-acre land where he and his family newly resides in. The complete story is filled with a wide variety of fruit-bearing trees. Here, the translator fulfills his motive as a mediator who presents the text of an alien culture to the target readers.

The story comes to an end with Basheer pointing that though bats cannot be regarded as the rebirth of our ancestors, they certainly have the license and privilege to live peacefully on this earth. The words of Basheer may remind us of an early concept in ancient India, that of *vasudhaiva kutumbakam*, 'vasudha' being 'the earth', and 'kutumbakam' being family which means that the whole world is a single family that includes all the living beings.

Like a Romantic poet, Basheer discards the concept of Man centered approach. God created the world to incorporate all living beings. Man is only a part of it. Nature produces numerous fruits and flowers to satiate the hunger of its creatures. Man thinks that it is for him Nature exists. According to Basheer the conflict between Man and Nature is a big absurdity.

Analysis of Basheer's Translated Works

Vaikom Muhammed Basheer's works are translated into distinct languages, but none of them perpetrated hundred percentage justice and arbitrariness to the master's poetic prose.

Basheer's "*Shabdangal*", is a work that encompasses the series of chats between the author and ex-soldier. This ex-soldier is the protagonist and a fan of Basheer, the mode of the work is like a quick conversation. Basheer entails so many social adventures in a single word with the touch of existentialism and remarks on the outrages of war. "*Shabdangal*", is the first Malayalam novel to speak about homosexual intercourse.

Basheer belonged to an age that was free and confused. Basheer brought out the complex nature of the internally confused people and portrayed the way the nation was insensitive towards the common men. The outcasts of a nation are portrayed in *Shabdangal*. In E.V Ramakrishnan's 1997 translation of *Voices*, a soldier thinks about a baby left on the roadside.

"He may become a beggar. Or a burglar. A poet, a story writer, a politician. A future president, a scientist. Or the prophet of a new religion. Philosopher!"

The translation has brought out the cry of the ordinary people that are always left out when wars break out and nations crumble. He was a freedom fighter himself and all these are reflected in *Voices*.

His work *Balyakalasakhi* was translated as Childhood Friend. The word Sakhi which carries a greater emotion to the audience and a higher meaning to the story did not find its way into the title. The Malayalam title might give one the nostalgic memories of childhood love while the English title here lacks to give the same perspective.

However, *A Love Letter and Other Stories* has done justice to the writer. Translating a writer like Basheer is nearly impossible as he writes in a dialect that is equally made from his Muslim background and north Kerala upbringing. *Premalekhanam* is a wonder in itself and the language used is more Basheerian than literary Malayalam itself. Conversational in tone and spontaneous in appearance, Basheer was also a meticulous craftsman. Translating cannot afford word to word translation. One has to get the equivalent effect for the readers of the language. In *A Love Letter and Other Stories*, one can find the exact translations of Basheer's original work without any loss of its beauty as he has not used spoken language to write largely.

"*Jeevitham Yauvana tikshnavum*" is translated as "When my life is at its most intense state of youth" and "*hrudayam prema surabhilavumayirikunna* is translated as "one's heart has reached its most beautiful state of love". Here Basheer has not used his colloquial style but literary Malayalam.

II. CONCLUSION

Ntuppuppakkoranendarunnu (My Granddad had an Elephant), *Sthalathe Pradhana Divyan (The Most Important Holy Man of My Place)*, *Mucheettukalikkaranthe Makal (The Card-Sharpers Daughter)*, *Aanavariyum Ponkurisum (Aanavari and Ponkurisu nicknames for Raman Nair and Thoma)*, *Viswavikhyatamaya Mookku (The World-renowned Nose)* are some of the famous translations of Basheer.

Basheer was a writer who had a certain warmth in his stories. He stood out when he chose to write about thieves, gamblers, homosexuals, pimps, sex workers, and many more. Through the stories where about a Malabar Muslim and his world it gained a place in the world, literature is because the emotions under every character are universal. This might be the reason why he has been translated into many languages by major linguists and translators. Basheer found humanity in villains and clowns and this love for all beings, man or mammal, made this writer connect with the world literature. He was indeed a Sultan who promised good to a world blinded by loss.

Indian aesthetics or art experience elevates to a physical to a sublime level. The Rasa theory developed by Bharatha Muni, based on the eight schools of artistic appreciations, Hiriyantha commenting on the Rasa theory in Indian Aesthetics that the aesthetics of pleasure of reading a good work of art is something extraordinary. Rasa is established by the combination of the components of determinants like Vibhava, anubhava and vyabhichari bhava, these elements helps the bibliophiles to derive rasanubhava from a work of art.

In translations, they don't impose their hundred percentage to ensue the original author's unexpressed emotions of mental level, because of that the resulting aesthetic appreciation and pleasure are lacking in it. To attain that they should detach themselves from the oriental and occidental consciousness, try to find out the experience of expressed emotions through the exact feelings and love of the original author. Translators have to induce a state of detachment through ideal creations of art, the realization of unity in variety should add to

it. The amalgamation of imagination and idealization is the secret of Basheer's works, that beauty has an integrity and the translator has to be striven for it and to infer the purpose of art.

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