

Re-writings and Colonial Voices: A Postcolonial Perspective

Ghulam Ali
Raja Nasim Akhtar

Abstract

The study highlights the traces of translator's positional superiority in colonial rewritings. It argues that the worldview of the translator influences his/her interpretation of source text realities. It maintains that translator's strategic decisions (lexical, syntactic and textual choices) reflect his perspective, position and sociopolitical relations with the source text (ST) culture. And Para-texts (prefaces, footnotes, explanatory notes, Appendices etc.) are the more vulnerable ideological spaces wherein ST realities can be manipulated most commonly. The two English translations of Urdu fiction Bagh-o-Bahar have been selected for collecting data. The discussion reveals that the rewritten and reconstructed English versions of ST represent the colonized culture as colonial other and the culture of the translators seem to be the role of arbitrator. It establishes that the ideological position of the translators is that of colonizers as they view ST as a colony and treat it accordingly in the process of translation. The translators seem playing a sociological and ideological role in establishing the dialogical relationship between the colonizers and the colonized. And it also finds that the translators in the process of translation could not step out of their own sociocultural and ideological perspectives.

Keywords: *Rewritings, manipulations, colonial voices, translator's positional superiority*

1. Introduction

Translation does not only perform its communicative function among the diverse communities and societies; but sometimes, it is also seen as an ideologically motivated activity for serving some political purposes. When the act of translation is performed under specific constraints and for specific purposes, it gets the form of rewriting (Aksoy, 2001). Translation as "rewriting" is manipulative when it serves the power. All rewritings, whatever their intentions are, manipulate the original text to actualize a specific purpose (Lefevere, 1992) and the role of translator becomes an ideological position. The translator's perspective, in such a situation, influences his/her interpretation of the source text realities. The worldview of the translator is the product of ideologies and vice versa. The lexical choices and translation strategies, in discourse framework, employed for the purpose dialogically reflect the positions and the perspectives of the translators. The study of perspectives and positions of the translators become more important in cultural translations.

2. Translation as a Form of Rewriting

Translation is considered as an intercultural communication and translator is supposed to hold the knowledge of both source text (ST) and target text (TT) language and culture. It is evident that source text reflects its own socio-cultural and socio-political realities but the translator interprets source-text realities and makes translation strategies in terms of his own particular socio-cultural perspective. The translated text, in such situation, may acquire translator's ideologies and socio-political beliefs. Translator's purpose, institutional affiliation, immediate social situation and his/her ideological position also plays a significant role in constructing the social realities of source text. The role of translator is seen more important in such situations wherein source text culture (STC) and target text culture (TTC) are in power relations. The writings translated from colonized cultures by the colonial powers are of paramount significance in this regard.

The activity of translation/rewriting, in colonial situation, had been employed by the imperial power as a tool for the representation of Europe's *others* for her cultural dominance in colonial situation. This ideologically controlled knowledge constructs the Western as civilized and superior but the colonized people as uncivilized and inferior. This knowledge was created by rewriting the colonial writings for managing and controlling the dependent colonies. The role of rewriter in the process of rewriting the original text is just of a colonial translator. The colonial linguists, anthropologists and the translators had themselves been involved in the act of rewriting of Non-western writings. This body of knowledge was constructed to make colonizers well aware of the culture of the natives to administer them in a better way. This writing activity has also been performed by the colonizers in subcontinent in colonial time. Wherein, the role of the translator becomes significant.

The activity was performed by the colonial power, with a pretention, for reliable and sound understanding of Indian culture. The image of colonizer as *Self* and colonized as *other* has been constructed and constituted through translation. Fort William College was the first step towards colonial institution in subcontinent. Hindustani and Persian were taught to junior civil servants in Calcutta in 1799 and Mir AmanDehlvi was appointed to translate *Bagh-o-Bahar*(1801) into Urdu for colonial officers (Rehman, 2011). The purpose of imperial power was not just to know the language and the culture of Indians; but also to manage them in a better way. For this objective, the act of English translations was initiated at Fort William College. Duncan Forbes, J. B. Gilchrist, S. W. Fallon, John Shakespeare, Eastwick and Smith are prominent Orientalists of the College. Waiden (2003) highlights that Sir William Jones, Duncan Forbes and Nathaniel Halhed are the eminent European orientalist, who constructed one type of discourse-a discourse of "mysterious", "exotic" orient. *A Grammar of the Persian Language, A*

Grammar of the Bengal Language, and *A Grammar of the Hindustani Language* have been instrumental in constituting the derogatory image of the Indians. It implicates that various orientalist think of the Indian and Indian culture the same way and focus on the same content.

Religious, cultural or spiritual, but it is saturated with mysticism that is different from the metropolitan *self* of European culture (Baker and Saldanha, 1998). Jones' colonial position is visible in all his dictionaries, translations and even in his letters. He stresses, in the preface of *Grammar of Persian Language* (1777), that English officials should learn Indian languages because "it was found highly dangerous, says Jones, "to employ the natives as interpreters, upon whose fidelity they could not depend" (quoted in Niranjana 1992, p.16). Sir William Jones' English translation of *Hafiz Shiraz's* poetry also reflects his Western European perspective. Fitzgerald's English translation of *Khayyam's Rubaiyat* and Richard Burton's translation *A Thousand and One Nights* also reveal the colonial perspective of the translators.

The present research paper, in this regard, takes two English translations of Urdu Dastan *Bagh-o-Bahar* produced for colonial purpose in the nineteenth century in India. It intends to investigate the manipulative aspects of the selected translations in the process of rewriting. Translations as rewritings of the original text reflect the political agenda and the ideological position of the translator. This study uncovers the hidden ideological constructions and underlying power relations in the translations of *Bagh-o-Bahar*. The study selects textual extracts from the two English translations of *Bagh-o-Bahar* and analyses them in critical discourse perspective. The study mainly focuses on paratexts for gathering textual samples.

3. Theoretical Framework

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) model comprises three level of analysis of a text: Description, interpretation and explanation. The first dimension of Discourse (Fairclough, 1992) is Text that embodies texture of the text coherence and cohesion. He maintains that descriptive level analyzes the linguistic aspects of text- linguistic features, lexical items, metaphors, grammatical structures which are supposed to knit the texture of the text. The research describes the linguistic choices which have been used by the English translators in the process of translation. At interpretative level, the research is concerned with the processes of interpretations of source text realities which are made against the perspective of the translator. The third level of analysis is the sociological climate wherein the translated versions/rewritings become significant. It explains the way translator's interpretation become meaningful in a particular colonial situation.

4. The Role of Translator

The present study, in rewriting and postcolonial translation theories, critically investigates the role of translator and his ideological perspective in interpreting the source text (ST) realities for specific audience. It focuses on the discursive traces of translators' Western European colonial perspective reflected through their strategic decisions made while translating the Indian colonized culture. The critical investigation highlights the traces of translator's *positional superiority* in colonial rewritings. It argues that the worldview of the translator influences his/her interpretation of source text realities. It maintains that translator's strategic decisions (lexical, syntactic and textual choices) reflect his perspective, position and sociopolitical relations with the ST culture. And Para-texts (prefaces, footnotes, explanatory notes, Appendices etc.) are the more vulnerable ideological spaces wherein ST realities can be manipulated most commonly. The data discussion reveals that the rewritten and reconstructed English versions of Urdu fiction *Bagh-o-Bahar* represent the colonized culture as *colonial other* and the culture of the translators seem to be the role of arbitrator. It establishes that the ideological position of the translators is that of colonizers as they view ST as a colony and treat it accordingly in the process of translation. The translators seem playing a sociological and ideological role in establishing the dialogical relationship between the colonizers and the colonized. And it significantly finds that the translators in the process of translation could not step out of their own sociocultural and ideological perspectives.

The Urdu source text *Bagh-o-Bahar* was produced by Mir Aman at Fort William College for teaching purposes in 1801. He was awarded five hundred rupees for its translation in simple Urdu language which was easily understandable for the colonial officials. It comprises the stories of four *Darwaishes*(saints) and a king which are somehow linked with one another. *Bagh-o-Bahar* is a *Dastaan* pregnant with linguistic and cultural information of India which was crucially needed by the colonial powers for managing and controlling the indigenous population. It presents courtly manners, sociocultural and religious norms, detail of geographical areas, folk ways even the thinking patterns of the local people. It was again translated by English translators in 19th century in colonial India. The translations have been used as text books for the Higher and Lower Standard Examinations in Urdu by the government of Colonial India (Quintine, 1901) *Bagh-o-Bahar* was of paramount significance for them for two major reasons: first for learning and knowing the indigenous culture and second for constructing the colonized people and their culture in Western terms. Sengupta (1995) asserts that colonial power usually used to choose such texts for their translation project, which were "either religious or spiritual, saturated with mysticism or they portrayed a simple and natural state of existence that was radically different from the metropolitan self of the target culture" (quoted in Baker and Saldanha,1998, 2009,, p.201). They always selected only those source texts which

helped them create a desired image of the colonized or confirm the prevalent orientalist images (ibid). *Bagh-o-Bahar* seems to have such cultural and spiritual qualities, which were of much significance for the colonial mission.

Forbes (1857) one of the translators of the selected translations unfolds in his preface the significance as: “The *Bagh O Bahdr* or ‘Garden and Spring’ has, for the last half century, been held as a classical work throughout our Indian empire. It highly deserves this distinguished fate, as it contains various modes of expressions in correct a language, and displays a great variety of Eastern manners and modes of thinking” (p. V). Smith (1852), another translator of *Bagh-o-Bahar* talks about its cultural worth in his preface as: “It is an excellent introduction not only to the colloquial style of Hindoostan but to a knowledge of its various idioms” (p. a).

The mentioned above extracts from the prefaces not only reflect the traces of colonial linguistic and anthropological needs but also the visibility of the translators. The demonstrative pronoun “Our Indian Empire” explicitly echoes the perspective and positions of the translators. The pronoun “Our” discursively creates a sense of in-group and aligns the prospect students who are potential colonial administrators.

5. Data collection

The critical reading of the English translations along with the Urdu source text maintains that the translators position themselves usually in the Paratexts: prefaces, commentaries and footnotes. Drawing upon the understanding developed while reading, the research focuses on the prefaces and footnotes of the two English translations. The following Urdu source text and its two English translations were selected for gathering data:

- 1- Source Text: *Bagh-o-Bahar* by Mir Aman (1850/2008)
- 2- English Translation of *Bagh-o-Bahar* by Lewis Ferdinand Smith (1852)
- 3- English Translation of *Bagh-o-Bahar* by Duncan Forbes (1857)

The following pages discuss the extracts taken from the paratexts of the two selected English translations of Urdu *Dastaan, Bagh-o-Bahar* by purposive sampling in CDA perspective. It mainly focuses on such linguistic constructions which constitute the colonial identities discursively: the use of demonstrative pronouns, activization/passivization, Over-lexicalization, Agency, nominalizations, References, expressive and relational values.

It is evident from the prefaces, official documents, letters, Fort William annals and other colonial correspondences that the selected translations had been used as teaching material for the prospect young civil servants and employed for

acquiring linguistic and anthropological information of indigenous population of colonial India in 19th century. The colonial power was in dire need of such information about the colonized people and their culture for various purposes: tax/revenue collection, spying, coastal information, communication with Mughal offices etc. One of the English translators of this ST Eastwick (1852) talks about its ideological significance in his preface as: "It is the book in which every officer in India, civil or military, must undergo an examination that no apology seems requisite for presenting the public" (p. iii). It upholds the purpose of the English translations and intended audience. It is established in the data discussion that both the translators reconstructed the ST culture for the target audience and the colonial purpose which they implicitly or explicitly stated in their prefaces.

6. Analysis

The following pages attempts to uncover the ideological traces of the translators' Western European perspective and colonial positions constructed in the discursive structures of prefaces. The prefaces are considered the vulnerable spaces wherein such ideological positions can usually be taken by the translators. It is earlier mentioned that the purpose of these translations was to acquire anthropological and linguistic knowledge of the colonized people and to equip the young colonial officials with this knowledge. The study finds that the prefaces of both the translations demonstrate the purpose, translators' perspective, the audience, and even the way they are expected to read the translated texts. It is noticed that both the translators employed the prefaces as ideological spaces rigorously for positing and aligning their prospect colonial readership. The following extract taken from Duncan Forbes' preface demonstrates his colonial purpose and the focus of the translators.

"Garden and spring.....contains various modes of expression ... and displays a great variety of Eastern manners and modes of thinking" (Forbes 1857, p.v).

The colonial administrators were in need of cultural knowledge to communicate with the indigenous population for running the administrative affairs and colloquial idiom in colonial India. They thought of the translations of Hindustani languages as the best resources for knowing the local languages. The underlined phrases regarding Hindustani language in the above mentioned statements: various "modes of expression and great variety of Eastern manners and modes of thinking" echo the colonial need of the time. The colonial officials were more concerned with the everyday language spoken in India and the cultural patterns of the colonized society. The ST *Bagh-o-Bahar* is loaded with the idioms of all the factions of society. Mir Aman himself states in his preface that my patron, John Gilchrist assigned me this duty to "translate this Story into the pure Hindustani colloquial dialect, which the Urdu people, Hindus, Musalman, women, men,

boys and girls, high and low, speak and use among themselves. According to the order of his Highness, I also began to write in this same style, just as one converses" (Eastwick 1852, p. II). The second translator Lewis Ferdinand Smith likewise expresses the importance of linguistic and cultural knowledge of Indian:

"The religious rites and the peculiar customs of the Hindoos, who compose the vast majority in the population of our Eastern possessions, must be understood and... they cannot be known without knowing their language" (Smith 1852, p.b)

Notice, Smith also focuses on cultural and religious information of the colonized people. More importantly, the use of "our Eastern possessions" voices the colonial presence of the imperial entrepreneurs. The phrase discursively not only aligns the target readers with the Western European colonial philosophy but it also creates a sense of *ingroupness* in the minds of potential colonizers. The use of demonstrative pronoun *our* with "Eastern possessions" constructs a colonial relationship between the colonizers and the colonized population. The use of auxiliary *must* is also significant as the information given in the preface is taken as guiding principles for reading the translation. It creates a sense of obligation in the minds of the readers for learning and understanding the anthropological information of the colonized people for the purpose. The critical reading of the extract mentioned above implicates that there was a logic link between knowing the "religious rites and the peculiar customs" with the command and control of the colony. Forbes (1857) confirms this colonial link between the learning of local language and the control of the colony in these lines: "the gentlemen of dignity perceived that by acquiring the Urdu tongue, they might hold converse with the people of India, and transact with perfect accuracy the affairs of the country" (Forbes, 1857, p.5). He seems to deliver a lecture to his target readers on the importance of learning Hindustani. The mention of language acquisition linking with the command and control demonstrates that the activity of translation had been indispensable prerequisite for running the affairs of the colony.

It is important to note here that the translators rewrite the ST realities for their target readership. They adapt the ST specifically to the needs of the young civil servants in the colonized India. It is noticed that they omitted/deleted the ST information which was superfluous and illustrated the linguistic and cultural expressions which were of great importance for the readers. The names of various Indian food items were deleted during the translation as such information was not significant for the purpose. Abundant use of explanatory and footnotes creates a new universe of discourse different from the ST. The translators even mentioned this aspect of manipulations and subversions in their prefaces. Forbes (1857) explains it as:

“To the present edition numerous notes are appended; some, with a view to illustrate certain peculiarities of the author's style, and such grammatical forms of the language as might appear difficult to a beginner; others, which mainly relate to the manners and customs of the people of the East, may appear superfluous to the Oriental scholar who has been in India” (p. iv).

The additions, explanations, deletions and omissions were made for making the text useful for the civil servants. The purpose not only influenced the translators' strategic decisions but it also tailored the ST realities for the target readership in the process of rewriting. It is found that both the translators, at first, adapted the ST information to the colonial needs then compared and evaluated the two STC and TTC for marginalizing the colonized Indian culture. The following extracts with their explanations and illustrations taken from the two English translations reflect the manipulations and subversions made by the translators for serving the purpose.

It is established that the translator is supposed to translate whatever given in the ST but in the present case the situation is different. The translator not only challenges the ST author but also interrogates its linguistic system. Linguistically speaking, the judgment of the native speaker is more authentic and reliable as compared to the non native speakers but Forbes gets the privilege of being powerful in the present situation and decides the way he wants without knowing the linguistic system of Urdu. He seems to have English linguistic system as the standard and evaluated the Urdu parametric setting against it. Mir Aman, the author of the ST used the pronoun “*Wuh*” for referring the plural noun “the kings”. As per Urdu grammar, the pronoun “*Wuh*” refers the singular noun “the king” and “the kings” as well but the translator claims that the author is not aware of the grammatical rules as he did not use the pronoun the way English grammar uses. He translates the Urdu pronoun “*Wuh*” as “they” for refereeing “the kings” and explains in the footnotes as:

“A mere novice in the language would say that Mir Amman writes “bad grammar” here! He uses the singular pronoun “*wuh*” instead of “we”. Now Mir Amman distinctly tells us that he gives us the language as it is. He did not make it ---and, furthermore, nothing is more common among Hindustani writers than to use the singular for the plural, and “vice versa.”---vide grammar.” (Forbes 1857, p.7).

He consciously or unconsciously changes in the translation and explains the way his English perspective permit. He even comments and evaluates Urdu grammar as bad grammar which not only shows his positional superiority as argued by Edward Said but also his colonial attitude as the Urdu belongs to the colonized culture.

The next instance focuses on the way both the translators manipulate the Eastern literary tradition. Both the translators had translated *Bagh-O-Bahar* as literally as possible. It has also been discussed by the translator in their prefaces and the use of this translation strategy is visible throughout the English translation. It does not take into account of the contextual meaning of the STC and its purpose in the source culture as can be seen in quotes below:

"Majnun is a mad lover of eastern romance, who pined in vain for the cruel 'Laih'. Farhad is equally celebrated as an unhappy amant, who perished for Shirin (Forbes 1857, p.110). "a lover famed in eastern romance, who long pined in unprofitable love for Laila, an ugly hard-hearted mistress. The loves of Yusuf and Zulaikha, Khusru and Shirin, also of Laila and Majnu are the fertile themes of Persian romance". (Forbes 1857, p.56).

"Mujnoo, a lover of eastern romance, who long pined in unprofitable love for Lylay, an ugly hard-hearted mistress. The loves of Eusof and Zoolaiikha, Khoosroo and Sheersen, and Lylay and Mujnoo are the fertile sources of all oriental romances and the constant themes of their poets" (Smith 1852, p. 17).

"Mujnoo is a mad lover of Eastern romance, who pined in vain for the cruel Lady Furhad is equally celebrated as an unhappy amant who perished for sheereen". (Smith 1852, p.46).

The whole literary tradition has been presented as ridiculous with a single stroke of pen. The metaphoric meanings of the romances as well as their symbolic significance have been overlooked. Images like *Unprofitable love, ugly hard-hearted mistress, mad lover of Eastern romance* and *pine in vain for the cruel lady* have been used to show the nonsensical attitude of Asiatic lovers as well as literature written about them. Both the translators suppress the richness of the Eastern literature because the readers of the text are *would be* colonizers.

The translation of *Bagh-o-Bahar* without taking these points into account, takes the metaphoric meanings in literal sense; therefore, the literalization of metaphoric sense makes the translated text a new version that is different from STC. The running commentary on the eastern concept of lover explicitly shows the presence of power relations between the translators (colonizers) and the STC (colonized). The use of literal translation strategy of *Dastaan* is instrumental as it creates the image of the Indians as lunatic and irrational beings. It is evident from the reference of *Majnun* (note the inconsistency in spelling) and Farhad in Forbes' translation that how literal translation becomes an ideological strategy to construct the colonized in a derogatory sense. The footnote commentary further shows the ideological purpose of translation. Majnun is described as "mad lover of Eastern romance" by the translator in the explanatory comments. The very

word *mad* for a lover shows what attitude a translator has towards the concept of love in the East. The term *Love* has various interpretations in Eastern context. *Love* in the East is lover's waiting and longing for the glimpse of the beloved and one sight of her can be the gain of his whole life. The apparently unusual behavior of lover is not lunatic, as in the East the love of male and female is metaphorically taken as a desire to have a reflection of Reality. Love in Eastern tradition is the absorption of the lover in love experience. So, it is derogatory to say *Majnun* (in the ecstasy of love) as a *mad lover*.

Moreover, the translator comments that the presence of characters like *Majnun* in Eastern romances give the impression that these romances are full of mad people. It implies that the translator has given a derogatory view of Eastern literary tradition just to refer to the cultural inferiority of the colonized land. In this way, the translator does not only tries to prove the inferiority of the colonized culture but also expresses the superiority of his own culture, as romances have been the part of English literary tradition. The comparison of translated *Bagh-o-Bahar* with English romances gives the impression of cultural superiority of English literature as in English romances the hero is a *warrior* rather than the *mad lover*.

While commenting on *Majnun* the translator does not limit himself only to highlight *Majnun's* madness, rather; he shows his love as *vain* and futile effort. It shows that by doing this he develops- by conditioning readers' minds- a derogatory attitude of the target audience towards the love tradition and its delineation in Indian Muslim literature. In Eastern Muslim literature, love is a sublime phenomenon and is described metaphorically. It is taken in terms of divine love. The pattern of narration which is followed in Urdu *Dastaan* is that the passionate love of male and female stands for the intensity of relationship between God and humans. Therefore, it is derogatory to the whole concept of love in East to say it as vain and futile.

Moreover Smith's description of *Laila* (*Majnun's* beloved) as "ugly hard-hearted mistress" insultingly reinforces *Majnun's* lunacy that he loves such as a lady. Other than this, the expression "ugly hard-hearted" shows translator's racial biases as white man's description of *other* in a derogatory sense. The description of *Laila* as having black color skin makes the expression racial. This enforces the reader to accept and read the statement on racial grounds. Like the intrusion of an omniscient narrator who controls the narrative by commenting on incidents and characters, so the translator intervenes the text in the form of footnotes that are running commentary on the incidents and characters of *Bagh-o-Bahar*. Through his presence the translator controls and conditions the limits of narrative much embedded in colonial situation. His remarks on *Laila's* ugliness, overpower the plot of *Bagh-o-Bahar* which takes the reader towards the reality

constructed by him. This control of narrative thus becomes an act of colonizing the text, as colonial discourse being essentially reductionist which interpellates the subjectivity of the colonized. The symbolic nature of *Laila* and *Majnun* as being the spiritual travelers of divine path seeking beauty in soul instead of seeking pleasure of lady love like courtly love in Medieval Christian sense, has been suppressed by both the translators. Translators' discursive and ideologically motivated commentaries show the gap between two cultures which ought to be bridged through translation; instead, he colonizes the native text by presenting it as irrational and strange. This makes translation as hegemonic discourse that marginalizes the native.

7. Conclusion

The analysis of the data manifests that both the translators rewriter and re-represent the source text culture STC of the colony as a subordinate culture and discursively construct the culture of colony as "colonial other" by employing discourse strategies: stereotyping stigmatization, homogenization etc. Rewritten and reconstructed Urdu source text realities only opaquely represent the colonized culture and the culture of the translators seems to be the role of arbitrators. The analysis of the selected extracts reveal that the omissions, additions and the commentaries not only reflect the presence of the translators but also echo their imperial supremacy especially in translating cultural aspects from the source text into target text. The study of both the texts shows that the translator takes over the role of colonizer and the process of translation becomes the process of colonization. The translator exploits and manipulates the contents of colonized culture for his colonial interest and handles source text (ST) as his colony. The researchers being postcolonial readers find in the analysis that the translator placing himself on a high colonial pedestal with an imperial sight and always views colonized culture as inferior subject. The manipulations and subversions made by the translator in rewriting the STC into TTC make the translated text a hegemonic version.

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