



## Translating Chhappa of Akho or a Medieval Gujarati poet into English: Aims and Issues

### Abstract

*When the translator translates any work, like a writer or creator, he or she has some specific aims and objectives in his or her mind. The Chhappa of Akho are translated by many translators. Chhappa is an attack on the social, religious and literary evils of the time and it is a satire of all these evils. Translation from Gujarati to English will communicate to the Non-Gujarati readers something of the power and beauty of the originals. The present research paper describes the aims and issues of translating a medieval Gujarati poet into English.*

**Key Words:** *Chhappa. Medieval Gujarati poet, translation, Linguistic diversity, aims and issues*

### Translating Chhappa of Akho or a Medieval Gujarati poet into English: Aims and Issues

There are some basic aims the translator has and some definite issues or problems the translator encounters with, while and before translating any text. The foremost issues before translator are-

- What to translate and how to translate?
- The selection of the T.L.
- Who will be the reader or the target reader?
- Selection of the S.L. book if there are number of editions available.
- Overt or covert meanings of the S.L.
- Whether to print the S.L. in the book or not.
- Whatever you are going to translate may have been translated or somebody might be translating it.
- The translator may be expert either in one language or two.
- If the translator him/herself is a creator in either S.L. or T.L., like A.K.Ramanujam who translated Kannad and Tamil poetry and folklores into English.
- When it is poetry what to maintain lexical or semantic level?

Every translator who translates from an Indian language into English would certainly face these problems partially or fully. India has a multilingual literary tradition and most of the languages are not perfectly comprehensible even to the speakers hailing from neighboring languages. Translating literature into English will be a means of building cross-cultural bridge within the country. Translation from Gujarati to English will communicate to the Non-Gujarati readers something of the power and beauty of the originals. In other states like Maharashtra there is a long tradition of translation but we did not find such tradition of translation but now we find interest in this field and this workshop is major step in this process.

When a translator thinks to translate anything he has perhaps a number of works available i.e. old, modern and contemporary. By translating any work he creates a new relation between poetry and society. Akho is the medieval poet of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. There are about fifteen forms of poetry in Gujarati literature and Chhappa is one of them. In the preface of the book I have given the reasons for selecting

Chhappa. “Akho the most appropriate poet of our time is put in the margin. Except his some Chhappas most of his works are forgotten. Our new generation is unaware of his famous Chhappas also. My only purpose to translate the Chhappas into English is to present Akho before the new generation.” (Patel Preface)

Most of the old or medieval Gujarati poets need to be rendered into modern Gujarati for the sake of the modern readers. It is better to translate them into English than rendering them. I believe that every classical work should be translated in every century. And it will yield new significance with every new interpretation i.e. translation. As an original work influences its age by expressing new attitudes or communicating a new content, a translator can also affect his own age. After publication of my book Chhappa of Akho Ashish Vashi in the Times Of India writes a column entitled “Beware Akho still keeping vigil.”

Number of editors or schools has tried to collect the Chhappa and publish them with meaning or rendering or interpretation.

1852 – “Akha Na Chhappa Ni Chopadi” By- some editors from Ahmedabad. No of Chhappa – 669.

1884 – “ Brahmgyani Akha Bhagat Na Chhappa” By. – Pujara Kanji Bhimji. No of Chhappa – 582

1886 1<sup>st</sup> Edition By Gujarati Printing Press Mumbai

1925 7<sup>th</sup> Edition. No of Chhappa – 582

“Akha Ni Vani”

1914 1<sup>st</sup> Edition

1986 5<sup>TH</sup> Edition By ‘ Sastu Sahitya’ No of Chhappa – almost 600

1953 By – Umashankar Joshi. 1<sup>st</sup> Edition. No of Chhappa – 656

3<sup>rd</sup> Edition. No of Chhappa – 755

“ Akha Bhagat Na Chhappa”

1977 1<sup>st</sup> Edition By Bhupendra Trivedi and Ansuya Trivedi

1980 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition and 1982 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition. No of Chhappa – 756

“Chhappa”

1988 1<sup>st</sup> Edition By Dr. Shivilal Jesalpura

1995 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition

1999 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition

2000 4<sup>th</sup> Edition No of Chhappa – 756

In most of the editions we cannot get literal or expressed meaning also. And sometimes the verbal meaning is very complicated. A text as a signifying system implicates other forms of signification like myths, fashion, festivals, food, metaphysical structure, religious practices and superstitions in addition to other textual structures. A literary text is a sub-system of the cultural semiotic system and it is embedded in the ideological and socio-economic structures of the society. In most of the Chhappa we find the local color represented by his language, way of thinking and feeling that are very distinctive of rural areas of Gujarat. To comprehend or understand the Chhappa there were many issues i.e. edition, old Gujarati language, old cultural context, old social customs, proverbs, sayings, legends or myths, colloquial words, use of Sanskrit, Arbi, Farsi, Hindi, Rajasthani words, change in the original form of the grammar or words e.g. Vastu for Brahm, Aap for Atma or Ahamkar. Ultimately translator has to depend upon his own instinctive grasp of the meaning and message of the S.L. text.

Chhappa is an attack on the social, religious and literary evils of the time and it is a satire of all these evils. The book is full of figures of speech and complex illustrations. Akho is a philosopher and

mystic poet. Akho is having two qualities in his Chhappa i.e. classical and folk-elements. Chhappa is a unique form in Gujarati itself consisting six lines in each. But Akho has written three lines only. The Chhappas are loaded with philosophy and deep insight into human nature. He uses connotative and ironical diction in Chhappa. The poet is unique in rhyme, rhythm and melody also.

Time changes and with it culture also changes. The social customs, conditions, religious ceremonies, rituals, number of things change or their systems, methods, forms change. Some traditions either disappear or modify in the society. Cast system, evils of dowry untouchability take new forms or shapes. Here the translator has to consider the target reader also. For a modern Gujarati or new generation the medieval poet is almost very unusual.

Linguistic diversity across the world plays a significant part in the maintenance of corresponding differences and diversities in culture and mentality of the people of various regions. The aesthetic loss in translation from one language to another is always immense in the case where the cultures are far apart. This may be the same case with the old work being translated in the modern period. It may happen with the contemporary work also. Here we can comment that in the original work also the poet may fail to read his own mind while writing the poem. There may be the limitations of the words or the poet himself. The translator has to translate the original poem, which the poet himself wanted to translate. The translator may have great word or expression or translating power.

To maintain lexical and semantic level is quite difficult. Translator has to translate the meaning of the text and at the same time he needs not to be faithful because when we read the translation it should look original also. If the translator cannot translate all that the original text contains, there may be the limitations of the text not of the translator. If we use the two words 'original' and 'duplicate' the duplicate might be more near the creator's original poem. The photocopy may be better than the original or the first hand copy. The photo machine can be more powerful. The original work is original in the terms of time only. There is not self- evidence for its originality. The translator can reach to the source of the poet's inspiration and create a parallel poem. A translator may have simply the value of a contemporary poet. In many cases the translations are given without the references of the original.

The translator has to create a new relation between poetry and society. The translator has not to refer merely linguistic uses but different cultural relations or references also. The translator who translates the lines is a professional translator. The translator we are talking about has to translate the lines between the lines. The translator returns to the source of the poet's inspiration and creates a parallel poem. Translation whether within culture or language does not transform the whole gamut of meaning the S.L. contains. I have given a long glossary of the Non- English words and obscure expressions and about this Prof. Bakul Raval writes in a newspaper that this glossary is helpful to the Ardh-Gujarati i.e. Semi- Gujarati readers. The translator ought not to be exited about exactness in translation. We can use the footnotes and take care of the native or S.L. words also. In my translation I have used the words like- Sadguru, Rishi, Dharm, Arth, Kama, Moksh, Sanyasi, Sant, Yagna, Mala, Panth, Mahima, Vairag, Maharaj etc. And translating them would have robbed them of their emotional exuberance. They prove to be untranslatable also because of their being extremely culture-specific.

## Works Cited

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