



The Achievers Journal

Volume 6, Issue 3

ISSN (ONLINE): 2395-0897 / ISSN (PRINT): 2454-2296 July to September 2020

The Confluence of Ganga and Yamuna: Interpreting the Cultural Nuances Involved in the Writing of *Doob Dhaan*

Shruti Mishra

Scholar

Department of English and Modern European Languages
University of Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh, India

Abstract

This paper talks about the cultural underpinnings involved in the writings of Anamika, a known name in the world of Hindi poetry. I have tried to interpret and examine few pieces from her collection of poetry named “Doob Dhaan”, together with the cultural nuances involved in her writings and while translating it to a western language and still being able to retain that flavour of a particular culture. I have also talked about the perspective of the writer herself regarding the translation and culture in form of a culturally ambivalent woman together with examining the peculiarities and problems of translation with the help of theorists like Eugene Nida, J. C. Catford, Hrish Trivedi, Susan Bassnett and G.N Devy. The purpose is to explore the traces and trajectories of translation of poetry which is completely immersed in cultural ethos. Language displays two components by providing a connotative or the denotative meaning; this is where all the change occurs. Anamika’s poetry is deeply immersed in the culture of Bihar. The title of her work itself comes from the customs and traditions of Bihar. The lives of these women revolve around the culture and customs of Bihar. As people are caught in their day-to-day lives, the women in her poetry are caught in the vicious cycle of traditions and modernity in order to take both the things forward within a single individual. I have also tried to explain on how to retain the culture essence of her poetry together with bringing an insight to the reader regarding a certain culture. Translation is the only method through which this thought can be materialized today. Translation of these ethnic as well as women centric text would help to promote our local writers and make it accessible for everyone to read and understand them and a different culture altogether.

Keywords: translation, culture, modernity, ethnicity, customs, traditions, language



The Achievers Journal

Volume 6, Issue 3

ISSN (ONLINE): 2395-0897 / ISSN (PRINT): 2454-2296 July to September 2020

Anamika is a prominent and a critically acclaimed Indian poet, a novelist as well as a social worker. She writes in Hindi together with critic writing in English. She has eight collections of poetry to her credit together with five novels and four works of criticism. She was born on in Muzaffarpur, Bihar. She grew up reading books and living a life of imagination and listening to her aunts, classmates, other women, women in distress, in those stories and the underlined pain which they experienced, that shaped her understanding of women and of married life in Indian households, with socially constructed femininity. Her collection of poetry includes, *Galat Pate ki Chithi*, *Beejakshar*, *Anushtup*, *Doob-Dhaan*, *Khurduri Hatheliyan*, *Tokari me Digant*. Her novels include *Das dwaare ka Pinjara*, *Tinka Tinke Paas*, *Billu Shakespeare – Post Bastar*. Her works of criticism include, *Post- Eliot Poetry* and *Streetva ka Maanchitra*. She has also exemplified her capabilities in works of translation; these are *Naagmandal*, *Afro- English Poems* and *Kahti hai Auratein*. She has been felicitated by the Kedar Samman in 2007, by Sahityasetu Samman in 2004, by Parampara Samman in 2001. She has been also honored by Girija Mathur Samman in 1998, by Sahitya Samman in 1998 and by Bharat Bhushan Award for Poetry in 1996.

Translation is an inseparable component of literature without which the idea of multiculturalism holds no concrete value. Every human being is indulged in it in almost every moment of their life, as G. N. Devy puts it that Indian have “translating consciousness”. We are constantly translating our thoughts into words, of any language that is known to us, through which we can help others to understand our views and feelings. This process can be noticed when we use second language or any other language which is not our mother tongue. There has been a long tradition of translation, in larger sense it is as old as human existence. Translations were always done, though with different orientations, for different purposes and mostly to fulfill different needs of the people of different consciousness and cultural backgrounds.

“Translation is the wandering existence in a perpetual exile.” J. Hilli Miller

“Translation is as old as humanity.” Sussan Basnett

We trace the source of written communication from very basis of science and symbols. It evolved into character based alphabets representing the sounds of localized languages through passage of time, groups of people started spreading out and the languages collided between



The Achievers Journal

Volume 6, Issue 3

ISSN (ONLINE): 2395-0897 / ISSN (PRINT): 2454-2296 July to September 2020

groups. The necessity of communication within each group gave birth to translation and the concept of interpretation came as a solution for such unavoidable circumstances.

Translation has helped knit India together as a nation throughout her history. Ideas and concepts like 'Indian literature', 'Indian philosophy' and 'Indian knowledge systems' would have been impossible in the absence of translations with their natural integrationist mission. The concept of translation in the Indian text, which offers plurality of thought and diversity in culture, is received in its multiplicity while in the Western context translation is received in scientific and specific mode of literary communication.

India is a multicultural and multilingual country, and has been in the forefront of translation for many centuries. This being the reason it is known to be a linguistic as well as a translation area. We use more than one language while speaking or even thinking. Languages evolve, change and sometimes they die too, therefore, their meaning also changes. Also it is interesting to know, that as the language develop through time, and it is unavoidable to recognize that the meaning of words and phrases change.

The poems have been taken from Anamika's collection of poems named *Doob-Dhaan* (2019). Anamika comes from Muzzafarpur, Bihar. Hence the culture, customs and language of Bihar and its people are deeply embedded in her poetry. Even the vocabulary of her poetry also shows a deep influence of Bihar.

I will start by talking about the title of this collection of poetry. The title "doob-dhaan" has been taken from a custom in marriages of Bihar. After all the rituals of marriage when the newly wed bride arrives to her in-laws house for the first time, then this ritual takes place. The ceremony is executed by praying to lord with paddy (known as dhaan), grass (known as doob) together with turmeric and vermilion. She is blessed to have a cordial and fulfilling married life together with a bright and prosperous future with her husband, children and her in-laws, her new home or rather the extended family.

In this book she majorly deals with the ordeals and struggles of a married girl in an Indian household. She is represented as a multifunctional woman, who looks after her man, children together with all sorts of household chores. But still somehow she tries and manages to keep her dreams and her ambitions alive in her busy life. She is always forced to dance on the tunes of time constantly running after her accustomed routine. She does not compromise with her



The Achievers Journal

Volume 6, Issue 3

ISSN (ONLINE): 2395-0897 / ISSN (PRINT): 2454-2296 July to September 2020

financial independence and executes everything well single handedly. She tends to represent a woman who does not compromise with her financial and educational independence but has to compromise with her emotional independence and her dreams and wishes as a woman.

There is a deep sense of nostalgia which runs throughout her poetry. There is a deep sense of belonging of a woman for her homeland and her beloved family. There is also a strange sense of loneliness, when she does everything for her family alone without any emotional or psychological support. She is considered to be capable enough to not look around for any help emotionally as well as psychologically. She remembers how her mother used to manage everything and yearns for the same power and patience for herself in order to appear bold and independent enough to her children.

A woman is always caught in the vicious cycle of her life. She had to play several roles throughout her life. The first role which a woman is required to play is that of a daughter. In her poems the poet talks about the modern woman, who is independent to decide for herself, but the only difference is that none of her decisions should disrespect her parents. I find the modern women caught in the greatest dilemma. They are independent enough to take their own decisions but within certain limits. The other role is that of a wife, where the responsibility of a woman increases up to thousand folds. She has to be a loving wife and a respectful and docile daughter in-law. The only change which has intervened these parameters in this modern world is that now people look for a wife who is also earning well. Nothing has changed so far except the name and face, dowry is very much there.

After reading the poems of Anamika, I feel she has given an exemplary presentation of the twenty first century woman in an Indian milieu regardless of any cultural background or language. Poets like Sarojini Naidu and Kamala Das also talk about their ambivalent culture together with how they adjusted themselves in this frame. The title of her book itself explains all the themes which run throughout in her poetry. The title *Doob-Dhaan* itself signifies that the poet will be talking about marriage life, together with the role of a mother, a daughter and ultimately as a woman. The woman is caught in all sorts of customs and traditions in such a way that she keeps moving in that cycle of just sacrificing throughout her life, there is no one who asks her about her own well-being but there are thousands of people who are always ready to blame her if something goes wrong. She includes in the painful story of Sita who was divided between the responsibilities towards her husband Raam and her beloved children Love and Kush.



The Achievers Journal

Volume 6, Issue 3

ISSN (ONLINE): 2395-0897 / ISSN (PRINT): 2454-2296 July to September 2020

She talks of how not even a single minute was left for herself, not even to die. She uses this story to contest the glory of Jesus Christ, she says that if Jesus Christ was a woman, he would also have face the same situations as that of Sita. He would have to look after her children together with arranging their bread and butter. He would also be occupied that he would not get any spare minute to walk up to the cruise. Later she talks of Krishna, who helped and encouraged his Radha to come out of her ordeals and dance on the rhythm of life and gain few moments of peace in the tune of flute played by the beloved Krishna. The poet considers all other women as the 'daughters of Radha', where she asks that why the women now are not as tenacious as Radha to express their will, irrespective of all the terms and conditions of a hypocrite society. She questions that why now there is no such Krishna to help these daughters to come out of their ordeals and display the magic of his musical flute that can even change the direction of wind. The fabricated questions which lie in her poetry ask that why the women are not allowed to imitate the deeds of their Gods and Goddesses. One is so liberal when it comes to philosophizing the phenomenal changes of life, but how come they become so conservative when it comes to practice and the sufferer is of course solely the woman and children. She asks a very innocent question that together with other men why the very powerful and kind Krishna has also become equally cold towards us? This question remains unanswered till the end.

Later in her poem named 'A Bag of Tulsi', the poet calls herself Ratan Tulsi, which personifies herself both as a jewel and an epitome of pristine persona with a godly image known in the name of Tulsi (a herb named after a woman according to Hindu mythology), it also signifies that the woman named Tulsi stands for prosperity, well-being and abundance. Still she expresses her pain by saying that she has been concocted in the chaos like a ball with knots. She was in constant wait for someone to pull her out of her uncertainties and allow her to realize her womanly tinkling dreams. She talks of those moments of her life when man's manliness turned into 'Pride'. He did not care about her presence; she stood as insignificant as any inanimate object. She feels guilty about what a heavy price she had to pay for being an opinionated woman. In the next poem the poet talks about how a woman has been forced to destroy her dreams. Whatever she ones thought appears so unreal to her now, she finds the reflection of her unfulfilled dreams in the smiling bright moon far away from her reach. A woman has always been advised to keep that spirit alive in her heart, the spirit of her dreams. She is always advised to think from her heart when it comes to relations and leave the restlessness and glamor of mind behind. She questions again that how women used to console themselves when they were in immense pain. From where does she get the pleasure to sing to the moon? How she conceives the



The Achievers Journal

Volume 6, Issue 3

ISSN (ONLINE): 2395-0897 / ISSN (PRINT): 2454-2296 July to September 2020

seed of marriage in her womb with complete involvement leaving all her dreams and reveries behind. She is amazed to know that how much patience and love these women had in their hearts. That soothing and peaceful smile has so much pain beneath it. In her other poems she also talks about the rat race of the modern world where everybody is busy in the chaotic world fiercely motivated towards solving their vested interests. She talks of a busy railway platform which gets deserted on a drizzling night. She is impressed by looking at a classic book stall and contemplates on how people have still retained the habit of reading in this busy life. She comes to the fact that there must be some or the other kind of emptiness that people still take up reading as their hobby or a favorite past time. As we know that books are mans' best friend, this fact has been very aptly applied by the poet in her poetry. The poet also brings up the theme of explaining the hollowness the materialism. She attempts to explain that nature is filled with beauty and all sorts of pristine magical moments. She compares the young and green branches of trees to the breasts of a young mother. Where she says that the manner in which pollution in form of smoke and heat destroys the beauty of a tree, in the same way immense materialism is destroying the kind human heart. The poet very categorically mentions that, it not only the tinkling of coins left in the pocket but there are also many unrequited dreams and stories which tinkle with the same intensity. She brings up the heart wrenching pain experienced by both the mother and the daughter during marriage, when their little girl has to leave her maiden house and proceeds in the new phase of life. The place where she was born and brought up, attained her individuality, gained that capability to reason and question uncertainties, becomes someone who has an opinion and is intellectually independent, moves to a new house among new people. But this what the tradition and the rule mentions. The pain of a mother's heart is immeasurable. Her daughter is that collection of jewels which she has conserved through her pain and labor throughout her life. She moves forward to picture this pain in the portrayal of a rice harvester. He nurtures his field throughout months with manure and water, then one day when those rice stems grow up, all green and fluttering then he takes up the harvester to cut them off. This whole process is a completely mechanical concept, it is only about a cycle of gain and loss but the poet has completely infused this minor everyday work of a farmer with lots of emotions. This is a unique capability of thoughts and creation, which is something only a poet, is capable of. In one of her poem named 'An Afternoon', the poet talks about the aura and influence of two different seasons on an afternoon. She talks of 'Jeth', the hottest month of the year on the basis of Hindu calendar which falls between May and June. The other month which she talks about is 'Magh', the coldest time of the year according to Hindu calendar which falls between January and



The Achievers Journal

Volume 6, Issue 3

ISSN (ONLINE): 2395-0897 / ISSN (PRINT): 2454-2296 July to September 2020

February. The poet links the warmth of ‘Jeth’ to the warmth of emotions where the whole surroundings of the poet are bubbling with pleasure and enthusiasm. There is a sort of vigor to buy sparkling bangles and shining bindi’s in lady whereas during ‘Magh’, there is a deep coldness and subtle alienation. She compares the coldness of a particular season to the coldness of heart and emotions. She says that there is something left unsaid and unexpressed between her and her companion. She is still waiting for the fulfillment of her very being. There are moments of constant nostalgia, throughout her poetry. She remembers the good old days when the postman used to deliver letters door to door from their loved ones. The postman used to work so diligently in order to carry those awaited messages during those hot afternoons, what a noble job he did. But now everything has changed so rapidly. There are no more letters even the pigeon hole is also empty, they have also left such places where they are not required any more. The she says that pigeons might be building their new homes somewhere else where they are acknowledged and valued. What sort of loneliness a woman has to go through amid her responsibilities and from where does she get that courage. Everything works and moves at its own pace, in the same way the woman of the house has to move as well. The traffic in her life tries to hold her back at each and every juncture but still she has to keep moving for her family and her children. That is the time when she realizes that she cannot have a life of her own; she cannot consider herself only an individual independent of all consequences. Her each and every action will affect her children; she ultimately has to bear everything and go on with the flow only for her children. She becomes all emotionally dried up that now even her beautiful ornaments do not make her feel delighted any more. She talks of how she took up the challenge of sleeping under the sky alone at night, being a single woman. She is looked upon as a male stimulator. She tries to say that a woman works in a male-dominated society where she is looked up as an eye tonic. Throughout her poetry she constantly yearns for solace to where she was born and brought up. Being a single woman she is her only anchorage because society will never move forward to encourage her but will only move ahead to exploit her. That is the most tragic picture of the modern world presented by a modern woman.

Cultural translation represents a process through which the peculiarities of a culture are represented through most particularly the language of another culture. In this process one comes across a lot of cultural differences. The major motive is to bring cross- cultural communication in action. The main issue that cultural translation must solve consists in translating a text as showing cultural difference of the text together with respecting the source text.



The Achievers Journal

Volume 6, Issue 3

ISSN (ONLINE): 2395-0897 / ISSN (PRINT): 2454-2296 July to September 2020

Cultural translation should also be understood from the lens of cultural anthropology, a branch of anthropology focused on cultural issues based among humans. This discipline possibly questions translation through cultural differences. Hence, indeed translation studies are not only based on language issues, but also cultural contexts between people.

Besides, translation of cultures cannot be, as some cultures and societies remain dominant compared to others, therefore power is a limit of translation of cultures. Indeed, within a translation of cultures, the target language may dominate the source culture in order to make the text comprehensible in a sense of culture for the readers. The meaning of culture is quite difficult to understand therefore translation of cultures is certainly limited. This limit of translation of cultures was also explained in the theory of Edward Sapir, an American linguist and anthropologist: “the worlds in which different societies live are distinct worlds, not merely the same world with different labels attached”. “Each linguistic community has its own perception of the world, which differs from that of other linguistic communities implies the existence of different worlds determined by language”.

Some linguists assume that untranslatability doesn't only come from linguistic limits but also from cultural barriers within translation. According to some linguists, such as C. L. Wren, differences of point of view between peoples relatively impose narrow limits to cultural translatability. The theory of universal translatability is therefore disapproved by some researchers, like Andre Martinet, who is convinced that human experience cannot be well communicated because it is unique. Catford rationalized this theory in his book named “Linguistic Theory of Translation”: “Cultural untranslatability arises when a situational feature, functionally relevant for the source language text, is completely absent from the culture of which the target language is a part”. For instance, the name of some institutions, clothes, food, and abstract concepts related to certain culture, tradition and customs.”

Cultural translation obviously implies the notion of culture, which needs to be defined here, in in order to understand well about the term named cultural translation. Culture often offers two different meanings: the first one defines culture as a civilized society in a developed country, whereas the second one considers culture as a whole set of behavior and a way of life which people commonly share at every level. As previously explained culture gets an important role and meaning in translation. According to Katan, culture is a shared model of the world, a



The Achievers Journal

Volume 6, Issue 3

ISSN (ONLINE): 2395-0897 / ISSN (PRINT): 2454-2296 July to September 2020

hierarchical model of beliefs, values and strategies which can guide action and interaction of people. Culture can be acquired through diverse ways, like education.

Culture has a huge influence on society and politics of a country, in terms of ideology. According to some translation researchers such as Even- Zohar, Susan Bassnett and Trivedi, culture is also linked to the will of power and to the way people pretend to this power. In this sense, translation deals with making systems of ideologies comprehensible for the readers. Translation of cultures is therefore linked to the ethics and explains a new way of thinking. This kind of translation must show the context and the personal way of thinking through translated texts.

Identity for me is like a beehive divided into different wax chambers, honey stored in different chambers is just the same but the bees are multiple, each resting or buzzing in one particular chamber, vaguely aware of the presence of the Queen bee in the center.

Multiple identities are the different dimensions of the same Being. Even Gods and Goddesses in India are addressed by “Sahasranama” (a thousand names folded up in different petals of the thousand petalled lotus in the Sahasrar, the mind within the mind/ the apex energy centers). These names, I suppose, are the different dimensions of the same Being and when addressed by one particular name, only that dimension of the Being manifests. (Nevertheless, call a rose by any name as Shakespeare would have it, it smells as sweet.

Language, identity, history and culture are all multilayered entities, almost as multilayered as the sedimentary rocks with some beautiful fossils ingrained in their hearts!. When we talk of reading the text against the text by deconstructing aporias floating in the linguistic subconscious, this is how we interpret Derrida: the crust or the outer layer of an expression may be coarse but a patient exploration can help us locate the inner crux as something innately soft and sweet like Kabir’s “googe ki gud” which means candy in the mouth of dumb Rasika and Nirala’s “maun madhu” which means the silence of honey and also the honey of silence. Of the four layers of the linguistic subconsciousness that Bhartrihari talks about at length in “Vakyapadeeyam” or “Pashyantee” is the state in which almost with the onrush of the Ganga descending from the peaks of the Himalayas, thought descends from the ideational plane (para stage) onto the paralinguistic state of conceptual crystallization before descending down on concrete earthly plains or green valleys of Madhyama and Baikhari Truth manifests at different levels and language helps us decipher that through the lens of Desh, Kaal, and Manasthiti.



The Achievers Journal

Volume 6, Issue 3

ISSN (ONLINE): 2395-0897 / ISSN (PRINT): 2454-2296 July to September 2020

Basically because Anamika has been breastfed by my own Mother Tongue, her turns of phrases, her idiomatic vigour have nurtured the inner recesses of my being! English for her is an acquired language, her mother tongue gives me the greater freedom of expression.

Nostalgia is like a fixed deposit for most of us, all our life we keep drawing sustenance from this fixed deposit! Her memories are rooted in the University town of Muzaffarpur where both her parents were University Professors and eminent writers of Hindi. Their huge library was full of classics from all over the world but in the immediate surrounding she heard most of the chitchat happening either in Hindi or in the five major dialects of Bihar: Maithili, Bajjika, Bhojpuri, Angika and Magadhi. Her aunts, vegetable vendors and subaltern men and women who hailed from different regions of Bihar proudly spoke in their own dialect and because she was all ears to the large fund of folk songs they brought home, her Hindi gained many shades of Hindi which could be found in most of her early poems. Discourses in English and Sanskrit played like background music in her linguistic environment. Almost all Indian children in small towns are naturally exposed to this rainbow splendor of sister languages, and in most of the cases instead of them, choosing their language of creative expression, the language takes a step forward and picks them up in her arms.

Translation has been the best way of reaching out to the larger world and of breathing the music of otherness in my own chaotic being, of enhancing the limits of our inner boundaries. Like all Indians, she was also born 'translating' and her journey as a womanist translator began early. Over the years, I have realized that all languages in the world, like all hearts, are interconnected. There is a sisterly bond among languages and it feels good to stay connected.

Cultural translation, is the most intimate act of reading, and intimacy is a dangerous zone. Texts, like human memory, are multi-layered and the act of translation titillates all the layers: rhetoric, logic and silence. But it titillates without overpowering. An able translator, like an efficient director, does not overpower, nor does she let the translation dissipate the whole notion of owning the text. Bhakti poets slipped their names into *saakhis* and *padas* to authenticate their experience, not to impose a mark of ownership. Their texts travelled far and wide to other co-writers who carved it into an entirely new image. Freed from the clutches of authorship, most of our epics and classics operate like free radicals. At least four feminist translators in Hindi have dreamt of this freewheeling; Prabha Khetan, Madhu B. Joshi, Pragati Saxena and Garima Srivastava. In their feminist renderings, texts emerge as common property; which anybody from



The Achievers Journal

Volume 6, Issue 3

ISSN (ONLINE): 2395-0897 / ISSN (PRINT): 2454-2296 July to September 2020

the commune or even outside the commune can interpret, reshape, or use for an intertextual flight.

Each feminist text has a corporal and an ethereal body. A feminist translator, like a good lover, plays more with the ethereal body. It does not maintain a reductive, Para phrasal relationship with the text but one of inter-textuality.

Hence, at the end I would like to wrap up by talking about the aptness of the title of my paper “the confluence of Ganga and Yamuna” as the writer whom I took as my subject hails from Bihar but her work place is Delhi. The amalgamation of a woman whose sense of identity is deeply rooted in the culture of Bihar but also she equally represents the aura of an independent and modern working woman of Delhi, is extremely significant. Here, translation helps to bridge the gap between the two and becomes a medium in order to communicate what a woman’s cultural ambivalent heart feels.

Works Cited

Bassnett, Sussan. *Translation Studies*. Routledge, 1991

Brisling, Richard W. (Ed.). *Translation: Application and Research*. Gardener Press, 1976.

Chomsky, J.C. *Aspects of Theory and Syntax*. MIT Press, 1975.

Nida, E.A. *Language, Structure and Translation*. Stanford University Press, 1975.

Nida, E.A. *Towards a Science of Translating*. Leiden E. J. Berill, 1964.

Nida, E.A. and Taber, Charles R. *The Theory and Practice of Translation*. E. J. Brill, 1974.

Richard, I. A. *Towards a Theory of Translating*. Chicago University Press, 1953.

Shastri, Pratima Dave. *Fundamental Aspects of Translation*. PHI Learning Pvt. Ltd., 2012.

----- “Arguing for ‘Translevelization’ with reference to the translation of Culture Specific words.” *American Journal of Translation Studies* 4 (2015) November 2015.



The Achievers Journal

Volume 6, Issue 3

ISSN (ONLINE): 2395-0897 / ISSN (PRINT): 2454-2296 July to September 2020

----- “Comparative Literature in Classroom: A Model” *Pupil: The Remix Edition*. Department of English, Comparative Literature and Linguistics, California State University Fullerton. Spring 2015.

----- “Discourse Analysis towards Creative Fulfillment in the Interpretation of Texts”. *The Indian Journal of English Studies*, Vol. LIII, 2015.

----- “Global Issues and Local Realities: ‘Nature’ in Folk and Corporate Cultures”. *European Journal of Academic Essays*, Lisbon, Portugal. 1 (7) : 39-43, 2014.

----- “Representative Folk Literature of Hindi Speaking North India”. *Spark International Online Journal*, Vol. IV , Issues VIII, August 2012, pp. 34-45.

Soanes, Catherine. Stevenson, Angus. *Concise Oxford English Dictionary*. Oxford University Press, 2006