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HISTORY OF TRANSLATION

Datta G. Sawant

Sengaon

It is significant to review the history of translation in different languages. There are divisions of period made by scholars like George Steiner. According to Steiner, the history of translation is divided into four periods. Starting from the Roman translators Cicero and Horace to Alexander Fraser Tytler is the first period; the second period extends up to Valery and from Valery to 1960s becomes the third period and the fourth period 1960s onwards. The history of translation is stressed out from 3000 B.C. *Rosetta Stone* is considered the most ancient work of translation belonged to the second century B.C. Livius Andronicus translated Homer's *Odyssey* named *Odusia* into Latin in 240 B.C. All that survives is parts of 46 scattered lines from 17 books of the Greek 24-book epic. In some lines, he translates literally, though in others more freely. His translation of the *Odyssey* had a great historical importance. Before then, the Mesopotamians and Egyptians had translated judicial and religious texts, but no one had yet translated a literary work written in a foreign language until the Roman Empire. Livius' translation made this fundamental Greek text accessible to Romans, and advanced literary culture in Latin. This project was one of the best examples of translation as artistic process. The work was to be enjoyed on its own, and Livius strove to preserve the artistic quality of original. Since there was no tradition of epic in Italy before him, Livius must have faced enormous problems. For example, he used archaizing forms to make his language more solemn and intense. His innovations will be important in history of Latin poetry. In the fragments we have it is clear that Livius had a desire to remain faithful to the original and to be clear, while having to alter untranslatable phrases and ideas. For example, the phrase "equal to the gods", which would have been unacceptable to Romans was changed to "summus adprimus", "greatest and of first rank". Also early Roman poetry made use of pathos, expressive force and dramatic tension, so Livius interprets Homer with a mind to these ideas as well. In general, Livius did not make arbitrary change to the text; rather he attempted to remain faithful to Homer and to the Latin language.

Then Quintilian, Cicero, Horace, Catallus and Younger Pliny tried their hand to theorize translation and practiced it. Cicero and Horace were from the later generation of translation

history who differentiated between word for word and sense for sense translation. The most significant turn in the history of translation came with the *Bible* translations. The efforts of translating the *Bible* from its original languages into over 2,000 others have spanned more than two millennia. Partial translation of the *Bible* into languages of English people can be stressed back to the end of the seventh century, including translations into Old English and Middle English. Over 450 versions have been created overtime. Although John Wycliffe is often credited with the first translation of the *Bible* into English, there were, in fact, many translations of large parts of the *Bible* centuries before Wycliffe's work. The Bible continues to be the most translated book in the world. This fact is revealed by same statistics which is approximate. As of 2005, at least one book of the *Bible* translated into 2,400 of the 6,900 languages listed by SIL—Summer Institute of Linguistics—including 680 languages in Africa, followed by 590 in Asia, 420 in Oceania, 420 in Latin America and the Caribbean, 210 in Europe, and 75 in North America. The United Bible Societies are presently assisting in over 600 Bible translation projects. The *Bible* is available in whole or in part to some 98 percent of world's population in a language in which they are fluent. The United Bible Society had been announced that as 31st December 2007 the *Bible* was available in 438 languages, 123 of which included the deuterocanonical material as well as the *Tanakh* and *New Testament*. Either the *Tanakh* or the *New Testament* alone was available in an additional 1168 languages, and portions of the *Bible* were available in another 848 languages, for a total of 2,454 languages. In 1999, Wycliffe Bible translators announced Vision 2025.

All these numbers reveal the importance and place of *Bible* in translation history. It needs to write something about English *Bible* translation history. The fascinating story of how we got the *Bible* into English in its present form actually starts thousands of years ago. But toward the end of the seventh century, the Venerable Bede began a translation of scripture into Old English—Anglo-Saxon. Aldhelm (c. 639-709) translated the complete *Book of Psalms* and large portions of other scriptures into Old English. In the tenth century an Old English translations of the *Gospels* was made in the *Lindisfarne Gospels;* a word-for- word gloss inserted between the lines of the Latin text by Aldred, provost of Chester-le- Street. This is the oldest extant translation of the *Gospels* into the English language. The Wessex *Gospels*—the West-Saxon *Gospels*—are a full translation of the four gospels into a West Saxon dialect of Old English produced approximately 990, they are the first translation of all four gospels into English without

the Latin text. In the 11th century, Abbot Aelfric translated much of the *Old Testament* into Old English. The English Bible was first translated from the Latin vulgate into Old English by a select monks and scholars. Such translations were in the form of prose or as interlinear glosses—literal translations above the words. Very few complete translations existed during that time. Rather, most of the books of the *Bible* existed separately and were read as individual texts. Thus, the sense of *Bible* as history that often exists today did not exist at that time. Instead a more allegorical rendering of the *Bible* was more common and translations of the *Bible* often included the writer's own commentary on passages in addition to the literal translation. The ormulum is in Middle English of the 12th century. Like its old English precursor from Aelfric, an Abbot of Eynsham, it includes very little Biblical text, and focuses more on personal commentary. This style was adopted by many of the original English translators. For example the story of the Wedding at Cana is almost 800 lines long, but fewer than 40 lines are the actual translation of the text. An unusual characteristic is that the translation mimics Latin verse, and so is similar to the better known and appreciated 14th century English poem, *Cursor Mundi*. Richard Rolle (1290-1349) wrote an English Psalter. Many religious works are attributed to Rolle, but it has been questioned how many are genuinely from his hand. Many of his works were concerned with personal devotion, and some were used by the Lollards. The 14th century theologian John Wycliffe (1330-1384) is credited with translating what is now known as Wycliffe's *Bible*, though it is not clear how much of the translation he himself did. This translation came out in two different versions. The earlier translation text is characterized by a strong adherence to the word order of Latin, and might have been difficult for the layperson to comprehend. The later text made more concessions to the native grammar of English. Early modern translations of the *Bible* are those which were made between about 1500 and 1800, the period of Early Modern English. This was the first major period of *Bible* translation into English language. It began with the dramatic introduction of the Tyndale *Bible*. The early 16th century Tyndale *Bible* differs from the others since Tyndale used the Greek and Hebrew texts of the *New* and *Old Testaments* in addition to Jerome's Latin translation. Tyndale is also unique in that he was the first of the Middle English translators to use the printing press to help distribute several thousand copies of this translation throughout England. It included the first "authorized version" known as the *Great Bible* (1539); the *Geneva Bible* (1560), notable for being the first *Bible* divided into verses, and the Bishop's *Bible* (1568), which was an attempt by Elizabeth 1st to create a new authorized

version. It also included the landmark King James Version (1611) and Douay-Rheims *Bibles*. Douay-Rheims' *Bible* is the first complete English Catholic *Bible*. Called Douay-Rheims because the *New Testament* portion was completed in Rheims France in 1582 followed by the *Old Testament* finished in 1609 in Douay. In this version the 14 books of the Apocrypha are returned to the *Bible* in the order written rather than kept separate in an appendix. Early English *Bibles* were generally based on Greek texts or Latin translations. Modern English translations of the *Bible* are based on wider variety of manuscripts in the original languages—Greek and Hebrew. The translators put much scholarly effort into cross-checking the various sources such as the Septuagint, Textus Receptus and Masoretic Text. Relatively recent discoveries such as the Dead Sea scrolls provide additional reference information. There is some controversy over which texts should be used as a basis for translation, as some of the alternate sources do not include phrases—sometimes entire versed—which are found only in the Textus Receptus. Some say the alternate sources were poorly representative of the texts used in their time, whereas other claim the Textus Receptus includes passages that were added to the alternate texts improperly. These controversial passages are not the basis for disputed issues of doctrine, but tend to be additional stories or snippets of phrases. Many Modern English translations such as the New International Version contain limited text notes indicating where differences occur in original sources. A somewhat greater number of textual differences are noted in the *New King James Bible*, indicating hundreds of *New Testament* differences between the Nestle-Aland, the Textus Receptus and the Hodges edition of the majority text. The differences in the *Old Testament* are less well documented, but do contain some references to differences between consonantal interpretations in the Masoretic Text, the Dead Sea scrolls and the Septuagint. Even with this hundreds of differences, however, a more complete listing is beyond the scope of most single volume *Bibles*. Modern translations take different approaches to the rendering of the original languages of approaches. The approaches can usually be considered to be somewhere on a scale between the two extremes: Formal equivalence translation—sometime literal translation or Formal correspondence—in which the greatest effort is made to preserve the meaning of individual words and phrases in the original, without regard for its understandability by modern readers. Dynamic equivalence, sometimes called paraphrase translation, in which the translator attempts to render the sense and intent of the original. Examples of these versions include *The Living Bible* and *The Message*. While most translations are made by committees of scholars in

order to avoid bias or idiosyncrasy, translations are sometimes made by individuals. The translation of J.B. Philips, J.N. Darby's *Darby* , R.A. Knox, Gerrit Verkuy's *Berkeley Version* and *The Message* are largely the work of individual translators. Robert Alter has also translated individual books of the *Bible* specifically to capture what he sees as their specific flavour. Most translations make the translators' best attempt at a single rendering of the original, relying on footnotes where there might be alternative translations or textual variants. An alternative is taken by the *Amplified* . In case where a word of phrase admits of more than one meaning the *Amplified* presents all the possible interpretations, allowing the reader to choose one. For example, the first two verses of the *Amplified* read: "In the beginning God (prepared, formed, fashioned, and) created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and an empty waste, and darkness was upon the face of the very great deep. The spirit of God was moving (hovering, brooding) over the face of the waters." (Web biblegateway.com).

16th century marked a good turn in translation other than the *Bible* translation only. George Chapman (1559?-1634) translated Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* in metrical form (iambic pentameter and iambic heptameter) which became his most famous works, from 1598 he published his translation of *Iliad* in installments and in 1616 the complete *Iliad* and *Odyssey* appeared in *The Whole Works of Homer*, the first English translation, which until Pope's was the most popular in the English language and was the way most English speakers encountered these poems. His translation of Homer was much admired by John Keats. Chapman also translated the *Homeric Hymns*, the *Georgics* of Vergil, the works of Hesiod (1618, dedicated to Francis Bacon), the *Hero and Leander* of Musaeus (1618) and the *fifth Satire* of Juvenal (1624). Chapman's translation of Homer's epic the *Odyssey*, originally published in folio, 1614—16, has become as rare as to be inaccessible to the general reader and comparatively unknown to the more curious student of old English Literature (translation). Martin Luther (1483-1546) had published his German translation of the *New Testament* in 1522 and, he and his collaborators completed the translation of the *Old Testament* in 1534, when the whole was published. He continued to refining the translation until the end of his life. Others had translated the *Bible* into German, but Luther tailored his translation to his own doctrine. Luther's translation used the variant of German spoken at the Saxon Chancellery intelligible to both northern and southern Germans. Luther *Bible* made a significant contribution to the evolution of German language and literature, and of course to translation.

Seventh century is the notable age of translation history, because according to Suka Joshua:

"The seventeenth century is the great age of French classicism. Translation of the French classics increased greatly in France between 1625 and 1660, and the French writers were in turn enthusiastically translated into English. Sir John Denham in his theory stated that the translator and the original writer are equals differentiated only by the social and temporal contexts. Abraham Cowley in his 'Preface' to Pindarique Odes argued for freedom in translation and established imitation as a branch of translation. John Dryden devoted most of his last twenty years to translate the ancient classics and update the modern. His preface to Ovid's Epistles served as the starting point for nearly every discussion of translation in the eighteenth century." (3).

The seventeenth century knew the birth of many influential theorists such as Sir John Denham (1615-69), Abraham Cowley (1618-67), John Dryden (1631-1700)—who was famous for his distinction between three types of translation; metaphrase, paraphrase and imitation—and Alexander Pope (1688-1744). Dryden translated works by Horace, Juvenal, Ovid, Lucretius and Theocritus, a task which he found far more satisfying than writing for the stage. In 1694, he began work on what would be his most ambitious and defining work as translator, *The Work of Vergil* (1697), which was published by subscription. His final translations appeared in the volumes *Fables Ancient and Modern* (1700), a series of episodes from Homer, Ovid and Boccaccio, as well as modernized adaptations from Geoffrey Chaucer interspersed with Dryden's own poems. The Preface to Fables is considered to be both a major work of criticism and one of the finest essays in English. As a critic and translator he was essential in making accessible to the reading English public literary works in classical languages. Pope had been fascinated by Homer since childhood. In 1713, he announced his plans to publish a translation of the *Iliad*. His translation appeared between 1715 and 1720. It was acclaimed by Samuel Johnson as a performance which no age or nation could hope to equal. With the help of William Broome and Elijah Fenton, he also translated *Odyssey* in 1726.

In the eighteenth century, the translator was compared to an artist with a moral duty both to the work of the original author and to the receiver. Moreover, with the enhancement of new theories and volumes on translation process, the study of translation started to be systematic; Alexander Fraser Tytler's volume of *Principles of Translation* (1791) is a case in point. The

other exponents of this period were Samuel Johnson and George Campbell. Tytler's treatise is important in the history of translation theory. He said that translation should fully represent the ideas, style of the original and possess the ease of original composition. During the century translators strove for ease of reading. Omitting whatever they did not understand in the text or whatever they thought would be boring to the reader. At the end of this century, much interest shown by the British East India colonial administrators in the languages, literature and culture of their subjects, and the discovery and the translation of ancient Indian works was highly encouraged. According to 18th century scholars, translators should have the contemporary reader in mind while translation and convey the author's spirit and manner in a more natural way.

The nineteenth century was characterized by two conflicting tendencies; the first considered translation as a category of thought and saw the translator as a creative genius, who enriches the literature and language into which he is translating, while the second saw him through the mechanical function of making a text or an author known. This period knew also the enhancement of Romanticism, the fact that laid to the birth of many theories and translations in the domain of literature, especially poetic translation. An example of this translation is the one used by Edward Fitzgerald (1809-63) for *Rubaiyat Omar Al-Khayyam* (1858). Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792-1822), one of our greatest poets, was a brilliant translator as well. He translated three of the Plato dialogues: *The Banquet (Symposium)* in 1818 and *Ion* in 1821. But his translation of *Phaedo* is lost. The elevation and sophistication of Shelley's prose make his translation much better vehicle for Plato's writing than the rather chatty and colloquial translations current today. Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834) a major writer, critic and poet has translated an important work—Goethe's Faust—in 1821. For many years Dante Gabrial Rossetti (1828-82) worked on English translations of Italian poetry including Dante Alighieri's *La Vita Nuova*, published as the Early Italian Poets in 1861. Thus the 19th century saw an abundance of translations from a variety of languages into English, like the translation of Goethe's work from German into English, and the translation of the *Rubaiyat* of Omar Khayyam—a collection of poems—from Persian into English. The *Bible* was also translated into hundreds of languages all over the world, and many English books and texts were translated into various Indian languages. It is worth noting that word lists and grammatical descriptions of the languages of inhabitants of European colonies were prepared, which eventually facilitated the translation of *Bible*. In regard of 19th century translation activity, Joshua's view is notable:

"The field of translation flourished with strange theories during the nineteenth century. Shelley was cynical towards translation and Coleridge tried to distinguish between fancy and imagination. Fredrich Schleiermacher suggested a separate sublanguage to be used for translation should show faithfulness to the forms and language of the original.

The Victorian translation gave importance to literalness, archaism and formalism. Unlike Dryden and Pope, Victorians wanted to convey the remoteness of the original in time and place. Mathew Arnold for example, gave a literal translation of Homer into English and was criticized for neglecting the spirit of the original work. The Revised and American Standard Versions of the Bible best illustrate the harmful effects of a literalistic Victorian translation." (3-4).

In the twentieth century translation was viewed as a social action by religious and political forces with many societies and organizations created and fostering *Bible* translations into many different languages, including those of primitive and tribal societies. By the second half of the 20th century, accuracy and style was the main criterion in the translation. The political arena of this century saw translations as a political mission, and highly political content was translated from Chinese, Russian, and other Asian and European languages to English, as well as from Canadian, French into English and vice versa. It is worth noting that the translation sexual and religious content in China began in the 80s, and was well received, despite its discouragement during the Cultural Revolution. In the same period, studies on translation became an important course in language teaching and learning at schools. It also saw the development of translation research products, such as Machine Translation and Computer-Assisted Translation (CAT) tools.

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