

Translation as Theory and Praxis: Indigenous Literature of Rajasthan with Special Reference to Vijay Dan Detha's Stories

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ÖZET Çeviri; bir kültürün, bir bölgenin edebiyatını diğer bir kültüre - bölgeye taşır ve karşılıklı kültürel ilişkiyle birlikte güven duygusu oluşmasına katkıda bulunur. Fakat Hindistan örneğinde bölgesel kültürün ürünü olan edebiyatın daha güçlü olan milli kültürün içinde erime tehlikesi vardır. Dolayısıyla, çevirmenin stratejisi hem alt kültür ürününü muhafaza etmek, hem de milli kültürle barışık olmalıdır. Yani çeviri metin Hintlilerde bu eserin kendilerine ait olduğunu hissettirirken, aynı zamanda da bir bölge kültürüne ait olduğunu göstermelidir. İngilizce'nin farklı kullanımları olduğu gibi, teori ve pratikte bir Rajasthan metni de bir Pencap metninden daha farklı okunmalıdır. Hindistan gibi çok dilli bir ülkede alt kültüre ait ve daha az bilinen Marwari (Rajastanca olarak bilinen dil) dili ve dillerin ürünü olan edebiyat ürünleri ve çevirileri öncelik kazanmaktadır. Bu makalenin amacı; Hindistan özelinde üretilmiş, kültürel anlamda benzerlik taşıyan alt kültüre ait metinleri dikkate alarak, diller arası çeviri metinler üzerinden yerel-bölgesel kültürün önemini vurgulamaktır. Makalenin ilk bölümü çeviri teorisi ve uygulamaları üzerinedir. İkinci bölüm ise, Vijaydan Detha'nın kısa hikaye antolojisi olan *Chouboli* adlı eserini çeviren Christi Merrill'in bir çevirmen olarak durumunu değerlendirecektir. Sonuçta, Christi'nin eserinin önsözünde kendi tecrübesinden yola çıkarak ifade ettiği "etkili bir uygulama olarak çeviri" başlığının bir tartışması yapılacaktır.

ANAHTAR KELİMELER yerel edebiyat, çokdillilik, çeviri çalışmaları, dil içi çeviri çalışmaları, yeni yazın, dil ve kültür topluluklar

ABSTRACT Translation makes the literature of a culture and region known to other regions and establishes a certain credibility and relationship of mutual regard. But in the context of India there is the danger of so called regional literature subsumed into more powerful national culture. Thus the translator's strategy would be to bring out the sense of continuities within the nation as well as the distinct sense of location of the text that has been translated. The readers will have to be convinced of both the fellow Indianness of the translated text as well as of the uniqueness of its location. A *Rajasthani* text has to be read differently from a *Punjabi* text and calls for different kind of theory and practice, also different kinds of Englishes. Thus in a multilingual country like India, the translation of indigenous literature and culture should be treated as a matter of primary national importance in that it would contribute to spreading the knowledge about lesser known social and linguistic groups such as *Marwari* (popularly known as Rajasthani). The present paper is an attempt to look at the nature of interlingual translation practices within India and locate the significance of parallel texts which address different linguistic and cultural communities at large and provide an opportunity to celebrate culture specificity. The first part of the paper addresses the issue of translation as theory and translation as praxis. The second part focuses on Christi Merrill's position as the translator of Vijaydan Detha's short story collection *Chouboli*. It discusses at length Christi's own experiences as expressed in the foreword which she titles, 'translating as a telling praxis'.

KEYWORDS indigenous literature, multi-lingual, translation studies, interlingual translation practices, new writing', linguistic and cultural communities

“Translation is the only art that is like writing.... It is also the highest, most intense form of reading, yet translation is almost by definition the most imperfect of arts of and more than any other form of writing risks self-delusion.”

(Pinsky 2006)¹

Translation of literary works is a particular branch of literature dealing not merely in finding words in one language as substitutes for those of another, dealing not just in finding adequate literary expressions or linguistic constructions corresponding to the language of the original work in the language being translated into, but involving much more—the transfer of aesthetic, cultural, psychological and historical concepts from one language into another. It is undoubtedly a question of translating one culture, one way of life into another. The system of language as we know is inherently dialogic and language and words make sense only in its orientation of intercommunication directed towards the other’s voice in itself and translation locates this translinguistic voice in its approximation to achieve the layers of meanings of a given text in another language.

Translation in fact, opens up a text to other realisms of understanding by re-reading and re-creating by its radical suggestion that all reading is, in fact deconstructive. The more a text is translated or read or interpreted, the greater is its unreadability. The reader/translator finally confronts the moment of aporia when all traces of the text’s materiality get dissolved. The practical task of the translator starts in this unreadability. He reads between the lines to inhabit the aporia, or the inbetweenness- to discover a new meaning.

The role of translation can hardly be over-emphasized in a multi-lingual country like India with 22 languages recognized in the eighth schedule of the constitution, 15 different scripts, hundreds of mother tongues and thousands of dialects. One can very well say that India’s is a translating consciousness and the very circumstances of their real existence and the conditions of their everyday communication have turned Indians bilingual if not multilingual. One can even add without exaggeration that India would not have been a nation without translation and we keep translating almost unconsciously from our mother – tongues when we converse with people who use a language different from ours.²

In a multilingual country like India, the translation of indigenous literature and culture should be treated as a matter of primary national importance in that it would

1. Robert Pinsky, ‘On Translation’ *Literary Review*; Research Library, 50/1 (Fall 2006), p.7.

2. Asha Makhecha, ‘Problems of (Cultural) Translation; Translating Gujarati Poetry in Piyush Raval (ed.), *Translation Studies Contemporary Perspectives on Postcolonial and Subaltern Translations: The Task of the Postcolonial Translator* (New Delhi: Viva Books, 2012), pp 213-214.

contribute to spreading the knowledge about lesser known social and linguistic groups such as *Marwari* (In a broader sense *Rajasthani*). Furthermore, such a project would 'not only make other voices heard but also broaden the cultural base of English, the other cultures and peoples of Rajasthan in a multilingual discourse' This translation initiative would encompass not only the translation of literature, but can also introduce and incorporate indigenous Indian languages into the education system. Translations of indigenous literature addresses issues in a different way each time we translate depending upon our preference of reading, the target group (whether it is primarily for Indian readership or global consumption) and the possibility and prospects of dialogue between languages.

The present paper is an attempt to look at the nature of interlingual translation practices within India and locate the significance of parallel texts which address different linguistic and cultural communities at large and provide an opportunity to celebrate culture specificity. The first part of the paper addresses the issue of translation as theory and translation as praxis. The second part focuses on Christi Merrill's translation of *Chouboli*. It discusses at length Christi's own experiences as expressed by her in the foreword titled, 'translating as a telling praxis'.

But there are also certain basic and necessary questions that all of us as students and practitioners of translation studies should attempt to answer-, like who can translate and for whom? Which text or genre to translate? Who is the reader? How are the readers going to receive it? How should one translate? How to approach a text in translation? And finally ---- Is unlearning compulsory? Answers to these questions must take care of a larger question whether we translate to construct a national, literary and cultural landscape or to patronize, appropriate, marginalize or destroy the culture and beauty of the source language³

(I)

According to Piotr Kuhiwczak and Karin Littau, translation maintains a priori dialogue between the inside and the outside, not only of disciplines, but of cultures, languages and histories. In other words, we practice translation each time we theorise connection.⁴ Unlike in literary studies, where criticism and creative writing have, until very recently,

3. Foucault, Michel and Gilles Deleuze, "Intellectuals and Power." In *Language, Counter-Memory*, in D. F. Bouchard (ed.), *Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews* [translated by S. Simon] (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977), p.208.

4. Piotr, Kuhiwczak and Karin Littau. (eds.), *A Companion to Translation Studies* (Clevedon Hall and New York, MultiLingual Matters Ltd., 2007), pp.6-7.

only rarely been taught side by side in the same department, in translation studies it has been much more difficult to separate translation theory from translation practice. There is no point pretending that there has never been a conflict between translation and translating, but the gap between the two has never been vast because one simply cannot ignore translation practice while working in translation studies. There are moments, however, when practicing translators wonder why there is not a better interface between theory and practice. There is a dire need to initiate a more fruitful dialogue between the theorists and the practitioners. This gap has less to do with entrenched attitudes than different institutional set-ups. According to Wagner we treat the two activities – academic translation studies and professional translation practice – as two separate industries, each with its own priorities and constraints, each with its own production line and targets. He feels it is important that something is done to break up the rigid institutional boundaries, so that translators and translation studies scholars can work more closely together.⁵ Translations, transcreations, (P. Lai's term) and adaptations are all forms of cultural transactions between one Indian language and another which characterize literary histories in India. They occur in almost all Indian languages - oral and written, recognized and marginalized - and form an important part of multilingual reality of Indian life. At the same time, each Indian language also has its own tradition of translation which may proceed from or reflect a range of situations such as the philosophical understanding of language operating in each linguistic community; the interaction that each linguistic community i.e. a group of Hindi – speaking, Rajasthani – speaking or Punjabi – speaking people has with currents outside its local domain and so on. Similarly the strategies of translation employed in the history of each language, although far from uniform, may also reflect how the activity of translation is perceived – whether adaptation and other such stepsiblings of translation have legitimacy or not. The history of the nature of interlingual translation practices within India constitute a fertile field that has hitherto not figured in the English – dominated discourse of translation.⁶

The history of translation and its practice in India from Vedic times in rewritings and localizations of *Kavyas*, *Puranas*, *Itihasa-puranas* to the contemporary postcolonial era in Indian English literature, are more in tune with translation as *anuvad* (saying after) suggesting a temporal movement.⁷ Sanskrit based word for translation in Hindi, (*anuvaad*)

5. E. Wagner, "A Tale of Two Industries," *The Linguist*, 45/2 (2006), pp.48-49.

6. Rita Kothari, 'Bengali into Gujrati; Unequal Transactions.' *Journal of the School of Language, Literature and Culture Studies* (Delhi: Pencraft, JNU Autumn 2004) p.35.; Rita Kothari, *Translating India; The Cultural Politics of English* (Manchester: St. Jerome Publishing, 2003).

7. Piyush Raval, (ed.), *Translation Studies Contemporary Perspectives on Postcolonial and Subaltern Translations: The Task of the Postcolonial Translator* (New Delhi: Viva Books, 2012), p.69.

treats the text not as a single piece to be carried across but as one of the many ongoing performances as a 'telling in turn'. *Ramcharit Manas* has been reworked several times and all versions make it more relevant to new age and idiom. For the past century and more, literary production in Indian *bhashas*(languages) has been narrated and evaluated by English standards that make more sense in the European rather than the South Asian context. According to Meenakshi Mukherjee, 'In a country as multilingual as India, translation in the English sense- is so integral to the many interconnected traditions that comprise the broad category of Indian literature that it cannot be said to be a separate activity.'⁸

Thus in India, translation has always been known as 'new writing' in contrast to the western outlook towards it as 'derivative' or 'subsidiary'. Translation makes the literature of a culture and region known to other regions and establishes a certain credibility and relationship of mutual regard. But in the context of India there is also the danger of so called regional literature subsumed into a more powerful national culture. Thus the translator's strategy would be to bring out the sense of continuities within the nation as well as the distinct sense of location of the text that has been translated. The readers will have to be convinced of both the fellow Indianness of the translated text as well as of the uniqueness of its location. A *Rajasthani* text has to be read differently from a *Punjabi* text and calls for different kind of theory and practice, also different kinds of Englishes. The translation have to alter the readers to specific regional location, the class, caste, gender and specific locales in their distinct linguistic cultures. Thus the task of the translator is to create an Indian domesticity as well as maintain relational distance between the texts from different languages. The question still remains whether the translator is getting the accent right and does not end up addressing no body at all.

Moreover the study of a text written in an Indian language is far from getting the institutional sanction it deserves. Most English literature departments follow conservative British European traditions (presently progressive departments are including Russian, Latin American, and African literature) and exclude from the sphere of literary study those very cultural products that are most relevant to our reality. The last 5-6 years have witnessed translation activities flourishing and literature departments showing an inclination to include it in the curriculum along with the government bodies and publishers becoming more receptive to translations.

Indian literature is seldom an important part of institutionalized literary study at the university level. As such some of the primary requirements while translating from

8. Sujit Mukherjee, *Translation as Recovery* (Delhi: Pencraft International, 2004), pp.78-79).

Rajasthani (from the name of a state, Rajasthan) to Hindi or English is to retain differences to demonstrate the heterogeneous nature of Indian and Indian languages and literatures, to retain the local terms to add local colour even if the word has the same source in all the languages (*Katha* has taken this initiative), demonstrate ways in which the languages and culture have differentiated themselves from each other, retain proper nouns, cultural markers

(Kinship terms and religious terms), and also spelt the way people of that region would in English. Rather regional terms have been pollinated into the texts in order to give them their distinct locations and local cultures speak in its own term, and create their own English to suit the textual needs. Regional literatures (or as Devy calls them ‘*Bhasha*’) share a two-fold relationship with the source language of translation. Translated literature is already a part of the source culture and language and after translation it also members itself in the target group.

The flourishing of Translation projects immediately after the Independence since the Nehruvian era had been aligned with projections of nationalist ideology to prevent an imaginative ‘holistic’ picture of India as one uniform nation to the manes, obliterating and homogenizing the irreducible differences among different cultures, languages and people. The task of translation of critical and cultural theory, has not so far pursued at a greater scale in various Indian languages, becomes significant in this respect, to carry the discourse forward outside the Eurocentric centre, i.e. translation practice as a tool to enrich the analytical precision of one’s own language and habits of thoughts.

According to Piyush Raval:

“Defining translation as teaching which can stimulate reading, (in the academic sense that Anthony Appiah calls ‘thick translation’), the purpose behind translating from the regional language to English would be largely academic in nature, since at the altar of academics most translations are produced and consumed in quantity, but it also seeks to transcend the institutionalization of practice and products of translation through the use of the vernacular for wider dissemination into social, cultural, political and other domains. The history of translation in India has always been open to thoughts concealed in ‘alien’ texts to assimilate them within itself and enrich it, and give back her thoughts to the world; therefore the present call to translate indigenous literature expects to receive a more cerebral response.”⁹

Theoretical frameworks cannot be applied to a literary body without substantial examples and due to lack of translations from *Rajasthani* to English; it has always

9. Piyush Raval, (ed.), *Translation Studies Contemporary Perspectives on Postcolonial and Subaltern Translations*. p.73.

remained a neglected area. The political boundaries of linguistic states in India do not coincide with their cultural boundaries due to the complex history of social and cultural formations in India. This has meant that the translational discourses of the Indian subcontinent and in this case Rajasthan have been rendered unintelligible in our institutional climate of debates and dialogues.

(II)

Indian art of story-telling is not easy to define or theorize, because of the mind baffling range of stories that the Indian mind has lived through centuries. This does not give way to any monologic or essential zed frame, which we might describe as patently 'Indian'. In fact the very term 'Indian' is problematic as India is not a culturally homogenous nation space. The problem of defining Indian short story becomes all the more confounding as folk tales associated with different geo-cultural regions of India cannot be overlooked. The folktales of a region have a number of contrasting tales that are in dialogue with each other, yet each has its own chronotype in the Bakhtinian sense says Trikha. It was during the late 1940s that *Rajasthani* short story writing began to experience some prominence. Vijay Dan Detha, more popularly known as '*Bijji*' is a pioneer and has provided a new lease of life to the form and content of the short story. He has added new dimensions by adapting tales from the rich folklore to give them contemporary cultural insinuations.¹⁰

Dialects of *Rajasthani* are widely spoken but its grammar and lexicon have never been institutionally standardized and it is not among the recognized official languages of the Indian constitution. Presently more than 2 crore people speak *Rajasthani* and *Rajasthani* literature is being written in local dialects such as *Marwari*, *Dhudhani*, *Malwi*, *Mewati*, *Bagri*, *Uajdi* etc. *Marwari* has a strong influence of Sanskrit, Prakrit, Arabic and Persian and is mostly the dialect of Jodhpur, Bikaner and Jaisalmer. George Abraham Grierson (1908) was the first scholar who gave the nomenclature '~*Rajasthani*' to the language, which was earlier known through its various dialects. Today, however, Sahitya Akademy, National Academy of Letters and University Grants Commission recognize it as a distinct language. Since 1947, several movements have been going on in Rajasthan for its recognition, but unfortunately it is still considered a "dialect" of *Hindi*. The small, literate class which speaks *Rajasthani* is only taught Hindi in school, while a major portion of Rajasthan's population remains illiterate to this date. 'And literary

10. Pradeep Trikha, "Alternative Traditions; Rajasthani Tales as Artefacts" *Journal of the School of Language, Literature and Culture Studies* (Delhi: Pencraft, JNU Autumn, 2006), pp.120-121.

Rajasthani magazines and publishers are few. New ideas as expressed in *Hindi* prose and poetry have had only a moderate influence on the literary tradition of Rajasthan. It remains overwhelmingly oral in character'. The interrelated development of written and oral narratives is worth considering when drawing a new literary map of the Subcontinent. This is an assertion that will hardly surprise anthropologists and other students of oral traditions. But, keeping in mind text-based and equally text-based studies of the written traditions of South Asia, it is important to emphasize how the content and the form of the texts we study are influenced by the interplay between written and oral traditions.

Detha prefers to call his mother tongue *Rajasthani* rather than *Marwari* (as he wants his tales to be part of a broader pan-*Rajasthani* identity). Detha's decision to write in the daily *bol-chal* (language of conversation) of Rajasthan rather than the national language *Hindi* right from the start was a daring move politically and aesthetically in contrast to Ngugi who renounced English after building an international reputation and switching over to Gikuyu. It is worth noticing that during the 1950s and early 80s these dialects flourished in *Rajasthani* creative writing; before the 1940s *Dingal* and *Pingal* were the popular forms of creative expression. Pradeep Trikha mentions the three classifications as proposed by C.P. Deval, a progenitive *Rajasthani* poet;

- (a) Works based on folk motifs, whose main exponents are Vijay Dan Detha and Satya Prakash Joshi.
- (b) Works based on classical *Dingal* vocabulary, metre and rhythm. Major exponent is Narayan Singh Bhati.
- (c) Works of the recent writers, often experimenting with various forms and use of language. Deval, Pawan Arora, Premji Prem to name the few.

The literary tradition of *Rajasthani* short story, he says implies narrating which dramatizes a situation where a group of people is, for one reason or another, called upon to exchange stories. But what needs an explanation, or at least an exploration is the survival of this oral tradition in contemporary times. Detha, an iconoclast storyteller, infuses his orature with Rajasthan's rich storytelling traditions. He has a gift for picking the most provocative and compelling stories from the landscape of Rajasthan and recreating them in a literary form as engaging and daring as his oral sources.

In 1950-52, Detha read and was inspired by the great literature of 19th century Russia. 'I thought if I didn't return to my village and write in *Rajasthani*, I would remain a mediocre writer,' he recalls. By then he had already written 1300 poems and 300 stories, apart from criticism, in Hindi. In 1959 Detha returned to Borunda and was inspired to "garland the age-old *Rajasthani* folklore with story writing skills". Writing was so easy

for me, like singing is for the koel, or dancing for the peacock. It is only after people started liking my stories that I became conscious of my writing,' Detha says. His son Kailash Kabir translated two books – *Duvidha* and *Uljhan* – into Hindi which brought recognition for Detha. In 1974, the Sahitya Akademi officially recognized *Rajasthani* language, and Detha got the first award. Till date he has written more than 800 short stories in *Rajasthani*. Using the voices of wise shepherds, foolish kings, crafty ghosts, clever princesses, honest thieves, talking necklaces, and amorous snakes, Detha manages to make their words come vibrantly alive. His stories grapple with contemporary concerns and age-old dilemmas and blur the lines between rural and urban, ancient and contemporary, to pose situations that find echoes across languages, cultures and ages.

Detha's stories may grow out of a three sentence remark he had heard, a folk remedy for chasing away a fever, as short and enigmatic as the children's English folk song 'London Bridge is Falling Down' (the dilemma), or even an idiomatic expression, says Christi Merrill. At times it becomes very difficult to match and transform Detha's oral versions with zesty turns of phrase and lively atmosphere he creates while performing. Detha deftly combines modern literary technique with traditional story telling conventions to create written versions of stories he has heard from friends, family and neighbours, versions compelling and delightful.¹¹

Christi Merrill who has translated two volumes of *Chouboli*, says 'When I was introduced to Detha's work I volunteered to look for stories to translate into English that would offer young language learners something less alienating than the usual colonial era fare of daffodils and snow (both inappropriate to imagine in the arid deserts of Rajasthan)'. She wanted to create an English language primer that grew from local knowledge systems, the students had grown up with. *Katha* in this context is doing a significant job in its insistence on including *bhasha* words that have made their way into the everyday English of readers, without italicizing or glossing or apologizing.

Christi felt it necessary to challenge the English reader, in much the same way that Kailash Kabir had challenged his Hindi readers, by creating versions of quintessentially *Rajasthani* colloquial expressions close enough to the literal to indicate the particular context inspiring the readers, while still conveying enough of the figurative meaning to communicate more than local colour. A significant problem for a story writer like Detha lies in his location and position either of an author or a folklorist, unless he proves

11. A Christi Merrill, "Are We the "folk" in This Lok?: Usefulness of the Plural in Translating a Lok -katha." in Anisur Rahman (ed.), *Translation Poetics and Practice* (Delhi: Creative Books, 2002). pp 72-73.

himself in no way derivative, he cannot be considered as a true author. But this cannot take us away from the main goal and with Detha's stories; the act of translation says Christi is done with the purpose to keep storytelling alive and to make the written text as yet one more performance of a story in a tradition necessarily various and multiple.

The major challenge for a translator of Detha's stories lies in retaining the ability to combine the rollicking irreverence of folktales with the polish of literary stories with simplicity and elegance that can make sense to young native *Rajasthani* speakers. The problem lies in capturing the dynamism of folk culture and to make the written version convey all the complexity and energy of oral versions. Performing the story along with a rhyming *chougou*, a nonsensical sing-song rhyme that pairs falling goats with stolen turbans, simply to put listeners in a storytelling mood, which also marks the transition from everyday speech to the language of performance, beseeching a local deity to bless their proceedings, narrating like an old fashioned storyteller, discourse that makes use of local idioms, along with a combination of modern techniques of short story like details to create atmosphere, commentary included in the form of stray comments to provide irony, balance between the urban and the rural, the contemporary and the traditional are among the numerous nuances to be taken care of.¹²

For the translator there is also the major challenge of playing with *Rajasthani* formulations that somehow make Hindi readers feel close to *Rajasthani*, while also hinting at the distance between the two. There also lies the challenge of rendering local idioms and narrative conventions in a manner that retains its unpretentious vibrancy. Merrill's success as a translator lies in her skill at inventing new innovative colloquial formulations that actually brings alive the performance. Detha's versions of the stories told by aunts, potters, peasants, servants, thieves, holy men slides into the written and moves from oral to written and back to oral in the similar fashion of *Vaat'*, a word from the Sanskrit word '*Vaarta*' (talk) which means dialogue or talk, a category in *Rajasthani* which transcends the distinction between fiction and non-fiction, gossip, moral inquiries, a mixture of story and a personal anecdote. I would like to substantiate this argument with an example from the story of a thief caught stealing who is asked by his ruler to choose his own punishment either endure a hundred shoe lashes or to eat a hundred raw onions. A political activist Shankar Singh narrated the story but his version concluded with an added mischievous remark, 'The freedom to choose between the two penalties has him so muddled.... That's how democracy works in India. We are given two bad choices and then told that we have the total freedom.' The translator here is no less than an author who instills new life and

12. A Christi Merrill and Kabir Kailash, *Chouboli and Other Stories Vijaydan Detha* (New Delhi: Katha, 2010), pp.10-14.

meaning to the story, Detha himself heard the story from a populist politician Khubha Ram who used it to remind people that they were the leaders now and as an elected leader he was merely their servant. Thus the story travelled from a politician to a writer, the political activist and back to the translator as writer, each and every time in a peculiar way of carrying and creating newer versions.

We need to rethink and reshape our reading of folk tales because reducing an ongoing creative process to the text of a single performance does not fully account for the story's multiple origins- oral, or otherwise. The reason as Albert Lord suggests is our discomfort with multiplicity. In oral tradition, he claims, 'the words 'author' and 'original' have either no meaning at all or a meaning quite different from the one usually assigned to them'.

Detha's particular writing gift lies precisely in the ways in which he plays with and against the storytelling tradition. He retains enough elements of it to create a fuller context for the rhetorical and political transgressions he makes, so that the departures represent a critique of the tradition from within. Such artistry is difficult to appreciate if we cannot tolerate multiplicity. The stories of Detha represent a particularly fruitful relationship with the various *lok* brought together in the stories-*lok* not only in the sense of people or folk but also in the sense of worlds. The question whether Detha's short stories should be read as folktales or folktales be read as stories matters less as we strive to find answer to the Hindi translation of '*lok katha*' wherein the question of who, what and where still remains pertinent.

People may identify as being in a group because they are part of the same family, ethnicity, race, nation, and hence all of us are folk. Therefore, folklore functions in part to create a sense of belonging; and thus to know our identity, we must know the identity of the teller of the tale, gradually insisting on holding an individual responsible for the collective. Detha's stories are mostly read in the context of other folk tales in the *Rajasthani* oral tradition, and only after we read them in the context can we hear a parodic edge to the narrator's voice. These are the moments where Detha uses traditional storytelling conventions not only to comment on the events within the story, but to comment on the traditions themselves. Himself an artist, he irrevocably crosses the line between the storyteller (in the play) and the writer (in reality).

Therefore contemporary theory must situate itself not outside interpretation, but in hidden places of negotiation and exchange", writes Stephen Greenblatt in "Towards a Poetics of Culture"¹³ The translation of epics like *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* in India,

13. Stephen Greenblatt, "Towards a Poetics of Culture" in H. Aram Veesser (ed.), *The New Historicism* (London: Routledge, 1989), pp.1-14.

Indonesia, Thailand, and Malaysia reveals that in each case some legend or story has been overturned on its head, some new relationship recovered or discovered, some new dimension added. Translation thus aims at examining cultural sedimentation as and when they come across and like an external wayfarer moves in search of a perfect habitation.

The potential of translation can be fully realized once we are able to approach literary text as agents as well as participants in a cultural conversation re-presenting the inconclusive parameter of understanding that would make significant strides towards a new domain of culture studies. Better human relations will result from readers with widely differing views sharing and comparing their responses through strategies of interpretation and 'reading'. The main reason for studying texts through appropriating many 'Othernesses' is to expand the mind by introducing it to the immense possibilities in human actions and thoughts, 'to see and feel what other people have experienced, to know what they have known in their own ways'. To be sure, the process of translation is everywhere. It is an essential activity of life itself. It endlessly extends and thus endlessly defers the implication of the original. The movement of the 'signification' adds something which results in the face that there is always more. Like Detha himself who says, 'I write because

"The seed of a story was contained not in the words themselves but in something even more intangible, something we each had access to.Language is not made by professors of linguistics but by the illiterate rustic folk. I learnt the art of language from them. I am still paying Guru Dakshina..."

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