



Trans-Creation in Music

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Abstract

Trans-creation is an unusual kind of Translation that protects the basic intent from one language and conveys it in another language. The word "Trans-creation" is the result of amalgamating two words translation and creation. In short, we can also call it as creative translation. To transfer the creative elements of a work into another culture or language is what is termed as Trans-creation. Though, Trans-creation is chiefly a term used in the boundaries of advertising and marketing area, it is definitely not something new to the field of Art and Aesthetics, especially the Performing Arts. Whenever, artists have craved to bring out new perspectives to an existing piece or Art work, one of the results has been either translation or re-creation or both which is Trans-creation. Artists have a mind set to focus on new things, adaptations and revivals based on the audiences they address across the world. In the present paper, would like to bring about an analysis of how music and literature have been adapted by some of the celebrated Kannada poets like B M Srikanthaiah (translations of English poetry), G S Shivarudrappa (translations of Bengali poems) and some of the *Vaggeyakaras* like Tyagaraja and Dikshitar in the Carnatic Music arena.

Keywords: B M Srikanthaiah - English GeethegaLu, Dr. G S Shivarudrappa, Rabindranath Tagore's Gitanjali

Introduction

The word "Trans-creation" is the result of amalgamating two words, translation and creation. In short, we can also call it as a creative translation. To transfer the creative elements of a work into another culture or language is what is termed as "Trans-creation". Trans-creation is re-inventing the origin of another version. Though, Trans-creation is chiefly a term used in the boundaries of advertising and marketing area, it is definitely not something new to the field of Art and Aesthetics, especially the Performing Arts. Whenever, artists

have craved to bring out new perspectives to an existing piece of Art work, one of the results has been either translation or re-creation or both, which is Trans-creation. Artists, have a mind set to focus on new things, adaptations and revivals based on the audiences they address across the world. Trans-creation, in the realm of music, is definitely an extension of Translation as in any other field, and it is inevitable. It could be from the point of view of only music literature, only music or both.

The concept of Trans-creation has its origin from the term Translation. Though, Translation studies in the field



of Art emerged for the first time as an academic discipline in the Western nations during the late 1970s and 1980s, Nobel Laureate Rabindranath Tagore(1861-1941) perhaps, began the discussion of translation in India in 1913 itself. In fact, his world acclaimed work '*Gitanjali*' (*Song- Offerings*) is considered to be a miracle of translation and it was this publication that fetched him the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1913. Roman Jakobson, an American linguist and a literary theorist and the most celebrated, influential linguist of twentieth century has mentioned three types of Translations - intralingual, interlingual and intersemiotic. But Tagore seems to have contemplated, yet another kind of translation which very closely resembles the concept of Trans-creation. This type of translating was used by Tagore to translate *Gitanjali* poems in 1912 and later adopted by Vladimir Nabokov (1899-1977) and by Samuel Beckett (1906-1989) for interpreting their works into English from their mother - tongues. This type of translation has been called self-translation, auto translation or trans-creation by scholars.

Trans-creation in music can be analyzed in 2 ways as follows:

a) From the Literary Perspective : Whenever a poem is written, there is a cultural background behind each of these creations. Each poet/poetess belonging to a particular region is influenced by his/her surroundings and inspired by the happenings that are witnessed by him/her. The ideas, customs, traditions and social behavior of every region is unique. The norms and principles that bind each society are unparalleled. In the process of Trans-creation, artists adapt a message from one language to another,

while maintaining its native intent, style, tone and context. An excellent Trans-creation evokes the same feelings and passes on the same logical consequence in the target language as it is in the source language. It involves not only framing a new message from one language to another but also aesthetically placing the words in such a way that it resonates through the target audience.

b) From the Music Perspective - Music manifests itself in myriad styles ranging from traditional to folk. Each of the styles has a rich ancient history and geographical significance, a set of admirers and music roots. The rhythm (tala), the octave (sthayi), the tune (raga) and the dynamics (gamakas) of each region are quite unique and indigenous. It is interesting to note that each style follows the same scale of notes, but the dynamics adapted in each of the genre gives rise to a plethora of emotions in its own way supporting the lyrical content that has been translated. Here, the process of Trans-creation happens, from the point of view of music rendering.

Anatomical Study of Trans-creation from the point of view of music

Translation in its literary sense means conversion of text from one language to another. In the music per se, text involves the saptha swaras as per the Indian music (S R G M P D N) or the seven notes (C D E F G A B/ do re me fa so la ti). Using these notes, we arrive at various ragas or scales. If at all, we look at, just translation, it happens only from the point of view of literature of the song and not in its tune because music language is universal. But when we think of Trans-creation, music whenever recreated whether from the literary aspect or music or both, definitely



undergoes a transformation in its rendering, irrespective of its words translated. The seven notes and the words could still be the swap of language, but the approach of music of each region is indigenous. A solid example for this type of an adaptation can be seen in the rendering of Basavanna's vachana - Nudidare muttina haradante irabeku. These verses are beautifully festooned to the tune of Edelweiss by some artists of Karnataka. The Edelweiss lyric was originally tuned in 1959 for the Broadway production of Sound of Music for the character Captain Georg Von Trapp as a mark of Austrian patriotism when he was forced to join the navy of Nazi Germany. Edelweiss is actually a white flower that is found in the Austrian Alps. Captain Georg sings this song as a farewell to his homeland Austria, symbolizing his loyalty by recalling the flower of his nation. In this example, the context of the song, the lyrical text is entirely different, whereas the movements of notes are forged. However, when rendered, the dynamics reflect the native approach of each region.

The process of Trans-creation is an ongoing process especially in the area of Manodharma Sangeetha- a branch of study in Carnatic Music which deals with improvisation. In Carnatic Music, impromptu rendition can be seen both in composing and also in raga delineation. The repetitions, variations and alternate germinal motifs with far flung ideas make up the Raga Alapana (improvisation). According to Madhu Vasudevan in his book "M D Ramanathan meaningful pauses" - *The art of organizing sounds and silences in meaning patterns is achieved in Indian Music, be it Carnatic or Hindusthani, through the delineation or exposition of*

Ragas. This can be thoroughly witnessed during any jugalbandi concert, wherein both the artists of their respective genre trans-create the similar lines by emphasizing their native approach in their renditions.

Few examples that explain the process of Trans-creation

a) The hymn "*Lead Kindly light*" was written by John Henry Newman in 1833 AD. The poem was titled "*The Pillar and the Cloud*". The lyrics of this poem were written when Newman was a young priest. While he was travelling in Italy he fell sick for a while, before setting sail to England. In the strait of Bonifacio, he wrote this poem when he was becalmed in the fog for a week. These words which were an intense outlet of his deep emotion of helplessness, turned out to become a hymn in course of time. There has been 3 to 4 version of tunes to which it is sung and popularly heard:

Tune of Lux Benigna composed by John Bacchus Dykes in 1865. Dykes was an English clergyman and also a hymn writer.

Tune of **Alberta** composed by William Harris(1883-1973), an English organist and composer **Choral Anthem** by John Stainer, (1840-1901), English composer and organist **Lux in Tenebris** (means Light in Darkness in Latin) by Arthur Sullivan (1842-1900), English composer and operatic collaborator. Another version by Audrey Assad, American singer-songwriter and contemporary Christian music artist.

This hymn has been trans-created into Kannada by one of the iconic poets of yesteryears Sri. B M Srikanthiah in 1921 in his collection known as "English GeethegaLu" The



poem is titled "Prarthane" followed by lines "KarunALu baa beLake". It has been excellently tuned by one of the well known composers, Sri Mysore Ananthaswamy. The raga chosen for this song in the Carnatic style is based on Mohana or Bhup of Hindusthani style

Lead Kindly Light

- John Henry Newman

Lead, kindly light, amid the encircling gloom,
Lead thou me on;
The night is dark, and I am far from home;

Lead thou me on;
Keep thou my feet: I do not ask to see
The distant scene: one step enough for me.

I was not ever thus, nor prayed that thou
Shouldst lead me on;
I loved to choose, and see my path; but now
Lead thou me on.
I loved the garish day, and, spite of fears,
Pride ruled my will: remember not past years.

So long thy power hath blest me, sure it still
Will lead me on,
O'er moor and fen, o'er crag and torrent, till
The night is gone,
And with the morn those angel faces smile,
Which I have loved long since, and lost a while.

b) "**Character of a Happy Life**" written by Sir Henry Wotton depicts the formula for leading a happy contented life. According to Wotton, any life bound by truth and honesty and unaffected by any kind of flattery or criticism is the key to attain freedom. The poet is of the opinion that, following some of these life styles, makes the person a Lord of himself. The corresponding translation by Sri B M Srikanthiah is "Eno sukhiyo taanu, huttinali kalikeyali, innobbaniccheyanu, duDiyadiruvavanu". This has been beautifully tuned in raga

with slight touches of Kakali Nishada which otherwise is not found in boundaries of this Raga. This deviation from the main scale could be assumed as a part of Trans-creation intentionally composed to evoke the emotions.

ಪ್ರಾರ್ಥನೆ

- ಬಿ. ಎಚ್. ನ್ಯೂಮನ್

ಕರುನಾಳು ಬಾ ಬೆಳಕೆ ಮುಸುಕಿದಿ ಮಬ್ಬಿನಲಿ
ಕೈ ಹಿಡಿದು ನಡೆಸೆನ್ನನು ||
ಇರುಳು ಕತ್ತಲೆಯಾ ಗವಿ ಮನೆ ದೂರ ಕನಿಕರಿಸಿ
ಕೈ ಹಿಡಿದು ನಡೆಸೆನ್ನನು

ಹೇಳಿ ನನ್ನಡಿ ಇಡಿಸು ಬಲು ದೂರ ನೋಟವನು
ಕೇಳಿದೊಡನೆಯೆ ಸಾಕು ನನಗೊಂದು ಹೆಜ್ಜೆ
ಮೊನ್ನೆ ಇಂತಿರದಾದೆ ನಿನ್ನ ಬೇಡದೆ ಹೋದೆ
ಕೈ ಹಿಡಿದು ನಡೆಸೆನ್ನನು

ಇಷ್ಟು ದಿನ ಸಲಹಿರುವೆ ಈ ಮೂರ್ಖನನು ನೀನು
ಮುಂದೆಯೂ ಕೈ ಹಿಡಿದು ನಡೆಸದಿಹೆಯಾ?
ಕಷ್ಟದಡವಿಯಿ ಕಳೆದು ಬೆಟ್ಟ ಹೊಳೆಗಳ ಹಾದು
ಇರುಳನ್ನು ನೊಕದಿಹೆಯೆ?
ಬೆಳಗಾಗ ಹೊಳೆಯದೆ ಹಿಂದೊಮ್ಮೆ ನಾನೊಲಿದು
ಈ ನಡುವೆ ಕಳಕೊಂಡ ದಿವ್ಯ ಮುಖ ನಗುತಾ

Desh by the celebrated composer and Violinist Sri Padmacharan. An indepth understanding of both the styles of tune gives two angles of contemplation. In the western style of composition, music is constructed in a simple way to show how life can be made uncomplicated if handled with few simple changes in the life style of a man. However, in the Indian style of music composing, it portrays the difficulty of leading a simple life through its intricate dynamics (gamakas). The first few lines of the poem are as follows:



Character of a Happy Life

How happy is he born and taught
That serveth not another's will
Whose armour is his honest thought
And simple truth his utmost skill

ಸುಖ ಜೀವನ

ಏನು ಸುಖಿಯೋ ತಾನು ಹುಟ್ಟಿನಲಿ ಕಲಿಕೆಯಲಿ
ಇನ್ನೊಬ್ಬನಿಚ್ಛೆಯನು ದುಡಿಯದಿರುವನು
ಒಳ್ಳತನು ಬಗೆವುದೇ ತನ್ನ ಕಾಯುವ ಯಂತ್ರ
ನಿಜದ ನಡತೆಯ ತಂತ್ರ ತನಗನಿಸಿದವನು
- ಬಿ.ಎಮ್. ಶ್ರೀ

Bengali Poems translated into
Kannada

a) The popular piece "**Howdene Uma Howdene**" in kannada written by Rashtrakavi Dr. G S Shivarudrappa is an excellent illustration for the term Transcreation. The inspiration for this song seems to be from the Agomoni and Vijaya Song tradition of the Bengal Folk culture. Nevertheless, the poets of some of these verses are known (usually the poets of folk literature are unknown). Agomoni Vijaya is a well known folk tradition in West Bengal. "Agaman" - the Sanskrit word means 'to come' - These songs herald the coming (*Agomoni*) of Mother Durga. Though it is not a deviated version from the original mythological text, the songs depict Goddess Parvathi in a folk culture, as the daughter of a wealthy king of Himalayas married off to a poor mendicant named Shiva. Menaka, mother of Parvathi being unhappy about this whole event, coerces her husband to invite Parvathi back home to her parental house in the month of August during the onset of Autumn. Now, after Parvathi's arrival, Menaka is unwilling to send her back to a poor man like Shiva even after marriage.

With this as the background, songs composed about her return to her parental home is known as Agomoni songs, while the songs composed about her return to her husband's home are known as Vijaya Songs. The best known composer of these songs was Ramprasad Sen(1720-1781CE), the Sakta poet of West Bengal. In the Bengali version of the poem, Ramprasad Sen very vividly portrays the mind of Menaka as a mother in the following lines "*Giri, when my Uma comes to me, I will not send her back again. Shiva haunts the burning ground and execution places and no thought for home*". Dr. G S Shivarudrappa absorbed this literary movement which took place much before his times and recreated this particular piece for the discerning readers of poetry in Karnataka. His approach reflects the close relationships between daughters and mothers that persists after marriage. The actual lyrics in Bengali language are not found in one particular Agomoni geet. These are the few pieces that closely resembling the meaning and incidences.

- Ebar Amar Uma Ele
- Jao Jao Giri Anite Gouri
- Dekh Giri Dekh Cheye



These are various sequences of Mother Menaka expressing her unpleasantness to her husband. This has been beautifully captured by Dr. GSS and trans-created in one poem that is "**howdene Uma howdene**". The music

ಹೌದೇನೆ ಉಮಾ ಹೌದೇನೆ ?
ಜನವೆನ್ನುವುದಿದು ನಿಜವೇನೆ

ಮಸಣದ ಬೂದಿಯ ಮೈಗೆ ಬಳಿದು ಶಿವ
ಎಲ್ಲೆಲ್ಲೋ ತಿರುಗುವನಂತೆ
ಹೊಟ್ಟೆ ಬಟ್ಟೆಗೂ ಗತಿ ಇಲ್ಲದರೊಲು
ಊರು ಊರೊಲು ತಿರುದುಂಬುವನಂತೆ
ನೀನು ಕೂಡ ಬಂಗಾರದ ಮೈಯಿಗೆ
ಆಬೂದಿಯನೆ ಬಳಿಯುವೆಯಂತೆ

ನಿನ್ನ ತಾಯಿ ನಾನಾಗಿಹ ತಪ್ಪಿಗೆ
ಸಹಿಸ ಬೇಕೆ ಅವಮಾನವನು
ಮತ್ತೆ ನಿನ್ನ ಶಿವ ಕರೆಯಲು ಬರಲಿ
ಮನೆಯೊಳ್ಳು ಉಮೆ ಎನ್ನುವೆನು

- ಡಾ || ಜಿ.ಎಸ್.ಎಸ್

for this is composed in a splendid style with glimpses of Yaman and Maruva Behag to emote the feelings of Menaka towards her loving daughter Parvathi in a folk style.

Is that True Uma? Is that True
What I hear from people
Is that True?

Daubed in the Ashes of the burial ground
There he roams, the whole world around
Uncovered and starved, an orphan he stays
Wandering around from place to place.
And you a damsel of golden lusture,
they say, Will follow his gesture ! || Is that true..

should I, unfortunately, your mother, endure ?
This is an insult, I am sure
Let Shiva come again and call you
I shall say "Uma is not there for you"
- as translated by me

b) Another example of Trans-creation can be seen in the poem "**Nenapu**" also versified by Dr. G.S. Shivarudrappa. This is a soliloquy wherein Krishna visits Vrindavan and recalls all the wonderful moments he spent during his childhood years ago. "Nenapu" has been documented in the compilation of Dr. Shivarudrappa's work "Teerthavani". These verses seem to be an influence drawn from Sri Krishna Kirtana Kabya composed by Boru Chandidas(1408-1433 CE) of West Bengal. Chandidas was deeply inspired by Vishnu Purana and Gita Govindam of Jayadeva. In this work, there is a strong kinship of the folk literature of the time in the style of the lyrics. The extant work has 13 sections

where the poet has created a nomenclature to each section explicitly. However, the last section has not been named by the poet. There is a possibility that Dr.Shivarudrappa's poem "**Nenapu**" is from this last section or may be his own creativity explored to give rise to such a fertile imagination. These verses in kannada are tuned to the raga Hamsanandi, a Raga which instantly sets off a meditative and intense mood. Its equivalent in Hindusthani style is Raag Sohini. The first note here commences on the Shadja of the higher octave which carries a lot of recall value which aptly suits the poem "Nenapu" meaning "Reminiscence".



ನೆನಪು

ಓ ಎಲ್ಲಿದೆ ಬೃಂದಾವನ ತೋರೋ, ಎಲ್ಲಿ ಯಶೋದ ತಾಯಿ
ಎಲ್ಲಿ ನನ್ನ ಆ ಧವಳ ಶ್ಯಾಮಲಿ, ಎಲ್ಲಿದೆ ಮೋಹನ ಮುರಳಿ

Where is Vrindavana ? Where is mother Yashoda ?
where is my fair complexioned Radha ?
Where is my alluring flute?

ಎಲ್ಲಿ ನನ್ನ ಪಿತ ನಂದಗೋಪ, ಮತ್ತೆಲ್ಲಿಹನಾ ಬಲರಾಮ
ಎಲ್ಲಿ ನನ್ನ ಪ್ರಿಯ ಸ್ನೇಹಿತರಿಬ್ಬರು, ಆ ಶ್ರೀಧಾಮ ಸುಧಾಮ

Where is my father Nanda? And where is Balarama?
Where are my two friends? Sridhama and Sudhama

ಯಮುನಾ ತಟದಡೆ ವಂಶಿವಟದಡೆ, ಪ್ರಿಯ ಗೋಪಿ ಜನವೆಲ್ಲಿ
ನನ್ನ ಪ್ರಾಣಸಖಿ ರಾಧಾರಮಣಿಯು, ಹುದುಗಿರುವಳು ಇನ್ನೆಲ್ಲಿ

Near the banks of Yamuna,
Near the Vamshi Vata, (Banyan tree where rasa dance is
performed)

- ಡಾ || ಜಿ. ಎಸ್. ಶಿವರುದ್ರಪ್ಪ

Where are the gopikas?
My soulmate Radha, Where is she hiding?

- as translated by me

In the above examples, we have seen that lyricists and the music composers have been different people. But this attempt towards Trans-creation has led to many new ideas and inventions. It has been explored by two of the Trinities of Carnatic Music namely Saint Tyagaraja and Muthuswamy Dikshitar as well who were the Vaggeyakaras (Lyricist and Music composer both). Some of Saint Tyagaraja's lyrics resemble the verses of Saint Purandaradasa. We can clearly observe the Trans-creation process from Kannada Language to Telugu language. Muthuswami Dikshitar has adopted the Celtic music to his Sanskrit poems which is popularly rendered today as **Notuswaras**. Another, exceptional example of transcreation is the popular song "*Anandolokey*" which is based on **Kayo Sri Gowri** the official anthem of the Kingdom of Mysore under the Wodeyar Dynasty. The Swan Song of Muthuswami Dikshitar "Meenakshi Me mudam" so deeply influenced Rabindranath Tagore that he composed "Basonti He Bhubono Mohini" in Bengali Language. Some of the other Tyagaraja kritis that have inspired Tagore are :

- Dhyaname Varamaina - Bedona Ki Bhashai Re (Bengali version) - Raga Dhanyasi
- Lavanya Rama - E ki Labonye (Bengali version) - Raga Poorna Shadjam
- Nidu charanamule - Baje Koruno Sure (Bengali version) - Raga Simhendramadhyama
- Brindavana Lola - Nilanjana Chaya (Bengali version) - Raga Todi

Conclusion: A syllogism may arise as to the need for trans-creation in the field of music. Firstly, trans-creation is possible or can occur only if there is an eagerness to acquire knowledge. Secondly open mindedness to accept the other culture is another important factor that leads to Trans-creation. It is an approach which starts from adapting the traditional rendering to another genre, keeping in view the cultural background of the target genre in the most collaborative manner. Trans-creation paves way for the exchange of cultural ideas between two regions. Cultural exchange is nothing but sharing of Human emotions. The cultural differences in beliefs, behaviours,



languages, practices and expressions considered unique to the members of a specific ethnicity, race or national origin can be dealt with more composure when Trans-creation is accepted. It is also debated that in the process of Transcreation, the indigenous version is either diluted or completely lost. However, this could be true with the literary aspect, but from the performing arts perspective, it seems to enrich more, than to ruin. The beliefs, rituals, traditions, languages and even the methods followed could be many but the intent of all this is one, which is Tolerance. The realization for Universal Brotherhood and Tolerance for each other is the need of the hour, to make the world a better place to live in.

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