Translating Contexts, Transforming Cultures: A Bengali Adaptation of Mahesh Elkunchwar's *Vāḍā Cirebandī*

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Introduction

In the year 2014, with respect to an independent translation project based on the plays of the Marathi playwright Mahesh Elkunchwar, we went to Natya Shodh Sangsthan[1] in Kolkata for archival research. Besides going through different newspaper clips, articles and manuscripts, the librarian suggested that we should also see the Bengali adaptation of Elkunchwar's signature play *Vāḍā Cirebandī* (The Old-Stone Mansion, 1985) directed by Sohag Sen in 1989. Initially, we were puzzled by this suggestion: in what way was it going to assist our project, which was then centrally concerned with the language of his translated plays, from Marathi to Hindi and English? But, when we went on to watch the recorded play it proved to be a turning point for our research. The socio-cultural and geo-political differences between Elkunchwar's writing of the play and Sohag Sen's stage representation transformed our entire perspective. The seventy-minute adaptation generated new contextual dimensions of translation, beyond the clichéd textual paradigm of language and linguistics. This paper, which is a brief segment of that project, identifies and interrogates the persistent colonial pattern of knowledge representation and production.

The paper examines the dimension of coloniality from two major standpoints. Firstly, the way India continues to drag the colonial baggage of language hierarchies in the form of promoting a limited set of socio-political contexts and ignoring the others. Secondly, the way textual translations that are based on language expressions are problematic in nature. Keeping these problematic aspects in mind, this paper explores the diverse possibilities of delinking and decolonizing translation, transforming it from a colonially systematized process of textual accumulation towards a decolonial process of contextual acculturation.

The paper is divided into three sections followed by a conclusion. The first section, "Problematizing translation," will locate the ways in which diverse forms of colonially configured textual and contextual translations initiated by British officials tend to preserve, and then (mimicked by Indians) carry forward, their ideologies in postcolonial India. Translators used (mis)translations as an ethical apparatus of persuasion to distort and traffic indigenous knowledges to the West and enforce the taboos of Eurocentrism over the natives. Translation not only identified certain Indian perspectives as globally appreciable but also generated a firm hierarchy of expressions that continues to define the parameters of high-intellectualism and low-intellectualism in contemporary India. Thus, in order to dislodge translation as a socio-culturally unifying network, it is important to shift the narrow contours of translation towards a cross-disciplinary space that actively involves our habitual experiences. The second section, "Translation as Transcreation: Mapping the Changes," attempts to analyze these arguments through manifold instances. It will illustrate the efforts being made by different playwrights to destructure and delink translation from existing socio-political hegemonies and restructure it in terms of specific socio-historical and geo-political aspects.

These arguments will be further elaborated in the third section "Transcontextualization of *VāḍāCirebandī* to *Uttarādhikār*: A Critical Study of Sohag Sen's Adaptation." Here, the discrepancies that emerge when a text is translated into a performance will be understood through theatre director Sohag Sen's Bengali direction of Elkunchwar's *Vāḍā Cirebandī*. It will encompass the stage set, the verbal expressions of the characters, the rural representation of West Bengal and costumes. Sen's adaptation disrupts the literary and thematic autonomy of the original author and creates 'an'-other textual narrative that caters to the socio-cultural, geographical and economic experiences of people of Bengal.

I) Problematizing Translation: Identifying Colonial Legacies in Texts and Contexts

In a post-colonial context, the problematic of translation *becomes* a significant site for raising questions of representation, power and historicity. (Niranjana 1)

The relationship between translation, power and historicity is complex. To understand this, it would be pertinent to go through a story. In sixteenth century, the members of the Tupinamba tribe in Brazil devoured a Catholic priest. The eating of the priest was not an illogical act by the tribe; rather it was a form of homage. But, this incident horrified Portugal and Spain, and the term 'cannibal' was immediately associated with the Americas. Originally, the term referred to a group of Caribs in the Antilles and it entered the *Oxford English Dictionary* in 1796 meaning an 'eater of human flesh.' Gradually, it passed into other European languages and further embellished the already existing taboos of European Christianity. Therefore, the name of the tribal community and the name awarded to the people who devour human flesh merged into a single term – 'cannibal' (Nunes 35).

The concept of man-eating was not new to Europe, as Christianity in general rests on consuming the body and the blood of Christ. But, in order to systematize, authenticate and widen the colonially structured global cartographical/cultural dimensions the Europeans did not distinguish between the Tupinamba concept of eating and the taboo, which originated from different sources. This narrative argues that "translation does not happen in a vacuum, but in a continuum" (Bassnett and Trivedi 2) in which the different *avatars* of Eurocentrism function as a "hydra-headed monster" (Wallerstein 22) by translating translation[2] across diverse linguistic and cultural boundaries. Susan Bassnett and Harish Trivedi further contest that "translation is not an innocent, transparent activity but is highly charged with significance at every stage; it rarely, if ever, involves a relationship of equality between texts, authors or systems" (2). One of the major problems of Translation Studies is the conflict between the original author and the translator, which is widely challenged in the contemporary era. In historical perspective, it has been observed that such conflict – the original/translated dichotomy – is a recent phenomenon. Medieval writers and/or translators, for instance, were not affected by this concern (3).

The evolution of the author-centric hegemony could be traced back to the invention of the printing press, which also coincides with the early period of colonial expansion. It ensured that any form of challenge that came from "outside the safety of the hedges and neat brick walls of Europe" is questioned (Bassnett and Trivedi 8). Octavio Paz's philosophical statement maintains that:

> [the world is a heap of texts] each slightly different from the one that came before it*: translations of translations of translations*… No text can be completely original because language itself, in its very essence is a translation – first from the nonverbal world, and then, because each sign and each phrase is a translation of another sign, another phrase. (154, our italics)

This view not only disrupts the colonial hegemony but also rescues translation from the margins and re-positions it within the epistemological mainframe. The theatrical (re)productions of Ratan Thiyam, Kavalam Panikker, DharamvirBharati, Habib Tanvir and P.L. Deshpande not only rely on mere linguistic translations but also transcontextualize the mythological and historical narratives of India with respect to the social environment, cultural community and the geographical space to which they belong. It is important for us to realize that colonialism and translation are symbiotically connected and the latter has been the "central act of European colonization and imperialism" across the globe (Cheyfitz 104). This is the reason why the colonies in the postcolonial era mostly exist as translations, diminishing their indigenous originalities.

According to A. Duranti, culture is something which is "learned, transmitted, passed down from one generation to next, through human actions, often in the form of face-to-face interaction, and, of course, through linguistic communication" (24). In India, counter-hegemonic cultural expressions are reflected through early modern plays like *Tṛtīya Ratna* [(Third Jewel) 1855] by Mahatma Jyotibha Phule and *Nīl Darpan* [(Mirror of Indigo) 1860] by Deenabandhu Mitra. These plays were composed

and enacted as counternarratives to the socio-cultural, political and demographic hegemonies established and practiced by the British, but they were widely underpinned by colonial ideologies that were copied and translated within specific socio-political contexts.

Mahatma Jyotibha Phule's play *Tṛtīya Ratna* talks about a Brahmin priest who was also a faithful servant of the colonizers. He made a lot of money for himself as well for his entire clan by exploiting and threatening a Kunabee (lower agricultural caste) family. Finally, a Christian priest tries to awaken them and makes them aware of their condition of oppression. On the one hand, the play reflects the manner in which precolonial caste and communal differences were violently aggravated by the colonizers; on the other hand, it celebrates the way in which the missionaries transformed the 'redundant and traditional' attitudes of the indigenous natives and 'successfully' helped them disentangle from the existing orthodoxies (Sathe 36). Even if in the play the missionary's effort to liberate Patil (a Kunabee sufferer) and his community from the clutches of the exploitative Brahmins is highly commendable, we may doubt that this was his genuine intention. The history of colonialism would suggest another set of motives.

Bassnett and Trivedi state that "the notion of a colony as a copy or translation of the great European original inevitably involves a value judgement that ranks the translation in a lesser position in the literary hierarchy. The colony, by this definition, is therefore less than its colonizer, its original" (3). This can be observed throughout Mitra's *Nīl Darpan*. This play unravels the "use of translation to create or amass knowledge … a reflex of panopticonism, which can in the extreme become an intelligence operation, a way of reconnoitering a territory, a mode of interrogating informants, and even, so to speak, a mode of spying" (Tymoczko 294).

Nīl Darpan was composed in Bengali in 1860 and was immediately translated into English by Rev. James Long in 1861. It is usually believed that this play widely contributed towards the evolution of the Dramatic Censorship Act of 1876. The English translation did not happen overnight and was structured in a very logical and organized manner which Anuradha Dingwaney and Carol Maier identify as 'translation in the form of violence' (17). The play deals with the exploitation of the Indigo farmers in India. Its English translation was commissioned by W.S. Seton-Karr, the secretary of the government of Bengal. Nandi Bhatia remarks upon this connection by saying: "[…] the government printed five hundred copies of the play. Of these, two hundred were distributed to prominent members of Parliament, philanthropists, Indian officials, and newspaper editors in India and England" (24). The outcome was a systematically planned colonial strategy to manipulate Mitra's anticolonial attitudes and push them into the framework of colonial ideologies. Interestingly, Dinabandhu Mitra did not face any charge, rather he continued to prosper in his postal department job. During 1868-70, the Northeast experienced a massive revolt against the British led by Mizo and Kuki tribes. Mitra played a crucial role as a Postmaster General by assisting the British in suppressing the revolt. His play was later on condemned as anti-British, but Mitra's faith in the "rationality and impartiality" of the English law remained unshaken (Bhatia 25). This attitude clearly emerges in the foreword which he wrote for the English version of the play. He said, "…it is becoming fully evident that these great men will very soon take hold of the rod of justice in order to stop the sufferings which the ryots are enduring from the giant Rahu, the Indigo planters" (qtd. in Bhatia 26). This English foreword bears no resemblance to the original Bengali version which specifically criticizes the British for criminalizing and victimizing the indigo farmers. Through this "commitment to (political) fidelity"[3] the colonial originalism was maintained (Lessig 1166).

Thus, the two anti-colonial plays discussed above were specifically composed and enacted within the legacies of colonialism to appease the front-row colonial audience. The patterns of colonialism which are indoctrinated in Phule's and Mitra's plays have internalized translation from a cultural subject of achievement into a cultural object of epistemic exploitation. This epistemic exploitation in the history of colonialism in India can be dated to Sir William Jones' translation of the Sanskrit romantic play *Abhijñānaśākuntalam* (between 1st century BCE and 4th century CE) into *Sacontala, or The Fatal Ring: An Indian Drama* (1789). His translation made a massive socio-cultural and emotional departure from the original through an apparently small change –excising references to the heroine sweating. It is worth noting that sweating functions as a strong sexual metaphor within the

Indian context. The *KāmaSūtra*[4] reveals that sweating is a traditionally accepted symptom of sexual interest and arousal (Vatsyayana 121). The warm and humid climatic conditions also of course play a role. But, despite his long stay in Calcutta, Sir Jones disowned an essential bodily function in order to pay tribute to conventional Western aesthetic norms.

In this way, a "common translatorial temptation" was promoted "to erase much that is culturally specific [and] to sanitize much that is comparatively odorous" (Bassnett and Trivedi 7). It also generated a neocolonial dimension of Oriental literature by trafficking translations from the East to the West and incorporating Western texts within the Indian socio-cultural paradigm. This occurred through the work of 'Janus-faced Indian translators' (7) such as J.C. Bose, who believed that Bengali literature was "monotonous, platitudinous, convention-ridden and devoid of substance," and that through its contact with English literature "it has become humanized" (118-19).

Some later instances such as Harivansh Rai Bachhan's *King Lear*, Rangeya Raghav's *Hamlet*, *The Merchant of Venice*, and *Macbeth*, and Raghuvir Sahay's *Macbeth* and *Othello* functioned as a clarion call to unsettle the autonomies of "interlingual translation or translation proper" which unanimously functioned "as an interpretation of [colonial] verbal signs by means of some other language […]" (Jakobson 146). Thus, in order to delink the paradigm of translation from both 'external colonialism' and 'internal colonialism'[5] (Tuck and Yang 4) in India, it is important to rethink translation in terms of 'pragmatic equivalence' (Guo 344), i.e. not to isolate it from the diverse socio-cultural, political and emotional concepts of indigenous societies.

II) Translation as Transcreation: Mapping the Changes

Historically, the process of decolonization has always strived to disentangle itself from the metaphysical colonial components that dominate the non-West in the contemporary era. The different colonial modes and motives of translation that have been interrogated and debated in the previous section appear to be a pseudo-reconciliation of the colonial guilt which Janet Mawhinney defines as "moves to innocence" (14). It is a strategy to "remove involvement in and culpability for systems of domination" (14). Translation has played a core role for the West in maintaining its ideological patterns by transferring the colonial epistemological burden onto the native in a very strategic and convincing manner, and we argue that this process needs to be countered through transcreations.

a) From 'UtInterpretes' to 'Rūpāntar': Demetaphorizing Translation

In *De Optimo Genere Oratorum*(46 BCE), Cicero talks about two forms of translation – 'utinterpretes' and 'ut orator' (qtd. in Durdureanu 53). The former, which means literal translation, is very similar to the Indian concept of *bhāṣāntar* or "a conscientious rendering of the language [and] verbal texture of the original" (Dharwadker 359) and the latter, which means translation as a form of creation,appears to be quite identical to the Indian concept of *rūpāntar* or 'a systematic "transformation" that changes the "appearance" of the original in such a way that it does not seem alien or alienating in the target language' (359). The colonizers, their subjects and later the postcolonial advocates of coloniality consciously chose the former to preserve their global superiority.

The process of 'translation as creation' systematically substitutes the original cultural codes and establishes an epistemic multiplex (Acharya) through identifying the specific historical-cultural and local-cultural differences between the source and target language. This makes the process of translation intercultural rather than interlingual and "assimilates canonical Western and Indian texts to the […] contemporary experience" (359). Every community possesses specific cultural patterns and "uses a particular language as its means of expression" (Newmark 94). Therefore, the translator functions as a transcultural mediator between communities. This generates a dialectical relation between the source and the target culture, and the translator engages in a 'struggle for symbols' (St-Pierre 257) which disentangle the platform of translation from the existing colonial metaphors.

Contextual diversities, which play an important part in the movement towards intercultural translations, cannot be accommodated within a universal and singular parameter. Goodwin and Duranti

argue that "[it] does not seem possible at the present time to give a single, precise, technical definition of *context*, and eventually we might have to accept that such a definition is not possible" (2). So, context, or to be specific, the decolonized context, does not limit itself within universalized ideologies but "is infinite in some sense" (Andler 281). This infinity not only disestablishes the geographical, socio-political, communal and cultural hierarchies, but also encompasses specific cultural norms, languages and target audiences. The next subsection will reflect upon plays which have been episodically transcreated and enacted from different Indian historical and mythological (con)texts.

b) Transcreating Episodes: Rethinking Texts as Performative Contexts

Indian history and mythology have always functioned as prominent mediain preserving and propagating indigenous socio-cultural elements since the colonial era. But, until the beginning of the postcolonial era, they have mostly survived as imitated theatrical adaptations and have often experienced "a [colonially sponsored] conscious act of selection, assemblage, structuration, and fabrication" (Tymoczko and Gentzler xxi) which appealed to the community of Western-educated Indian elites. Therefore, the histories and mythologies remained distracted from their central purpose – to function as an anti-colonial phenomenon. The appearance of playwrights like Habib Tanvir, Girish Karnad and Mohan Rakesh not only deconstructed the mimicking tendency of translation but also unsettled existing power relations by disentangling translation from the cobwebs of colonial elitism and rewriting texts as performative contexts for the masses.

Habib Tanvir's play *Duryodhana* (performed in1979) disrupts the boundaries of the usual classical representations and transcreates a definite episode of the *Mahābhārata* in the tribal language of Chhattisgarh, which is located in central India. He neither uses any classical form nor any dominant Indian language, but transcreates "the classic into the tribal context, retaining the principal characters and events but presenting them in the cultural register of folk performance" (Dharwadker 184). Tanvir recreates and rewrites Duryodhana's anti-heroic deathat the hands of Bhima within the local socio-political context of Chhattisgarh by "utilizing the thematic and textual material and conventions of both the literary and the oral traditions" (Dandekar 183). The process of dehierarchizing textual elitism throughTanvir's episodic transcreation of the *Mahabharata* undergoes a tangential historical turn in Karnad's*Tughlaq*[6](1972) and Rakesh's *ĀṣāḍhKāEkDin*[7] (originally published in 1958) (*One Day in the Season of Rain* 1969). In these plays, Karnad and Rakesh disassemble the established framework of historical characterization by recreating the characters – Muhammad bin Tughlaq and Kalidasa respectively – within the contemporary socio-political scenario of postcolonial India.

Girish Karnad believed that Tughlaq was "the most idealistic, the most intelligent king ever to come [to] the throne of Delhi, including the Mughals" (Paul 54), but he failed because of the contradictions that existed between his personality and his politically self-defeating nature. The twenty-year old period of Tughlaq's political failure was transcreated and resituated by Karnad within the newly formed postcolonial Indian government under the ministership of Jawaharlal Nehru. Karnad primarily evoked Tughlaq as a metonymy of the "emerging ambivalence of power relations in the political and public spheres that were based, for the first time in Indian history, on the principles of mass representation and enfranchisement" (Dharwadker 243). But for the Indian audience of the 1960s, the Tughlaq of Karnad's play appeared identical to Jawaharlal Nehru, who inspite of being an extraordinary intellectual failed to become an able political leader. The "steady weakening of well-established institutions and the increased mobilization of diverse political groups" in postcolonial India occupies central space in this play (Kohli 21).

In *Āṣāḍh Kā Ek Din* by Mohan Rakesh, the character of Kalidasa is reduced from a legendary epic poet to a self-absorbed individual who appears to be preoccupied with his talent and is looking for a suitable environment to nurture it. The *mahākavi* (legendary poet) is portrayed as a young talent who deviates from the "poetic landscape of his origins, remains alienated from the world of fame and power in the imperial capital, and returns to his village at the end to reconnect (unsuccessfully) with his past life" (Dharwadker 227). This play destabilizes the aesthetically alienating tendencies of Indian classics,

demystifies and humanizes the ontologically distant and heroic identity of the poet, and reestablishes him as a common man. The process of decolonizing, dehierarchizing, translating/transcreating and rewriting the Indian histories and mythologies used by these playwrights emphasizes the importance of 'intersemiotic translation' (Munday 9). Mahesh Elkunchwar's *VāḍāCirebandī* is a significant addition to this tradition of transcontextualization.

III) Transcontextualization of *Vāḍā Cirebandī* to *Uttarādhikār*: A Critical Study of Sohag Sen's Adaptation

Roman Jakobson defines intersemiotic translation as "an interpretation of verbal signs by means of signs of non-verbal sign systems" (145). It occurs when a written text is translated into a different medium, as observed throughSohag Sen's adaptation of Subrata Nandy's transcontextualization[8] of Mahesh Elkunchwar's*VāḍāCirebandī*. Marathi playwright Mahesh Elkunchwar composed and published his monumental play *Vāḍā Cirebandī* in the year 1985 when metropolitan Bombay was gradually being transformed into megalopolitan Mumbai. Literally, the Marathi term *vāḍā* stands for a house, but socio-historically it refers to the ancestral home, the joint family and the hub of an Indian family that are seen as opposite to the contemporary parameters of urbanization. Therefore, the *vāḍā* stands in opposition to the modern, urban and westernized Bombay. The transformation manifested itself as a severe emotional, socio-political and economic crisis in the urban and the rural areas. This crisis becomes exposed through the fragmented state of Deshpande household in the village of Dharagaon.

After the death of Tatyaji[9]Venkatesh, Bhaskar, Aai[10] (Bhaskar, Sudhir and Prabha's mother) and Vahini[11] (Bhaskar's wife) wait for Sudhir (Bhaskar's brother) and Anjali (Sudhir's wife) to join them from Bombay for the last rites. The latter's arrival unravels the financial skeleton of Deshpande household and fractures the persistent (pseudo)elite capitalistic superiority of the urban centers over rural margins. The conversations reveal that except Aai and Chandu Kaka, all the male and female characters are entirely self-concerned about their well-being. The characters operate in mercantile fashion, bartering their emotions like mere commodities. It is observed in Anjali and Sudhir whose primary concern for coming to Dharangaon was to achieve their respective selfish goals. Sudhir arrived with the intention of getting his share of agricultural land and Anjali wanted to acquire the valuable antiques. On the other hand, Bhaskar, along with his wife Vahini, plans to claim ownership of the family jewelry box which preserves the identity of Deshpande womanhood. The family faces further dereliction through the debaucheries of Ranju and Parag (Bhaskar's daughter and son respectively). The individual agonies of the characters mingle together to add fuel to their existential plight. Even the daily language of communication loses its concreteness and is replaced by a mysterious silence, which prevails throughout the play. The conflicts involved in human existence are further complicated by introducing a fragmented and blurred vision of modernization through the image of a broken tractor.

The broken tractor that stands at the very entrance of the mansion manifests the deranged picture of modernization. The long-cherished dream of enrolling backward rural areas into the technological domain proves to be catastrophic and burdensome for the Deshpandes. The techniques adopted for furthering modernization on the one side and defending traditionalism on the other are regressive in nature. As a result, amidst inter-familial conflicts both tradition and modernity fall apart. Orthodoxy, in the name of tradition, defines gender roles in the Deshpande family and patriarchy dominates over the women in the house. The existence of Dadi (Aai's mother), Aai, Ranju, Prabha and Vahini has no independent status; it is defined with respect to their male counterparts.

The conflict between traditional emotions and modern practicalities comes to the forefront when, inspite of an ecologically and financially calamitous situation, Bhaskar is determined to abide by the customary post-death rituals, which demand a massive expenditure. Considering their financial situation, Bhaskar suggests that Sudhir curtail the expenditure of feeding the entire village of Dharangaon. But, Bhaskar, over-concerned about the Deshpande reputation, pushes ahead to abide by the ritualistic norms and ends up in massive debts. This compels Bhaskar and his family to sell a part of their dilapidated mansion to a businessman named Bansilal. Amidst economic tussles, the bohemian lifestyle of Parag and Ranju, the son and the daughter of Bhaskar and Vahini, and the counterarguments

of Prabha,the sister of Bhaskar and Sudhir, for not letting her study, adds prominently to the multidimensional thematic framework of this play. It concludes in a state of mutual irritation and conflict over the undivided village property, while Sudhir and Anjali return to Bombay.

In the year 1989, Subrata Nandy translated/transcontextualized *Vāḍā Cirebandī* from Marathi into Bengali under the title *Uttarādhikār*(literally meaning inheritance)for Sohag Sen's Bengali adaptation of the play. Subrata Nandy was an eminent film and theatre actor who mostly worked in parallel Bengali movies and theatre in the 1990s. In spite of the parallel cinema movement in Kolkata during the 1950s, the Bengali film industry gradually drifted towards commercialism, particularly during 1990s, and this affected theatres as well. It was during the same time that Sohag Sen rose to prominence through her adaptations of different European and Indian vernacular plays in Bengali. In order to challenge the rise of elitism in Bengali theatre, her adaptations dismantled the linguistic authority of the original texts on the one side, and socio-culturally and geographically transcontextualized texts on the other. In other words, her theatrical vision shifted beyond written texts and moved towards performative contexts. Therefore, *Vāḍā Cirebandī* was not only linguistically translated by Nandy but also socio-culturally, economically and emotionally transcreated by Sen with the 1990s rural-urban divide in West Bengal as the backdrop. When Sen adapted the play, she was thus very conscious about stage sets, costume, and the verbal and emotional expressions of the characters. Here, the Marathi play and the Bengali enactment can be broadly differentiated in two aspects – historical cultural differences and local cultural differences.

The historical cultural differences encompass the "power relations in the context of translation" (Fischer and Jensen 11). This aspect is "intimately related to knowledge, information, and especially to the manner in which that information is conveyed" (Alvarez and Vidal 6) from the original text (Elkunchwar's *Vāḍā Cirebandī* as a written text) to the target text (Sohag Sen's *Vāḍā Cirebandī* as a visual-dramatic text). The dormant feminine voices in Elkunchwar's play attain a dominating status in Sen's adaptation. Elkunchwar's Aai, Vahini, Prabha, Ranju and Anjali communicate in a fragmented state and their socio-cultural and familial insignificance is naturally portrayed in the play. On the other hand, Sen's Ma and Boudi(the Bengali equivalent for a mother and a sister-in-law), Prabha, Ranju and Anjali interact in a very confident and prominent manner to counter the patriarchal autonomy of the Deshpandes. In Elkunchwar's play, the fractured state of feminine existence thematically occupies a minor segment within the major theme of the "collapse of the *vāḍā*" (Elkunchwar, "Majha Aajvarcha"). By contrast, Sohag Sen counters the Deshpande patriarchy by portraying feminine existence as the central theme of the play.

The conformist domestic spaces of women in Bengal started experiencing a major shift during the 1990s. The transformations were significantly reflected through arts and print advertisements. As Amrita Basu Roy Chowdhury argues: "There has been a shift in the stereotyping of the image of women…The represented image of the Indian woman no longer remained explicitly traditional…[H]er appearance and the language of the text in which she appears is liberated from the typical stereotyping of the docile domesticity in the Indian society" (Chowdhury). These changes also contributed to shaping Sen's agenda. During this time, when the familial structure in Maharashtra was still patriarchally inclined, women in Bengal were gradually shattering the house wife stereotype (in both urban and rural areas) by moving out of their kitchen space and publicly participating in collective socio-cultural and economic development. In rural areas, women were defying the norms of child marriage and steering ahead toward education and self-dependence. This is the reason why the dominated characters Ranju, Prabha and Vahini of Elkunchwar's *vāḍā*(mansion) boldly express their disgust and anger against the Deshpande patriarchal culture in Sen's adaptation, and silence Bhaskar and Sudhir. Ranju defies her father Bhaskar (which did not happen in *Vāḍā Cirebandī*) to go to her tutor's house for taking lessons. Prabha does not lock herself in a room (as seen in *Vāḍā Cirebandī*) but boldly encounters her brothers (Bhaskar and Sudhir). Unlike Elkunchwar's play, Vahini/Boudi and Anjali also downplay the superiority of Bhaskar and Sudhir through active participation in Venkatesh's last rites (which according to the ancient Hindu custom was forbidden to women).

Apart from the historical cultural differences, the multidimensional portrayal of Bengal's local culture is another significant feature of Sohag Sen's *Uttarādhikār*. The linguistic translation of the title

from Marathi (*VāḍāCirebandī*) to Bengali (*Uttarādhikār*) widens the scope of the play. *Uttarādhikār* moves beyond the borders of *Vāḍā*, Dharangaon and Bombay, and interrogates the pan-Indian tension between the universalized colonial/patriarchal structures of modernity and pluriversal, indigenous and feminine structures of traditionality. The stage was structured as a room inside a traditional *jamidārbāṛi* (mansion of a landlord in Bengal) with a high wooden bed, a meat safe, an *ārām-kedārā* (a chair with long wooden handles, a piece of furniture associated with the landlords of Bengal), a dim oil lamp, an *ālanā* (a wooden stand for keeping clothes and hats) and a dressing table. Outside the room an *uṭhān* (threshold of a house in Bengal) was made and it served as the entrance to the mansion. The stage setting is very different from that presented in the original play written in Marathi. The *vāḍā* in Elkunchwar's play is almost deserted, with the presence of a few habitual objects like a broken dressing table and tattered sleeping mats. This dilapidated state reflects the situation of ex-landlords in Maharashtra during the '90s. But, during the same time Bengal experienced a different scene. Though the system of landlordship faded away long time back, yet their mansions housed traditional Bengali furniture such as the *ārām-kedārā* and *ālanā*.

The characters of *Vāḍā Cirebandī*, especially the female characters, are referred to with multiple titles in *Uttarādhikār*. Vahini is referred to as Boudi*(baudi*, sister-in-law*)* and *didi*(older sister)in *Uttarādhikār*. In Bengali, a sister-in-law is usually referred to as both *didi* and *baudi*. Aai is called *mā* (mother), *māśimā* (older lady or aunt) and *ṭhakumā* (elderly woman or grandmother), and Tatyaji is referred to as *mesomaśāi* (husband of mother's sister) in the play. The same characters are addressed with different names because they stand at different levels of social and familial relationships. Let us take the example of Aai. Ranju and Parag being the youngest among all refer to Aai as *ṭhākumā*, Vahini (Bhaskar's wife) and Anjali (wife of Sudhir) being younger than Sudhir and Bhaskar call her *māśimā*, and Bhaskar and Sudhir being her sons address her as *mā*. But, in Elkunchwar's play everybody refers to her as Aai. We should also note that it is not only a linguistic feature to call a Marathi woman Aai, but also a form of traditional, emotional and cultural rootedness for the people of Maharashtra which cannot be experienced through the general connotation – mother.

The multidimensional identities and the growing need for the socio-cultural involvement of Bengali women function as crucial elements in Sen's adaptation. *Uttarādhikār*also ensures a close connectivity with Bengali socio-cultural attitudes through the transcreation of the verbal expressions. The introductory line of Elkunchwar's play which commences with Aai calling, "Vyankatesh…ArreyVyankatesh…" (Elkunchwar 133) becomes "EiBenkotesh, baba Benkoteshrey…" (*Uttarādhikār*) in Sen's adaptation. The interjection 'Arrey!' is expressed as *ei* and *bābā* in Bengali and both the words are usually used by elders to show their love and warmth for the younger ones. Similarly, other expressions like *dhurbābā* (expressing irritation/disgust) is used instead of *ārreybābā* (expressing irritation/disgust) by Bhaskar and the onomatopoeic interjection *dhyat* (expressing irritation/disgust) is used instead of *uie* (expressing irritation/disgust) by Vahini during their conversation with Sudhir. As far as the clothing pattern is concerned, the women on the stage draped themselves in *lāl-pāṛ-sādāśāṛi* (a type of white sari with thick red borders) which is specific to Bengali culture and is usually worn on ritualistic occasions. Thus, the performative transcreation of *VāḍāCirebandī* into *Uttarādhikār*not only transcontextualizes and localizes the Marathi text as a visual text within a different geographical and cultural spatio-temporal zone, but also attracts the attention of the local audience who can easily connect themselves to the socio-political pattern of the Bengali enactment.

Conclusion

The task of translation has always been challenging.The translator's difficulty lies in translating not only the words inscribed in the text but also the context in which it is situated. This brings in the role of intention and improvisation, often leading to mistranslation or transcreation. The translation expedition has played a crucial role in the production and re-production of knowledge about India during the colonial regime; therefore, the same is being utilized to decolonize colonized knowledge. A close observation of Mahesh Elkunchwar's play *VāḍāCirebandī* in Marathi and its transcreation through dramatic adaptation as *Uttarādhikār* by Sohag Sen foregrounds various such translational crises that affect or have affected the process of knowledge production. The case under analysis also offered

a view on the diverse possibilities that exist to dehierarchize and decolonize literature through various modes of translation.

Besides being a linguistic enterprise, translation also involves an interplay of representation, power and historicity. Contextual translation can be utilized to distort and expropriate indigenous socio-cultural elements and appropriate one's own. An understanding of the politics of translation is, therefore, vital in critiquing the colonially patterned author-centric and language-centric modes of translation which have a strong socio-historical base. Translation was and is 'an'-other colonial mode of socio-cultural appropriation, assimilation and distortion of pluriversal indigeneity. It not only diminishes the primary author but also recreates the text through the translator as we see in the case of Sohag Sen's *Uttarādhikār*. Like Tanvir's *Duryodhana*, Karnad's *Tughlaq* and Rakesh's *Āṣāḍh Kā Ek Din*, Mahesh Elkunchwar's*Vādā Cirebandī* is another example that allows us to grasp the ways in which a written text can be translated into performance. Performance not only translates the play linguistically but also leads to dynamic geographical and emotional transformation. It contributes not only to dismantling the prevailing tendencies of textual accumulation but also to generating multiple ethical, political and pragmatic dimensions of knowledge production.

Notes

1NatyaShodhSangsthan, Kolkata is India's largest drama and theatre archive which houses countless handwritten documents, ancient texts, newspaper records, audio clips of interviews and discussions and video clips of performances.

2The phrase 'Translating Translation' refers to the galactic Eurocentric (and later Westcentric) project of orientalizing the non-West through trafficking, distorting and translating the indigenous texts into their respective languages and vice versa. This systematic process altogether translated the very concept of translation from an optimistic trans-cultural element into a dehumanized colonial/European hierarchical framework.

3In this context, it refers to the ways in which Indians were ideologically hypnotized by the British and were allured to establish blind faith in them.

4The *KāmaSūtra* is an ancient Indian text written by Vatsayana in Sanskrit on sexual behavior of human beings.

5 With respect to the question of translation, external colonialism has not only expropriated the fragments of indigenous knowledges from the non-West, but also sponsored the systematic development of internal colonialism through appropriating western knowledges within the domestic borders of ex-colonies.

6The name of the play refers to Muhummad bin Tughlaq who was the Sultan of Delhi from 1325 to 1351.

7 The season of *āṣāḍh* marks the onset of monsoon in the northern parts of India every year.

8The term transcontextualization has been used instead of translation because Subrata Nandy's Bengali version of Elkunchwar's*WāḍāCirebandī* is not merely a linguistic transformation but a complete textual re-creation through socio-cultural, familial, emotional and verbal re-contextualization.

9In Marathi *Tatyaji* means uncle or husband of mother's sister.

10Aaiin Marathi means mother or someone with motherly affection.

11Vahini in Marathi means sister-in-law.

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