

**Transcending the Cultural Barriers:  
An Analysis of Lakshmipathi Kolara's  
*Post Box No. 9*  
Translated by Tha Sri Gururaj**

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The world 'translation' owes its origin to the old French word 'tranlacion'. This word was used widely in the 12<sup>th</sup> century and refers to the transfer of the relics of saints from one place to another. Translation in the current age serves the same purpose. It is an attempt at preserving the rich cultural heritage of mankind in the premise of a different linguistic tradition. Such an attempt but poses serious challenges for the translator. Transcending the obstructions and thereby preserving the original source primarily rises the question whether the writer should prioritize the language skills, or the emotional content delivered. The paper analyses this aspect of translation primarily with reference to Tha Sri Gururaj's translation of Lakshmipathi Kolara's *Post Box No.9*. It also emphasizes on the cultural blending in the play and how this gets confronted by Tha Sri Gururaj in the course of his translation of the play

Every great work of art project a picture of man's inner turmoil and concerns that are universal in nature. In the introduction to the play, the author Lakshmipathi Kolara reflects on the incident that motivated him to write the play. Sruhard El Murai, a young Palestinian woman shared her unfortunate experience of being tortured by the Israeli military. She was victimized by gang rapes and restricted her to a wheelchair. But the very statement that the author shares with the reader is what encompasses the whole paper. "Although none of the ten thousand people gathered there could understand her Palestinian language, the language of her pain made everyone heavy hearted" (2). The play discusses the plot centered on the protagonist Kaifa, a character drawn upon the real life events of Sruhad El Murai. The life of Kaifa is in fact placed against the most troubled times of the Palestinian crisis as the introduction to Kaifa points to the fact that she was born in the midnight of December 31,1985.

Language has always been considered as a barrier in the exchange of ideas and the emotions from one culture to another. In translating a literary work, one may confront the same conflict at large. The vocabulary or the syntactical challenges in fact doesn't possess much threat to the translator. The most intimidating obstruction is that of the complete transfer of the emotional quality of the original source. Language to this end, opens its channel for the transmission of emotions. It is under this premise that one approaches the translation of Lakshmipathi Kolara's *Post Box No. 9* by Tha Sri Gururaj.

Tha Sri Gururaj, the recipient of National Award for translation faces the worst nightmare of a translator in the translation of Post Box No.9 keeping in mind the very idea of translating a work from cultural background to that of a language with its origins in an entirely distinct cultural premise becomes troubling, the extraordinary attempt at this unique play which fuses together two different civilizations separated by miles remains unparalleled. The play yokes together Kamsale, the folk-art tradition of the Kuruba Gowda community, native to Karnataka with the Palestinian crisis.

The most difficult part in any translation is comprehending that the art of translation is not just an exercise in language but one in culture. The Sapir-Whorf hypothesis put forward by Edward Sapir and Benjamin Lee Whorf contends the idea that one's cognition is determined largely by the language he speaks. But this can barely provide an explanation for the complicated cultural experience one goes through. If the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis be considered into account, language will only serve as a limiting factor.

In reality language surpasses the boundary conditions posited by Sapir and Whorf. The play stands as a vindication for the same. This can be substantiated further when one observes the emotional depth of the play being preserved even after being translated to English. The play brings together the complex and distinct Palestinian experience blended with the mythical overlay of Indian tradition in a marvelous fashion. For instance the story of Rangayya displacing Shiva, being narrated by Madayya, serves as the perfect analogy for the historical events related to Israel-Palestine conflict:

**MĀDAYYA:** Yes... he had to come. He had already permitted Dāsayya, hadn't he? No sooner Shiva came out of temple Dāsayya rushed in and sat on Shiva's seat. And this Shiva had no place now.

**CHORUS:** Just for the blunder of permitting Dāsayya to come in?

**MĀDAYYA: CHORUS:** This is absolute cheating. Driving away Shiva for showing mercy on wandering Dāsayya!(10)

Their remains an invisible bridge that takes the reader from the Male Mahadeswar hills with the beats of Kamsale to the wall of Gaza. This bridge is nothing but that of humanity and shared compassion for mankind the writer possesses. The translator should himself become empathetical with the writer and the reader at the same time to allow the manifestation of such a construct of such magnificent virtues. In fact, the translator himself acts as the bridge between the writer and the reader and strengthens it by simple but potent language.

Vitality of a translation rests in the lack of resistance it offers in the transfer of emotion. This to occur, the translator should himself be aware of the fact that he is the womb through which the work of letters gets born again into the world of yet another linguistic tradition. The pain of labor that the translator might have gone through is quite observable in Post Box No. 9. The greatest problems that Tha Sri Gururaj

might have faced are the recitals that appear in the play. It starts off with the search of “the key of a never dying dream” and appears finally in scene V with the title of the play “Post Box No.9”. After Scene V the recitals come to an end. The beats and tunes of Kamsale cannot be in anyway be brought with its full glory into any translation. But the translator overcomes this limitation by inculcating short lyrics that conveys the emotional depth the writer intends to convey:

Every home a graveyard,  
Grief governs lethal days.  
Sunrise signals our death,  
Night crawls in hellish fears. (11)

What follows is a world of chaos. On a close reading what becomes evident is a mode of transition of mood by employing language and syntax to its maximum. One can observe at the beginning of the play, dialogues which are short, lyrical and pleasant. The horror and pandemonium which ensues is revealed through comparatively longer passages of the play providing the sense of masculine brutality and fierce conflict that has become the part of the daily lives of the unfortunate Palestinians.

The play may be quite under question for the political viewpoint it possesses. Nevertheless, the play must be observed from the aspect of a compassionate human being who would shed a tear for the oneness of the world. Political viewpoints stand out of the equations. The playwright and the translator have focused on to give a sense of helplessness that the Palestinians experience. Beyond all the complexities of the form and language, what makes a literary work worthy is its ability to stand on its own, irrespective of the environment in which it is set in, the timeframe it adheres to, or the society it addresses.

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