

If 'that which we call a rose' can smell sweet 'by any other name', why restrict ourselves to good literature in only one language? Let translations open up new windows for you. Today's page brings some basic how-to tips and to further entice you, we present a couple of translated pieces. If this has your attention, be sure to apply for the upcoming workshop! Comments and contributions are welcome at: [DSLitEditor@gmail.com](mailto:DSLitEditor@gmail.com)

MUNIZE MANZUR

## TIPS ON TRANSLATIONS



There are two extreme approaches in the way one can translate a literary piece from one language to another. The first is seeking a literal translation, sometimes known as formal equivalence, in which an attempt is made to translate using the words that correspond as exactly as possible in the two languages, allowing, of course, for the grammatical differences but without paying a great deal of attention to context. A second extreme is paraphrasing, sometimes called making a free or loose translation.

One problem with the first approach is that literal translations can be awkward. An obvious problem with paraphrasing is that the translator may not accurately convey the intent of the speaker, especially where precision of language is required. So many of the best translations take a middle ground, sometimes known as dynamic equivalence — trying to convey the thoughts and intent of the original, veering from the literal where needed.

Here are some basic tips to keep in mind when translating:

### Read avidly in both languages:

Reading the genres you wish to translate will help you become better acquainted with the writer and the nuances of language, culture, thought, and message. This will help you understand what the writer is trying to relay figuratively. Reading will also help you develop your language skills and keep up with any changes in dialects or semantics.

### Take a course:

Taking a course in comparative literature, linguistics, languages, or translation will give you the technical skills and a confidence boost. Such academic training will also give you access to literary lectures, mentorships with professors who translate and libraries with extensive collections. If academia doesn't fit into your schedule, you can teach yourself through books or translation blogs and websites.

### Research the writer and work you are translating.

Translating means not just looking at the words but also trying to understand the writer's work and what message he/she is trying to convey. In order to do so, find out when and where the work was written; the writer's history; the historical context of the piece; literary references (if any); etc.

### Practice, practice, practice:

You can only get better by working hard and regularly, if possible — daily doing an exercise on translation. It gets easier and faster with practice and after a while, you will be amazed at how much work you have accumulated.

Most importantly, keep in mind that translation is an art not a science. So use your judgment and creative skills as well as your vocabulary to get the "right" words.

## Repentance

Bibhutibhushan Bandyopadhyay  
[Translation: Arunava Sinha]

Baladas Apte awoke and busied himself preparing for the day. It was Sunday, and a crowd of confessors would start streaming in soon. He bathed and dressed for church.

Baladas Apte was a well-known figure in the Tusughat and Panjim areas of the Konkan Pradesh. He was the assistant priest at the small village church of St Xavier's on the highway to Goa. He did not preach very often, but every Sunday he heard confessions and handed out suitable penance. People respected and feared Balasaheb for his piety. Gazing at the enormous maize fields and the low mountain ranges of the Western Ghat through the tiny window of the confessional, trespassing devotees could not but feel utterly sinful and hopeless every time they caught a glimpse of Baladas's long beard.

Sprinkling a little of the holy water from the Jordan on his head and donning his long canvas cassock, Baladas took his seat on the stool by the confessional window in the Church of St Xavier's. He had been doing this for the past twenty years. Before that he had been a scribe for a mason in Goa.

A farmer had come to confess early in the morning. Baladas performed his scheduled

task mechanically. Sprinkling the holy water from the Jordan on the cultivator's head, he chanted the approved Latin prayers, pronouncing the words wrongly:

*"Out noncommittis soncomittis o dela Jesu Noncommittis sancomittis o imid Chris Marie Hippocritea nihil salvitor e out..."*

Then he asked the country farmer in a stentorian voice, "Recount your sins. The Lord is seated on the throne in the court of the afterlife. The angels are blowing their trumpets and proclaiming all your acts in this world. Do you wish to keep anything concealed?"

Terrified and silenced by this controlled eloquence, the farmer looked at the priest and said, "I shall hide nothing, Father. On Monday evening, I took two sets of pumpkins from Solomon Balakrishna's pumpkin patch without telling him."

Admonishing him, Baladas said, "Say after me, theft is a grave sin..." "I have committed the grave sin of theft, Father. Nothing on Tuesday. On Wednesday..."

"Nothing on Tuesday? Think it over. One rupee and four annas for every unconfessed sin on the sacred altar of St Xavier's..."

"By Mother Mary, Father, nothing on Tuesday."

"Very well, continue. On Wednesday..."

"Buruth Tudu and his son Sol Tudu were running away with potatoes and oranges stolen from my farm. I threw rocks at them and broke their legs."

"Broke their legs?" "Yes, Father. Fractured their legs. I won't lie."

"But it was no sin when you stole from someone else's farm, was it?"

"It was..."

"Go on. Thursday. The day made sacred by the memory of the holy St Teresa." The priest knelt to display his reverence for the abovementioned St Teresa.

The farmer followed his lead. Then he said, "On Thursday I was supposed to have paid back some money I had borrowed, Father, but I did not."

"Deliberately? You did remember?"

"I did, Father. I couldn't bear to part with the money."

"Hmm. It didn't occur to you when borrowing, did it? Have you returned the money yet?"

"No, Father."

"Those who wish to reform after sinning must correct their errors on

the same day as the confession. Return the money today. Continue."

"On Friday, I quarrelled with my wife and told her to go to her parents' house..."

"Saturday?" "Er... er..." "Continue."

Gulping, the farmer said, "Er, it's a little..."

"Go on."

"Er, Mangaldas' sister-in-law is here from Panjim. When the women were bathing at the roadside well in Mangaldas' neighbourhood, I stood beneath the fig tree to spy on her."

Placing his palm on his face, Baladas said, "Goodness me! Why?"

"Since I've come to confess, I will. Mangaldas' sister-in-law is a well-known beauty from Panjim. She works at a dance hall there. There isn't a better singer or dancer than her in India. She dances the Garba beautifully. It's a wonderful dance; she earned a big name for herself the last time she danced here."

Baladas thought he remembered hearing that a lovely woman from Panjim had put up a spectacular show on the Hindu festival of Garba.

Frowning, he said, "Hmm. Very eager, I see. How many times did you spy on her?"

"Er, four times, Father."

"Four times?" "Yes, Father. I won't lie."

"Oh no, you are Paul the Truthful. How old did you say the woman is?"

"I would have to say she's a young woman, Father. Educated. She pays half the expenses for Mangaldas' household."

"What is her name?" "Sakhibai."

"All right, you may go now." The farmer left.

He was so despondent over his sins that he could barely make a meal of his red rice and potato curry. Wheat was not grown on the Konkan coast. Maize and red rice were planted on the highlands in September — while autumnal paddy was sown on the lowlands. Poor farmers cultivated red rice on half their fields because it ripened in only sixty days; they ate their fill of the same rice every morning before going to work.

Morning rolled into afternoon. In his field the farmer concluded that what he had done was definitely wrong. And he had been rebuked roundly for it by the honourable priest Baladas.

But then, Sakhibai was not going to be here forever.

She would return to Panjim in three

or four days. Most certainly she would.

Never mind. After his work was done on the maize farm today, instead of going home directly he would take a detour for another glimpse of Sakhibai.

You didn't get women like her in this part of the world too often. Maybe he would have to place a candle on the altar of St Xavier next Sunday for this transgression. The priest would fine him for repeating his sin.

A rupee and four annas. He would pay. He could recover the money easily enough by selling a cartful of pumpkin to a dealer from Goa.

When he was done for the day, he set off towards Mangaldas' neighbourhood, reaching the large fig tree near the well on slow footsteps. Someone was standing, his head bowed, on the other side of the clumps of branches that had descended to earth like the strands of a prophet's beard.

"Who's there?"

Rounding the trunk, the farmer saw a figure in a long canvas cassock, his long hair and beard well-combed, standing furtively beneath the network of branches of the fig tree. Priest Baladas Apte himself.

## DON'T BE AFRAID, O HUMAN SOUL!

Kazi Nazrul Islam (24 May 1899 – 29 August 1976)

The power thrones of today represent devil's affair, the power-hungry monsters are busy playing there. Don't be afraid, O human soul! Don't break down in tears! The drunkard of the underworld won't prevail much longer here. With injustice and wrongs black-stained is his throne, his sword is rusted with the curse of those oppressed. Painting the sky dark-yellow, approaches the monsoon storm in full power, the greedy ones are beguiled thinking, this is a beautiful twilight hour. The fire they have spread around the world, now in its flame in turn, like blazing fire, everywhere, these wretches will burn.

The traveller of the path of truth! Don't be afraid, don't fear! Those who seek peace, defeat is not for them, my dear! Sometimes the enemies of peace win in their disguise, at the end in humiliation and shame comes their inevitable demise. Dusts of the road rise off the ground as a wind blows strong, if you think, they are on the rise, won't that be wrong? Those who want to ascend above, these dregs stand in their way; they can make the road slippery, but the mud doesn't win the day.

In tranquillity, victory or defeat, we will treat the same, if we win, we will dedicate it to His glory and name. If we lose, we will be greeted by Him in the hereafter, if we are battle-wounded, we will be His beloved, forever. Sometimes they will win, but never shall we retreat! Our Lord tests us - we will take it as His treat. Does hatred ever bring back those who are lost? To win their heart, with love first our heart must defrost. Those who knowingly practice oppression and take away others' right, it is against them, the sword of God is always ready and upright. Don't be hard on those who, in ignorance, go astray! They might return to the truth, if you show love, and pray! In His one name, invite people of all nations; Hold your sword in hand, offer your heart in affection.

The whole world will be in your favour, if at you His grace flashes; all the enemies of the truth, you will see, will burn into ashes. Those whose hearts among us are stained with temptation, they also deserve discipline, before facing God's condemnation. March forward, O the new warriors, indomitable! Prevent our journey and progress? No one will be able! Let faith and patience be the lasting friends - yours and mine. On our path, the light of moon will always shine. Don't be afraid! Have no fear! Falsehood will definitely disappear! Truth will triumph, O my dear! Those who treat the meek with bloody eyes, finished is their share! This world belongs to people, not to any throne; declare!

Those who disgrace the blessed power from their power-bed, at the command of the King of kings, they'll lose their head. The rule of the ship-owners is ending; it won't be very long, to the real King of the universe, all the countries will belong. O blood-eyed vultures, monsters! Beware, beware! To beguile others and make forget God's command, how do you dare? We fear one God only; no one else do we fear! Our guide is the Omnipotent, our Lord so dear! Sky, earth, moon, planets, and stars are witnesses, I say, as to who are the followers of truth, and who go astray.

Don't be afraid; have no fear! Falsehood will surely disappear! Truth will be triumphant, my dear!

[Original: *Bhoy Koriyo Na, He Manobata;*  
Translation: Mohammad Omar Farooq]



CALL FOR APPLICATIONS  
BANGLA-ENGLISH LITERARY  
TRANSLATION WORKSHOP  
15-20 NOVEMBER 2014

Dhaka Translation Centre (DTC), in partnership with the British Centre for Literary Translation, Commonwealth Writers and English Pen, is delighted to announce a call for applications for a workshop on Bangla-English translation, to be held in Dhaka from 15-20 November 2014.

Led by the award-winning literary translator Arunava Sinha, workshop participants will work on a consensus translation of one particular text — a short story or an excerpt from a novel — with the author present. The workshop will offer a space for collaboration and peer learning, where participants will be able to share ideas and, with the text before them, discuss in real-time the challenges of translating from Bangla to English. After the workshop, participants will be assigned stories to translate for an anthology of fiction of Bangladesh.

### WHO ARE WE LOOKING FOR:

- Early to mid-career literary translators working in Bangla-English translation.
- Bilingual creative writers interested in exploring literary translation as a way to expand their writing practice
- Participants must be over 18 and citizens of Bangladesh living and working in Bangladesh.

### HOW TO APPLY

Interested candidates are asked to fill in an online form available at the website listed below. Deadline for applications is 30th September 2014 and successful applicants will be informed by 15th October 2014.

[www.ulab.edu.bd/dtc/beltw2014](http://www.ulab.edu.bd/dtc/beltw2014)

### VENUE AND FEES

The workshop will be held on the campus of the University of Liberal Arts, Bangladesh (ULAB) in Dhanmondi, Dhaka. A fee of BDT 2,000 will be collected to cover administrative expenses. For further details and contact information, please visit the website listed above.