

RELEVANCE OF TRANSLATING TECHNIQUES USED BY BUDDHAGHOSA IN PALI COMMENTARIES TO MODERN METHODS OF TRANSLATION

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Key words: Translation, Techniques, Buddhaghosa, Modern Methods

Introduction

Translation is a major function occurred among languages. The word "translation" derives from the Latin *translatio* which itself comes from *trans* and *fero*, the supine form of which is *latum*, together meaning "to carry across" or "to bring across". Translation is the communication of the meaning of a source language (SL) text by means of an equivalent target language (TL) text. In Sri Lanka, the system of translating runs into a long history more than 1500 years. The first translation process in the history of Sri Lanka can be traced to the 3rd century B.C. After the arrival of Ven. Mahinda all Pali commentaries brought by him from India were translated into Sinhala under the supervision of him. Then Ven. Buddhaghosa in the 5th century A.D came to Sri Lanka with the intention of translating Sinhala commentaries (*Sīhalaṭṭhakathā*) into Pāli for the beneficence of overseas people. Therefore, translations of Buddhaghosa can be considered as back translations. A back-translation is a translation of a translated text back into the language of the original text, made without reference to the original

text. Likewise, Buddhaghosa translated Sinhala commentaries that were translated on the basis of Pāli commentaries brought by Ven. Mahinda. His translating techniques is well explained by himself in the introductory verses of the *Samantapāsādikā* (the commentary of the Vinaya Pitaka) and in the *Sumangalavilāsinī* (commentary of the Dīgha Nikāya). Aim of this research paper is to study the relevance of translating techniques of Buddhaghosa shown in Pāli commentaries to modern methods of translation by using the sources mentioned above giving priority to the *Samantapāsādikā*.

Discussion

In the beginning of the *Samantapāsādikā*, Buddhaghosa clearly mentions about his work as a translation saying "*Samvannanā sīhaladīpakena vākyena esā pana sankhatattā*". This reveals commentaries had been done in the language of the island of Sīhala (Sinhala). Therefore, Buddhaghosa translated them into Pāli since overseas cannot understand the meaning thereof. As mentioned by modern scholars, a competent translator should have a

very good knowledge of the language, written and spoken, from which he is translating (SL). Buddhaghosa proves his skills for that mentioning the Sinhala sources namely, *Mahāṭṭhakāthā*, *Mahāpaccaraiya* and *Kurundi*. Here his source language was Sinhala being the target language Pāli. According to linguistics, there are eight methods of translation: word-for-word translation, literal translation, faithful translation, semantic translation, adaptive translation, free translation, idiomatic translation, and communicative translation. What kind of a translation was associated by Buddhaghosa? The method of Buddhaghosa's translations does not represent one of these theories but a collection of whole. Buddhaghosa clearly says his exposition is in conformity with the method of treatment found in the sacred texts (Pāli texts). In same manner, this idea is found in the *Sumangalavilāsini* as "*tantinayā mucchavikam āropento*". This shows his excellent command of the language into which he is translating (TL). Special factors of Buddhaghosa's translating techniques tallied with modern concepts of translation are drawn here. Some of them are; not discarding the relevant statements and the rulings given in the recognized commentaries (*vinicchayo aṭṭakathāsu vuttam - yo yutta mattam apariccajanto*), including the opinions of elder monks (*antogadha theravādam*), avoiding the incorrect statements handed down in Sinhala commentaries (*vajjayitvāna pamādalekham*), giving up recourse to a different tongue (*bhāsantameva hitvā*), condensing protracted exegesis (*vitthāramagganca samāsayitvā*), not excluding any formal decision

(*vinicchayam sabbamasesayitvā*), not deviating from the method of exposition found in the textual tradition even in a small measure (*tantikkaman kanci avokkamitvā*). In accordance with these, it is clear that translating techniques of Buddhaghosa can be applied with modern theories of translation. Attributes of a competent translator as shown by the modern scholars are familiarity with the subject matter of the text being translated, a profound understanding of the etymological and idiomatic correlates between the two languages, and a finely tuned sense of when to paraphrase ("translate literally") and when to paraphrase, so as to assure true rather than spurious equivalents between the source- and target-language texts. These qualities are clearly shown by Buddhaghosa according to above facts.

Methodology

This research is based on literary survey. Therefore, particular commentarial texts and modern books written on translation are taken into consideration. Then, they are examined in descriptive, analytical and comparative methods in relation with the topic.

Conclusion

Buddhaghosa shows outstanding skills in translating. His techniques of translation as mentioned in the introductory sections of the commentaries can be applicable even to modern concepts of translation in many ways. Ven. Prof. Walpola Rahula says Buddhaghosa's work, named *Visuddhimagga* was that of an editor – translator but he seems to have performed his task so efficiency and

with such discretion and authority that now he is regarded more or less as the author of commentaries. . Therefore, editorial features mostly can be seen within the translating techniques used by Buddhaghosa.

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