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***Indian Home Rule or Hind Swaraj: Gandhi's Experiment with  
Translation***

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*Hind Swaraj* is the seed text and the only auto/self translation by Gandhi. Originally written and published in Gujarati in the Gujarati columns of *Indian Opinion* 11<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> Dec., 1909 is 'hurriedly dictated' and 'not a literal translation but it is faithful rendering of the original' (Preface to English Translation). The decolonizing text written and translated by the decolonized mind has drawn the attention of many a critics and translators during last hundred years. The compulsion with Gandhi to translate *Hind Swaraj* and the attempts to revise the translation draws our attention to the processes involved in translation resulting in a close reading of the powerful political text.

Gandhi the man and his literature /ideology have its own currency in the political and academic world. Just as there is politics in use of Gandhi in political world so is the case with publications in academic world that realizes a market. *My Experiments with Truth* is the most read book even today. *Hind Swaraj* has most referred text when it comes to study Gandhian thought. The many varied revisions and retranslation of *Hind Swaraj* can be taken up as a case study to develop the Indian Translation theory and its application. The western theories are keeping with monolingual spaces and translations that are mainly SL to TL. India with its multilingual aspects can lend to new interventions in the area of translation studies. India has a specific case of generations of writers who wrote originally in their mother tongue or the source culture and translated their works in target culture languages. Tagore, Gandhi and Latest Karnard are the best examples. The self-translations by the writers and by the endeavor of translations within Indian languages has led to multiple possibilities from translation to retranslations and critical translations.

If Gandhi's life is his 'experiments with truth' *Hind Swaraj* is his experiment with translation. Gandhi was free from religious dogmas and was open to the best thoughts from all around in pursuit of truth and humanity. As a translator too he speaks about his pursuit as 'free' and 'compulsion' as:

A European friend with whom I discussed the contents, wanted to see a translation of it and during our spare moments. I *hurriedly dictated* and *he took downbut*. it is not a literal translation it is a faithful rendering of the original('free translation' in Forward to 1019 edition)... news was received that the original was seized in india. This information *hastened* the decision to publish the translation *without a moments delay*. (Sharma 5)(Emphasis mine)



Gandhi translated to communicate his thought/message. His tricking simplicity was his faith that the greatest truths are as simple as our being and thus he advocated truth and non-violence as the tool for the path. Whatever activity/action Gandhi committed himself to is elevated as 'Gandhian' as he persuaded it as a *vrata* (devotee). Gandhi's translational practice too can be termed as 'Gandhian translation' based on its necessity and utility. When it came to creative writing his view was that a writer 'should write in the language is understood by the laborer drawing water from the well'. Not to mention that 'his life is his message'. *Hind Swaraj* contains the 'seed' of his life-message. The translation too is the rendering keeping with the simplest of 'free rendering' not falling for 'dynamic translation'.

Utilitarian in the true sense of the term Gandhi took up the English translation of *Hind Swaraj* himself -the only work of his -I repeat he translated out of volumes that we have as 'his body of words' (*Gandhino akshardeh*) is enough to speak of the importance of the message of *Hind Swaraj*.

Apart from translating freely he did it 'hurriedly' the hurry was not one of professional/ institutional or publication politics or market but true politics of 'swaraj' with an aim to send a clear message to the materialistic 'modern' western colonizers in the language they understood.

Theory wise 'hurried translation' (a term any common person may understand) can be a term coined to appropriate 'formal equivalence' where according to Eugene Nida 'it is designed to reveal as much as possible the form and content of the original message.' (Nida 134)

'Hurried translation' is in a way natural process of translation. A translator reads SL text and dictates the reading in TL. This is the actual practice we see adopted in the academic translation workshops (working in groups) or among research students and guides who sit to finalize their thesis. These are time bound projects and follow the same practice of close reading the text in SL (aloud probably), discussions to translate in TL, dictation of final/ accepted translation taken down by a member of the group or researcher/translator.

Gandhi's act of translation can be viewed in the 'functioning context' (Hermans 87) particularly in sway after 80s with the emergence of *skopos* (Greek for aim and goal) theory descriptivism. Hans J. Vermeer in his *Skopos and Commission in Translational Action* conceives translation as action to further elucidate it having an aim, a purpose (*Skopos*). Wherein he emphasizes that:



A source text is usually composed originally for a situation in source culture; hence its status as a “source text”, and hence the role of translator in the process of intercultural communication in mind. In most cases original author lacks the necessary knowledge of the target culture and its texts. If he had the requisite knowledge he would of course compose his text under conditions of target culture, in the target language! Language is part of culture. (Venier 222)

The simplicity of Gandhi acquires complex preposition because his is the writer as well as the translator. *Hind Swaraj* is by no means composed for the source culture only hence the English Translation has been referred as source text for non-Gujarati readers. Gandhi claims to have the necessary of the target culture as the text itself is critic of the modern civilization which is targeted also as source target! Thus Gandhi seems not bound by any theory also follows it in his own way by first writing originally in SL translating the same in TL. He did not do otherwise to confirm his faith in the ideology that was a mission to decolonise, the minds of his people/times. Descriptivism ‘focus on the actual behavior of the translator rather than ...the product.’ Rudolf Pannwitz characterizes this true significance of freedom in *Die Krisis der Europaichen Kulture* as:

Our translations, even the best ones, proceed from a wrong premise. They want turn Hindi, Greek, English into German instead of turning German into Hindi, Greek, or English. Our Translators have a far greater reverence for the usage of their own language than for the spirit of the foreign works... (as quoted in Veniti 22)

Attempts at revisiting/ revising Gandhi’s translation of *Hind Swaraj* draw us to understand the practice in the area of translation with its latest critical study by Anthony J. Parol ed. *Gandhi Hind Swaraj and Other Writings* (1997) as well as translation ‘restoring the sanctity of original edition’ of *M K Gandhi’s Hind Swaraj: a Crical Edition* (2010) ed. by Suresh Sharma and Tridip Suhrud.

*Hind Swaraj’s* translation that is ‘free’ and ‘hurried’ has also been a prime reason for many a scholars to revisit it and extend the life of the text. The above mentioned critical editions have critically assed the text as well as placed the translated text with the original Gujarati can be a good case study of such an endeavor in the field of translation.



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Anthony J. Parol ed. *Gandhi Hind Swaraj and Other Writings* has a scholarly 62 page long Introduction calling it a ‘seed from which the Gandhian thought has grown...’. He adds his notes on Gandhi’s ‘Life Mission’ and intentions in ‘Historical Context’ of modern civilization. The background to ‘Politics of South Africa’, ‘The Politics of Expatriate Indians’(addressed), The Indian Nationalistic Movement, (political scenario). Parol also introduces the readers to the intellectual context. The book highlights the first time publication of Gandhi’s own ‘Preface’ (March,1910) and ‘Forward’(22 Nov.1909). Most important is that there are 240 footnotes that run along the text (English self translation of HS) speak of close reading and analysis of the text.

Navajivan Trust, Ahmedabad celebrated the centenary year of *Hind Swaraj* in 2009 by publishing the volume that is facsimile edition of the Gujarati original in Gandhis hand along with the English and Hindi translations. It’s a well designed collector’s item as well as important source text for comparative study in translation.

The third recent publication is *M K Gandhi’s Hind Swaraj: a Critical Edition* (2010) ed. by Suresh Sharma and Tridip Suhrud. The well studied work as it states on the cover page is ‘restores the sanctity of the 1910 original edition’ with its editors forward that discusses the strategy that Gandhi employed in using ‘crude’ Gujarati and the shift in the textual locus in the process of translation. The concern of the scholarly editors as expressed in the ‘Editors Introduction’ as: ‘... In our presentation of *Hind Swaraj* the foremost concern is to restore in the same measure the muted conversation between linguistic-semantic rhythm of the Gujarati original and its translation/rendering in English.’(Sharma xxi)

*Hind Swaraj* is presented to address two linguistic-epistemic questions: One as whence reside the textual locus, and two, the constructive elements of that textual locus. The text comes up with three axis in relation with the English text: margin notes (M followed by number) provide alternative translation/reading in English of certain expressions, phrases and passages in the Gujarati original, foot notes and the Hindi translation of the Gujarati original. The number of footnotes is four hundred and twenty-two(422) and the margin notes account to five hundred and five 505. Mention of Tridip Suhrud’s (also the coeditor of *M K Gandhi’s Hind Swaraj: a Critical Edition* ) *Hind Swaraj Vishe* will not be out of place an example of meta-text. It’s a chapter wise reader’s response in the seemingly casual way to call it ‘writing as understood’. Thus, such attempts could give directions in theorizing in the area in a multilingual space as India.



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All these attempts might be to critique a text that witnessed a hundred years of influence/ acceptance and resistance. They are seminal as interpretations in context of the times then for the post independence generation of readers. But one must not forget that Gandhiji never altered a word in the text, during his lifetime, even though he accepted that he was too harsh to use a few words and apologized. Neither did he change his views on issues as machinery or modern civilization even though it seemed impractical to many. It is a seminal text written in the times of transition from traditional to modern written in the times when rural India was not much influenced by 'modern' advancements.



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