

Social and Gender Discrimination in the Translated Work of Ambai's "Clear Sky"

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Abstract: Short stories mirror the age and influence the readers' to a great extent. "Clear Sky" is a short story written in Tamil by Ambai, pen name of C.S. Lakshmi and translated into English by Lakshmi Holmstrom. The multidimensional and life-like characters savours the readers. The impact given by the characters through their conversations and its effect in their relationship is examined here. This paper shed light on the effective plot structure of the author with handful of characters intertwined to express her views boldly. India as a multilingual, multicultural and multiracial country is prone to experience discriminations in various areas. The regional livelihood is the key factor in social discrimination. Ambai attempts to deliver a vivid picture on the prevailing social scenario of Tamilnadu, India in this work "Clear Sky."

I. Introduction

English has to be admitted as a vast reservoir of translation in contemporary India. The term translation technically connotes the art of recomposing a work in another language without losing its original flavor or finding an analogous substitute. Its complexity lies in it being like the transfer of perfume from the bottle to another. Translation is always a shift not between two languages but between the two types of cultural matters. In translation studies attempts have been made to define its boundaries and develop its terrain by scholars working in disciplines as varied as Anthropology, Comparative literature, Culture studies, Linguistics and Literary theory. Literary and cultural texts suggest rather than describe meaning. Cultural meanings are very specific and their connotations vary with more in other languages. But in "Clear Sky" the translator captures all the aspects of cultural meanings in the translated work.

A translated work permits us to experience various cultures, traditions and the life of the people. It expands one's ability to explore through other literature – the thoughts and feelings of people from different society or different eras. Through a translated work one could deepen his knowledge on various cultures and expand his linguistic power. A translated work can have the ability to transform one's perception towards literature.

II. Ambai – An Egalitarian Writer

Ambai's stories fall into two phases, the first phase conformed to traditional percepts where the second one has more social concerns probably on the suppression of women and the social taboos and evils. As she comments on her early writings she says: 'Most of my initial stories had very rigid and orthodox views of sexuality, femininity and life in general. The widows in my stories, after a speech full of symbolic metaphors always refused to remarry and my heroines married idealists who were combinations of Tagore, Ramakrishna and Vivekananda.'

"Clear Sky" is a short story written in Tamil by Ambai, pen name of C.S.Lakshmi and translated into English by Lakshmi Holmstrom. "Clear Sky" is one of the short stories in the collection *one world*. The feminist writer Ambai raises questions about existing gender and caste disparities. This story portrays some interesting characters that kindle the imagination of the readers. The plot is constructed around the protagonist Sivagami, a young girl of around ten years old. Her way to school and home along with her friends Maragatham, Thangam and Susai Manickam is vividly explained with the regional flavor.

III. Untouchability In "Clear Sky"

"Clear Sky" focuses on two areas viz., untouchability and gender discrimination. Sivagami's grandfather is a person stuck with old beliefs and the customs. He is so rigid with his rites and never allows a person like Susai, a son of a cobbler, from a so called lower class in his home. One day Susai come to deliver a pair of slippers for Sivagami's grandfather. Sivagami runs to her mother for a cup of coffee to serve her friend and schoolmate, Susai. Mother serves coffee in a brass tumbler and once Sivagami could reach Susai, grandpa stops her. He takes the coffee from her and poured it in an aluminium tumbler that has been kept on the windows sill. Then he holds it out to Sivagami and unwillingly says: "Mmm. Go, give it, and not in his hand."

Put the tumbler down on the ground.”(p.10). Sivagami bursts into tears, but the moment her grandfather turns his back, she poured the coffee back into the brass tumbler and hands it to Susai.

At night, Sivagami questioned her mother “Who divides us like this? Who says this is a high caste and that is a low caste?” (p.11).

Her mother replied “People like us.” (p.11).

Here Ambai captures the real situation prevailing in most of the families in the southern part of India.

IV. Gender Inequality

One day due to some riots in the nearby town the school closes earlier. During her return home, in the drizzling showers under the umbrella of her father, Sivagami pleads him to make a statue of Jesus Christ for his friend Susai, So that they could pray in their neighbourhood instead of walking a long way to church. Sivagami asks this with a doubt. Her father assures her to fulfil her request and added that the sculptors have no religion.

Entering in the workshop is prohibited for Sivagami by her grandfather. Grandfather has a very stern decoram that the art of sculpting would never be taught to the girl children as the secrets of the art would pass on to another family, when the girl child gets married. In the afternoon as Sivagami comes from school earlier, goes to her father’s workshop.

Grandfather scolded her,” What business do you have here? Go home and study.” (p.15). Sivagami looked at her father and said to him, “You said sculptors don’t have any religion.”

She asked, “Then, the only difference there is, is between girls and boys?” (p-15)

Her grandfather shouts at her. But her father calls her near to him and said,” I will teach you.” (p-16)

He gives a small chisel in her hand and starts the lesson. Grandfather grumbles, but Sivagami started to watch her father intently.

V. Conclusion

The grandfather and others are portrayed as real life pictures which makes the story memorable. The translation captures all the spicy flavours in the source and presents a good reading experience. The well organised plot serves the purpose in a better way. Every character creates a vibrating effect on readers. Ambai’s view on social and gender discrimination is well narrated to the readers. To some extent “Clear Sky” is undoubtedly a didactic work by the author. The questions of the shrewd girl Sivagami on the evils seizes the readers and makes them to think on them.

References

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