

Why does Translation Matter? Fissures in English Translation of Pārijāta's *Śirīṣakō Phūla*

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Abstract

Background: The relevance of translation is widely questioned in applied linguistics. The linguists attempt to answer the question: why does translation matter? The question is more pertinent today, as the network society has revealed an entirely novel facet in the age of artificial intelligence.

Methods: This study draws on Tejeswani Niranjana and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's theoretical discussions on the functioning of power in the study of translation to interpret Pārijāta's *Śirīṣakō Phūla* (1964) in its translation by Tanka Vilash Varya as *Blue Mimosa* (1972). This study reveals that the target text follows the twists and turns of the source text's message from the text's title onward.

Conclusion: Conventionally, translation allows linguists to travel between the source and the target language, preserving the message of the source and conveying it in the target. However, a host of factors play a critical role in conveying the message in the target text. Often, power emerges covertly to modify the text's meaning.

Novelty: This paper argues that the target text in English fails to convey the meaning of Pārijāta's text, *Śirīṣakō Phūla*, due to the play of power in translation.

Keywords: sending abroad, negotiation, colonial image, power, mistranslation

Introduction

Translation as a means to decode ideas expressed in one language and then code them in other languages as a platform to create understanding between people with different languages. It enhances, ideally speaking, social understanding of different people, thereby facilitating the maintenance of social harmony. As an event, it happens somewhere between

two languages. Put differently, it is an in-between space where two consciousnesses interact to gain rewards through the experiences of others.

***Śirīṣakō Phūla* (1964) and *Blue Mimosa* (1972): A Critical Review**

Pārijāta's [Śirīṣakō Phūla \(1964\)](#) [also known as *Shirisko Phool*] was translated into English as [Blue Mimosa \(1972\)](#). Different scholars have received the text differently. For instance, [Sharma \(2025\)](#) argues that as the protagonist, Sakambari challenges the traditional gender roles and attempts to redefine the ways of existential struggle. He writes:

Her refusal to conventional femininity positions her in a quarantined location where she is socially and emotionally isolated. She asserts, "A woman's freedom is always a dangerous thing" (Parijat), underscoring that women who deviate from societal norms face alienation and condemnation. ([Sharma, 2025, p.102](#))

[Awasthi's \(2022\)](#) study extends the novel's line of argument, approaching Pārijāta's *Śirīṣakō Phūla* through an ecofeminist critical perspective and analyzing the urge for gender and environmental justice. He argues, "Parijat's narrative exposes the deeply ingrained patriarchal and thropocentric structures in Nepali society, advocating for a harmonious coexistence between human and the natural world" ([Awasthi, 2022, p. 96](#)).

In the 1960s, authors were contemplating human existence as the key theme. Critics often examine [Pārijāta's Śirīṣakō Phūla](#) as a treatise on human existence. For instance, [Chauhan \(2010\)](#) looks at the text from the existentialist point of view when he critically asserts: "At a time she was wishing a release from this absurd world, enveloped by the cloud of despair, Parijat reflected the sense of desolation, dissipation and futility in her works including *Shirishko Phool*" ([2010, p. 52](#)). Another study by [Shakya \(2021\)](#) further elaborates the argument. As she writes,

Shirishko Phūl referred to as her first significant writing and which catapulted her as Nepal's leading literary icon is part of her first phase and is credited to have introduced Freudian existentialism into Nepali literature. A well-known literary critic Shankar Lamichhane ... argued for the void following the emotional turmoil of Suyog Bir's kiss imposed on Sakambari to be read through Buddhist philosophy of *shunyata* (emptiness). ([2021, p. 155](#))

The existential and nihilistic reading of the text is found in many studies of the novel. [Paudyal and Bhandari \(2025\)](#) examine *Blue Mimosa* through an existentialist lens and examine the role of free choice in the protagonist's life. As they argue, "Sakambari represents the example of a woman's free will who does not compromise with patriarchal norms and values, and the existence of god. Her silence in front of Suyog Bir..." ([Paudyal & Bhandari, 2025, p. 129](#)). Like [Chauhan \(2010\)](#) and [Shakya \(2021\)](#), [Paudyal and Bhandari \(2025\)](#) have also explored existentialist reflection in Pārijāta's novel.

Similarly, [Khatriwada \(2025\)](#) finds Suyogbir and Sakambari living a very futile life in *Śirīṣakō Phūla*. His study concludes that personal choices in life lead to futility, raising the question of the existence itself ([2025, p. 95](#)). The futility of life is further explored in the novel,

as [Hegewald \(1994\)](#) analyzes the text to examine Suyogbir's self-realization. The critic thus writes: “In association with Sakambari, two things come together. Suyog wants to lose himself in her to gain meaning for his life, but also to be purified by her” ([1994, p. 198](#)). However, critics such as [Phuyal \(2022\)](#) have examined the historical forces in the text. For instance, he argues,

Parijat’s antihero, Suyogbir, participated in World War II in Burma, experienced the hardship of battle in life, and derived an irregular sense of life from his encounter with women in Burma. Such perceptions of life and society instrumentally shape his self to understand the world around him, consequently leading him to force Sakambari to commit suicide. ([Phuyal, 2022, p. 13](#))

[Phuyal’s study](#) examines the historical context and the treatment of history in the fictional world of Pārijāta. The new historical reading of the text helps understand the world as [Chauhan \(2010\)](#) does in his biographical reading of the novel.

Contemporary readings of the text emphasize the text's critical themes. Some of the prominent themes include gender, environment, existence, absurdity, futility/nihilism, and historical context at both personal and national levels. However, the existing scholarship has paid no attention to the issues surrounding the translation of the seminal text, written in 1964 and translated in 1972. This study brings the source and the target together to examine how distortions have occurred in the target text. Also, the study seeks to analyze the implicit agenda behind the distortion in the theoretical discussion of translation theories that have emerged within the postcolonial critical framework.

Power and/in Translation

Theoretically, transition is situated between two languages and two cultures. People's cultural tenets are embedded in the languages they use to express themselves. Both cultures and peoples benefit from the introduction of each other's traditions through translation. In this regard, novel perspectives and potentials emerge in the in-between space of language and culture. In the middle space, two cultures interact through their respective languages, enriching each other. The complexity of the other is coded and decoded in translation, and new ways of communication are identified therein.

Translation is often seen as a search for equivalence in lexical choice and syntactic formation between the source and the target. However, culture functions as the force within the movement, seeking lexicon and syntax from the source while addressing the audience of the other language. [Benjamin \(2000\)](#) focuses on “a literal rendering of the syntax which proves words rather than sentences to be the primary element of the translator” ([2000, p. 81](#)). The translator performs all the functions of an observer standing on a hill, reporting on each person in the two valleys on either side. As a mediator, she turns into an interpreter of the source culture for the target audience. In addition, [Goethe \(2000\)](#) believes that “a translation that attempts to identify itself with the original ultimately comes close to an interlinear version and greatly facilitates our understanding of the original” ([2000, p. 66](#)). In this sense, translation

occurs at both the linguistic and cultural levels. At the site of translation, exchanges of words, ideas, and perspectives occur, enabling the mindsets of the source to interact with those of the target.

Power and Translation in Culture

The relationship among various discourses in society produces power. Translation is one discourse that can be used to justify the superiority of a culture over others. That is, it is itself a source of power when used to bring out and interpret the negative aspects of others' cultures. Moreover, both power and Translation are major drivers of a people's understanding of others and themselves. In the backdrop of culture, power plays a significant role in determining the position of the target text.

Significantly, power legitimizes the translation for the users of the target language. Power promotes the source's culture by encouraging the target audience to understand the text. Critiquing the relationship between the truth and power in the larger cultural network, [Foucault \(1980\)](#) observes: "What makes power hold good, what makes it accepted, is simply the fact ...it traverses and produces things, ... forms knowledge, produces discourses" ([1980, p. 1139](#)). People's experiences help confer legitimacy on knowledge. The target text must achieve a certain degree of acceptance through legitimization. In this sense, translation embeds within itself the tacit agency of serving the power network of the target culture. For example, British bureaucrats and Christian missionaries exercised power through translation in India. As [Niranjana \(1992\)](#) states, "... translation comes into being overdetermined by religious, racial, sexual, and economic discourses" ([1992, p. 21](#)). As a site of negotiation and the generation of meaning in a new setup, translation serves as the field of tension in which new words and concepts search for their roles in a new power network and strive to function meaningfully.

As a meticulous translator moves between the source and target texts, they strive to remain faithful to both the linguistic and paralinguistic features of the source text. On the surface, such an attempt is governed primarily by the lexical and syntactic features of the source text. As translation occurs between two cultures, the linguist at work cannot escape the context of the text's creation and transposition. [Lewis \(2000\)](#) critically views translation as a process of "double writing" ([2000, p. 260](#)), in which the translator must attend to both language and culture. He emphasizes the translator's ability to transcend the linguistic parameters of the source and see through the cultural factors. Also, [Toury \(2000\)](#) argues that texts are "*primary* products of norm-regulated behaviour ... they are partial and biased" ([2000, p. 214](#)). In this regard, translators require prudence to navigate both linguistic and cultural challenges, as translation, as a site of exchange, brings together the linguistic signs and cultural forces embedded therein.

Translators pay adequate attention to the historical circumstances of the production of the source text in order to interpret and understand its meaning. Such reading puts them in a comfort zone while taking the meaning of the source to the target. In this sense, [Niranjana \(1992\)](#) states that translation relocates the source text in a new context of the target text. For

her, "It is a theme even in the writings of Luther, who saw it as his duty to translate the holy books into German, to Germanize them" ([1992, p. 53](#)). She explicitly distinguishes between historicity and context as distinct aspects of the same text. The historicity of the source text enhances understanding of the source and enriches the target culture, while the contextuality leaves translators feeling inspired to negotiate the meaning of the source and adds to them a bogus sense of superiority. Still, the text has to maintain an equilibrium between historicity and context to avoid the dehistoricization of the source text in the target. Because translation involves multiple challenges, [Spivak \(2000\)](#) argues that accurate translation is not possible and that "the translator must surrender to the text" ([2000, p. 372](#)). Spivak's surrender incorporates both the context and the historical forces involved in the production of the source text. A translator who fails to acknowledge historical forces and context ends up dehistoricizing the source text in the target text. In such cultural exchange, the unfamiliarity of the source enriches the target. It makes a dynamic interaction possible as [Niranjana \(1992\)](#) writes, "Translation functions as a transparent presentation of something that already exists, although the 'original' is actually brought into being through translation" ([1992, p. 3](#)). The complexity of the translator's task entails deciphering the distinctive features of individual life experiences and bringing them to the attention of the target audience in the new text.

The historical forces uphold power relations and political preferences as well. The powerful define the right and the wrong, the just and the unjust, and the ethical and the unethical. Such factors form a network, just as a web of ideas is formed in the process of writing a text. Implicitly, such a web is present at the foundation of the text. While translating into one's culture, the translator is affected by the network of power. Postcolonial critics often skeptically look at the practice in that (former) imperial forces assert certain choices as the translation happens between non-European and European languages because Europeans held that "the natives are unreliable interpreters of their own laws and cultures" ([Niranjana, 1992, p. 13](#)). Postcolonial critical discourses argue for a more meticulous attention to the use of specific lexicon, syntax, and omissions and/or additions in the target, because new meaning is constructed through the exercise of power previously practiced during the colonial era. In other words, highly pervasive power relations significantly impact the production of the translated texts.

Translation serves as a stage for various cultures to dynamically interact with one another at both linguistic and political levels. The inequalities embedded in each culture surface in translation, forming a network of power: the language functions as a vehicle of power by asserting certain conscious choices of the translator while bringing ideas home and sending them abroad. Linguists who translate into their mother tongue and those who translate into a second or third language do not have similar interests in cultural and linguistic interactions. The power relations among cultures surface visibly in translation, as [Said \(1990\)](#) remarks that the West has imposed an embargo on Arabic literature; therefore, Arabic literature is not translated into English. The Anglophone academy denies Arabic literature the status of serious

literature. The whole body of literature produced in the Arabic language is untranslatable to the Western world because there is "a deliberate policy of maintaining a kind of monolithic reductionalism where the Arab and Islam are concerned" ([Said, 1992, p. 278](#)). Since translation familiarizes the target culture with the images and concepts of the source culture, the Western World may have wanted to keep Arab ways of thinking and viewing the world distant from its people. Such distance helps other people and society be seen as separate from one's own.

Similarly, we can take an instance of othering in patriarchal discourses where women are trained to accept the ways of men as the natural and normal ones. [Spivak \(2000\)](#) critically views the power struggle through the gender dynamics in translation. As she writes, "Women within male-dominated society, when they internalize sexism as normality, act out a scenario against feminism" ([2000, p. 375](#)). While critiquing the power relations binding the non-West to the West, translators are also required to analyze the situation between the sexes. She emphasizes the challenges faced by women from the Global South and argues for politicizing translation as a site for women's power. "The act of translating into the Third World language is often a political exercise of a different sort" ([Spivak, 2000, p. 378](#)). As a site of heavy tension and power, translation becomes a critical space where people tussle to ascertain their position, prepare the target text to suit the audience's sensibility, and appropriate the voice in a new context. The polysemous language requires serious attention from literary translators. This paper explores the issues that have arisen in the translation of Pārijāta's seminal 1964 Nepali novel *Śīrīśakō Phūla* into English [Blue Mimosa \(1972\)](#) and scrutinizes the role of power in translation.

Power and Politics in Translation of Pārijāta's *Śīrīśakō Phūla*

Pārijāta's *Śīrīśakō Phūla* ([1964](#)) drew the translator's attention immediately after it won the prestigious Madan Puruskar in 1965. However, the 1972 English translation shows multiple issues from literal translation to mistranslation: the source text fails to communicate its purpose to the target audience. Tanka Vilas Varya translated the text in and around 1970 with the help of Sondra Zeidentsein, and the English text was published in 1972. This study finds that the translation has compromised the original text's overall meaning. This study has categorically presented the issues that have appeared in the target text: literal translation, compromise in the target text, issues of gender in translation, loss of precision and specificity, violation of meaning in the source, vulgarization of the original meaning, and assumption of imperial power by the translators during translation. Nonetheless, [Blue Mimosa \(1972\)](#) has served as a seminal Nepali text, introducing Nepal to Western readers.

The target text showcases literal translation that often seems to ridicule the rigor of the source *Śīrīśakō Phūla* ([1964](#)). Literal translation often works at the level of the lexicon and its arrangement in syntactic structures, failing to grasp the deeper cultural meaning embedded in the source text. For example, [Blue Mimosa \(1972\)](#) uses the phrase "King's Way" ([p. 84](#)) to refer to "राजपथ" [rājapatha] ([p. 55](#)) in the source. The proper name could have been transliterated to maintain its distinctive use in the target language as well. Alternatively, words

like 'highway' also carry the same meaning as the source. In the target, the text reads: "Because Shiva Raj continued to drink, I said I had to go home and took him out. I walked my cycle along King's Way, past Rani Pokhari" (p. 84). The target text prefers to use literal translation in this context. The source text makes mention of "रगतको टाटो" [ragatko tāto] (1964, p. 39) and "मुखामुख" [mukhāmukha] (p. 55) that turn into "spots of blood" (p. 59) and "mouth to mouth" (p. 84) in the target, respectively. In the first instance, the word "stain" could have been replaced with "spot" to convey the same meaning. The second instance shows that the phrase does not mean what the source text refers to. Such instances ridicule the essence of the source text.

Blue Mimosa fails to distinguish between the physical and the spiritual, a result of its heavy reliance on literal equivalence between the source and the target in translation. Suyogbir is a World War II veteran who fought in Burma. As he returns from the War to Kathmandu, he often thinks about his own being now and then. Pārijāta infuses her protagonist with a sense of existential crisis as she writes, "हामी मरिरहेकाहरूसँग आर्दशको पर्खाल किन राख्नु पर्‍यो, आउ लुट्न देऊ, तिमी पनि लुट मलाई।" [Hāmī marirahēkaharu sanga ardaśakō parkhāla kina rākhnu paryo, ā'u luṭna deu, timī pani luṭa malāī] (1964, p. 39). The target text turns the spiritual into the physical when it reads, "Sweet heart, why must you raise a wall of ideals against those who are about to die? Come let me plunder, and you, too, plunder me" (1972, p. 58). The loss of spirituality and its impact are implied in "about to die" in the target text. Also, "अलङ्कारहरू" [alaṅkāraharū] (p. 64) is translated as "ornaments" (Varya, 1972, p. 97). The wilderness couples with the idea of Bari as a powerful magnet when Śīrīśakō Phūla writes, "जूनको रङ्गमा पहेंलिएकी, जङ्गली फूलको बाससँग अभिव्यक्त भएकी, यदि कसैलाई स्वर्गालु भन्न सके ऊ त्यही हो।" [Junakō raṅgamā pahēnalikī, jaṅgal phūlakō bāsasanga abhivyakta bhaekī, yadi kasailāī svargālu bhanna sake ū tyahī ho.] (p. 35). However, the target text distorts and blurs the idea of wilderness of the source when it reads, "Illuminated by the moonlight, expressed in the smell of forest, if anyone can be called a thing of heaven, it was she, in that place" (p. 52). The target text misses the flower's primitiveness, which fascinates Suyogbir's existence, and ends up presenting human beings as mere objects.

The mathematical equivalence searches for dictionary equivalence of the lexical entries in the target. The connotative meaning is lost in such translation. *Blue Mimosa* documents multiple instances of such literal translation. In *Śīrīśakō Phūla*, Pārijāta writes: "...शायद मासुको तिर्खा मेट्छे र त्यो ठिटो पसल्लिलाई त्यस्तै सजिलो वातावरणमा पाउन्जाल प्रेम गर्छ, कुन्नि आफ्नो कुन तिर्खा मेट्छ।" [Śāyada māsukō tirkhā mēṭchhē ra tyō ṭhitō pasallnīlāī tyastyai sajilo vātāvaranmā pā'unjela prēma garchha, kunni kuna tirkhā mēṭchha.] (p. 15). The author does not want to mention the drive she knows is present in the young boy. However, the target text shows the ridiculous translation when it states, "... perhaps quenching thirst of the flesh, and the boy, as long as he finds the atmosphere easy, will love her –to quench who knows what

kind of thirst?" (p. 20). The phrase "who knows what kind of thirst" completely fails to carry the embedded meaning in the source. It misses the author's implied goal in the source. A too-literal equivalence also fails to evoke the source's sense. For instance, "कस्तो हाँस उठ्दो!" [Kasto hāsa uthdo!] (p. 26) is translated as "How laughable that is!" (p. 38) in the target text. On the prima facie, the native audience of the target language finds such a translation uncomfortable and tends to dismiss the source text as a serious piece of artistic creation. As a mechanical approach, literal translation is an easy tool for finding lexical equivalence between the source and the target; however, it renders implicit allusions and intended effects insignificant, thereby trivializing the source's impact on the target audience. Such translation distorts the source material and gives the target audience a completely different picture of it.

Literal translation does not acknowledge the special use of language and its stylistic features in a particular slot of the syntactic order. The source's cultural tenets also fail to transfer to the target when mechanical equivalence is the only goal in the target text. Like literal translation, over-reliance on generalization also distorts the meaning of *Śirīsakō Phūla*. Although generalization speeds up the conversion of a source text into a target text, the former's cultural tenets do not reach the latter. The source and target texts do not align when generalization is the translator's chief strategy. Pārijāta's *Śirīsakō Phūla* presents certain words like "मादल" [mādala] (p. 39) and "झ्याउरे गीत" [jhyā'urē gīta] (p. 7), which are translated as "drum" (p. 59) and "folk song" (p. 7), respectively. The Nepali musical instrument "mādala" is a type of drum, and "jhyā'urē gīta" is also a form of folk song from Nepal. However, the lexical entries at the source do not carry the same concepts from the source text. Instead, the translator could have transliterated the word with an annotation in the footnote. It could have shown respect to the source text and culture as well. In another place, Pārijāta's text states: "मलाई देखासाथ उसले भन्यो 'बरीले तलै भनी, धन्दा नमान्नुहोस, यसलाई आफ्नै घर सम्झनुभए हुन्छ।" [Malā'ī dēkhnāsātha usalē bhan'yō, 'Barīlē talai bhānī, dhandā namānuhos, yasalā'ī āphnai ghara samjhanubha'ē hunchha.] (1964, p. 13). Varya's translation presents the same text as the following: "As soon as he saw me, he said, 'Bari just told me downstairs. Don't trouble yourself, consider this your home'" (p. 16). Such translation implants an awkward effect. Furthermore, "घर" [ghara] carries three semantic connotations in Nepali: it conveys an emotional bond, as in 'home'; a sense of belonging, as in 'family'; and a sense of physical presence, as in 'house.' Native speakers of Nepali naturally understand each meaning in its context of use. Since Suyogbir is devoid of family ties, the instance conveys a sense of family when Shivaraj uses the word "ghara" to welcome Suyogbir home. The target text misses the exact meaning by ignoring the semantic distinctions that certain lexicons embed in them when used in a particular place in the syntactic string.

The source text specially mentions the different types of drinks. The target text generalizes all the drinks into one category. For instance, the Burmese people make "nigāra," "jāda," and "raksī." However, the translator fails to see the difference in the essence of each

drink. The drink “निगार” [nigāra] ([Pārijāta, 1964, p. 45](#)) is stated as “beer” ([p. 68](#)) in Varya’s translation in the target. The source text reads: “घ्याम्पाभरि रक्सी खुवाएर कस्तरी तिमी खुसी भएकी थियौ।” [Ghyāpābhari raksī khuvayara kastarī timī khusī bha’ēkī thiyau.] ([p. 35](#)). The target text says, “It made you happy to give us a big pot full of whiskey to drink” ([p. 53](#)). In this instance, ‘raksī’ is treated as ‘whiskey.’ When “घ्याम्पा भरि-भरि जाँड र रक्सी” (ghyāpābhari-bhari jāda ra raksī) ([p. 28](#)) is translated as “big jars of beer and whiskey” ([p. 41](#)), the cultural essence is ignored, by bringing into the limelight the target culture. Just like varieties of concepts in alcohol, ‘home’ is also wrongly treated in the target text, *Blue Mimosa*. The translator does not distinguish between a family and a rented room in the target. For instance, Suyogbir says, “होइन, म डेरामा खाइहाल्छु नि।” [Hō’ina, ma dērāmā khā’ihālchhu ni.] ([p. 13](#)) turns into “No, I’m going to eat at home” ([p. 17](#)) in the target. Suyogbir does not have a family in the sense of ‘ghara’ in Nepali. The whole text revolves around his confusion between owning a home or having the sensual adventure of life. Suyogbir’s ‘dērā’ is a rented room where emptiness rules his life, where he travels back to the forests and villages of Burma during World War II, and where his past weighs more than his present. The translator could not understand Suyogbir’s life while overgeneralizing ‘dērā’ as ‘home’.

Omission is among the most significant fissures in the target text. One who attempts to translate an award-winning masterpiece cannot be taken as an insufficient linguist in the target language. When Pārijāta writes, “... तिमीले अवश्य मलाई गतिलो झापट हान्नेछौ, मेरो मुखभरी थुक्नेछौ।” [timīlē avas̄ya malāī gatilō jhāpaṭa hānaum, mērō mukhabharī thuknēchhau.] ([p. 31](#)) has been translated as “... you, I am sure, will slap me. You will spit in my face” ([p. 46](#)) in the target. The intensity of the slap is lost when ‘gatilō’ is omitted in English. Varya’s translation shows “म” [Ma] ([Pārijāta, 1964, p. 39](#)) and “पहिलो प्रेमको आवेग” [pahilō prēmako āvēga] ([Pārijāta, 1964, p. 52](#)) are “my body” ([p. 59](#)) and “my first love” ([p. 78](#)) in the target text, *Blue Mimosa*. Apparently, such a mismatch creates confusion in the target text. Also, “बारीको उद्देश्य के हो?” [Barīkō uddēśya kē hō?] ([p. 58](#)) has turned into “What was Bari’s intention?” ([p. 88](#)) in the English text. Can the shift in tense be acceptable in the target? The present tense in the source changes to the past tense in the target. The mismatch and generalization push the meaning of the source text into the mist, where the real picture is lost in the dim speculation of the authentic text. The target text has been victimized by employing general terms to refer to culturally significant small terms. The translator shows no preference for the source culture, which adds meaning to the source text. The source text derives meaning from the political context of South Asia in the 1950s and the 1960s. However, the target text ahistoricizes the fictional world.

Translation also shows the linguist’s preference for a specific ideology and worldview. In the patriarchal order, men seek to advance their own interests. In this sense, translation may involve gender-based prejudice. Varya’s English translation of Pārijāta’s *Śirīsakō Phūla* (1964)

falls into this trap by promoting masculine bias in the target language. The target text, *Blue Mimosa*, states that a human being is a man. For instance, “मानिस” [mānisa] (Pārijāta, 1964, p. 65) is translated as “he” (p. 98). In Nepali, mānisa is a neutral form that requires the masculine or feminine adjective to qualify it. Otherwise, it should be referred to by the third-person plural pronoun. In one instance, Pārijāta writes: “त्यसो भए हामीमा अर्थात हामी मानिसहरूमा सम्झौता कसरी ल्याउने?” [Tyasō bha'e hāmīma arthāta hāmī mānisaharūmā samjha'utā kasarī lyā'unē?] (emphasis added, p. 26). The target text supplants human (necessary to refer to ‘mānisaharū’) with man, and it reads: "Looking discouraged, I asked, 'In that case, how can we, as *men*, be reconciled with one another?" (emphasis added, p. 38). The translator's prejudice is further evident in the target text when he avoids acknowledging gender distinctions. For him, “काम गर्ने स्वस्त्री मान्छे” [kāma garnē svasnī machchhē] (p. 31) is just a “servant” (p. 45). “Maid” could have made better sense there. On the other hand, the target text states Shivaraj's cook as a man, though the source text does not mention anything about the cook's gender identity. Sakambari responds to Suyogbir thus: “‘‘डेरामा कसले पकाइदिन्छ तपाईंलाई? मिठो लाग्छ के? बिहा गर्नुस्, अब बूढो भइसक्नुभयो।’’” [‘Dērāmā kasalē pakā'idinchha tapā'īmlā'ī? Miṭhō lāgchha kē? Bihā garnus, aba būdhō bha'isaknubhayō.] (emphasis added, p. 13). The target text carries the same sense, thus: “‘‘Who cooks for you at home? Probably a cook. *Is he any good?* Now that you're old, you should get married” (emphasis added, p. 17). It is complex at this point to understand that the cook is a man. Given the source's lack of gender implication for the cook, the translator chooses to present the cook as a man.

The meaning of Pārijāta's source text has been compromised in the target text, *Blue Mimosa*, at points where the language refers to the relationship between Western and Eastern people. Because the central figure, Suyogbir, has fought in World War II from the British side, he has worked with the officers. As he returns home after the War, he reflects on his past and his time with those people. The translator shows extra care while translating about the British people and their ways. In the source text, we get to read certain adjectives and verbs that are either omitted or changed in the target text. Such practice indicates that the imperial forces impacted the translation of the source text. First of all, the issue of cleaning the traditional image pops up in translation. The description of Pārijāta's *Śirīṣakō Phūla* has been altered in Varya's 1972 English translation. For instance, Suyogbir and Colonel Stephen work in the same unit where they have known each other intimately. Pārijāta's description shows that Colonel Stephen drinks just as other soldiers do in the barracks. However, Varya's target text does not mention such things. Pārijāta writes: “‘‘ब्रिटिश कर्णेल स्टेफन रातभरि मातेर रोए, स्वास्त्री-छोराछोरीको सम्झना आएर, मेरो नम्बरी साथीले भन्छ ।’’” [Bṛīṣa karṇēla stēphana rātabhari mātēra rō'ē, svāsnī-chōrāchōrīkō samjhanā ā'ēra' mērō nambarī sāthīlē bhanchha.] (p. 42). In the target text, Varya writes it thus: “‘‘British Colonel Stephen cried all night, thinking of his wife and children,' my bunk-mate told me” (p. 63). The translator omits “mātēra rō'ē” in the target, as it indicates that

he was drunk while weeping throughout the night. Similarly, Pārijāta's metaphorical sense is lost in the target text when the object of sacrifice is understood only in the literal sense. As Pārijāta writes, “भन्नुहोस् त युद्धले मानिसलाई कतिसम्म बोका बनाउँदो रहेछ।” [Bhannuhōs ta yud'dhalē mānīsalā'ī katisam'ma bōkā banā'uṃdō rahēchha] ([emphasis added, p. 8](#)). The target text reads, “Do you see how war turns men into *goats*?” ([emphasis added, p. 8](#)). A goat is generally taken as the object of sacrifice. In English, the sentence sounds unusual because the embedded cultural meaning is lost from the word.

The target text exercises uneven authority, compromising the meaning of the original text. As the source text explores the futility of life, the author employs cigarettes and smoke to explore the characters' inner worlds. Suyogbir, Shivaraj, and Shakambari smoke throughout the text; they share cigarettes; and they explore the inner essence of life. Pārijāta's source text mentions explicitly the cigarette brand “Capstion” ([p. 4](#)), which the translator omits in the target text. The publisher of the English text, [Zeidenstein \(1972\)](#) also writes:

It is ironic to find that the new novel of Kathmandu reflects the emptiness of life just at a time when Kathmandu has become a hub for those seeking to escape the emptiness of Western life. Many young Europeans and Americans are turning toward affirmation of Hindu and Buddhist philosophy to water the dry roots of their lives. ([1972, p. ii](#))

The emptiness of life prevailed in the West and the East in the 1960s. However, the target text views Nepali society only from a particular vantage point. Pārijāta writes: “गोरा क्याटेन धाप मारन आउछ।” [Gōrā kyāṭēna dhāpa mārna ā'uchha.] ([p. 42](#)). The target text reads: “The British Captain slapped me on the back” ([p. 64](#)). Such translation does not imply the linguist's inability to distinguish between the two words “pat” and “slap.” Rather, it is the conscious choice on the part of the translator to reaffirm the authority of the British Officer over the soldiers in Burma.

The target text further presents the West as the savior and the East as the wild, emotional category while translating Pārijāta's description of Burmese people and their ways. Pārijāta takes Suyogbir on an inner journey into Burmese society while he is in Kathmandu to explore the substantial impact of the War on his being. Phrase like “जंगली केटी” [jaṅgalī kēṭī] ([p. 7](#)) and “असभ्य केटी” (asabhya kēṭī) ([Pārijāta, 1964, p. 36](#)) are translated as “primitive girl” ([Varya, 1972, p. 7, p. 55](#)). Pārijāta's “असभ्य मन” [asabhya mana] ([p. 36](#)) is changed into a “wild heart” ([p. 55](#)) in the target. Such translation ridicules the source text by distorting its fundamental meaning. The intimacy that Pārijāta's descriptions establish in the source has been entirely lost in the target. The target text presents Burma as a wild category, thereby trivializing the source text's meaning. The imperial tendency shapes the course of translation.

Often, translators distort the meaning of the source in the target through trivialization and vulgarization. They practice linguistic violence in translation, compromising the meaning of the source text. English translation of Pārijāta's [Śirīṣakō Phūla \(1964\)](#) ridicules the source text in *Blue Mimosa*. The linguistic violence humiliates the source text by applying words that have no correspondence in it. English Translation of Pārijāta's *Śirīṣakō Phūla* trivializes the

meaning when it uses the lexical items that do not match the meaning of the source. The source text reads: “गला धेरै खुला भएको चोलोबाट देखिने गर्धन मुनिको हाड र बेस्कन उँभो उठेको छाती देख्दा हाँसो र वितिष्णाले एकसाथ छोप्यो।” [Galā dhērai khulā bha'ēkō chōlōbāṭa dēkhiṇē gardhana munikō hāḍa ra bēskana uṁbhō uṭhēkō chhātī dēkhḍā hāṁsō ra vitiṣṇālē ēkasātha chhōpyō.] (p. 10). The corresponding text reads in English: “The sight of her collar-bone and her full breast excited laughter and desire at the same time” (p. 12). The translator employs 'desire' to mean "vitiṣṇā", thereby arousing the sensual connotation in the target text. "vitiṣṇā" could mean "disinterestedness" but not "desire." Pārijāta's anti-hero explores the meaning of life, beyond the quotidian order. Suyogbir falls in love with Sakambari, but in the source text, Shivaraj appears as the family's patron in Bishalnagar. As Pārijāta writes, “सकमबरीको तस्वीरलाई मायालु आँखाले हेर्दै उसले आफ्नो वालेट अधिल्लिर राख्यो।” [Sakamabarīkō tasvīralāī māyālu āṁkhālē hērdai usalē āphnō vālēṭa aghiltira rākhyō] (p. 13). The corresponding text reads thus in English: “He looked at the picture with a lover's eyes and then slipped it into the front of his wallet” (p. 16). The person is Sakambari's brother, Shivaraj. The translator fails to see who the pronoun “usalē” refers to in the sentence, thereby vulgarizing brother's “māyālu āṁkhā” into a “lover's eyes.” In another instance, the source text reads: “अहँ, दुइटामा कुनै सामञ्जस्य आउन सकेन; खोजेर पनि, चाहेर पनि र स्वीकार गरें केही बिराएछु ।” [Ahaṁ, du'itāmā kunai sāmāñjasya ā'una sakēna; khōjēra pani, cāhēra pani ra svīkāra garēm kēhī birā'ēchhu.] (p. 24). In the target, the corresponding text states: "No. I always watched her. I watched her because I liked to" (p. 35). This is a weird kind of translation where the source and the target completely miss the goal of the job. Furthermore, Suyogbir recalls his casual sexual encounters with Burmese girls during the War and attempts to read Sakambari along the same line as the source text writes: “मलाई लाग्थ्यो शायद बरीमा यौन भन्ने कुनै रोग नै छैन ...” [Malāī lāgthyō śāyada barīmā yauna bhannē kunai rōga nai chhaina] (p. 21). At 24, Sakambari knows what sexual attraction is. However, the target text translates the same thing as “I thought maybe she was not sexually aware ...” (p. 30). The passionate Suyogbir takes sexual drive as a necessary evil, as implied in "yauna bhannē kunai rōga," i.e., a disease called sexual desire. The target text omits the sense to neutralize Suyogbir's part.

The translator combines two uneven ideas in the target text, *Blue Mimosa* (1972). Pārijāta's Nepali text uses phrases like “अर्नाको फिलो” [arnākō philō] (p. 35) and “अर्नाको सिंगभरि रक्सी” [arnākō sigambhari raksī] (p. 35), which are translated as "rhinoceros' thigh" (p. 53) and “a rhino-horn full of whiskey” (p. 53) respectively in the target. The target text does not distinguish between an Asian buffalo or a wild water buffalo in the source and a rhinoceros in the target. The use of a completely different animal distorts the meaning of the source and fails to communicate the cultural meaning of the Burmese people present in the original text. Pārijāta's “को हो बरी मेरी?” [Kō hō Barī mērī?] (p. 29) could have been translated as "Who is Bari to me?" Instead, the target text uses “Who is my Bari?” (p. 29). When the source reads,

“मेरो उसलाई भन्नु केहि थिएन।” [Mērō usalāī bhannu kēhi thi'ēna.] (p. 32), the target text states, “I could not say anything to her” (p. 47). The source shows that the speaker has nothing to communicate to the addressee, whereas the target text fills the addressee with those thoughts that the addresser cannot express in the specific context. The target readers are misled into perceiving the meaning as the persona's void changing into an inability to express in the target. Very funny translation occurs when “अँध्यारोको कुनै अर्थ छैन।” [Aṁdhyārōkō kunai artha chhaina.] (p. 54) is stated as “It was night but there was no darkness ...” (p. 54), and “म झस्किन्थे।” [Ma jhaskinthēm.] (p. 62) turns into “I was surprised” (p. 93). The translator does not take the source text seriously when the correspondence of meaning between the source and the target is utterly denied. When the source states, “हामीमा कुनै प्रगति देखिएन।” [Hāmīmā kunai pragati dēkhi'ēna.] (p. 62), the target text translates it into “We showed no progress” (p. 93). The source shows that the subject “we” appears in the role of a place, whereas the “progress” is the expected event. The target text treats “we” as the agent and “progress” as the goal. The Nepali text attempts to show human beings' inability in the 1960s and the crises of existence. In such a text, human agency fades into the role of mere observer. The translator fails to see the larger picture even while translating the text immediately after its publication.

Politics of Translation

Varya's 1972 English translation of Pārijāta's *Śirīṣakō Phūla* (1964) carries multiple linguistic and cultural flaws. First of all, the title of the source text is taken from the purple jacaranda flower of the Kathmandu Valley. Mimosa and jacaranda are completely different plant species with different types of flowers. The target text does not have Pārijāta's plant in the title. Still, the translator has popularized the novel by “Blue Mimosa.” The author explores the transient nature of human life, glamor, strength, and beauty through purple flowers in April and May. However, the translator attempts to universalize the emptiness the Western World was undergoing in the 1960s by framing the target text as crises beyond the West. The target text is produced through literal translation, forced matches, generalization, mismatches, haphazard word use, omissions, and attempts to cleanse the image of the imperial officers. In this sense, the meaning of the source text has been severely compromised in the target text.

Translation matters because it can effectively communicate ideas from one language and culture to an audience in another. The vulnerability of translation emanates from the possibility of violence that appears as the conscious choice on the part of the linguist. The analysis of Pārijāta's *Śirīṣakō Phūla* and its English translation, *Blue Mimosa*, shows that the target text imposes violence on the transfer of meaning from the source. An honest, linguistic effort could have successfully given a Nepali masterpiece to the world audience comfortable in English. However, the translator's and publisher's dubious political goals seem to have hampered the translation process, thereby distorting the meaning of the source text in the target text.

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