Modalities of the Translation-Ideology Nexus

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An Analysis of V. G. Kiernan's Translation of Iqbal

By

Jamil Asghar Jami

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

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To my father whose loving memory is one of the constants
of my life.

On every level of the translation process, it can be shown that, if linguistic considerations enter into conflict with considerations of an ideological and/or poetological nature, the latter tend to win out.

—André Lefevere (1992)

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Grateful acknowledgements are made to all those writers whose works have been included here. I am also thankful to my colleagues and friends, who have revised the text, and to those who have helped revise parts of the text. To my institution—the National University of Modern Languages—I owe so much which I cannot put in words. Here I made, in William Hazlitt's words, "my first acquaintance with poets". Their valuable suggestions have added manifold to the worth of this book. Lastly, but most importantly, my debt to Iqbal is too great to pay; therefore, I have no other option but to pass on as a defaulter chanting contritely these lines from him:

نہ زباں کوئی غزل کی نہ زباں سے باخبر میں
کوئی دل کشا صدا ہو عجمی ہو یا کہ تازی

My Expression befits not ghazal; nor I acquainted with Expression;
May there be some heart-easing voice, be it in Persian or Arabic.

About the Author

Jamil Asghar Jami is currently working as a Director at the Center for Translation and Interpretation, National University of Modern Languages, Islamabad, Pakistan. He has a PhD in English (Translation Studies) and holds MA English, MA Philosophy and MA Political Science degrees with distinction. He also holds a Research Fellowship in Translation Studies from the University of North Texas, USA. He has the privilege of conducting research on translation under John Robert Ross, a prominent student of Noam Chomsky and one of the leading contemporary syntacticians. His teaching and research experience stretches over about two decades. He has presented papers at national and international conferences and has contributed to renowned research journals. It is to his credit that his article on Iqbal titled "Iqbal's Philosophy of Art and Its Relevance to an Age of Postmodern Artifice" won the Best-Article-Prize in an international competition in 2015 organized by the ECO Cultural Institute, Tehran. He is also the recipient of "Distinguished Researcher Award" by the National University of Modern Languages in 2018. His areas of interest include Postmodernism, Literary Theory, Linguistics, Translation Studies and Philosophy.

FOREWORD

"Traduttore traditore"
(A translator is a traitor)
Italian Proverb

Dr Jamil Asghar Jami's substantial and insightful critical study, *Modalities of Translation-Ideology Nexus: A Critical Analysis of V. G. Kiernan's Translation of Iqbal* stands out as a highly welcome contribution to both Iqbal and Translation Studies.

Having reviewed a spate of English translations of the Quran, particularly by the Orientalists, the ilk to which V. G. Kiernan too belongs, I appreciate and endorse all the more Dr Jami's painstakingly massive and perceptive study. For, it presses home the unpalatable truth that ideological presuppositions on the part of a translator amount to wreaking havoc upon the source text and denying readers their right to learn what the text says.

The regrettable history of English translations of the Quran by the Orientalists, from 1649 to our times, has been disfigured by willful distortion of the meaning and message of the Quran. Far from stating what the Quran is and what it tells man, their versions poison the minds of the unsuspecting readers, who do not have access to the Quran in original Arabic, with the following outrageous, bizarre notions that the Quran

- is merely a product of Prophet Muhammad's (peace be upon him) mind,
- is a poor, rather grotesque replica of the Bible drawing heavily, though without any acknowledgment, upon the Judeo-Christian religious tradition,
- is bereft of any logical order in its presentation and largely incomprehensible in its contents,
- incites violence and bloodshed against all those outside the fold of Islam, and
- represents, at best, a Christian heresy.

Readers are bound to develop these misperceptions on reading any of these Orientalist translations which are highly popular in the West:

- Alexander Ross, *The Alcoran of Mahomet* (1649).
- George Sale, *The Koran* (1734)
- J. M. Rodwell, *The Koran, the Surahs Arranged in Chronological Order with Notes* (1861).
- E. H. Palmer, *The Quran* (1880)
- Richard Bell, *The Quran, Translated with a Critical Rearrangement of the Surahs* (1937-1939).
- N. J. Dawood, *The Koran* (1956).
- Alan Jones, *The Quran* (2007)
- A. J. Droge, *The Quran: A New Annotated Translation* (2014).

This brief account of the polemical thrust of these translations reinforces the main thesis of Dr Jami in the present book i.e. how an ideology-propelled translation cheats and misdirects readers. The numerous examples, so diligently culled by him from Kiernan's rendering, illustrate how the translator has superimposed his own dogma upon the text. It is not simply an instance of not being true to the source text. As cogently adduced by Dr Jami, Kiernan is guilty on many counts of giving a diametrically opposite ideological twist and thrust to Iqbal's message. As a result, Iqbal's quintessential Islamic ethos and symbolism, to which he was unflinchingly wedded, appear in Kiernan's domesticated terms, which bear no relation to the original. Apart from the Christianization of Iqbal's message, Kiernan has faltered also in the misrepresentation of the form of Iqbal's poetry. It is indeed gratifying that Dr Jami has stoutly substantiated all the instances of Kiernan's failure to present faithfully Iqbal's contents, owing mainly to his ideological presuppositions and cultural blindness, which borders on xenophobia or the colonial trait of usurpation.

Other translators of Iqbal's poetry have not been successful either in fathoming the depth of his poetic universe which is premised solidly on the Islamic/Quranic *weltanschauung.* Take the Indian translator, Khushwant Singh as illustrative. It must be, nonetheless, clarified at once that unlike Kiernan, he is not tethered to the colonialist agenda. Rather, by dint of his familiarity with Urdu and Persian poetic corpus and his dabbling in

Sufism, Singh at times, displays some empathy for Iqbal's egalitarian ideals. Yet in his translation of Iqbal's widely acclaimed "Shikwah" and "Jawab-i Shikwah" he, occasionally, betrays his inability to capture Iqbal's intent, for example, in confounding the characteristic Islamic posture of prostration with "kissing the earth" and "*millat/ummat*" with mere "following", rather than a community.

Divided neatly into 10 chapters, Dr Jami's work delves deep into the intricacies of both the art and craft of translation. His grounding in the translation theory is impressive. More importantly, he has drawn discerningly upon this body of knowledge in his critique on Kiernan's translation, particularly his fault lines.

Dr Jami's book is a pioneering work in assessing a popular translator with reference to his ideological presuppositions and the resultant distortion in his translation of Iqbal. I am sure this study will inspire some bright students of Iqbal to evaluate R. A. Nicholson's, A. J. Arberry's and Annemarie Schimmel's renderings of Iqbal's works.

Dr Jami deserves every credit for this sterling scholarly contribution which will enlighten students of Iqbal studies, Urdu literature, cultural studies, and translation studies.

Professor Abdur Raheem Kidwai
Aligarh Muslim University
Aligarh, India, April 2019
Professor of English
Director, UGC Human Resource Development Centre, Aligarh Muslim University
Honorary Visiting Fellow/Professor (2006-2016)
School of English, University of Leicester, UK

PREFACE

Let it be said at the outset that this book is primarily for the researchers and academicians who are interested to know the intricate power play and subtle workings of translation and its immense potential to re-create the source text in its own image. Located in the Foucauldian perspective, the book mildly subscribes to the idea that there is no such thing as apolitical scholarship and under the impact of a ubiquitous post-modernity, our knowledge has become disjointed, catastrophic and complicitous with the larger power structures and subversive praxis. Therefore, in our age where all kinds of texts are mired in politics, one daunting challenge for us is to get used to knowledge in such a way that it can interrupt old patterns and hone our sensitivity to differences and strengthen our capacity to tolerate the incommensurables.

Against this backdrop, I have explored the elements of ideology-translation nexus and domestication in V. G. Kiernan's translation of Iqbal into English. Domestication is a translation strategy that plays down, or in extreme cases obliterates, the linguistic and cultural distinctiveness of a source text. At times, it tends to *re-write* the source text in line with the dominant poetics of the target text. I have also examined the nature of this domestication and its effects on the overall scheme of translation.

As regards the theoretical and methodological framework, I have employed Lawrence Venuti's model of *foreignization* and *domestication* which contends that, rather than being a liability, it is one of the greatest assets of a translation to appear *unfamiliar* and *foreign* since that is the only way to register and negotiate the linguistic and cultural distinctiveness of the source text. Besides, as per this model, I have conceptualized translation in a broader perspective as a site of ideological conflict for power and discursive supremacy constantly animated by multiple cultural and social factors/variables.

We are living in troubled times when the question of intercultural dialogue and negotiation has assumed unprecedented proportions. The world in which we are living, individual nation-states are increasingly

embroiled in socioeconomic and information networks. The competing national and linguistic identities are compounding the inter/trans-cultural relations. Of late, the global reach of the socio-political institutions and technological gadgets has just added to the value and relevance of translation.

Today, we are confronted with rapid and radical changes all around us and the modern technologies are just precipitating this process of social and cultural transformations. In transnational relations and inter-dependent economic, commercial and strategic affairs, translation is operating at every level (Berman & Wood, 2005). Indeed, in a turbulent and increasingly polarized world, the role of translation is so fundamental that Ilan Stravans rightly said, "Modernity…is not lived through nationality but through translationality" (quoted in Sokol, 2002, p. 138). Globalization with all its violent discontents coupled with rampant terrorism and protracted wars, calls for a much more nuanced and intimate understanding of all the cultural others.

In the development of such self-critical understanding, translation plays essentially a crucial, if often unappreciated, role (Berman & Wood, 2005). By negotiating meanings, translation has the potential to create a meditational zone of intercultural conciliation which is of key importance in a global and transnational world. Without such meditational zones, different peoples are likely to remain partitioned in their own cultural cocoons. Such distancing among different cultures will cause misunderstandings at best and ethnic cleansings at worst. The only antidote to these problems is a deeper and broader understanding of other peoples and nations.

However, translation has the immense potential to do more harm than good if it domesticates the source text by submerging all its cultural and linguistic identities. In our times, this recognition was achieved mostly ably and subtly by Lawrence Venuti (1992, 1995 & 1998). Venuti is right in cautioning the translators that domesticated translations will only create what he varyingly calls "Eurocentrism", "ethnocentrism", "narcissism", "isolationism", etc. Viewed from this perspective, domesticated translations are very likely to be partial, partisan and dismissive of the source text. As a result, the entire business of translation is imprudently reduced to an act of making selections (inclusions as well as exclusions), and the representations

of the source text happen to be little more than a sum total of all these selections. It is this partiality of perspective associated with domesticated translations which is, therefore, destined to play a complicitous role in the politics of power, hegemony and discursive control. This, in turn, leads to a perpetuation of the dominant power structures in the society (Tymoczko, 2010).

Lastly, and admittedly, Kiernan's translation of Iqbal is beautiful, moving, mesmerizing and well-esteemed. Assuredly, it has its share of prosaic patches and at times one can feel him plodding through his text. But then, so what? As regards the beauty of translation, we have to remember that there is nothing which does not come at some cost, let alone a thing of beauty which purportedly is a joy forever. And as regards, its prosaic and plodding patches, it has to be understood that every act of translation, in Friedrich Schleiermacher's words, is a *Trial of the Foreign* which inevitably results in the deformation of translation. Let us proceed.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Sir Muhammad Iqbal (1877-1938), a celebrated Muslim philosopher, poet, and political leader, born in Siālkot, India (now Pakistan), has variously been translated into English by different translators of note. Among them, Victor Gordon Kiernan's translation of Iqbal (*Poems from Iqbal,* first published in 1955) enjoys a unique and prestigious status. Kiernan (1913 - 2009) was a British writer, Marxist historian, translator and a noted scholar of imperialism.

Since its publication, Kiernan's translation has been received with great acclaim and the translator has rightly been eulogized for his literary merits and aesthetic prowess. However, there has been an acute dearth of criticality which could help evaluate this translation (or, for that matter, any English translation of Iqbal) from the ideology-translation nexus perspective. A large number of allusions, tropes, idioms and metaphors used by Kiernan have led in varying degrees to the domestication of the source text in a way where ideological considerations can clearly be seen taking over the linguistic considerations.

While translating Iqbal, Kiernan at times appears to have applied what David Katan has termed as "cultural filter" whose clear aim is to communicate the meanings to the reader from the standpoint of target culture canons and precepts (2004, p. 78). Coincidently, the Urdu language happens to be a subordinate partner in the cultural power relationship with English. Stark power differentials between these two languages are a historical and social fact. In fact, the status and the character of Urdu and English differ so widely that they are entirely two different and distinct languages unlike Spanish and Portuguese or, for that matter, Italian and French which are sister/cognate languages (Campbell, 2004).

Urdu happens to be one of those languages which have not been very frequently translated into English and within the Anglophonic

translation discourses its position is still quite marginal. Since World War II, the languages most often translated into English were mainly the European ones such as French, Italian, Russian, German, Spanish, etc. (Baker, 1998). The renowned translation scholar André Lefevere justifiably observes that the European and non-European cultural and literary traditions are so different that the translators dealing with these traditions, of necessity, have to engage in a process of far-reaching cultural mapping.

During the course of translating the non-European languages into the European ones, the former have routinely been conceived, constructed and situated within the European cultural categories (Lefevere, 1992). To a considerable extent, it is true of Kiernan's translation of Iqbal also as the translator has negotiated the meanings and proposed the equivalents within the categories borrowed from the European (more specifically Anglophone) thought and culture.

Translation—A Translucent Curtain

Translations are often problematic for those who consume them because they have little or no access to the meaning of original texts. If we take translation as a text that stands for another text, then translation, in effect, is meant for those who have little or no access to the meaning of the original text. The practice of translation is intricate and is usually defined in relation to the target language culture rather than the source language culture. Moreover, in the process of translation, cultural and linguistic norms of the source text are steadily redefined, re-presented and, at times obliterated—in short, domesticated. The issues of power and appropriation come into play very actively as translations are not between two texts but rather between two cultures and two worldviews.

This cross-cultural negotiation of meaning is also determined by the amount of relative prestige which source and target cultures enjoy. Thus, the bilateral relations between the two cultures/languages also have a direct bearing on the practice of translation. Hence translation is not merely between two sets of words; rather, it is between two sets of *worlds* which, more often than not, are very distinct from each other.

Most of the existing research on Iqbal's translation into English comprises literary and aesthetic analyses and comparisons. There is,

however, an acute scarcity of research on such specific issues as domestication and the Eurocentric appropriation of the source text mostly done by European translators. These translators, including Kiernan, have in varying degrees adapted the source text to the poetics and politics of the target text in order to make it more acceptable 'at home'. For this reason, these translations continue to enjoy uncritical acceptance in the Anglophone world as well as among the indigenous readership and have not been sufficiently problematized and deconstructed.

Arguably, the fact that Kieran's translation has received such great acclamation and uncritical acceptance is a sign of the general level of insensitivity toward the power politics of translation and its complicity with the dominant discourses. Therefore, here I am interested in deconstructing the translation by employing Lawrence Venuti's model of domestication and foreignization. I have assiduously pointed out minor deviations, lines of tension, imprecisions as well as outright distortions.

Reach and Limit

Although I have dealt intensively with the question of domestication of Iqbal's poetry by Kiernan, there are several theoretical and methodological issues which delimit the present book in more than one way. All of these issues define the scope of this book and delimit the application of its findings. The following three considerations must be kept in mind as the central delimitations of the present study:

- The study deals with Urdu poems of Iqbal and their translations by Kiernan. More specifically, I have limited myself to those poems/extracts/verses which bear directly on such issues as otherness, appropriation, domestication, power, hegemony, manipulation, etc. Coincidently, these are the poems in which such themes have been foregrounded by Iqbal as: imperialism, liberty, nationalism, Pan-Islamism, resistance, spirituality, culture, identity, theology, etc. That constitutes the actual sample for the present inquiry. Besides this, no attempt has been made to include the Persian poetry of Iqbal for the simple reason that the number of Persian poems translated by Kiernan is too small to

enable us to draw viable generalizations (just eight out of a total number of one hundred and eighteen). However, a similar analysis of the English translation of Iqbal's Persian poetry is definitely a distinct topic of study in its own right.

- It must also be made clear at the outset that the domestication of a translation does not affect its aesthetic appeal or merit in any real sense. My claim that Kiernan's translation is a domesticated one does not subtract from the aesthetic or literary import of the translation. In fact, the purely aesthetic and literary features of Kiernan's translation remain outside the purview of this book as such. A translation may be incredibly aesthetic, yet domesticated to its core (Venuti, 2013). Similarly, the fact that Kiernan's translation is immensely popular also does not invalidate the central premise of the book since to be popular is not a proof that a translation has done real justice to the source text also.
- The fact that the study deals with a translator who belongs to the Anglophone literary tradition should not lead to the conclusion that all the Anglophone translators of Iqbal produced domesticated translations. In addition, there is a sizable collection of translations done by the Pakistani, Indian and Persian translators also which must be taken in a completely different light and with an entirely different set of epistemological and methodological assumptions (Ghani, 2004). Furthermore, the fact that Kiernan's translation is domesticated does not necessarily imply that he did it on purpose or anything of that sort. Rather, one of the most intriguing features of domestication is that it can imperceptibly permeate translation of which a translator may well remain unaware on account of a 'pious ignorance'.

The Challenge of Translating Iqbal's Poetics

The literary and historico-cultural significance of Iqbal's poetry is immeasurable both quantitatively as well as qualitatively. For a vast majority of Urdu-speaking people, Iqbal typifies the inner core of the Muslim identity as he is hailed as the ideological founder of Pakistan and the Poet of the East. Quantitatively he is among the most widely read,

debated, circulated and translated of the Urdu poets; and qualitatively, he symbolizes the epitome of literary excellence and lyricism. Within Urdu and Persian literary traditions, he has been consensually given the honorific of *Allama* (Urdu: علامہ) which means "extraordinarily learned".

There have been a large number of people who translated Iqbal into English but immediately we are just concerned with the British translators. The prominent British translators of Iqbal include such prolific and eminent Orientalists as R. A. Nicholson (1868-1945), Arthur John Arberry (1905-1969) and Victor Gordon Kiernan (1913-2009). These much-esteemed writers, in fact, belong to the classic tradition of British Orientalist scholarship whose intellectual authority has largely been revered. Nevertheless, these translators produced such translations which, in one way or another, suffer from the problem of domestication and, at times, outright inaccuracies. The notable Pakistani scholar of Iqbal and the Professor of Islamic Studies at Youngstown State University, Mustansir Mir (1949-) is of the view that most of Iqbal's translations into English "frequently raise the questions of accuracy and quality" (Mir, 2006, p. 151).

Here is a cursory discussion of some of the instances of domestication and inaccuracies found in Nicholson's and Arberry's translations of Iqbal. A mild but academic indictment of these translators can be framed as follows: although their translations are widely acclaimed and they carry great literary import as well, yet for a more intimate and genuine study of their subject they substituted a kind of elaborate discourse which was readily accessible to them in the intellectual archives of their imperial culture. Their universe of discourse was largely formed by such prominent figures as Sir William Muir (1819-1905), Anthony Ashley Bevan (1859-1933) and Charles James Lyall (1845- 1920) who directly followed in the line of descent from people like Sir Edward William Lane (1801-1876) and Giovanni Battista Belzoni (1778-1823). Their scholarly precepts were supplied primarily by such apologists for imperialism as Rudyard Kipling and Baden-Powell who had sung so excitingly of holding "dominion over palm and pine" (see Said, 1978, pp. 224-225).

Moreover, these translators, although extremely well-versed and erudite in the field of their "specialization", lacked the empathy which is the only means to transcend spatial and cultural barriers in order to gain an

informed perspective on Iqbal's poetics. They went about their business with strong maxims, abstractions and 'truths' about the Orient based upon the mythology of a mysterious and inscrutable East. This is what Kiernan himself has termed as "Europe's collective day-dream of the Orient" (Said, 1978, p. 53).

Let us take into account some of the domesticating instances in Nicholson's and Arberry's translations. Nicholson translated Iqbal's book *Asrar-e-Khudi* as *The Secret of the Self* in 1915. This was Iqbal's first introduction to the West. Iqbal gave his critical response to this translation and did not feel wholly satisfied with it and recommended revisions here and there. Some of the corrections recommended by Iqbal were abidingly incorporated while some others were rejected by Nicholson. What is more, on occasion, Nicholson tried to 'improve upon' the recommendations made by Iqbal (Ghani, 2004). For instance, look at the following verse (Lines: 363-364):

خیزد، انگیزد، پرد، تابد، رمد

سوزد، افروزد، کشد، میرد، دمد

The Self rises, kindles, <u>falls</u>, glows, <u>breathes</u>;
Burns, shines, <u>walks</u> and flies.
(Nicholson, 1920, p. 19)

The problematic nature of this translation can easily be seen. There is nothing in the source text which could mean "falls", "walks", or "breathes". Nicholson has incorrectly translated the verb "رمد" as "breathes". This is a wrong lexical move which is clearly redundant and, therefore, constitutes an instance of unwarranted inclusion. At the same time, we have two interesting examples of unwarranted exclusion also. For example, two verbs present in the original "کشد" (kills), and "دمد" (grows), have been left out by the translator (Ghani, 2004). Let us look at another extremely interesting example of domestication (Line 372):

باغلام خویش بر یک خواں نشست

He sat with his slave <u>at one table</u>
(Nicholson, 1920, p. 25).

In this line, Iqbal is talking about the essential egalitarianism introduced by the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) as he demolished all the distinctions of high and low and never hesitated to sit with his servants or to share his meal with them. Anyone slightly familiar with Arab dining customs knows all too well that the Arabs up till this day prefer to sit on a mat spread on the ground.

Moreover, within the classical Islamic tradition, it is a well-documented fact that the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) never sat at the table to eat his meals. In fact, sitting on a mat for eating meals is part of the Semitic, Middle-Eastern tradition and the use of dining tables and chairs is a much later phenomenon. Nonetheless, Nicholson's use of the word "table" makes his translation well corresponded to the British cuisine and the dining etiquette of the 20th century. This is a clear example of disregarding the cultural specificities associated with the source text and subjugating it to the dominant canons of the target language culture.

It is because of these inclusions, exclusions and departures from the original text that at times Nicholson's translation also appears domesticating. However, this is not a place to pursue this subject to any greater lengths. Such instances of inclusions and exclusions can be found in the translations of the following lines of *Asrar-e-Khudi*: 17, 26, 33, 57, 60, 66, 95, 96, 102, 113, 125,126, 170, 217, 218, 335, 700 and 885 (Ghani, 2004).

It is also pertinent to conclude that Nicholson's translation, much to Venuti's chagrin, is remarkably *fluent* and *transparent*. Its fluency and transparency is so naturalized that it does not look like a translation and the 'alienating' and 'de-familiarizing' experiment that a translator, in Venuti's words, should ideally enact is totally absent. One clear aim of all the lexical and syntactic choices made by the translator is certainly to smooth out some of the cultural peculiarities of the source text which may dishevel the reading fluency and thereby pose a challenge to readers' easy comprehension.

Having dealt with these specific cases of domestication, now I will discuss one conceptual problem related to Nicholson's misidentification of Iqbal's thought. Nicholson, while translating Iqbal, was driven by a very deformed understanding of the concept of the Self (خودی)—the central theme of *The Secrets of the Self*. He miserably failed to understand the

poet's notion of the Self and put it in a highly contorted form. Nicholson presented Iqbal as

> …a religious enthusiast, inspired by the vision of a New Mecca, a world-wide, theocratic, Utopian state in which all Moslems, no longer divided by the barriers of race and country, shall be one…It must be observed that when he speaks of religion he always means Islam. Non-Muslims are simply unbelievers, and (in theory, at any rate) the Jihad is justifiable, provided that it is waged "for God's sake alone". (see Vahid, 1964, p. 93)

Nicholson's unfounded and highly erroneous view created a great deal of misunderstanding regarding Iqbal in the British intellectual circles. Even a reasonably well-meaning figure like E. M. Forster was deluded into saying, after coming across this view of Nicholson, that "the significance of Iqbal is not that he holds [Nietzsche's doctrine] but that he manages to connect it with the Koran" (quoted in Hassan, 1977, p. 98). Now this is hardly what Iqbal saw himself doing and is profoundly at variance with his philosophical and religious persuasions. Iqbal protested vehemently in his letter dated 24 January 1921 to Nicholson at this mischaracterization of his thought by Forster:

> Nor does he rightly understand my idea of the Perfect Man which he confounds with the German thinker's Super-man. I wrote on the Sufi doctrine of the Perfect Man more than twenty years ago, long before I had read or heard anything of Nietzsche...The English reader ought to approach this idea, not through the German thinker, but through an English thinker of great merit – I mean Alexander – whose Gifford Lectures delivered at Glasgow were published last year. (Iqbal, 1978, pp. 141-42)

The foremost reason for such a grossly flawed understanding of Iqbal's poetic philosophy is an outright domestication of his philosophical thought. Iqbal never saw himself founding a "New Mecca"; rather, he exhorted the Muslims to go back to the same old Makkah. Look at the following line in which he clearly makes this exhortation:

بھٹکے ہوئے آہو کو پھر سوئے حرم لے چل

[Oh, God!] Once again guide the strayed impala [Muslim Ummah] toward the Haram! (My translation)

Similarly, Iqbal was never an advocate of any theocratic or Utopian state. His political philosophy was thoroughly realistic and in tune with the central premises of Islam. Iqbal never envisaged Islamic state as a theocracy in the Western sense of the word. Here are his words:

> The essence of *Tauhīd*, as a working idea, is equality, solidarity, and freedom. The state, from the Islamic standpoint, is an endeavour to transform these ideal principles into space-time forces, an aspiration to realize them in a definite human organization. It is in this sense alone that the state in Islam is a theocracy, not in the sense that it is headed by a representative of God on earth who can always screen his despotic will behind his supposed infallibility. The critics of Islam have lost sight of this important consideration. (Iqbal, 2000, p. 67)

Besides, Forster's characterizing of Iqbal's *Mard-e-Momin* (I will translate it as the *Noble Master*) as Nietzsche's power-driven and godless Superman (*Übermensch*) is a clear example of the domestic as well as the domesticated representations of the foreign. Making sense of Iqbal by drawing parallels with Nietzsche is a very superficial understanding of the poet and the one which subjugates the actualities of the source text to the dominant structures of the target culture. In spite of clear protestations from Iqbal, Nicholson's mischaracterization of his thought is an evidence of the deep-rootedness of domestication in Anglophone translation tradition.

Equally fluent and prosodically more artistic than Nicholson's is Arberry's translation of Muhammad Iqbal. Arberry was one of the most widely respected British Orientalists and a prolific scholar of Islamic studies and mysticism. It is also to his credit that he introduced Rumi to the English speaking world through his selective translations, *Mystical Poems of Rumi* (2009). With reference to his translation of Iqbal, Arberry declared to remain as faithful to the source text as possible and it can be seen that he achieved considerable success in his goal. Arguably, his is the least domesticated translation of Iqbal when juxtaposed with Nicholson's and Kiernan's.

There are, however, numerous examples of domestication present in his translation. His translation of *Shikwa* and *Jawab-e-Shikwa* ("The Complaint" and "The Answer") published in 1955, is a case in point. Perhaps the most interesting and surprising aspect of all this is that Arberry did not know Urdu as it is evidenced by his *Preface* (Arberry, 1955). In order to overcome this critical shortcoming, he was graciously provided with a literal rendering on which he based his translation. Therefore, this very indirectness of his translation made it at times inevitably prone to domestication. Here are just a few instances:

تیرے دیوانے بھی ہیں منتظرِ ھو بیٹھے

Dream, Thy lovers, of Thy coming, and the cry of "He the King"
(Arberry, 1995, p. 18)

In this translation, what the translator fails to appreciate is the word "ہُو" which does not here refer to God or Providence. Nor are the "lovers" eagerly announcing the Kingdom of God. Rather, what is being longed for by the lovers is the consoling voice that emanates from God and not from humans. Now look at another distortion:

قیس زحمت کشِ تنہائی صحرا نہ رہے

Qais, if so he pleases, may endure the desert's solitude
(Arberry, 1995, p. 37)

This is a clear case of mistranslation—an obvious distortion of the source text. The original line makes a negative statement about the well-known Arab lover Qais; whereas Arberry's translation is making a positive statement. This shift completely inverts the concept. In fact, Iqbal bemoans the tragic fact that the modern-day Qais (i.e. the Muslims who ardently claim to be God's lover) are no longer ready to endure the solitude of desert for the sake of their Beloved (Allah). But this is precisely which is not shown in the translation at all. Look at yet another example:

آسماں چیر گیا نالۂ بیباک مرا

That the very walls of heaven fell down before its wild lament
(Arberry, 1995, p. 42)

In fact what Iqbal is talking about is the piercing of the sky, whereas the falling down of the walls of heaven is an unwarranted inclusion and altogether alien to the tenor of the source text. We are left with only two possible inferences and both of them are problematic: either it is an outright inclusion just to keep the prosodic balance, or it is an imposition of the Anglo-American canon on the foreign text. In both cases, the result is the domestication of the source text.

Now, something about the difficulty of translating Iqbal. There are various factors that contribute to this difficulty which are at once linguistic, literary, and cultural. The renowned literary critic and author Mustansir Mir has elucidated the complexity and diversity which characterizes Iqbal's poetry:

> A reader of Iqbal's poetry is struck by its sheer thematic variety. Iqbal was deeply interested in the issues that have exercised the best minds of the human race—the issues of the meaning of life, change and constancy, freedom and determinism, survival and progress, the relation between the body and the soul, the conflict between reason and emotion, evil and suffering, the position and role of human beings in the universe—and in his poetry he deals with these and other issues. He had also read widely in history, philosophy, literature, mysticism, and politics, and, again, his catholic interests are reflected in his poetry. (2000, p. 13)

Sayyid Abdul Vahid, one of the most prominent Pakistani scholars of Iqbal, also describes the difficulties of translating Iqbal. To Vahid, Iqbal's poetry has an overwhelming sense of inventiveness and the chief reason for this is that Iqbal employs words, expressions and phrases in an utterly unconventional sense. A considerable number of these words and expressions are ingeniously endowed with new meanings by him.

At times, the sense attached to a word by Iqbal happens to be so radically counterintuitive that it baffles even those who are well-versed in Urdu. To Vahid, Iqbal is also one of the great phrase-makers of Urdu literature who has been endowed by a rare felicity of expression by which his poetic discourse achieves meanings beyond the ones assigned by the lexicon. These words and expressions function like the "keystone for the

entire arch of the poetic inspiration". Vahid illustrates Iqbal's knack of expression:

> As the removal of the keystone is sure to cause the downfall of the entire arch, so if we try to substitute some-thing else for the master word or phrase, the whole artistic expression is marred… The use of those words and phrases gives to Iqbal's poetry not only a sense of newness found in very few Urdu and Persian poets, but also the quality of surprise which "characterizes all great poetry. (Vahid, 1964, p. 17)

Iqbal's inventive genius gave new dimensions to such age-old literary allusions as love, time, selfhood, freedom, art, etc. Take just one example—Iqbal's conceptualization of love. To Iqbal, love is an ecstatic and dynamic passion which awakens what is divine in humans. Iqbal defies the conformist notions of love which take it in a quietist and passive sense. Instead, Iqbal takes love as "the source of the highest inspiration for true knowledge and effective, righteous action" (De Bary, 1958, p. 754). Love is a spring of vitality which can enable a devout Muslim to achieve such noble goals as spiritual redemption, moral integrity, and individual freedom. It is the alpha and omega of human existence and has the miraculous power to awaken hidden talents. This is how Iqbal describes the full immensity of the role played by love in the world:

> The luminous point whose name is the Self
> Is the life-spark beneath our dust.
> By love it is made more lasting,
> More living, more burning, more glowing.
> From love proceeds the radiance of its being
> And the development of its unknown possibilities.
> Its nature gathers fire from love,
> Love instructs it to illumine the world.
> Love fears neither sword nor dagger,
> Love is not born of water and air and earth.
> Love makes peace and war in the world,
> Love is the fountain of life,
> Love is the flashing sword of death.
> The hardest rocks are shivered by Love's glance:
> Love of God at last becomes wholly God. (Iqbal, 1915, pp. 28-229)

This kind of conceptual and philosophical uniqueness surrounds all the major themes in Iqbal's poetry. It is this uniquely situated cultural and literary position of Iqbal that proves to be a daunting challenge for all those who set out to translate him. The famous translation scholar Eugene Nida illustrates this problem when he says that for a truly successful translation, it is biculturalism which is more important than bilingualism (Nida, 2002). Another translation scholar Christiane Nord makes the same point when he says that the cultural chasm between the two given languages has always been a hard nut for translators to crack. It is with this conceptualization in mind that he opines: "...translating means comparing cultures" (Nord, 2001, p. 34). Moreover, it seems to be this biculturalism or the cultural chasm that is largely responsible for a great of deal of domestication of Iqbal by his English translators.

Conclusion

Translations are problematic for those who consume them because they have little or no access to the meaning of original texts. Most of the research on Iqbal's translations largely comprises literary and aesthetic analyses/comparisons. There is, however, an acute scarcity of research on such specific issues as domestication and the Eurocentric appropriation of the source text. These translators, including Kiernan, have in varying degrees adapted the source text to the poetics and politics of the target text. Kiernan's translation of Iqbal has received much praise but little critical assessment. Coincidently, Urdu happens to be a subordinate partner in the cultural power relationship with English and the European and non-European literary traditions are so different that the translators, of necessity, have to engage in a process of large-scale cultural mapping—Nicholson's and Arberry's translations are two more cases in point. Lastly, Iqbal's poetic discourse poses some unique challenges to translators, given its inventiveness, unconventional semantics, thematic diversity, etc.

CHAPTER 2

IDEOLOGY AND TRANSLATION— THE NEXUS

Kiernan's translation of Iqbal is indeed artistic, beautiful, aesthetic and authoritative. It has its share of admirers, lovers and chanters. The passion and commitment with which he approached Iqbal's poetry is rare and laudable. We are also grateful to him for making a concerted effort to render Iqbal into English and, thereby providing him with a greater global readership. But the aesthetics and literary merits of his translation are not my concern. Instead, this study seeks to problematize a traditional and facile understanding of translation and aims to illustrate the immensity of its political and ideological intricacies.

Historically, the idea of translation coupled with the mystique of knowing *the foreign* has always fascinated the theorists and scholars of language. From this historical perspective, it can be affirmed that, at the broadest level, all human communication is centered upon the very notion of translation. Primarily translation aims at actuating some inter-lingual communicative patterns along with effecting some intercultural dialogic engagements. However, in these intercultural and inter-lingual engagements, the complex notions of politics, manipulation, control and dominance inevitably emerge and complicate the relations between the source text (the original text that is to be translated into another language) and the target text (the finished product of a translated text). Furthermore, the inherently subjective and culture-sensitive character of language adds to the complexity of the power politics so closely associated with translation. Therefore the ubiquitous risk of miscommunication in translation ranges from unintentional semantic misidentifications to systematic and intentional propaganda (Crumbley, 2008). The "mist and veil of words," as the Irish philosopher George Berkeley put it, is still a frequently