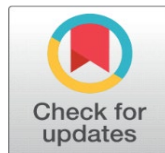# TRANSLATING SELECTED TANKA POETRY FROM ICHIAKU NO SUNA INTO HINDI: LINGUISTIC NUANCES AND CULTURAL MEDIATION

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ABSTRACT

This paper presents a Hindi translation of selected tanka poems from Ichiaku no Suna (A Handful of Sand), the most celebrated anthology by modern Japanese poet Ishikawa Takuboku. The translation is undertaken within a multidisciplinary theoretical framework that integrates classical Indian aesthetics—particularly Anandavardhana's Dhvani and Rasa theories—with modern Western translation models such as Eugene Nida's dynamic equivalence and componential analysis, Peter Newmark's semantic translation, and Lawrence Venuti's theory of foreignization. The study investigates the complex interplay of emotion, suggestion, and cultural specificity in poetry translation, aiming to preserve the original's emotive resonance while rendering it accessible to Hindi readers. Key challenges explored include issues of linguistic structure, poetic devices, cultural context, collocation, and gender representation. Using examples from Takuboku's deeply personal and socially reflective poetry, the paper analyzes translation difficulties through Newmark's classification of translation problems. It proposes solutions based on semantic feature comparison and functional equivalence. One of the study's key innovations is the adoption of the mukt chhand (free verse) style, influenced by Hindi poet Suryakant Tripathi 'Nirala', to reflect the emotional and stylistic spirit of the original. Through close readings and theoretical engagement, the research underscores the importance of balancing fidelity with poetic aesthetics in cross-cultural translation. By situating Takuboku's work within both Japanese and Hindi literary traditions, this study contributes to comparative poetics and expands the possibilities of literary translation across culturally distinct yet emotionally resonant languages.

Keywords: Tanka, Translation, Ichiaku no Suna, Linguistic

1. INTRODUCTION

Translation has played an important role in human society since the development of language, and its importance has only increased in today's globalized world. It allows for the fast and effective exchange of ideas, information, and knowledge across languages. Among various forms of translation, literary translation holds special significance because it not only transfers meaning but also helps convey the cultural and traditional values of both the source and target languages.

While Japanese literary works have been widely translated into many foreign languages, translations into Indian languages—especially Hindi—remain limited. It was only in the 1970s that direct translations from Japanese to Hindi began receiving more attention, and even then, the focus was mostly on prose. As a result, traditional Japanese poetry forms such as tanka and haiku have rarely been translated into Hindi. Furthermore, there is a noticeable lack of research

that directly addresses the challenges involved in translating tanka poetry into Hindi. Because of this, there is no established method or framework to guide such translations and address their specific difficulties.

The translation of tanka poetry presents several challenges due to its concise form and the complex interplay of linguistic and aesthetic features. This study focuses on these issues by analyzing the Hindi translation of Ishikawa Takuboku's tanka collection Ichiaku no Suna. It explores key translation challenges, including differences in syntax and collocation, socio-cultural backdrop and aesthetic concerns. The study also aims to identify effective strategies for interpreting and translating tanka into Hindi.

Takuboku Ishikawa's most representative Tanka anthology, Ichiaku no Suna (A Handful of Sand), holds a significant place in modern Japanese poetry. The present study proposes a Hindi translation of selected poems from this anthology, grounded in both Indian and Western theoretical frameworks. The translation will be informed by Dhvani theory of Anandavardhana, which offer deep insights into the emotive and suggestive aspects of poetic expression. It focuses on a shift from sharīravād (apparent structure) to Ātmavāda (the suggestive function of literature) played a pivotal role in interpreting Takuboku's tanka.

In terms of translation methods, Eugene Nida's componential analysis and Peter Newmark's 'semantic' translation approach will be utilized to maintain fidelity to the original while capturing the poetic essence. Furthermore, Lawrence Venuti's theory of foreignization will be considered to retain the cultural and linguistic uniqueness of the source text. These methods and theoretical perspectives collectively aim to strike a balance between accuracy, aesthetic quality, and cultural nuance.

As Newmark (2003) observes, a translator must approach a text with dual purposes: first, to understand what the text communicates; and second, to analyze it through a translator's lens. The latter involves discerning the author's intent, the tone and structure of the text, and the subtle issues embedded in its composition. Such analysis is crucial in determining the most suitable translation strategy and procedure.

Therefore, it becomes essential to provide a comprehensive background to tanka poetry as a genre and to Ichiaku no Suna in particular. The present investigation offers a detailed exploration of its stylistic and thematic features, genre-specific characteristics, and the psychological and emotional state of the poet during its composition. It also examines the socio-cultural elements that influenced Takuboku, shedding light on the motivations behind these deeply personal and evocative poems.

1.1. TANKA AS A MIRROR OF JAPANESE AESTHETICS AND CULTURAL HISTORY

Tanka, one of Japan's oldest poetic forms, originated in early texts like Kojiki and Nihon Shoki and was considered divine in origin. It gained prominence through anthologies such as Man'yōshū (759), which featured poems from all social classes, and later evolved in sophistication during the Heian period with the Kokin Wakashū (905) and Shin Kokin Wakashū (1205), incorporating refined aesthetics like aware and yūgen. After its classical peak, tanka declined, giving way to haiku, which became dominant through poets like Matsuo Bashō and Yosa Buson. In the Meiji era, modern poetry forms like shintaishi and jiyūshi emerged under Western influence, marking a shift to free-verse poetry, led by figures like Shimazaki Tōson. Concurrently, debates emerged regarding appropriate language choices in poetry. While early "new-style" poets continued to use classical language, growing familiarity with Western literature led to a gradual shift toward colloquial speech.

Although tanka and haiku continued to be composed, they remained bound by traditional themes and stylistic conventions until poets like Masaoka Shiki, Yosano Akiko, and Ishikawa Takuboku brought a renewed vitality to these forms. These poets not only challenged thematic norms but also redefined the expressive capacities of traditional Japanese poetry, paving the way for modern poetic discourse.1.2.

Ichiaku no Suna is the first and most celebrated Tanka collection of Ishikawa Takuboku, published in 1910. The anthology contains 551 tanka poems, categorized into five sections reflecting key periods and emotional states in the poet's life. Themes range from personal melancholy, nostalgia, romantic relationships, family tensions, loneliness, grief, and social critique.

- Each section addresses a specific phase:
- Ware o ai suru uta: Self-reflection and emotional turmoil.
- Kemuri 1 & 2: Memories of Morioka and the nostalgic recollection of his hometown Shibutami.

- Akikaze no kokoroyosa ni: Romantic and emotional introspection.
- Wasuregataki hitobito: Loneliness, wandering, and love affairs during his time in Hokkaido.
- Tebukuro o nugu toki: Daily life in Tokyo and grief over his son's death.

The collection is deeply autobiographical, reflecting Takuboku's inner emotions, social concerns, and changing poetic techniques, including his pioneering shift from the traditional one-line tanka to three-line format, influenced by contemporary poets and his emotional experiences—especially the death of his son.

Ueda (1983) emphasizes that Takuboku's poems are criticism of "life" which make the readers introspect the reality of human life. Takuboku meant "human life" a souvenir of a poet to its readers. In fact, the readers of Takuboku's poems are presented an opportunity to have a bit of human reality without which they would be deprived of it or remain ignorant with misguided perception. Therefore, the life, the poet passes on to its readers is a "human life" not the "poetic life."

2. TRANSLATION APPROACHES AND CHALLENGES

The study explores the Hindi translation of selected tanka from this anthology. The translation follows the 'mukt chhand' (free verse) style, inspired by Suryakant Tripathi 'Nirala', which does not bind itself to metrical conventions but emphasizes emotional flow and aesthetic intensity. (Nirala, 1929). This style, along with the Nayi Kavita (New Poetry) movement, shares thematic and stylistic similarities with Takuboku's work—especially realism, psychological depth, and everyday language.

Key challenges in translation are classified using Peter Newmark's framework:

1) Linguistic issues: Grammatical and structural differences between Japanese (SL) and Hindi (TL).
2) Literary/aesthetic issues: Capturing metaphor, diction, and poetic devices.
3) Socio-cultural issues: Translating context-specific words, emotions, and symbolism.

These categories guide the analysis of difficulties in translating Takuboku's nuanced emotional expressions and poetic effects into Hindi.

3. PROBLEM OF COLLOCATION

Collocation is a word or set of words which typically combine and in TL (target language) also it must be of same category in terms of meaning and function. The given translation targets collocation and its equivalent in target language.

神のごと　　　　　　　　　(409)

/ka.mi no go.to/

遠く姿をあらはせる

/toː.ku su.ga.ta o a.ɾa.wa.se.ɾɯ/

あかんの山の雪のあけぼの

/a.kaɴ no ja.ma no jɯ.ki no a.ke.bo.no/

Hindi Translation

विहान की हिम की चमकीली चादर में

/ʋɪɦaːn kiː ɦɪm kiː tʃəmkiːliː tʃaːɖɐr mẽː/

दूर से प्रकट होते देवता की भांति

/duːɾ seː pɾəkəʈ hoːteː deːʋʈaː kiː bʰaːntiː/

पर्वत आकान के।

/pɛrʋəʈ aːkaːn keː/ (researcher)

In the Hindi translation of the poem, lexical preference for 神 ka̠.mi in Hindi देवता deːʋʈa which has specific cultural connotation in both source language and target language. In linguistic aspect, Hindi equivalent for Japanese collocation such as su.ga.ta o a.ɾa.wa.se.ɾɯ (姿をあらはせる) need to be contextually correct as suggested in the translation प्रकट होते prəkəʈ hoːteː which can be used in certain connotation only in Hindi, here in the context of deːʋʈaː.

To this line, Nida's 'dynamic equivalence' theory and Newmarks' 'equivalent effect' which means to produce the same effect as much as possible in the TL is important. Nida's 'dynamic equivalence' explains that translation consists in recreating the TL the closest natural equivalent to the source SL message, first in terms of meaning and secondly in style. There are three major following terms in translation in terms of 'dynamic equivalence', the first is equivalence pointing to the original language, the second is natural which means the target language and closest suggests that selecting the translation which is closest to the source language on a natural base. Newmarks suggests that the 'equivalent effect' should be desirable in translation, but not the aim. Especially when there is a remarkable cultural gap in the SL and TL text, the less possibility of equivalent effect is there. (Newmark, 2003)

In this context, Nida (1975) propounds that Componential Analysis is very crucial as it helps to analyse the meaning of a word by dissecting it into meaning components known as 'semantic features.'

Verifying the semantic features of the word the 神 ka.mi through Componential Analysis Method

	DIETY	Gender Male	NATURAL ELEMNETS (MOUNTAIN)
ka̠.mi （神）	+	+, -	+
deːʋʈaː （देवता）	+	+	+

Through the table which proves that the basic semantic features whether available in both the SL and TL words. Hence, 神ka.mi can be translated as देवता deːʋʈaː, becauseof the common semantic features found in both words. Thus, 'Dynamic Equivalence' and 'Componential Analysis' facilitates the translation process to understand the meaning in SL and convey the closest equivalence in the TL.

4. PROBLEM OF GENDER

Determining gender in the poem is another challenge which the translator encounters during the process of translation. The representative example of such poem is given below.

頬につたふ (2)
/hoː ni tsɯ.ta.ɸɯ/

なみだのごはず
/na.mi.da no go.ha.zɯ/

一握の砂を示しし人を忘れず
/i.t͡ɕi.ni.gɯ no sɯ.na o ɕi.me.ɕi ɕi çi.to o wa.sɯ.ɾe.zɯ/

Hindi Translation

कपोलों पर ढुलकते अश्रुधार न पोंछे

/kə.poː.loː pəɾ dʱʋ.lək.ʈeː əʃ.ɾʋ.dʱaːɾ nə poːn.ʧʰeː/

मेरी स्मृति से वो कभी होता न परे

/meː.ɾiː smɾɪ.ʈi seː ʋoː kə.bʱiː ɦoː.ʈa: nə pə.ɾeː/

वो जिसने मुझे एक मुट्ठी रेत दिखाया था।

/ʋoː d͡ʒɪs.ne: mʋ.d͡ʒʱeː eːk mʋʈ.ʈʰiː ɾeːʈ dɪ.kʰaː.ja: ʈʰa:/ (Researcher)

English Version of Translation:

The girl that didn't

wipe the tears falling adown and adown her cheeks

showed me a handful of sand; the girl I never forget.

(Suga, 1995)

He does not wipe his cheeks clean of tears

The man who produced a handful of sand.

Not to be forgotten…   (Pulvars, 2015)

Similar to 'number', in Japanese language 'gender' is also obscure and to determine it on the translator has to solely depend on the context and the reference. However, in Malayalam translation of this poem, (George, 2016) has used the word 'aalu' which means 'person' in Malayalam language indicating the gender neither male nor female. Hence, it is equivalent to ひと /çi.to (person) which is appropriate in this case. In this context, most of the above translations in English suggest that the gender referred in the poem ひと /çi.to (person) is the masculine. To corroborate and establish this fact, dhvani theory plays significant role here.

Osawa (2010)'s findings mention that 'A handful of sand' in the poem is a metaphor depicts sprinkling of 'soil'on the coffin of the dead body by the relatives in order. Here, Ishida Rokutaro's findings emphasize that takuboku is portraying his own experience after attending the funeral ceremony of his girlfriend, Sada who was close to Takuboku in his hometown during his young age. Hence, Takuboku is referring to himself in the poem as ひと/çi.to (person). Further, Takuboku's closest friend, Kindaiichi also mentions her name in his book Ishikawa Takuboku and the period when Takuboku was overwhelmed by the death of his girlfriend, Sada.

A different hypothesis established by Kondo (2008) suggests that since, this is the second song in the anthology which shows its significance. He remarks that this song has two symbolic meanings. Since the author mentions only 'a handful of sand' out of the limitless amount of sand which means every individual's existence. And the second is the sand symbolized 'passing of time', as every individual has equal moments to live out of the infinite time. Keene (2016) also opines that this poem suggests the passing of time same as sand in an hourglass.

Kondo emphasizes that Takuboku did not perceive time as 'transient' rather he fully made use of the limited time to make his life fulfilling. The person (a man) who showed a handful of sand taught a lesson that since we are to live the limited time, we must live each moment fulfilling. Takuboku had less nihilistic thought about life; rather he was strongly aware and sensitive toward the limit of life. Therefore, he was quite energetic to make his limited time of life meaningful and valuable.

Regarding the style of the above poem, it is imperative to notice the following poem composed by Yosano Akiko.

頬に寒き涙つたふに言葉のみ華やぐ人を忘れたまふな("Dancing Woman")

/hoː ni sa.mu.ki na.mi.da tsɯ.ta.ɸɯ ni ko.to.ba no.mi ha.na.ja.gɯ çi.to o wa.sɯ.ɾe ta.maɯ na/

(I will not forget the person whose words were brilliant and cold tears was streaming down the cheeks.)

This song is from Yosano Akiko's 5thcollection of tanka known as "Dancing Woman" published in 1906. Takuboku had certainly read the poem and encountered the terms and style and seemingly he employed the similar terms in a refined and elegant manner. (Takeda, 2003)

5. ELLIPSES

In Japanese language omissions are quite frequent and the parts of the sentence which can be understood through the context are contracted, omitted or pronouns are used instead.

病むと聞き   (427)
/ja.mu to ki.ki/

癒えしと聞きて
/i.e.ɕi to ki.ki.te/

四百里のこなたに我はうつつなかりし
/joɴ. çja.ku ɾi no ko.na.ta ni wa.ga wa ɯ.t͡su.t͡su na.ka.ɾiɕi/

Hindi Translation

तेरे बीमार होने का समाचार
/teːɾeː biː.maːɾ hoːneː kaː sə.maː.t͡ʃaːɾ/

फिर ठीक हो जाने की खबर,
/pʰɪɾ t̪ʰiːk hoː d͡ʒaːne kiː kʰəbər/

हज़ार मील दूर, मैं बाँध न पाता सबर।
/ɦəzɑːɾ miːl duːɾ mɛ̃ː baĩd̪ʰ nə paː.t̪aː sə.bər/   (Researcher)

Ellipses of Subject and Pronouns which are common and frequent in tanka poses a difficulty in translation because it must be revealed in Hindi to clarify the obscurity.

Brown & Miller (2003) define that the languages which omit the arguments (pronouns) frequently and Japanese is also a 'Topic-Prominent language', however, sometimes in Hindi, it requires the subject as given in the case of above translation. In this context, the verbs in the sentences of Japanese language do not need to take the overt subject.

This characteristics of Japanese language creates a space for obscurity in the meaning. In such cases, the translator must depend on the context heavily to know the gender, person, and the number of the subject. However, in Hindi language, pronoun is an important part of speech which should be present in the sentence to give the meaning. Basic nature of Japanese and Hindi language differs with this regard.

Though in Hindi translation too, the gender of the person addressed by the author is not clearly comprehendible, however the background of the poem suggests that this poem has been written in the memory of Takuboku's beloved woman Tachibana Chieko who was a fellow schoolteacher and colleague of Takuboku in Hakodate of Hokkaido Island. Not only this poem, but there are also several other poems around twenty-two tanka dedicated to Tachibana in the collection. On 10thFebruary 1909, his records in diary finds the mention that when he heard about the illness of Tachibana from her mother's letter, he became supset and it was around this time he composed the poem referring to Tachibana.

A letter addressed to his close friend, Yoshino Shozo written in October, 1910, and addressed to Tachibana Chieko too mentions that all the twenty-two poems placed in "Those Unforgettable people", two are dedicated to Tachibana Chieko. Hence the gender in the above given poetry which is obscure, can be determined as female based on the given explanation.

6. SENTENCE-FINAL PARTICLES

In Japanese language there are some exclamatory expressions or emotion markers such as jo「よ」na「な」which are used to emphasize the speaker's emotions of which the equivalent expressions in Hindi are difficult to establish. Therefore, usually translator struggles to frame the equivalent expression in the TL in place of such markers. According to grammatical rule explained by makino, (jo at the end of a sentence) is a sentence-final particle that indicates the speaker's strong conviction about something which is presumed to be known only to the speaker. Using yo in the expression makes it further forceful. (Makino & Tsutsui, 1994)

However, in terms of traditional poetry like tanka and haiku, emotion markers are of immense significance. In the given poem and its translation, usage of emotion marker yo has been analyzed.

いのちなき砂のかなしさよ　(8)
/i.no.t͡ɕi.na.ki su.na no ka.na͡ɕi.sa jo/

さらさらと
/sa.ɾa.sa.ɾa to/

握れば指のあひだより落つ
/ni.gi.ɾe.ba ju.bi no a.i.da jo.ɾi o.t͡su/

Hindi Translation
कसूँ तो उँगलियों के बीच से
/kəsū̃: to: ʊŋgli:jo: ke: bi:t͡ʃ se:/

सरसराती फिसलती जाती,
/sərsəɾa:ti: fɪsləṱi: d͡ʒa:ti:/

व्यथित रेत अपना आस्तित्व खोजती।
/vjəṱʰɪṱ ɾe:ṱ əpna: a:sṱɪṱʋ kʰo:d͡ʒti:/　　　(Researcher)

रेत कितनी दुखी है कि उसकी अपनी कोई ज़िन्दगी नहीं
/ɾe:ṱ kɪṱn̪i ḍʊkʰi: hɛ: kɪ ʊski: əpni: koi: zɪnḍgi: nəhi:/

कसूँ तो उँगलियों के बीच से गिरती है
/kəsū̃: to: ʊŋgli:jo: ke: bi:t͡ʃ se: gɪɾti: hɛ:/

पानी की धारा की तरह आवाज़ करती हुई

/paːniː kiː d̪ʰaːɾaː kiː ʈəɾəh aːʋaːz kərtiː ɦuiː/   (Sachidanand & Mochizuki, 2008)

In the second Hindi translation, near equivalent for the exclamatory expression jo 「よ」 is expressed through kɪt̪n̪i by the translator. However, in the first Hindi translation, such equivalent in Hindi is not given; rather lexical choice has been different to encapsulate the emotion of the author with his intended emphasis.

Such particles play very crucial role in tanka and haiku tradition and they are known as kireji (cutting words) or kugire (punctuation).The convention of using kireji is highlighted in composing tanka because of their function which they perform. According to Harold G. Henderson in his book on haiku, there are eighteen kireji in this convention used frequently in composing the given style of poetry for example や (ja), かな(ka.na), けり (ke.ri), よ(jo), か(ka), せ(se),ぬ (nɯ), ず(zɯ), and such others. (Henderson,1958)

Conventionally, the kireji is placed in the end of the phrase or the expression the author wants the readers to pay their attention most. The poetic effects which the kugire presents is as follows. They help us understanding the exact location of the pause or the break the author intended to place, and it acts as punctuation too. Besides, author's emotions wherever emphasized, can be discovered through the kireji. Moreover, it adorns the poem with rhyme as well as rhythm.

「よ」 jo is a verbal exclamation used in the given poem of which Hindi equivalent expression is not available and is the case with English language too. However, Gilbert (2003) suggests how kireji can be reflected English haiku. He comments that linguistically the direct imitation of kireji is not viable in English, but usage of analogues which performs the same function as original can be accommodated.

In other words, following punctuation marks, the break can be provided, or the emphasis can be hinted. On the other hand, the translator can drop the punctuation marks and let the language decide its own natural break and emphasis.

Similarly, this traditional form of kireji is one of the representative examples of 'untranslatability' into Hindi language too. Thus, the unavailability of near equivalent expression of such kireji in Hindi language gives translators wide range of choices to employ the phrase or expression whichever they find appropriate for such expressions (including deletion). This poses difficulty for translators to select appropriate near equivalent without losing the original meaning of the text. In the Hindi translation of the poem by the researcher, expression for jo has not been added, because the poetic effect is more in the choice of words and the rhythm it creates without using any kireji.

Along with the above discussed issues, the problem of modifier (adjective in the given poem) and the modified (The noun in the given poem) also requires attention. When the collocation is not appropriate, it hinders the natural flow of the language in translation. For example, in the equivalent term for "砂のかなしさよ" su.na no ka.naɕi.sa jo is "व्यथित रेत" vjət̪ʰɪt̪ ɾeːt̪ in Hindi and it can be "व्यथित बालू" ʋjɐ.t̪ʰɪt̪ baː.lu as another choice of expression, however, the latter set of words is not able to create the natural flow in the Hindi language. Hence, the choice of collocation has to be meticulously placed.

7. CONCLUSION

This study highlights the intricate art of translating Ishikawa Takuboku's Ichiaku no Suna into Hindi, emphasizing that poetry translation is not merely a linguistic act but an aesthetic and cultural negotiation. By applying classical Indian poetics and modern Western translation theories, the research demonstrates that conveying the emotional depth (rasa) and subtle suggestion (dhvani) of the original is possible without compromising the target language's poetic integrity. The choice of mukt chhand (Free-verse) in Hindi serves not only as a structural adaptation but also as a creative response to the free, introspective tone of Takuboku's tanka. Ultimately, this translation is both an homage and a bridge—bringing Japanese sensibility into dialogue with Hindi literary tradition, enriching both, and affirming the universal human emotions that great poetry transcends.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Parenthetical Citation: (Brown & Miller, 2013; Henderson,1958; Ishikawa, 1952; Keene, 2016;Kondo, 2008; Makino & Tsutsui, 1994; Newmark, 2003; Nida, 1975; Osawa, 2010; Sachidanand & Mochizuki, 2008; Suga 1995; Takeda, 2003; Tripathi,1929; Ueda, 1983)