Somewhere Else (ম'ক্ত'না'নী'র্মিন্।)

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Abstract: "Somewhere Else" is a reflective poem that evokes exile, memory, and historical trauma through the lens of a refugee's spiritual and emotional journey. It depicts exile as not only one's physical dislocation but also a psychological and spiritual condition passed from one generation to the next.

Keywords: Refugee, exile, trauma, poetry, buddhism

Translator's Introduction

In Lama Jabb's brilliant talk on translation, "An Act of Bardo: Translating Tibetan Poetry" (2018, 2024), he argues that "like a journey through the bardo realm, translation is full of pitfalls and enlightening opportunities." On the one hand, "something of the originals remains uncaptured in translations." On the other hand, Lama Jabb encourages translators to toil in our task until we gain enlightenment. In the process of translating Dhompa's poem, I felt the existence of bardo. From the outset, I was trying to share one possible version of her poem with Tibetan readers, rather than trying to capture the original and complete feel of the poem engrained in English.

Translation is not simple and linear; it is a complex process and a delicate task to perform. Like bardo, translation is a sort of intermediate conversation between the original text, the translator, the writer and the reader. I felt that I was part of that conversation when translating Dhompa's beautiful yet historically tragic poem. The word "refuge" is the center of the poem, not just the word, but its historical formation and burden, in which words like "patience," "prayer," "sacrifice" and "hope" are imprisoned. It also provides us a glimpse of the repressive history that led to her becoming a refugee and the future that it hopes for, to be legitimized on foreign soil. Hope and patience are the only qualities that a refugee can claim.

In the process of translating this poem, I have tried to touch upon three major elements: voice, economy of language, and the multiplicity of perspectives. Translating the poem's use of voice into Tibetan is very difficult because there are several: "her" voice, her uncle's voice, and the poet's own voice. Each of these voices has its own historical anecdote and significance. For example, her voice is the memory of history as well as a historical beacon that guides the poet from time to time. Also, the uncle's voice suggests a force that reminds the poet to keep the historical memories intact. The poet's voice narrates others' voices, situating them where they fit best in terms of historical significance and positionality. Also, the tone or mood that each voice evokes is another difficult domain to deliver in Tibetan, because the poet uses alliteration, repetition, and internal rhymes within certain lines to produce specific emotional effects.

Even I can feel their voices through the textual community of the poem; I think their voices in English are not equal to their voices in Tibetan. I think the poetic effect, tone, and mood should be felt and experienced in English, rather than in Tibetan. Despite the significance of their voices in English, it is entirely fair to say that my translation is only the translation of their voices rather than the originality of them.

Economy of language was another major challenge when translating this poem. In most cases, I was not able to keep the same length: each line in Tibetan is a little longer than the English version. Maybe I was unable to be perfect in my diction while focusing on the meaning. I tried to capture the meaning of each line for the Tibetan readers, rather than maintaining the length. However, in some cases, I think I was able to do better than the original English. For example, the pot metaphors can be better captured in Tibetan because we already have standardized terms. Just the names of those terms in Tibetan are more than enough to capture the precise meaning because they commonly pass the lips of Tibetans.

Perspective was another challenge because there are some slightly abrupt shifts in the narrative time and between historical events and figures. The story is not linear; rather, it is woven through the history and memories of different individuals related to the poet. Having said that, of course they all have something to contribute to the history of refugees to some extent. I was able to capture the perspectives of the poem because I am also familiar with that particular history which I myself have experienced.

The challenges that I have described could be understood as opportunities, as Lama Jabb stresses in his talk. With that in my mind, I would say that my translation is primarily a translation of the meaning

of Dhompa's excellent poem. Rather than reading poems in Tibetan and English, if I am a poet in both, there might be better opportunities for me to capture the rhythm, the form, and even the effect of the poem in Tibetan.

Somewhere Else

Remembering her, I draw the net away from the future's dry riverbank.

Remembering, not losing myself to the words, nor ignoring words, their order, the meaning.

Persevere, she would say, even if the words don't reach you. If the story is too difficult, do not be disheartened. Give equal attention to a simple word as you would a complex theory.

Pouring water on an upside-down pot will drench the pot but you'll remain thirsty.

Pouring water into a pot with a hole will be like listening to a story in a language where you know only five words. Pouring water into a pot that has poison in it will turn medicine into a knife.

The attitude with which you listen is important.

I hear her voice in the Words of my Perfect Teacher.

It is, as she was, talking about a spiritual journey.

Story is remembered with levels: what is heard, what is meant to be heard (indirectly), and the meaning. If you mix up the order with each telling, the story will be different, and the levels will change.

If you alter details, the meaning will shift. Do not reorder my story, uncle said. He did not want me to paint the walls of his prison cell. No bait to get to meaning. Remember everything, he said, the words, the meaning, and the sequence of events.

She pulverized rocks to build a road for her host nation in exchange for a ticket to the future: a refugee-citizen, a citizenship to come at whose center a demoness was pinned to the ground.

The leaders of the future nation said:

- 1. Practice patience.
- 2. Pray.
- 3. The rules that govern the house you build today may not apply tomorrow.
- 4. You are a product of actions that predate your memory.
- 5. Sacrifice.
- 6. Hope is crucial. Do not trust hope to alter your karma.
- 7. Hope.

She survived survival in a substitute heart, hers hung

elsewhere.

The category of refugee demands evidence of dispossession. Scars of war are recorded in a different column. We remember, life is suffering.

That's also when the lama points to karma: everything fades except the effect of actions. A seed no bigger than a sesame grain grows into a tree.

This is also true of negative actions. She believed that above all laws that govern us, whom no law protects, is karma. The life of karma

is outside the knowledge of remembered life.

Karma of self, of people, of land, of history, and so on.

She believed that justice would correct her mother's jump to death. The river that had helped her live, accepted her to drown.

As a citizen I carry documents to verify I am who I am not.

When I say I was a refugee the audience conjures a narrative from which I emerge a plucky winner who has proved their worthiness.

Then, I am equal to a concept of human, because of their humanity.

When I was a refugee, I apologized for the lime stains on guests whose spines leaned against the walls in our home. I blamed myself for the unpreparedness to pick an option, between A and B on entry and exit forms.

When I am a refugee, I work hard to prove I am exceptional to ordinary people. I fight desire for something as ordinary as having a team to root for.

Everything that blooms is the last time. The last marigold, the last new baby. Confident about returning, we turn homecoming into a ritual.

The embarrassment of uncertainty follows us through new streets festooned with trees, that for years were pictures of how others lived.

Now we enter doors that were symbols.

The walls are left white, in case we must leave.

The category of refugee comes with benefits, they say, so you fulfill their expectations. Knowledge of, acceptance of, analyses of losses don't change how you feel.

You begin to worry you have not suffered enough. If only you had scars where your bones were broken for a convincing narrative.

Your mother was shot by the Chinese.

Your sisters spent their youth in labor camps.

As one who came after, you memorize the names of the dead to legitimize the self or perhaps it is about suffering I am attempting to write here.

The state of refugee is the state nobody wants to conquer. You are there;

we cannot leave.

Before I understood your suffering as having no end, I thought imagination would color over facts. Time heals all wounds, I said offering you language from school.

In exile, you crack peanuts between thumb and index fingers. It is also the way I write, being the one who came after.

Imagine, you are in the waiting room with an open wound and a ticket with your name on it.

You practice patience. The best you can do is hope.

Year after year you wait for your name to be called.

The blister called hope,

burns before it peels off.

याकायाची स्म

मृ्ष्र्। रथ. यवुषा रश. यवुर प्रकृत की. या ब्रह्म रहे हैं र या विष्य शहा की स्थाप की स्थाप हैं र प्रमुषी

इवःमा ८४:र८:हेट् क्वेंनायः वेंरः नवस्य क्वेंनाः प्रः देवे में रिस्रा वरः र्देवः नवस्य स्थानः स्थेटः सेट्र होट्राया सेवा यानविष्यः स्त्रुन् श्रीत्रान्तः व्याप्यः व्याप्यः स्त्रुन् । यान्त्रः स्त्रुन् श्रीत्रान् । योष्य्रयः भ्रीत्यायः स्त्रायः स्त्रुन् । स्त्रुन् । स्त्रुन् । स्त्रुन् । स्त्री विष्यं योज्ञान्त्रः स्त्रुन् । स्त्

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- १) नर्बेर्-र्स्स्र मर्वेर्।
- ব) বার্থুরে:বার্রুবমা
- २) ने से हार्बिन खेश न श्रुव मिर माने स्तर हिस मिर मिर स्वाप के स्थित स्वाप स
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- ५) र्ह्मेश्रामिहरा

ع) كرام

मिं र्से अः श्रेटः कं नः देवसः प्यटः दः न ग्रेसः हैं ना सः ग्रेडः हिंद्। ग्रद्धः ग्रेवः विनः तुः वर्केः हेंद्रः वः न सेंदः न वर्षः श्रुटः कं नः देवसः प्यटः दः न ग्रेसः हैं ना सः ग्रेडः हिंद्। ग्रद्धः ग्रेटः विनः तुः वर्केः हेंद्रः वः

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ট্রিন্'গ্রী'জ'ম'ক্কু'অম'নমন্

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नड्रन्त्र्त्यात् । हिंद्रिंग्रेशःस्टानीः सम्मेत्र्यः स्त्राः स्त्रिः सह्तः ग्रीशः स्त्रः गाः निर्देगः स्थितः हिंसा बच्चीः नविः देसः सर्वे । टःस्टा हेशः सुः सुन्धाः स्थितः स्था

हिंद्-ग्रिश-स्ट-वी-त्यवा-हु-श्रॅ-श्रेदिःश्रेद-र्ह्मवश-सदि-श्च-श्रे-शे-त्वेवा-वज्जट-त्रश-वी-वा-वर्हेश-होद्-स्य-भ्रुवा-वत्वेद-स-त्य-र्हेद-द्यवा-हिंश-द्या

ब्रिंत्र ग्रीयः नर्बेत्र र्स्स्य ग्रीत्र। ब्रिंत्र ग्रीयः नात्र त्र स्त्र ना ग्रीत्र र्स्सुना ग्रीत्र । वित्र ग्रीयः स्टर नी सीटः वर्षेत्र प्रस्था त्रयः वसुत्र स्यसः से सुना ग्रीत्र।

रे.भ्रेंग.धु.क.चर.के.चेत्।

दे'स'नईस'र्थेद'स'द'त्तुमामहेंदा

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