



आँसू

Ansu

By

JAISHANKAR PRASAD

TRANSLATED BY

JAIKISHANDAS SADANI

INTRODUCTION

Jay Shankar Prasad is, from various points of view, the greatest literary figure of modern Hindi literature. His *Kamayani* which is an epic of human psyche or a grand allegory of the progress of human civilization remains the highest pinnacle of poetic achievement even today. His lyrical poem *Ansu* is a romantic elegy par excellence. For several decades the critics have been struggling hard to decipher the mystery regarding the basic inspiration and the object of love to whom the poem has been addressed. But the problem has not yet been solved. So far as I have been able to understand, like most of the romantic poems *Ansu* does not have any definite material theme nor any particular person as its central figure. It is really an ornate poetic expression of a tragic mood through romantic imagery of exquisite quality.

Shri Jaikishandas Sadani has performed a hazardous task in attempting an English translation of this masterpiece which is essentially oriental in its experiential content, verbal texture and imagery. But considering that he had already performed a greater miracle by a successful translation of *Kamayani* which is completely soaked in oriental colours, the present achievement may not be quite inexplicable.

One theorist has made a rather mischievous observation about

the art of translation : Translation is like a maiden if she is beautiful, she is not likely to be faithful, and if she is faithful she is generally not beautiful. However unfair the remark may be for the fair sex, it underlines a basic problem of translation. The present translator has obviously grappled with this difficulty and some of his usages which smack of literalism can be condoned on this account. But he has certainly made a commendable effort to reconcile faithfulness with beauty.

For obvious historical reasons, English still remains an effective medium of publicity not only in the wider international market but also within the boundaries of our own country. Hindi has lagged behind some of her sister modern Indian languages in this respect, because the Hindi scholars have not exploited the English medium properly. Viewed in this light, the present work is not only a glowing tribute to the literary performance of Shri Jaikishandas but is also a positive service to Hindi literature for which translator deserves all credit and warm felicitation.

University of Delhi
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Nagendra
(M.A. D.Litt.)

FOREWORD

In spite of the pseudo-witticism of the Italian saying - "Traduttore, Traditore" (Translator - Traitor)-the art of translation from one language into another is a priceless asset of every cultured society since it is through translation that the cultural contact between one nation and another can be firmly established. It is through translation that the thoughts of one nation can be brought home to another nation. And if the difference of languages does not quite represent nationalistic, ethical, cultural differences that testifies to closely linked up variations of linguistic propensities, if the languages are (as they are in India) like so many flowers in the same vast national garden, then translation can excellently serve the purpose of a unifier.

A cultural unifier is Shri Jaikishandas Sadani whose poetic sensibilities must needs manifest themselves through the art of translation. His translation of Prasad's *Kamayani* has already attested to his ability to transplant the beauty of one language into another. In the present volume Shri Sadani is concerned with another book of poems, one of the best known in Hindi literature, Jaishankar Prasad's *Ansu*. To my mind, this is an exceptionally difficult book to translate into another language, especially into English.

Nevertheless, Shri Sadani has succeeded in bringing the poetry- to use a phrase from Bacon—"close to men's business and bosoms."

Consider the following stanza :

In the dark deserted night,
Star-like lamps are lighted;
In the stream of milky way,
Peerless gifts are offered.

The fluid trimeter lines (the English trimeter comes sonally very close to the original Hindi rhythm) posit before the reader two pictures of the nocturnal sky. A comparable description can be found in another stanza :

Like a trailing cloud of pollen,
That drunken memory returns,
Budding in the woods of heart,
Smiles which its luscious nectar.

Prasad's poetic diction stands in a class by itself. His imagination often dwells in a conceptual universe rather than in a naturalistic one, in a world of ideas rather than in a world of mere facts. But since the human experience must needs be based on naturalistic objects, on concrete facts; since the larger part of a language is concerned more with facts than with concepts Prasad has to employ words that refer to concrete, things but (the reader must have the subtlety to understand this) frequently invests these concrete objects with an allegorical or symbolical suggestion of abstraction.

For the translator this dual meaningfulness of words raises serious difficulties. He has to make a choice among several verbal possibilities. I find that Shri Sadani has unfailingly chosen the appropriate word, the word that conveys at once a concrete objective experience and having done so, glimmers with an allegorical suggestion. The result is as close an approximation to the original as a translator can make it.

I hope this translation will give the non-Hindi reader a fair idea of the beauty and ideological depth of Jaishankar Prasad's *Ansu*.

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Amalendu Bose
M.A., D.Phil. (Oxon), F.I.A.L.
(Zurich & Geneva)