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Translation- An Essential Bridge between Two Banks

Taleb Al Refai

Panel: At Language's End

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Taleb Alrefai (Kuwait)

Translation- An Essential Bridge between Two Banks

First- Translation is the gateway for knowledge:

I was 14 years old in the mid-seventies when I started reading beyond the borders of my schoolbooks, never aware that I was entering a magical new life. I was brought up in a humble environment. Outside school hours, I played football with friends, swam at a nearby beach, or watched TV. I did not foresee that reading would cunningly snatch me away from my familiar surroundings and transfer me to completely new and different worlds. The moment I laid eyes on *The Mother* by the Russian writer Maxim Gorky, I realized that there were books beyond school-books, and that these books were a source of a more colorful knowledge. I later discovered that such books were classified as novels and they were concerned with the knowledge of human life, rather than the learning of skills like reading and writing. The first novel I ever read was translated by Sami Al-Droobi, one of the best Arabic translators, who translated some of the masterpieces of Russian literature into Arabic, particularly classical novels and short-story collections. Because then I was only able to read Arabic, I realized that translating literary works and putting it within reach of readers created a huge gateway for learning the literature of the rest of the world.

After Russian literature, I moved on to classical European literature, then to American novels, and later to South American literature. In all I read, it was translation that enabled me to pass through to the literary, social, political and artistic life of other worlds. The translation gateway took me from a very narrow and limited circle to one that was much wider and richer made up of all the human knowledge in existence. The translated works which I read broadened my horizons; they made me share in the lives and experiences of others and in the end added whole other lives to my own.

Second- Translation Is The Gateway For Literature Of The Other:

Every society has its own unique features, like every flower has its own unique scent. Consequently, reading the literature of another writer is a personal, peaceful way to approach “the other” and an elective dissolution into the other's surroundings. Reading the works of both Anton Chekhov and Dostoyevsky presented me with the social life of the Russian Tzars, but each writer presented it from his own point of view. As a result of that, the reader is offered an excellent opportunity to become acquainted with another society's customs and traditions, a valuable chance only available through translation.

Translation is not only a gateway to knowledge, it is also a gateway to learn about other people, places, events; all which could be one of the greatest virtues of translation. Translation gathers people in a peaceful manner around a table of literature and art. It becomes a passport for the reader to travel to new countries that enrich their knowledge, without which it would have been impossible to reach. It is only the eye of a creative writer that can capture the elements of their environment, artistically color it with happy or even sad colors, and convey it to a reader. These colors faithfully express the deepest meaning of the lives populating their environment.

No history book reveals the cruelty and tragedy of the Great Depression in the United States, as well as it is presented by the American author John Steinbeck in his novel *The Grapes of Wrath*. It must be stressed that while writing this history of the Great Depression, he immortalized the glory and resilience of the American people. The translation of this great novel gave readers like myself, who live in

a different country, on a different continent, speaking a different language, a valuable opportunity to experience great events through literature. In conclusion, translation remains a gateway to the literature of the other.

Third- Translation Is A Bridge Between Two Banks:

I have spent around 35 years reading literary works from all over the world; this enabled me to move from one country to another and from one life to another. Through my readings, I experienced many adventures which left their stamps on my heart. They also affected my sensitivity and awareness to my surroundings, which then found its way into my writings. Today, I personally appreciate translation and owe it great favors, and strongly understand its importance in relaying my own words and the lives in my books to other readers who do not live in my country or speak my language. As such, translation expresses my country's uniqueness to a reader who knows very little about my country. Crossing this bridge of translation, the reader is able to experience the lives of my country's people through my books.

While following a current event anywhere in the world, all peoples deserve equal attention living in the global village. Many writers' work also deserves to be translated to other languages.

English language has conquered the entire world. In my opinion, I think it's time for translators to move their attention to the valuable literary works of other peoples. Arabic translators worked for a long time to translate foreign books into Arabic, conveying the lives of these peoples to Arab readers. However, western translators, in general, give little attention to Arabic literature and even less to the literature Arabian Gulf countries.

The Orientalists drew colorful pictures of the Arab world in their books. Even though the colors of these pictures have faded with time, and life in those countries has changed tremendously, the influence of these fake and outdated pictures is still strong. It is as if these pictures are genetically passed down from one generation to the next.

Even though Prof. Edward Said dedicated his life to re-draw the pictures of Arabs in the Western eyes, I am certain it is only the translation of the literary works that can achieve this goal.

Kuwait, September, 2012