

Meaning in Translation: Evaluation of the English Versions of Jibanananda Das' "Mṛityur Āgē,"

Md Atiqur Rahman Shaikh

PhD Fellow, Institute of Bangladesh Studies (IBS), University of Rajshahi, Rajshahi-6205, Bangladesh

Abstract:

The study examines how far the translated versions of a poem remain close to the original text in the respect of capturing the meaning of the original. For doing this, three versions of the Bangla poem "Mṛityur Āgē," by Jibanananda Das are purposively taken into consideration. Data are collected through textual analysis of the original poem and its translated versions produced by Clinton B. Seely, Fakrul Alam and Chidananda Das Gupta. The findings show that the versions Fakrul Alam is closer to the original poem than the other versions, while Chidananda Das Gupta's version of the poem is far away from the original poem.

Keywords: Meaning, Translation, Evaluation, Jibanananda Das, Mṛityur Āgē

1. Introduction

Translation of poetry is considered one of the most complicated types of translation. It faces many difficulties, the most important of which is the question of the possibility or impossibility of translating poetry.¹ It is more challenging than other types of translation because of the peculiarities that characterize poetry. Considering these challenges, Robert Frost creatively remarks that poetry is what is lost in the translation.²

Theories about meaning in the translation of poetry often face difficulties in balancing both the literal and figurative understandings of the original text while adapting it for a different verbal and cultural context. In contrast, the most scholar, Jakobson believes that "Poetry by definition is untranslatable...and it requires creative transposition." But, according to other scholars like Dryden meanings and concepts can be translated and what is said in one language can be transmitted in another language³.

It is a true challenge for any translator to translate Jibanananda Das who is one of the most important poets of Bangla speaking regions that mainly include Bangladesh and West Bengal. His poetry is the representative of a time, which remained contrary to the motion of Tagorian philosophy of exquisiteness

¹ Khalida H. Tisgam, "Translating Poetry: Possibility or Impossibility?" *Journal of College of Education for Women* 25, no. 2 (2014): 511.

² J. K. Gayle, "Poetry Found in Translation by Robert Frost," BLT-Bible Literature Translation, April 3, 2012, accessed May 31, 2025, <https://bltnotjustasandwich.com/2012/04/03/poetry-found-in-translation-by-robert-frost/>.

³ Silvana Dervishe, "Poetry- Challenges of Untranslatability," *Beder University Journal of Educational Science (BJES)* Vol.o4, accessed June02, 2025, [https://bjes.beder.edu.al/uploads/arch201405071223223363.\(pdf\) p298](https://bjes.beder.edu.al/uploads/arch201405071223223363.(pdf) p298).

and aesthetics.⁴ Clinton B. Seely has described him as “the acknowledged successor to Rabindranath as Bengal’s poet laureate” and expressed him as “Bengal’s most cherished poet since Rabindranath Tagore.”⁵

Translation of poetry refers to the translation of shade and harmony, thought and feeling, sense and meaning essence, image and cultural objects rather than just words and phrases. Capturing the accurate form and content, theme and meaning in translating Jibanananda Das is quite a difficult task. Numerous lovers of Jibanananda Das have developed a passion for translating his poetry into English. Their efforts have led too many recitations of the poem, “Mṛityur Āgē,” in various gatherings, both domestically and internationally. Definitely, a few prominent translators have felt the need to undertake new translations of the poems, primarily due to the varied interpretations of Das’ poems arising from different translators’ approaches. To focus a few noteworthy translators who have recreated the poem “Mṛityur Āgē,” the names Fakrul Alam, Clinton B. Seely, and Chidananda Das Gupta are prominent. This study reflects on the translated versions of these three translators of the poem of “Mṛityur Āgē” to examine their key differences from the perspective of transferring the meanings of the source text (ST) to the target text (TT).

2. The Poem “Mṛityur Āgē”

The poem “Mṛityur Āgē” (meaning “before death”) appeared in 1936 in the collection titled *Dhūsara Pāṇḍulipi* (meaning “the gray manuscript”). The poem “Mṛityur Āgē” was also included in *Jibanananda Das’ Srīsto Kobita*, which was illustrated by Anil Krisna Bhattacharya from Kolkata December, in 1954. “Mṛityur Āgē” distinguishes itself as a poem that thoughtfully considers the fundamental knowledge or experiences that are essential to possess before confronting one’s own mortality. Unlike some of his other poems that convey a more agonized recognition of ennui and sterility, this poem explores the possibility of finding serenity and acceptance in the face of death. The poem in narrow Roman transliteration is given below:

Āmrā hēṭēchi yārā nirjan khaṛēr māṭhē pauṣ-sandhyāy
Dēkhēchi māṭhēr pārē naram nadīr nārī chaṛātēchē phul
Kuyāśār; kabēkār pāṛāgār mēyēdēr matō yēna hāy
Tārā sab; Āmrā dēkhēchi yārā andhakārē ākanda dhundul
Jōnākītē bharē gēchē; Yē- māṭhē phasal nāi tāhār śīyārē
Cupē dārāyēchē cād-kōnō sādḥ nāi tār phasalēr tarē;

Āmrā bēsēchi yārā andhakārē dīrgha śīt-rātrīṭirē bhālō,
Khaṛēr cālēr ’parē śunīyāchi madhyarātē ḍānār sañcār;
Purānō pēcār ghrāṇ- andhakārē ābār sē kōthāy hārālō.
Bujhēchi śītēr rāt aparūp,-māṭhē-māṭhē ḍānā bhāsābār
Gabhīr āhlādē bharā; āsvatthēr ḍālē-ḍālē ḍākiyāchē bak;
Āmrā bujhēchi yārā jībanēr ēi sab nibhṛta kuhak;
Āmrā rēkhēchi yārā bhālōbēsē dhānēr guccḥēr ’parē hāt,

⁴ Amitabh Ranjan Kanu, “Use of Metaphor in Jibanananda Das’s Poems: An Analysis,” *Research Scholar* 3, no. 2 (2015), 229, accessed December 16, 2022, <http://researchscholar.co.in/downloads/36-amitabh-ranjan-kanu.pdf>.

⁵ Clinton B. Seely, *A Poet Apart: A Literary Biography of the Bengali Poet Jibanananda Das* (Calcutta: Rabindra Bharati University, 1999), 9.

Sandhyār kākēr mata ākāṅkṣāy āmrā phirēchi yārā gharē
Śisūr mukhēr gandha, ghās, rōd, māchrānā, nakṣatra, ākāś,
Āmrā pēyēchi yārā ghurē-phirē ihādēr cihna bārō-mās;

Dēkhēchi sabuj pātā aghrāṇēr andhakārē hayēchē halud,
Hijalēr jānālāy ālō ār bulbuli kariyāchē khēlā,
Īdur śītēr rātē rēśamēr mata rōmē mākhīyāchē khud,
Cālēr dhūsar gandhē taraṅgērā rūp hayē jharēchē du'bēlā
Nirjan māchēr cōkhē;- Pukurēr pāṛē hās sandhyār ādhārē
pēyēchē ghumēr ghrāṇ-mēyēli hātēr sparśa layē gēchē tārē;

Minārēr mata mēgh sōnāli cilērē tār jānālāy ḍākē
Bētēr latār nicē caṛuyēr ḍim yēna nīl hayē āchē,
Naram jalēr gandha diyē nadī bār-bār tūṛtikē mākhē,
Khaṛēr cālēr chāyā gāṛha rātē jyōtsnār uṭhānē paṛiyāchē;
Bātāsē jhījhīr gandha-baiśākhēr prāntarēr sabuj bātāsē;
Nīlābh nōnār bukē ghana ras gāṛha ākāṅkṣāy nēmē āsē;

Āmrā dēkhēchi yārā nibīṛ baṭēr nicē lāl-lāl phal
Paṛē āchē; nirjan māṭhēr bhiṛ mukh dēkhē nadīr bhitārē;
Yata nīl ākāśērā rayē gēchē khūjē phērē ārō nīl ākāśēr tal;
Pathē-pathē dēkhīyāchi mṛdu cōkh chāyā phēlē pṛthibīr 'parē;
Āmrā dēkhīyāchi yārā supurir sārī bēyē sandhyā āsē rōj,
Pratidin bhōr āsē dhānēr guccēr mata sabuj sahaj;

Āmrā bujhēchi yārā bahudin mās ṛtu sēs halē par
Pṛthibīr sēi kanyā kāchē ēsē andhakārē nadīdēr kathā
Ka'yē gēchē, āmrā bujhēchi yārā path ghāṭ māṭhēr bhitār
Ārō ēka ālō āchēḥ dēhē tār bikālbēlār dhūsaratā,
Cōkhēr-dēkhār hāt chērē diyē sēi ālō hayē āchē sthīr;
Pṛthibīr kaṅkābatī bhēsē giyē sēikhānē pāy mlān dhūpēr śārīr;

Āmrā mṛtyur āgē ki bujhītē cāi ār? Jāni nā ki āhā,
Sab rānā kāmanār śīyarē yē dēyālēr mata ēsē jāgē
Dhūsar mṛtyur mukh;-ēkadin pṛthibītē svapna chila-sōnā chila yāhā
Niruttar śānti pāy; yēna kōn māyābīr prayōjanē lāgē.
Ki bujhītē cāi ār? Raudra nibhē gēlē pākhi-pākhālīr ḍāk
Śunini ki? Prāntarēr kuyāsāy dēkhini ki uṛē gēchē kāk.⁶

3. English Translations of the Poem “Mṛtyur Āgē”

⁶ Jibanananda Das, “Mṛtyur Āgē,” in Abu Taher Mojumder, *Jibanananda* (Dhaka: The University Press Limited, 2002), 139-140

The poem “Mr̥tyur Āgē” is translated by different translators. Among them, the translations of Chidananda Das Gupta, Clinton B. Seely and Fakrul Alam are taken into consideration because, according to Abu Taher Mojumder, the translations of these three translators exhibit specific characteristics.⁷

3.1 The Version of Chidananda Das Gupta

Chidananda Das Gupta’s version appeared in his book of translation titled *Jibananada Das*. It was published by Sahitya Akandemi, New Delhi, in 1983. His version of the poem was titled “What Else, Before Death?” which is given below:

We who have walked the fields of hay in the autumn twilight
Seen the dim women at the river sprinkling the flowers of fog;
Women of the dim past, of distant villages;
We who have seen the trees filled with fireflies,
Seen the unavaricious moon stand at the top of the field without crop;

We who have loved the long, dark nights of winter,
Heard, upon the hay, in the enchanted night, the flutter of wings;
Smelled out the old owl and lost him again in the dark;
Felt the glory of the winter night
Filled with the rapture of wings across fields upon fields,
Heard the crane on the boughs of the ancient tree
We who have delved these secret mysteries of life;

We who have seen the wild duck escape the hunter’s aim
And fly to the end of the earth in the pale blue moonlight,
We who have placed our hands on sheafs of corn
And, like the evening crow wound our way home full of longing;
Smelled the child’s mouth, the grass, the sun, the bird, the star, the sky
We who have seen their marks on the cycle of the year;

Seen the green leaf turn yellow in the autumn night
The light and the bird play at the tree-framed window,
The rat in the winter night white with the flour,
Known the moist smell of the rice
Carried by the waves into the eyes of the solitary fish,
Across the pond the swan in the dark touched by the wand of sleep,
Wafted away from all by the touch of some soft maidenly hand;

Clouds like minarets call the golden kite to their windows
Under the cane-creeper blue lies the sparrow’s egg,
The river bathes its bank with the smell of soft-lapping water,

⁷ Mojumder, *Jibanananda*, 139.

The shadow of the thatched roof is etched in the moonlit yard;
On the salt white slope descends the thick mist of tense longing;
The air is laden with the odour of crickets in the fields;

We who have seen the red fruits lying under the enraptured tree
The crowding fields watching their reflections in the river,
The blue skies seeking the depths of deeper blue,
Eyes cast their soft shadow across the paths of the earth;
We who have seen the evening descend down the row of betel-nut trees
And the morning arrive easy and fresh as a sheaf of corn;

We who have known how the daughter of the earth
At the end of days, months and seasons,
Comes in the dark whispering of rivers; we who have known
That behind the fields and the paths and the steps to the tank
Shines another light, pale in the mellow afternoon,
Beyond the seeing of eyes, the un-flickering light
There, where the lovely maidens of the world glide into bodies of incense;

What else need we know before death? Do we not know?
How at the edge of each red desire rises like a wall
The grey face of death? The dreams and the gold of the earth
Reach a tranquil equilibrium, ending a magic need.
What else need we know?
Have we not heard the cries of birds upon the dying sun?
Have we not seen the crow fly across the mist?’⁸

3.2 The Version of Clinton B. Seely

The version of Clinton B. Seely is found in *A Poet Apart: A Literary Biography of Bengali Poet Jibanananda Das* which was published from New York by University of Delaware Press in 1990. Seely’s version of the poem is “Before Death” which is given below:

We who have walked deserted stubble fields on a December evening,
Who have seen over the field’s edge soft river woman scattering
Her fog flowers—they all are like some village girls of old - We who have seen in darkness the akanda
tree, the dhundul plant
Filled with fireflies, the moon standing quietly at the head of
An already harvested field—she has no yearning for that harvest;

We who have lived in the darkness of a long winter’s night, who have
Heard wings flutter on that ched roof in captivating night — The smell of an ancient owl, now lost again
in the darkness!

⁸ Chidananda Das Gupta, *Jibanananda Das* (New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 1983), 29-30.

Who have understood the beauty of a winter's night—wings bouyed up over
Fields brimming with deep joy, herons calling from aswattha tree limbs;
We who have understood all this secret magic of life;

We who have seen wild geese escape injury from a hunter's bullet
And fly away into the horizon's gentle blue moonlight;
We who have placed a loving hand upon the sheaves of paddy;
Like the evening crows, we who returned home full of desire;
Smell of a baby's breath, grass, sunlight, a kingfisher, stars, sky —
We who were aware of these as we came and went throughout the year;

We have seen green leaves turn yellow in November darkness,
Light and bulbuli birds frolicking in the windows of a cashew tree,
A mouse rubbing chaff over his silklike fur on a wintry night,
Waves forming in gray odors of rice and pouring down twice daily
Upon eyes of lonely fish, a duck in evening's darkness on the bank of a pond
Catching scent of sleep—the touch of a womanly hand carries him off,

A golden hawk calling from the window of a minaretlike cloud,
Beneath a wicker vine a sparrow's eggs appearing so hard,
A river ever smearing its banks with fragrance of soft water,
Roof thatching casting shadows in deep night upon a moolit courtyard,
Smell of crickets in the green wing of April's outlying fields,
Thick juice oozing with heavy desire into bluish custard apples' breasts;

We who have seen the red fruit fallen beneath the thick banyan,
The crowds of deserted fields seeing their faces in the river,
However blue the skies, yet finding one that is even bluer;
Who upon the paths have seen soft eyes casting their glow on the earth;
We who have seen evening each day flow over rows of betel nut trees,
The dawn appear every day simple and green like a sheaf of paddy;

We who have understood after many a day, month, season gone by
That daughter of the earth who came near and in the darkness spoke of
Rivers; we who have understood there is another light within
The fields, ghats, paths: its afternoon grayness is in our bodies — As we let go our seeing hands, that
light remains constant:
Kankabati of the earth floats there and attains a body of pale incense.

Before death what more do we wish to understand? Do I not know that
The face of gray death awakes like a wall at the head of all prostrate
Reddened desires. Once there was a dream in this world—there was gold
That attained silent peace, as though by some magician's need.

What more do we wish to understand? Haven't we hear the call of wings
As the sun faded? Haven't we seen the crow fly off into fields of fog!"⁹

3.3 The Version of Fakrul Alam

Fakrul Alam's version, titled "Before Death," is found in his translation work *Jibanananda Das: Selected Poems with an Inreoduction, Chronology and Glossary* published by The University Press Limited, Dhaka in 1999. His version of the poem is given next.

We who have walked past lonely haystacks on winter evenings
Have seen shy river women scattering flowers of fog
Like country women in some remote sylvan scene;
We who have seen fireflies fill akanda and dhundul trees in the dark
And have seen the moon shushed over fallow fields
All passion to gorge on the harvest spent;

We who have loved long dark wintry nights,
Have heard wings flutter on roofs of straw on spellbound nights;
Have smelled ancient owls; where did they disappear in darkness?
We who have felt the beauty of wintry nights, the deep delight of wings

Wafting from field to field, and herons calling on aswatha branches Have seen into the secret of the spell
cast by life.

We who have seen wild ducks evade shots of hunters
And head into the horizon's soft blue moonlight;
We who have placed loving hands on paddy sheaves,
Have watched the evening crow hurry home full of hope;
Have seen signs of life surround us all year long:
Babes breathing, grass, sunlight, kingfishers, and skies above;

Have seen green leaves yellowing in autumnal darkness,
Bulbuli birds bathing in light on Hijol Branches;
Mice rubbing onto silky fur husks of rice on wintry night,
The smell of moist rice cascading daylong onto solitary fish eyes;
Ducks in pondsides smelling sleep in the shade of evening
Wafted away by a wand in a feminine hand to some magic land.

Clouds, high as minarets, call golden kites to their casements.
Beneath bet creepers sparrow eggs lie all in blue
The river bathes its banks with the soft smell of its waters
The straw roof's shadow falls on the yard in moonlight
Cricket smells everywhere—in summer's fields and the green air;
On the bluish custard apple's bosom thicken the juice of desire

⁹ Jibanananda Das, "Banalata Sen," trans. Clinton B. Seely, *A Poet Apart: A Literary Biography of Bengali Poet Jibanananda Das* (New York: Univesity of Delaware Press: 1990), 9-10.

We who have seen ripe red fruits fallen under dense banyans;
Fields left lonely by crowds seeing themselves in the river;
Blue skies seeking themselves under far bluer skies;
Have seen mild eyes cast shadows across the world.
We who have seen evening fall across rows of shupori trees,
Have seen mornings arrive, green and soothing like rice sheaves.

We who have known how when days months seasons passed
The daughter of the earth drew near in the dark to speak of rivers
We who have known how within paths ghats fields
Lie another light, bodied in the grey of late afternoon;
Light which when you give up gazing becomes still;
Light in which lovely Kankabati levitate into incense

What else need we know before death? Do we not know, alas.
The one wall that raises its head and surrounds all deep desires,
The pale face of death? One day the world had dreams,
Moments of gold, the deep repose required by some magic woman.
What else do we need to know? did we not hear in fading light
Cries of birds? Did we not see crows fly into the fog?¹⁰

4. Comparison between “Mr̥tyur Āgē” and Its English Translations

The phrase “nirjan khaṛēr māṭhē”¹¹ appearing at the very first line of the ST refers to a harvested field which is lonely or deserted. Here the word “nirjan” a significant word because in the whole poem loneliness has been set with a great emphasis. It means a place where there is no people. It is avoided in the version of Chidananda Das Gupta who has translated the phrase “nirjan khaṛēr māṭhē” as “the fields of hay”¹² Thus, the matter of creating a poetic atmosphere of the selected poem has been omitted in the version of Chidananda Das Gupta. In the versions of Fakrul Alam and Clinton B. Seely, the word “nirjan” has appeared as “lonely”¹³ and “deserted”¹⁴ respectively. Both these translations are acceptable. In fact, the word “lonely” is more adequate because while the word “deserted” means unused or abandoned, the word “nirjan” does not refer so. The possibility is quite high for the people not to come up the place, which is a wasteland, on the contrary, in lonely place a few number of people come up. However, the phrase “nirjan khaṛēr māṭhē” appears in their versions as “lonely haystacks”¹⁵ and “deserted stubble fields.”¹⁶ Besides, Chidananda Das Gupta’s translation of “khaṛēr” as “hay” is not accurate, because ‘the last portion of the crop-plants are not dried grasses or dried crop or hay. On the other hand, English word for that object is “stubble” which is found in the version of Clinton B. Seely.

¹⁰ Fakrul Alam, trans. *Jibanananda Das*, 39-40.

¹¹ Das, “Mr̥tyur Āgē,” in *Mojumder, Jibanananda*, 139.

¹² Gupta, *Jibananada Das*, 29.

¹³ Fakrul Alam, trans. *Jibanananda Das*, 39.

¹⁴ Seely, *A Poet Apart*, 109.

¹⁵ Fakrul Alam, trans. *Jibanananda Das*, 38.

¹⁶ Seely, *A Poet Apart*, 109.

The “autumn twilight”¹⁷ that appears in the version of Chidananda Das Gupta cannot be considered appropriate as the English meaning of “Pauṣ sandhyāy”¹⁸ because the difference between autumn and winter in our country is not to be ignored. Translations of “Pauṣ-sandhyāy” as “on winter evenings”¹⁹ by Fakrul Alam and “on a December evening”²⁰ by Clinton B. Seely are more satisfactory than “in the autumn twilight”²¹ as is translated by Chidananda Das Gupta.

The noun phrase “naram nadīr nārī”²² is translated as “shy river women”²³ by Fakrul Alam, “soft river woman”²⁴ by Clinton B. Seely and “the dim women at the river”²⁵ by Chidananda Das Gupta. In Chidananda Das Gupta’s version, “dim” denotes obscurity; the word has been used in this version to mean the lack of light during the twilight; it does not mean “soft” as is meant by “naram.” Although the smell of literal translation seems to be correct, the use of the word “shy” by Fakrul Alam as the translation of “naram” seems right. Besides, Fakrul Alam and Chidananda Das Gupta have translated “nārī” as “women” making it plural but Clinton B. Seely has kept the expression singular in his version. The expression “Kabēkār pāṛāgār mēyēdēr matō yēna hāy / tāṛā sab”²⁶ is translated as “Like country women in some remote sylvan scene”²⁷ by Fakrul Alam, “they all are like some village girls of old”²⁸ by Clinton B. Seely and “Women of the dim past, of distant villages”²⁹ by Chidananda Das Gupta. Here, the translation of Fakrul Alam seems comparatively poetic.

Two trees are mentioned in the expression “ākand dhundul.”³⁰ The local names of these trees are avoided in the version of Chidananda Das Gupta who has translated it as “the trees.”³¹ The local names are retained in the versions of Fakrul Alam and Clinton B. Seely. Fakrul Alam has translated this ST expression as “*akanda* and *dhundul* trees”³² while Clinton B. Seely has translated it as “the *akanda* tree, the *dhundul* plant.”³³ The plants “ākand” and “dhundul” have been resolved in Chidananda Das Gupta’s version and thus the originality is lost. Fakrul Alam and Clinton B. Seely have successfully upheld the integrity of the original and have presented Jibanananda Das’s poems appropriately.

Chidananda Das Gupta’s translation of the lines “Yē- māṭhē phasal nāi tāhār śīyārē / Cupē dāṛāyēchē cād-kōnō sādḥ nāi tār phasalēr tarē”³⁴ seems to have been far away from the original. He has translated these lines into “Seen the unavaricious moon stand at the top of the field without crop.”³⁵ In this translation, the word “unavaricious” takes the meaning of being meaningless or unworthy. There is a

¹⁷ Gupta, *Jibanananda Das*, 29.

¹⁸ Das, “Mṛtyur Āgē,” in Mojumder, *Jibanananda*, 139.

¹⁹ Fakrul Alam, trans. *Jibanananda Das*, 38.

²⁰ Seely, *A Poet Apart*, 109.

²¹ Gupta, *Jibanananda Das*, 29.

²² Das, “Mṛtyur Āgē,” in Mojumder, *Jibanananda*, 139.

²³ Fakrul Alam, trans. *Jibanananda Das*, 38.

²⁴ Seely, *A Poet Apart*, 109.

²⁵ Gupta, *Jibanananda Das*, 29.

²⁶ Das, “Mṛtyur Āgē,” in Mojumder, *Jibanananda*, 139.

²⁷ Fakrul Alam, trans. *Jibanananda Das*, 38.

²⁸ Seely, *A Poet Apart*, 109.

²⁹ Gupta, *Jibanananda Das*, 29.

³⁰ Das, “Mṛtyur Āgē,” in Mojumder, *Jibanananda*, 139.

³¹ Gupta, *Jibanananda Das*, 29.

³² Fakrul Alam, trans. *Jibanananda Das*, 38.

³³ Seely, *A Poet Apart*, 109.

³⁴ Das, “Mṛtyur Āgē,” in Mojumder, *Jibanananda*, 139.

³⁵ Gupta, *Jibanananda Das*, 29.

great difference between non-avoidance and greed. The translator has failed to present the poem's meaning exactly. Clinton B. Seely has translated these lines into "the moon standing quietly at the head of / An already harvested field—she has no yearning for that harvest"³⁶ This translation seems far better. In the translation of Fakrul Alam, "Yē- māṭhē phasal nāi tāhār śīyarē / Cupē dāṛāyēchē cād-kōnō sādḥ nāi tār phasalēr tarē" appears as "And have seen the moon shushed over fallow fields- / All passion to gorge on the harvest spent."³⁷ This translation seems superior.

Fakrul Alam is quite remote from the original. His translation of "Cupē dāṛāyēchē" into "Shushed over" is far away from the original, because no one expressed the moon to stand silent, the moon stood quietly. However, in the word "shush" there are a few echoes of the word. Though the last line has not been translated here, whatever the word is "All passion to gorge on the harvest spent;" a new line that cannot be termed right. The word "passion" is not in the word "sādḥ" that has the intensity of the concentration of the word. Similarly, the word "gorge" is also not accurate. The discovery of proper synonyms for translation or paraphrasing may be difficult at times, but due to this, it may not be standard to change or diverge so far away from the original.

In the translation of Seely, the call of the "cil" from the clouds changed from the cloud to the window. In Seely, the translating of the 'transferred epithets' into simple sentences has led to the loss of poetic beauty and it may be assumed that the imagination of the reader has been congested. Some translations of Fakrul Alam seem to slip away from the original, such as when Jibanananda articulated "Minārēr mata mēgh,"³⁸ he indicated the shape of the cloud. Fakrul Alam thought of it as referring to height. That is why he has translated it into "Clouds, high as minarets."³⁹ If a tower is not too high, then this cloud is very close. It is nearing the closure near the window rather than being in the same high altitude as that of the clouds in the sky, where poetic beauty has been damaged and the spread of imagination has been congested. But the use of "casement" instead of "window" is more poetic and imaginative than Keats and reminds us of his "magic casements."⁴⁰

The hawk is a strong, swift and keen; it is a sighted bird of prey and the kite is a bird of prey of the hawk family. The qualitative differences between the two are not to be ignored. Then the translation of "cil"⁴¹ (kite) is more standard than "hawk."⁴² Cane-creeper, wicker-vine and bet-creeper can be easily accepted as "bētēr latā."⁴³ The word "cane-creeper"⁴⁴ is also adequate. "Bet-creeper" is rudimentary and more usual than cane-creeper; since the word "cane" is not always known to the common readers of Bangla poetry. The phrase "wicker vine" is not far away from the original, there are also qualitative differences, because there is the scope of the cane to be spinning. Although the cane is not spinning, it may have Eggs underneath it. Seely claimed Eggs are tough and in this case they are original. The other two translators have mentioned the color of the egg, which is not original. The correct visual consciousness

³⁶ Seely, *A Poet Apart*, 109.

³⁷ Fakrul Alam, trans. *Jibanananda Das*, 38.

³⁸ Das, "Mr̥tyur Āgē," in *Mojumder, Jibanananda*, 140.

³⁹ Fakrul Alam, trans. *Jibanananda Das*, 39.

⁴⁰ John Keats, "Ode to a Nightingale," Poetry Foundation, accessed May 14, 2025, <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/44479/ode-to-a-nightingale>.

⁴¹ Gupta, *Jibananada Das*, 29.

⁴² Seely, *A Poet Apart*, 110.

⁴³ Das, "Mr̥tyur Āgē," in *Mojumder, Jibanananda*, 140.

⁴⁴ Gupta, *Jibananada Das*, 29.

is visible in both the words “eggs appearing so hard”⁴⁵ and “eggs lie all in blue.”⁴⁶ Then in the analogy of eggs, a similarity of visual awareness flows. Jibanananda put emphasis on not only on the color but also on the strong thinking. The translation of Chidananda Dasgupta, among the three translations seems more standard.

The line “Naram jalēr gandha diyē nadī bār-bār tīrtikē mākḥē”⁴⁷ is translated into “The river bathes its banks with the soft smell of its waters”⁴⁸ by Fakrul Alam, “A river ever smearing its banks with fragrance of soft water”⁴⁹ by Clinton B. Seely and “The river bathes its bank with the smell of soft-lapping water”⁵⁰ by Chidananda Das Gupta. The translations of this line by Fakrul Alam and Chidananda Das Gupta are quite close, original and poetic. But in Clinton B. Seely’s translation, the word “smearing” is irrelevant, because “smearing” does not reflect the Bangla word “mākḥē.” Consequently, it is not suitable as a translation. Smearing is a positive word that means to cover or mark something with something oily, sticky, or greasy. Hence, “smearing” is a misrepresentation of the word “mākḥē.”

The line “Bātāsē jhījhīr gandha-baiśākhēr prāntarēr sabuj bātāsē”⁵¹ is translated into “Cricket smells everywhere- in summer’s fields and the green air”⁵² by Fakrul Alam, “Smell of crickets in the green wing of April’s outlying fields”⁵³ by Clinton B. Seely and “The air is laden with the odor of crickets in the fields”⁵⁴ by Chidananda Das Gupta. In Fakrul Alam’s translation, two words – “Baiśākhēr” and “sabuj” – have been omitted. With the exclusion of “Baiśākhēr,” the description of the season in the whole poem was hampered in translation, and due to the omission of “sabuj,” the timelessness of the green field was overlooked. Clinton B. Seely’s translation is original but it would have been better if “April” were not used to mean “Baiśākhēr.” In Chidananda Das Gupta’s translation, the equivalence of the Bangla month of “Baiśākh” is absent. The entire part of this translation could have used the name ‘Baishakh’ in a setting where the evocative practice of local names is quite common. The translations of Fakrul Alam and Chidananda Das Gupta seem more standard than the translation of Clinton B. Seely.

The Bangla line “ki bujhitē cāi ār?”⁵⁵ is translated into “What else need we know?”⁵⁶ “what more do we wish to understand?”⁵⁷ and “What else need we know?”⁵⁸ by Fakrul Alam, Clinton B. Seely and Chidananda Das Gupta respectively. In Clinton B. Seely’s translation, “bujhitē” is translated into “to understand” and in the other two translations, it has been treated as “know.” In the deepest sense, “understand,” not “know,” is logical. There is a subtle difference between the significance of these two words. Hence, the translation of Clinton B. Seely seems right. Chidananda Das Gupta has used the word “else” to perfectly present the idea of Jibanananda’s fillings and to sustain the poetic manner.

⁴⁵ Seely, *A Poet Apart*, 110.

⁴⁶ Fakrul Alam, trans. *Jibanananda Das*, 39.

⁴⁷ Das, “Mr̥tyur Āgē,” in Mojumder, *Jibanananda*, 140.

⁴⁸ Fakrul Alam, trans. *Jibanananda Das*, 39.

⁴⁹ Seely, *A Poet Apart*, 110.

⁵⁰ Gupta, *Jibananada Das*, 29.

⁵¹ Das, “Mr̥tyur Āgē,” in Mojumder, *Jibanananda*, 140.

⁵² Fakrul Alam, trans. *Jibanananda Das*, 39.

⁵³ Seely, *A Poet Apart*, 110.

⁵⁴ Gupta, *Jibananada Das*, 29.

⁵⁵ Das, “Mr̥tyur Āgē,” in Mojumder, *Jibanananda*, 140.

⁵⁶ Fakrul Alam, trans. *Jibanananda Das*, 39.

⁵⁷ Seely, *A Poet Apart*, 110.

⁵⁸ Gupta, *Jibananada Das*, 30.

The translation of “Sab rāṇā kāmanār śīyarē” by Chidananda Das Gupta is “at the edge of each red desire.”⁵⁹ In Clinton B. Seely’s translation, it is turned into “Reddened desires”⁶⁰ and in Fakrul Alam’s translation, it appears as “deep desires.”⁶¹ Here, it seems that “deep” is exact and more acceptable than “red.” In the case of “reddened,” the question can be upraised, “by whom?” Chidananda Das Gupta has translated “śīyarē” into “at the edge.” In Clinton B. Seely’s translation, it turns into “at the head of.” Observably, this type of use of “śīyarē” is very difficult to translate. The word “prostrate” in Clinton B. Seely’s translation and the word “surrounds” in Fakrul Alam’s translation do not seem to have any special significance. Yet, if the ideal convert is kept in mind, then the word “prostrate” is noteworthy but then the word “surrounds” does not seem to be momentous, because the face of death is like the wall, near the seer, not delimited by the surroundings.

The expression “yēna kōn māyābīr prayōjanē lāgē”⁶² is translated differently by the translators. In Fakrul Alam’s version, it is translated into “the deep repose required by some magic woman.”⁶³ In the versions of Clinton B. Seely and Chidananda Das Gupta, it is translated into “as though by some magician’s need”⁶⁴ and “ending a magic need”⁶⁵ respectively. Jibanananda did not set the gender of “māyābī” but Fakrul Alam has portrayed “māyābī” as a woman; Clinton B. Seely did not identify the gender of “māyābī.”

The expression “Prāntarēr kuyāśāy dēkhini ki urē gēchē kāk!”⁶⁶ is translated by Fakrul Alam into “Did we not see crows fly into the fog?”⁶⁷ In the versions of Clinton B. Seely and Chidananda Das Gupta, it is translated into “Haven’t we seen the crow fly off into fields of fog!”⁶⁸ and “Have we not seen the crow fly across the mist?”⁶⁹ respectively. In Chidananda Das Gupta’s version, no synonyms have been used for the word “Prāntarēr.” The word “field” in Clinton B. Seely’s translation has demonstrated the original and its poetic effect has not in any way slowed down.

5. Conclusion

It is true that translation can never be the same as the original text. For expressional, artistic, or cultural need, a translator has to take freedom at many a time and in some points of views, he goes off the original text. That is why translation varies from translator to translator. As for the translations of the poem “Mṛtyur Āgē,” the versions analyzed in this study are those of Chidananda Das Gupta, Fakrul Alam and Clinton B. Seely. The findings show that the translator whose translation is close to the original is Fakrul Alam. Then comes the name of Clinton B. Seely. Chidananda Das Gupta’s version is far away from the original in respect of capturing the meanings of some ST expressions. The expressions, that are selected from the poem “Mṛtyur Āgē” for analysis include “nirjan kharēr māthē,” “kharēr,” “Pauṣ sandhyāy,” “naram nadīr nārī,” “Kabēkār pāragār mēyēdēr matō yēna hāy / tārā sab,”

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Seely, *A Poet Apart*, 110.

⁶¹ Fakrul Alam, trans. *Jibanananda Das*, 39.

⁶² Das, “Mṛtyur Āgē,” in Mojumder, *Jibanananda*, 140.

⁶³ Fakrul Alam, trans. *Jibanananda Das*, 39.

⁶⁴ Seely, *A Poet Apart*, 110.

⁶⁵ Gupta, *Jibanananda Das*, 30.

⁶⁶ Das, “Mṛtyur Āgē,” in Mojumder, *Jibanananda*, 140.

⁶⁷ Fakrul Alam, trans. *Jibanananda Das*, 39.

⁶⁸ Seely, *A Poet Apart*, 110.

⁶⁹ Gupta, *Jibanananda Das*, 30.

“ākand dhundul,” “Yē- māṭhē phasal nāi tāhār śīyarē / Cupē dāṛāyēchē cād-kōnō sādḥ nāi tār phasalēr tare,” “Cupē dāṛāyēchē,” “sādḥ,” “cīl,” “Minārēr mata mēgh,” “bētēr latā,” “Naram jalēr gandha diyē nadī bār-bār tīṛṭikē mākhē,” “Bātāsē jhījḥīr gandha-baiśākhēr prāntarēr sabuj bātāsē,” “ki bujhitē cāi ār,” “Sab rānā kāmanār śīyarē,” “yēna kōn māyābīr prayōjanē lāgē,” “Prāntarēr kuyāśāy” and “dēkhini ki uṛē gēchē kāk!”