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Ethical Considerations in the Research and Literary Criticism of Classical Works

Baladora Indrajothi[1]

Abstract

This study examines the basic ethical standards relevant to scholarly research and literary criticism of classical works, employing a qualitative research approach centred on textual analysis. The study intends to enhance comprehension of ethical responsibilities related to the interpretation of classical literature. The study underscores that proper scholarship necessitates researchers to avoid personal biases and to analyse texts from the writer's perspective while preserving the original meaning and intellectual contribution of the work. It emphasises the necessity of cultural sensitivity to prevent the misrepresentation of historical interpretive traditions by contemporary theoretical frameworks. Significant emphasis is placed on appropriate translation processes, as inaccurate translation might misrepresent the original text's intended meaning. This study's significance covers various research domains, including historical, textual, philological, literary, comparative, hermeneutic, conceptual, philosophical, qualitative, and interdisciplinary research. This study establishes an important ethical framework for the academically rigorous examination, interpretation, preservation, and transmission of ancient literary and intellectual traditions by addressing concerns of responsible interpretation, cultural sensitivity, and ethical translation.

Keywords: Academic research, Classical works, Cultural Sensitivity, Ethical principles, literary criticism, Responsible Interpretation, Responsible Translation.

1. PhD Candidate, Department of Sanskrit Studies, University of Hyderabad,
Senior Lecturer, Department of Languages, Bhiksu University of Sri Lanka.
E-mail: b.indrajothi@busl.ac.lk https://orcid.org/0009-0008-3974-2518

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Introduction

The analysis and literary critique of classical texts necessitate strict compliance with (moral) research standards. Classical works are fundamentally embedded in historical, cultural, and linguistic contexts, necessitating a meticulous and responsible academic study. This study analyzes a few ethical points pertinent to the academic study of classical works.

The study employs a qualitative methodology, relying mostly on previously published research papers. Special emphasis is placed on matters of responsible interpretation, responsible cultural interaction with classical texts, and responsible translation methodologies.

The aim of this study is to underscore the significance of ethical awareness in preserving the integrity and authenticity of ancient text studies. All references and citations in this article adhere to the Harward citation style. The discussion culminates in a statement of the principal ethical tenets that underpin responsible and credible investigation into ancient literary studies.

Research Problem

What ethical considerations should researchers observe when conducting research or critical analysis, while maintaining fidelity to the author's viewpoint, cultural context, interpretations, and accurate translations?

Research Questions

- How may interpretive bias be effectively mitigated when employing research and literary criticism on classical works?
- What ethical practices are essential to avert cultural misrepresentation or appropriation and to ensure accurate and culturally sensitive representation of classical traditions in academic research?
- How does translation accuracy enhance the ethics of research work in the selection or assessment of translations of classical literature?

Research Methodology

This study employs a textual analysis method related to the qualitative research methodology. The conclusion has been generated by gathering and analysing data relevant to this research, considering the opinions stated by many researchers.

Discussion

In advocating for the inherent value of the humanities, Researchers must adhere to ethical standards that protect the independence of literature and the arts from utilitarian simplification while promoting critical analysis. Hundreds of researchers have spoken on the matter. Compliance with ethical norms in research, as emphasised in Helen Small's analysis of humanities, maintains intellectual integrity and professionalism. This dedication cultivates public trust and credible results, deterring misconduct while

aligning research with social values and the public interest. (Small, 2016.) Moreover, researchers must exemplify fundamental attributes of responsibility, rationality, and autonomy in their endeavours, guaranteeing that each activity demonstrates intentional moral agency rather than personal bias or dogma (DMU, 2018). Also, fair conduct concerning the values and ethics of study is crucial for upholding the integrity and social relevance of scholarly work. Research ethics provides a valuable understanding of the various values inherent in study, including its utility and purpose. These ethics stress the importance of being fair in study, which means that the results and methods should not be biased. Moreover, the ethical framework acknowledges democratic values by promoting transparency and accountability, fostering a research environment that respects diverse perspectives and societal needs (DMU, 2018). From here on, several ethical principles related to academic study on the interpretations of classical works, which researchers must adhere to, are discussed.

1. Responsible Interpretation

A central hermeneutical principle in humanities study is that interpreters need to put aside their personal ideas and biases to comprehend texts from the author's perspective. This approach seeks to restore the author's intended meaning rather than imposing modern perspectives or subjective interpretations on the text. Gabidullina's work highlights that hermeneutical interpretation must eschew an artificial quest for originality or solely subjective reinterpretation, prioritising instead the comprehension of the author's perspective and the exploration of the original poetics and intended meaning of the work (Gabidullina, 2018). This methodology guarantees adherence to the author's intent and improves the reliability and depth of textual analysis in qualitative research. This discipline cultivates respect for cultural-historical settings and facilitates a conversation between the text's perspective and the interpreter's perspective, essential for nuanced comprehension in humanities research. Furthermore, critical reading in the fields of humanities underscores a sympathetic interaction with the author's voice, distinguishing between the text's meaning and its relevance over time and among various readers. This technique preserves scholarly impartiality and prevents the distortions of subjective interpretation that could alter the original meaning. Certain researchers emphasise the necessity of differentiating between informed analysis and personal belief, advocating for a reflexive awareness of prior beliefs during text interpretation (HLT, 2022).

Furthermore, diverse textual analysis methods prompt readers to inquire, "What was the author's intent?" How do linguistic and rhetorical strategies enhance meaning? These inquiries facilitate the grounding of interpretation in textual evidence rather than subjective bias (SC). Thus, disregarding personal bias in humanities study enhances intellectual rigour, honours the author's original intent, and maintains authenticity to the text. This

method enhances academic discourse by promoting several levels of meaning based on responsible interpretation rather than personal preference.

For example, one may examine a statement made by Kalidasa in his poem *Meghadūta*, where he declares that the waters of the Ramagiri hermitage have been sanctified by Sita's bath. "Janakatanayasnānapuṇyodakeṣu" (Meghaduta 1,1) The general practical reality is that water gets dirty when anybody bathes. Here, the author believes that the water was sanctified by Sita's bath. Understanding this requires an awareness of the concept of Sita. Sita embodies not merely a woman but a spiritual ideal symbolising the higher status of femininity. She is Rama's wife. Rama is an avatar of Vishnu. Thus, Sita isn't human but rather divine. Kalidasa was a Hindu. The veneration of Parvati and Maheshwara at the outset of his *Raghuvaṃśa* serves as compelling evidence of this (Raghuvansha.1.1). Therefore, the writings cannot be comprehended without that perspective. This statement is incomprehensible without grasping the author's mind. Therefore, understanding it without acknowledging that concept constitutes an ethical breach, undermining the author's intent.

2. Cultural Sensitivity in Interpretation

Maintaining cultural sensitivity is a fundamental principle for interpreting classical works, events, or characters. Cultural sensitivity entails acknowledging and honouring the historical contexts, social conventions, and values inherent in a text's origin. Academics argue that insufficient cultural awareness can result in misinterpretation, stereotyping, or misuse of culture, distorting the original meaning and promoting bias. Interacting with books via a lens of cultural sensitivity ensures that interpretations respect the cultures and viewpoints represented, promoting a more profound and genuine comprehension. This sensitivity necessitates continuous education, openness to varied perspectives, and meticulous evaluation of the cultural context to maintain the integrity and depth of classical works.

Academic discourse highlights that ancient interpretive traditions hold substantial cultural and intellectual importance and should be comprehended within their original historical and linguistic contexts, rather than being misrepresented by subsequent conceptual or ideological frameworks. (Sheridan, M. n.d). These findings together help academics in conducting culturally sensitive interpretations, honouring indigenous and traditional knowledge systems, and properly interacting with historic cultural heritage. Cultural sensitivity entails an understanding of and respect for cultural distinctions, the recognition of biases, and the adaptation of interpretative approaches to the particular cultural context to prevent the misrepresentation of traditional knowledge (Lisa, MG. 2017). Comparable ethical considerations are evident in UNESCO's Ethical Principles for Safeguarding intangible cultural

heritage, which underscore the necessity of preventing decontextualization and misrepresentation, the significance of transparency and consultation, and the imperative to honour the original cultural meanings and integrity of traditions. It says that communities, groups and, where applicable, individuals should play a significant role in determining what constitutes threats to their intangible cultural heritage, including the decontextualization, commodification and misrepresentation of it, and in deciding how to prevent and mitigate such threats. (UNESCO, 2015). In the same manner, effective cultural sensitivity in interpretation requires attentive listening, empathy, continuous cultural education, and recognition of emotional and contextual signals beyond basic verbal content (Seldean, S. 2024). In addition to this, cultural sensitivity is regarded as a fundamental aspect of contemporary research methodologies, aiding in the preservation of traditional interpretations and the mitigation of contemporary biases (Lisa,MG. 2017).

Therefore, it is essential to acknowledge and evaluate historical interpretations rather than dismiss them, as this approach can yield logical findings that encourage constructive discourse in contemporary study domains. The researcher concurs, based on comprehensive study, writing, and interviews, that safeguarding the respect and commandment foundations of ancient readings is essential. Researchers ought to consider cultural beliefs within their contextual framework. Ancient sources, spiritual writings, and socio-economic, linguistic, and historical circumstances must be taken into account. For instance, if a conventional belief or habit does not explicitly pertain to contemporary notions, it should be interpreted in the context of the prevailing social norms and requirements of the era. Researchers must exhibit respect for varied perspectives. The identical text may be interpreted in several ways; researchers ought to acknowledge these divergent interpretations. Researchers need to analyse comprehensively, assuring no details are overlooked.

As an example, the following two assessments of the *Wessantara Jataka* enhance the efficacy of the aforementioned concept.

- The grief and renunciation of Prince Vessantara may be perceived solely as indicators of emotional frailty, undue altruism, or psychological instability by contemporary materialistic criteria. This interpretation is unsuitable.
- In the Buddhist ethical and literary tradition exemplified by the Jātaka tales, Prince Vessantara's deeds epitomise the perfection of dāna-pāramitā (the virtue of supreme generosity), portrayed as a lofty spiritual ideal that guides one toward Buddhahood. Consequently, his behaviour ought to be understood within the religious, moral, and literary context of Buddhist culture, rather than through modern individualistic or psychological frameworks. This interpretation

is more precise as it honours the doctrinal and cultural roots that influenced the narrative. This example illustrates that ancient works require interpretation with an awareness of their original intellectual and cultural surroundings to maintain its genuine meaning and scholarly integrity.

- Additionally, the following two analyses on Kalidasa's *Meghadūta* augment the potency of the above idea.

- Kalidasa romanticises the young man's grief as a result of the excessive sentimentality or interpretative deficiencies of ancient poets. This interpretation is incorrect.

- Kalidasa places the young man's sorrow within the Sanskrit alaṅkāra tradition, wherein rasa, especially karuṇa-rasa, serves as a fundamental literary concept; thus, his emotional interpretation should be comprehended via that artistic lens rather than contemporary psychiatric frameworks. This interpretation is more accurate, as it respects the literary conventions and aesthetic theories that shaped the work. This example demonstrates that culturally sensitive interpretation is essential for preserving the original meaning of classical texts and for ensuring ethical and credible scholarship.

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3. Responsible Translation Practices

For the best study, the researcher should do the translation themselves or choose a higher-quality translation. Failure to do so could compromise the entire process. More recent studies have underlined that the precision of literary translation is essential, since any erroneous translation might distort the author's original meaning and impact readers' comprehension of the work. Adherence to the author's objectives, emotions, and stylistic elements is a primary focus in translation studies. A study published by Clausius Scientific Press emphasises that translators must endeavour to read the original language with objectivity and precision to effectively represent the author's intended meaning and style. This method requires profound comprehension, proficiency, and occasionally collaboration with other experts to ensure accuracy and mitigate subjective bias, as even minor inaccuracies or personal interpretations can significantly affect the work's effect and authenticity (Yang, Y. 2023).

Upholding cultural sensitivity is essential for the Moral practice of translation, particularly concerning ancient works, events, or characters. Translators must possess a profound understanding of and respect for the cultural settings from which those texts originate, ensuring that metaphors, symbols, and subtle meanings are accurately presented without distortion or omission. Misinterpretations arising from the disregard of those cultural aspects can profoundly distort the reader's comprehension and decrease

the original work's richness. Effective translation harmonises faithfulness with originality, maintaining both literal and cultural integrity. Translators must confront intricate moral dilemmas, respect the source culture while ensure the work is accessible and significant to new audiences, thereby promoting intercultural conversation and respect. (Shen, J. 2025)

Considering the whole situation, translation accuracy is a multifaceted objective, including meticulous conveyance of the author's semantic content, tone, rhetorical strategies, and cultural references. Translation errors, omissions, or ideological distortions can misrepresent the work and mislead readers about the author's intent. The lack of accuracy in translations can result in misunderstandings of the plot or argument, which may also undermine deeper literary components, like character, setting, and philosophical themes. Achieving accuracy necessitates that the translators possess fluency in both the source as well as target languages, an awareness of the author's context and literary conventions, and a sensitivity to emotional and cultural distinctions. Literary translation needs rigorous attention to detail, cultural literacy, and profound respect for authorial purpose to mitigate the risk of distorting meaning and undermining the work's worth.

Conclusion

This study has examined key ethical considerations crucial for academic study about the interpretations of classical works. The discourse has demonstrated that decent academic research in the humanities involves both analytical proficiency and a robust dedication to ethical research methodologies. The precise portrayal of the author's intent, responsible interpretation, cultural sensitivity, and responsible translation are essential components for preserving the integrity of classical text studies.

Researchers should strive to comprehend a work from the author's viewpoint instead of imposing contemporary assumptions or personal prejudices. By overcoming personal biases and engaging with the text through intellectual rigor, researchers can more adeptly reveal the author's intended meaning. This technique maintains the integrity of classical literature and guarantees that interpretations are based on textual evidence. Classical works are intricately linked to the historical, religious, linguistic, and social contexts of their creation. Disregarding these circumstances may result in skewed interpretations or a reductive comprehension of the text. Researchers must meticulously interact with the cultural context of the study, considering historical interpretations and conventional knowledge systems. This culturally aware method preserves the richness and authenticity of classical traditions. Scholarly interpretation necessitates meticulous consideration of linguistic significance, stylistic elements, and cultural allusions to maintain the author's intended message. Inaccurate representation may obscure the original significance of the work and

mislead readers about its meaning and intellectual value.

Accordingly, ethical research requires rigorous compliance with criteria like precise depiction of the author's intent, cultural sensitivity, and exact translation. These principles guarantee ethical and credible academic research while maintaining the integrity and enduring importance of classical studies in the humanities.

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Abbreviations

DMU - De Montfort University

HLT - Humanities Libre Texts

SC - Study.com

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