



Translation Across Cultures: From The Regional To The Universal

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Abstract

India is a nation of many regional languages. The advent of the Europeans brought in a necessity to understand the regional languages through a foreign language. The Europeans felt it necessary to learn and understand our languages so that their religion and religious teachings would reach the indigenous people better. In the process, many Christian missionaries who came to India learnt different dialects of the regional languages along with Sanskrit and made way for translation works. Reverend Ferdinand Kittle who came to India as a missionary and Indologist, worked on similar lines and gave the monumental work; the kannada-English Dictionary. Even to this day this dictionary is considered as the authentic document of reference. This work helped many European readers to easily understand Kannada and hence connect themselves to the Kannada literary culture. In the long run numerous Kannada literary works of different genres were translated into English, giving it wider and broader readership. Here is a humble effort to peep into the translations of different genres of Kannada literature that have gained universal fame and applaud. Girish Karnad's Hayavadana, The Vachanas of Basavanna, Parva by S. L Bhyrappa, and few poems of K S Narasimha Swamy are a few works that are considered here.

The vachanas by Basavanna initiated a new genre of writing in Kannada literature called the 'Vachana Sahitya' which is a form of rhythmic writing. The play Hayavadana by Girish Karnad gives expression to Indian imagination. This play unfolds the new directions in the history of Indian drama, combining the western techniques with Indian folk psyche, socio-cultural and political reality. The novel Parva is a feast to its readers as it unfurls the myth of Mahabharatha as a retelling by a few principal characters and also brings into light several other practices that are still prevalent in the Himalayan regions of India. Several poems of the Romantic poet K S Narasimhaswamy have been translated to English and one of his best poetic creation has been chosen as a reference here.

The paper also shows how the development of dictionary has laid the foundation stone in the movement of Kannada as a regional language to Universal level and focuses on the role played by dictionary in assisting the scholars to translate Kannada literary works into English thereby giving a universal readership to the regional language

KEY WORDS: Authentic document, Ferdinand Kittle, Hayavadana, Kannada – English dictionary, K S Narasimha Swamy, Parva, The Vachanas.

INTRODUCTION

India is a nation of many languages. The Europeans, who came to our country as colonizers, felt it necessary to learn and understand our languages so as to easily preach and spread their religious teachings. In the process, many Christian missionaries who came to India learnt India's most ancient and indigenous language, Sanskrit and different dialects of the regional languages. This resulted in the usage of a major literary tool called TRANSLATION.



Translation is termed as a process of reproducing a text from a source language to the target language, keeping in mind that the surface meaning of the target text will not deviate from the source text. It is an imperative activity. Hilaire Belloc in his *On Translation* writes “*Good translation is exceptionally hard to*

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attain because it demands what may be called a dual control. The translator is working in two mediums which he has to be keeping abreast during every moment of his work, which both have to be present before him in equal weight and yet be present before him in two different ways.” The translator has to obviously know both the languages and master over a mysterious idiom which combines the two languages and acts as a bridge, permitting him to pass continuously from one to other. Translation also paves the way for one nation or a linguistic community to understand the other which results in the increase of one’s knowledge and acceptance of other nations’ literature. It sometimes acts as a uniting force of the self and the other hence complimenting Comparative Literature studies. For example, a person who knows 1-2 languages gets to understand Universal masterpieces of Dante, Shakespeare, Kalidasa, Tolstoy etc. only with the help of Translation.

The traditions of translating material among ancient languages of Egypt, Mesopotamia, Assyria, Anatolia and Hebrew language dates back to several millennia. Buddhist ‘*Diamond Sutra*’ translated from Sanskrit work ‘*Vajracchedika Prajnaparamita Sutra*’ into Chinese by Kumaarjiva is considered as the world’s oldest known dated print book and it is as old as 868 CE. In India it is difficult to precisely tell the exact date of the origin of the translation works. The Ramyana and the Mahabharatha were the major works that were translated in the beginning of the 19th century to many other Indian languages. This laid the foundation stone to the inter-regional movement of Translation.

Reverend Ferdinand Kittel, who came to India as a missionary and Indologist, was also interested in many Kannada literary works and desired to give his people, the Germans, a glimpse of the rich Indian literature and culture. It was inevitable for him to translate them to a language common to the west. In the process, he formulated the monumental work; the Kannada-English Dictionary, which, even to this day is considered as an authentic document of reference. This work helped many European readers to easily understand Kannada and to connect themselves to the Kannada literary culture. From the above examples it is understood that with the help of translation, many regional languages slowly started moving towards the universal stage. Kittel’s dictionary is a veritable and an authentic source of knowledge and very few Indian languages can boast of a comparable work. This has many scientific and unique features. He has given many illustrations for almost every word from the spoken varieties of the language as well as many literary texts both ancient and modern. The proverbs and idioms given by him are really charming. The original words are given with an appropriate English translation and many shades of meaning. Kittel’s awareness of the fact that Kannada was a Dravidian language has made his deductions and conclusions objective. This dictionary received ungrudging admiration from one and all. Kittel’s notable translated works are *Katha Maale* and *The Panchatantra* into English. His religious translations are ‘*The Sufferings of Christ*’ into Kannada as ‘*Yesukristana Shrameya Charitra*’.

Inspired by Kittel’s translations and his incredible dictionary, many Western writers and scholars came forward to translate numerous Kannada literary works of different genres into English giving it wider and broader readership. A humble effort to peep into the translations of different genres of Kannada literature that have gained universal fame and applaud is made in this paper.

HAYAVADANA

Hayavadana is a very popular play written by renowned kannnda poet and writer Girish Karnad. It can be declared as the most successful example of a revolutionary movement in the theatre of India. It is written in Kannada and uses the elements of Indian folk traditions like Yakshagana and natak theatre. In this play Karnad uses various theatrical forms within the play to argue the idea of India as a unified nation



and to depict that the modern Indian culture is obviously made up of many diverse traditions. The Plot comes from Somadeva's *Kathasarithsagara*, an ancient compilation of stories in Sanskrit. However Karnad's more direct source for the text was a play by Thomas Mann called *The Transposed Heads* with a subtitle *An Indian Legend*. The play centers around three main characters Devadatta, Kapila and Padmini, who are in a tangle of love, attraction and loyalty. Mann's inspiration to write the novel was a book on goddess Kali by an Indologist Heinrich Zimmer who in turn recounted the idea from an old folk tale. This becomes the

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basis of "*The Transposed Heads*". From this interconnected works of translation, it is evident that the play *Hayavadana* is the end result of a series of translations and inspired works all of which root back to Sanskrit. Here the movement of translation from regional languages to a universal language is evidently seen.

Karnad's play *Hayavadana*, gives expression into Indian imagination and unfolds the new directions in the history of Indian drama, combining the western techniques with Indian folk psyche, socio-cultural and political reality. It upholds a problem of human identity in a world of tangled relationships. Karnad also uses several conventions and motifs of folk tale and folk theatre like masks, curtains, dolls and the story-within-a-story to create a bizarre world. Politically speaking, through this play Karnad tries to focus on the nation's attempt to break free of cultural domination imposed by the colonial past.

THE VACHANAS OF BASAVANNA

Basavanna was a 12th century philosopher, statesman, kannada poet and a social reformer during the reign of King Bijjala, the first. He spread social awareness through his poetry, popularly known as *Vachanaas*. A new genre of writing in Kannada literature called the 'Vachana Sahitya' was initiated by him. As a social reformer, he rejected gender or social discrimination, superstitions and rituals. He preached that every individual regardless of his or her birth should be devoted to Lord Shiva. Basavanna's teachings were very simple and easy to understand. The 'Anubhava Mantapa', an arena for open discussions on religious questions was popular because anyone could participate in it. Work is Worship was propagated and followed by Basavanna. His disciples and followers travelled far and wide, spreading the message of simple living and that of the vachanas. This led to the necessity of translation of Vachanas originally in Kannada to the more universal language English. R Blake Micheal in his book '*Work as Worship in Virasaiva Tradition*' talks about the concept of work is worship that was widely preached by Basavanna.

ಉಳ್ಳವರು ಶಿವಾಲಯ ಮಾಡುವರು ನಾನೇನು ಮಾಡಲಿ ಬಡವನಯ್ಯಾ

ಎನ್ನ ಕಾಲೇ ಕಂಬ, ದೇಹವೇ ದೇಗುಲ, ಶಿರವೇ ಹೊನ್ನ ಕಳಸವಯ್ಯಾ

ಕೂಡಲಸಂಗಮದೇವಾ ಕೇಳಯ್ಯಾ, ಸ್ಥಾವರಕ್ಕಳಿವುಂಟು ಜಂಗಮಕ್ಕಳಿವಿಲ್ಲ ,

The rich will make temples for Shiva, What shall I, a poor man do?

My legs are pillars, the body the shrine, the head a cupola of gold.

Listen, O lord Kudalasangama, things standing shall fall,
but the moving ever shall stay.

Basavanna stressed on oneness of all human beings and on equality. He urged his followers to focus on the right path of deeds to attain salvation. One should be thankful of all the blessings they have.

ಅತ್ತಲಿತ್ತ ಹೋಗದಂತೆ ಹೆಳವನ ಮಾಡಯ್ಯಾ ತಂದೆ,

ಸುತ್ತಿ ಸುಳಿದು ನೋಡದಂತೆ ಅಂಧಕನ ಮಾಡಯ್ಯಾ ತಂದೆ,



ಮತ್ತೊಂದ ಕೆಳದಂತೆ ಕಿವುಡನ ಮಾಡಯ್ಯಾ ತಂದೆ, ನಿಮ್ಮ ಶರಣರ ಪಾದವಲ್ಲದೆ

ಅನ್ಯ ವಿಷಯಕ್ಕೆಳಸದಂತೆ ಇರಿಸು, ಕೂಡಲಸಂಗಮದೇವಾ.

Not digressing here and there, make me a lame person, my Father !

Not letting sight around and away, make me blind, my Father!

Not letting hear something else, make me deaf, my Father!

Other than Your refugee's feet, keep not getting dragged
into anything else, Oh the Divine of kudalasangama !!

Basavanna's vachanas emphasize on the purity of thought, word and deed as essentialities to please the God. Without this purity, all other steps we may take in the form of "Acquiring knowledge" or "Indulging in social services" or "Performing religious rituals, worships and sacrifices" or "Performing all kinds of Yoga, Meditations, etc." may not help at all.

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ಕಳಬೇಡ, ಕೊಲಬೇಡ, ಹುಸಿಯ ನುಡಿಯಲು ಬೇಡ, ಮುನಿಯಬೇಡ, ಅನ್ಯರಿಗೆ ಅಸಹ್ಯಬಡಬೇಡ,

ತನ್ನ ಬಣ್ಣಿಸಬೇಡ, ಇದಿರ ಹಳಿಯಲು ಬೇಡ. ಇದೇ ಅಂತರಂಗಶುದ್ಧಿ, ಇದೇ ಬಹಿರಂಗಶುದ್ಧಿ

ಇದೇ ನಮ್ಮ ಕೂಡಲಸಂಗಮದೇವರನೊಲಿಸುವ ಪರಿ.

Do not steal, do not kill, do not lie, do not rage, do not loathe the other,

do not brag of yourself, do not revile the opponent.

This itself is inner purity, this itself is outer purity.

This alone is the way to win our Koodalasangamadeva.

Through these preaching the cultural diversity in the Indian society is highlighted. There is also focus on simple ways of pleasing God through Bhakti and not through materialistic constructions and dedications declaring that this is the easiest way of attaining salvation or Mukti. The simple and easy practices mentioned in the vachanas drew several international scholars like Blake R Micheal, Julia Jeslie towards it and make Vachana Sahitya as their subject of research. Moving a step further, the bust of Basaveswara unveiled in London in 2015 endorses the influence of translation of Indian Literary works in the minds of the people of the West.

PARVA

S L Bhyrappa is a kannada novelist whose works are popular in Karnataka and across the world. He is regarded as one of the foremost novelist of modern India. His novels are unique in terms of theme, characterization and structure of the story. His books have been translated to Hindi, Marathi, Telugu, Bengali and Sanskrit besides English. *Parva* is one of Bhyrappa's widely debated and popular works. This novel is based on the Sanskrit epic Mahabharata. *Parva*, a non-mythological retelling of the Mahabharata is widely acclaimed as a modern classic. In this novel, the story of Mahabharata is narrated in the form of personal reflections of some of the principal characters of the epic—Kunti, Draupadi, Bheema and Arjuna using monologue as a literary technique. Translated to English by K Raghavendra Rao, the novel talks about "polyandry", a form of polygamy in which a woman takes two or more husbands at the same time. This practice still persists in the Garhwal region of the Himalayas and it is said that it is followed from the time of Draupadi.

Through this novel, the author brings into limelight many myths and practices of Indian cultural and traditional system. The author's effort in understanding the sensitive practices of the people of the Garhwal Himalayan region and smartly exposing it to the world through a mythological storyline is



clearly evident. There are several indigenous tribes mentioned in the novel like the nagas, nishadas, rakshasas, yakshas and Aryans- the city builders. The Indian geography is explored in rich detail and gives a stunning background to Dwarka. The geographical description of coolness of Himalayas to the dense forests where the Pandavas spent their exile provides rich tapestry that the Mahabharata deserves as a background. *Parva* as a novel gives a vivid picture about the history and anthropology of the early vedic era and concentrates mainly on human emotions like love, peace, hatred, jealousy and greed that lead to war and death. The national and international readers are thereby attracted to explore and understand the Indian culture deeply. *Parva* stands nearly at the top of a long list of Indian literary works that are translated to English. Translation works thus help in cross-culture understanding.

A POEM BY K S NARASIMHASWAMY

K S Narasimhaswamy, popularly called as the love poet, was a renowned Kannada poet. His most popular collection of poems *Mysooru Mallige* has been reprinted 32 times. His love poems were inspired by Robert Burns and they were unique to the language at the time when Kannada poetry dealt with nature and natural world. K S Narasimhaswamy is considered to be a part of the Navodaya movement in Kannada literature. His poems are simple and thus were able to bring Kannada poetry to a broader audience.

Translation as a profession /hobby is gaining pace and offers vivid challenges to young scholars. Such

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an acceptance of challenge can be seen in the work of Prof. M.C Prakash and Dr. Mekhala who have worked on translating the popular poems of the legendary poet K S Narasimhaswamy. Their book '*Bride comes home*' is a collection of many poems of late K S Narasimhaswamy who was fondly addressed as Romantic poet of modern Kannada literature. Here is a popular poem of K S N and its translation.

ನಿನ್ನೊಲುಮೆಯಿಂದಲೇ ಬಾಳು ಬೆಳಕಾಗಿರಲು ಚಂದ್ರಮುಖಿ ನೀನೆನಲು ತಪ್ಪೇನೆ?

ನಿನ್ನ ಸೌಜನ್ಯವೇ ದಾರಿ ನೆರಳಾಗಿರಲು ನಿತ್ಯ ಸುಖಿ ನೀನೆನಲು ಒಪ್ಪೇನೆ ?

ನಿನ್ನ ನಗೆ ಮಲ್ಲಿಗೆಯ ಪರಿಮಳದ ಪಾತ್ರೆಯಲಿ ಚೆಲ್ಲಿ ಸೂಸುವ ಅಮೃತ ನೀನೇನೆ!

ನನ್ನ ಕನಸುಗಳೆಲ್ಲ ಕೈಗೊಳುವ ಯಾತ್ರೆಯಲಿ ಸಿದ್ಧಿಸುವ ಧನ್ಯತೆಯು ನೀನೇನೆ !

ನಿನ್ನ ಕಿರುನಗೆಯಿಂದ, ನಗೆಯಿಂದ, ನುಡಿಯಿಂದ ಎತ್ತರದ ಮನೆ ನನ್ನ ಬದುಕೇನೆ!

ಚಂದ್ರನಲಿ ಚಿತ್ರಿಸಿದ ಚೆಲುವಿನೊಳಗುಡಿಯಿಂದ ಗಂಗೆ ಬಂದಳು ಇದ್ದ ಕಡೆಗೇನೆ!

When by your love alone is my life lit
Is it wrong to call you moonfaced?
When your courtesy has shaded my path
Does it befit to call you ever joyed?

You are the nectar overflowing
The fragrant bowl of your jasmine smile!
You are the accomplished blessing
In the pilgrimage taken up by all dreams of mine!

My life itself is a lofty home
By your smile, laugh and word!
Printed in the moon, from the beauty's sanctum
Ganga flowed to where I stood!



Despite many challenges faced in translating literary works from one language to another, it has always been a rewarding and satisfying assignment. A translator upgrades oneself to the next level to reach to Universal readers and here acts as a bridge between two languages, cultures and literatures and also mystic practices.

CONCLUSION:

In a country like India with linguistic and cultural diversity, translation plays a vital role in upholding the unity of the nation and helping people of one linguistic community to understand the other. From the above discussed topics it is clearly evident that translation oozes the relation between people of different nations resulting in the increase of one's knowledge and appreciation of other nations' literature. The role of translation in comparative literature studies is of vitality. Translation and comparative studies are inter-linked and go hand-in-hand. Translation enhances the relation between people and nations. With English as the only international language common to all countries, translation of regional texts to this universal common language is necessary and inevitable to understand the cross-country cultures. But many critics have pointed that translation has its limitations because it fails to capture the essence of the original literary text. In spite of this one cannot deny the important role played by translation in understanding various literary cultures of the world. Despite several arguments, undoubtedly, the movement of translation from a regional stage to a universal forum not only boosts Comparative literature studies but also enhances better universal understanding of literature, culture and traditions of the other.

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