

# Evolution and changing contours of Translation Studies in Tamil Literature

<sup>[1]</sup> Srinivas A

<sup>[1]</sup> Translation Studies, University of Hyderabad.

---

**Abstract:-** Translation studies as an inter-discipline have grown rapidly in the past fifty years considerably. This paper analyses some of the notions that it put forth on the world literary arena, within the space of a regional literature. Also finds and discusses the relations and problems it encounters on a multi-disciplinary level correspondingly with modern Tamil literature. It draws an example from contemporary literature to illustrate what could be the interferences in such a proceeding.

**Key Words:** Maria Tymoczko, Jeyamohan, Venmurasu, Clustered concepts in Translation.

---

Translation studies involve a primary excitement of including many other disciplines to delve in for translators and its scholars. Scholars who enter the field are primarily educated in language sciences and linguistics. Some other who are excellent critics of the literary texts involve in translation. Both have their limits towards conquering their entire task and meet it successfully. Critics and aesthetics of literature when failing to attempt the linguistic elements of the texts, the former will lose miserably in transcreating the historical, cultural and other peculiar intricacies. However, it is evident that a translation involving a text that connects multiple disciplines, for example, any classical foundational work in a given discipline that cover a considerable amount of philosophical queries that lean towards other disciplines, will pose a humongous threat on a translator or its scholar to cover it up entirely.

Although it is accepted among many scholars to arrive at the knowledge sufficient enough to tackle this multi-disciplinary aspect of the text, we witness only a few scholars are well trained in research methods required for the field. As it is an emerging area, it must stay awake of its needs and encounter closely the research fields needed to be sharpened. Since it is a discipline that works and behaves in concepts that are clustered (Maria Tymoczko call it clustered concepts), shifting and temporal by nature, they also need to watch closely the emergence of ideas in fields they are related and interrelated. [1]

As Translation scholars at the least are trained in languages and linguistics for the work they are carrying out, they must also be competent enough to investigate the other disciplinary elements in the text they deal with. Maria Tymoczko, a translation intellectual, who envisages a wide scope for translation through deep research and enlarging the paradigm itself, suggests that for a scholar to grow ahead of the blurred margin of translation discipline, one must commit him/herself to a broad reading program that reaches

widely into humanities, social sciences and natural sciences [2]. She steps even further and suggests that this will somehow organize a scientific system of inquiry within the translator even who are not trained in that area, which is essential on her behalf. Though it is fascinating to imagine a scholar who can translate, is educated and trained in various fields such as psychology, historiography, cognitive sciences, neurophysiology, astrophysics and ecology depending on the text or work he has adapted, it still is important to investigate the above-mentioned notions and translation elements within the context of Indian literature. I believe such a discussion will lead to concentrate and enlarge the term translation, and Indian literature that are yet to be achieved and read in the context of global literary discourse.

To discuss adequately and handle with precision, in this article I will reflect upon only a small part of Indian literature, which is Tamil literature. It is very important to analyze the theories and notions of translation that are put forth in the world literary arena, keeping it in a regional literary space. Doing so will enlighten us upon the practical values of such European discourses, and what is to be achieved by meeting the stumbles that only we can encounter. Such encounters will undoubtedly lead us towards a literature that is completely native and unique. Here, emphasizing shortly on the background of Translations and the evolution of novel in Tamil literature, before entering into the questions of multi-disciplinary research is necessary.

Every regional literature in India has its own way of encountering the classics from the west and then passing to modern, postmodern works. In the first half of the twentieth century, Tamil writers and translators, translated and rewrote a considerable amount of French and English modern fiction from the nineteenth century. [3] Even modern predecessors like Pudhumaipitthan rewrote works

of Maupassant in different names in different magazines, which helped the modern Tamil prose in its initial stages. Ka.Na.Su, another modern writer, and translator brought many novels and novellas from across world literature. Full-time translators like K.Sandhanam, T.N.Kumaraswamy, T.N.Senapathy brought Russian classics and huge novels from Bengal which were widely read. Apart from individual efforts, as a part of communist campaign Soviet Union books and classics from Russia are translated and published by Moscow and Progressive Publishers. N. Dharmarajan played a major role in translating these works. It is said that the translation of "War and Peace" by T.S.Chokkalingam has played a major role in forming the modern prose in Tamil. [4]

On the other side, Tamil novel has gone through multiple transformations in the past fifty years. Apart from precursory efforts, Tamil novel is said to attain its form 'novel' properly in its era of modernism. Ka.Na.Su's 'Poithev' is said to have attained a proper modern form for a novel as mentioned when discussed western works. [5] A series of novels are said to be successfully executed in terms of modernist works such as Neela Padmanaban's 'Thalaimuraigal', Sundara Ramaswamy's 'Oru Puliymarathin Kathai' and 'J.J.Sila Kuripugal' and so. Apart from modernist works, there are certainly other such as 'Mogamul' by Janakiraman, 'Puyalile oru Thoni' by Pa.Singaram, 'Manudam Vellum' by Prapanchan which fall under various other categories. [6] Almost all the works mentioned above are written before 1980's of which most of them are translated. Here I classify the Tamil novel period in two for my convenience in order to show how multiple disciplines have involved in the writing of a text. It is evident that the classification part Tamil novel into Modernist works and Postmodernist works based on the year 1980 roughly.

Although the year 1980 is mentioned, this partition takes into account a significant discussion and discourse brought into the area of the novel by writer Jeyamohan theoretically and practically through his novels and criticism after his arrival. He based on his readings on world literature, discussed and put forth the idea of finding and achieving the novel form and content that are native in nature. His novels including 'Vishnupuram', 'Pinthodaram Nizhalin Kural', 'Kaadu' published in his early years received a wide reception among scholars and readers and led to discussions, both on form and content.

Novels like 'Kaaval Kottam' [Su. Venkatesan] which rewrites history in its own typical way, novels like 'Nedungurudhi' [S. Ramakrishnan], 'Aazhi Soozh Ulagu'

[Joe D' Cruz], 'Manarkadigai' [M. Gopalakrishnan] which strives to cover the life in its entirety, novels like 'Manarkeni', 'Unmai Kalandha Naatkuripugal' which tries to communicate through apertures – correspond in many ways in the effort of discovering and employing their unique 'architectonics' inside their art apart from all ramifications. Charu Nivedhita's 'Zero Degree' 'Existentialismum Fancy Banianum' , Yuwan Chandrasekhar's 'Manalkeni' 'Veliyetram' 'Pagadaiyattam', Francis Kiruba's 'Kanni', Kanmani Gunasekaran's 'Anchalai', Joe D'Cruz's 'Aazhi Soozh Ulagu' 'Korkai' – they all do narrate an individual's life, having to exhibit world history as their framework. They re-tell histories by playing with them through fictional ingenuities. [7] Most of these works from the twentieth century has the privilege of being not translated, excluding few works in other regional languages. It is a key question that why most of the popular and critically acclaimed novels from Tamil were not translated, even years after their publication?

Apart from readership and lacking translators, I would like to discuss this problem within a literary and research level. One feature that is shared between these novels is that most of them are huge in size and attempts to portray life from multiple viewpoints. Portraying different characters with different viewpoints and attaining an equilibrium in the form is a characteristic of classic novels. E.g. War and Peace, Brothers Karamazov, Anna Karenina, Crime and Punishment. But these novels steps further and disintegrates such a singular form, and ends with ununiformed features and intricacies. [5]

For example, Venmurasu is an ongoing work on Mahabharatha, written by Tamil Writer Jeyamohan. The veteran writer announced in 2014, the project of writing the whole epic Mahabharatha as a novel series that will discuss and portray the story in a holistic manner. So far the series contains sixteen novels, of which the story has only moved to the beginning of the war. The seventeenth novel is ongoing and been published a chapter every day on his official website. Unlike other renarrations, the novel not only focuses on primary characters but also on characters that are not much talked about in the original. For example, King Shantanu's son Vichitravirya is a largely bloomed and a magnified character in this series. Secondly, apart from being just a rewriting, the work takes into account the multiple layers of the text and vividly portrays them. For instance, when one witness the philosophies of Indian tradition been narrated through fiction, also can realize a fictional river of history running beneath it. History gets mythologized, mythology being historicized all through a finely spun web of a narrative. After all such portrayal of

larger than lives, furthermore, it investigates into the psyche of all characters portrayed in the huge novel. However, it will settle as one of the longest novel series (it already is) in the whole of world literature when finished, it has not been translated so far.

Correspondingly, the ability to write such a huge novel arrives only after a humongous research done, especially for a work which will involve the whole philosophy, history, mythology, literature like Mahabharatha. Even though, the work being a rewriting of an age-old epic, it successfully meets the need of all kind of readers who read Thomas Mann, Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, Chekov and Gabriel Garcia Marquez.

Drawing two lines for my suppositions, of which one is from Translation Studies, whereas the other is from Tamil Literature, I would like to conclude on the necessity of redefining our skills in multi-disciplinary research. The need to translate such a work will strive the translator to attain the ability to work on it. But to answer the 'how' part of it, we need to trace the path the original text is been written. [8] Also, concentrate on the unsearched areas that correspond to the layers portrayed in the fiction. In Tamil, as far as the researches are concerned, still there are many untouched areas and unanswered question in the fields of History, Sangam Literature, Philosophy, Folk tradition, Cultural Anthropology and so. There are many blurred and grey areas which are yet to be discovered and argued in the paradigm of Tamil researchers.

To translate a classical work like Venmurasu and put it before the readers for a good reading, a translator must be an avid researcher him/herself who is interested in old Tamil literature, Indian philosophy, historiography, and travels apart from linguistics. It is time we rethink about the shifting paradigms in the world of research, which is not so corresponding and slow in nature to that of the happenings in the world of literature.

#### REFERENCES:

- [1] Tymoczko, Maria. Enlarging Translation and Empowering Translators. 2010ed, pp. 140 – 151. Routledge. Print.
- [2] Ibid.
- [3] Chettiar, Chidambaranadhan. A. Tamil Chirukathaiyin Thotramum Valarchiyum.
- [4] 1977 ed, pp. 67-68. Philomina Publishers. Print
- [5] Jeyamohan, B. Naveenathuvathin Mugangal. 2003ed, pp – 97, 99 -105 Tamizhini Publications. Print.
- [6] Jeyamohan, B. Naveena Thamizhilakkiya Arimugam.1998 ed, pp. 108 - 114 Uyirmai Pathipagam. Print.
- [7] Ibid. pp. 110.
- [8] Jeyamohan, B. Pudhiya Kaalam. 2009 ed, pp. 106-108 Uyirmai Pathipagam. Print.
- [9] Gentzler, Edwin. Translation and Rewriting in the age of Post-Translation Studies. 2017ed, pp. 1-19. Routledge. Print.