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Editor’s Note

For a civilization that dates back to the pre-historic times, it is a matter of much concern if its literature is dominated by a ‘foreign’ language that is just over two hundred years old. Even after gaining political independence, the literature still seems ‘colonized’. The need of the hour is to resist the imposition of English as ‘the’ only language and break the shackles of colonial mind set. With due respect to English, it is imperative that the indigenous languages of India should also be placed on the same platform and be given their deserving recognition, without overshadowing either. No doubt English language eases our communication and fills the void between people of different linguistic backgrounds, but still the centrality given to it in creating Indian literature needs a second thought. Raja Rao’s declaration in his Foreword to *Kanthapura* that, it is impossible to capture and express the tempo and rhythm of the native sensibility in an ‘alien’ language, seems to be the indirect germination moment of Bhasha literature. The Indian writers, in pre-independent India, had inadvertently conceived the idea of writing in their mother tongue, initially the reason could have been retaliation and protest against the Imperial power, in the present scene, the upshot of Regional writings is the result of the attempts to forge a relationship between Home and Abroad, to accept the movement away from Global to Glocal. The ‘look within’ approach should be viewed as promoting the ‘nimbu pani’ (Bhasha writers) along with the ‘coca cola’ (India English Writings), as put by Dilip Chitre.

Translation is a tool used by the unheard voices to transcend boundaries and get a global audience. However translation should be very wisely differentiated from ‘trans creation’ or ‘literal paraphrasing’. Instead of ‘duplication’/ ‘reproduction’/ ‘imitation’, translation should be a more creative process to promote cultural and literary exchange. It should act as a connection between the Source Language/ Culture/ Thoughts and the Target Language/ Culture/ Thoughts. Translation in India has a pivotal role to perform to make the richness and diversity of India known across the world. With nearly 500 languages and thousands of dialects, translation in India is a reliable process to converge the divergences, a method of aiding nation-building and initiating dialogues.

With such an aim, the present issue on Bhasha Literature: From Subnational to Transnational invited papers on various sub-themes such as role of translation in encouraging a dialogue among different linguistic communities, its function in the formation of India as a nation, how it enriches the Indian literature, and how is Bhasha literature significant in completing the meaning of Indian literature. Manju V.V in ‘Othello Translations and the Development of Modern Literary Polysystem’ traces the influences of British language/ literature in school syllabi, how Malayalam literature has come of age and instead of ‘imitating’ Shakespeare, has rather ‘appropriated’ it. Her paper focuses on various ‘re-writings’ of Shakespeare’s *Othello* in Malayalam varying with social/ cultural/ spatial and temporal contexts. H. Lakshmi in ‘Dimensions of Translation in Colonial Context: A Case Study of Rajasekhara Charita’ focuses upon how translation is a ‘re-writing’ of an original text, and serves a manipulated function of reflecting a certain ideology. Her aim is to analyse the Telugu novel *Rajasekhara Charita* as a translation of Goldsmith’s *The Vicar of Wakefield* and what role does it perform in accelerating the sociocultural, political and literary background in Telugu. In ‘Inevitability of Translation in Incredible India’ Dipanwita Mondal stresses the need and significance of
translation in a nation where different languages and linguistic registers co-exist, tracing the inception of translation from pre-colonial India to the present age. While the issue stresses upon translation and the role of serious translator, Khushpal Sandhu presents his translation of the Punjabi poet Dr. Harbhajan Singh. Folktales of any region are the authentic source of its culture. Elaborating the same, Vandana P Soni goes back to the roots of Rasa theory, even referring to the culinary and medicinal counterparts, and in her ‘Rasa Theory and the Folktales of Jhaverchand Meghani’ applies the theory on Meghani’s folktales and his contribution in enriching Gujarati literature. Debarghya Sanyal takes a different stand and in his paper ‘The Ghost of Bhakti: Aar Chitra Katha and the Politics of Cult’ presents the ‘imag(e)ination’ and identity of Indian Gods in the changing times.

With such varied papers, it is proved that the Indian readers/ writers have awakened from the slumber and have realized the need to open the locked doors; the purpose is not just to let the sun come in, but also to let the locked-ins see the world as also to be seen.

Neha Arora
Book Review:


Poet and Translator: the Dilemma of Creation and Re-Creation

Pragya Sengupta

If a poet creates for recreation, is it true to say a translator re-creates for further recreation? The translator in his note himself confesses that it is essential to comprehend the “psyche” of the poet in order to make the translations live and successful”. The readers can attempt to understand the psyche of the poet as well as that of the translator in ‘The Horizon’ where he asks - “before the tallest shadow/ I place my query: What is poetry?” This tallest shadow could be the reflection of his thoughts, which transcends from the mind and gets imprinted in paper. This cognitive transfer which he calls poetry is nothing but a translation which he addresses as ‘the tallest shadow’. Every time when he wonders upon the origin of the poetry, the poet places himself as a translator. It is even more evident in ‘Poetry’ where he declares that “poems arrive like rumours inside the mind”. Even then, he realizes that the creation of his mind is not only his asset, but a means of circulation. That’s why his poetry self does not want to be focussed on his fame, but rather break the mirror and find place outside the world of “elation”. The translator’s note is also entitled as “I am not purchased by elation” where he has confessed that he tried to get into the soul of the poems rather than making easy translations.

While the translator in his note mentions only about the wounds of partition on the poet’s mind being reflected in the poems, there are injuries too. The poet also tries to read the readers’ minds in ‘The Wound’ and here he admits that he is aware that they will search for his “scars... wounds... suppuration”. So the translator rightly points out the sufferings in his note and his attempt to paint the poet’s agony has materialised in a gentle temper as compared to the Bengali language. The effect of ‘death’ as a subject is also lightened. In Roy Chowdhury’s ‘Speaking With The Self’, the readers can identify the poet and his poems as the facing old mirrors who “bite each other to die”. A poet’s identity is through his poems and none can be separately criticised without considering the other side. What comes as a result of this is the conflict which he tries to identify in ‘I Can Leave, But Why?’. The few trees which he mentions being planted in the beginning of this poem is none other than his poetic creations, and what he wonders at the end is “Will those plants survive even after my demise?” This concern is genuine among all poets and probably this is the reason that he dedicated it to eminent poet Shakti Chattopadhyay. Translation plays as a mode of survival as Sengupta in his translations undertakes the task of not only transferring the poet’s personal wounds but also renders to make the readers aware of the history of Bengal’s partition. The translator decides to foreignize the non-Bengali readers with the word Bhatiali which demonstrates his perception of Bengal’s folk-culture as well. Bhatiali is a popular Bengali folk-music which can be found on either side of the divided Bengal. Keeping the original name in the translated work means that the translator too is struggling to unite the divided Bengal in his translation. He is
compassionate towards the pain that the poet endeavours in the line, “Union of the parted Bengal will aid in my recovery”.

A poet’s survival is depended not only in his/her own poems but also in a comparative structure with other poets. Even though in the poem dedicated to Shakti Chattopadhyay, the poet is more concerned about the survival of his poems, in ‘The Offering’, dedicated to Tagore, his views are cynical. He considers Tagore as the poison in young poets’ diet, but cannot deny the fact that Tagore is still the source. But we find content in his dedication to poet Bhaskar Chakrabarty, ‘When Will Winter Come’, where he finally says, “wait, let us first understand and estimate”. This understanding followed by estimation has been taken up by the translator too and Sengupta has delivered the profound emotions in Roy Chowdhury's poems in an appropriate mitigation.
Translation:

Scared of the poem

Khushpal Sandhu

Hardly had I uttered a couplet

That Lord Shiva appeared and said

I am very pleased

Wish if you desire anything

I was yet to express my wish

that He took off His cobra

and put it on my neck

and said

It will be your friend forever

will protect you from the Evil

will not let anything atrocious come near you

and will also shield you from the constraints of

expecting something in return.

I was yet to be frightened of the Hiss

that He disappeared.

I aspired

that I should have asked for the Moon of Shiva

but gullible Shiva was nowhere

It was mere my mirage

However

to write a poem-a replica of beautiful Moon

is still my ardent desire.
Whatever close to moon is mine,

people listen

even suggest sometimes

but retain distance

Forlorn in the whole world

feel I sometimes

that a Snake accompanies me

and I get scared of my poem

A poem by a renowned Punjabi poet-Dr. Harbhajan Singh A recipient of Sahitya Academy Award
Dimensions of Translation in Colonial Context: A Case Study of Rajasekhara Charitra

H. Lakshmi

Translation is, of course, a rewriting of an original text. All rewritings, whatever their intention, reflect a certain ideology and a poetics and as such manipulate literature to function in a given society in a given way. Rewriting is manipulation, undertaken in the service of power, and in its positive aspect can help in the evolution of a literature and a society. Rewritings can introduce new concepts, new genres, new devices, and the history of translation is the history also of literary innovation, of the shaping power of one culture upon another. But rewriting can also repress innovation, distort and contain, and in an age of ever increasing manipulation of all kinds, the study of the manipulative processes of literature as exemplified by translation can help us towards a greater awareness of the world in which we live.

(Susan Bassnett & Andre Lefevere, 1992, p.xi)

These words by Susan Bassnett & Andre Lefevere set the tone for the present paper. This paper basically tries to raise and answer a couple of pertinent questions like how and in what sense the first novel in Telugu, Rajasekhara Charitra, is a translation of The Vicar of Wakefield by Oliver Goldsmith? What kind of socio-cultural, political and literary background prompted its genesis in Telugu? What motivated the European missionary, Rev. Robert Hutchinson, to translate it immediately into English? And finally, what was the purpose of the translation and how it was translated into English.

It was Gideon Toury (1995) who introduced the term ‘Pseudotranslation’ into the discourse of Translation Studies to refer to a text that is presented and promoted to be a translation, but in reality something written originally in the target language. It is an original writing but falsely presented as a translation and thus has no source text. Why would one resort to this mode of disguise? Well, Toury enumerates several reasons for it. It is used mainly to introduce new things, innovations like new themes, genres, styles and literary experiments into the target culture. In the Indian context when we examine the translations, especially those made from Sanskrit, we realise that almost all of them are rewritings or new writings of the old texts in a new language to suit the purpose of the translator and the culture of the target audience. All such texts qualify to be both translations and pseudo-translations at the same time. For instance, if you take the case of the Mahabharatam in Telugu, it is both a translation and pseudo-translation as the translators, the trio- Nannaya, Tikkana and Errapragada, translated most of it from the source text but also added their own verses here and there, besides borrowing freely from the works of other writers. As a translation it is a rewriting or a recreation of the source text that went on to become a model for all subsequent translations into Telugu.

The genre- novel, emerged in Indian languages under the influence of English novels at a time when the first crop of English educated Indians were savouring English novels with great pleasure. Some enthusiastic readers attempted to either translate or narrate their favourite ones into/in their mother tongue for the benefit of their friends who could not read them in English but were not happy with the outcome as their translations/narrations failed to appeal much to the sensibilities of their native readers. This was what is said to have prompted them to abandon
such attempts and start writing original novels in their own languages on the model of their own favourite English novels.

In this context let us remind ourselves of what Lord Macaulay said in his address given to the British Parliament on 2\textsuperscript{nd} February, 1835. It goes as follows:

I have travelled across the length and breadth of India and I have not seen one person who is a beggar, who is a thief such wealth I have seen in this country, such high moral values, people of such calibre, that I do not think we would ever conquer this country, unless we break the very backbone of this nation, which is her spiritual and cultural heritage and therefore, I propose that we replace her old and ancient education system, her culture, for if the Indians think that all that is foreign and English is good and greater than their own, they will lose their self-esteem, their native culture and they will become what we want them, a truly dominated nation.

As part of this scheme the British masters encouraged the Indians to learn their language and read their literature and it seemed to work partly as per their plan as many Indians educated in English started appreciating and glorifying the English literature and translating it into their own languages and later under the influence of it started experimenting with new genres in their own languages. The case of the genesis of a novel in Indian languages illustrates this point. But as expected by the British, the Indians did not lose their self-esteem and their native culture, instead they used their contact with the English literature to enrich their own languages and literatures and never allowed themselves to be dominated by the Europeans. The rest is history!

As we understand, the first Telugu novel—Rajasekhara Charitra emerged out of the author’s abandoned attempt to translate the English novel The Vicar of Wakefield by Goldsmith into Telugu. Rajasekhara Charitra was serialized during the period 1876-77, in a magazine founded by Kandukuri himself, called ‘Vivekavardhini’ which mainly targeted women readers and later, in 1878, the novel appeared in a book form. Though it is considered as a translation of the English novel, in reality it does not qualify to be a translation in the general sense of the word, as only the general idea of the story is taken and recreated afresh with many changes in Telugu. It is also not an adaptation, as an adaptation would generally replace only those SL cultural elements that are alien to the target culture with those drawn from the target culture in an attempt to domesticate the text. But otherwise the source text, more or less, would remain intact in an adaptation and the target text usually corresponds to the source text structurally and thematically and is clearly recognisable as a translation of the source text. In this case, Kandukuri himself seems to have termed his work as “sweecchaanusaranam” (literally it means ‘free adaptation’). When adaptation itself is a freer form of translation what do we mean by ‘free adaptation’? Perhaps what Kandukuri meant by the term was that it was a rewriting of the general plot of the source text to suit the socio- cultural and temporal milieu of his native readers. When we go for a comparative study of these two novels, we do not find any resemblance between the two texts either at the linguistic level or textual level. What we do find is a faint similarity between the two
in terms of the broad story line, that too, with a lot of variation. The story revolves around a family and how a number of misfortunes heap up on it one after another and then finally how everything comes to a happy ending. Apart from this there is no relation between the two and another important difference is while the English novel is a sentimental novel, the Telugu novel is a social novel.

When we examine the para texts, especially the epitexts about this Telugu novel, we find statements that introduce this first novel as something ‘written on the model of Vicar of Wakefield’; ‘modelled/based on Vicar of Wakefield’; ‘written inspired by Vicar of Wakefield’; ‘written on the lines of Vicar of Wakefield’ and so on. What do we mean exactly by these terms? Does it mean that the Telugu novel is to be considered as a translation of the English novel? If yes, in what sense or at what level the Telugu text can be considered as the translation of the English novel? If we go by the strict sense of the term ‘translation’, this text does not qualify to be a translation as the only connection it has with the English novel is that it faintly resembles the story line of the Goldsmith novel.

Another point to be noted regarding the genesis of novel as a genre in Indian languages is that it was also a time (18th century) when prose was gaining popularity and some magazines were founded that promoted and propagated prose writing and the period also marks the emergence of middle class readers, especially women. This could be the reason why most of the early novels in Indian languages were social novels. Kandukuri Veresalingam, for instance, was a not only a very well known writer and translator, but also a social activist and reformer. He promoted women education and widow marriages and waged a war against child marriages.

Similar is the case with the genesis of this genre in Malayalam and Kannada as well. For instance, in Malayalam, O Chandumenon’s Indulekha, which was published in 1889, was modeled on Benjamin Disraeli’s Henrietta Temple. Like Kandukuri, Chandumenon also attempted to translate the English novel, but abandoned it after a while for the same reason and wrote this novel in Malayalam.

When it comes to Kannada, the first novel - Srungaracathuroryalaasini, published in 1896, was written by Gubbi Murugaradhyam. The writer in his introduction states, “I first thought of translating an English “novel” into Kannada but when I considered a few such works in English, they did not seem to agree with our Hindu sensibility, hence I had to give up that idea. Then I thought of our own famous poetical works based on myths and legends, and I wanted to narrate them in prose; but then I realized, in so doing, I would have to give up the sensibility of English “novels”. Hence, retaining the Hindu sensibility or taste in the content and following the English novels in form, I created a new story of my own”. (Ravindran, 2001). (Translated into English by C.N. Ramachandran).

In India, novel as a genre was introduced first into Bangla and then into Telugu. In Bangla, the first novel Durgeshnandini written by Bankin Chandra Chattopadhyaya was published in 1865. The Kannada and Malayalam novels appeared much later. It is interesting to note that these first novels written in Indian languages were translated into English by Europeans. The Telugu novel was translated into English under the title, Fortune’s Wheel: A Tale Of Hindu Domestic Life by an American missionary, Rev. Robert Hutchinson in 1887 and Indulekha was also translated into English in 1887 under the title Indulekha- A novel From Malabar by
W. Dumergue. And these early novels were also translated into other Indian languages. For instance, *Rajasekhara Charitra* was translated into Kannda and Tamil and *Indulekha* was translated into Hindi, Tamil and Kannada.

If we look at these early novels in Indian languages, most of them carry a clear message of social reform. The focus of the early novels, especially in the South, was on caste and deplorable condition of women. Women’s education, the plight of widows, and problems created by the early marriage of girls etc., were the important issues for social reformers at that time. Perhaps it is not out of context here to mention another interesting point about these early novels in Indian languages. They were written by members of the upper castes and primarily dealt with stories of upper caste families.

According to Namwar Singh, “The idea of India as a country begins with 1857, even though it did not become a sovereign state at that time, and we need to remember that novels in India came to be written only after that crucial year” (Meenakshi Mukherjee 2002, p. xviii). This might help us understand the social concerns of these writers who introduced this genre in Indian literature and used it as an instrument to educate people, especially the masses, about the various maladies that were plaguing the then society.

It is interesting to see why and how these Indian novels were translated into English. If we want to understand the various dynamics and politics involved in these translations of Indian novels into English made by the Europeans from the perspective of post-colonial discourse, we have to examine the para texts before analysing the translations. The colonial government seemed to have encouraged the native elite to produce texts rich in sociological detail and these texts were then translated into English by the western missionaries or educational officers for the benefit of colonial administrators. The motive behind this kind of colonial transactions becomes clear when we look at the paratexts.

Let us examine the case of the *Fortune’s Wheel; A Tale of Hindu Domestic Life* in detail.

As stated earlier, this was the English translation by J. Robert Hutchinson of the first Telugu novel, *Rajasekhara Charitra*. This was also the first English translation of a Telugu novel as it appeared immediately after the publication of the Telugu novel. And like the Telugu novel, this English translation was also serialized in *The Madras Christian College Magazine* in 1886 and appeared in a book form a year later, in 1887. It is interesting to see the subtitle added to this translation—*A tale of Hindu Domestic life*. The following Preface given by the translator explains it all:

That stronghold of Hinduism, the native home, has never yet been carried. It stands impregnable within rugged walls of caste prejudice and ancestral usage. The barriers it opposes to the inquisitive outsider—barriers of race, caste, and religion—are barriers of steel slowly corroding now, it is true, but still effectually strong to prevent curious intrusion. In this citadel of the Hindu people hangs the key to their hearts and minds and lives; and of this key the excluded foreigner can never hope to possess himself. Our knowledge of the domestic economy and social life of the Hindu family must, under existing circumstances, come from within the home itself.
Apart from its intense interest as a work of fiction, the following tale (written by a high-caste Hindu) is, in this respect, of special value. It is the 'open sesame' before which the door of the Hindu abode flies open, revealing the complete inner life of a representative Hindu family— their home, dress, food, worship, modes of thought and speech, joys and sorrows, loves and hates, hopes and fears; their simple, unquestioning piety, so strangely blended with rank superstition; the secluded quiet of their existence; their calm stoicism and unmurmuring resignation to the decrees of fate. In a word, the tale unlocks the street-door, introduces the reader to the inmates, shows him over the house and makes him feel quite at home notwithstanding the bewildering strangeness of his surroundings.

The numerous live social questions of the day in India have their origin in this seclusion of all domestic life within four walls. Nor does the writer ignore this important fact. The subject position of women, and their education; the inhuman treatment and wretched condition of widows; the quackeries of native charlatans, the consequent sufferings of the sick, and the opening thus presented for trained physicians of both sexes; child-marriage, with all its heartless intrigue and unnatural horrors; the remarriage of unfortunate child widows—these and many kindred topics are treated powerfully and with enlightened good sense. While to crown all, the story into which these topics are woven is of intense interest and thoroughly Hindu (1887, p.iii-iv).

This translator’s preface makes clear why they found the Telugu novel interesting enough to translate into English and how it was envisioned to be helpful for them. Further, the English translation also comes with an introduction by R.M. Macdonald (General Macdonald), ‘Late Director of Public Instruction, Madras Presidency, India’ as it was stated. In his introduction Macdonald remarks that, “Complaints are sometimes made that the educated natives of India have not done as much as they ought for the improvement of their vernacular literature. The Pandits, it is said, must be expected to work in their old groove, but something new ought to be produced by men who have been brought in contact with the literature of Europe, and have had the advantage of studying models unknown to their countrymen” (p.v).

This remark makes apparent what the Europeans in general think about themselves and the other, the colonized. It clearly indicates what they think about vernacular literatures vis-a-vis their own. Their supposed dominance or superiority over their subjects, as they perceive, becomes apparent from the above statement.

He further states, “Kandukuri Viresalingam, Telugu Pandit of the Government College at Rajahmundry, who has had the advantage of receiving some English education, some years ago conceived the idea of translating the ‘Vicar of Wakefield’ into Telugu, but eventually decided on writing a tale of Hindu domestic life, in which the scene is laid in his own district, and little or nothing is borrowed from Goldsmith beyond the general idea of a family in easy circumstances reduced to poverty. Himself an ardent reformer, he has made his story a vehicle for exposing the evils of child-marriage and the miserable condition of Hindu widows. He shows us how large a part a belief in astrology, omens, fortune-telling, magic and witchcraft plays in Hindu life” (p. v). Two points can be made out of these remarks—one, the assumption that receiving English education is an advantage to their subjects, and
two, their subjects are primitive, uncivilized and superstitious. These assumptions are in tune with the colonial discourse regarding the Indians in general.

He further comments on the literary merit or rather lack of it in the present book. He remarks that, “The English reader must not expect to find any traces of the delicate delineation of character and quiet humour which give such a charm to Goldsmith’s inimitable idyl. The main value of the book lies in its minute descriptions of that domestic life, which is so imperfectly known to Europeans” (p.vi). These remarks undermine the literary value of the Indian novel while highlighting the merits of Goldsmith’s work and also make their purpose clear in translating this particular literary piece into English.

He also states in his introduction that the incidents narrated in the novel are, “perhaps scarcely of a character to prove very attractive to the ordinary novel-reader, and less faithful translation might have given the book a better chance of success in the circulating library, but not success of a desirable kind” (p. vii). This comment again makes it apparent that their sole aim in translating this work into English is to know the domestic life of Hindus in all detail, about which little is known to them. But for this purpose, they would not have translated this work at all as they do not seem to find any other merit in it.

Another interesting aspect discussed in this introduction can be observed from the following extract:

Rajasekhara set out on his pilgrimage in 1618-1619. At this period the white strangers were not far off, for they had already commenced trading at Masulipatam and Nizampatam; but there are no references to them in the story, nor do we come across a single Mussulman, although Ramamurti does ask the astrologer how long the country is to remain under the yoke of the foreigner. During the two centuries and a half which have elapsed since the period to which the tale relates, the face of the country has undergone great changes. At Dhavalesvaram, where the story opens, the magnificent stream of the Godavery is now spanned by the great anicut constructed by Sir Arthur Cotton, and the district is covered with a network of canals, which fertilize the fields and carry boatloads of travellers with an ease undreamt of in the days of Rajasekhara. Broad roads run through tracts which were once covered with jungle, and, since the establishment of Sir William Robinson’s police, such highway robberies as that described by the author have ceased to be common. English education is slowly undermining the ancient faith. But the external aspect of Hindu society changes very slowly. The life described in the story is the life of the present day. The author has drawn most of his pictures from the scenes among which he is living. It is this realism which gives the book whatever merit it possesses.

Owing to the excellence of the Telugu in which it is written, and the insight which it gives us into native manners, the original story may be perused with advantage by young civilians, military officers, missionaries and other persons whose duties require them to study the language... Missionaries have done a great deal to bring India closer to England, but there is still much to be achieved, and a friendly welcome should await every fresh labourer in this wide field of usefulness.” (p. vii-viii).
As it can be observed from the above, General Macdonald tries to highlight the progress that they brought to our land by building dams, by laying roads and setting up of the police system during the two centuries, 16th to 18th, under their rule/occupation. He also states that the English education is slowly undermining the ancient faith. Here the reference is to the belief in astrology, omens, fortune-telling, magic and witch-craft that plays an important role in Hindu life as depicted in the novel.

This introduction by R.M. Macdonald makes apparent the colonizers’ agenda and their problems and concerns. They wanted to know more of the domestic life of the Hindus so that they can rule them better and they tried their best to take India closer to their country.

Let us now turn our attention to the introduction of W. Dumergue, the translator of Chandumenon’s *Indulekha* from Malayalam into English to show the similarity and the difference between the two.

W. Dumergue says, “So far as Europeans are concerned, the value of a book like ‘Indulekha’ can hardly be over-estimated. Few amongst us have opportunities of learning the colloquial and idiomatic language of the country, which, so far as I am competent to express an opinion, is far more important for the ends of administration than all the monuments of archaic ingenuity which we read and mark and leave undigested under the present “Rules for the encouragement of the study of Oriental Languages”. In this respect, therefore, a novel supplies a distinct want, and I would respectfully commend this point to the consideration of the powers who regulate such matters” (p. viii). He further states that he derived ‘linguistic profit’ from its perusal. About his translation strategy he declares that, “Although I have generally adhered as closely as possible to the original, I have not hesitated to depart from the literal idiom on occasions when it would be unintelligible or discordant in English” (p. ix).

While the purpose of translating these novels from vernacular languages is the same, the method changes a bit from one translator to another. Now let me give you a glimpse of how *Rajasekhara Charitra* was translated into English to make this point clear.

It is an extremely faithful and source-oriented translation of the Telugu source text. The translator has literally transferred everything into English with great effort. He did not go for smooth or idiomatic translation which would have necessitated drastic changes to the native idiom. In other words the kind of practices that we observe in the translations of some Europeans who take liberties with the source texts and domesticate them to suit the target culture are not resorted to in this translation.

Here and there the translator has added explanations in the footnote which give additional information to the readers about the domestic life and culture of the Hindus. But most of the explanations are again of descriptive nature rather than evaluative ones, but at times they do try to present certain additional details about the natives and their way of life in a sarcastic or humorous or disapproving way, which to some extent puts this translator also in the same basket with all others of his tribe. Interestingly while W. Dumergue acknowledges the cooperation and help he received from his author and ‘a Telugu Pandit’ (no name is given though) in his
endeavour, Hutchinson does not mention any. But it becomes clear to us from his translation that without any help from local Pandits it would have been impossible for him to translate literally every cultural expression and idiom of Telugu. Again not acknowledging the help that they receive from the local scholars is quite common across the board.

Let me give present some illustrations from this translation to make things clearer:

a) The following are some examples for literal translation:

1. **Please go and come back again** (p.25). This is a literal translation of ‘veLLiranDi’(veLLi (to go) + ranDi(come)), the common expression used in Telugu in the sense of ‘okay, take leave then’.
2. What better subjects for conversation than these have uncultivated women who know not even the odour of education (p.23). This is a literal translation of vidhyaagandham (vidhya (education)+gandham (odour)).
3. A short female of about thirty years of age made her way to the front at that moment, and laying her finger along the bridge of her nose, called out... (p.18). This is literal translation of ‘mukkumiida veleesukonu’( mukku (nose)+miida (on)+ veelu (finger) +veesukonu (to put)) . This action symbolizes a shocking disapproval of someone’s comment or action.
4. **Does sickness leave mortals and attack trees?** (p.17).This a literal translation of ‘roogaalu manshulaku raakapootee maanulakostaayaa?’
5. But **who is the author of his own destiny?** (p.17).This is literal translation of ‘ewari karmaki evaru badhyulu?’ It is used to convey the sense that nobody else but you yourself are responsible for your destiny.
6. **Four-faced creator** (p.13). This is a literal translation of Chathurmukhudu.

b) Now let us examine some notes that he supplemented to his text.

1. **“I must shampoo mother-in-law’s feet”**- This is a translation of ‘attagaariki kaaLLu paTTaTam’(press the feet of mother-in-law). To this sentence he added this foot note –

   **“A privilege of dutiful Hindu daughters-in-law”.** We can see a tone of mockery in this comment, especially in the word ‘privilege’!

2. **Smallpox, supposed to be a visitation from Amma Varu or Kali, to whose malign influence all such diseases are attributed** (p.20). This is of course a neutral statement that indicates to the readers the superstitions of Indians.
3. Branding is much resorted to by the Hindus. No child escapes it. The stomach is branded for colic, the head for convulsions, headaches, etc. (p.44). This also indicates the superstitions of Indians in a disapproving manner.

4. The Hindus practise ancestor-worship. They believe that such worship as that mentioned above accelerates the progress of the soul to heaven. One of their poets thus satirizes the practice:

   “If offerings of food can satisfy Hungry departed spirits, why supply The man who goes a journey, with provisions? His friends at home can feed him with oblations.”

This note indicates that he agrees with the poet who satirizes this particular practice of Indians and finds it ridiculous.

All these remarks would certainly create an impression in the minds of the European readers that the Indians are highly superstitious, irrational, unscientific and primitive. Further, we can also see the process of ‘othering’ in these comments, a feature common to all Oriental discourse, as though Indians are the opposite of the Europeans.

To conclude, when we consider any work done by the administrators of the East India Company related to our languages and literatures, we have to first see their agenda/motive in doing such work. In most cases they undertook such projects not because they fell for our languages and literatures and it was only a matter of their labour of love. Nor did they have any genuine interest in enriching the languages and literatures of their subjects, the colonized. It is mainly to aid themselves and their fellow countrymen to learn the local languages and to know their subjects better in terms of their domestic life and social and cultural ethos so that they can better govern them that many European administrators resorted to the kind of work that they did. It is the end that justifies the means and all the Europeans had their own clear agenda and worked towards achieving it. When it comes to the translations it is their skopos that determined everything, right from the selection of the text to the translation strategy adopted. Further we find their attitude towards their subjects in general quite objectionable and humiliating, which gets reflected in their work in some guise or other. In order to understand the different dimensions of the colonial transactions and put things in perspective, therefore, we have to critically examine their work, rather than simply heaping praises on them for what they did and ask ourselves some basic questions like - What? Why? In what context? For whose benefit? And finally, how?
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Othello Translations and the Development of Modern Malayalam Literary Polysystem

Manju V. V

The introduction of Shakespeare in British colonies and the institutionalisation of ‘Bardolatry’ were very much part of England’s socio-political project of creating and maintaining stereotypes. With the dissemination of the English language, the obligatory inclusion of Shakespeare in the school syllabi and the consequent institutionalisation of Shakespeare studies, the Bard has attained great popularity in India. Consequently, there was a deeper assimilation of Shakespeare to the nation’s literary culture. From the early days of western influence to the present day, Kerala has taken recourse to assimilate Shakespeare through different modes of appropriations, translations and adaptations. These appropriations have recreated the canonical Shakespeare in a very different culture and setting. This present study is pre-eminently an investigation into the genealogy of Othello translations in Kerala. This study focuses on the textual rather than the visual appropriations of Othello. Malayalam produced twelve different translations of Othello. These are “rewritings” or “interpretations” of a same source text in different social, cultural, spatial and temporal contexts. Despite being translations, they demonstrate mediations of social, cultural, linguistic, class, caste and gendered differences in the time of their creation. These Malayalam translations of Othello fall into three broad categories: colonial, postcolonial and contemporary globalised productions.

Key words: Translation, Malayalam, Othello

Shakespeare translations played an important role in the making of a modern literary polysystem in Malayalam. But the area has so far been ignored by most literary historians. While we claim of Shakespeare’s influence on our language, education, religion, artistic sensibilities, and the popular culture, Shakespeare translations are looked down upon as secondary, derivative and inferior creations. This paper looks at the various ways in which Kerala translated, adapted and altered Shakespeare’s Othello in order to reflect its changing social and political concerns. A historical perspective shows that these translations are neither mere linguistic practice nor do they emerge from vacuum. A proper understanding of these Malayalam appropriations demands an interrogation of its colonial relations, an analysis of the linguistic and literary history of the language involved and the political conditions of that time.

The introduction of Shakespeare in British colonies and the institutionalisation of ‘Bardolatry’ were very much part of England’s socio-political project of creating and maintaining stereotypes. With the dissemination of the English language, the obligatory inclusion of Shakespeare in the school syllabi and the consequent institutionalisation of Shakespeare studies, the Bard has attained great popularity in Kerala. Consequently, there was a deeper assimilation of Shakespeare to the state’s literary culture. From the early days of western influence to the present day, Kerala has taken recourse to assimilate Shakespeare through different modes of appropriations, translations and adaptations. Othello, more than any play in the canon has a fascinating and contentious translation and reception history. The play enjoyed a startlingly unabated popularity in Kerala through translations,
adaptations, retellings and innumerable recreations. These Malayalam appropriations have transcended the borders of the genre of drama and ingeniously indigenised *Othello* into the field of fiction, short stories, cinema and theatrical performances. Thus different versions of the same source text were produced, as their specific goals and strategies varied from each other.

Several reasons could be accounted for the popularity of *Othello* in Kerala. First, the issues that the play tackles, jealousy, ambition, revenge, and love have a timeless appeal to which people of all places can relate. Second, the play features a dark skinned man rising to power in the midst of a white society. It is appealing to a society like Kerala where several religious and caste hierarchies exist. More than any of these reasons, the theme of marital infidelity is of perennial appeal to Malayai readers.

**Othello(s) in Malayalam**

Transcending the borders of the genre of drama, Malayalam has incorporated Shakespeare into several other fields like cartoon, cinema and theatrical performances. In 1964, V.Sambasivan rendered *Othello* into *kathaprasangam* format. In 1986, a cartoon on *Othello* for children was published by Paico classics. In 1996, Sadanam Balakrishnan produced a *kathkali* *Othello*. Jayaraj’s *Kaliyattam* is a film version of *Othello* that links the story of *Othello* with Kerala’s native cultural art form Theyyam. A recent theatrical adaptation of *Othello* that appeared in Malayalam is *Yamadoothu: After the Death of Othello* presented by a theatrical group Janabheri in 2012.

Apart from the renderings for stage, *Othello* was popular on page also. The play has been translated, adapted and imitated by Malayalam writers and has been popular with the Malayali reading public. In 1896, Koungallur Kunjikuttan Thampuran translated the first two acts of *Othello*. This was followed by 1905 verse rendering of *Othello* by Kandathil Varghese Mappilai with the title *Uthalan*. M. R. Nair’s *Othello* (1944) is a prose rendering that shows a surprisingly near equivalence with the original. Pattathil Radhakrishna Menon’s *Abdolla athava Othello* (1965) is an indigenised theatrical adaptation of *Othello*. It was followed by several prose translations like *Othello* (1966) by V.N. Paramaswaran Pillai, *Othello* (1978) by K. A. Moses and T. T. Mani, *Othello* (1982) by A. F. Vellanikkaran. *Othello* (1986) by Sreenarayana Kurup is a prose narrative meant for better comprehension of the original English text. *Othello* (2000) by P. K. Vennukkuttan Nair is faithful prose rendering of *Othello* into Malayalam. A. Govinda Pillai, a retired judge is recorded to have translated *Othello*. But his version is not available for assessment.

The influence of Shakespeare is discernible in the field of Malayalam novel also. Apart from the dramatic renderings in Malayalam, *Othello* was adapted into the form of novel. In 1903, K. Pappu Pillai rendered *Othello* into *Avivekathalundaya Apathu. Later in 1929*, Kainikkara Kumara Pillai turned *Othello* into a Malayalam novel with the title *Durantha Dussanka* (*Fatal Jealousy*). *Premahomam* (1932) by M. R. Velu Pillai Sastrī is another fictional rendering of *Othello* into Malayalam. These adaptations converted scenes into chapters and provided elaborated description about the atmosphere for each chapter as required in a novel. Some of these adaptations have changed even the arrangement of the incidents so as to give a smooth and sustained narrative.

*Othello* also appeared in the form of short prose narratives based on Lamb’s *Tales from Shakespeare*. Important among them are “Othello” in *Shakespeare Kathakal*...
This present study is pre-eminently an investigation into the genealogy of textual rather than the visual appropriations of Othello. The twelve textual translations of Othello produced in Malayalam are different “rewritings” or “interpretations” of a same source text in different social, cultural, spatial and temporal contexts. Despite being mere linguistic practices, they demonstrate mediations of social, cultural, linguistic, class, caste and gendered differences in the time of their creation.

These Malayalam translations of Othello fall into three broad categories: colonial, postcolonial and contemporary globalised productions. The translations produced in the colonial period, roughly from 1890s to 1940s - Othello (1896), Avivekathalundaya Apathu (1903), Uthalan (1905-6), Durantadussanka (1929), Premahomam (1932), and Othello (1944) - were mostly adaptations. They were primary concerned with appropriating the work of the great English writer in order to enrich their own language and literature and so, they preferred adaptation to literal translation. The second phase incorporates both faithful translations and adaptations by accommodating both the European and the native literary traditions. The translations produced in this postcolonial period, ranging from 1950s-1980s, were Abdolla (1965), Othello (1966), Othello (1978), Othello (1983), and Othello (1986). The concern of the third and contemporary generation of translators marks a remarkable shift from their predecessors. Apart from personal motives, these translators have been considerably influenced by the changing conditions of the publishing industry and commercial interests. Othello (2000) belongs to this category.

The first generation of Othello translators choose the mode of adaptation. The replacement of European cultural icons with native elements is characteristic of the translations which appeared in this colonial period. These translations were motivated by two important considerations: the target readers and the target language. The translators were conscious of the fact that these versions were aimed at readers who were mostly unfamiliar with the English language and culture. Secondly, their primary commitment was to their own culture and they aimed at enriching the literary corpus of Malayalam by borrowing the best from other cultures.

This point to the need to look at the then Malayalam literary corpus and the central role that Shakespeare translation played in redefining its cultural identity. According to the Polysystem theory of Itamar Even-Zohar, translated literature participates actively in shaping the polysystem of a language and thereby maintains a central position in the cultural, literary and historical system of the target language. They are rewritings that become new originals. Zohar describes three major cases where translated literature occupies the primary position.

When a polysystem has not yet been crystallized, that is to say, when a literature is “young” in the process of being established; (b) when a literature
Malayalam literary condition seems to fulfil all Zohar’s three criteria. Kerala depended on translations in a period when Malayalam literature was ‘peripheral’ or ‘weak’ and the established models were no longer tenable for its cultural and political requirements. Through the works in translation, new ideas, characteristics and techniques were introduced into Malayalam literature which did not exist there before. Thus Kerala used these Shakespeare translations as a means to redefine its prevailing aesthetic sensibility, as distinct from the dominant classical drama in the Sanskrit tradition and musical drama in the Tamil tradition. These translations undertake a conscious critique of the prevailing literary traditions and social values. They critiqued Tamil musical drama (sangeethanatakam) that dominated Kerala stage during that time. These dramas were mere musical concerts and hardly bothered about the quality of acting or dialogue. They used colourful costumes and spectacular settings to create a world of fantasy. Contemporary reality never penetrated into it (Sankarapillai 38). In his translation of The Taming of the Shrew titled Kalahinidamanakam, Kandathil Varghese Mappilai satirises the pompous style of these musical plays. In the opening scene, he ridicules the Tamil musical plays of his times. The play presents a landlord who is a great admirer of musical play. He has brought a renowned Tamil musician for performance. The name of the theatre group is “Kusala Kolahala Leela Vilasini Sabha”. Here the word “kolahala” means ‘chaos’ and “leela” means ‘play’. This ridicules the convention of providing high sounding names that signify nothing. The name also suggests the crude nature of dramatic performances that prevailed in the late nineteenth century Kerala (Ramakrishnan 78).

These Shakespearean translations also critiqued the Malayalam translations of Sanskrit plays, which were widely staged during that time. These were presented in highly Sanskritised Malayalam. Their theme looked backward to old legends and the verse dialogues were remote from living speech. But the early nineteenth century translations of Shakespearean plays employed simple colloquial prose as their medium. This marked a shift from the dominant Sanskritised, poetry-centred literary tradition to simple colloquial prose. Through these translations, the everyday speech of the lower classes made its appearance into the literary realm. Thus “the conflict between Sanskritised Malayalam and varieties of everyday speech that we encounter in these Shakespeare translations reflect the prevailing social conflict between the feudal elite and the lower castes” (Ramakrishnan 79).

Thus translation of Shakespearean plays brought in another mode of theatre which was closer to social realism. These plays differ notably from existing kinds of theatre prevalent in the first decades of the 18th century. During that time performances used highly Sanskritised language and were part of temple rituals. But the Shakespearean translations with their realist themes and colloquial language prepared the community of readers for a shift in sensibility. Obviously, Malayalam had no prior models for this kind of writing when Umman Philipose attempted his translation of Shakespeare’s Comedy of Errors under the title Aalmarattam (1866).
These translations dismissed the oppositional content of the alien aesthetics by absorbing and transforming the foreign according to their needs. Haroldo de Compos’ notion of Cannibalistic mode of literary transfer becomes relevant here. Cannibalistic mode of literary transfer refers to the custom of the Tupinamba Indians of Brazil, of eating their conquered enemies in order to absorb their strength. It was seen as a nourishing act in which the positive values of the brave, defeated soldier would be absorbed and become part of the future physical and mental identity of the victorious community (Vieira 82). It symbolises simultaneous reverence and irreverence. On the one hand, it is an act of honour and nourishment. Only the bravest and most virtuous soldiers were devoured. On the other, it destabilizes the dualities of civilization/ barbarism, original/ derivative propagated by colonialism. Here the “weaker” or “peripheral” Malayalam culture is devouring the stronger and bigger Shakespeare tradition and thereby acquires its strength. Their very project is not to deny foreign influences or nourishments, but to absorb and transform them by the addition of indigenous input. In a way, Malayalam could be seen as devouring Shakespeare and incorporating the native culture into the discourse of the translated text. These translations are not simple replications of a universal text, but rather they craft a text that will speak to specific readers in a particular receiving culture. Here, the translation process is creative, as much like original writing. It is a process of incorporating the positive elements from both European and native traditions but at the same time questioning “originality”, “timelessness” and “universality” accorded to the European sources. They are taken not as a receptacle of European culture and ideas, but as a form of resistance and a deliberate act of absorbing and recreating the best European works. Such acts have helped Kerala to forge its own independent literary identity.

This cannibalistic mode of literary transfer serves as a metaphor for the active process of translation. Here, translation is no more a slavish reiteration of the ideas and forms of the source texts but a creative participation in the making of a translated text. Malayalam’s cannibalistic mode of literary transfer signified an end to imitation, and offered an alternative to the excessive influence of European culture. It marked the end of mental colonization and the beginning of an independent identity.

These translations created an imaginative community by targeting a particular audience, generalizing and addressing their issues. This worked towards the creation of an imaginative community. As Anderson in his work *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* said, this created in the minds of each man “the image of their communion” (6) that share the same aspirations. The imagined alliance among the people of this imagined community was so strong that regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail, they conceived themselves as one. This collective spirit might have played a remarkable role in the creation of a new provincial state, Kerala, in 1956.

*Othello* adaptations enjoyed great prominence in Malayalam as they contextualised Shakespeare within a specific location in Kerala. These Malayalam appropriations with their alterations were rather more problematic and complicated than the literary translations as they incorporate several debates on contemporary issues. Despite being adaptation, they demonstrate mediations of social, cultural, linguistic, class, caste and gendered differences in the time of their creation. These
renderings complicate the postcolonial reading of *Othello* as they deal with present-day issues of caste and communal politics. According to Poonam Trivedi, this transposition of *Othello* into caste and communal politics and discrimination is more valid in Indian society, and form a more apt equivalent of Othello’s blackness than an imported notion of race, which remains largely a Western postcolonial dilemma (187). These colonial translations can be viewed ambivalently as potential agents of social reform. Here the author, as translator, is responding to the needs of a living culture and the original becomes a mere pretext that is pluralised within the target culture.

The second phase, postcolonial period, ranging between 1950s-1980s saw the rise of a new type of translation. If the earlier generations were motivated by the desire to enrich Malayalam by appropriating the universally acknowledged dramatic genius of Shakespeare, the new generation was guided by the idea of literal translation. The translators of this period believed that a wider world view and exposure to life in other cultures were necessary to modernise our thinking. The mode they adopted for this purpose was literal transfer, limiting the interference of indigenous culture to the minimum. They rejected the earlier models of adaptation and refused to make changes in the names, the places, the periods and the atmosphere of the original plays. Their aim was to be close enough to Shakespeare without moving too far away from the Malayali reader. Menon’s *Abdolla* (1965), which straddles the first and second phase, is an exception for this as this theatrical adaptation addresses Hindu-Muslim religious conflict, a major problem that postcolonial India faced. Transposition of *Othello* into the contemporary communal politics and the politics of discrimination brings to light several pernicious elements present in the postcolonial Indian society. The play shows how the idea of Indian nationalism is a double-headed discourse split between a secular liberalism and supremacist dogmatism.

Early Malayalam translators of *Othello* appropriated the play into Malayalam since their primary concern was to enrich the language and literature, while translations which appeared after 1960s comparatively used more borrowed English words. This is seen evidently in *Othello* (1966) and *Othello* (1983), but at two different levels. *Othello* (1966) transliterates several English words and use them frequently in the play. For instance, English words like city (1), lieutenant (1), officer (2), promotion (2), seniority (2), sergeant major (2) light (7), duty (9), dozen (12), purse (33), captain (38), council (43), dance (52), good night, rascal (60), dismiss (73), lodge (73), mistress (73), school (80), dinner (82), blouse (153), paper (183), pocket (183), government (184), portico (188) and so on. Here, the English words were subjected to the grammatical features of Malayalam language. V. N. Pillai (1966) borrowed many content words from English and attached Malayalam functional words to them. These affixes determine the syntactic category indicating number, case, and gender. A few examples include

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>V. N. Pillai (1966)</th>
<th>Category</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>siṟṟjyil(4) (in the city)</td>
<td>(in + the city) Noun + Preposition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dụ̄ṭṭiuulla (9) (on duty)</td>
<td>(on + duty) Verb+ Preposition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kaunsilarr+ mār (12)</td>
<td>(counciler+s)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Othello (1983), on the other hand, retains English words in English alphabets within the translated text. Words like “personal assistant” (20), “good night” (20), and “good bye” (20) appear in the translation with English alphabets. Several reasons could be attributed to this. Because of the long association with English, a large number of words from English have been borrowed and assimilated into Malayalam. Although Malayalam words denoting the same meaning also exist, the translators retained the English words as such because they are more common in usage.

The translations which appeared in the third phase could be termed as ‘dictionary translations’. If the second generation translators excessively borrowed English words and used it in their translations, the translations of the third phase faithfully follow even the syntactical structure of the source language. P. K. Nair (2000) reproduces not only the story but also the syntax of its English original. This illustrates the shift in audience sensibility over a period in the Malayali society. A number of reasons could be attributed to this change. The advances in science, technology, international trade and commerce have drawn all nations together, shrinking distances. This has considerably affected lives of people, their culture and their language. As a result globalised people developed a deep interest in familiarising themselves with other cultures. It also contributed in a more effective way towards understanding the source language and culture. These translations refused to make changes to the names, places and atmosphere of the original. The dominant use of English language in business, media, information technology, and in every aspect of the globalised world has paved way for a linguistic colonialism that affected the mind-set of people. Translations produced in this period, using literal method, attempt to ‘foreignise’ the TT and the TL by fully incorporating the features of English syntax and diction. While this trend points to the growth in the acceptability of English, whether it leads to a consequent dilution of the strength of the local languages, or enhancing it is something that needs further study.

Othello (2000) is a typical example for this. The translation is too faithful that at some points, it retains the English syntax with SVO pattern which is remarkably different from the SOV pattern of Malayalam (Meyer 38). At several places, this too literal character makes the passages yield little sense. For instance, in I.iii.123, “the vices of my blood” means my sinful desires. Venukuttan Nair translates it plainly as “enre raktattinre durguṇañnal” (672). Another instance is in V.ii.139 where Iago says, “Cassio did top her”. Nair’s translation that insists on rendering this line literally as “conjūvavāḷuṇṭattukayar” (750) violates the meaning to preserve a formal grammatical correspondence. At other places, the translation seems to even imitate the syntactic order of the original, as in the translation of II. i. 679,

II. i. 679  Great  Jove,  Othello  Guard.
(P. K. Nair 679)  mahañāya,  jōv  otellōye  kaḵkanē.

In many other occasions, the structure of sentences is too English to provide smooth reading.
Examples are,

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Shakespeare</th>
<th>Venukuttan Nair</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Here comes Brabantio and the valiant Moor (I.iii.47)</td>
<td>itā varunnu brabāṇṛyōyum vīraṇāya kāppirīyum (667).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do ye triumph, Roman? Do you triumph? (IV. i. 117)</td>
<td>nī jayam ghōśikkunnō, rōmakkaṛā? nī jayam ghōśikkunnō? (723)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thou dost belie her (V.ii.136)</td>
<td>ninnāl kaḷḷamparayukayānī avarepparṇi (750)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am maym’d for euer: Helpe hoa: Murther, murther (V.i.27).</td>
<td>nān ennennēkkumāyi muṭantanaṅkkappeṭē! hēy... sahāyikkanē... kolapāṭakam... kolapāṭakam (742)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>making the beast with two backs (I.i.113)</td>
<td>iraṭṭamutukan jantuvine uṣṭākkunn (660)</td>
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</table>

During the colonial period, English domination in the political sphere prompted Malayalies to hold on tightly to their local identities. With the encroachment of globalisation, English language which was once seen as an imperialist and homogenizing force detrimental to the world’s cultural diversity is now seen as a language of influence and strength.

The co-existence of twelve different versions of the same source text shows that they are not mere linguistic practices. These translations vary in their vocabulary, texture, degree of resemblance, language variety, and aesthetic effect. This shows how source text and its translations are products of historically specific moments and therefore influenced by several extra-linguistic factors of social, political or cultural kind.

**Works Cited**


Inevitability of Translation in Incredible India

Dipanwita Mandal

India constitutes one of the most fertile and intriguing spaces for the study of translation owing to the co-existence of different languages and linguistic registers. My paper besides dealing with the history, nature, prospect and importance of translation in a multilingual country like India, also touches upon other issues like the inception and reception of translation in pre-colonial and postcolonial India, translation as industry, prospect of machine translation, need for proper theorization of translation in India and the endeavors taken up by national organizations to promote and sustain quality translation projects among the myriad of Indian Bhasha-s in order to expand the scope of Indian Bhasha Literatures.

[Key words: Bhasha, translation, transcreation, rupantar, discourse, multilingualism, theorization]

“Every text is a unique and, at the same time, it is the translation of another text. No text is entirely original because language itself in its essence is already a translation: firstly, of the non-verbal world and secondly, since every sign and every phrase is the translation of another sign and another phrase. However, this argument can be turned around without losing any of its validity: all texts are original because every translation is distinctive. Every translation, up to a certain point, is an invention and as such it constitutes a unique text.”

(Paz 152)

Translation is one of the fundamental activities of mankind. Besides, every action which we do is instigated by the need of doing it and our brain sends the stimulus to our body organs to have it done. This system of transformation of the stimulus into action can also be regarded as a type of translation. Therefore the most basic function of the human body is also linked with the very idea of translation. The very evolution of language is the product of years of efforts of translating man’s thoughts. The act of translation from one language to another is therefore nothing but a continuation or extension of this fundamental activity. That is perhaps why translation is posited as an all-pervasive act by Roman Jakobson. He classifies translation into three categories in his “On Linguistic Aspects Of Translation” (1959) - intralingual where translation occurs within the same language using synonyms or alternative words, interlingual where translation occurs between two different languages, and intersemiotic where translation takes place between two different sign systems. Translation at the most basic level is a replacement of a text in a Source Language (SL) by an equivalent text in a Target Language (TL), so that such a text fulfills a function in TL equivalent to its function in SL or it can function as a cross-cultural event in TL as an act of communication across cultural barriers. Traditionally the act of translation centered round the never-ending debate between faithfulness and readability but now it has gone far beyond the mere constrains of the dilemma between fidelity and readability. It is not only a system of words and languages but a much more vital component governing graver issues.
The term ‘translation’ has various implications including alteration, change, conversion, interpretation, paraphrase, rendering, rephrasing, rewording, transcription, transformation and transliteration but in the Indian context it is also referred to as *rupantar* (change in form) which indicates a transformation from one *rup* (form) to another. India being no stranger to translation; translation activity in India dates back to ancient times. It may be a matter of conjecture, argument and debate whether or not such activity as it was practiced here was in harmony with what the Western world understood as ‘translation’; but it cannot be denied that a number of texts, both oral and written have been transmitted among and between multiple languages in India since ancient times – something that makes the comparative approach so relevant to the study of the literary and cultural matrices of India. Thus it is through translation that the Sanskrit epics and Puranas of medieval Bengal attained the ‘classic’ status. Translation in the concept of pre-colonial India was probably not as deeply concerned with fidelity as the Western world traditionally was; in fact the poets recreated the original text in their own language according to their individual understanding, the perceived needs of a new audience and notions of creative license. This was a kind of translation that P. Lal might have called “transcreation.” This idea of ‘transcreation’ is a special feature as far as translation in India is concerned. The quantum of creative license taken by the translator has traditionally been substantial in comparison to Western theories and practices of translation. This is a trend that has been understood to have been reversed after colonial contact.

The English language which is a legacy from the British, influenced the Indian literary scene in two ways – on one hand it provided a medium of expression in the form of Indian writing in English and on the other hand it emerged as a medium for exploring the past as well as the present at a wider level through Indo English. There cannot be a better canvas to discuss the role translation plays in the postcolonial context than a multilingual and pluralistic country like India. It is a nation with ethnic and cultural diversity and has a substantial population speaking more than one language.

During the colonial period English was essentially the language of administration. The English realized that in order to establish a sustained rule over the country it was necessary to reach out to the people and their cultural heritage which was only possible through translation. That is because India, even though a multilingual nation, shares a common heritage. The masses, largely illiterate and immersed in oral culture, did not have to travel further beyond the confines of their own language; there were indigenous versions of the great epics in almost all major languages. Literate people sought to look at other languages more through the filter language English. No initiative was however taken by the British to promote translation activity among the Indian languages since this was the ingredient of the basic postulate of their political process of ‘divide and rule’. Translation into the vernacular was a fundamental component of the campaign to popularize science. Numerous European textbooks were translated into Sanskrit, Bangla and other local languages. The postcolonial scene brought a new dimension to the language and translation activities altogether. Besides during the colonial rule the Christian missionaries also translated a whole lot of books into the regional languages in order to disseminate the religious thoughts. Those translations were never based on any set trajectory or theory but were mostly driven by the political issues.
Translation is at the very core of India’s consciousness. Pre-colonial India witnessed translation of literary works within the different regional languages but with the advent of the British the TL changed into English. With the growing power of English as the official language, translations within the regional languages began to be viewed as fashionable. According to G.N Devy the basic idea behind such an indiscriminate translation activity was that more translation from English will strengthen Indian languages.

Sisir Kumar Das in his *A History of Indian Literature 1911-1956: Struggle for Freedom: Triumph and Tragedy* writes:

“The magnitude and frequency of translations from Sanskrit into different Indian languages came as a surprise to any student of Indian literature in view of the dominance of Western literary canons and models. This phenomenon may be partly explained by a scholarly strategy towards the dissemination of Brahmanical learning and Indian classical heritage and partly as the assertion of the indigenous literary tradition against rapid Westernization. The split in taste and literary sensibility within the Indian readership that began with the exposure to West as partly reflected in the translation activity. In most of the cases the translations from Sanskrit were done by traditional scholars without any acquaintance with Western literatures and sometimes even with the stream of Indian literatures emerging under Western influence. Critical authors on Sanskrit authors and texts in different Indian languages were conspicuously different from the dominant literary taste and temper of the time. Rabindranath’s *Pracin Sahitya* is perhaps the only seminal work on Sanskrit by a modern poet who had responded with English literature with fervor and joy. The translators in most of the Indian languages were not creative writers themselves; the quality of their translations was never very high. But these translations acted as a chain through which the literature the past maintained its link with the present.”

(Das 48)

One presupposition in contemporary Translation Studies in the West is that the writer and the translator are the two separate entities (except in the case of self-translation). This assumption is challenged in part in the Indian experience, for instance, where the Indian translators are replaced to some extent by writers working in several languages and where at least up until the nineteenth century, it was possible to assume that readers themselves knew more than one language and did not always need translations to access texts outside their linguistic communities. India moved with a multi-lingual structure, not necessarily thinking of these languages as different languages but rather as different registers of the same language, each with a specific task.

In the introduction to *Mapping Indian Traditions in Translation: Concepts, Categories and Contestations*, E.V Ramakrishnan points out:
“The hegemonic role that English has played had further complicated the relationships between Indian languages, effectively sealing off a domain of interactive, subliminal relationships and creative dialogues that made large scale discrimination of myths, metaphors and discourses possible earlier. Indian literary history is a maze of meandering texts which reincarnate themselves in several versions and forms of retellings. Western theorizations and models of translation are inadequate to grasp or explain their manners of enunciation, circulation and reception. As we move backward in time, Indian literary history gets entangled in the history of translation which becomes part of a network of religious and political transaction. Translations, thus, are deeply implicated in the history of social and political formations as well as in narratives of identity. During the colonial period translation becomes the site where the politics of domination and subversion, assertion and resistance gets played out. We need a new paradigm of Translation Studies, a new way of looking at translation as an act to understand this complex network of textual and cultural relationships. With colonization we enter a phase where translation itself needs to be conceptualized differently. Both Orientalists and Anglicists wanted to translate India into their respective languages to reinvent it after their own models. Colonialism was a colossal project of translation where human beings and not texts became the object of translation.”

(Ramakrishnan viii)

He further says:

“In the pre-colonial Indian literary culture, translation signifies a creative appropriation of texts as part of socio-political negotiations, cultural assimilation and subversions. The translations celebrate the plurality of meanings inherent in the original and test the expressivity of the TL by stretching the metaphorical resources of the language to the limit. We need to evolve new perspectives and paradigms to describe these complex cultural and linguistic processes.”

(Ramakrishnan viii)

Given the Indian context where each educated person is at least bilingual, translation of a vast body of Bhasha Literatures into English or within the Bhashas themselves includes two types of readership. One is the group who not being equipped with the TL would read a translated text for the sake of reading it or for pleasure or even for the sake of love for the SL author. Another enthusiastic group includes the ones who (mostly) knowing both the SL and the TL would read both the SLT and the TLT and would compare their viabilities for pure academic purposes. But latter group of readers is limited and that is not very unnatural too. As Sujit Mukherjee rightly points out,
“In some rare instance, a usually persistent reader can even compare two translations of a text he cannot read in the original and make up for what one version may have denied him.”

(Mukherjee 68)

Multilingual India constitutes one of the most fertile spaces for translation, yet it is an irony that so much of Indian academic discourse on translation centers round theoretical debates originating from Western academic spaces. So much of it is silent on Indian theoretical positions on translations that one cannot help wondering if India has not theorized the act of translation in the myriad Indian languages. Is theory the sole preserve of the ‘West’? Do all Indian contributions merely constitute just a derivative discourse, adding up to little more than annotations to Western theories of translation? Or, is this ‘absence’, this ‘lacuna’ the result of a culture of deafness that refuses to acknowledge the presence of alternative discourses, discourses that challenge, or perhaps refuse to fit into the paradigm of, hegemonic discourses of translation theory? A culture of deafness that may be organic to Western stereotypical perceptions of the Orient, but also one that some of us have internalized and keep reproducing in our theoretical writings on translation? Can this also be a consequence of our collective failure to identify and disseminate theoretical positions enunciated in the languages through translation?

Many writers in different languages have put forward their works of translation and their views on translation theory. A translator’s view of translation, his/her experience with, or purpose of, or success in translating the text also throws some light on positions on translation. Different writers have different points of view and depending upon that their idea of translation is shaped, as translation is an art which is heavily dependent upon the perspective of the translator.

The theoretical positions of writers and translators in say Bangla and Hindi and also other Bhashas are by and large yet to be anthologized, let alone translated. These positions have the potential to offer material for fruitful investigation and analysis, the researcher feels. One expects exciting grounds of similarity and contiguity to crop up in these investigations. Yet, while it is important to note these areas of intersections, it is also imperative for us to go beyond it and historicize it in order to understand these practices in their proper contexts. That is something my thesis would attempt to do. In doing so, I shall focus on the Indian social, political and historical trajectories, but not at the cost of glossing over foreign impact. Particularly in the post-contact era, it is probably naïve to imagine the possibility of arriving at any ‘pure’ indigenous body of translation theory—what is perhaps more feasible and productive is perhaps to locate these key theoretical texts at the interstices of foreign and indigenous influences and of historical, social and political conjunctures.

In today’s world the worth or success of anything is often judged in terms of business or gain. In a highly populated country like India there are plenty of business opportunities among the various states having different languages. Therefore India being the best site for translation owing to its multilingualism also provides a prosperous platform for business. Translation in India is an important service sector which invites millions of income to the country. The language market in India has expanded in the late nineties especially due to the
innovation in communication technologies both on and offline. The way science and technology are increasing it can be said that machine translation will rule the world in near future. Translation is such an activity that involves directly or indirectly all the major necessities of human existence. Apart from literary translation, translation of different legal documents, text books, manuals, even subtitles of films, commercials, voice-overs, speeches, etc need translation in this tech-savvy world of today. One of the important initiatives taken by the Central Institute of Indian Languages, Mysore is the translation of knowledge texts of different Bhashas within the Indian regional languages which include the 22 official languages mentioned in the Eighth Schedule of the Indian Constitution. The target is to acquaint the new generation of readers with their mother tongues even in their text books instead of struggling to understand English. Though there is a usual tendency to adhere to the legacy of the English language, it is a truth acknowledged by most rural students or readers that they understand things better in their respective mother tongues compared to English. Therefore such a step by CIIL somehow helps in integrating the solidarity of the Indian Bhashas. The other undeniable contributions to the development of Bhasha Literatures and translations among the Bhashas are Sahitya Akademi, India’s National Academy of Letters and National Book Trust, India whose central focus have been publication and promotion of literary activities in 24 Indian languages, including English along with promoting good taste and healthy reading habits, keeping alive the intimate dialogue among the various linguistic and literary zones and groups through seminars, lectures, symposia, discussions, readings and performances, increasing the pace of mutual translations through workshops and individual assignments and developing a serious literary culture through the publications of journals, monographs, individual creative works of every genre, anthologies, encyclopedias, dictionaries, bibliographies, who’s who of writers and histories of literature. Therefore what emerges out from all these discussions is that translation functions as a connecting thread among the myriad of Indian Bhashas and therefore plays an irrefutable role in maintaining the national integrity.

Translation has a significant role to play in a multi-lingual and multi-cultural country like India. The host of different languages has given birth to various literatures and their study is only possible through translation because none of us are equipped with the knowledge of all the languages. In a country where there are 22 official languages and many more dialects, translation becomes the only powerful tool through which say a Bengali reader can taste the literary talents of a Malayali author or a enthusiastic Kashmiri reader can satisfy his/ her desire to read an Oriya text. The authoritative power that the English language exercises even in today’s postcolonial situation owing to its institutionalization, it is assumed, much to our surprise that, it is much more mandatory, important and moreover fashionable to know English rather than other regional languages of the country. But the time has arrived to get out of our clichéd colonial hangover and take up serious and effective steps to promote our Bhasha literatures by making them part of the literary canon and build up real healthy indigenous body of Bhasha Literatures. Therefore translation plays an undeniable role in the study of literatures especially in the Indian context.
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The theory of Rasa is well known Indian theory applied to all forms of Indian Art and Literature. The term rasa connotes ‘taste or flavor’ but in the context of Indian literature and Criticism it is defined as aesthetic pleasure. The term Rasa has its root in the Vedic period; in the 2nd century B.C Bharat Muni elaborated the concept of theory of Rasa in his ‘Natyashastra’ and explained the sources and types of Rasa. In cooking and medicine there are six tastes whereas in Art and literature there are nine Rasa. As a fine blending of all spices and ingredients in a cooked dish effuse aroma and create a taste, similarly amalgamation of Bhava (the state of mind) evokes ananda (joy). The theory of Rasa is built around the concept of bhava (a state of mind). A work of art/ literature appeals to human emotions; it evokes certain state of mind and evocation of emotions leads to joy (rasa).

The present research paper attempts to apply the theory of Rasa on Jhaverchand Meghani’s folk tales. Jhaverchand Meghani (1896-1947) pioneered Folk literature of Gujarat. His Folk tales give glimpses of vibrant and kaleidoscopic Gujarati culture.

The Rasa theory has been accepted as the core literary theory applied to many forms of Indian art including dance, music, musical theatre, cinema and literature. The term rasa was derived from Vedic hymns. In the second century B.C Bharat Muni propounded the theory of rasa in his Sanskrit text of literary theory titled as Natyasastra (natya meaning “drama” and shastra meaning “science of”). The sixth and seventh chapters of Natyasastra contain scientific analysis of rasas and interpretation of their associated bhavas (the state of mind). Bharata Muni opined that the object or meaning that is sought to be conveyed in literary compositions is in the nature of an emotional effect of diverse human experience on man’s mind and heart. In Sanskrit the root word of Rasa is ‘rasah’ which primarily means essence, juice, taste, flavor or relish but metaphorically it means the emotional experience of beauty in any work belonging to Art and literature. As there are six tastes (rasa) – sweet, salty, sour, bitter, and tangy and astrangement-in cooking and medicine; similarly there are eight rasa in natya, literature of representation. The ninth one is sata rasa (tranquil) which was added afterward by Anandavardhana. Every work of Art and Literature aims at evoking a particular kind of rasa (aesthetic experience) in the minds of Saharadiya. Sahradya is the Indian term used for readers, viewers, audience, participant or hearer. ‘A sahrdaya has the competence analogous to that of the poet/composer to see, to hear, to feel, to participate, and to experience’ (Kapoor 44).

Rasa has no equivalent in word hitherto known to us. The closest explanation of rasa can be ‘aesthetic relish’. According to Bharata Muni, Natya is the imitation of life (lokanukriti) wherein the various human emotions have to be dramatically glorified (bhavanukirtanam) so that the spectator is able to flavor the portrayed pleasure and pain (lokashya sukhadukha) as Natyaraasa. This Rasa experience will entertain and enlightens the spectator who hence becomes the Rasika (Connoisseur). Bharata discusses the whole range of emotions in terms of cause and their effect on man’s being. Thus the theory of Rasa is strongly rooted in the empirical human reality. This literary experience is also termed as rasa- bhava experience because rasa is generated by evocation of bhavas. The rasa theory is not only the theory of aesthetics; it is also a structural analysis of the totality of human experience and behavior. The bhavas spring from an interaction of persons.
and events and response or knowledge of bhava is rasa which is explained as Rasabodha (jñāna / the knowledge). This whole process of experiencing bhavas and realization or knowledge of emotions is defined as rasanubhuti (the final effect or knowledge about the state of mind) which consequences into ananda. So what constitutes the knowledge of a Kavya is of understanding the bhava and the experience of rasa.

Kavya (this term is applied to any form of art and literature) has been called the fifth Veda, a discourse of knowledge. In kavya, knowledge is constituted and communicated in a manner different from the sastras. In Kavya knowledge is imbued with rasa and therefore pleasurable. In Indian literature, the purpose of kavya is to create ananda (a tranquil pleasure); but ananda does not mean “laughter” or gross pleasure – for ananda arises from a narrative deep grief as well. Ananda is that type of pleasure which comes from acquiring knowledge of human experience. Here ‘knowledge’ connotes impressions or emotional experience, for example take the story of Chekov - of the old cab driver who is so happy that his son has now become young and has started driving the cab, and he in his old age can sit back and rest but sudden death of his son evokes grief. He wants to unburden his sorrow by sharing his grief with other cab drivers and passengers. As no one pays heed to him, finally the cab driver relieves himself by telling his story of suffering to his horse. Now one may feel compassion on reading this story. Here, to understand the story does not mean to grasp its meaning but to experience deep grief that affects old man. Here the condition of an old cab driver evokes Soka bhava (the state of sorrow) and produces the knowledge/feeling of Compassion i.e (Karuna rasa).

The debate on the theory of art experience rests on non opposition between ‘emotion’ and ‘reason’, between the feeling self and the reasoning self was also prevalent in Western Criticism. Plato set a trend to extol reason at the expense of emotions whereas Aristole defended emotions. In his Theory of Poetry and Fine Art Aristole stated that, ‘Tragedy, then, is an imitation of an action ..... aims at effecting the proper purgation of these emotions.’ (Poetics, pg 23)Aristotle also underlined on ‘effect’ which in the context of Indian theories translated as (rasa) and ‘emotion’ (bhava/ a state of mind). He mentioned that evocation of human emotions through any literary composition exerts pleasurable effect on a mind of human being which is the ultimate goal of Poetry. According to Longinus the aim of literature is ‘Sublimity’ means to give eternal joy by elevating emotions. Thus it is very clear that art aims at creating joy (ananda) by affecting emotions. Thus as per Indian as well as Western theories of art and literature, the states of mind or emotional states (bhavas) constitute the core aesthetic experience. Art creates and communicates these dominant emotional states and the reader/ viewer/ audience experiences (rasa) these states of mind. The experience or effect of these dominant emotional states evoked by any piece of art or literature is termed as rasa (joy/ an aesthetic experience). The theory of rasa- bhava emphasizes on emotions but do not overlook reason because bhava is not in opposition to intellection but a stage in total intellection. The evocation and communication of a state of mind is judged successful if the art/literary composition moves the reader/hearer and affects him deeply, in that case the work of art is beautiful. In short ‘If the art/ literary composition succeed in giving enjoyment by evoking some state (s) of mind, then the work is aesthetically satisfactory.’ (Kapoor 96)
Bharata has laid down in Natyasastra: *nahi rasadre kascidartha pravartate*, i.e., without *rasa*, no meaning gets established. *Rasa* is the first of the eleven elements in literary representation namely, *Rasa* (aesthetic experience), *bhava* (emotional states), *abhinaya* (acting), *dharmi* (actors), *vrtti* (mode), *pravrtti* (local modes of appearance), *siddhi* (accomplishment, good effect), *savara* (tones, notes), *atyodha* (musical instruments), *gana* (song), *ranga* (colour).’ (Kapoor 104). Abhinavagupta in his comment on *Natyasastra* mentioned that Rasa is the first or primary element because:

- It is *rasa* that illumines the meaning of *Kavya*
- In the the absence of *rasa*, the purpose of the composition in the form of knowledge is not fulfilled
- It is *rasa* that creates *ananda* in the viewer/ participants/ reader.

Rasa is the basic but it is generated by *bhavas*. ‘*Rasa-bhava*’ is hyphenated as the two constitute a continuum in the rasa theory. It is claimed that bhava evokes *rasa* and *rasa* cannot come into existence without the *bhava*. Bhava is derived from the root word ‘*bhu*’ *bhavati*, that is, ‘to become’, ‘to come into existence’. Defining *bhava* Kapoor Kapil writes: ‘*bhava* means an instrument of being. It may be broadly translated as states of mind or emotional conditions or even emotional consequence of experience.’ (Kapoor 106). He further states that *bhava* is a feeling or sentiment. Bhava means the emotional or psychic states which a poem deals with. It is the bhava which evokes rasa. Bhava is also defined as “*vikaro manaso*” which means a constant change in the native state of mind. So a man during his life time experiences number of bhavas. The rasa theory is built around the concept of *bhava*. Bharat Muni enlisted *forty nine bhavas* reffering to wide range of human experience. *Bhavas* are categoried as *Vibhava, Sthayibhava, Sancaribhava, anubhava* and *Sattvikbhava*.

1. **Vibhava**

   Vibhava means *karan / Hetu* (reason). Vibhava is the objective condition producing an emotion. Vibhava are of two kinds:-

   a. *Alambana* (experience) – *Alambana* means a person or persons with reference to whom the emotion is manifested. *Alambana* is further subdivided into:-
      - *Visaya* (event)
      - *Asraya* (experience)

   b. *Uddipana* (context) – It means the circumstances that excite emotions for an example- Dushiyant and Shakuntala mutually represent the *alambanabhava* and the scenic beauty of the forest and fragrance of the flowers represent *uddipanabhava* as it excite an emotion of love.

2. **Anubhav**

   The outward manifestations brought forth as a result of the *Vibhavas* which are known as the Anubhavas. These are divisible into:

   - *Angika* - Body movements
3. Sthayibhava

Relatively stable human experiences are termed as sthayibhava. According to Bharatmuni there are nine sthayibhava. As they are corresponding to nine rasa they are enlisted along with the nine rasa. They are called sthaya (stable) because:

- a. springing from stronger causes, they tend to endure longer,
- b. almost everyone experiences them,
- c. They are more frequent, are experienced again and again. They are more powerful and more basic.

Sthayibhavas are inborn qualities; they exist permanently in the mind of every human being in the form of vasana (latent impressions). Vasana are always avchetana (in an unconscious state). When vasana comes from avchetana (from unconsciousness) to chetna (consciousness) it becomes Sthayibhava. Certain bhavas are sthaya and they exist in the mind of everyone in more or less degree for example the urge to seek pleasure lurks in everyone and it evokes Srngara rasa. Another sthaya emotional state is to laugh at others which create hasya rasa. The third emotional state is the suffering on being seperated from the loved ones which indicates Soka. On the account of seperation one gets angry which evokes Krodha. The emotional state of helplessness evokes bhaya. Another permanent emotional state is the desire to achieve something which indicates utsaha. Dislike for improper things indicate juguptsa. Another emotional state is the surprise at unexpected deeds of self and others which indicates vismaya. The desire to give up or renounce evokes Santa rasa. No human being is born without these emotions, the only difference is that some have more of one and some have less. Rasa is the consequence of the experience of these emotional states. Nine Sthayibhavas corresponding to nine Rasas as listed in Natyasastra are stated below:

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<tr>
<th>Sthayibhava</th>
<th>Rasa corresponding to sthayibhava</th>
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...
1. **Rati** (love)
2. **Hasya** (comic)
3. **Soka** (sorrow)
4. **Krodha** (anger)
5. **Utasha** (enthusiasm)
6. **Bhaya** (fear)
7. **Juguptsa** (disgust)
8. **Vismaya** (astonishment)
9. **Nirveda** (renunciation /Indifference)

1. **Sringara** (erotic)
2. **Hasya** (comic)
3. **Karuna** (compassionate)
4. **Raudra** (wrathful, terribleness)
5. **Vira** (heroic)
6. **Bhayanaka** (terrifying)
7. **Bibhatsa** (odious)
8. **Adbutta** (marvelous)
9. **Santa** (tranquil)

### 4. Vyabhichari/ Sanchari

It is opposite to *Sthayibhava*. There are thirty three *vyabhichari bhavas*. They are mild, temporary and dependent but *Sthayibhava* cannot be expressed in poetry without depicting these moods. The thirty three sanchari or *vyabhichari bhavas* are:

- **Nirveda** (indifference)
- **Glani** (debility)
- **sanka** (apprehension)
- **Asuya** (envy)
- **Mada** (intoxication of pride)
- **Srama** (weariness)
- **Alayasa** (indolence)
- **Dainya** (depression)
- **Moha** (delusion of mind)
- **Smriti** (recollection)
- **Dhriti** (contentment)
- **Vrda** (shame)
- **Capalata** (unsteadiness)
- **Harsa** (joy)
- **Avega** (agitation/flurry)
- **Jadata** (stupefaction/immobility)
- **Garva** (arrogance)
- **Visada** (despondency)
- **Autsukya** (impatience)
- **Nidra** (sleep)
- **Apasmara** (dementedness)
- **Supta** (dreaming)
- **Vibodha** (awakening)
- **Amarsa** (animosity/indignation)
- **Avahittha** (constraint/dissimulation)
- **Ugrata** (ferocity)
- **Mati** (resolve)
- **Vyadhi** (sickness)
- **Unmada** (madness)
- **Marana** (demise)
- **Trasa** (alarm)
- **Vitarka** (trepidation)

To point out the difference between *Sthayibhava* and *Vyabhichari* Abhinav Gupta gives an analogy of *mala* (necklace). The beads of *mala* represent *Vyabhichari bhava* and the thread represents *Sthayibhava*. The *sthayi bhavas* are subtle so they are indirectly depicted with the help of *Vyabhichari bhavas*.

### 5. Sattvik bhava- It connotes inbuilt bodily responses. There are eight *sattvik bhavas*. They are as following:

- **a. Stambha** - paralysis
- **b. Sveda** - perspiration
- **c. Romanca** – horripilation
- **d. Svarabhanga** – change of voice
- **e. Vepathu** – trembling
- **f. Vaivarnya** – change of colour
Rasa is a constant aesthetic pleasure in all literature; a state or condition produced in the spectator or reader, a single feeling which is pleasurable. Aesthetic pleasure results with the interaction of sthayibhava (relatively permanent emotional moods), vibhava (substrate or ‘awakeners’ of the emotions and the exciting causes and the contextual factors) and, anubhava (external manifestations of the emotion) and Vyabhichari bhavas (the ancillary or accessory emotions) and Sattvikabhava (inbuilt body responses). The cognition of bhavas results into rasa. For Bharata, as the distinctive flavor or aroma emerges from a cooked dish due to the mixture of different ingredients used in the preparation of food in the same way rasa/flavour emerges from the combination of various emotional factors.

In words of Bharata-

Tatravibhavanubhavavyabhicarisamyogadarasanispatti

(Through co-mingling, co-appearance-samyoga-of vibhava, anubhava and sancaribhava, production of rasa take place)

Bharata had formed the hypothesis of rasa by keeping only the audience/spectators in mind. Bhatta Lottata further extended Bharat Muni’s dictum by pointing the effect of Rasa on actors. The major commentators on Rasa theory were Bhatta Lollata, Sankuka, Anandvardhana, Bhattayaka, Bhoja, Abhinavagupta, Saradatyana, Visvanatha and Jagannath. In Sanskrit literature various theories like Alankara (figures of speech), Riti (style), Dhvani (sound), Vakrokti (deviation or archedness in literary language), etc have been evolved but all these theories are means whereas Rasa has been considered as the end. Thus the rasa theory has been accepted as the underpinning literary theory by all major poeticians. In short, Rasa is not only the matter of knowing but it is also the matter of feeling. Rasa is the soul of poetry. It is the aesthetic experience. It is called chit vistara that lifts ordinary man from mundane world to experience sublimity. As rasa is the matter of experience, here in order to feel them they have been applied to Gujarati folk tales of Jhaverchand Meghani.

Jhaverchand Meghani (1896-1947), a Gujarati writer, poet, journalist, folklorist and sonorous singer of duha and chhand was the literary doyen in Gujarati literature during the Pre-independent era. The impact of Meghani’s writing on the minds of the young generation of Pre-Independent Era was so profound that Mahatma Gandhi, in 1935 felicitated Meghani with the title of Rashtriya Shayar (National poet) a poet manifesting nationalism. In the field of folklore the national bard Meghani carried out painstaking excavation of the folklore of Saurashtra. He journeyed by rail, rode horses and camels and trudged by foot to befriend bards, minstrels, streetsingers, story tellers, illiterate men and women who were the only source of folklore. He jotted down everything he found, songs, stories, ballads, odes, fables, legends, elegies; much of them were in disjointed and derelict state. Meghani contributed the following five anthologies of folk tales comprising 175 folktales:

- Saurashtra Ni Rasdhar
- Sorathi Baharvatiya
All the folktales penned by Meghani throb with human emotions and throb with life. As it is mentioned in the beginning of the article that parameter of success of art/literary composition depends on the aesthetic pleasure that it provides by evoking some states of mind. Dissection of Meghani’s folktales will reveal the prevalence of Rasa in the folktales.

In an anthology titled as, Raang Chhe Barot (1945) there is dominance of Vira rasa (heroic rasa). Rang Chhe Barot is a collection of fairy tales full of myths and fables. The explanation of fourteen skills, nine lineages of serpents in pithy language make it an illuminating work appreciated by children as well as by adults. In the three stories namely Vikram and Khapro, Vikram and Prabhat Chavdo and Parkaya Pravesh, the pivotal protagonist is the valiant King Vikram of Ujjain. All the three stories more or less delineate the saga of dauntless spirit, philanthropic attitude, benevolence, and exploring nature of highly intelligent, erudite, public spirited, good Samratian and an ideal king Vikram.

The story of Vikram and Prabhat Chavdo (Raang Chhe Barot) is governed by vira rasa and bhayanak rasa. Vikram went to Patan, where Prabhat Chavdo ruled. Prabhat Chavda looked pale and anemaic. Vikram asked Prabhat the cause of his bony and bloodless figure but Prabhat did not disclose his enigma. Vikram spied Prabhat to discover the reason of his weakness. Ghastly and alarming truth was disclosed that Prabhat had to go to one cellar where he was asked to sit in a cauldron of hot oil and four fairies used to fry and eat his body. Every time after eating Prabhat’s body fairies used to revive Prabhat by sprinkiling water on the ash of his fried body. Vikram resolved to distress Prabhat from this insurmountable torment. On the particular day of Prabhat’s turn Vikram himself went into the cellar and sat in the cauldron of hot oil. As usual, nymphs fried and ate his body and sprinkled water on ashes of fried body and Vikram regained life. On seeing Vikram instead of Prabhat, fairies were surprised to find another man. On knowing the fact, they got awed with Vikram’s adventurous spirit and benevolence. They asked Vikram to make a wish. Vikram wished libration of Prabhat from agony. From that day, Fairies emancipated Prabhat from woe. The tale is governed by vira rasa displayed by King Vikram’s undaunted spirit to undertake any type of risk, and this heroic spirit arouses nerve-wrecking fear -Bhayanaka rasa. One may shudder with the emotion of terror by reading the following lines:

“Har! Har! Har! Karto Prabhat Chavdo tel ni kadai ma besi gayo. Talai gayo. Chhar aapsara avi. Chare e Prabhat ni talel kaya no bhakhra kariyo, pacchi had bhega karine, mathe aanjali 6aati. Sajivan thai ne Prabhat pa60 valiyo. Aa ha ha ha! Aavu dukh!”

“Har! Har! Har! Har mahadev. On exclaiming, such Prabhat Chavda set into a cauldron of boiling oil. He got his body fried. Four nymphs came. All the four nymphs ate fried body of Vikram. They collected bones and sprinkled nectar on it. On getting life, Prabhat returned. Aa ha ha! This much torture! It is unbearable.”
Another sub tale of Vikram’s mission to save flower woman’s son underlines the (Vira) rasa. One night, Vikram did not stay at one flower woman’s home that gave him a warm welcome to Vikram but later on made a heart-wrenching cry. On being asked by Vikram she explained that a princess of that country had become a demon so she was captivated in Kalika temple. Every night she devoured one living human being so king set a turn of one member from each family to go and become a victim of a demon princess. On that night, it was a turn of her son. Vikram determined to represent flowerist’s son. There can be a proxy in any other matter but in death, one dare not to represent other; but here Vikram willingly took risk. As he went into the temple, he discovered Sinduriyo naag, which came out from Princess’s mouth, and it was the serpent, that was devouring every living being and not the princess. Vikram killed a serpent and not only gave new life to the princess but also emancipated the Princess from a stigma of a man-eater demon. Spasms of fear keep wrenching readers due to prevalent use of Bhayanaka rasa (terrifying) in the tale. Shuddering experience, which is intact in the tale, is obvious in the following evocative lines.

“Aadhraat thai te vakhtte unghti Rajkumari na mo ma kaik salvalat haliyo ane emathi kaik bhar nikaliyu.

Arrrr sap nu bhondu! Labrak llabrak jibh na labkara kare ne aam juve, tem juwe, chare kor juwe.

Nikaliyo, e nikaliyo, aardho nikaliyo, aakhoye bahar nikaliyo...........

O bap! Aa to Sinduriyo naag. Kardiya bhego j manas ne dhali de


At midnight, certain type of movement started into the mouth of a sleeping princess. Something came out of her mouth

Arrrrrr! A head of a snake! It was repeatedly pushing tongue outside the mouth. It was looking, here and there and everywhere.

It came out. First, half of its body came out. Later on full sized snake came out...

‘Oh my God! This is a sinduriyo naag’. Its single sting is enough to kill a person.


The story Bhai (vol.3 -Saurashtra Ni Rasdhar) builds the tone of Vira rasa (heroism) through the delineation of an out caste Jogda’s heroism. Jogda an untouchable wielded a sword to fight against foes to protect his Mityana village. The following accentuates the effect of vira rasa dominating the story:-

Aage chhelio uthto, peli uthiyo paant,
Bhupa ma padi bhrant, jaman abhdaviyu, jogda!

Hey, brother Jogda, you are an outcaste. In feast you get the last chance. But in the feast at the battle field you got the first chance. You died first. You unpurified meals of other great emperors; it means that you diminished their fame.

Vira rasa is also present in Sorathi Baharvatiya (1927) which is a collection of adventurous deeds of audacious outlaws. In the Oxford Dictionary, Outlaw is defined as ‘A person who has broken the law, especially one who remains at large or is a fugitive.’ In the words of Meghani the word baharvatiya / an outlaw is used for a person who by overlooking Royal Authority goes across the territory of the state. As they do not abide to laws; consequently they are deprived of protection provided by law. Inspite of their non obedient approach to law, Baharvatiyas have occupied attention because of their chivalric qualities, the spirit of generosity, optimistic and pleasant attitude against adversity.

Heroic qualities of Vikram depicted in the story Vikram and Vidhata from collection of Dadajee Ni Vato (1927) gives glimpses of Vira rasa (heroic). In the folktale Vikram and Vidhata, Vikram takes the challenge to prove wrong the prophecy made by Goddess Destiny. As per the story, once Vikram stayed at one Brahmin’s house. Brahmin woman had delivered a baby boy. The day on which Vikram made a stay was the sixth day of baby boy’s birth. At night the Goddess of Destiny came to inscribe destiny of a newly born boy. Every thing she wrote about his life was fair and fine but when she went to write about his age the pen slipped from her hand and it was written that a lion would attack him and he would meet premature death in the midst of his own marriage ceremony. Vikram took a challenge and fulfilled the challange by giving new life to the Brahmin boy by bringing Ami no Kupo (nectar) from subterrean region.

The feeling of terror i.e. the rasas of Bhayanaka (terrifying) / Bhaya (fear) persists in the story Vikram and Khapro from Raang Chhe Barot for example Rani Bhanmati sprinkled udad na dana on chest of Raja Vikram and chanted a mohni mantra:

Hatheli e hanumant
Bhaliye bhairav
Chalne chal bandhu
Bolne ki jibh bandhu
Mo bandhu
Bandhu nagar sara
......
........
Vachha chuke ubho suko
Pade dhup ke kandma
Jai khadi massan ma
Chalo mantra phatkat chuva.
Hanumant is in palm.
Bhairav is on a forehead.
I will hypnotise your movement.
I will hypnotise your tongue.
I will hypnotise your mouth.
I will hypnotise your city............
I can create city with the power of hypnotism.
May his communicative power paralyse.
Ash of incense may fall in the altar; and may its particles, reach to crematorium.
Let this formula of black magic work.

The folktale titled *Sihn nu Daan* from the anthology of *Saurashtra Nee Rasdhar* (vols. 1-5, 1923-1927) exudes *Vira* (heroic) rasa. Darbar Chachoji took a vow that whatever he had he would give happily to one who demands from him. Darbar of Halwad instigated Charan that to demand something that Chachoji would refuse to give and his vow may get violated. Charan asked Chachoji to give him a living lion. Chachoji caught one living lion from mountain of Chotila and gave to Charan. The whole story builds an ambience of valour.

Evaluation of above folktales related to bravery has revealed the prevelance of *vira* and *bhayanka* rasa. Rest of the rasa are dominant in Meghani’s other folktales related to love legends, fairy tales and vrat katha. In nut shell, *rasa* is relish or a joyful experience generated by blending of various *bhavas*. After reading this write up one may feel that the dissection of *rasa* is complicated but its absorption in aesthetic sense, is delightful and transcendental.

**GLOSSARY**

1. Chhand: A rhythmic poem
2. Duha: A heroic verse, usually a couplet containing four ictus. Compact, meaningful and full of ascending and descending rhymes, it is the most popular form of lyric in Saurashtra and Kuchchh regions. In variation they also contain three, four or six lines.
3. Khad...khad...khad: A Sound of laughter
4. Mohni mantra: One type of composition to hypnotise someone.
5. Saurashtra: A peninsula of hoary antiquity on the westernmost shores of India, presently knowns as the Saurashtra region of Gujarat. After the ninth century A.D, kathi clans migrated from sindh and kuchchh and occupied the peninsula so this region is also known as Kathiawaad.
6. Sorathi: Saurashtra
7. Sinduriyo Naag: Vermillion coloured poisonous serpent
8. Udad na dana: A kind of black coloured pulse used for necromantic purpose.
Works Cited


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The Ghost of Bhakti: Amar Chitra Katha and the Politics of the Cult

Debarghya Sanyal

God is the jewel,
His follower the jeweller
   Hawking him through the bazaar.
Only when the discriminating
Customer comes along
   Will the jewel ever sell.¹

….the instant the criterion of authenticity ceases to be applicable to artistic production, the total function of art is reversed. Instead of being based on ritual, it begins to be based on another practice – politics…ii

‘Jewel’, ‘bazaar’, ‘discriminating customer’, ‘sell’ – it’s interesting how Kabir’s God is a marketable object, and that too one of such high aesthetic quality. Tells us exactly why Walter Benjamin might find himself strangely conflicted in India. In a nation where ‘art as ritual’ was never discernible from ‘ritual as art’, the function of our devotion, constituted through a series of religio-cultural signifiers (festivals, rituals etc.) stands rooted, now more than ever, in a distinctly sensorial aesthetic of marketability. Our Bhakti³ today then becomes a function of the image of our gods. There is an acute sense of engagement with the visual signifier, and as we would go on to argue, this causes a ‘politics of presence’ to govern our perception of religio-cultural signifiers. But before that, we need to explore the very context within which the image(inition and identity of our gods – and Bhakti – stand today. What decides the very iconographic function which can be accepted as ‘marketable’? How and why does one relate to a particular function of images as representative of a ‘truth image’? How do we identify with this ‘truth image’?

First and foremost it becomes imperative to recognise how distinctly and unequivocally Hindu the Indian iconography has becomeiv. It is a product of the era between 1930s and late 1980s, when the climactic stages of India’s struggle for independence, post-independence concern for national integration and a late twentieth century project of ‘nation building’ churned out a function of signifiers which sought to create an ideal whole, which could be called our ‘history’ – a singular, coherent being, celebrated and revered.

Indian comics may not have created a big splash among its global peers, but they become a major formative factor within India in this very context. Other previous players notwithstanding, the one name which holds an almost all-consuming presence in this process of myth-making and image construction is surely that of Amar Chitra Katha (ACK) – Anant Pai’s popular comic book series which was nothing less than educational primers to entire generations between the decades of sixties through early nineties. Pai’s bestseller masterpiece however is more than just a children’s classic.
Born in 1967, ACK’s reach and popularity, its didactic approach, and as Nandini Chandra puts it in her book *Classic Popular*, “the reliance of its narrative on the naturalising effect of the photographic realism of its drawings, intended to seduce a more adult audience”, has caused its iconography to become so entrenched in the public psyche that they are hardly separable from the ‘truth’.

Pai clearly spells this out in an interview to a popular e-magazine:

> We are trying to promote morals, values and national integration. The goal for Amar Chitra Katha is that it should be nothing less than the *holy truth*. We are not preaching, but the message in the story is very important to us.Ⅵ (Emphasis added)

Bhakti as we understand it today is a ghost of this omnipresent, ubiquitous sign – a golden past erected and shaped in the image of a ‘holy truth’, bound in a popular iconography of blue-gods and ten-headed monsters, paraded as the marker of our national culture, our ‘sanskriti’, and hence, the corner stone of our identity as the citizen of a ‘Hindu nation’.

ACK, as it eponymously transposed the *Katha* tradition of story-telling onto the visuality of comics, created a new breed of superheroes unique to the Indian context. Our gods and legends came to be our most revered superheroesⅦ. This means we were given access to a certain set of heroic individuals, starkly black and white, who being situated within an epic golden past, monumental and inspiring, became ideals to be emulated and brought back to life in the present, along with their mythic idyllic settings.

Needless to say, it isn’t half as simple. Here’s how.

ACK’s tales and characters are coloured by a brand of Bhakti drawn primarily from that strand of the Bhakti movement which runs from Shankaracharya, through Madhavacharya and finally culminates in ‘an organised Hinduism on the ecclesiastical lines of monotheistic Islam and ChristianityⅧ. And this in turn stems from Pai’s own religio-cultural rootsⅨ. Chandra identifies these very roots as the prime influence behind ACK’s portrayal of South India as ‘pan-Indian, as the home of an untrammelled proto-Hindu national history preceding the postcolonial nation-stateⅩ. This Historiography of ACK might as well be viewed through two binary and opposing functions: Aryan-Kshatriya-Hindu-Native-Self as opposed to the Rakshasas-Muslim-British-Coloniser-Outsider-OtherⅪ.

Therefore the glorified ACK Hindu hero is always waging war against a series of foreigners – the asuras/rakshasas, the Muslims or the British – whether on the battlefield as a Kshatriya/Rajput or through the ideological tool of religion, as Bhakti Saints preaching ‘knowledge’ to the ignorant ‘other’.

Consequently for ACK, Bhakti becomes the revival of ‘Vedic Dharma’. “The true meaning of Bhakti for ACK was to preserve the inner core of Vedic Hinduism, endangered by inner dissentions as much as Muslim threats”, says Chandra. Yet, thanks to the Gowda Saraswat Brahmin gene in the ACK DNA, biases inadvertently seep into this larger, more generalised outlook. There is a clear leaning towards a more Brahmin oriented Madhavite brand of Dvaita Vaishnavism, as against the Advaita or Nirguna enquiry into the existence of the ultimate truth, which was closer to Shankara’s teachingsⅫ. ACK’s Bhakti is therefore essentially
monotheistic, believing in the existence of an ultimate supreme reality, which
instead of an abstract notion is none other than Vishnu. A Saguna monotheism.
The propensity to project ‘an avatar based Vaishnav Hinduism’ as the dominant
structure of our mytho-history becomes evident in not only ACK titles based on the
Mahabharata, Ramayana and the Dashavatara Purana, but also in titles based on
the lives of Bhakti saints and folktales. This structure is particularly suited for
projecting Hinduism as not only a ‘humane religion’ but more than that a ‘way of
life’, where a bhakta or a devotee is assured the presence or arrival of a ‘new avatar
to deliver him from a world of oppression’ (Chandra). Vishnu then is taken beyond
the supreme God into the realm of a superhero: the ideal king (Rama) of our one
ture ideal past (Ramrajya) as well as a constant presence – firstly through avatars
and other incarnations including local deities like Vithoba/Vitthal, Jagannatha,
Venkateswara and Balaji, and secondly through the saints themselves, like
Chaitanya who is till today worshipped as an avatar of Krishna, in turn an avatar
of Vishnu. All of this indicates an attempt to “push the Vishnu bias into a pan-
Indian phenomenon stretching back to the most antiquated times”. Therefore
Vishnu becomes the quintessential Indian god-hero who is both idyllic, exalted,
distant and epic as well as dynamic, ever-‘present’ and modern.

As a corollary to this Vaishnavite leaning, ACK’s definition of Bhakti invariably
draws from Gita’s Bhakti Yoga ‘rather than radical Bhakti movement of the late
medieval period’ (Chandra). In the ACK comic on Gita, Krishna defines Bhakti yoga
as the “simplest way” to achieve the ultimate truth – which in the Madhavite
tradition is not an abstract entity, but Vishnu himself – through ‘worship,
adoration, prayer, surrendering oneself to the will of God”. Interestingly, this
definition would popularly be acknowledged today as the true and most accurate
meaning of Bhakti or devotion. However, what one fails to acknowledge is that this
definition establishes a hierarchical relationship between the God and the devotee
rather than the more equal-footed tradition of ‘Ishq’ with Rab, the tradition of lover
and beloved, which is established by Nanak, Kabir or the Sufi saints.

The second aspect of ACK Bhakti is the predominance of the Brahmins. In fact ACK
situates itself within, as well as draws from, the long tradition of Brahmanical
Hindu revivalism.

Bhakti a la ACK was an attempt to place the bad Brahmin in
opposition to the good Brahmin. Vaishnavism then emerged as a
means for co-opting foreign elements, while conceding to critiques
of animal sacrifice, idol worship and other ritualistic practices.

Whatever be the problem – whether that of the outsider or the social discrepancies
cause by the ‘bad’ elements, like the ‘the bad Brahmin’ – it was always up to the
Brahmins and the Kshatriyas to resolve it, either through ‘preaching’ or through
‘valour’.

And this takes us back to the ACK comic on Gita.

In this final frame from the comic (Plate 1), what we see is a lineage of saints and
social reformers all of whom, irrespective of their differences in sects, religious
schools, beliefs and teachings, or even their ‘disparate times and places’, have been
grouped under this singular lineage of Bhakti derived from Gita. This “attempt
to draw connection between the saints of the medieval Bhakti movement and modern
day saints like Swami Vivekananda, Raman Maharshi, Swami Yogananda, Ramakrishna and to source their inspiration in the Gita”

Therefore, coming back to Benjamin, ACK does something funny. As it takes art out of its cult sanctum sanctorum (Ajanta Elora Cave paintings, Raja Ravi Varma paintings et al) its images structure a religious cult of its own, within the market itself. The images that we swear by, an entire function of visual signifiers by which we identify with our deities and legends, are hence in fact a homogenisation of multiplicity, an assimilation of localised micro-practices within a larger organised macro-tradition, rooted in the beliefs and practices of traditionally dominant class and caste strata.

However ACK’s glory days are past. And, interestingly, to understand the magnitude of impact its iconography has had, we need to delve deep beneath the surface of the Indian comics today.

With the popularity of television increasing during the late 80s, Indian comics industry receded into a state of decline, even though many popular telly-serials, especially the mytho-historic ones borrowed copiously from Comics as well. It was only in the late 2000s that Indian comics saw resurgence.

These new age comics are acutely sensitive to the sensual and aesthetic appeal of their works, and the marketability of their tales. Drawing from a long function of popular western images, like those fostered by Lord of the Rings film series, Star Wars series and the western commercial comic giants Marvel and DC, they target an audience which is already high on a heady doze of electronic media – video games, animated films and TV series, web-comics etc. And yet, these comics have remained loyal to the vast plethora of tales offered by our folk tales, Puranas and Epics for the prime sources of their plots and characters, rather than building up a profusion of new superheroes and Marvel-DC like multiverses. While it cannot be denied, that the drive behind their presentation of the age old narratives is completely different, the visual iconography itself still struggles to step out of ACK's ghostly shadow. Therefore on one hand we have this clash between a set of narratives vouching for their representation of a particular fiction to be the 'original, or the true reality' against another set which would rather celebrate a multiplicity of interpretations and what A.K. Ramanujam would term as ‘multiple tellings’. And on the other hand we have a new function of images operating within as well as straining to break away from the traditional marketable function of images.

ACK’s historiography was centred upon the glorification of a Brahmin-Kshatriya led golden society. Grant Morrison’s 18 Days undercuts this notion completely. His version of Mahabharata is set in a society of ‘super beings’ whose rigid social customs and divisions of the society becomes the reason for an apocalyptic war which annihilates their entire race. Shekhar Kapoor and Deepak Chopra’s Ramayana Reloaded (henceforth RR) too brings out the deeply ingrained social biases ACK’s historiography created. Here, in a post-apocalyptic version of Ramayana, Shabri is a Mushik leader and no ‘bhakta’ of Ram. Shabri in fact becomes the quintessential example of the new age comic’s critique of the ACK generated iconography. By equating her low-class status with a visual
And this also becomes the overarching frame of Bhakti in the new generation comics. God is dead. In *18 Days*, Krishna is an exotic creature with Elven features, more like a *shaman*, a magician, rather than a god, while in RR Vishnu’s material manifestation is nothing more than a plaything in the hands of the political leaders of Ayodhya/Armagarh (*Plate 3*).

If ACK was meant to be instructive in moral values, utilising the epics as gateway to a mythic past, an idyllic state which was far removed from the ‘troubled reality of the present’ and something the present society should aim to emulate; then on the other hand the new age comics can best be summed up into being inquisitive, often philosophical, while also trying to connect their narratives to the underlying anxieties and questions of the 21st century India, and situate the legends within the context of present realities. Therefore new age comics like Vimanika and Liquid exhibit a basic fragmentation, inherent within the plots, characters, narrative techniques etc. Linearity of time is dispelled, the existence of a universal signifier is denied. They lack the unified vision, or if you may, the added baggage of a concern for national integration. And hence are free to explore for narratives and ‘tellings’ in their quest for commercial success.

But can the break be so clean and easy?

Both *RR* and *18 Days* are situated within completely different time-space continuum – a dystopian future or a pre-historically legendary past. And these two series therefore show the greatest divergence in terms of visualisation as well as narrative interpretation of familiar characters. However, traces of the old iconography especially in terms of dress-codes, architectural features etc. can still be easily identified, such that the entire iconography is at best a fusion of a modern sci-fi image function and the old ACK function.

However if one goes through some of the other popular titles/series today, including most major titles of the Vimanika repertoire, ‘India Authentic’ by Liquid Comics and even *Ravanayan* to a certain extent, it becomes clear how uphill a task it can be, this complete re-churning of the image function.

Consider what Karan Vir Arora, CEO and the brains behind Vimanika, has to say about a comparison between ACK and his own publication:

“*Amar Chitra Katha* always had their story right, their research right, but what we have done is combined the authentic story with beautiful art. I used to find the Gita very boring as a youngster. The youth in India can feel suffocated by Hindu interpretations of our history and mythology. We don't want to force it down their throats, which is why I have made it entertaining and beautiful but without forgetting the moral and the wisdom,”

Sharad Devarajan of erstwhile Liquid Comics, now CEO of Graphic India, echoes:
“The morals cannot be overt. We can touch upon the themes, but we do not want to alienate our readers by making the message inaccessible. Entertainment comes first.”

Clearly, the emphasis is on lighter, more innovative plotlines. As far as images go, a mere ‘beautification’ is all that seems to be required. And that’s exactly what happens. High definition images are painstakingly drawn and coloured through several layers of digital painting. Deities become hulking heroes with six-pack abs and well-toned bodies fulfilling the criteria of superheroes rather than divinities. The sensual appeal is immense, but the code of visual signifiers remains the same.

This is where currently emerging individual Graphic Novelists like Amruta Patil come into the picture. Patil in her _Adi Parva_ underlines the unfathomability of the god figure, in not merely its multitude but its sheer infinitude, thus denying the existence of a universal signifier not only in in terms of a ‘the God’, but also in terms of a ‘the Story’ (Plate 4). Moreover, in her art work too, she creates an iconography which on one hand, borrows from a traditional set of images without falling prey to censorship while on the other hand condemns the new age commercial fetishisation of the western super-hero-esque bodies and exotic locales.

Patil brings in a bricolage of visual codes ranging from High Renaissance to the tribal Pat and Madhubani traditions of India. Interestingly, it is a similar bricolage of art styles which had shaped the ACK iconography too. By shaping up a rigid inflexible image function through such a bricolage, ACK had rendered the Indian popular image-ination helplessly dependent on a ‘presence’. Which is why, coming back to where we started, the images of our gods/legends become the legends themselves. Like in RR, it is a mechanically produced holographic image which is both a representation as well as a manifestation of the ‘god function’, the ‘holy truth’.

Today we have slowly come to realise that the whirlwind of colour and noise that our festivals are, or the aesthetic extravaganza that the images of our gods are, is more of a worldly tapestry of narratives which are nothing more than schemas to be generated and regenerated to propagate different ideas through the changing times. In the present world, Bhakti is not merely an ideological apparatus needed for the reproduction of the conditions of productions, in whichever context – right from the family to the nation. It has in fact graduated into a condition of production, itself in need to be reproduced. Patil’s bricolage seeks to render this very ‘worldly tapestry’ askew. By not adhering to a singular visual code, nor assimilating them into one, she seeks to create a proliferation so multiplicitious that she invariably indicates an absence of the presence, if not an absence instead of the presence.

Therefore, what we witness today is a _manthan_ (churning) of the ocean of images, drawing from the past as well as the present. And in course of this _manthan_, we journey back to the root question of Bhakti or devotion – the urge to connect with ‘the ultimate reality’ which is beyond the ‘maya’ of rituals and deities and hence accessible without such elaborate ceremonies. While we are nowhere near a total demise of the ACK iconography, we do witness an impulse to internalise the quest of the ultimate truth and ‘Bhakti’ towards that truth, similar to the late medieval
movement. And in the process, the Indian Comics definitely stands poised for a sea change.
Plate 1: The Gita, Amar Chitra Katha. The long lineage of Bhakti Saints and social reformers who followed Gita’s teachings.
Plate 2: Ramayana 3392 AD Reloaded Issue #1. A ghastly Mushik Shabri reveals her cannibalistic tendencies.

Plate 3: Ramayana 3392 AD, Issue #2. The Vishnu statue condemns Ram to exile.
Plate 4: Amruta Patil’s Adi Parva. Infinite numbers of Vishnus recline under the coils of Anant, the Infinite Serpent (left); and the Sutra Dhār starts her story (below).
To know your story, the beginning is as good a place to start as any other. One beginning among countless beginnings. One world among countless others.
i  Notes and References


iii  ‘Bhakti’ literally stands for devotion as the true and most basic essence of most religions or religious sects. The concept of ‘bhakti’ therefore goes much beyond the water tight barriers of a historical time frame. However in terms of the religious developments at the end of 16th century the ‘Bhakti movement’ stands for an impulse to break away from entrenched hierarchies, and sometimes just for the sake of it, to bring out the devotional urge in greater relief, greater importance – devotion as being free of worldly trappings of rituals and customs.

iv  Consider, how an image of ancient India would invariably recall to mind characters dressed in silken *dhotis*, wearing head gears like the *mukut*, the *pagri* etc. or sadhus in flowing saffron robes and long matted hair or women in *lehnās* and *saris*; speaking in a highly Sanskritised Hindi or Sanskrit itself; living a life governed by the rules of *Vedas* and *dharma*, and this as the original image-scape of the entire subcontinent.

v  Nandini Chandra, 'The Serious Comics' in *The Classic Popular: Amar Chitra Katha, 1967-2007*, New Delhi: Yoda Press, 2008, p.5. Ernst Hans Gombrich in the introduction to his *The Story of Art* says, “We have a curious habit of thinking that nature (or reality) must always look like the picture we are accustomed to” and therefore exalt ‘realistic’ paintings/sculpture to the highest stature in art, taking them to be the ‘correct’ form of portrayal. Dr Chandra refers to this very weakness for realism which ACK exploited along with the presentation of its whole project as a well-researched, highly objective telling of our Itihaas or “as it was”, as the reason behind the truth value which one attests to its iconography today.

vi  [http://expressindia.indianexpress.com/story_print.php?storyId=11899](http://expressindia.indianexpress.com/story_print.php?storyId=11899). Sunaina Kumar’s article in Indian Express’s ExpressIndia.com on September 3rd 2006. Indian comics industry was born in 1946 with Chandamama as the first graphic children’s magazine. This situated the industry squat in the middle of India’s earliest port-independence project of national integration. Alongside Pai, several other graphic novelists and artists of that generation like B. Nagi Reddy, Chakrapani and later Pran too were quoted in the media as siting the urgent need to create an identity, a narrative which could conveniently be paraded as ‘national’,
an all-encompassing, assimilating kind of image, as the one basic underlying goals of their comic book ventures.

Interestingly, a parallel stream/genre of Indian Comics operating during the same era, led by Raj Comics(RC), which sold superhero tales heavily influenced by story arcs and character sketches from Marvel and DC despite its popularity could not rise above the lines of ‘casual, cheap street literature’. It never could acquire the respect and unanimous popularity enjoyed by ACK. One prime reason was of course an easily identifiable and apish imitation of the major western characters.

With the advent and popular acceptance of Buddhism and Jainism, both in princely courts and among the common people, a monotheistic inquisition into the existence of an ‘ultimate being’, an ‘ultimate reality’, which is beyond the ‘maya’ (illusion) of rituals and deities and hence accessible without such elaborate ceremonies, start to first emerge prominently around 6th century BCE with the rise of several philosophical schools which would all be later grouped under the umbrella tag of ‘Hindu’. (Saankhya, Uttara Mimansa, Yoga, Nyaya, Vaisheshika etc.) Adi Shankaracharya and later one of his most prominent disciples Madhavacharya, sought to assimilate all the minor and major Brahmanical/ Vedic traditions into a single ecclesiastical corpus, as a response to the Buddhist and Jain monotheism. Prime deities from the old Vedic pantheon were reduced to the stature of mere ‘illusory facades’ of the ultimate singularity – Ishvara. This period, characterised by the compilation of Upanishads and Puranas, propagation of the Vedanta school of Philosophy and the rise of the trinity as the three prime aspects of Ishvara (creation, preservation and destruction) along with the rise of three prime ‘Hindu’ traditions – Vaishnav, Shaiv and Shakta, is collectively called an era of Hindu revivalism. This revivalist drive however is recurrent throughout later history.

Pai hailed from a family of Gowda Saraswat Brahmins, an upper class Brahmin community belonging to the stream of Madhavite (followers of Madhavacharya) Vaishnavism, in Karakala, Karnataka.

In the first function, the ‘Kshatriya’ node is interchangeable with ‘Brahmin’, according to whether the function is being applicable to North India or South India. The Kshatriya valour and war-field bravery is located within a more political and martial framework of history which ACK constructs for North India. On the other
hand, the Brahmin’s knowledge and wisdom befits the ideological playground that
ACK makes out of South India.

xii Through the Bhakti tradition, Saguna and Nirguna defines how ‘God’ is
imagined: Saguna denotes attributing a physical form to God as opposed to the
abstract un-imageable Nirguna God. Dvaita-Advaita on the other hand denotes
practice of worshipping/recognising a multiplicity of deities/avatars as opposed to
an all-encompassing singularity, respectively.

xiii Most manifestations of God, especially in folktales, while giving boon to a
poor Brahmin, or as an innocent statue in a household atrium, is shown in the
likeness of Vishnu, even though he is addressed in terms of ‘Ishwar’ or ‘Bhagwan’
or ‘God’, thus collating the figure of Vishnu with the notion of the ultimate and one
ture God. Also, most of the times these manifestations of Vishnu/God is present in
human forms as characters with the folktales – sadhus, beggars, or poor farmers –
who when called upon reveal their ‘true form’.

xiv Nandini Chandra, ‘Uncle Pai and Vaishnav Historiography’ in The Classic
Popular (Yoda Press, 2008), p.68
Again, although the Shaivites cannot completely be
ignored, there is a clear bias against them. For one, Shiva is primarily identified as
a ‘tribal god’, given his constant association with tribal people, Rakshasas and
Asuras as well as his own appearance as a wild ascetic, forest hunter (nishaad),
fisherman etc. through several incarnations. Therefore Shiva is primarily ‘the lord
of the pagan other’, a deity to those whom the ‘Hindu hero’ sought either to reform
or defeat. Also, Shaivite saints, except when a comic is specifically dedicated to one,
invariably appear as the ‘bad or corrupt Brahmin’ against the Chaste Vaishnavite
saint.


xvi Nandini Chandra, ‘Uncle Pai and Vaishnav Historiography’ in The Classic
Popular (Yoda Press, 2008), p.68.

xvii Nandini Chandra, ‘Uncle Pai and Vaishnav Historiography’ in The Classic
Popular (Yoda Press, 2008), p.67

xviii Ibid.

xix For instance Vithoba/Vitthal, Jagannatha, Venkateswara and Balaji were
all tribal or regional deities assimilated into the larger organised religious tradition
of Vaishnavism, something which ACK portrayals fail to shed light on.
It was Liquid Comics (formerly known as Virgin Comics), a collaboration venture between Richard Branson, Shekhar Kapoor, Deepak Chopra and the Indian comic book publication Gotham Comics, which with its flagship title Ramayana 3392 AD (later Ramayana Reloaded), which generated a renewed interest in comic books and mythology, among Indian audience. Ramayana Reloaded was followed by Devi, Ganesh, Buddha and finally Grant Morrison’s 18 Days (a modern rendition of Mahabharata), among other titles. However by then new age publication houses like Vimanika, Holy Cow and Campfire were already in good business, apart from other individual graphic novelists and collective ventures (the Pao Collective being one such). A recent and most important addition to this list is Amruta Patil’s Adi Parva, the first book in a trilogy which attempts individual creative reinterpretation of the Mahabharata.

A. K. Ramanujam, ‘300 Ramayanas’. Ramanujam’s claim of the inexistence of an ur-Ramkatha, of which there may be different versions, is at the heart of the new age proclivity for twisting the tales. Whether that be Holy Cow entertainment’s Ravanayan or Liquid Comics’ Ramayana Reloaded, the new age comics refuses to accept the existence of something like Ramrajya, or even the deities themselves as part of a real historical past, the story of whom has travelled through different versions of legends and epics. For them the myths and legends are like works of fiction without copyrights, free to be told and retold as ‘tellings’.

Morrison mentions in the introductory book of 18 Days: “There are people who are warriors and people who are business people and people that are priests, the idea you can break society down into types. It’s a world where that is the rule and this is the world of super-warriors. And in this world, it’s them who dominate over every other kind of men. In the world of 18 days you’re looking at war as a perfect culture, almost as an art form, so we’ve designed all the costumes to be decorative rather than functional. They’re beautiful and created by artisans.” And these super warriors/art-dolls are shown self-obsessed, cut off from ground realities of the common, where the art of war as a royal pass time devours up the lives of the lower Varna.

A race of half-humans and half rats, an aberration born post a nuclear holocaust. The Mushik live in the junkyard of Pampa, a wasteland meant to be the deposit ground of nuclear and industrial wastes released by cities like Lanka and Ayodhya – home to the exalted Kshatriyas. They thrive on rare human catches, food pillaged out of the junkyard and hence in utter desolation. Their matriarch Shabri is portrayed in a ghastly avatar.

In the Ramayana Reloaded reality, Sita, the daughter of earth goddess possesses the ability to bestow life itself. Turning the conventional picture of gender and class equations on its head, we see Shabri becoming an ardent devotee of Sita when she restores the barren junkyard into a lush valley of vegetation and fruit.
trees, so that the Mushiks would never have to scavenge for food again. Her devotion is therefore the result of an actual deed of kindness on the part of a woman demi god, rather than the blue-man Rama who haughtily accepts the gift of vehicle (a futuristic car) from the erstwhile junkyard to serve them in their journey ahead.

xxv  In the post apocalypse Ayodhya, people worship a colossal hologram of Vishnu. This hologram is the God, and the supreme judge of all major disputes. The Vishnu hologram could be sought to validate any judgement passed in the high counsel. It is both the representation and the manifestation of the god, and speaks the final word, whether it is in matters warfare, administration or judging the guilt of an individual. Kaalnemi, Dashratha’s prime-minister and an asura in disguise, hacks into the programming and makes the holographic Vishnu speak his words. In fact as it is revealed later, ‘divine manifestation’ always spoke the words of the ruling council. Even in voting against the council, its decision was influenced by the council’s interest and analysis of popular sentiment.

xxvi  For example, in Moksha, a title in the Vimanika repertoire, two powerful Chiranjivins or immortals in the Hindu mythology, Parashurama and Hanuman re-surface in the modern world and take the two child-protagonists of the story on a journey to find moksha, or the eternal truth as Vimanika head Karan Vir Arora would term it. Now, both these characters clash in their mode of dealing with problems. While Hanuman stands for a more judicial and controlled use of force and mainly sides with the non-violent, peaceful side, Parashurama’s style of dealing with evil, or any problem for that matter, is more aggressive and radical. The very interesting aspect of this plot therefore is the new age conception of the ‘holy truth’. The plot constantly refrains from defining what exactly the “eternal truth” is, and instead maps the adventures of two immensely learned characters from a forgotten past as try to make sense of their future and our present, analysing their own concept of truth, righteousness, Dharma, Karma and Moksha layer by layer, even as they teach their protégées.

xxvii  The new age comics show a sharp detachment with the ACK approach of merging ‘history and mythology into a holy past’. In fact the whole concept of a ‘past’ is rendered meaningless as narratives start to leap across barriers of time and space. For example while Ramayana 3392 AD takes place in a post-apocalyptic future earth; 18 days is situated in the long past when the earth was dominated by the single land mass of Pangaea; in Vimanika comics’ The Sixth, a retake on the character of Karna in Mahabharata, the narrative keeps travelling across time realms, journeying through, the Vedic age, the present time India and a distant unseen hazy future; Holy Cow’s Ravanayan travels with the progression of the plot from the distant past to the distant future, depicting regenerative incarnations of Ravana throughout the ages, and the consequences therein.
As Patil’s Sutra Dhār in *Adi Parva*, River Ganga states, “The conclave of creators is a crowded space”. There are an infinite number of Vishnus, Shivas and Brahmas, each emanating from within each other across an infinite number of universes and each claiming to be the creator of all the universes. And all these infinite trinities and infinite universes are part of this one story among infinite others.

Patil’s images reminds one strongly of the cave paintings of Ajanta and Elora or the Rathas of Mahabalipuram or the sculptures of Khajuraho, all of which Anant Pai is popularly known to have visited for his research. Yet, while Pai cleansed his adaptation off the ‘sexually explicit’ images that these sculptures show, Patil does not hold back and hence her images seem more authentic when compared to the said sculpture.

Conversely, in a post from her popular on-line blog, *Umbilical* (http://amrutapatil.blogspot.in/2010/05/steroid-crazed-vishnu-toxic-ananta.html), Patil condemns Vimanika comics’ title *Dashavtara* for portraying a “Steroid Crazed Vishnu and Toxic Anant Shesh-nag”, claiming she would “trust the ‘divinity’ of smiling, relaxed androgyu over the claims of an alpha male nutcase any day”.

Chandra identifies in her book a similar bricolage like influence of myriad art movements and techniques which finally went on to construct the ACK iconography. There were Raja Ravi Varma paintings which are credited by Christopher Pinney for transforming the ‘Indian imaginary from a realm of fantasy to a historicised realist Chronotope’; Purna Chandra Chakrabarty’s early graphic novelistic representation of Ramayana and Mahabharata for Children, Marathi Calendar art and Bollywood film poster art etc. Chandra say, “On the one hand they accommodated what they believed were Indian components – the decorative line, the two dimensional patterning characteristic of miniature art, the Indian bhava from sculptural or Pat traditions. At the same time, they borrowed from trans-national techniques of Hollywood and western comics to make their art assume the highlights of a popular realism. In fact...when they stuck to a pre realist aesthetic in terms of geometric perspective and proportion, it ended up skewing the realist effect of the comics. Thus the success of the bazaar or derivative realism depended on the hybrid product'- the bricolage.

Consider: Muslims who become the greatest religious ‘other’ to the Hindus, are characterised by an absence of a God image.

Louis Althusser, ‘Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes Towards an Investigation)’
Works Cited

Texts

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Plates
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