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# A Multilingual Nation

Translation and Language Dynamic in India

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## Conceptual Priority of Translation over Language

The possibility of translation depends on prior notions of a distinction between languages. The notion of a language and its distinction from another language is often taken for granted in the task of translation. Languages are generally distinguished based upon their syntax and membership in linguistic families. However, what makes a system of communication and expression a language or a dialect is far more than the linguistic and syntactic factors alone. We argue that the notion of translation is already present in any notion of language and look at transliteration and creation of languages as illustrations. As an example, we will look at Kannada and its relationship to Sanskrit. When a language like Kannada has borrowed a considerable amount of its lexicon from Sanskrit, how and why should we distinguish between the two languages? What are the implications of such a distinction for the activity of translation?

What comes first? Languages, or the notion of translation? The common understanding of translation is based on the belief that languages as well as texts are already given. This original text upon which the act of translation 'happens' is already present in a linguistic form and is, in this sense, prior to the act of translation. It is perhaps even meaningless to ask what is prior—language or translation, especially,



given the long history of suspicion towards translation not only a secondary activity but also one that is essentially problematic—the myth of Babel being a good illustration. However, in what follows, we would like to argue for the possibility that translation—a concept—is prior to the notion of language.<sup>1</sup> We will illustrate this with examples of transliteration and the formation of languages by considering the examples of Kannada and Sanskrit.

What are the conditions that we require in order for translation to be possible? We might perhaps start with the condition that there are at least two different languages—the source language and the target language. But even this condition is diluted since we can have translation within a language, what Jacobson calls intralingual translation. If we do not specifically restrict ourselves to ‘language’, as in intersemiotic translation, then we can replace source and target language with the notion of the original and the translated. Since we are interested in the question of language as such, we are concerned with the assumed priority of language over translation. Equivalently, we could ask, in what sense is language original or even unitary, both of which are needed for the common view of translation?

The fundamental problem in the conceptualization of translation arises from this problem between language and its potential role as an original. Language—in whichever way we look at it—is never an original for the simple reason that it always ‘refers’ to something else. One can understand complex philosophical reflections on language as related to this problem of finding the originality of language within itself, that is, to locate the sense of the original within that system of language and not through its relationship with an ‘outsider’. It is really the sense of the ‘outsider’ that characterizes the essence of translation and, if we hold onto this concept, we can begin to see how the notion of translation is not about being consequent to language but more about being an integral and essential characteristic of languages itself. A language is characterized by its syntax and semantics, for example, but it is also marked by its essential translatability. To extend this point: syntax, semantics, or pragmatics cannot characterize language as such, and it is only a core of translatability that defines a language. If we accept that languages are distinguished not just by syntax and semantics alone, but also through pragmatics, then we can immediately locate the idea of translation within pragmatics. But the

notion of translatability is not restricted to just this component alone; it is an essential part of the very definitions of syntax and semantics. While this may be more obvious in semantics, the hidden core of translatability in syntactic structures is present already in formalization, in the substitutability of symbols, and so on. Briefly, the argument is as follows: translation has been too closely associated with issues of speech and meaning. The way in which meaningless symbols are manipulated and transacted as written marks should alert us to the more primordial possibilities of translation, one that is prior to language as a meaning system. Mathematical and scientific texts are a classic illustration of this capacity of symbols and the unique nature of translation that can be recovered from the analysis of such texts.<sup>2</sup>

Even if we restrict ourselves to the conventional idea of translation between languages, we should note that languages cannot be distinguished merely on the basis of their lexicon. In principle, it is difficult to associate unique ownership of words to one language or another. A word of one language can easily become a member of a different language. Translation too resists any such easy distinctions between languages and, thus, the nature of translation suggests not a plurality of languages but the universality of them. Ironically, if translation is seen as the source of the problem in a world of multiple languages, it is also translation that offers an idea of unity to languages as languages. In fact, if there is a language that is not translatable into another language, we tend to describe it as technical language (computer languages, for instance) or symbolic system (mathematics). In this sense, translation is prior to language. The seeds of translatability have always been present in language. Scholars invoke the idea of untranslatability to establish a distinction between languages, but to invoke untranslatability is to privilege language over translation. Later in this essay, we will explore the universality of language, the position of translation in establishing the universality, and the nature of transliteration using two illustrations from Old Kannada (*Haḷe Kannada*) texts.

## Transliteration

Is the presence of more than one language necessary for translation? Jacobson's (1959: 113–18) well-known typology of translations



suggests one answer to this question. According to his classification it is possible to have translation within the same language, intralingual translation, and thus synonyms and paraphrase belong to the species of translation. Second, the translation that happens between any two languages, between Telugu and Kannada, for instance, is called interlingual translation or translation proper. Third, any translation that takes place between two sign systems is known as inter-semiotic translation. Writing in science involves a considerable amount of inter-semiotic translation. For example, even the very act of symbolizing—replacing ‘mass’ with ‘m’—is an instance of translation, but is one that offers deep insights into the philosophical basis of translation itself (Sarukkai 2002). Thus, translations that involve two languages are a specific kind of translation, but the presence of distinct languages is not necessary for all kinds of translations.

The distinction between these three kinds of translation looks clear and unequivocal at the outset. Many of the translations that allow people of a particular tongue to access a text written or recited in a different language are generally considered to be interlingual translations. However, one has to be careful while making this claim. When one accepts that the text was written in a particular language and translated to another language, the question of whether it is interlingual translation does not arise. However, this depends on some notion of boundaries of language which demarcates two languages very clearly. Yet, there are practices of language and translation that challenge the possibility of such clear distinctions between languages. One such practice that questions Jacobson’s classification is *transliteration*. Transliteration is generally understood as the change of script when the word remains ‘unchanged’; it is to borrow a word from the source language to the target language with the same or a similar pronunciation. The presence of Sanskrit words like *avatar*, *bhakti*, *guru*, etc. in English are good examples of transliteration. Celebrated texts and texts of archival importance such as Homer’s *Iliad* or Valmiki’s *Ramāyaṇa* are found, once in a while, in editions that carry translation and transliteration next to each other. In cases of such editions, one may hesitate to consider transliteration as translation. Nevertheless, instances of transliterated words in translation are found in plenty not just in the translation of literary texts but also in texts related to science and philosophy.

Transliteration is considered to be one of the important 'methodologies' of translation, particularly in scientific texts, and it has aided the transmission and circulation of knowledge across linguistic boundaries. At the same time, transliteration is also looked at with suspicion for many reasons including the possibility that it may restrict a certain knowledge or even knowledge system to a particular language (Sarukkai 2013: 311–29). In such cases, transliteration may implicitly advocate beliefs such as 'science can be learnt and done only in English' or '*ayurveda* cannot be learnt in any language but Sanskrit'. These texts differ from the editions such as that of *Ramāyaṇa* in that these texts are not transliterated entirely; these are translations, but there will be transliteration (mostly of concepts) in between. Thus, the text, in principle, will be in the target language, and only some source language words will be transliterated in it.

It is important to note that the 'translatability' of a word also influences the way a culture accepts the concept, which the word refers to, to be its own. In other words, the claim that a particular word is untranslatable implies that the target culture is incapable of bearing the concept referred to by the word in the source language. Transliteration, as a method of translation, has been widely used and has a very long history. We can see the impact of this strategy when it comes to translating concepts. The question of translating concepts is a complex one. Firstly, we need to have an account of what concepts are. In some dominant philosophical traditions, concepts are often seen to be as an 'outside' language. Words which stand for concepts often denote these extralinguistic units. Concepts include universals, and we can indicate the process of denotation in this case. This topic is also a subject of a long debate in Indian philosophy on the meaning of words. The word 'cow' can mean a particular object 'cow', or it can refer to qualities of a cow or the universal cowness. So the meaning of a word can be with reference to the object or the concept. Translation shares a striking analogy through this process of denotative meaning. Typically, we understand the word '*mara*' in Kannada as a translation of the word 'tree' in English because both of them refer to a common object, an object that is outside and independent of language. Making concepts extralinguistic makes translation of concepts similar to that of the 'tree'.

However, there are problems in transliterating concepts. When we translate a concept from one language to the other, the concept does



not remain alien anymore as it is accessible to the readers in their own language. Here, the linguistic and cultural alienation does not affect the cognition of the concept. Yet, the concept may be unknown to the speaker of that particular language. This phenomenon is not an instance of alien concepts, as there are many concepts in our own language that we still need to learn. The fact that they are a part of our language takes away the alienness of the concept. To repeat this with an example, it is not surprising to find many English speakers who are not familiar with the concept 'mass', even when 'mass' is an English word. Nevertheless, if a Kannada learner finds 'mass' in transliteration, the kind of alienness faced is obvious.

What happens to concepts when they are transliterated? Do they become a part of the target language or do they remain alien? Is transliteration a form of resistance to a certain metaphysics of translation, or is it just a question of convenience or pragmatism? In other words, if the transliterated words do not become a part of the target language lexicon, do they remain foreign, thereby re-establishing the belief that concepts are not translatable? Or, moving a step further, do they imply that the target language does not have the capacity either to produce or to bear those concepts? These questions are of great significance, as we find transliteration in writings related to various disciplines in different genres. Transliteration appears to be a tool of translation, but it appears in various texts that are not translations. In these cases, the transliterated words enter the lexicon of the target language and appear in texts that are written in the target language itself. As one reviewer pointed out, there is an increasing tendency to use source language words/concepts, but either not italicize them or, sometimes, not even use the proper diacritical marks. This is really a kind of appropriation, and is perhaps a strategy through which words in one language slowly get taken into the vocabulary of another language. Here, translation or transliteration of these concepts has happened earlier to the current act of writing.

Concepts are transliterated in target language texts because of two reasons. First, translating concepts is difficult and is a methodological issue. One needs to first understand what translation is and what are the ways of translating concepts to address this issue. Second, perhaps as an offshoot of the first reason, there is an assumption that concepts (at least a majority of them) are untranslatable. This assumption is

expressed in various ways by scholars. As an example, we quote one of the most well-known literary scholars from India, A.K. Ramanujan. In an interview in 1989, Ramanujan (1989 [2001]: 52) indicates that 'even words like literature, history, words like society, nation, state' do not have a 'clear-cut Indian language translation'. This is a strange statement to encounter because, as we all know, there are words in Indian languages that denote concepts like 'literature' or 'history'. Ramanujan's difficulty in accepting them as translations maybe is due to the fact that there is no total equivalence between the words in the source language and the target language; hence, he uses the phrase 'clear-cut'. The assumption that concepts cannot be translated with total equivalence, and hence are untranslatable, underlies most of the practices that leave concepts untranslated or transliterated. But the assumption is wrong as expecting total equivalence in translation, of concepts or any word, is unrealistic, as repeatedly reiterated in the discipline of Translation Studies.

We can understand the work of transliteration in another way—expanding the semantic space of the concept of translation by noting that translation into another language can always be looked at as nothing more than a metaphor in the same language. For example, the word *anuvāda* (in Kannada and other Indian languages) for translation can be seen as a metaphor for the English word 'translation'. For, after all, there is nothing which stops *anuvāda* from being considered as an English word. Transliteration does exactly this: it introduces words like *electron* into the lexicon of a new language. The 'electron' instance is not a strange occurrence, as numerous English words have entered Kannada lexicon through transliteration in the writing of scientific texts. As examples of the transliterated words that have become a part of Kannada lexicon, we provide a few instances of 'Kannada words' that are found in Kannada-medium school textbooks: galvanometer, dynamo, armature, nucleon, hydrocarbon, valency, protein, lipid, vitamin, piston, cation, glycerol, rocket, tank, radio, siren, platform, radar gun, electron, oxygen, chlorine, ribbon, beaker, cathode, and anode.

There is no translation theory that does not deal with the questions regarding equivalence. We will discuss two arguments regarding equivalence, translatability, and commensurability. Eugene Nida (1964: 156) suggests that because there are no two identical



languages, there is no possibility of a translation that can achieve total equivalence; it can come close to the source text, but with 'no identity in detail'. To extend this inference to the translation of concepts, when concepts are translated, the concept in the target language can point to an associated concept, but it might not have total equivalence with the source concept. Nida and Taber (1982) speak about translation as restructuring, while they conduct grammatical analysis of translations in the context of Bible translations. According to that model, translation is a process that involves three different stages. First, there will be an analysis of the source text to understand it according to its grammatical structures and semantics of the words. Second, the meaning of the utterance in language 'A' has to be transferred to language 'B' in the mind of the translator. Finally, the message has to be restructured in the receptor language to make it intelligible and acceptable (Nida and Taber 1982: 33). Bassnett (2002: 24–5) explains this model in terms of 'decoding' and 'recoding'. When the recoding occurs, a phrase is 'replaced by a phrase carrying the same notion', regardless of the fact whether they literally mean the same (2002: 26). This implies that there will not be an absolute equivalence between the source text and the target text. When a translator realizes that the meaning of the target word does not match the meaning of the source word, he/she might resort to transliteration as an attempt to maintain the identity of meaning between the target and source words. The assumption of the failure to achieve equivalence through translation or the success of maintaining identity of meaning through transliteration has to be questioned, as the issue at hand is not just about the expression of the meaning but also about its cognition.

When thinking about translations, there is often a risk of assuming the possibility of understanding the meaning of the source text and then constructing the problem of translation as the impossibility of conveying the same message or meaning of that text in another language. The process of reading and understanding has been discussed in detail by many thinkers in different fields including literary theory, philosophy of language, and translation studies. One such seminal work on meaning and translation is by Willard Quine, the philosopher, who belongs to the analytic tradition. The question here is two faceted: first, how to understand the utterance made in the source language in order to translate it and, second, how to test whether

the translation matches with the original. Quine uses a hypothetical example of a linguist, who is a Westerner, attempting to study a native who speaks a language that the linguist is not familiar with. Quine (1959: 94) starts with asserting that if one can 'peel away the verbiage,' what then remains is the empirical meaning, the one that is present in the source language and the translation. However, the meaning that remains after the words are taken away is not an easily observable fact. Quine provides an example where the native utters '*gavagai*', and the linguist notes 'rabbit' or 'lo, a rabbit' as possible translations. These probable translations are based on ostension; when the native utters '*gavagai*' while pointing at the rabbit and the linguist translates it, what gives the linguist the confirmation that his/her translation is correct? Even when the native points to the rabbit, the linguist might not, in the first attempt, be able to decide whether it means 'rabbit,' 'white,' 'animal', or something else; yet, this problem can be solved by multiple attempts at pointing and receiving an assent from the native. The issue of resolving the meaning through ostension gets much more complicated when one is talking about a non-existent entity (for example, 'unicorn') or an abstract concept ('justice'). Even in the '*gavagai*' instance, Quine notes that if the utterance did not mean 'rabbit' but something integral to rabbit that cannot be shown outside rabbits, then the linguist may not be able to determine that. Through this, Quine argues that translation is indeterminate; if the native and the linguist have different world views or 'conceptual schemes' that influence their understanding and interpretation of the word and the world, then they might not even agree upon the same set of measures to judge the translations.

Quine provides an important insight about the problem of incommensurability. One might think that this problem can be overcome by circumventing translation through transliterating a concept, but the problem persists even with transliteration. This is because incommensurability is not an issue related only to the comparison of meaning between the target and source texts to verify identity, but it is primarily a question related to the cognition of the source word meaning. Transliteration, as a method of translation with an assumption that the meaning remains unchanged between the source and target texts, has its limitations. The word travels from one language to another; and from one script to another in the case of transliteration. However,



if translation of that word has the limitations of not conveying the identical meaning in the target language, then transliteration too cannot be assumed to bear an identical meaning, because in the case of transliterating a set of words in a translated text, the words of the source language are already read and understood in association with the target language words and by the reader who knows the target language. The nature and context of the target text influence the capacity of the transliterated word to convey the meaning. Furthermore, the transliterated word has to face the issues of incommensurability that are not different from a translated word. Extending the example by Quine, even if the linguist notes 'gavagai' as 'gavagai' and not as 'lo, a rabbit', the issues of cognition of meaning through ostension is not solved. Furthermore, if the word 'gavagai' is used in a Malayalam text, for example, the meaning of the word cannot be assumed to have any clarity. The impact of the issue is deep-rooted, and Venuti (2000: 68) expands the reading of Quine's incommensurability by suggesting that if meaning, interpretation, and the relationship between words and meaning are varied in different cultures, then it might force the translated text to be in conformity with the 'terms and values of the receiving culture'.

Transliteration, with all its limitations as a tool for translation, reveals important insights regarding the nature of language itself. Transliteration is primarily an act of 'forcing' words to become 'members' of other languages. How can words migrate from one language to another? For translation to take place, there has to be something common between languages, and this is most clearly exemplified in the case of transliteration. The target language should have the capacity to bear the new transliterated word in its lexicon or, the transliterated word should already be a part of the language that has perhaps not been used till the instance of transliteration. This implies that the languages should have the 'innate' capacity to exchange words between them. Thus, translation and transliteration are conceptual foundations that lie at the basis of any language. To phrase this more strongly: it is impossible to conceive a notion of a language without necessarily discovering the concepts of translation and transliteration in it. (While the examples of transliteration seem to be restricted to writing alone, we can also imagine the space of transliteration in spoken languages also. The structure of everyday conversations in

a multilingual society is a classic example of how words from other languages get spoken in the 'lingo' of the dominant language. For example, one could argue that speaking an English word with a Hindi accent can be seen as an example of 'oral transliteration'.) Thus, when one transliterates a word from English to Kannada, the English word already has the potential to be a 'part' of Kannada. As a result, transliteration also aids the development of languages. We will discuss two examples from Kannada literature to show how a language develops by gaining words from another language.

### Kannada and Sanskrit

Kannada literature bloomed into existence around the tenth century. Or, one can at least claim that the earliest texts available in Kannada are from that time. When we read the early texts from Kannada, particularly of Pampa, the language he uses is intriguing, particularly in the contexts of translation, transliteration, and multilingualism. His *kāvya*s are translations of a Jain epic (*Ādipurāṇa*) and *Mahabharata* (*Vikramārjunavijaya*). Pampa lived in times when Kannada had to carve out a place for itself in the literary sphere. The tradition of writing *kāvya*s was not yet systematized before the tenth century, though the language existed not just in speech but also in the royal *śāsana*s and *praśastis*. Sanskrit was the dominant language of literature and the influence of it on Kannada was overwhelming. When Pampa or his contemporary Ranna wrote their *kāvya*s, they had to choose the language of their expression. It is indisputable that Pampa or Ranna were scholars in Sanskrit. Thus, they had an opportunity to write in Sanskrit, a language that was cosmopolitan in their times. Yet, they choose to write in Kannada.<sup>3</sup> It is necessary to note that the first available texts of Kannada by Pampa, Ranna, and others established Kannada as a language of literature against the backdrop of a long and influential history of Sanskrit *kāvya*s, but they did not frame these two languages as enemies, and Kannada literature has drawn a considerable amount from Sanskrit, including lexicon, metre, poetics, etc.

The early poets in Kannada including Pampa and Ranna were arguably multilinguals who translated Sanskrit *kāvya*s into Kannada. The nature of translation and transliteration in their works gives us valuable insights towards understanding the intricacies of multilingualism

and the distinction between languages. To begin with, we need to clarify the statement that many of the earlier Kannada texts, including Pampa's *Vikramārjunavijaya*, are translations of texts that were available to those poets in Sanskrit; this is important, for there are scholars who argue that there were no translations, as we understand translation today, in premodern India. However, one should note that the limitation of this claim is that it does not recognize the variety of translations that are available not just in the context of India but elsewhere. Poets like Pampa and Ranna did not attempt a line-by-line translation, where each and every aspect of the source language story is attempted to be retold in the target language text. There are various kinds of translation that have been in practice. If one compares the translations by Pampa to a particular translation in Latin, for example, the methods and intentions of the translations may vary. This difference cannot be a valid reason to claim that there were no translations in India.

Many scholars who resist calling Indian texts, including that of Pampa and Ranna, as translations accept that there were textual transactions between languages like Sanskrit and Kannada. Scholars such as Rao (2014: 233–67) denote these textual transactions using different terms; Rao calls them 'responsive receptions'. He recognizes that Sanskrit had a considerable influence on the vernaculars so much so that the literatures of the vernaculars were animated by Sanskrit. He notes that languages like Kannada responded to Sanskrit literatures and one kind of response was to re-render the Sanskrit texts in the vernaculars. These responses retained only the larger contour of the narrative, but they did not retell the story line-by-line or aspect-by-aspect. Thus, the argument regarding whether there was translation in India is not different than asking whether the practice of translation in premodern India matched the practice of translation elsewhere. Considering the texts of poets like Pampa and Ranna as translations provides us valuable insights not just about translations, but also about the nature of languages in the context of multilingualism.

The production of literature or *kāvya* in Kannada began circa tenth century. Pollock (2006: 1–36) analyses the history of the beginnings of Kannada as a written language, literization of the vernaculars, that led to literacy and the growth of manuscripts; and



also the beginnings of Kannada kāvya literature, or the literization of Kannada, where the literature developed lexical, metrical, and thematic features that were essential to a text to be considered kāvya. The influence of Sanskrit on Kannada, particularly through transliteration can be seen not just in the literarized kāvya of Kannada, but also in the earlier inscriptions that are more political than literary. We will provide an example from Ranna's translation of Mahābhārata titled *Sāhasabhīmavijaya*, written c. 1000 CE, to show the nature of the text and the extent of transliteration.

*kurubhūbr̥d̥balatūlakālapavanamkauravyagandhēbakē  
saridus̥śāsanaraktarak̥tavadanam̥duryōdhanōruk̥samā  
dharavajramkururājaratnamukutōtkūtānghrisanghaṭṭasam  
garanendendabhivarn̄ipemran̄ayaśaśr̄irāmanambhīmanam* (Ranna 2007)

The one who is a hurricane of the doom's day to the fluffy cotton-like army of the Kuru king Duryodhana, a lion to the Kaurava elephants, the one whose face is red with Duśśāsana's blood, the one who is a mighty weapon to the mountains of Duryodhana's thighs, the one who stamped on the jewel in the crown of the Kaurava and the one who equals Rāma in the battle field, thus I describe Bhīma (trans. by Chippali).

This stanza appears in Ranna's *Mahabharata* where he describes Bhīma, the protagonist, of his kāvya. Most of the words in these four lines are Sanskrit words (italicized), and only a little Kannada is added here, as if to provide a flavour of the vernacular in the stanza. This stanza, we are aware, does not represent the proportion of Sanskrit used in the entire text; however, it gives a glimpse of the multilingual aspect of the earlier Kannada kāvya literature. The amount of Sanskrit words used in the texts by Pampa and Ranna pose the particular challenge of the distinction between languages. When the above-mentioned stanza appears in what we consider a Kannada kāvya, the words used in it can be considered Kannada words that have their roots in Sanskrit. Or, we can assume these words to be Sanskrit words which are only transliterated in the Kannada script; even when we think that these words are essentially Sanskrit words, the act of transliteration introduces these words into Kannada kāvya, thus introducing them to the Kannada lexicon. This practice challenges any naïve claim that words can only belong to Sanskrit or to Kannada; every

word in every language is potentially a word in every other language. In a complex multilingual situation like this, where a Sanskrit kāvya is being translated to Kannada but the translated text contains lines that have words from the source language, Sanskrit, how does one categorize the process in the framework of the different types of translations that we discussed earlier?

Translators like Pampa and Ranna were not the pioneers of blending Sanskrit and Kannada, as they had their predecessors who used a mix of these two languages in the śāsanas and praśastis. As we noted earlier, the literization of Kannada took place earlier than the production of literature in Kannada. Pollock (2006: 26) suggests that although Kannada was literized in the fifth century, it was first used in the production of praśasti only in the ninth century. Pollock (2006: 335) provides an example of a praśasti by a Ganga ruler named King Ereyappa who reigned around 890 AD. Through this example, he elaborates how Kannada was struggling against the literary and political hegemony of Sanskrit. This example also shows us the kind of interaction that took place between Sanskrit and Kannada that, over the centuries, made Kannada a language worthy to be used in the kāvyas. In the following example, the Kannada words are in Roman, and the Sanskrit words are italicized.

*sa*mastabhuvanavinutagaṅgakuḷaṅgagananirmmaḷatārāpatijaḷadhijaḷav-  
ipuḷavaḷayaṁēkhaḷākālāpālamkr̥tyaiḷādhīpatyaḷakṣmīsvayamvrtapatitāv-  
adādyagaṇitagunaganavibhuṣaṇavibhūṣitavibhūti śrīmadeṛeyapparasar-  
pagevarellaman *niḥkṣatrammādi* gaṅgavāḍitombhattārusāsiramuman  
*ekacchatracchāyeyoḷ* āluttam iḷdu

The spotless moon in the sky that is the Gaṅga lineage, whose praise are sung throughout the world; the husband chosen by Lakṣmī herself, goddess of royalty, for lordship over earth as far as the vast circle of the waters of the ocean that form her ornamental belt; one whose power is adorned with adornments—masses of virtues—such as these, which cannot be counted: this glorious King Eṛeyappa stripped all his enemies of political power and ruled in the shade of a single royal parasol over the Gaṅgavāḍi 96,000.<sup>4</sup>

These examples are from the times when Kannada was struggling to form an identity for itself both as a language of politics, through inscriptions, and of literature through kāvya. The nature and extent of transliteration in these texts suggest that translation and transliteration

played a major role in the reformation, if not formation, of Kannada, particularly as a language of literature. Exchange or borrowing of words between languages is not limited to Kannada and Sanskrit, as a lot of Indian languages draw from one another. A good amount of Sanskrit words are present in languages like Malayalam, Telugu, and Bengali, for example. These examples illustrate the fluidity of languages in terms of words' membership in a language. Transliteration, thus, illustrates the phenomenon of words having membership in multiple languages.

Pollock (2006: 322–33) analyses a passage from eighth-century Tamil, where a considerable proportion of the text comprises of Sanskrit words. He suggests that a blend of Sanskrit and Tamil emerged in a search for a cosmopolitan idiom. This blend of languages continued to be more popular in the coming centuries, and around twelfth and thirteenth centuries the hybrid language was recognized by naming it *maṇipravāḷa*. Pollock considers *maṇipravāḷa* to be a process of localizing the 'Sanskrit universal', and the process was not limited to Tamil as similar instances were seen in the history of languages like Telugu and Marathi. Creation of languages like *maṇipravāḷa* or the import of a large number of words from Sanskrit in Kannada, Telugu and Marathi, for example, point to the possibility that the notion of translation is already prior to any notion of a language. Once we recognize this, we can then enquire into the implications of this view for translation studies in general.

## Notes

1. Another way of approaching this issue would be through Walter Benjamin's invocation of translation as the 'afterlife' of a text.
2. See Sarukkai (2001, 2008) for a discussion on symbols and translation. See Sarukkai (2002) for an account of how translation functions within scientific texts.
3. See Pollock (2006) for hypotheses regarding why poets like Pampa and Ranna choose to write in Kannada.
4. This translation is as given in Pollock (2006: 336).

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