

LANGUAGE IN INDIA
Strength for Today and Bright Hope for Tomorrow
Volume 10 : 2 February 2010
ISSN 1930-2940

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Some Features of Tirukkural Telugu Translations

A. Boologa Rambai, Ph.D.

Introduction

“Poetry is that which gets lost in Translation.”

Translation is a very difficult and challenging job. It involves far more than a working acquaintance with two languages. Levy (1963) defines, “A translation is not a monistic composition but an interpenetration and conglomerate of two structures. On the one hand, there are the semantic content and the formal contour of the original. On the other hand, the entire system of aesthetic features bound up with the language of the translation. It is an inter-textual activity involving the establishment of the equivalence at the syntactic, semantic and pragmatic levels.”

Tirukkural

TirukkuRaL was composed by TiruvaLLuvar. TirukkuRaL is the greatest intellectual treasure house, gifted by VaLLuvar who evolved a code of life two thousand years ago. Many scholars testify that kuRaL is the most important text in the entire secular literature of the Tamils.

KuRaL contents cover a variety of issues and multi-dimensional aspects of human existence. Hence it has a universal appeal and an eternal charm and significance. No

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wonder, Tamil scholars consider it as the crowning glory of their culture and their invaluable contribution to the progress and evolution of human civilization. It belongs to the entire world. This universality of the work attracted many scholars to attempt translating it into other languages, besides writing splendid commentaries.

Tirukkural Translations

It appears that there are more than eighty translations of TirukkuRaL available. One can find several translations of kuRaL in some languages. Take for example, we have a couple of translations in Hindi. Mr.Valmikinathan translated kuRaL into Hindi. Perhaps during the first half of the last century 50,000 copies were printed and distributed in most of the Hindi speaking states. Later Prof. Sundararajulu Naidu translated TirukkuRaL into Hindi with Tamil version side by side. This work was published by the University of Madras, a few decades ago.

In Telugu, a dozen translations are available as far as we know. The earliest translation perhaps was that of Vaidyanatha, K.V. (1887, Nellore) titled as “Tirivarga Pradipika” followed by Narasimhalu Naidu, S. (1892, Madras) Trivargam, Lakshminarayana Sastry, C. (1906, Chittoor) published TirukkuRaL in Telugu titled as kuRaL selections, Sri Puthalapattu Sreeramulu Reddy (1948, Chittoor) wrote Trivargam, Sri MudigaNTi Jagganna Sastry translated kuRaL and captioned his work as TiruvaLLuvar Sookthulu (1952, West Godavari), Chella Radhakrishna Sarma (1954, Madras) Tamil vedam, Jalayya brought forth (1955, Madras) Neethisudha, Arudra (1989, Hyderabad) Dakshina Veedam, Gunasekhra Naidu, G., Sadhanaveeraaswamy Naidu, Sri Jaggannadham (Gurucharan, Pen name), 2000, Kuppam) translated TirukkuRaL as TirukkuRaL of TiruvaLLuvar in Telugu with the Tamil version side by side.

Aim of the Paper

The main aim of this paper is to review the translated versions of TirukkuRaL in Telugu by Arudra and Gurucharan. The reason for reviewing these two Telugu TirukkuRaL translations is to find out the problems which we face in the translating the work. The problems may be identified in the phonological, morphological and the syntactical levels.

a) First of all regarding chapterisation, all the three major divisions of kuRaL namely aRam – virtue, poRuL – wealth, and kaamam conjugal bliss, Arudra translates them as Dharma vibhaagam (ధర్మ విభాగం), Artha Vibhaagam (అర్థ విభాగం) and kaama vibhagam (కామ విభాగం). Gurucharan translates these main divisions as Dharmam – (ధర్మం), Ardham (అర్థం) and Mooham (మోహం). For this kaamam, Arudra says that Kaama Vibhaagamm, Gurucharan translates it as Mooham.

The main three divisions are again sub divided in to aRam:

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paayiraviyal, illaRaviyal, tuRavaraviyal and uuzhiyiyal; PoRuL: aracyial,

amaicciyal, araniyal, kuuzhiyiyal, PaTaiyiyal, naTpiyal and kuTiyiyal;

Kaamam: kaLaviyal and kaRpiyal. Arudra translates paayiraviyal

.....illaraviyal – inTi banduvu (ఇంటి బంధువు), tuRavaraviyal –muniviruthi –
(ముని వృత్తి) uuzhiyiyal -..... arachiyiyal – raajyaangamulu – (రాజ్యాంగములు)
– swami – (స్వామి) which is not in TirukkuRaL. Amaicciyal – amaatyulu – (అమాత్యులు)
arNiyal - -----, kuuzhiyiyal - -----, paTaiyiyal - ----- naTpiyal - -----
---- and kuTiyiyal – muudoova bhaagam –

sangiiranam – (సంగీర్తనం) kaLaviyal – rahasya pranayam – (రహస్య ప్రణయం) kaRpiyal –
dhaampatyam – (ధాంపత్యం). He did not translate the subdivisions fully and left out some
of these subdivisions, such as paayiraviyal, uuzhiyiyal, araNiyal,

kuuzhiyal, paTaiyiyal and naTpiyal. On the other hand he divides the poRuL

as two parts as raajyaangamulu – (రాజ్యాంగములు) and swami – (స్వామి) (39-63)

raajyaangamulu (రాజ్యాంగములు) which is again divided into three parts as amaatyulu –
(అమాత్యులు) (64-69) sannidhaanavarthulu (సన్నిధానవర్తులు) (70-95) and sangiirnam
(సంగీర్తనం) (96-108). But Gurucharan did not translate any of the sub divisions.

b) All the negative sub-divisions of TirukkuRaL are translated with
positive labels by Gurucharan. Ex. puRankuuRaamai – caaTumaaTalu –
(చాటు మాటలు), kaLLaamai – dongatanamu – (దొంగతనములు).

But Arudra translates: 1) some terms by word by word translation

Ex . kuuTaaozhukkzm – tagani nadavaDii (తగని నడవడి), avaa aRuttal – vaancha
nivrutthi (వాంచ నివృత్తి).

2) Some negative terms are replaced by positive items. Ex. vekhulaamai – bhutadamu – (భూతదము).

3) Some terms are translated using Sanskrit equivalents, by adding the negative particle –a- Ex. kollaamai – ahimsha – (అహింస) and nilaiyaamai – asaasvatam or anidhyam – (అశాస్త్రము, అనిత్యం).

4) The nouns are translated as proper nouns by Gurucharan
Ex. cuutu – juudhari – (జూధరి), tuuthu – dhuuta – (ధూత), amaicchu – mathri – (మంత్రి).
But Arudra translates noun as noun itself in some places and in some other places, he translates the noun as plural noun. Ex .tutu –raayabhaaralu – (రాయభారాలు) Noun plural,
cuutu – Juudam – (జూదం) verb

5) Translating a compound word as a single word. Both the translators are used this type. Ex. poRaiuTaimai – oorpu – (ఓర్పు), tiivinai accham – apakruthi – (అపకృధి), oppuravu aRital – upakruthi – (ఉపకృధి) avai aRital – sabha _ (సభ), anpuTaimai – nenaru – (నెనరు), ceynanriaRital _ krutaknata – (కృతజ్ఞత), aTakkamuTaimai – anakuva – (అనకువ).

6) Using plural marker: While translating, both Arudra and Gurucharan used plural suffix for the singular concept. Ex. puRan kuuRaamai – caaTumaaTalu – (టాలు మాటలు), valiaRital – (బలాబలము), araciyal – raajyaangamulu – (రాజ్యాంగములు) amaicchiyial – amaatyulu – (అమాత్యులు), terintu ceyal vakai – telisi ceese panulu – (తెలిసి చేసే పనులు). Whenever Gurucharan translates the word with plural marker in that place Arudra translates the same without plural suffix and vice versa. Ex. valiaRital – balaabalamulu – (బలాబలములు) – Gurucharan ; balanirmayam – (బలనిర్ణయము) - Arudra Tutu – tuuta – (తూత) - Gurucharan ; raayabaarulu – (రాయబారులు), amaicchu – mantri – (మంత్రి) - Gurucharan ; amaicchiyial – amaatyulu – (అమాత్యులు) Arudra terintu ceyal vakai – karma kausalamu – (కర్మకౌసలము) Gurucharan, telisi ceese panulu – (తెలిసి చేసే పనులు) - Arudra.

7) Use of case markers: The translator Arudra uses case markers in his translation where TiruvaLLuvar did not use case marker in that particular place. Ex. cuRRam tazhaal – cuTaala sangathi – (చుటాల సంగతి), vinai tiTpam – ceetala dhiTTadanam – (చేతుల ఢిట్టదనం), vinitthuymai – ceetala suddhi – (చేతుల సుద్ధి), avai ancaamai – sabaloo nirbhayam – (సబలో నిర్భయము).

8) Use of concrete noun for abstract noun: The translator Arudra uses concrete noun for the abstract noun: “manakkavalai” which means the pain of the soul.

**తనక్కువమె ఇల్లాతాన్ తాఱ్ శేర్నతార్కకల్లాల
మనక్కవలె మార్లల్ అరితు (తిరు. 7)**

tanakkuvamai illaataan thaazh ceerntaarkkallaal
manakkavalai maaRRal aritu (TK. 7)

For this Arudra’s translation is

madini kalataleeka manujuNDundu
(మఱిని కలతలేక మనుజుండుండు)

manujuNDundu is a concrete noun. But in Gurucharan’s translation, the abstract noun is kept as it is in TirukkuRaL.

**పొఱివాయిల్ ఇఱ్ఱవితాన్ పొయ్తీర్ ఒఱుక్కఱెఱి
ఱిఱ్ఱార్ ఱీఱు వాఱ్ఱవార్ (తిరు. 6)**

poRivaayil aintavittaan poytiir ozhukkaneRi
ninRaar niiDu vaazhvaar (TK. 6)

neRininRaar niiDu vaazhvaar is used as abstract noun satyamaarga maraya nitya suhamu (సత్యమార్గమరయ నిత్య సుహము) – Gurucharan.

kaalamellaa entoo sukhamu – (కాలమెల్లా ఎంతో సుఖము) – Arudra.

9) In poetry, length of lines is an important variable. But this fact is overlooked by the translator Gurucharan. Ex. poRaiuTaimai – oorpu (ఓర్పు), avaa aRuttal – aasha – (ఆశ), kaNNooTTam – daya – (దయ). He sums up the chapter and makes economical use of words as a characteristic feature of his translation. This factor results in the translation being markedly different from the original, both in its visual representation in terms of length, shape and organization, and also in its tone, in terms of imagery, emotion and movement.

10) Use of Metaphor & Simile: The translators Arudra and Gurucharan use different metaphors for “celvatthai azhikkum paTai”

అల్లற்பட்டு ఆహాతు అమృత కண்ணీర్ అన్ఱే
శెల్వత్తై అఱిక్కుమ్ పడై (తిరు. 555)

allaR paTTu aaRaathu azhuta kaNNiir aanRee
celvatthai teekum paTai (TK. 555)

Arudra uses raacha cirulu kaayu rampa magumu (రచ చిరులు కాయు రంప మగుము) for the above. Gurucharan uses karagatiyu niruppuni kalimi belimi (కరగతీయు నిరుప్పుని కలిమి బెలిమి).

“Yaazh”, the stringed instrument, commonly found in the ancient civilizations of Greece and Rome, was very much in use in the ancient Tamil Sangam society. This is somewhat an unfamiliar instrument for the Telugu tradition, thus it was never found in Telugu literature and culture. This word and instrument have been substituted with a familiar stringed instrument “the Veena” as the nearest Telugu equivalent. Thus the readers get the meaning in essence without confusion. The following kuRaL is translated by Gurucharan using the term veena for yaazh.

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குழல் இனிது யாழ் இனிது என்பர்தம் மக்கள்
மழலைச் சொல் கேளாதவர் (திரு. 66)

kuzhal initu yaazh initu enpartam makkaL
mazhalaic col keeLaatavar (TK. 66)

veenuvaina viinanainu tama biDDa
(వేనువైన వీననైనను తమ బిడ్డ)

Arudra also mentions 'veena' for 'yaazh' and 'veenu' for 'kuzhal'

The Tamil literary traditions picture a woman's tender hands and shoulders as "tender bamboo shoots". On the other hand, the Telugu tradition is to compare them with the Lotus creepers.

The translator Gurucharan, by following the Telugu tradition, helps the Telugu readers to visualize the intent of the writer of Tirukkural.

Similarly the palm fruits and millets are compared with nails and mountains. That is, gooru and koNDa. Arudra used millet for tiNai and palm fruits as taaTi paNDu – (తాటి పండు) and jonnaginja (జొన్నగింజ).

A very interesting feature of Tirukkural is its strong, passionate and very emphatic treatment of the hardships of poverty and consequent hunger. The suffering of the poor and the needy are in no way overlooked when high morals are taught. While emphasizing morality, spirituality and social orderliness, Tirukkural also points out to the need for the elimination of poverty and consequent hunger. Very active words are employed by the author of Tirukkural to describe such features.

The translators express the concept pasi 'hunger' in the following way.

விண்ணின்று பொய்ப்பின் விரிநீர் வியனலகத்து
உள்நின்று உடற்றும் பசி (திரு. 13)

vinninRu poyppin viriniir viyanulakatthu
uLninRu uTaRRum pasi (TK. 13)

For “uTaRRum pasi” Arudra uses the term ‘karuvu’(కరువు) which means “famine”.

Gurucharan also uses the same term ‘karuvu’ (కరువు) in it.

Like this in the kuRaL (17)

నెడుంకడలూమ్ తన్ నీర్మై కున్ఱుమ్ తడింతెఱ్ఱిలిత్
తాన్ నలకాతాకి విడిన్ (తిరు. 17)

neDunkaTalum tanniirmai kunRum taTintezhili
taan nalkaataaki viTin (TK. 17)

Arudra translates by using the metaphor “garbham” (గర్భం) where as Gurucharan uses a simile “candramaina” (చంద్రమైన).

Arudra translates the above one into kadali garbhamentoo kalata centu (కడలి గర్భమెంతో కలత చెంతు). Gurucharan translates it into meeti candramaiya looTu baDunu (మేటి చంద్రమైన లోటుబడును).

11) Concept variation: For the chapter i) “maTiyinmai” which means “Not being lazy”. Arudra gives curukutanam – (చురుకుతనం) which means “activeness.” Gurucharan gives alasatvamu (అలసత్వం) which means “tiredness”. This is not equal to the maTiyinmai

12) maDal eeruvadhu: The technical term “madal eeruvadhu” has been explained by Gurucharan, as an ultimate recourse of protest by one of the determined lovers, in accordance with a contemporary manner of protest (in vogue during the Sangam period among the Tamils) by shedding all natural inhibitions, thus forcing the elders for their consent to the matrimony without any delay. For this “madal eeRuvadhu” Arudra uses the term taaTigurram – (తాటిగుఱం).

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For the chapter “tiitu” Gurucharan gives in Telugu as shedding inhibitions (Sigguviduchuta). But Arudra titled this as “lajja parityaagam”

(లజ్జ పరిత్యాగం).

13) aniccham: A flower referred to as ‘aniccham’ in kuRaL is a rare botanical specimen that blossomed once in 12 years, found only within the hilly regions of Tamil country and totally unknown elsewhere. It is reportedly a very sensitive flower, that withers just by the human touch!. Gurucharan justified the same word, importing the same as “aniccham” and in most of its occurrences he does not give the equivalent term for it (in the chapter 112 , the kuRaL numbers 1111,1115 and 1120). Arudra uses the term dhiriseena pushpamu – (ధిరిసేన పప్పుము) for aniccham in kuRaLs 1111, 1115 and 1120. In kuRaL 90, the aniccham is translated as “musidi puuvu” – (ముసిడి పూవు).

14) Miscellaneous items:

Arudra divides the chapter “amaicchiyal” (64-69) as amaatyulu – (అమాత్యులు), and from 70 onwards as sannidham – navartulu – (సన్నిధానం-నవర్తులు). This are the extra chapters divided by Arudra in his translation, which is not in the original TirukkuRaL. This is not found in Gurucharan’s translation. For the kuRaL

తానమ్ తవమ్ ఇరణ్డమ్ తంకా వియనులకమ్
వానమ్ వఱ్ఱంకాత్తు ఁనిన్.

taanam tavam iraNTum tankaa viyanulakam
vaanam vazhankaadhu enin (TK. 19)

Gurucharan translates this as

tapamu ceeDunu dhaana dharmambu luDugumunu
niiru jaarakunna ningi nuNDi

(తపము చెడును ధాన ధర్మంబు లుడుగుమును
నీరు జారకున్న నింగి నుండి)

Arudra's translation is

vaana kuruvakunna dhaanaalu dharmalu
tapamulanni dholagu dharaNi nuNDi"

(వాన కురువకున్న ధానాలు ధర్మాలు
తపములన్ని ధోలగు ధరణి నుండి).

In Gurucharan's translation, tapamu ceeDunnu is the extra one which is not found in Tirukkural. In Arudra's translation also the above mentioned form is used.

But both Gurucharan and Arudra use

dhaana dharmambu dhaanaalu dharmalu
(ధాన ధర్మంబు ధానాలు ధర్మాలు) the lexical doublets instead of dhaanam tavam
iraNDum in kuRaL.

Conclusion

We notice that these two authors have adopted some similar terms and similar strategies, while differing from each other in several other points. One of these translators even introduced new material, and both these translators tried also to look at the original work from their own understanding of the world and ethics and morals. They even tried to divide some of the original subdivisions into various categories. They tried to keep their audience (Telugu readers) in mind while dealing with the translation of nouns and other grammatical items. They also tried to be faithful to a great extent.

As this is only a preliminary investigation, a detailed investigation of all the Telugu translations of Tirukkural would reveal major trends and strategies in translating classics into a cognate language. Identification of such trends and strategies will help us teaching and reading these classics in a more creative way.

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