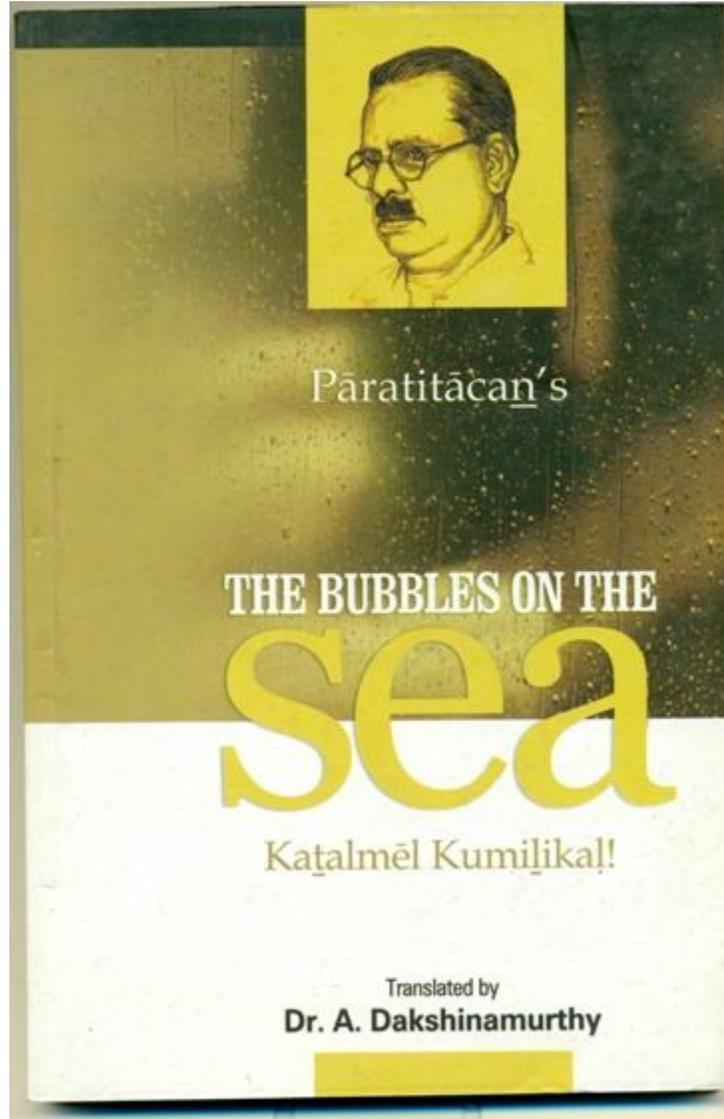


Evaluation of Translated Works of Bharathidasan

Dr. Rajendran Sankaravelayuthan

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1. Introduction

Bharathidasan belonged to the twentieth century and is still considered as one of the greatest poets in Modern Tamil Literature. As far as my reference to the translated works of Bharathidasan goes, only nineties saw renowned enthusiasm in translating Bharathidasan's works, triggered by the

Bharathidasan Centenary Celebration orchestrated by the then government of Tamilnadu. Though there are some individual efforts in translating Bharathidasan's works, major attempts to translate his works were taken up by certain institutions. Bharathidasan University, Pondicherry Institute of Linguistics and Culture and Marxist Periyarist Communist Party have brought out a volume each of translated poems of Bharathidasan. The first two are collections of a number of contributors and the third is a collection of an individual contributor. Among the individual attempts the works of Thangappa and Dhakshinamurthi can be quoted as examples. There are a few works of individuals which have not seen the day light. A. C. Chettiyar's works can be quoted as an example of this category.

Bharathidasan's works are translated mainly into English and French, though there are attempts to translate his works into Indian Languages. The translated works in English appears to be more in number than the same in French. Both his prose and poetic works have been translated, but the poetic works supersedes the prose works. The translated works are both bilingual and monolingual in nature, the former give the Tamil text along with the translated version and the latter give only the translated version. It appears that the bilingual translated works are more in number than the monolingual translated works.

It is not an exaggeration if one argues that the poetic genius of the source work cannot be unfolded in defined terms from the translated works. The evaluator can neither take the side of a literary critic nor that of a language analyst fully. He has to walk on a rope without falling into the pitfalls of taking the extreme side. To tell the truth, evaluating a translated poetic work is not an easy joke as the translation can swing between a perfect translation and transcreation. The evaluator's job may be questioned or he may not be in a position to justify his job as the expectation of his role may oscillate between linguistic analyst and literary critic. More over in the Tamil literary society, literary criticism is not a welcome thing. Only there are literary appreciators rather than literary critics in Tamil. Even translation evaluators are not totally free from this norm or trend. With this preamble let me take up the job at my hand. Before doing so let me confess that due to lack of time and non-availability of books I could not put my fingers on all the translated works of Bharathidasan. Only those works I could see in our library and in the private collections of T.N. Ramachandran are quoted here and are taken for evaluation. Also, I like to mention that it is not a very serious study based on

in-depth principles on evaluating translated works. A proper evaluation needs through research which is not attempted here.

2. Theory of Evaluation of Translation

Before entering directly into the evaluation of the translated text of Bharathidasan, it is better for us to understand the theory behind evaluating translated text. An evaluator looks forward for the fulfillment at least three criteria while evaluating a translated literary text. They are

1. Linguistic criteria
2. Stylistic criteria
3. Translational criteria

2.1. Linguistic Criteria

It comprises of the following three criteria:

1. Lexical Criteria,
2. Structural Criteria, and
3. Semantico-pragmatic criteria

The lexical criteria demand the fulfillment of the following items:

- i. Adequate rendering of technical terms
- ii. Adequate rendering of social\cultural terms
- iii. Lexical innovation of source language text (SLT) in target language text (TLT) for keeping balance between them
- iv. Retention of denotative meaning
- v. Preservation of connotative meaning

The structural criteria cover up the following items:

- i. Retention of SLT structure

- ii. Modified TLT structure for keeping balance between SLT and TLT.

Semantico-pragmatic criteria involves the following items.

- i. Retention of Social milieu of SLT into TLT
- ii. Preservation of emotion/feeling of SLT in TLT
- iii. Preservation of overall sense/import of SLT into TLT
- iv. Accuracy/intensity/seriousness of translator in attempting
- v. Coverage of all information conveyed in SLT while creating the TLT.
- vi. Adequate representation of images
- vii. Retention of the function of SLT into TLT.

2.2. Stylistic Criteria

The translator has to choose between a number of styles depending upon the nature of the SLT and the TLT he aims at. At least six types of styles have been identified:

1. Informative style: If the translator is mainly interested in covering as much as information embodied in the SLT in the TL, he is likely to use the informative style. This style is mostly associated with technical and scientific texts.
2. Natural style: If the translator adopts the natural flow of the TL and uses it in the translated text, even if it may be very different from the SL in the structure and style it is called the natural.
3. Objective style: If the translator retains his neutrality and merely reproduces the SLT objectively into the TL it is the objective style. This objective style is employed in an informative approach.
4. Imperative Style: If the translator conveys a sense of authority/commanding relationship vis-a-vis the TL readers it is called the imperative style.
5. Persuasive Style: It is the style where the translator conveys the message of the SLT in TL in such a way that the TL reader is persuaded to read it and react to it in a certain manner.
6. Individual/Idiosyncratic style: If the translator does not differ stylistically from the SLT author and does not follow the natural style of the TL but used the strategy of grammatical/lexical deviations it is called the individual/idiosyncratic style.

2.3. Translational Criteria

Translational criteria comprise of

1. communicative translation,
2. cognitive translation and
3. semantic translation.

Communicative translation attempts to recreate the same effect on the TL readers as received by the SL readers. Cognitive translation refers to a pre-translational procedure which may be performed on the SLT to convert it into the TL unambiguously. Semantic translation deals with the presentation of the exact contextual meaning conveyed in the SLT in TLT. In semantic translation, the translator always preserve the gist of the message in the SLT in a way the author intended, where the translator gives the prominence to the content rather than to the lexical items. In other words, semantic translation is a semantico-pragmatic oriented translation and not structure-oriented or lexicon oriented.

3. Evaluation of Some of the Translated works of Bharathidasan

It is proposed to evaluate only six translated works of Bharathidasan which to my purview. As has been confessed in the introduction itself, this is not going to be a full-fledged evaluation; one can even call it as an extended review.

3.1. Smile of Beauty

In my journey on chronological order I came across the "Puratci Kavignar Bharathidasan's Smile of Beauty" the translated version of Bharathidasan's *azhakin cirippu* published by Koo. Amutavalli, Paaratidasan Kuyil in 1984. It is bilingual (Tamil-English) in nature as the translator, Parameswaran, gives the original poem first and his translated version below it. His style is simple and the translation does not deviate much from the original version.

It is sometimes seen that if one renders a poem in Tamil into English he makes some compromise with the language structure which will be revealed in the translated version by loss of information, over generalization, under generalization, loss of tempo and emotional impact, etc. In

the following passage quoted from Prameswaran, the tempo of the original is lost in the translation due to the selection of words, their arrangements and style.

Tamil Original	English Translation
iruLin pakalaaTai iravaaTai viNmutal maN varaikkum viyakkum un meeni tanaik kaNNilee kaaNpeen: ndiiyoo aTikkaTi uTaiyil maaRRam paNNuvaay iruLee unRan pakal uTai tangkaccelai veNpaTTil iraac ceelai-meel veelaippaa Tenna colveen!	Admire I your body Spreading from earth to sky Alter you your apparel So often O darkness! Gold saree your diurnal Dress is; O what filigree Work on the white silk on Your nocturnal saree!

Sometimes a translator may resort to word-to-word translation without understanding the idiomatic meaning conveyed by the concerned phrase or compound. The following passage illustrates the above-mentioned statement.

Tamil Original	English Translation
kizhakkup peN viTTeRinda kiLicciRaip parutip pandtu	The parrot winged ball of Phoebes cast by the woman of the East

kiLicciRai means "gold resembling the parrot's wing in colour; one of four kinds of gold". The translator fails here by his wrong interpretation of the exocentric compound.

In the following passage also, the compound phrase used by the author is not caught properly by the translator.

Tamil Original	English Translation
paaRpukai mukilai ciyyttu paLiccenRu "tingkaT ceeval"	Cleaving the milk-smoke-like cloud emerges the moon cock

3. 2. Tranquility: a Mute Play

"Tranquility:a mute play", a translated version of Bharathidasan's *amaiti* in Tamil rendered by Chalapathy, was published in 1987. Bharathidasan has only a few prose works to his credit and *amaiti* is one of them. Being essentially a poet, Bharathidasan does not seem to have taken his prose writing seriously and this explains the rather sketchy manner in which he has written this work. The translated work "Tranquility" consists of 48 pages out of which 5 pages are devoted for translator's note, 16 pages for a note given by Thangappa entitled "Revolutionary Poet" and the rest of the 23 pages form the translated version of the poet. I don't have much to offer as comment about this work. The translation is simple and the translator tried to keep the tempo and style of the original.

3.3. Select Poems of Bharathidasan

This book has been brought out by The Periarist Communist Party which considers Bharathidasan as one of its philosophers. Thangappa had been assigned the work of translating a few poems written by Bharathidasan to be included in this volume. The book was published in 1992. It is bilingual in nature as the original poems are given on the left side and the translated versions of them are given on the right side pages of the book. There are 88 pages in this volume. Twenty five poems are rendered into English and they are grouped under six broad headings. The headings, both in Tamil and English, and the number of poems listed under each heading are given below:

Tamil name	English name	No of poems
iyaRkai	On Nature	5 poems
tamizh	On Tamil	2 poems
tamizh viTutalai	On Tamil's Liberation	2 poems
peN viTutalai	On Women's Liberation	2 poems
tozhilaaLar viTutalai	On emancipation of Workers	3 poems
periyaaR	Periyar	1 poem

Thangappa probably could be the one who took active interest in translating the poems of Bharathidasan even in the eighties due to his love and devotion for the poet and his close association with him as well. His style and the language are simple. His eagerness to bring out the emotional impact given by the original even in the translated version is reflected in his selection of words and phrases and the style he has chosen to express the original ideas. This can be illustrated by comparing his rendering with those of others.

Tamil	Murugan's rendering into English	Thangappa's rendering into English
tunpam piRrkundal inpam tamakkenum tuTTa manoopavam, anpinai maaykkum; aRangkulaik kum; puvi aakkand tanaik keTukkum.	The mentality abject and wicked 'Pleasure to me and pain unto others Will kill love, dissolve virtue and dissipate mankind's progress	"Let others suffer But let us have pleasure" This is a wicked attitude That kills love Upsets order And blocks the world's progress.

Tamil	Dakshinamurthy's rendering into English	Thangappa's rendering into English
<i>ndiilavaan aaTaikkuL uTalm Raittu ndilaavenRu kaaTTukinRaay oLimu kattaik koolamuzhu tum kaaTTi viTTaal kaataR koLLaiyilee ivvulakam caamoo?</i>	Covering up your person in full With your garment, the blue hued sky You expose only your glittering face called moon! What wrong will befall you If you expose your beauty in full?	Veiled in the blue mantle of the sky Showing your face as the moon, Fearing that the world may die of love If your beauty is revealed in full?

Sometimes a translator may resort to addition or reconstruction of information not given in the source text, thus deviating from the original. The following translated passage of Thangappa will exemplify this statement.

Tamil original	English translation
<i>vaanaviitiyil vandtu tirindtu</i>	Sweeping past the clouds in sweet sunshine

<i>tennagk kiiRRup ponnuunjcal aaTic</i> <i>coolaiyininRu caalaiyil meeyndtu</i> <i>vaanum maNNundtan vacattiR koNTaaL!</i>	She roams about the sky at will, Swings on the swaying coconut fronds Frisks and gambols in the woods And picks up grains by the roadside Heaven and earth belong to her
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3.4. Poems of Bharathidasan

"Poems of Bharathidasan (a translation)" is a handiwork of Dakshinamurthy which was published in 1990. The book consists of 73 pages out of which 2 pages each are given for foreword and a critical appreciation, 16 pages form the introduction and 2 pages are devoted for acknowledgement and 49 pages for poems and 2 pages for errata. The work is on the translation of Bharathidasan's two works "*puraTcikkavi*" and "*canjciivi parvatattin caaral*". *PuraTcikkavi* itself is a free adaptation of the Southern Sankrit recension of Bilhaniyam by a great poet Bilhana of Kashmir who belongs to 11th century A.D. In the introduction the translator scans through the life and works of Bharathidasan. He also discusses about Bilhaniyam and its direct translations in English and Tamil, and also about the story of the second work.

The translator makes use of simple language and style which is reflected in the words and phrases chosen by him to render the poems. The following example will stand to exemplify this observation.

Tamil original	English translation
<i>ndaayai izhuttu puRamviTuppiir-keTTa</i> <i>ndaavai aRuttu tolaikku munnee!- indtap</i> <i>peeyinai ndaanpeRRa peNNenavee collum</i> <i>peeccai maRandtiTac colli Tuviir!</i>	'Drag this dog and throw it away Before I cut its wretched tongue! Advise the devil to refrain From calling itself my daughter!'

But his simple style and phrases sometimes fail to capture the original style and phrases loaded with emotions and under current meaning as exemplified by the following passage:

Tamil original	English translation
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<i>kiTTariya kaataR kizhatti iTumveelai</i>	Would not the command of one's own sweet-
<i>viTTeRinda kallaiippool meeleeRip paayaatoo!</i>	heart
<i>kaNNin kaTaipparvai kaataliyar kaaTTiviTTaal</i>	Very rare to attain
<i>maNil kumararukku maamalaiyum</i>	Fly and spring up like a stone in air?
<i>oorkaTukaam</i>	Even a lofty mountain is a mustard seed
	To the youth on earth

3.5. Selected Poems of Bharathidasan

"Selected Poems of Bharathidasan" was published in 1991 by Bhrarathidasan University. It contains 409 pages out of which 25 pages are devoted for preface, the editor's note, Bharathidasan: his life and works, contents, and complete literary works of Bharathidasan and 378 pages are devoted for translated poems and 4 pages for "a note on translators". Eighty-five poetic pieces classified under seven headings have been rendered into English, sixteen of them under the heading "On Nature", fourteen under "On Love", thirteen under "Tamil", eleven under "Emancipation of Women", eleven under "A New Brave World", three under "Epic and Drama", and sixteen under "Miscellaneous". Thirty translators have contributed to the volume.

The style of the translation ranges from medium to simple, sometimes compelled by the authors' preference and sometimes by the style of the original. Most of the translators try to tread on the heels of the poet in style, tone and in other poetic features. The following passage will exemplify this statement.

Tamil original	English translation
<i>muzhu ndilaa! azhaku ndilaa!</i>	Perfect Moon! Beautiful Moon!
<i>muLaittatu viN meelee-atu</i>	Sprouted up in the sky
<i>pazhamaiyilee putundinaivu</i>	Like Fresh thoughts
<i>paayndtezhundtaaR poolee!</i>	Gushing through the old ones!

The selection of equivalent words, phrases, and compounds for the source items is worth commendable as they try to portray the translation as original and at the same time with the tinge of Bhrarathidasan. Whenever the circumstance demands, closer forms or dynamic equivalents are given in the absence of exact equivalents. The following table will illustrate the point.

Bharathidasan's Phrase	Translators' Phrase
<i>kaLicciRu tumpi</i>	little beetle drunk with joy
<i>kaNaaTic ciRaku</i>	glassy wings
<i>tuLicciRu malar itazh</i>	tiny petals of the little flowers
<i>kiLicciRakaaTai</i>	wing garb of the parrots
<i>kaniyiTai eeRiya cuzahi</i>	succulent pulp inside the fruit
<i>muRaal kazhaiyiTai</i>	juice of -full-grown
<i>eeRiya caaRum</i>	sugar-cane

Whenever necessary the phrases are shuffled or ordered to suit the poetic order of English Language.

Tamil original	English translation
<i>camaippatum viiTTuvelai</i> <i>calippinRi ceeyalum peNkaL</i> <i>tamakkeeam enRu kuuRal</i> <i>cariyillai!</i>	It is wrong to say That women alone should drudge As cooks at home And cleaners all day.

There is a slight distortion from the original as the verbal nouns *camaippatu* and *viiTTu velai* *calippinRi ceeyal* are rendered as agents instead of actions in the translation. This kind of compromises can be allowed in a translation, but only if necessary.

If a source poem puts its weight more on the cultural and social background in which it is written, its translated version may not convey the message properly if the TL belongs to a different cultural and social background. The following translated passage will exemplify this statement.

Tamil original	English translation
<i>puuriyil orundaaL ndaanak,</i> <i>puuteevar enanaTakkum</i> <i>aariyan oruvan tanRan</i>	One day Nanak saw in Puri One Aryan with closed eyes and covered nose, Walking towards him as the God of the Earth

<i>akalvizhi muukkai muuTi</i> <i>ndeeril varutal kaNTaar</i> <i>ndeerpaTum koolattiRkuk</i> <i>koorinaar;</i>	Why in such a pose he should appear, he asked,
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If a translated version of the above type is placed before a Western reader, one cannot expect that it will be fully understood and appreciated, because the reader concerned may not be able to understand the cultural and social background of this piece.

3.6. Selected Poems of Bharathidasan

"Selected Poems of Bharathidasan", a volume titled in the same name as that of the one published by Bharathidasan University, was published in 1994. The translation has been done by Murugan. It consists of 310 pages out of which 20 pages are given for introduction, etc. and 290 pages are devoted for the translated text. Hundred selected poems have been rendered into translation. Along with English, Dravidian languages such as Malayalam, Telugu and Kannada had been chosen by the institute simultaneously as target languages for translation. But I could not get the opportunity to see the translated books in the non-English languages.

The translator has chosen simple phrases and known words to express the original. The translation is simple to follow and the effect of the original is felt throughout the translation. As far as possible he tries to reflect the style of the original.

Tamil original	English translation
<i>tamizhukkum amutenRu peer- antat</i> <i>tamizh inpat tamiz engkaL uyirukku neer!</i> <i>tamizhukku nilavenRu peer - inpat</i> <i>tamizh engkaL camukattin viLaivukku niir!</i>	Tamil too is called the ambrosia! That, the lovely Tamil, is as precious as our life Tamil is called the moon! That, the lovely Tamil, is the water to our society's growth!

Sometimes, or shall I say, mostly it is difficult to transfer the emotional impact given by the original into the translated version.

Tamil original	English translation
<i>tamizh engkaL piRavikkuttaay!-inpat</i> <i>tamizh engkaL valamikka uLamuRRa tii!</i>	Tamil is the mother of our genesis! That, the lovely Tamil, is our quickening fire

It may so happen that the language structure of the target language may not allow the translation to reflect the style of the original and thus deprive the translation of the emotive impact of the original.

Tamil original	English translation
<i>tunapam ndeerkaiyil yaazh eTuttu ndii</i> <i>inpam ceerkamaaTTaayaa?-emak</i> <i>kinpam ceerkamaaTTaayaa?</i>	When we go sorrow and despondent Will you play on the lute to see us sprightly?

Sometimes lines have to be shuffled to suit the target language. As a result of this, the emotive aspect of the original may be sacrificed.

Tamil original	English translation
kaNTeen makizhcci koNTeen!	I found to my joy and ecstasy

Onomatopoeic words which are used to express emotions have to be duly modified to suit the English pattern.

Tamil original	English translation
aaraaroo aariroo aarariroo aaraaroo aaraaroo aariroo aarariroo aaraaroo	Hush my dear! Hush a-bye! O my darling

3.7. Bharathidasan: Selected Poems

It is published by Pondichery Institute of Linguistics and Culture, Pondichery in 1996. This comprehensive edition of Bharathidasan's poems starts with a critical introduction followed by a biographical note on the poet, Bharathidasan. It is bilingual in nature. Throughout this volume the original Tamil version of the poems appears on the left side and its English translation on the right. Two hundred poems are included in the volume of which 197 are arranged in an approximately chronological order, i.e. according to the date of their composition. The poem entitled "In Our Town"

and "I am Prince of Poets" are not in line with the chronological order due to their extraordinary nature, as noted by the editor. Under each poem the translator's name is given. Under the title "Notes to the Poems", annotations and short notes have been provided for all the poems. Based on the title of the poems and the first line of the poems, four indexes, each one for Tamil and English, have been appended at the end. These indexes are alphabetically prepared along with the page numbers, which would guide the readers an easy reference. A brief biographical note on the fourteen translators is also included.

The following translated passage from the book will exemplify how a translator gifted with both poetic talent and efficiency and experience in translation can transfer the effect of the original as such to the target language.

Tamil original	English translation
kaviyin mikkataam celvamon Rilayee! kaNmaNi keeLaTaa ndii enRan collaiyee! celvam piRrkum ndaam tandiTil tiirndiTum kalvi tarundtooRum mkaic ceerndiTum	Hark ye to my words, dear one! No wealth there is that is greater than learning Wealth goes when given away The wealth of learning manifold grows when offered.

The equivalents chosen by the translators are apt and to the point, which can be seen from the following renderings.

Tamil original	English translation
kalviyuLLavaree kaNNuLLaar enalaam	Deemed only the learned as having eyes

Tamil original	English translation
<i>enakillai kaTavuL kavalai</i>	About God worried not am I

Tamil original phrase	English translated phrase
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manaimakkaL	house-folk
aRiviyakkappulamai	the power of reason
kanamaana kaTavuLee	O! Great God!

Note that *aritu* is given three different but closely related translational equivalent to suit the need.

Tamil original phrase	English translated phrase
avvan paritu	her love is supreme
atuvum ulakil aritu	her love is great
naRRaaycciiir njaalattaritu	Mother's love is rare

Most of the poems are rendered into English in simple style and at the same time the poetic characteristics of the original are not sacrificed for translation sake.

Tamil original	English translation
tamizhukku amutenRu peer!-andtat	Tamil too is as nectar known!
tamizh inpat tamizh engkaL uryirukku ndeer!	That Tamil, sweet Tamil,
tamuzhukku ndilavenRu peer!- inpat	Is akin to our dear life!
tamizh engkaL camuukattin viLaivukku ndiir!	Tamil is as the moon described!
	That Tamil, sweet Tamil,
	Is the sap of our society's weal!

3.8. A Few French Translations

As mentioned in the introduction itself, there are some French renderings of Bharathidasan too. The works which came to my notice are listed below:

1. L E cume de le mer, a French translation of katal mel kumizhikaL, by L.Cadelis, 1979
2. Candi, a French translation of Bharathidasan's drama kaRkaNTu by Mme.G.David, 1991.
3. A French translation of Piciraantaiyaar By L.Cadelis

Summary

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Evaluation of Translated Works of Bharathidasan

Poems are given priority over prose for translation, though a few translated prose works are also available along with several poetic translated works. Bharathidasan's poems are translated especially into English and French; probably English may supersede French in quantity. There are attempts to translate Bharathidasan's works into other Indian languages. Institution-oriented translated works are more in quantity than the translation works done by individuals. Except a few translated works, most of the translated works are bilingual in nature, i.e. the Tamil version is given along with the translated version. Bharathidhar's Centenary Celebration saw a number of such attempts. As far as possible Bharathidasan's poems are rendered into a simple language to suit the original. Many translators try to keep or reflect the style of the original. The words and phrases selected by the translators are mostly simple words and phrases known to an ordinary second language English speaker. Idiomatic phrases are rendered with great transparency reminding the original. Distortions from the original is very rare. As far as possible, the translators try to keep the rhythm of the original. Whenever necessary the order of the words and phrases are altered to suit the target language.

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