

## The Significance of Translation Brought out through Bama's *Karukku*

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**Bama**

### Translation in Aid of Mutual Understanding

India is a multicultural and multilingual nation with many languages and traditions. Thus there is need to translate all sorts of written materials from one Indian language to another to bring about understanding and mutual appreciation among the varied groups of people in India. Even as Indian writers writing in Indian languages focus on their group's identity, traditions, beliefs and day to day life, they also do not ignore the cultural diversity and unity that exist among Indians. Their use of linguistic dialects brings out the uniqueness of the group and characters.

Indian writers have gained wide popularity and recognition through the translation of their works. Works like *Chemmeen* and *Gitanjali* and many works from other languages have

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been translated into English for universal appreciation. Translation has thus brought them recognition of their works and admiration from readers all over the world.

### **Three Different Types of Translation**

There are three different types of translation, namely, intra-lingual, where the sign is decoded to other signs in the same language; inter-lingual, where the signs are decoded into another language; and inter-semiotic, where verbal signs are decoded into nonverbal sign language. The first type translates into the same language, acting like a synonym. The second is the most acknowledged type, where the translator decodes a work of literature from one language to another. The third type is found in the artistry works like art, paintings, and sculpture.

### **Inter-lingual Translation**

Among the three, the predominant form used in the world is the inter-lingual translation or the so-called translation proper. The translators decode the work of art from source language to a target language. The source language is the language in which the writer has written his work and the target language represents the language into which the translator wishes to decode his content.

### **Nida on Translation**

Eugene Nida's graphical representation of translation process illustrates the process involved in translation. It tells us that, first, the text is taken from the source language, analysed, and then transferred to the receptor's language through the process of restructuring the syntax of the text. Nida distinguishes between two types of translation equivalence. They are the formal equivalence and dynamic equivalence. Formal equivalence "focuses attention on the message

itself, in both form and content” (Bassnett 33), whereas, “*Dynamic equivalence* is based on the principle of *equivalent effect*” (33).

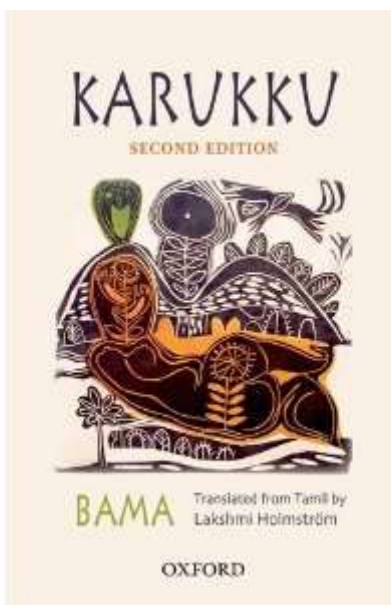
### **Bama Gains Recognition through Translation**

Notable Indian writers whose works of translation have become famous include Rabindranath Tagore, Girish Karnad, Thakazhi Sivashankara Pillai, and many others. Presently Bama has gained wide recognition through the translation of her novel. Bama is an eminent Tamil Dalit woman writer. She became an acclaimed novelist with the publication of her first autobiographical novel *Karukku*. It was published in the year 1992. It received wide recognition with its translation into English by Lakshmi Holmstrom. Both the writer and the translator won prestigious awards for their work of writing and translating. This novel speaks of the suppression of the Dalit people and their untiring effort to rise up from exploitation and discrimination.

Bama’s other works include *Sangati* in 1994, and a collection of short stories, *Kusumbukkaaran* in 1996. All her works were written in Tamil, her mother tongue. These were later translated into English. She uses her regional dialect texture of words, which enables the reader to comprehend her culture and her region of living.

### ***Karukku***

In her introduction, Bama provides an explanation for the title of her novel *Karukku*. She explains the name of the title by bringing up its reference to Tamil people’s cultural relationship. The term *Karukku* refers to palmyra leaves with sharp edges on both its sides. It is also referred to freshness and newness. She has justified the sharpness of the leaves with the sharpness of the sword in the Bible. She connects these terms with the suffering of the people in the novel.



## Bama's Background

Bama was born in the mountain range of the Western Ghats. She is a Christian and belongs to Paraiyar community. Many people of Paraiyar community worked as bonded labour in the lands owned by members of the dominant non-Dalit community. She suffered humiliation and discrimination along with her people. With all these struggles, she fought for her survival and became a teacher in a school, where she was subjected to humiliation on several occasions. Here, she helped the students of her Dalit community and inspired her students and others from her community.



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The author belongs to the Catholic family. As such, she explains in detail, the cultural festivals of her religion. She does so to establish the cultural importance of her place. It is these festivals that bring them joy, freshness and newness in their life. They show off their new attire, have special food and enjoy the time with their neighbours and family. Her recognition has also brought in freshness and newness to her.

### **The Translator**

Lakshmi Holmstrom, an Indian translator and writer, was impressed by Bama's work and took the step of translating the work into English. With the translation of the work, Bama became an accredited Dalit writer in the world. Holmstrom has translated the work with great effort, and she won the prestigious Vodafone Crossword Prize for translation. She strives to bring out the equivalence of translation of words in her translation of Bama's novel. The emotional strife that Bama underwent and the suppression of the Dalit people are all brought out clearly and effectively in the translation.

### **The Source and the Target Languages**

The source language used here is Tamil and the target language is English. The translation process is inter-lingual or the translation proper. Lakshmi Holmstrom has done a thorough study of the text, analysed the true emotional essence of Bama and has brought out the same in her translation. She has then restructured the syntax of the sentences to suit the English grammatical meaning. So, the exact emotional effect of Bama is somewhat modified in the translation even as it retains the essentials. But her target of translating the sufferings of Tamil Dalit people is brought out smoothly.

## Use of Transliteration

Holmstrom has used the process of transliteration for proper nouns and culture-specific objects. For instance, she has used the words *Paraya*, *Naicker*, *Endrayya*, *Keppa Kuuzhu*, *Kaaman*, *Naadodi*, and *Marakkaa* throughout the text. Readers foreign to Tamil might find it difficult to pronounce the words. The linguistic aspect, thus, marks another significant feature of reading and distinguishes the source language from the target language.

## Use of Dynamic Equivalence

The translator has used Dynamic Equivalence, in which the translator has aimed to bring out the equivalent effect in form and content of the writer to her readers. She has tried to make the target readers comprehend the essence of the novel just as the readers who read the novel in Tamil. There is also the presence of stylistic equivalence adopted by the translator.

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