

# SINHALA LITERATURE IN TAMIL TRANSLATION

## Introduction

Tamil and Sinhala have been co-existing and interacting in different social situations and contexts in Sri Lanka for many centuries. Sinhala scholars like Peter Silva (1961) and D.E. Hettiarachchi (1969) recognized the influence of Tamil on the structure and lexicon of Sinhala from the historical periods. Sugathapala de Silva (1969) and C.E. Godakumbura (1950) admit that *Sidat Saṅgarāwa*, the earliest grammar of the Sinhala language written in the 13th century A.D., is influenced by the Tamil grammar *Vi:raço:liyam*. Sinhala, in turn, influenced Sri Lanka Tamil to a certain extent, mainly in the area of its lexicon.

In spite of the present political conflict between the Tamils and Sinhalese in Sri Lanka, both the languages are mutually used by these communities for their day-to-day communication, at least in certain bilingual areas in this country.

Although Sinhala and Tamil have a long literary history of their own, Tamil literature has greatly influenced Sinhala literature during the middle ages. Peter Silva (1963), Charles de Silva (1964), Hissālle Dhammaratana Thera (1963) and recently Sunil Ariyaratna (1995) have pointed out the impact of Tamil on Sinhala literature. Tamil literature, however, did not in return get anything from Sinhala literature until very recently, maybe because of the political and literary dominance of the Tamil language in the region during the ancient and medieval periods.

The situation changed during the post-Independence period in Sri Lanka. Despite the ethnic tension and violence which occurred from time to time in the recent past, the Tamil-speaking communities in Sri Lanka have shown their interest in learning Sinhala, in reading Sinhala literature, and also in translating the same into Tamil. They learned Sinhala mainly because it was made the (only) official language in the late 1950s and had become socially dominant, so that they were compelled to learn it for their official existence. Whatever their reasons for learning Sinhala, this opened the windows to the culture of the majority community.

Tamil and Muslim writers who learned Sinhala have translated a number of contemporary Sinhala creative pieces into Tamil.<sup>1</sup> Most of these translations were undertaken with a purpose; that is, to promote an inter-communal dialogue through literature in order to create an understanding between communities, and to create communal harmony in this country. It was a one-way effort until very recently,

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<sup>1</sup>. Some of the translators of creative writings from Sinhala into Tamil are Al-Azoomath, S.M.J. Faisdeen, Junaida Shariff, T. Kanakarajam, M. Kanagarajah, Madulugiriye Wijeratna, Neelkarai Nambi, Nilarm Casim, M.A. Nuhman, A. Piyadasa, Raja Srikandan, P. Ratnasabapathy Iyar, Sarojinidevi Arunasalam, M.H.M. Shams, Sinnaiya Kanagamoorthy, Sinnaia Sivanesan, Siva Subramaniam, Sundaram Saumiyam, Tambyaya Davadas and M.M. Uwais.

however, because only a few contemporary Tamil pieces had been translated into Sinhala till the late 1970s.<sup>2</sup> This means that, unlike in the medieval period, Tamil had lost its social and political importance in this country. However, from the late 1970s, because of the intensification of the ethnic conflict after the 1983 communal riot, the emergence of Tamil militancy, and the escalation of the civil war some progressive Sinhala writers, journalists, and intellectuals took positive steps to have a dialogue with the minority communities through literature and started to translate contemporary Tamil writings, mainly Sri Lankan Tamil poetry, into Sinhala. Some Muslim and Tamil writers willingly collaborated with them in their meaningful efforts. Some of the progressive Sinhala tabloids like *Māwatha*, *Viwaraṇa*, *Rāvaya*, and *Yukthiya* made conscious efforts to promote the translation of Tamil literature into Sinhala during the last decade.<sup>3</sup>

This paper surveys the Sinhala literary works translated into Tamil during the post-Independent period, assesses the quality of the translations, and highlights some of the problems of translating Sinhala creative writing into Tamil.

<sup>2</sup>. Some Tamil classics have been translated into Sinhala between the years 1950 and 1970. Sri Charles de Silva (1964) and Misihami Gorakagoda (1961a, 1961b) have translated *Tirukkuraḷ* of Thiruvalluvar. Misihami Gorakagoda (1968) has also translated *Na:laṭya:r* an anthology of didactic poems in Tamil. *Cilappatika:ram*, the first Tamil epic, has been translated by Amarakoon Dassanayake (1956) and Rev. Hissalle Dhammaratana (1959). Rev. Hissalle Dhammaratana (1950) has also translated the classical Tamil Buddhist epic *Maṇime:kalai*. I could gather information of only one modern Tamil creative work that has been translated into Sinhala during this period. It is *Narisura:va*, (*Kallo: Ka:viyamo:*), a novel by M. Varatharajan (1966) translated by M.C.M. Sayir and P.D. Wijedasa.

<sup>3</sup>. I gathered information about the following five Tamil short story collections published since 1970 in Sinhala translation which include 64 Tamil short stories.

- (1) *Kulahi:nayo* 17 short stories by C. Rajagopalachari (1973). Translated by D.D. Nanayakkara.
- (2) *Alut Saṭaṇpa:tha* 12 short stories by S. Kaneshalingam. Translated by Ranjith Perera.
- (3) *Demala Keṭikatā* 12 short stories of different authors. Translated by T. Kanakaratanam 1979).
- (4) *Kalimuttuge: puravāsi Bha:vaya* 11 short stories of different authors. Translated by Ibnu Azoomat and Pushpa Ramlane Ratnayake (1991).
- (5) *Demalakeṭikata* 12 short stories by S. Thillai Nadaraja (1994). The translator's name is not given.

### Translation of Sinhala Short Stories

Nearly a hundred Sinhala short stories have been translated into Tamil during this period. Three Sinhala short story collections have been published. *Ce:tu Pantanam*, translated by Kanakaratanam (1979), consists of twelve short stories of different authors. *Cinkalac Cīrukataikaḷ*, published in India in 1982, includes ten short stories of different authors. These translations were done by eight different persons, and they had already been published in *Mallikai*, a Tamil literary monthly. *Valai*, translated by Madulugiriya Wijerathne (1994), consists of five short stories of different authors including one of his own. The other stories have been published in various magazines and newspapers during the past thirty years.

Most of the prominent Sinhala short story writers have been introduced to Tamil readers through these translations. Here are some of their names:

Ariyaratna Vithana, Dayasena Gunasinha, Ediriweera Sarachchandra, Gunadasa Amarasekera, Gunasena Vithana, Gunadasa Liyanage, K. Jayatilaka, Jayasena Jayakody, Jayalath Manoratne, Jayatilaka Kammallaweera, Karuna Perera, Lakshmi Bombuwala, K. Layan Perera, Leel Gunasekera, Madawala S. Ratnayake, Madulugiriye Wijerathne, Martin Wickramasinghe, Oswin de Alwis, Piyasoma Perera, Sarath Wijesuriya, Somarathne Balasuriya, A.V. Suraweera and Tilak Kudahetti.<sup>4</sup>

### Translation of Sinhala Novels

The following Sinhala novelists have been introduced to Tamil readers: T.B. Illangaratne, K. Jayatilake, Karunasena Jayalath, Leel Gunasekera, Martin Wickramasinghe, Meril Kariyawawam and R.R. Samarakoon.

Three of Martin Wickramasinghe's novels have been translated into Tamil. *Gamperaliya* was translated by M.M. Uwais and published by the Sri Lanka Sahitya Mandalaya in 1964. *Virāgaya* and *Maḍol Doova* were translated by Sundaram Saumiyam and published by Tisara Prakasakayo in 1992 and 1993 respectively. Thambyayah Thevathas translated K. Jayatilake's *Charita Thunak*. It was published in India in 1979. He has also translated Karunasena Jayalath's *Golu Hadavata* into Tamil. Sarojinithevi Arunasalam translated R.R. Samarakoon's *Ge Kurullo* in 1992; she also translated T.B. Illangaratne's *Añbayahaluvo* and three stories for children by Kumaranatunga Munidasa; namely, *Hatpana*, *Hinsaraya* and *Magulkāma*. Leel Gunasekera's *Pethsama* was translated into Tamil by Junaida Sheriff in 1986. Meril Kariyavasam's *Daruvange Gedara* has also been translated into Tamil by Sinnaiah Kanagamoorthy and published by the Socio-Cultural Integration (project) Ministry.

<sup>4</sup> I must stress that this is at best an incomplete list of the Sinhala short story writers who have been translated into Tamil.

## Translation of Sinhala Poems and Plays

Tamil translations of Sinhala poems and plays are noticeably few. Sri Rahula Thera's *Selalihini Sandesaya*, the medieval Sinhala classic, was translated into Tamil by Navalayur S. Nadarajan and published by the Sri Lanka Sahitya Mandalaya in 1963. Apart from this classic only a few modern poems from Sinhala have been translated into Tamil. In contrast to this, more than a hundred contemporary Tamil poems have been translated into Sinhala from the late 1970s. The first Sinhala poet who introduced modern Tamil poets to Sinhala readers is Parakrama Kodituvakku. He published *Indu Saha Lanka*, an anthology of thirty three Tamil poems of twenty modern Tamil poets from Sri Lanka and India in 1979. The next important translation of Tamil poems published in Sinhala is *Do:nkaraya* by Seeta Ranjani (1993) which includes thirty four poems by eighteen contemporary Sri Lankan Tamil poets. Nilar M. Casim and Madulugiriye Wijeratne have also translated several Sri Lankan Tamil poems into Sinhala and published them in various magazines and newspapers; however, no single volume of modern Sinhala poems has been published in Tamil so far. Rohana Lakshman Piyadasa (1995) has tried to fill this gap recently. His bi-lingual anthology *Inayppo:mkarankaḷ* or *Atvalak Tanamu Api* consists of twenty poems by twenty different poets, ten from each language. The ten Sinhala poets introduced to the Tamil readers in this volume are Kongasdeniye Ananda Thera, Monika Ruvanpatirana, Srilal Kodikara, Jayavadu Vitana, Dayasena Gunasinha, Parakrama Kodituvakku, Ratna Sri Wijesinha, Buddhadasa Galappati, Dharmasiri Rajapakse and Senarat Gonsal Korala.

Although there is a visible impact of the modern Sinhala theatre on the development of modern Sri Lankan Tamil theatre, only three Sinhala stage plays have been translated into Tamil. The first is Dayananda Gunawardena's *Naribēnā*. This was translated by Sinnaiya Sivanesan in 1971. It was staged and also published. Two decades after this translation, Madulugiriye Wijerathne translated the other two Sinhala plays, S. Karunaratne's *Gangaḷa Udin Kokku Giya* and Sunanda Mahendra's *Socrates*. They are not published in book form.

## Quality of the Translations

Most of the Tamil translators of Sinhala literary works are government servants, clerks or teachers and their fluency in Sinhala is limited. They learned Sinhala, as mentioned earlier, for their official needs. Their knowledge of Sinhala literature is also limited. Given this background one cannot expect a high quality in selection and translation. In most cases, the selection of the literary works seems to be made at random. It is not easy to find out any basis underlying the choice, however broad the selection. The writers can be selected for their popularity or literary importance or ideological relevance, if not for that of their individual work. The Sinhala writers who have been introduced to the Tamil readers seem to satisfy one or the other criteria mentioned above. However, in most instances, the translated works do not sufficiently represent the individual writers as well as modern Sinhala writing. One cannot think that the best Sinhala short stories, novels and poems have been translated. A few good

Sinhala novels--*Gamperaliya* and *Viragāya*, for instance--have been translated, but unfortunately they are not good translations.

Most of the Tamil translations of Sinhala literary works seem to be literal. That is, those translators are more faithful to the syntactic structure and the style of the source language than the target language. Hence, their translations seem to be alien to modern Tamil fictional prose style. For an example I would like to discuss the translation of a passage from *Gamperaliya*. The transliteration of the original is given below:

demasaakaṭa pamana pasu je:mis yalit maha gedaraṭa paminiye: vāḍi  
hiṭṭiyan dedenaku pirivara koṭagat tarunayaku samaṅgaya.  
e:tarunaya: anikaku nova jinada:sa lam:he:va:ya. Ohu paminiye:  
manama:liya nohot nanda: balanu pinisaya. Amuttan muhandiramgen  
da biriṅdagen da bulatvalin ha: suruttuvalin ha: te:panin da sangraha  
labu: pasu:, ma:tara ha:mīne: hoṅḍin ænda palandagena sarasunu  
nanda: samaga gos sa:laye: a:tin vu: asunaka va:ḍigatta:ya. (Martin  
Wickramasinghe 1967: p. 77)

The Tamil translation of the above passage reads:

iraṅṭu ma:tankaḷukkup pinnar je:misu mi:ntum peruvaḷavukku iru  
periyararkaḷ cu:lavarum oru va:līpanuṭan vantain. Avva:līpan  
jinata:sa lamaheva: anṇi ve:ṛoruvanum allan. avan manava:ṭṭiay  
ata:vatu nanta:vayp pa:rkkave: vanta:n. virunta:ḷikaḷ  
muka:ntirattina:lum pa:riya:ra:lum vettīlaya:lum cruttukkaḷina:lum  
te:ni:ralum upacarikkappaṭṭa pinnar ma:ttaray ammayar nanku  
uṭṭu a:paraṅankaḷ aṅintirunta nanta:vuṭan po:y ca:layil atika  
tu:rattil irunta oru a:canattil amarnta:r. (Martin Wickramasinghe  
1964:p. 69).

This is obviously a literal translation of the text. Here, the translator is more concerned about the syntactic and grammatical patterns of the Sinhala original which are alien to Tamil. For a Tamil reader it is not an artistic description of a fictional event and it is not in an appropriate style of fictional prose in Tamil which has been richly developed during the past seventy five years.

The original text consists of four sentences. Each of them is in a different pattern which are somewhat strange to modern Tamil syntax. The translated passage also consists of four sentences which are similar to the original Sinhala sentence patterns. For example, the adverbial clause of the last sentence "amuttan muhandiramgen da birindagen da bulatvalin ha: suruttuvalin ha: te:paninda sangraha lābu: pasu. . .". is in the passive form and the noun phrases except "amuttan" are marked for ablative and instrumental cases. This pattern is totally alien to Tamil because instrumental noun phrases in Tamil do not co-occur with verbs like *upacari* (to receive or entertain). In Tamil it is not appropriate to say *viruntinarkaḷay te:ni:ra:l upacarittarkaḷ*, which means

literally "they entertained the guests with tea". But the appropriate sentence would be *virunta:likaḷay te:ni:r koḷuttu upacaritta:rkaḷ* - which literally means "they entertained the guests giving tea." However, the translator has faithfully translated the Sinhala sentence into Tamil in the same pattern, using instrumental noun phrases - which is awkward in Tamil.

The above text can be re-translated into Tamil as follows:

iraṅṅu ma:tankaḷukkup piraku je:mis mi:ṅṅum peruvalavukku  
vanta:n. avanuṅan iru periyavarkaḷum oru va:līpanum vantanaṅ.  
jinata:sa lama:he:vata:n avva:līpan. avan nanta:vayp peṅpa:rkkave:  
vanta:n. virunta:likaḷay muha:ntiramum manayviyum upacarittanaṅ.  
te:ni:rum vettīlayum vaḷankinaṅ. curuṅṅum parima:rappaṅṅatu.  
nanta: aḷaka:ka uṅuttu nakaykaḷum aṅṅitirunta:l. ma:ttarai  
ammai:r avḷo:tu po:y maṅṅapattil tolaiyil irunta oru a:canattil  
amarnta:r.

This passage consists of nine sentences and is a more effective description of a fictional event in a more appropriate descriptive style developed in Tamil. The English translation of the above passage would be as follows:

About two months later Jamis came again to the mansion. Two elderly persons and a youth came with him. The youth was Jinadasa Lamahewa. He came to see his bride Nanda. Muhandiram and his wife received the guests. They offered tea, betel leaf and cigars to them. Nanda was beautifully dressed. Matara Hamine went with Nanda and sat on a chair which was at a distance in the parlour.

Another example of this type of listless, literal translation can be given from the Tamil version of *Virāgaya*. Martin Wickramasinghe's opening paragraph reads:

Ma: samaṅga eka pantiye: ugenimin ekaṅa kelisellam kala viva:ha  
ji:viṅṅayata atulu vu: pasu da ma: āsuru kala - sirida:sa jayase:na  
daki:maṅga me:vara ma: giṅṅpataliye: oḷuge: nivasata giye:  
avuruddakata pasuya.

The above paragraph consists of only one complex sentence which has a main clause and four subordinate clauses. The Tamil translator follows the same syntactic pattern which is rendered word for word as follows:

enno:ṅu onra:ka ore: vakuppil paṅṅittu onra:kave: o:ṅippiṅṅittu  
viḷaya:ṅi ta:mpattiya va:ḷvil i:ṅupaṅṅa piṅṅum enno:ṅu paḷakiya  
cirida:sa jayase:navayk ka:na immuṅṅai na:n kiṅṅpattaliyavil uḷḷa  
avanuṅṅaya vi:ṅṅuṅṅu oru varuṅṅattukkup piṅṅe: cenre:n.

(Martin Wickramasinghe 1992: p. 1)

This translation, like our first example, is more literal and therefore, alien to Tamil fictional style and unreadable as such. Ashley Halpé (1985:p.1) has translated the same passage into English more creatively as follows:

Siridasa Jayasena and I had been friends ever since we had gone to school together and his marriage to Sarojini had not altered our relationship. It was more than a year since I had last visited him in Ginpataliya.

Halpé has utilized the liberty of a creative translator in translating the Sinhala passage into English using the syntactic patterns appropriate to English style.

There are two processes in any translation. The first is deconstructing the structure to get the meaning or message of the text in the source language. The second is reconstructing it in the target language according to its syntactic patterns and stylistic norms. A proper reconstruction is absent in many of the translations from Sinhala into Tamil. The translators are insensitive to the structural and stylistic differences between Tamil and Sinhala; consequently, they have produced translations of poor quality. A good translation should appear as if it is originally written in the target language. There are only few such translations in Tamil from Sinhala. *cittukkuruvika!* the Tamil version of R.R. Samarakoon's *Ge: Kurullo* (1992) by Sarojinidevi Arunasalam is an example of a good translation.

### Problems of Translation

There are some linguistic and extra linguistic problems in translating Sinhala literary works into Tamil. Translation is primarily a linguistic activity which involves decoding a message encoded into verbal signs or linguistic units of a particular language and encoding it by means of another language. To translate a text from a source language into a target language one has to discover equivalent linguistic units or constructions in both the languages. Only the equivalent constructions are mutually translatable. Hence, equivalence is a notion intrinsically connected with the meaning of mutually translatable constructions. (Krzyszowski 1971:p. 37) If two or more linguistic constructions have the same meaning in two languages they are called translation equivalents. The concept of translation equivalence is, therefore, very important in any translation theory (Catford 1965:p. 21, pp. 27-31).

Finding translation equivalents is the cardinal problem in translation practice and it is more difficult in creative language rather than in non-creative language because the language of literature is more complex and aesthetically charged than non-literary language. That is why most people think that poetry is untranslatable. According to Roman Jakobson (1987:p. 434) "poetry by definition is untranslatable. Only a creative transposition is possible." In practice, however, we continue to translate literary works

and do not regard it as a mere transposition, but always consider it a translation whether it is more close to the original or not.

We should accept the fact that any translation of creative writing cannot be exactly the same as the original. As Catford (1965: p.93) points out, "source language texts and items are more or less translatable rather than absolutely translatable or untranslatable" which means that we always lose something in translation, specifically in translating a creative text. Therefore, we can say that any translation of a creative work is a filtered version of the original, and filtering occurs when it is impossible to find translation equivalents in the target language because of linguistic or cultural factors.

Linguistic untranslatability or filtering occurs because of some grammatical categories or grammatical elements. If a grammatical element is absent in the target language "it is more difficult to remain faithful to the original which we translate into the target language." (Roman Jakobson 1987: p.432). Although Tamil and Sinhala show a good deal of similarity in grammatical and cultural aspects, there are striking differences too. The pronominal system of these languages is a good example that could be cited here.

Tamil has only two second person pronouns while Sinhala has twenty different forms with varying degrees of honorificness and also with number and gender distinction (Nuhman 1994). It is extremely difficult to translate the socio-psychological senses carried by these pronouns into English or into Tamil. For example, the sentences *oya kanna*, *thamuse kanna*, *umba ka:pan*, *tho ka:piya* differ in meaning in Sinhala. This is due to the socio-linguistic situation which exists in this language. A similar situation is not found in English or even in Tamil. English has only one equivalent sentence 'you eat' for the four contextually different sentences and it does not reflect the four different honorific levels expressed by the four different Sinhala sentences. Tamil has two equivalents to the four different Sinhala sentences. *n:nka ca:ppitunka* is the equivalent to *oya kanna* 'you eat' and *ni: ca:ppitu* is the only equivalent to the other three sentences. *ni:nka* is the second person honorific singular as well as plural form in Tamil and *ni:* is the non-honorific singular form. Tamil maintains only two levels of honorificness, namely honorific and non-honorific while Sinhala maintains at least four levels of honorificness. This type of grammatical problem is difficult to overcome in translation.

Another fact that we can observe in Sinhala is a tendency to avoid the second person pronoun to address an elderly person, a superior, or a stranger. Instead, a Sinhala native speaker tends to use a kinship term, a proper noun, a proper noun plus a kinship term, or a common noun as an address term. This peculiar linguistic behaviour is to avoid the problems of selecting a proper second person pronoun suitable to the honorific level of the addressee (Nuhman 1994). For example, the Sinhala sentence *sunil koheda yanne* may be interpreted differently according to the conversational context in which the sentence is uttered. Sunil is in the third person if the speaker asks someone about Sunil's movement. Then the meaning of the sentence

would be "Where is Sunil going?" On the other hand, Sunil is in the second person if the speaker ask Sunil directly about his movement. In this case it should be translated into English as "Sunil, where are you going?" In both the cases the sentence is not marked for honorificness. However, this is not possible in Tamil. A Tamil sentence is obligatorily marked for honorificness because of the verbal endings. Hence, the above Sinhala sentence has four different equivalents in Tamil according to its conversational context. If Sunil is in the third person the sentence should be translated into Tamil either as *sunil enke: po:kira:n* or *sunil enke: po:kira:r*, the first sentence is non-honorific and the second one is honorific. The verb *po: 'go'* here obligatorily takes *a:n* or *a:r* ending. If Sunil is in the second person the same sentence should be translated either as *Sunil (ni:) enke: po:kira:y* or *Sunil (n:nkal) enke: po:kiri:rkaḷ*, non honorific and honorific respectively.

Although in Tamil the second person pronouns *ni: 'you-non honorific singular'* and *ni:nkal 'you-honorific singular'* are optional in this context (as they are given in brackets), the personal endings *-a:y* and *-i:rkaḷ* which denote the second person non honorific and honorific respectively in the verb are obligatory. While the Sinhala finite verbs do not take personal endings, the Tamil verbs always take a person, number and gender (PNG) marker obligatorily. Some of the translators of Sinhala novels and short stories in Tamil have ignored this linguistic fact in translating such sentences and have tried to be faithful to the Sinhala original pattern; as a result, they have produced unacceptable and artificial Tamil sentences in their works, thus impairing the quality of the translation.

Like these linguistic aspects, there are some cultural features too which are not adequately translatable or are untranslatable due to the cultural differences which are always reflected in a language. Culturally charged lexical items, idioms, and proverbs come under this category. For example, Sinhala lexical items like *sil*, *pirit* and *po:ya* are linguistic as well as cultural signs which have specific meanings deeply rooted in Buddhist culture. These meanings in their full sense cannot be conveyed to non Buddhist readers in a language like Tamil. Tamil has no equivalents for these lexical items and they have to be borrowed. Grammar itself reflects some cultural aspects. The pronominal system discussed earlier is a good example for this. Thus, as Catford (1965: p. 103) points out the "cultural untranslatability" that we face "is ultimately describable in all cases as a variety of linguistic untranslatability."

Apart from these linguistic problems there are some extra-linguistic problems pertaining to the translation of Sinhala literary works into Tamil. Two such problems should be mentioned here:

The first problem is the lack of competent translators. Although, there are a number of Tamil translators, most of them are not conversant enough with the Sinhala language and literature and also with translation techniques. There are also a few Sinhalese who are engaged in Tamil translations; but they are, likewise, not competent in the Tamil language. The translator's creative talent is also very important in the

translation of creative literature. Translating a creative work is also a creative activity and only a creative translator can translate a poem or a work of fiction into a target language without distorting its content and destroying its aesthetic value in the process. Knowing the two languages is not by itself the qualification for a translator to translate a creative work. A good translator is not born but can be produced by proper training in translation techniques. There is no formal forum or institution which can provide training for translators in our country.

The second problem is the non-availability of financial or institutional support for Tamil translation works. So far translation activities have been mostly dependent on individual interest. There is no organization or publishing house to promote translation activities in Tamil.

In India there are two major state sponsored institutions; namely, the Sahitya Academy of India and the Indian National Book Trust to promote translation of creative literature in the Indian national languages and they have published hundreds of books in translation.

The Sri Lanka Sahitya Mandalaya, too, in the early 1960s recognized the importance of the mutual translation of Sinhala and Tamil literary works and made the first attempt to translate *Selalihini Sandesaya* and *Gamperaliya* into Tamil and *Tirukkural* into Sinhala. But they did not continue the work any further. Without institutional support it is not possible to achieve any progress in the kinds of translation referred to in this paper.

Translating literary works from Sinhala into Tamil and Tamil into Sinhala is not only a literary activity but also a socio-political activity in our present political context. Mutual translations can make some contribution towards promoting mutual understanding and communal harmony in a country that is divided on communal lines, and presently involved in a civil war. Let us hope our academic community will take some positive steps to promote mutual translations between our national languages.

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