

**Religions 'Crossing Borders': On the Emergence of Translation Traditions in India<sup>1</sup>****T.S. Satyanath<sup>2</sup>****Abstract**

This paper attempts to suggest that the movement of Buddhism from its place of origin, in particular the regions of Western and Southern India, necessitated the emergence of the tradition of translation and interpretation from Pali/Prakrit in order to facilitate a newly emerging community of Buddhists. Historians have pointed out that Buddhism spread to the North Western frontier region to start with and subsequently into Western and Southern India by about 100 CE. South India being home for speakers of Dravidian languages, a need must have been felt to translate and interpret the sectarian texts into local languages. Although there is a lacuna of such texts in Dravidian languages, except for a few texts in Tamil, the archeological evidences appear to substantiate such a possibility.

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**1 Religions Crossing Borders****1.1 *Movement of Religions, People and Ideas***

There is a complex relationship between the movement of people and the dissemination of ideas and material culture. Spread of religious faiths from one geographical region to other has resulted in positive enrichments as well as disastrous consequences, irrespective of the intentions behind them. A look at the history of movement of religions suggests that religious expansionisms subsumed political intentions and consequently resulted in the spread of religious traditions, annihilation of other religious traditions and emergence of syncretic and new varieties of religious traditions. Viewed from this perspective, movement of people in terms of religious faith, whether for the purposes of war or trade or religious conversion has resulted in diffusion,

A significant change took place in the Buddhist religious architecture, from a *stupa-centered* worship system of the Gangetic plains to a *caitya-* centered worship system in Western India. Whereas a *stupa* is an open religious structure, a *caitya* is an enclosed rock-cut temple with a provision for accommodating an assembly of people. The *caitya* system of worship subsumes the presence of a gathering of Buddhist laymen and women, who in all probability, were speakers of local languages and unfamiliar with Pali/Prakrit, the language of Buddhist liturgy and scripture. Thus, the crossing of borders by the Buddhism eventually resulted in a new linguistic situation that appears to have prompted the emergence of the tradition of translation and interpretation in Buddhism. In the absence of a Buddhist textual tradition in Kannada, the paper explores evidences from Jaina textual tradition, again an instance of crossing of borders can we say cross-border interactions or penetrations of the traditions?, in order to demonstrate how the early Jaina textual tradition in Kannada contains texts that are similar to the one postulated above for Buddhism. Taking the specific case of *VaUVaradhane* (*vaUUa* < *vUddha* Skt.), ‘the worship of the elders’, a text that has been written in c. 920 CE, in which the Prakrit formulaic *gahe* (Skt. *gatha*), its commentary or interpretation in Sanskrit/Prakrit and the subsequent expansion or translation of the formulaic *gahe* has been constituted into a life-story in Kannada, the paper suggests that the translation or interpretation was probably meant as a story to be recited for the benefit of the Kannada knowing Jaina lay men and women as a part of the performance of sectarian ritual. All these strongly suggest the dynamics of the emergence of translation traditions in Kannada as a consequence of religions ‘crossing borders’ on the one hand, while on the other it helps to reconstruct the religious, geographical and cultural dimensions of Medieval Kannada translation traditions.

transformation and hybridization of religious ideas and cultural elements. The history of the religious

faiths in India, such as Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism and their movements across time and space thus becomes an interesting study of cultural transactions on the one hand and a study of diffusion of religious texts and their translations, on the other.

### *1.2 Diffusion of Texts and the Emergence of Translation Traditions*

Buddhism and Jainism, two ancient Indian religions that started as a reaction to Vedic Brahmanism, originated in the Ganges valley of North India during the sixth century BCE. The diffusion of Buddhism into Central Asia, East Asia and South East Asia also resulted in the diffusion of Buddhist cultural elements into these regions. Sectarian texts, their 'tellings' and renderings as translations constitute an interesting aspect of such cultural transactions. This paper suggests that the movement of Buddhism from its place of origin, in particular to the regions of Western and Southern India, necessitated the emergence of translation and interpretation of liturgy and texts composed in Pali/Prakrit to cater to the needs of a newly emerging community of Buddhist lay men and women. Prior to the royal sponsorship by the Mauryan King Asoka in the 3rd century BCE, though Buddhism remained confined to the region of Ganges valley, it started spreading gradually from its original heartland to far off regions. Ashokan inscriptions available in different frontier regions of the Mauryan Empire bear testimony for the movement of Buddhism away from its place of birth.

To start with, Buddhism spread to the region of North Western India, coming in contact with Greek cultural elements and absorbing them, which eventually resulted in the birth of the Gandhara school of Buddhist art. Subsequently, the elements of the Gandhara School gradually diffused into Central, Western and Southern India, where local styles of Buddhist art and architecture emerged to suit the changes that were taking place within the local variants of Buddhism. Similar changes must

have happened in the liturgical and writing cultures of Buddhism. The map given in figure 1, from Brown's *Indian Architecture*, traces these two significant movements.

### Early Buddhist Sites



Figure 1: Map showing the movements of Early Buddhism (Brown)

The movements of religions and the emergence of new architectural practices appear to provide a significant clue to understand the emergence of translation traditions in Medieval India. The suggestion that I want to make here is that similar to the changes that took place in the architectural practices when Buddhism moved to North Western India and to Western and Southern India, changes must have taken place in the textual tradition of the Buddhist canon too, which in turn might have triggered the need for translation and interpretation activity in those regions. However, such a development had different implications for the two regions. Whereas North Western India was essentially a Prakrit speaking area during that period, Western and Southern India was probably an area where Dravidian languages were being spoken. By implication, such a situation created a need for the translation and interpretation of the liturgy

and canon which in all probability triggered the beginning of translation and interpretation tradition in medieval Indian literary culture.

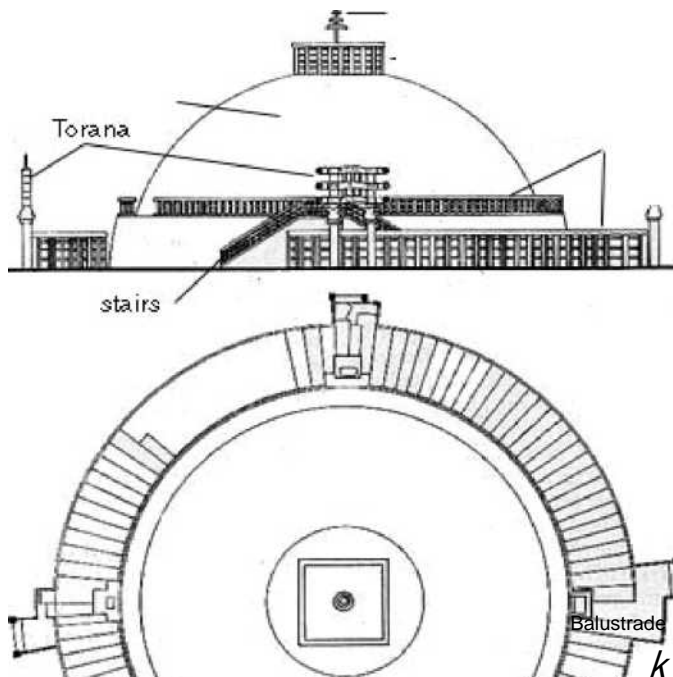
## 2. Architectural Evidences: From Stupa System to Caitya System

### 2.1 Emergence of New Architectural Styles

The movement of Buddhism into different regions and its implications for the change in architectural patterns prompted by the need for translation and interpretation of liturgy could be seen in the shift from the *stupa* system to the *caitya* system of worship. The worship of *stupa*, an open structure, which first appeared in Barhut in Northern India and Sanchi in Central India, subsequently transformed into a different mode of worship in the *caityas* in Bhaja and Karla in Western India. In Buddhist architectural system, while *stupa* refers to a Buddhist reliquary mound located in open air, *vihara* refers to a monastery, the dwelling places meant for the wandering Buddhist monks and *caitya*

refers to a hall enclosing a *stupa*, meant for worship with a scope to accommodate an assembly of followers.

The *stupas* are basically funeral mounds. In their structural



### 2.2 Changes in Architectural and Liturgical Elements

*Caitya-gUhas* were probably constructed to accommodate large numbers of devotees and to provide shelter for them (Mitra).<sup>4</sup> The appearance of the *caitya-gUhas* in Western India coincides with the shift from

the Hinayana to Mahayana school of Buddhism on the one hand

10 m  
10 30 ft

details, they are low circular reliquary mounds ringed by boulders. A *stupa* is primarily a Buddhist architectural monument, though Jains also seem to have built them. While the mound housed the sacred relic of Buddha, the circumambulatory path and entrance gateways provided the means for its veneration by the devotees.<sup>3</sup> Though the associated structures of the *stupa* are conceptually derived from *caitya*, probably from an early pre-Buddhist tree-shrine that is surrounded by a fence, they underwent changes to suit the conceptual needs of the changing nature of worship in Buddhism. However, a *stupa* is an open structure suggesting a direct link between the worshipper and the sacred. On the other hand, a *caitya* is an enclosed structure subsuming a restricted and mediated link with the

sacred. In Buddhism, *caitya* is a building containing a *stupa* (functioning as a shrine) and is also designated as a *caitya-gUha* (hall). *Caityas*, as we find them in Western India, are halls accommodating *stupas* within them. The plan and elevation of the *stupa* at Sanchi is given in figure 2. and the diffusion of Buddhism from the Gangetic plains to the region of Western India on the other. Apart from this, the appearance of *caitya-gUhas* in Western India could also have ecological dimensions, in particular, as a protected shelter for the gathering of the devotees from heavy rains and as a shelter for the wandering monks.

Early *caitya-gUhas*, such as at Bijak-ki-pahadi in Bairat which is ascribed to the emperor Ashoka (3<sup>rd</sup> Century BCE), were built as standing structures with the *stupa* being surrounded by a colonnaded processional path enclosed by an outer wall with a congregation hall adjoining it (Mitra). However, both qualitatively as well as quantitatively, the *caityas* are cut into rock caves. Such a shift in the architectural practice appears to have started in the Buddhists *caityas* of Western India, which start appearing from the first century BCE. The earliest rock-cut *caitya-gUhas*, similar to free-standing ones, consisted of an inner circular chamber with pillars to create a circumambulatory path around the *stupa* and an outer rectangular hall for the congregation of the devotees. It has been further pointed out that over the course of time the wall separating the *stupa* from the hall was removed to create an apsidal hall with a colonnade around the nave and the *stupa* (Dehejia). Moreover, the *caitya-gUhas* were usually used to be a part of a monastic complex, the *vihara*.

The *caitya* at Bhaja (about 50 km from Pune on Pune-Mumbai highway in Maharashtra) was constructed around 50 BCE. It consisted of an apsidal hall with a *stupa* located in the apsidal portion. The open hall in front of the *stupa* could easily accommodate a big gathering of followers, who could witness the liturgical rituals. These details could be seen in the photograph given in figure 3. The

suggestion here is that the architectural change implied a development to accommodate the gathering of devotees, who witnessed the translation and interpretation of liturgy, which initially, might have been oral in nature. The translation and interpretation thus became a necessity as the language of the liturgy was Pali/Prakrit, while the religious community used a Dravidian language, most probably Kannada.<sup>5</sup>

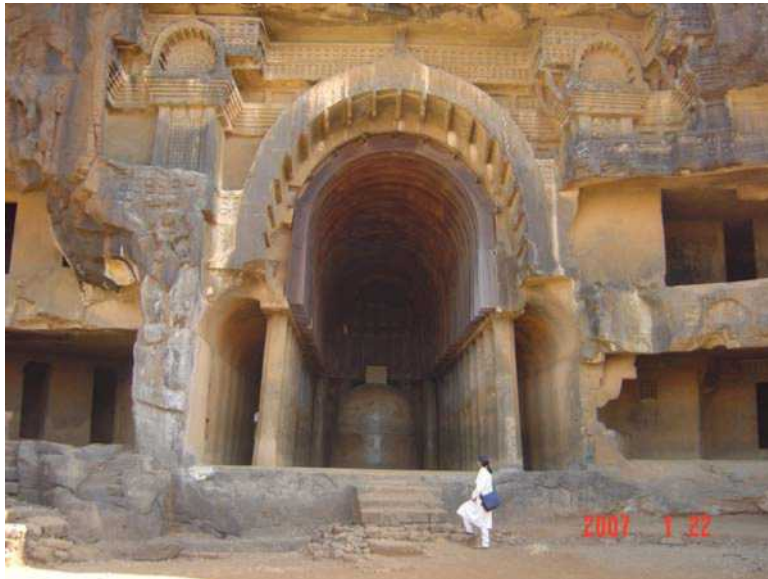


Figure 3: Rockcut caitya at Bhaja, Maharashtra, c. 50 BCE. (photograph by the author)

The most spectacular *caitya*, in terms of its aesthetics and size, is the one at Karla (c. 100 CE), which is nearly 38 meters deep, and the height and width of the cave measures approximately 14 meters. The *caitya* hall is apsidal with a central nave like space surrounded by a circumambulatory path and a large space in front of the *stupa* for the assembly of the devotees. Figure 4 provides elevation and section and details of the front pillar and plan.



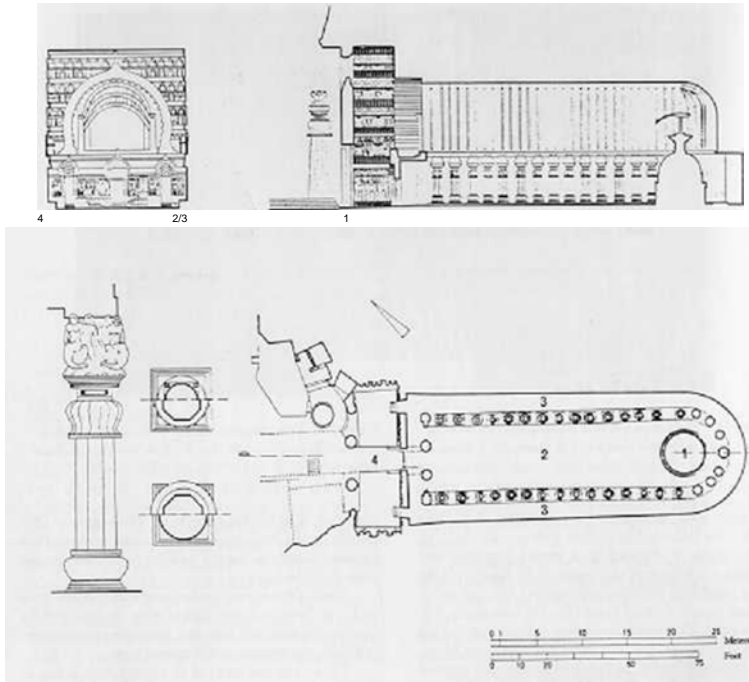


Figure 4: Rockcut caitya at Karla, Maharashtra, C. 100 CE.:  
Elevation, Section, Details of Front Pillar and Plan.

### 2.3 Implications for Translation and Interpretation

The implication of structural and liturgical changes for the emergence of translation and interpretation tradition appears to have been governed by three factors. First of all, a change in mode of worship from the Hinayana to Mahayana, from the ‘lesser vehicle’ to the ‘greater vehicle’, brought in radical changes in linguistic, literary, artistic and architectural conventions. For instance, Mahayana phase witnessed an increasing inflow of Sanskrit knowing Brahmin followers who were converted to Buddhism and who in turn undertook the job of writing on Buddhism in Sanskrit. Interestingly, the emergence of writing in classical Sanskrit coincides with this period. In fact, the earliest known Sanskrit plays not only are reported from this period but also contain Buddhist themes as could be found in Ashvaghosha (C. 150 CE).<sup>6</sup> In addition, his plays also incorporate a mixture of Sanskrit and Prakrit, thus signaling the emergence of Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit, the earliest example of the so called *maUi-pravaUam* (ruby-coral

style, hybridity) style. Furthermore, the tradition of writing Sanskrit commentaries to Buddhist Pali texts also started during the same period.<sup>7</sup>

Secondly, certain changes, both liturgical and devotee oriented, appeared within the *caitya* system. To start with, there appears to be a considerable increase in the number of followers of Buddhism that included both the wealthy ones and the lay ones. A gradual increase in the number of devotees is a phenomenon that is noticeable in general in Buddhism. As a specific instance, we can notice that in the case of donations to *stupa* at Sanchi, not only the number of lay men and women increased during the period 150-300 CE, but also they have been represented to have been showing their reverence in different postures of worship (Singh). The emergence of liturgy, participation of a pluralistic community (both caste and gender) and the aesthetic dimensions of the newly emerging Buddhism cumulatively created the necessity for the emergence of liturgy and liturgical experts on the one hand and translating and interpreting experts on the other.

The third change is a change that appeared within the linguistic repertoire of the Buddhist community in Western and Southern India, which is highly relevant for the purposes of this paper. It is the development of a new linguistic situation, as a consequence of diffusion of Buddhism into the region, in which the linguistic repertoire of the new following was not compatible with the Pali/Prakrit liturgy developed to suit the linguistic repertoire of the Gangetic plains and Gandhara region. The region of Western and Southern India, where Dravidian languages are being spoken today (and historically too) are conspicuous by their association with Buddhism right from the time of Ashoka. A large number of Ashokan inscriptions have been found in the region which is today called as Karnataka, which suggests the adaptation to a writing tradition by the local Buddhist community on the one hand and a contact between the

Prakrit and vernacular writing culture on the other. Early Tamil inscriptions date from the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BCE and early Kannada inscription date back to 4-5<sup>th</sup> century CE. Interestingly, within the Kannada speaking region, the use of Kannada and Sanskrit in the inscriptions starts around the same time and are also bilingual in nature, thereby suggesting an onset of multilingual writing culture. It is important to note that the new linguistic situation in Western India, though used Prakrit for inscriptions, constituted a devotee community who in all probability were speakers of Kannada.

The implication of such changes for the emergence of translation and interpreting traditions are quite obvious. A conspicuous increase in the numerical strength of the Buddhist devotee community and a consequent change in the liturgy on the one hand and on the other the fact that the local communities spoke languages belonging to Dravidian language family necessitated the beginnings of the process of translation and interpretation of Buddhist liturgy. Consequently, as liturgy and sectarian texts were sacred to its community of devotees, language in which these texts were composed (Pali/Prakrit) not only became sacred but also became an integral part of the liturgy, resulting in the emergence of multilingual texts that eventually led to hybridity. It is in such a newly emerging linguistic context that we need to understand the development of early Buddhist and Jaina canon in Pali/Prakrit, Sanskrit, Tamil and Kannada, since both these religions emerged in the Gangetic plains and subsequently moved to Western and Southern India, where they played an instrumental role in the development of Buddhist and Jaina canons in Tamil and Kannada. The beginnings of the Buddhist and Jaina canon in vernacular writing cultures of India, thereby, needs to be understood as a continuation of Pali/Prakrit/Sanskrit writing cultures and their translation and interpretation in the vernacular writing cultures.

### 3. Vernacular Buddhist and Jaina Writing Cultures: Hybrid Texts and Translations

#### 3.1 Canon Formation Process

This section discusses the beginnings and formation of grammatical traditions in Sanskrit, Prakrit, Pali and vernacular literary traditions and its implication for understanding the emergence of literary culture on the one hand and translation and interpretation on the other. Accordingly, an attempt has been made here to understand Indian grammatical tradition within a composite context of sectarian—Buddhist and Jaina—regional and linguistic (writing cultures) components.

A few preliminary remarks are necessary here. Similar to the practice of treating ritual, phonetics, prosody, etymology, grammar and astrology as *vedangas* (organs of the *Veda*) with regard to Vedic literature, in the Buddhist and Jaina literary traditions too, grammatical and literary canons in Pali and Prakrit need to be looked as part of the Buddhist and Jaina sectarian writing. Implicationally, the grammatical and literary canonical texts in vernacular languages, such as Tamil, Kannada etc., constitute an integral part of the sectarian canonical tradition and thereby, become a continuation of Sanskrit, Pali or Prakrit canonical traditions. Hence when we are dealing with grammatical traditions in Indian languages, we need to consider the entire canon composed in different Indian languages rather than dealing exclusively with texts on grammar or poetics in a specific language. Viewed in this perspective, canonical texts (grammar, poetics, metrics, lexicon etc.) in Sanskrit, Prakrit, Tamil, Tibetan, Kannada, Telugu and Malayalam not only constitutes one system but also address common issues with regard to the writing of sectarian literatures. Furthermore, the grammatical and literary canonical texts as well as sectarian texts in Tamil and Kannada were written by Buddhist and Jain scholars, who were also well versed in Sanskrit and Pali/Prakrit. It is this composite nature of the sectarian tradition that makes canon and sectarian

textual traditions a common resource pool for the communities using different languages and makes translation activity an integral part of the larger sectarian activity cutting across regional and linguistic boundaries.

### *3.2 Composite Sectarian Traditions*

In fact, there is a need to consider the Buddhist writings in Pali, Sanskrit, Tamil, Sinhalese and Tibetan as part of one sectarian literary tradition and Jaina writings in Prakrit, Sanskrit, Tamil, Kannada, Gujarati, Marathi and Hindi as another sectarian literary tradition. Implicationally, grammatical and other canonical texts from Sanskrit, and, Pali or Prakrit became an integral part of the grammatical and canonical traditions in these vernacular writing cultures and resulted in composite traditions. It is such tendencies that not only makes the study of Indian literature within a comparative framework advisable but also view translation and interpretation as natural activities associated with it. The crucial point to be remembered here is that with regard to sectarian literatures in medieval India, we need to desist ourselves from treating literature in different languages as autonomous literary traditions and should rather deal with them within a comparative and holistic framework. Only such an approach can account for multilingual sectarian traditions, multilingual canonical and literary traditions and their consequential textual characteristics such as hybridity, translation and interpretation.

Keeping these issues in mind, it can be noted that grammatical and literary canons address three important issues that arise as a consequence of sectarian nature of literature, movement of religions to different linguistic contexts and the multilingual nature of new religious contact situations.

(1) *A discussion on vernacular models of writing (desya, regional genres)*: In addition to vernacular writing practices, we can also see a discussion on the Sanskrit and Prakrit models of writing and their vernacular adaptations to suit the requirements of vernacular writing cultures. In general, the discussion presents various models available for vernacular writing cultures.

(2) *A discussion on hybrid texts*: The hybridity within the sectarian traditions emerges as a consequence of movement of religions to regions that are multilingual in nature. Consequently, the original texts as well as their translations become an integral part of the vernacular writing cultures. It is this process of translation activity, which has been called as *thevrat-katha* model of translation that is going to be discussed in detail.

(3) *A discussion on code-mixing in use of language*: This has been often called as *maUi-pravaUam* style ('the ruby— Vernacular— and the coral— Sanskrit-style of mixing languages') in literary canons. As a consequence of multilingualism in writing cultures, there was a gradual increase in inflow of terms from Sanskrit and Prakrit origin into vernacular writing cultures that prompted the canons to address the issue of code-mixing.

All the three issues discussed above subsume the process of translation and interpretation, which has been often called as 'tellings' (Ramanujan 1992) and renderings, in particular referring to the cultural exchange of texts among Indian languages.<sup>8</sup>

### 3.3 Processes and Models

In order to understand the processes and models that operated in the context of sectarian vernacular writing cultures, particularly with regard to the understanding of 'tellings' and renderings, we need to look into Buddhist, Jaina, Virasaiva and VaiDDava sectarian writings, the tradition of

writing commentaries (*Uika*) on them and the oral recitation of texts as performances in medieval India. As an entire survey of sectarian literature in all the vernacular writing cultures of India is beyond the scope of this paper, a detailed exploration of a Jaina text from medieval Kannada literature has been done here to understand the processes and models operating behind such sectarian translations and interpretations.

### 3.3.1 *Life-stories in VaUUsaradhane*

Let us consider the case of the Jaina Kannada text *VaUUsaradhane* ‘the worship of the elders’, a text that has been claimed to have been written by Shivakotyacharya in c. 920 CE. This text is an anthology consisting of 19 life-stories of legendary Jaina holy men. It has also been noted that the stories in this text are common to the Prakrit *Bhagavati-aradhana* by Bhrajishnu and the Sanskrit *BUhatkatha-kosa* of Harishena (Upadhye, Narasimhachar).

Considering the formulaic *gahes* (< *gatha*, a two-line meter in Prakrit) that appears at the beginning of each story<sup>9</sup>, it has been suggested that *VaUUsaradhane* might have been based either on a Prakrit commentary (*vyakhyana*) of *Bhagavati-aradhana*, or a version of *Bhagavati-aradhana*, also a Prakrit text. It is important to note that the manuscripts of *VaUUsaradhane* mention-, *vaDDaradhaneya-kavacavu-mangaDam* ‘the sacred shield of VaDDaradhane, be it well to everyone’ at the end, in the form of a colophon, implying that the text need to be considered as a ritualistic shield. Similarly, the beginning of some of the manuscripts start with the statement *kavacarohayahi* ‘the beginning (hoisting) of the shield’, suggesting the Prakrit formulaic *gahe*, its commentary in Sanskrit/Prakrit and the subsequent translation of the formulaic *gahe* into a life-story was probably meant as a story to be recited for the benefit of the Kannada knowing Jaina community as a part of the

ritualistic vow. Moreover, the term *aradhane* 'worship' that is inherent in the title of the text and the tradition of existence of such texts in Jaina literary tradition further suggests that the reading or recitation of the translated text might have been intended as the concluding part of a ritual worship similar to the story recitation of a *vrata-katha* ('vow story') among the sectarian communities of medieval Hinduism.

### 3.3.2 Structural Dimensions of the Text

Structurally, the stories in *VaUUaradhane* start with a Prakrit *gahe* that tells the story line in a synoptic manner. In certain stories, *gahes* could also be found in the middle of the story and occasionally towards the end. In some stories, along with the *gahes*, Sanskrit *slokas* and Kannada verses could also be found in the narrative portion of the story. The condensed version of the story line in Prakrit *gahe* is expanded and translated into Kannada.

The stories in *VaUUaradhane* describe the details of the ritual deaths, namely *samadhi-maraUa* and *sallekhana* undertaken by the followers of Jaina faith. The prose that comes in the beginning of the text after the invocatory verse makes this point clear. The recitation and listening of the stories not only constitute a sacred ritualistic narration but also act as a *kavaca*, a sacred shield that protects the listeners against all types of evil and sins that attempt to threaten the maintenance of the Jaina path.

The multilingual nature of the text suggesting its hybridity and the telling or rendering that takes place from one language to another within the text itself provides the model for understanding the translation process that is being discussed here. The relationship, a *lakUya-lakUaUa* model, subsumes the definition and its example is built into one other.<sup>10</sup>



### 3.3.3 *Vrata-katha or NOMPI-katha Model of Translation*

The model of translation that such hybrid texts use has been called as the *vrata-katha* or *nOMPI-katha* model, as not only *VaU Uaradhane* and several Jaina texts make use of such a model but also its variants could be found in many Indian languages, both at popular and folk levels.<sup>11</sup> A typical *vrata-katha*, as it is observed today, is very much a hybrid text like *VaUUaradhane*, consisting of sacred chanting in Sanskrit (*mantra*), ritual with instructions and commentaries, and at the end, a story narrated in vernacular prose for the benefit of the listeners. Thus, the Prakrit *gahes* in *VaUUaradhane* correspond to *mantras*, the commentaries in Sanskrit/Prakrit/Kannada correspond to ritualistic elements and the prose narration of the *gahes* in Kannada corresponds to translations.

The recitation and listening of the stories not only constitute a sacred ritualistic narration but also act as a *kavacha*, a (sacred) shield that protects the listeners against all types of evil and sins that attempt to threaten the order of the Jaina path. The multilingual nature of the text and the renderings that take place from one language to another within the text itself provides the model for translation and interpretation as a cultural transaction. Thus, the *mantra*, the ritual and the narration of the ritualistic story in vernacular language constitute the characteristic structure of such processes of translations and interpretations. The interconnections among different linguistic codes and their functions have been diagrammatically shown as shown in Figure 5.

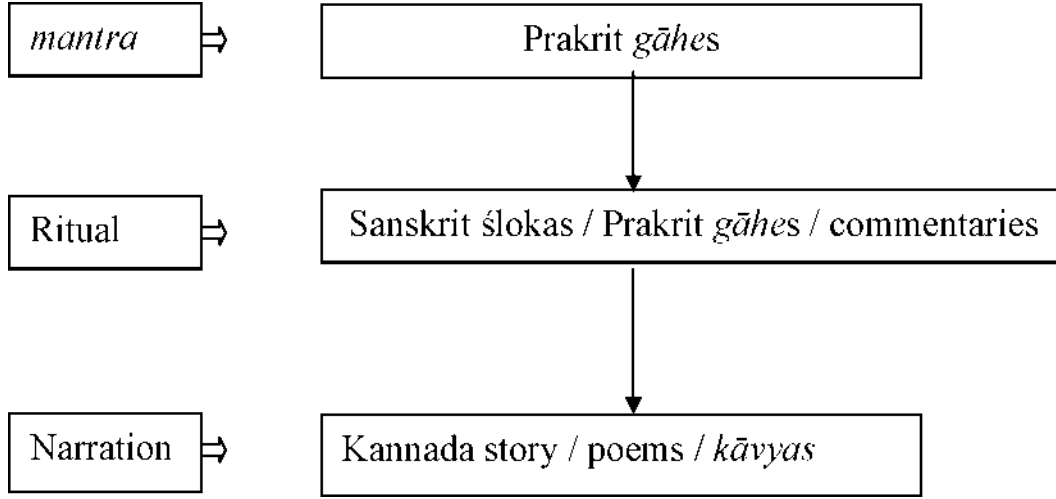


Figure 5: Schematic diagram of translation process for the life-stories in vrata-katha or nOMPI-katha model of translation.

### 3.3.4 JivadayaUuami-nOmpi and its Translation in Vernacular Writing Cultures

A mention has already been made of the ritualistic aspect of the life-stories of VaUuAradhane and the recitation of the Kannada part of the story as the story to be narrated during the performance of a vrata-katha. Incidentally, Jains have several vratas of this sort which have been called nOmpi's 'vow'.<sup>12</sup> In the body of the text of VaUuAradhane itself, there are several references to various types of vratas and nOmpis.

It is important to note that the observation of a vow is more like a ritual performance which ends with the recitation of the relevant story associated with the ritualistic vow. One of them, jivadayaUuami-nOmpi 'the vow of showing kindness (compassion) to animal life' is accompanied by the recitation of the story of Yasodhara and is known as YasOdharma-carite (Raghavachar). One of the prose renderings of the texts, belonging to the 16<sup>th</sup> century CE, has been called jivadayaUuami-nOmpiya-kathe ('The story of the vow of kindness to animal life') which starts with formulaic poems followed by story of Yasodhara -is-narrated in detail. In this connection, it is worth noting that medieval Karnataka used to treat multiple renderings of a text,

whether it was in Sanskrit, Prakrit or Kannada, as texts or *kUtis* of equal significance. One of the

introductory verses of *Yasodhara-carite* (1.2) elucidates this as follows:

In this world, this *kUti* has been rendered into Kannada based on the  
earlier *kUtis* in Sanskrit and Prakrit, rendered by earlier poets.  
Let their wisdom provide support to me in the art of poetry.

The story and the ritual appear to have been immensely popular in Medieval India. Table 1 provides details of *jivodayaUUami-nOmpi* texts in different languages. All these suggest that the Jaina tellings and renderings of the story of Yasodhara as ritualistic texts were popular not only in Prakrit, but also in its translated version in Sanskrit, Apabhramsha, Kannada, Tamil, Gujarati, Marathi and Hindi. The earliest reported text that deals with the story of Yasodhara is by Prabhanjana, written in Prakrit (c. 650 CE). Apart from this, there are at least 21 tellings of the story of Yasodhara available in different Indian languages. Among these, five are in Kannada, four each in Sanskrit and Gujarati, three in Marathi, two in Apabhramsha and one each in Prakrit, Tamil and Hindi. The availability of a number of textual versions from several languages suggests the high degree of popularity of the vow, its ritual enactment and narration as translation activity in medieval India.

TEXT	AUTHOR	LANGUAGE	TIME
<i>Samaraccha-kaha</i>	Haribhadra	Prakrit	900
<i>TrisaUUilakUaUa mahapura Ua</i> 1000	Jinasena	Sanskrit	
<i>TisaUhUhi-mahapurisa-guU alankara</i> 1100	Pushpadanta	Apabhramsha	
<i>Jasahara-cariu</i>	Pushpadanta	Apabhramsha	1100
<i>Yasastilaka-campu</i>	Somadeva	Sanskrit	1100
<i>Yasodhara-carita</i>	Vadiraja	Sanskrit	1200
<i>Yasodhara-carita</i>	Sakalakirti	Sanskrit	1500
<i>Yasodara-kappiyam</i>	-	Tamil	1200
<i>Yasodhara-carite</i>	Janna	Kannada	1209
<i>Yasodhara-carite</i>	Srutakirti	Kannada	1567
<i>Yyasodhara-caritam</i>	Padumanabha	Kannada	1600
<i>Yasodhara-carite</i>	Piriya Nemanna	Kannada	1209
<i>JivadayaUUami-nompi</i> 1835	Chandravarni	Kannada	
<i>Yasodhara- carita</i>	Jinachandrauri	Gujarati	1700
<i>Yasodhara-carita</i>	Devendra	Gujarati	1700
<i>Yasodhara-carita</i>	Lavanyaratna	Gujarati	1700
<i>Yasodhara-carita</i>	Manohara Dasa	Gujarati	1800
<i>Yasodhara-carita</i> <sup>13</sup>	Lakshmi Dasa	Hindi	1900
<i>Jasodhara-rasa</i>	Megharaj	Marathi	1700
<i>Yasodhara-carita</i>	Nagoaya	Marathi	1700
<i>Yasodhara-purana</i> <sup>14</sup>	Gunanandi	Marathi	1700

Table: Table showing the details of multilingual renderings of the Story of Yasodhara in Indian languages.<sup>15</sup>

### 3.3.5 Vrata-katha or Nompi-katha Model of Translation in other Sectarian Communities

In order to demonstrate that the *vrata-katha* model of ritualistic tellings and renderings is not just confined to Jainism but is a wide spread practice among other secretion groups; we need to extend the model to Shaivite hagiography in Tamil, Kannada and Telugu and to *mangal-kavyas* in Bengali. Elsewhere, discussion has been done in detail about the possibility of applying the *vrata-katha* model of translation to Shaiva hagiography in Tamil, Kannada, Telugu and Sanskrit on the one hand and to literary, popular and folk versions on the other and also to the *mangal-kavyas* in Bengali

(Satyanath, “Processes and Models”).

In the context of medieval Indian literature, the merging of distinctions between the written, oral and performance texts— or to put it the other way, the lack of a distinction between written and oral texts on the one hand and the crucial role of performing traditions in shaping and determining the nature of performing texts on the other - has played an important role, both at the conceptual and performing levels, eventually shaping the construction, composition, maintenance and transmission of textual, oral and performing traditions. Above all, their ritualistic nature in the form of vows, as *vratas* and *nompis*, is very crucial to the existence, continuation and transmission of texts as tellings, renderings, and more generally, in treating such tellings and renderings as translations.

#### 4. Implications

The movement of religions leading to changes in the nature of liturgy and its interpretations on the one hand and the emergence of *vrata-katha* model of translation that has been proposed for capturing the processes involved in medieval tellings and renderings in India on the other have significant implications for conceptualizing cultural transactions within medieval Indian literary cultures. What is more significant for us is the issue as to how multilingual texts are sustained within the *vrata-katha* or *nompi-katha* model even in the absence of the comprehension of the multilingual codes used in them, thereby making cultural transactions such as telling and rendering activities a ritualistic process of translation and interpretation. In fact, tellings and renderings as translations could be understood only when they are placed within the context of the following processes.

1. Movement of sectarian groups from their place of birth to new regions may result in new language contact situations and bring in new language speaking communities into the fold of sectarian

communities, thus creating a need for the interpretation of liturgy and textual traditions. This may have marked the beginning of translation and interpretation activity in ancient religions of India.

2. The movement of religions and the consequent changes like the translation and interpretation activity mentioned above may also bring in other cultural changes like the architectural innovations discussed above, the development of a new literary canon and the emergence of hybrid texts within the new contact situation.

3. All these changes may generate indigenous models of translation, as we have seen in the case of the *vrāt-kathā* model of translation, in which the ritualistic and hybrid textualities become an integral part of the sectarian translation traditions.

The study of production and consumption of literary texts needs to incorporate the components of cultural studies on the one hand and a holistic and comparative perspective on the other. Implicationally, the study of translations need not have to be radically different from comparative literary studies on the one hand and cultural studies on the other. Understanding the processes and models of translation and interpretation in such a comparative cultural studies framework not only provides an alternative approach to the dominant Eurocentric model in translation studies but also underscores the rich cultural information that the indigenous models can provide in understanding our translation traditions. The processes and model discussed here may have significant implications for Asian translation traditions in general, as Buddhism and Hinduism travelled beyond the places of their birth to different regions within South Asia and beyond. Comparative studies involving other Asian writing cultures that involve similar movements of religions, changes in artistic, architectural, ritual and liturgical dimensions, multilingual contexts and relationships between Sanskrit and vernacular writing cultures may shed further interesting insights in understanding

processes and models of translation activity within Asia.

### Notes

1. An earlier version of the paper was presented at the Third Asian Translation Traditions Conference with the theme (Ex)Change and Continuity in Translation Traditions held at Bogazici University, Istanbul, during October 22-24, 2008. The author wishes to acknowledge the comments made during the presentation, which immensely helped him in revising the paper. Acknowledgements are also due to Sakshi Soni for her suggestions and comments.
2. The author is a retired professor of Kannada and Comparative Indian literature in the Department of Modern Indian Languages and Literary Studies, University of Delhi. Medieval Indian literature, cultural studies, and translation studies are some of the areas in which he is interested.
3. However, many *stupas* do not contain actual relics, and so the term has come to be applied to any Buddhist shrine or monument having similar form and connotation.
4. In fact, rather than the *caityas* it is the *viharas* that are the dwelling places donated for the wandering Buddhist monks. In course of time, they developed into educational institutions and centers of Buddhist learning, such as those at Nalanda, Vikramasila etc.
5. Early Prakrit inscriptions at Karla and Bhaja rock cut caves suggest that their patrons were Shatavahana rulers. Studies (cf. Govindapai) have also pointed out that several Kannada words could be found in *Gathasattasai*, an anthology of poems in Prakrit ascribed to Hala, a Shatavahana ruler.
6. His play *Sariputra-prakaraUam* and long poem *Buddha-carita* are based on Buddhist themes.
7. It is possible to argue that the practice of writing commentaries, that is so central to medieval Indian literary and canonical traditions, itself could be viewed as one of the discursive translation traditions of Medieval India.
8. Such telling and rendering activity as a cultural transaction can go beyond textual and verbal translations and can get extended to the domain of inter-semiotic translation. For a discussion of an inter-semiotic translation between literary and sculptural representation of an episode from the *Mahabharata*, see Satyanath, "Tellings and Renderings".
9. *Gahe* works a synoptic verse and briefly tells the story line in Prakrit. Because sacred and ritual significance of the verse, it is retained in the text and commentaries even when the meaning is irrelevant. In fact the Kannada part of the text actually behaves like a translation and interpretation of the Prakrit synoptic verse.

10. Such a relationship is called as *lakUya-lakUaUa*, in which the definition and its example are provided by the same *sutra* (formula) in canonical text. Such a strategy resembles a two-in-one model.
11. For a detailed discussion see Satyanath, "Processes and Models".
12. The occurrence and meaning of *nompī* well attested in all the south Dravidian languages: *nonpu* (Tamil), *nompī* (Kannada), *nompū* (Malayalam and Tulu), *nomu* (Telugu) have meanings such as 'ceremonial fasting, abstinence, penance' etc. (*Dravidian Etymological Dictionary*, entry no. 3147).
13. Raghavachar notes that this translation is based on the Kannada text by Padumanabha (c. 1600 CE).
14. Sources mention that this is based on Sakalakirti's Sanskrit version (c. 1500 CE).
15. Apart from these, availability of manuscripts of *Jasahara-carita* (1434 CE.) and *Yasodhara-carita* (1589 CE.), both from the Mughal period has been reported. There is also a reference to Vasavasena's *Yasodhara-carita* (Sanskrit), but it is extant.

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