"Unveiling Thomas's Translation of Tirukkural: A Comparative Analysis of Key Couplets Against the Original Text"

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Abstract:

Textual analysis in translation is the process of analyzing a document to determine its meaning and purpose as well as the best way to translate it into another language. The process usually includes carefully reading the piece and learning about its context, history, and culture. Translation studies heavily rely on the well-known text known as *Tirukkural*, a Tamil classical epic written in ancient times. The famous book Kural is thought to have been written by Tiruvalluvar. Numerous translations have been in use in our society since the first translation, which happened in 1593, and up until the present. For this article, the researcher has chosen to use the most recent translation by Thomas Hitoshi Pruiksma. Since he translated the book into his mother tongue, he qualifies as a native translator. "*The Kural: Tiruvalluvar's Tirukkural, A New Translation of the Classical Tamil Masterpiece on Ethics, Power, and Love*" is the title of the translation he completed in 2022. The purpose of this essay is to evaluate how successfully this modern translator has connected with the readership.

Keywords*:* translation, comparing, purpose, and language

Introduction

The Latin origins of the word "translation" imply "to bring or transfer across." The English word "metaphrase," which refers to a "word-for-word translation," comes from the Ancient Greek word "metaphrasis," which means "speaking across." These ideas, which provide insight into the diverse contexts in which translation has been employed, have long served as the cornerstone of translation theory. Translations into Asian languages of the Sumerian poem Gilgamesh are known to have occurred as early as the Mesopotamian era. This is from approximately the second millennium BC. Buddhist monks who translated Indian texts into Chinese are responsible for a few more ancient translations. A few years later, Roman poets translated and modified Ancient Greek texts to produce complex literary works intended for pleasure. It is common knowledge that Cicero and Horace used translation services in Rome up to the 17th century when better protocols were created. The conversion of sacred writings into spiritual ideologies was becoming increasingly significant. Religious literature had to be translated into many languages as religion evolved to propagate and reinforce faith. The Old Testament was translated

into Greek around the third century BC, making it one of the earliest religious works translated into that language. This translation focuses on the "Septuagint," a Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible. The name "Septuaginta" comes from the Latin word "seventy." For this reason, this collection of works is frequently referred to as the "Greek Old Testament."Over seventy academics laboriously translated the book into Greek without the aid of modern resources or procedures; this project set the standard for later bible translations into other languages.

The church has proclaimed Saint Jerome to be the patron saint of translators since religion was so influential in the creation of translation. In the fourth century AD, Saint Jerome wrote a Bible in Latin. The Roman Catholic Church used this bible as its main source. The demand to translate the Bible and other sacred writings into European languages grew as Protestantism spread. Protestantism and Roman Catholicism are two distinct Christian denominations that arose from the Protestant Reformation's quick translation and dissemination of the Bible. The discrepancies in the literature and the changes between important language and biblical passages were the most obvious contrasts between these two types of faiths.

In recent years, machine translations have started to take the place of human translations. The following features are included in translation software:

Tools for computer-assisted translation (CAT)

Software for machine translation (MT)

Systems for managing translations (TMS)

Translation technology tools can improve productivity, efficiency, and overall effectiveness in managing multilingual information, much like any other technology-enabled activity. Numerous methods employed in contemporary translation technology can be traced back to the work of the ninth-century Arabic cryptographer Al-Kindi, who created the frequency analysis methodology that is still in use today. But translation technology didn't start to take shape until the middle of the 20th century when computers started to become more widely available and reasonably priced. Translation technology has undergone a revolution because of CAT technologies, which assist enterprises in managing massive amounts of text more rapidly and efficiently while also saving money and time. The primary advantage for translators is that they may devote more of their attention to the translation process by making the most of the time they save on laborious activities. Machine translation software can translate text mechanically, saving time and avoiding human interaction. As this page has already established, machine translation is not a new technology. Nonetheless, MT is being used more frequently as a result of recent technological advancements. Unlike CAT technology, machine translation generates translations completely autonomously without human intervention.

Let us now introduce *Tirukkuṟaḷ*, commonly known as the Kural, which serves as this study's major text and main focus. One of the classic works of Tamil literature, it has 1,330 brief couplets, each with seven words. Three books of aphoristic lessons about virtue (aram), riches

(porul), and love (inbam) may be found throughout the work. Regarded as one of the best writings on morals and ethics ever written, it is well known for being inclusive and secular. Valluvar is typically credited as the author; his full name is Thiruvalluvar. The book contains a variety of dates, spanning from 300 BCE to the fifth century CE. Tirukkural Bhasha, the first known translation of the *Kural* text into Malayalam, was written in 1595 CE by an individual who has not been named. The complete Kural was translated into prose, paying close respect to the spoken Malayalam of the time. But this unpublished work remained undetected until the Cochin Archeological Department's 1933–1934 Annual Report mentioned it. Not a single Malayalam translation was released for three more centuries. A few Kural couplets were translated into English by N. E. Kindersley in 1794, marking the first translation attempt in history. Francis Whyte Ellis made another, shoddy attempt at translating a mere 120 couplets in 1812; 69 were in rhyme and 51 in prose. The first two parts were translated into prose in 1840 and 1852, respectively, by William Henry Drew. It contains the original Tamil text, Parimelalhagar's Tamil commentary, and an abridged version of the commentary by Ramanuja Kavirayar, in addition to Drew's English prose translation. Only 630 couplets were translated by Drew, though. John Lazarus, a native missionary, transcribed the remaining pieces, making this the first comprehensive English translation. With the publication of George Uglow Pope's first complete English translation in poetry by a single author in 1886, the Kural text gained widespread recognition in the West. Researchers who were not native English speakers translated the *Kural* into over 37 foreign languages at the beginning of the twenty-first century, with at least 24 complete translations into English alone. As of 2014, the Kural had been translated into more than 42 languages, with 57 translations into English. Along with the Bible and the Quran, the Kural is still one of the texts translated into numerous languages worldwide. In October 2021, the Central Institute of Classical Tamil announced that it would translate the Kural text into 102 languages throughout the globe.

The most recent and complete translation of the Kural into verse is that by Thomas Hitoshi. Thomas Hitoshi Pruiksma works as a translator, educator, writer, and performer. The Kural: Tiruvalluvar's Tirukkural, his translation of the ancient Tamil poem about love, power, and ethics, was published by Beacon Press recently. Other volumes include The Safety of Edges (poems), Give, Eat, and Live: Poems of Avvaiyar (tr. Tamil), and Body and Earth (a collaboration with artist C.F. John). He has received fellowships and grants from the National Endowment for the Arts, and he frequently gives lectures and concerts. In addition, he teaches the Cozy Grammar online video course series. He published his translation in 2022. There is a significant gap that can be filled by this study because there are no publications in this field of study on the translator. Only ten chosen couplets from each of the three sections are examined in this article.

Methods

Critical discourse analysis, or CDA, is an interdisciplinary approach to speech analysis that views language as a form of social practice. Discourse analysis (CADA) combines discourse critique with an explanation of how it functions within and contributes to the current social

reality, serving as a basis for action to change it in certain ways. The CDA tradition's researchers often argue that language use and (non-linguistic) social behaviors are interwoven, and they focus on how language is used to create and preserve social power relations. This is where it differs from discourse analysis since it focuses on issues related to power dynamics, manipulation, exploitation, and structural inequities in areas such as politics, the media, and education.

CDA uses discourse analysis, and approaches from the social sciences, humanities, and discourse studies are widely recognized for use in CDA research. Its ability to sufficiently and pertinently provide insights into the ways that communication resists or perpetuates abuses of power or domination, as well as social and political injustice, is the basis for this. Rather than limiting its investigation to a specific text or discourse structure, CDA carefully links these patterns to the broader sociopolitical context. CDA has been used to study rhetoric in political speech acts and other speech forms that could be used to sway the audience's opinion. However, there have been problems with CDA. For example, it has been argued that it is too broad to detect manipulations within the discourse, but it is also too weak to uncover everything that researchers sought to prove.

Finding similarities and differences between the units of analysis is the aim of comparative analysis. The conditions and results that are comparable and different between large-scale social entities typically regions, countries, communities, and cultures are frequently explained and defended in comparative studies. A thorough comparison of two or more items side by side to identify their similarities and differences is called a comparative analysis. The investigation's topic could be something more tangible, like two distinct data sets, or something more abstract, like a specific issue, notion, or theory. Following a fruitful comparative investigation, you ought to be able to determine which product is superior as well as its advantages and disadvantages.

Analysis of Couplets

If cloud do not let their drops fall – hard to see even

One tip of green grass (16)

Evaluation: This couplet is from the second chapter, "*Vaansirappu*," which Thomas translates as "The Glory of Rain." Although the translation has acknowledged it, the original author just subtly mentions the term "rain" in the title. It has also been brought up by a few other translators, indicating that sense-to-sense translations have been used. Additionally, the translator has used the phrase "their" to convey a sense of awe or regard for nature. The translator might have said "its" in place of "their," but he chose not to. Although the translator added a reference to the color green to describe the tip of the grass, the original language does not specifically mention the color green.

Knowing the two and choosing to let go – no

Greater glory in this world (23).

Evaluation: This couplet comes from chapter three, "*Neethar Perumai*," which Thomas translates as "The Greatness of Letting Go." The translator has preserved both the meaning and the structure. Although the translator only subtly mentions it in his translation, the readers are supposed to comprehend the term "Knowing the two" as it is mentioned by the original author in his Kural. For greater comprehension, the translator has included context in the translations' comments area. The translation by G. U. Pope is similar in that he merely provides an explanation in his comments section. However, it is noteworthy that Jayaprakasam described it in his translation, which is written in prose.

Good grows and wrong wanes if one who loves goodness

Speaks sweetly (96)

This couplet is from chapter ten, "*Iniyavai Kooral*," which Thomas translates as "Sweet Speech." When translating this couplet, the translator chose her words carefully. Good rises and wrong wanes because the translator used alliteration, which strengthens the couplet's structure.

For those who hit back – one day of pleasure – for those who bear –

A life of renown (156).

Evaluation: This couplet is from chapter sixteen, "*Poraiyudamai*," which Thomas translates as "Forbearance." Compared to other couplets, the structure is unique. Although the rationale for this arrangement is unclear, the author's preface explains the use of hyphens. Therefore, I've added dashes to highlight locations on the page where a stop would assist the poem in jumping off the page. Here's an example from couplet fifteen in chapter two. The dash can be translated as "is," of course, but I think it's better in line with the original spirit and energy to convey that meaning with a more meaningful quiet. By doing this, the poem is also kept more inclined to do so.

To overpower arrogant insolence practice

Inborn Patience (158)

Analysis: This couplet and the preceding couplet are from the same chapter. The phrase "insolence practice and inborn patience" shares a letter with the source text, making the word choice he used in this couplet noteworthy. Thomas attempted to preserve the original author's ideas in the form of a poem. Some translators complicate their translations by employing

complicated words or jargon, yet their translation is straightforward and still delivers the message.

Fortune fed up with the envious consigns them

To her wayward sister (167)

Evaluation: This couplet is taken from chapter seventeen, "*Azhukaaramai*," which Thomas translates as "Freedom from Envy." The couplets' structure is identical to that of the original text. The translator explains the deep significance of the phrase "fortune" in this couplet in his comment area. The name "wayward sister" refers to Lakshmi, the goddess of misfortune, and it represents the goddess of prosperity. The context of this couplet will remain unclear unless and until the reader peruses the comment section.

They divide old friends with their words – those

Who can't speak joyfully and make friends (187)

Evaluation: This couplet is from chapter nineteen, "*Purangkooramai*," which Thomas translates as "Freedom from Backbiting." Comparing it to the original text reveals that the structure is unchanged. The word selections are clear-cut and easy to understand. As a result, readers could comprehend it more fully. Thomas was able to accurately convey the meaning of the source text in the target language by keeping his intended audience in mind when translating. It is noteworthy that the translator also used the phrase "with the words: with backbiting words" in his comment section. Make friends and speak with joy to experience genuine friendship. These remarks were made by Thiruvalluvar on Iago a millennium before Shakespeare penned Othello.

Purity without comes by water – purity within

Comes by being true (298).

Analysis: This couplet is from chapter thirty, which Thomas translates as "Truth" and is named "*Vaaimai*." Compared to other translators, his translation is simple and accurately captures the meaning of the original material without adding extraneous details. This also holds for this couplet, as the reader may get the idea after reading it without having to look for any more translations or the comment area.

One who lets go of any thing and any thing is free

Of the pain of that thing and that thing (341)

Evaluation: This couplet is taken from chapter 35, "*Thuravu*," which Thomas translates as "Renunciation." The translator has attempted to replicate the original text. The translator has

repeated two sentences. Examining the couplet's comment section is noteworthy since it demonstrates that translator Thomas studied Paremelalakar's manual before translating. "For Paremelalakar, this verse's repetition indicated multiplicity," he states. It is necessary to let go of a great deal of things, either all at once or one at a time. Given that Tamil and English have distinct sentence structures, the translator was unable to maintain the original text's structure.

Summation:

The translator has made an effort to be as near to the original text as possible, despite the significant differences in time between the two manuscripts. The translator has also made an effort to preserve the poetic elements and the framework. It's also critical to recognize that the translator translated with modern readers in mind, using straightforward language while preserving the essential ideas of the original poetry.

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