Introduction

Chapter I
Introduction

Language is a highly complex social phenomenon, which will persist as long as our society continues to exist. Considered to be the most important medium through which the members of a community exchange or conceal thoughts and understand each other, language develops in keeping with the level of thought and development in every realm of human life. But it is paradoxical that languages, which help communication possible within a geographical or cultural domain, greatly divide races because of their immense variety. This multiplicity is an obstacle in the path of integration of different societies set apart by culture, economy, politics, geography and a host of other factors. Whatever may be the reasons for the evolution of languages in this way, translation plays an important role in the inter-lingual process of communication.

For the last few decades, translation studies have been developing with rapid strides. Asserting itself as a separate discipline, it brings together fields like linguistics, literary study, ethnography, history, culture studies etc. The aim of this research project is to trace the development of translation theories, to examine the impact of ideology on translation and to examine the relevance of transcreation as a special case of translation in the present day context. A study of the various versions
of 'Sambookan', a Sudra character in The Ramayana, in different works in general, and particularly in the play Sooryahasam written by K.Sulaiman is also included as a case of transcreation. The first chapter gives an introduction to the basic principles and theories of translation. The second chapter deals briefly with the major traditions in translation practice around the world. The third chapter treats of the impact of post-colonial theory, feminism and deconstruction on translation. The fourth chapter examines the views of theoreticians and translators on transcreation. The fifth chapter explores the connection between rewriting, transcreation and the role of ideology in it, along with the representation of the character 'Sambookan' as an example of rewriting with a special reference to the aforesaid play. The fifth chapter sums up the observations made on the topic.

Definitions, Theory and Principles of Translation

The word 'translation' is made up of two words: 'trans' and 'latum'. The former Latin word means 'across' or 'beyond' and the latter means 'carried' or 'borne'. Thus translation is a 'carrying across', or it acts as a bridge that attempts to fill the gap between languages. But it is interesting to note that the question of 'how to translate' occupied the centre stage for a long time until the question 'what actually translation is' was discussed. The long controversy between word-for-word
translation and sense-for-sense translation came to an end long ago with the latter winning the battle. Translators of religious texts who thought that changing the original structure was blasphemous practised the former method. Alexander Tytler's treatise *Essay on the Principles of Translation* published in 1790 laid down the basic principles of translation. They were: 1. Translation should give a complete transcript of the idea of the original work. 2. The style and manner of writing should be of the same character with that of the original. 3. The translation should have all the ease of the original work (qtd. in Lefevere, *History* 128).

J. C. Catford in his treatise *A Linguistic Theory of Translation* defines translation as the replacement of textual material in one language (SL) by equivalent textual material in another language (TL) (20). Based on the principles of linguistics Catford has made a comprehensive analysis of translation. He further states translation is an operation performed on languages: a process of substituting a text in one language for a text in another. Clearly, then, any theory of translation must draw upon a theory of language- a general linguistic theory (vii).

The later theoreticians have rejected the purely linguistic ideas of Catford. Susan Bassnett states that,

"What is generally understood as translation involves rendering of a source language (SL) text into the target language (TL) so as to ensure that 1. The surface meaning of the two will be approximately
similar and 2. The structures of the SL will be preserved as closely as possible but not so closely that the TL structures will be seriously distorted." (Susan, *Studies 2*)

According to Roman Jakobson, inter-lingual translation is an interpretation of verbal signs by means of signs in some other language (114). D. G. Rossetti who was a poet, painter, translator himself was of the opinion that a translation remains perhaps the most direct form of commentary (qtd. in Lefevere, *History 67*). Based on his experience of Bible translation, Eugene. A. Nida came to the conclusion that translating consists in producing in the receptor language the closest natural equivalent to the message of the source language, first in meaning and secondly in style (Nida, *Structure 33*). Modern theories of translation postulate the view that translation is a way of cross-cultural communication because language and culture are inextricably interwoven. So translating means translating cultures. For example, in the opinion of Vladimir Ivir, translation is a way of establishing contact between cultures (Ivir 35). Richard W.Brislin, in his book *Translation: Application and Research*, says that translation is the general term referring to the transfer of thought from one language (source) to another language (target), whether the languages are written or oral form (1). Lawrence Venuti says that translation is a process by which the chain of signifiers that constitutes the source-language text is replaced by a chain
of signifiers in the target language which the translator provides on the strength of an interpretation (Venuti, *Invisibility* 17).

The idea that translation is only a parasitic occupation or a secondary activity is obsolete. Some people still believe that the translator will have neither original contribution nor any imaginative skill, rather his /her venture is only an attempt at imitation. But the fact is that translation of a text is only an aspect of the manifold activities of human beings. All our actions are a translation of the thought process, which come as a result of the social pressures experienced by the human brain. According to George Steiner, any model of communication is at the same time a model of translation (45). Inside or between languages, human communication equals translation (47). When a play is performed on the stage what takes place is a translation of the script; what an artist does with the shade of colours is a translation of his or her idea of a particular incident, impression, emotion or thought. In a broader sense, the process of translation is woven in the very texture of human existence though most of us are not aware of it. Steiner is also of the view that any thorough reading of a text out of the past of one's own language and literature is a manifold act of interpretation (17). The theoreticians make it clear that translation is an activity involving perception and interpretation and a good translator must be equipped with these ideas. But that alone cannot ensure the success of a translation because it should
create the same effect as that of the original for which the translator must have resourcefulness, imagination, and sensitivity to language.

Original writing is nothing but a translation of the perception of the writer. The famous poet Octavio Paz said that,

"Every text is unique and, at the same time, it is the translation of another text. No text is entirely original because language itself, in its essence, is already a translation: firstly, of the non-verbal world and secondly, since every sign and every phrase is the translation of another sign and another phrase. However, this argument can be turned around without losing any of its validity: all texts are original because every translation is distinctive. Every translation, up to a certain point, is an invention and as such it constitutes a unique text".

(qtd. in Bassnett, Studies 38)

Theoreticians have divided translation of verbal signs into categories. John Dryden was the first to recognise translation as an art by underlining a theory to guide translators. In the preface to his translation of Ovid's Epistles he grouped translation into metaphrase, paraphrase and imitation. Metaphrase is word-for-word and line-for-line rendering, paraphrase is sense-for-sense translation and imitation allows the translator to change the word and sense of the original (qtd.in Lefevere, History 102). Roman Jakobson grouped them into intralingual translation, interlingual translation and intersemiotic translation. By the first, he means transposition within a language; interlingual translation, which is
translation proper, is from one language to another; intersemiotic means transposition from one system to another, eg. from verbal art into music, dance, cinema, or painting (114). J.C. Catford divides translation into full and partial taking into account the extent, and again divides it into total and restricted in accordance with the level of translation. In full translation every part of the text is replaced by TL text material (20). In partial translation, some parts of the SL text are left untranslated: they are simply transferred to and incorporated in the TL text. In total translation all levels of the SL text are replaced by the TL texts. By restricted translation he means the replacement of the SL textual by TL textual material, at only one level.

Two basic conflicts in the field of translation have been 1. Literal vs. free 2. Emphasis on form versus concentration on content. In the former method the emphasis is on form and it can be employed where the languages are close in structure. In the latter, the communication of ideas is important without much care for the form. This method is feasible where the translator is faced with the exposition of content rather than the form of the original. Peter Newmark distinguishes between two types of translation viz. communicative and semantic. Communicative translation attempts to produce on its readers an effect as close as possible to that obtained on the original readers. Semantic translation attempts to render, as closely as the semantic and syntactic structures of the second language allow, the exact contextual meaning of the original (39).
Modern theoreticians, upon the principle that no two words are identical, do not of approve of the notion of sameness in translation. But the famous American translator Eugene A. Nida in his book *Toward a Science of Translating*, published in 1964, speaks about two types of equivalences in translation: formal and dynamic. He observes "[...] a formal-equivalence (or FE) translation is basically source oriented; that is, it is designed to reveal as much as possible of the form and content of the original message" (165).

Nida says, in such a translation several formal elements such as grammatical units, consistency in word usage and meaning in terms of the source text will be reproduced. Formal equivalence translation does not attempt to make adjustments in idioms, but tries to reproduce such expressions more or less literally to understand the local cultural elements along with the meaning of the original. Dynamic equivalence is the "closest equivalent to the source-language message" (166). It is directed primarily towards equivalence of response rather than equivalence of form. Thus dynamic equivalence is based upon the principle of equivalent effect, that is the relationship between receiver and message is aimed to be the same as that between the original receivers and the source language message. Anton Popovic distinguishes four types of equivalence in his *Dictionary for the Analysis of Literary Translation*. They are: linguistic equivalence, which seeks homogeneity on linguistic level of both SL and TL; paradigmatic equivalence where
there is equivalence of the elements of a paradigmatic expressive axis; stylistic equivalence where there is functional equivalence of elements; textual (syntagmatic) equivalence where there is equivalence of form and shape (qtd. in Bassnett, *Studies* 25).

But the term 'equivalence' is a much-abused word and theoreticians feel that the term, used in science, will create serious obstacles in translation studies. For example, if a number of people translate the same poem, they will produce only different versions - they are never likely to be identical. But somewhere in the versions there will be an invariant core of the original poem. But this should not be confused with speculative arguments about the 'spirit' or 'soul' of the text.

The question whether translation is a science or an art has also created controversies. Nida is of the opinion that though artistic sensitivity is an indispensable ingredient in any first rate translation of a literary work, the process of translation is amenable to rigorous description - because there is a transference of a message from one language to another - which makes it a science (Nida, *Science* 3). In a paper presented as part of the author's presidential address to the Annual Meeting of the Linguistic Society of America in 1968, he says that the competent translator passes through a process of analysis, transfer and restructuring. Each item in this process involves scientific procedures such as grammatical analysis, deep structure analysis, semantic analysis etc. He concludes that insights from linguistic theory have provided
important help for those interested in the scientific analysis of translation. It would seem equally evident that the scientific analysis of translation can provide important insights, and even correctives, for various theories of linguistics (Nida, *Structure* 97). But some theoreticians strongly argue that translation is an art. Theodore Savory, G. Tolman and T. H. Warren belong to this group. In his treatise *The Art of Translation* published in 1957, Theodore Savory says that the existence of possible alternatives between which the translator must make his own choice is the essence of his art (27). Savory goes on to compare the similarities between art and translation. For example, he says that the wrong colour or the wrong thickness of line is the equivalent of the wrong word; a mistake in drawing, in perspective, is the same as a mistake in the meaning of a phrase (30).

Savory acknowledges that besides linguistic knowledge and literary capacity, a high degree of familiarity with the subject matter is essential (34). A close reading of the arguments of these writers gives one the feeling that translation has both the elements of art and science fused in it. Familiarity with the subject matter and linguistic knowledge make it a science whereas resourcefulness, imagination and intuition make it an art. A good translator must be ambi-dextrous so that all the problems of translation can be handled whether it is scientific or artistic.

In translation studies, limits of translatability or untranslatability also need to be discussed. Words in a language are not mere symbols;
they signify ideas and are culture bound. Again, no word is identical to another word. Even if one tries to explain the meaning of a word by using synonyms or by intra-lingual translation, complete equivalence is unattainable. The words 'pail' and 'bucket' have connotations different from each other. It leads us to the conclusion that there are occasions when the translator will have to make choices for which he/she must have flair and feel for the language. J. C. Catford states that SL texts and items are more or less translatable or untranslatable (93). He distinguishes two types of untranslatability: linguistic and cultural. In linguistic untranslatability the functionally relevant features include some which are in fact, formal features of the language of the SL text. If the TL has no formally corresponding features, the text or the item is (relatively) untranslatable. To explain cultural untranslatability, Catford takes the example of 'bathroom' translated into the Japanese and Finnish. In all the three cultural contexts the objects and their uses are different. Bassnett says, in so far as the language is the primary modelling system within a culture, cultural untranslatability must be de facto implied in any process of translation (34). But Catford feels that more abstract lexical items are translatable in all languages because the items are international. He takes 'democracy' as an example. But Catford fails to note that a bourgeois politician and a communist do not understand the term in the same manner. So we have to conclude that nothing is absolutely translatable or untranslatable. Prabodha Chandran has put it rightly when he says that it
is not logical to group textual data into translatable and untranslatable. Translatability is a quality to be found in every text in varying degrees (54). According to Walter Benjamin, if translation is a mode, translatability must be an essential feature of certain works. Translatability is an essential quality of certain works, which is not to say that it is essential that they be translated; it means rather that a specific significance inherent in the original manifests itself in its translatability (71). Translation is an effective way for establishing contact between cultures. Therefore to believe in translation is to believe in the translatability of the culture too (Rao V.C 141). To be short, the modern theories of translation reject the notion of untranslatability and approve of the principle that all languages can express a concept in another language in one way or another.

In the opinion of Nida, the actual process of translating can be described as a complex use of language. But the scientific study of translating can and should be regarded as a branch of comparative linguistics, with a dynamic dimension and a focus upon semantics (Nida, *Structure* 95). This means that the discipline ‘translation studies’ is a branch of comparative linguistics. But Susan Bassnett has a different view of the matter. She says the recent developments in feminism and the theoretical formulations of the polysystem theory suggest that translation could be considered as a primary shaping force within literary history (Bassnett, *Comparative* 142). Also post-colonial studies and post-
structuralism question the ‘originality’ of the source text. This suggests that translation studies have become a genuinely interdisciplinary field. We can better describe it as ‘intercultural studies’. But it is right to say that translated books serve as sources for studies in comparative literature because it is impossible for a scholar to study all major languages in the world.

The theoreticians in the field of translation no longer speak about the do’s and don’ts in translation. The rules have become descriptive rather than prescriptive as it is in the field of linguistics. Theodore Savory formulates the principles in contrasting pairs. According to him a translation must give the words of the original or it must give the ideas of the original; it should read like an original or read like a translation; it should reflect the style of the original or possess the style of the translator; it should read as a contemporary of the original or read as a contemporary of the translator; it may add or omit from the original or it may never add to or omit from the original; a translation of verse should be in prose or it should be in verse (49). These principles show that the translator has enough choice before him/her and it varies according to the context.

Translation – Specific problems

Translation is an activity that relates to commerce, diplomacy, politics, and communication at a global level, and at a national level in
multi-lingual countries like India. It involves in discourses like philosophy, education, historiography etc. All translations made in a language reflect the need of the community – political, social or cultural. For example, European renaissance drew ideas from French socialism and German philosophy through translations. In the Indian and Kerala situation also we can see that translation has played a very important role in shaping the national consciousness.

Literary translators have many problems to tackle. The fact that the translators should have mastery of both SL and TL is to be taken for granted. Nida says that the translators should have a satisfactory knowledge of the source language to understand the obvious context of the message but also the subtleties of meaning and the significant emotive values of words. The translators should have a complete control of the receptor language also (Nida, Science 150). Nida continues that a thorough acquaintance with the subject matter concerned is also indispensable. The literature of a country is an offshoot of the culture of that country. So mastery of the two languages means mastery of the two divergent cultures also. Translating the literature of a nation means placing the source culture in the receptor culture. Each society receives a message in terms of its own culture. The receivers will decode the translation in the same way, not in terms of the culture and experience of the author and the receptor audience of the original text. This target-oriented view has been gaining wide currency in recent discussions. Translation of technical
books is relatively free from aesthetic considerations - the language should be free from aesthetic considerations. Thousands of new words are being coined in the field of science and technology. If the word cannot be translated, the word can be ‘transferred’ or ‘transliterated’. Transfer is adopted when both TL and SL have the same alphabet, and the latter is adopted when the alphabets are different. Socio-cultural problems are difficult to be handled in translation. G.Gopinathan says that,

“(They) mainly occur in the translation of socio-cultural vocabulary, idioms and proverbs, folk images, folk similes, myths, satire, humour etc. The range of socio-cultural terminology and their allied usages, especially kinship terms, courtesy words, abusive words, words connected with geographical peculiarities, flora and fauna etc.”(46)

A poem is a literary artefact deeply rooted in the native language, culture, customs and attitude. It has elements like imagery, tone, emotion, rhythm, metre etc. fused into it which in the end make an organic whole. How to transfer these together to the target situation is a vexing question for which there are many answers. There is an Italian saying (“traduttore traditore”) which means that a translator is a traitor. The famous American poet Robert Frost is of the opinion that poetry is that which is lost in translation. Roman Jacobson also holds the view that all poetic art is technically untranslatable, only a creative transposition is possible (118). Andre Lefevre in his book Translating Poetry: Seven Strategies and a Blue Print analyses seven distinct stages of the various methods of
poetry translation which can be simplified as follows: Phonemic translation, which tries to reproduce the sound, literal translation which gives importance to word for word rendering, metrical translation which reproduces the metre, poetry into prose translation, rhymed translation which reproduces both metre and rhyme, blank verse translation, interpretation in which there are two sub-types: version and imitation. The substance of source language text is preserved but the form is changed in version. In imitation the translator reproduces a poem, which has title and point of departure in common with the original text (Lefevere, *Poetry* 19-84). The strong prejudice against poetry translation is evident from the opinion of a gifted critic like Christopher Caudwell. In his masterpiece *Illusion and Reality* he says that, “The metre may be reproduced. What is called the ‘sense’ may be exactly translated. But the specific poetic emotion evaporates” (126). But in an era where translation is re-reading and re-writing, such opinions do not deter poetry translators. Most of the theoreticians agree to the view that poetry translator should have mastery of both the SL and TL cultures and that poetry can be best translated by poets in the target culture.

There are some unique problems relating to the translation of dramatic texts, for the dramatic text is a piece of literature, which is complete only when it is presented on the stage. So the problem is whether to translate the text as a piece of literature or to translate it in its function. The text is only one element in the totality of the theatre
discourse. Discarding other elements like action, gesture, tone, audience, image etc. will be a partial view that will yield only an unwholesome result. It is difficult to separate the text from performance because theatre consists of a dialectical relationship between both. Robert W.Corrigan in his article ‘Translating for Actors’ says that without a gestural quality in language there can be no drama. In a theatre we have to write only for actors and not for readers. Corrigan is of the view that good translation of plays will never come to those who have not had at least some training in the practice of theatre. The translator must be conscious of the gestures of the voice that speaks - the rhythm, the cadence, and the interval. Corrigan’s approach is based upon the principle that drama in the theatre must always be gestural. These problems of paralinguistic features coupled with the difference in the culture of the SL text and TL text give drama translation a peculiar dimension (94-106). The famous Indian playwright and actor Girish Karnad, in his interview with Tutun Mukherjee, says that besides the theme and the form, one must also convey the dramatic effect by controlling the way language is used. The play must be performable and the translation must possess the innate qualities of performance (219).

It is taken for granted that translation of fiction is relatively easy when compared to poetry and drama. It stems from the misunderstanding that the novel consists primarily of paraphrasable material content that can be treated straightforwardly (Susan, Studies 115).
She says this is a wrong conception because a piece of fiction also forms a part of the continuum of existence and intertextuality is also applicable to fiction. A novel has a narrative structure, tone, setting, and characterisation etc. that are to be transmuted to the target situation. So the relevant question is what could be the unit of translation of a novel. It can never be line, paragraph or chapter but the whole function both of the text and the devices within the text. Every prime text is made up of a series of interlocking systems, each of which has a determinable function in relation to the whole, and it is the task of the translator to apprehend these functions (118). It can be said that if the translator wishes to make a faithful translation of the target text i.e. an ethnographic translation, which seeks to introduce the culture and life of the source text to the target audience, the translator must have mastery of the source culture.

With the advent of computers, the linguists and technologists have been making serious efforts to develop machine translation or computer translation. Though it is hard to programme a computer to translate just like a human being, the machine can be helpful in translation. Thus we have, besides human translation, various levels like Human Aided Computer Translation, Computer Aided Human Translation and Computer Translation. Nida states that three important factors have emerged from research on machine translation: 1. Machine translation is possible for certain restricted types of documents dealing with limited subject matter treated in a relatively simple manner; 2. With present
technical developments in the "hard ware" presently or soon to be available, machine translation of a "rough and ready" type and for semantically and stylistically limited texts is practically attainable at an economically feasible price; and 3. Important theoretical considerations in machine translations throw considerable light on problems of traditional translation, and are proving highly stimulating to various developments in linguistic theory (Nida, *Science* 252). The observations made by Nida before three decades ago are still valid to a great extent.

Any computer will have the Input, the main storage and processor and the Output units. The Input in machine translation can be there in the background memory or it can be instructed by using Input devices. The processing of the text by the C. P. U. has three stages: a. Analysis b. Comparison and c. Synthesis. Semiotic Units and Structural patterns are identified in the Analysis stage. The Source Text and the Target Text are compared in the Comparison stage. In the third stage, that is the synthesis stage, semantic and structural specifiers are chosen and approximate target sentences are generated.

In his Barker lecture, Alan K. Melby states that Machine Translation stands on a tripod viz. source text, specifications and terminology. For machine translation, an additional basic requirement is that the source text be available in machine-readable form. That is, it must come on diskette or cartridge or tape or by modem and end up as a text file on your disk. Specifications tell how the source text is to be translated. One
specification that is always given is what language to translate into. But that is insufficient. Should the format of the target text (i.e., the translation) be the same as that of the source text or different? Who is the intended audience for the target text? Does the level of language need to be adjusted? Terminology is so important that the actual terminological database (also called a "term base") supplied with a source text has been listed as a third essential component of a translation job (3).

One of the main difficulties in translation relates to the ambiguity of terms. Whereas it is almost easy for the human brain to interpret the meaning from the context, it is very difficult to programme softwares to handle it. For example, the word 'bank' in the sentences 'he visited the banks' can have two meanings. Innumerable examples can be quoted from the English language itself. So, the question now asked is this: can the computers replace the human brain in producing flawless translations that need few post editing? The answer given by Melby is that this will not happen in the foreseeable future.