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A STUDY OF SINHALA TRANSLATED LITERATURE THROUGH A POLYSYSTEMIC APPROACH: TRANSLATION, LITERARY POWER AND CULTURAL TRANSFORMATION IN THE SINHALA LITERARY SYSTEM

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Abstract : Translation has long played a significant role in shaping, transforming and modernizing Sinhala literary culture in Sri Lanka. This study critically explores Sinhala translated literature through the lens of Itamar Even-Zohar's polysystem theory, focusing especially on how the position of translated literature has shifted within the Sinhala literary system over time. The research argues that translation should not be viewed simply as a secondary linguistic process but rather as an active cultural institution that contributes to literary innovation, canon formation, ideological negotiation and intercultural interaction. Using perspectives from descriptive translation studies, cultural translation theory, and postcolonial literary criticism, the study examines the ways translated literature has operated as both a central and peripheral subsystem throughout different stages of Sinhala literary history. The discussion follows the historical development of Sinhala translated literature, beginning with the translation of Pali Buddhist texts in the pre-modern era, moving through the introduction of Western literary genres during the colonial period, and later considering the influence of Russian, European and Latin American literary traditions on modern Sinhala fiction. The research shows that during periods of literary transition and cultural change, translation often occupied a central place within the literary system, allowing new aesthetic forms, narrative strategies and ideological viewpoints to enter Sinhala literature. In contrast, during times when indigenous literary traditions were firmly established, translation generally functioned in a more supplementary or marginal role. Methodologically, the study employs a qualitative descriptive and analytical approach based on polysystem theory, descriptive translation studies and cultural system analysis. Selected Sinhala translations of important foreign literary works are examined to identify tendencies such as domestication, foreignization, ideological adaptation and literary transformation. In addition, the study investigates how publishers, literary institutions, educational structures and socio-political ideologies shape the selection, circulation and reception of translated texts within Sri Lankan literary culture. The findings indicate that Sinhala translated literature has consistently acted as an influential force for literary change rather than merely reflecting foreign traditions. Translation has played a major role in the modernization of Sinhala prose, the growth of literary realism, the expansion of intellectual discourse and the negotiation of national and cultural identities. Ultimately, the study concludes that polysystem theory offers a highly effective framework for understanding the complex relationship between translation, literary development, cultural power and identity formation in the history of Sinhala literature.

IndexTerms - Polysystem theory, Sinhala translated literature, Descriptive translation studies, Domestication and foreignization, Postcolonial translation, Literary modernization.

I. INTRODUCTION

Throughout the history of world literature, translation has often been an important site through which literary traditions, religious ideas, political ideologies and cultural values have transcended linguistic borders. Contemporary translation studies, however, regard translation not as a simple transfer function of language, but as an elaborate process by which both literary systems and societies are formed (Bassnett 2014:12-18; Baker 2018:15–29). Sinhala translated literature is a significant part of the literary culture that has evolved in this country. Translation has united local traditions and external influences, from the translation of Pali Buddhist texts to modern-day iterations of world literature.

In this research study, the polysystem theory developed by Itamar Even-Zohar was included as it determines literature as a multi-system where subsystems interact with each other to become either prominent or peripheral in a culture (Even-Zohar 1990: 11–14).

Translated literature is a major force in the process of literary transition, as it brings entire new genres and stylistic models in (Even-Zohar 1978: 45–47). This idea was further elaborated in a more systematic translation context by scholars who thought of translation as an independent, albeit relatively auxiliary subsystem within the literary and cultural production rather than a derivative activity (Hermans 1999: 55–68).

Scholars like Gideon Toury claim that translations are to be understood as so-called pure "facts of the target culture" rather than works determined by loyalty to source text, they are products shaped by the social norms and literary expectations prevailing in a given place and time (Toury 1995: 24–29). André Lefevere also argued that translation acts as a form of rewriting when read through the lens of ideology, patronage (in the sense of someone who influences) and literary representation (Lefevere 1992: 14–18). This means that translation is important in the formation of literary-canons and cultural power structures.

The notion of translation as a socio-scientific act was consequently developed further by the so-called "cultural turn" in translatology. Bassnett and Lefevere (1990: 1–7) argue that translation must be studied as a cultural and historical practice rather than a purely linguistic one. Similarly, Lawrence Venuti discusses how translation strategies like domestication and foreignization construct cultural representation and ideological significance (Venuti 1995: 1–20). Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak likewise underscores both the ethical and political status of translation in postcolonial worlds (Spivak 1993: 179–188).

The role of translation in modernization as well as broader processes of cultural change has been firmly established within the context of Sinhala literary history. Influential translations of Buddhist texts in Early Sinhala literature contributed to the development of literary language and religious identity (Dharmadasa 1992: 67–81). Translations introduced Western literary genres: the novel, essay and drama into Sinhala literature during colonization (Halpe 1988: 23–41). Thus the discourse of translated literature is fundamental in steering modern Sinhala prose and literary realism (Bandara 1995: 45–52; Dissanayake 1992: 33–57).

The twentieth century also saw the impact of Russian and European literary translations on Sinhala fiction. Realism, existentialism and social critique were brought into Sinhala literary discourse through translations of the works of writers like Fyodor Dostoevsky and Leo Tolstoy (Perera 2011: 91–104). According to Wickramasinghe (2007: 112–128), translated literature stimulated some awareness of comparative literary practice and the experiment with style within Sri Lanka.

Translation has played a central role in the development of Sinhala literature, but there are few studies that apply polysystem theory systematically to Sinhala translated literature. This study thus explores the response and adaptation of Sinhala translated literature to this social reconfiguration through polysystem theory, descriptive translation studies and cultural translation theory as lenses for analysing how literary modernisation, cultural negotiation and ideological transformation contributed to the vitality and continuing evolution of the Sinhala literary polysystem.

II. Literature Review

Translation studies as a field has seen radical theoretical shifts in the last few decades, moving away from its foundation in linguistics to exploring notions of culture and ideology, identity formation, literary systems etc. Most of the early translation models are based on equivalence, i.e., structural or semantic linguistic relations between source and target texts. On the other hand, recent theories contend that translation is a practice to be rooted primarily not in individual creativity but in a socio-cultural and ideological onslaught deeply inscribed within structures of power and literary production (Bassnett 2014: 12–20; Baker 2018: 15–32). Such an abstract change acts as a basis for treating Sinhala translated literature not as something merely language oriented, but also free enough to be considered an existing subsystem of Sinhala literary polysystem.

Polysystem theory (Even-Zohar 1990) is arguably one of the most important theoretical contributions to translation studies. According to Even-Zohar (1990: 11–14), literature is a heterogeneous polysystem of more-or-less stable subsystems that constantly interact and compete for central or peripheral positions in the culture they belong to.

Within this structure, translated literature does not necessarily exist on the margins. Rather, the status is determined by the stage of development and the structure of state, to which the literary system pours. Even-Zohar (1978: 45–47) suggests that translated literature tends to play a central role in times of dynamic, modernizing or crisis-like changes within the target culture's literary system. Under these conditions, translation presents novel literary forms and genres, stylistic devices and ideological insights that have a profound impact on literary development.

In this context, Even-Zohar's system-oriented approach was subsequently developed by Theo Hermans (1999) who stresses the idea of translating as a product and of its existing within wider literary systems outside both itself and its textual functions. Hermans claims that translation actively plays a role in creating literary conventions, reader expectations and cultural hierarchies. These approaches are particularly relevant to Sinhala translated literature, in which translation has played an important role in literary modernization, cultural adaptation and ideological negotiation.

Another leading contribution in this theoretical vein is descriptive translation studies, developed by Gideon Toury. Rejecting prescriptive methods based on fidelity or equivalence (Toury 1995), Toury instead advocates considering translations as "facts of the target culture".

As Toury explains (1985: 15–20), translational behavior is regulated through norms, which encompass expectations of what is right and wrong in the target-literary system. This perspective emphasizes the role of institutional forces, literary expectations and sociocultural ideologies in shaping practices. With specific regard to Sinhala literature, descriptive translation studies offer a framework for demonstrating how translations were constructed as intimates with local literary devices, religious traditions, nationalist ideologies and readership aspirations.

The overall cultural and ideological aspects of translation are further developed by André Lefevere, who defines translation as rewriting the factors of ideology, patronage and literary system (1992: 14–26). According to Lefevere, there are all sort of ways that literary institutions and publishers and educational systems and political structures police what gets translated into which target cultures when it does. Likewise, Lefevere demonstrates that translations and other rewritings are often more influential in the process of literary fame and canon formation than any given original work itself. The significance of this theoretical perspective to the history of Sinhala literature is immense, given how translational processes and literary circulation have been shaped by colonial education systems, Buddhist institutions, nationalist projects and publishing industries.

Translation studies have seen another shift that challenges the monolingual approach: this move can be called a "cultural turn" and it has shown that translation is not just about language but also about ideology and the portrayal of culture. As Bassnett and Lefevere (1990: 1–7) suggest, translation needs to be studied from a perspective of historical, political and cultural contexts instead

of only strictly linguistic ones. In parallel with this, Lawrence Venuti also criticizes the invisibility of translators within dominant literary cultures arguing that translation acts often domesticate foreign texts to better fit the cultural norms/limit of the target context (Venuti 1995). Venuti (2004: 482–489) further elaborates on the concept of domestication and foreignization as contradictory translational strategies that either erase or preserve cultural difference. Theoretical suggestions that converge on this point are also evident in the Sinhala translations of foreign works, where translators negotiated between foreign form and local content.

Postcolonial translation theory also provides insights into the nature of the connection between translation and power. In such aspects, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (1993: 179–188) has also critically framed the act of translation as an ethical and political act in postcolonial societies where inequalities of powers intersperse linguistic and cultural difference into a fabric made up of overlapping hierarchies. In this vein, Niranjana (1992: 134–142) shows that translation has been used as a colonial tool through which both colonized cultures can be represented and managed. Such views expose the role of translation in cultural stratification and ideological hegemony. Colonial translation practices in Sri Lanka adopted and transformed Western literary styles and educational institutions, while serving to redefine native literary traditions and cultural identities.

The link between translation and world literature is similarly attracting scholarly notice. World literature, as David Damrosch argues, is the result of how texts travel from culture to culture and their subsequent practical and/or interpretative repurposing through translation (Damrosch 2003: 1–15). This emphasis on translatability and global literary circulation can be challenged by scholars like Emily Apter who focus on the untranslatable, or at least the dangers of universalizing such a process (Apter 2013: 3–18). Similarly, Pascale Casanova frames translation as the site of struggle over differentially empowered global literary fields dominated by metropolitan literatures (Casanova 2004: 11–28). Such perspectives elucidate how Sinhala literature interacted with world literature in translation while also negotiating issues of cultural sovereignty and literary identity.

In the case of Sri Lanka, translation has traditionally played an important role in a nation-building process. Translations from original Pali and Sanskrit traditions, indeed elaborately formatted Buddhist religious texts constituted as the basis for early Sinhala literary culture. These translations helped shape Sinhala literary vocabulary, prose traditions and religious mentalities (Dharmadasa 1992: 67–81). Thus religious translation was not just the channeling of language, but also a process of cultural and ideological construction (Seneviratne 2005: 101–114).

Translated literature became a more integral part of the modernization of Sinhala literary culture during the colonial and postcolonial periods. According to Halpe (1988: 23–41), the advent of prose fiction and modern novel in Sinhala literature through translations altered completely the production of literature and readers. As Bandara (1995, pp. 45–52) further points out, translated literature has had a leading role in transitional periods of local literatures by bringing new literary styles, philosophical ideas and narrative structures closer to Sinhala readers. In a similar vein, Dissanayake (1992: 33–57) identifies the impact of translated fiction of realism and psychological characterization and social criticism on Sinhala literature.

Scholars have paid particular attention to the influence of Russian and European literary translations on Sinhala fiction. Perera (2011: 91–104) shows how realism, existentialism and socio-political critique entered modern Sinhala fiction in ways heavily influenced by Russian literary works translated into Sinhala. Additionally, Wickramasinghe (2007: 112–128) argues that these translated works became instrumental to the comparative literary consciousness and aesthetic experimentation in Sri Lanka's literary culture. Goonetilleke (2008: 52–73), on the other hand, aims to underscore bilingual literary discourse and emphasizes the interplay of Sinhala and English traditions in post-colonial Sri Lanka through translation.

Recent scholarship positions translation more clearly as a practice entangled with globalization, transnational cultural flows and identity making. In a Sri Lankan context Hewamanne (2014: 210–219) asserts that cultural translation is indicative of the wider processes of globalization and social transformation. Tymoczko (2003: 181–193) likewise states that translators play an active role in making cultural meaning, intervening ideologically as well as creatively. Sinhala translated literature reflects these ideas and shows us that translation is not only about copying a text but also engaging with cultural ideas and creating new texts.

Although a considerable amount of research related to translation studies has been produced, relatively little systematic research applying the polysystem theory within the domain of translated Sinhala literature has been done. Previous studies have a limited focus on historical, linguistic or comparative literary aspects of translation and do not seem to adequately investigate the systemic role of translation in the Sinhala literary polysystem domain. Hence, this research aims to redress this lacuna within scholarly literature by theorizing the study of Sinhala translated literature as a polysystem, which is vitally contributory towards an understanding of Sri Lankan literary modernization, canon formation and ideological negotiation and cultural exchange.

III. Research Methodology

Based on the polysystem theory as well as descriptive translation studies, cultural translation theory and postcolonial literary criticism, this research utilizes a qualitative descriptive-analytical research methodology. This philosophical foundation functions as an introduction to the contextual methodology which looks at Sinhala translated literature, not just as isolated translations but a thriving subsystems operating within the larger Sinhala literary polysystem. It thus interrogates how translated literary activity, literary institutions and ideological structures correlate with cultural change in the context of Sri Lankan literary history.

It is mostly based on the work of Itamar Even-Zohar, who theorises literature in a very strong polysystem approach as a heterogenous and dynamic system composed of competing literary subsystems positioned centrally or peripherally (Even-Zohar 1990: 11–14) In this context, translated literature is seen as an active component of the literary system that enables and facilitates literary innovation, genre formation and ideological change. This study also incorporates the descriptive translation studies model of Gideon Toury, which stipulates that solutions should be studied descriptively as well "as facts of the target culture" and not exclusively as being good or bad by equivalence or fidelity standards (Toury 1995: 24–39). In doing so, it enables the study of Sinhala translated literature to be engaged with within its socio cultural and literary framework.

Translation is inherently affected by ideology, patronage, literary institutions and systems of cultural authority (Lefevere 1992) In a similar vein, the cultural and ideological aspects of translation, exponentiated by Lawrence Venuti, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and Maria Tymoczko offer further paradigms for analyzing domestication–foreignization encoding (Venuti 1995: 1–20; Spivak 1993: 179–188; Tymoczko 2003: 181–193).

3.1 Research Design

This study makes use of a qualitative research design and mainly aims for interpretation and analysis rather than statistical quantitative information. Qualitative methodology facilitates an in-depth analysis of literary works, translation techniques, ideological adjustments and cultural negotiations embedded within translated literature. This research thus amalgamates literary analysis, intertextuality, historicization and cultural systems to explore the shifting status of translated literature in relation to Sinhala literary culture.

The study is descriptive in that it elaborates and interprets the place of translated literature in Sinhala literary history. It is also analytical because it seeks to examine ways in which literary systems, cultural ideologies and institutional structures enable or constrain translational practices and literary circulation across Sri Lanka.

3.2 Data Collection and Selection

The main data in this study are selected Sinhala translations of significant foreign literature along with the source texts and accompanying critical works. It considers especially those translations made from English, Russian and European literary traditions that played an important role in shaping the development of Sinhala literature as a modern tradition during our colonial, postcolonial and contemporary history.

The selection of texts is performed under a few criteria:

1. Considerable cultural significance in Sri Lanka
2. The impact of historical events on Sinhala literary development
3. Representation of different literary periods
4. Accessibility of both source and translated material
5. Cultural and Ideological Relevance to the Sinhala Literary Polysystem

Especially, because of their significant impact on contemporary Sinhala fiction and realism (Perera 2011: 91–104), special emphasis is laid upon the translations of Russian classics into Sinhala as well. The study also looks at translations around Buddhist writings, colonial literary modernization and modern global literary interchange.

Secondary sources include monographs and journal articles on Sinhala literary criticism, translation theory and its history, and historical studies of Sri Lankan culture and Sinhala literature. These provide the theoretical and historical background needed to read the chosen texts and literary developments.

3.3 Analytical Framework

The analytical methodology is divided into several interconnected stages designed to examine the relationship between translated literature and the Sinhala literary polysystem.

3.3.1 System Position Analysis

The first stage involves identifying the systemic position occupied by translated literature within different periods of Sinhala literary history. Drawing upon Even-Zohar's polysystem theory, the analysis examines whether translated literature functioned as a central or peripheral subsystem during specific literary and historical contexts. This stage investigates publication trends, literary influence, institutional support, readership reception and cultural prestige associated with translated literature.

3.3.2 Comparative Textual Analysis

The second stage focuses on comparative textual analysis between source texts and Sinhala translations. This analysis examines:

- Narrative structure
- Stylistic adaptation
- Cultural modification
- Ideological transformation
- Lexical and semantic choices
- Representation of foreign cultural elements

The purpose of this analysis is to identify how Sinhala translators negotiated between preserving foreign literary features and adapting texts to local cultural expectations. The study also examines the extent to which domestication or foreignization strategies were employed in the translation process (Venuti 2004: 482–489).

3.3.3 Norm and Ideology Analysis

The third analytical stage examines translational norms, institutional influences and ideological interventions within Sinhala translated literature. Following Toury's descriptive translation studies, the research investigates how cultural norms and literary expectations shaped translational behavior (Toury 1995: 54–60). The analysis further explores the role of publishers, educational systems, literary criticism, nationalism, religion and colonial influence in determining which texts were translated and how they were interpreted within Sinhala literary culture.

Special attention is also given to the relationship between translation and cultural identity formation in postcolonial Sri Lanka. This analysis draws upon postcolonial translation theory and cultural translation studies to examine how translated literature participated in negotiations of nationalism, modernity, religion and globalization.

3.4 Historical Scope of the Study

The study examines Sinhala translated literature across four major historical phases:

1. Pre-modern Buddhist translation traditions
2. Colonial literary modernization and English influence
3. Post-independence Sinhala literary nationalism

4. Contemporary globalization and transnational literary exchange

This historical structure allows the study to trace the shifting position and function of translated literature across different socio-cultural and political contexts within Sri Lankan literary history.

3.5 Research Limitations

Several limitations affect this study. Early Sinhala translations and publishing are limited to archival literary materials at least when we consider pre-modern literary texts. Second, the classification of translated literature to a "central" position or "peripheral" in the literary polysystem depends on interpretative judgment and is subjective for critical perspective. And, thirdly, the tiny selection of translated texts that this study has examined cannot provide a representative indication of Sinhala translation practices for all text types and periods.

The interdisciplinary methodological framework used in this research thus offers a holistic approach to approaching Sinhala translated literature within wider literary, cultural and ideological systems despite these limitations. This study would, therefore, aim to avow its contribution towards developing a sustainable understanding of translation as an agency within Sinhala literary and cultural history by infusing polysystem theory with descriptive translation studies along with cultural translation theory and postcolonial literary criticism in the analysis.

IV. Historical Evolution of Sinhala Translated Literature within the Literary Polysystem

Sinhala translated literature illustrates the dynamic, ever-unfolding relationship between translation and national identity, literary modernization and ideological transformation in Sri Lankan literary history. Translation has never been a marginal literary practice in Sinhala, but it has always moved up and down the shifting ranks of the Sinhala literary polysystem depending repeatedly on changing religious, political, social and cultural conditions. Whether it is the translation of Buddhist canonical texts in ancient Sri Lanka or the circulation of contemporary global literature, translation has functioned as a central site for literary production, intellectual exchange and cultural negotiation.

Itamar Even-Zohar theorizes that translated literature tends to remain central in eras when the institutional and market frameworks of literary systems are undergoing a restructuring or seeking new models for the way novel works are produced (Even-Zohar 1978: 45–47). We see this theoretical principle powerfully underscoring Sinhala literary history, as transitionary periods of literature continuously thrust translation into a powerful and artistic leading subsector in the wider Sinhala literary polysystem.

4.1 Pre-Modern Buddhist Translation Traditions

History of Sinhala translated literature is closely related to the spread of Buddhism in Sri Lanka. The Sinhala literary tradition of the early period was largely a direct correlation to Pali Buddhist scripture, religious narratives and other teachings being translated or adapted into Sinhalese. These translations were not straightforward linguistic reproductions, but cultural reimaginations based on the purpose of serving local societies with Buddhist teachings.

Buddhist texts played a major role in shaping the vocabulary (literary aspects and prose style); establishing philosophical, conceptual (terminology) and intellectual traditions; through their translation (Dharmadasa 1992: 67–81). Thus, translation served as a core literary practice in the early years of Sinhala cultural civilization and reinforced Buddhism as a key component in Sri Lankan ethno cultural identity (Seneviratne 2005: 111–114).

Also, the translation of Buddhist stories into Sinhala literary forms wove indigenous cultural practices with newly introduced religious ideas. But this is a process that Obeyesekere (1990: 12–25) calls symbolic transformation, whereby cultural meanings are reconstructed through new interpretations and adaptations. In this way translation, was a primary factor in the definition of early Sinhala writing and cultural identity.

4.2 Colonialism and Literary Modernization

This was a very critical point for the history of Sinhala translated literature and it began with the period of colonial rule. The legacies of Portuguese, Dutch and particularly British colonial rule fundamentally altered the nature of education, print culture, literary institutions and linguistic structures on the island. Translation was tied to the colonial modernity and the inheritance of a non-native sense of literary tradition.

The introduction of modern forms of literature such as the novel, drama, essay and short story to Sinhala literature took place during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries under the influence of English (Halpe 1988: 23–41). These Sinhala readers and writers primarily engaged with these genres via translation. According to Bandara (1995: 45–52) translated literature was paramount during this period since the traditions of prose fiction akin to that in Europe had not yet matured in Sinhala at that time.

Thus, translation and adaptation were crucial in the evolution of modern Sinhala prose literature. Translation brought Western narrative structures, realism, characterization techniques and philosophical ideas into the Sinhala literary culture (Dissanayake 1992: 33–57). Book translations also expanded the readerships and public literary culture through print media and educational institutions (Rajasinghe 2010: 54–70).

But colonial translation was also tied to attendant ideological power structures. Niranjana (1992: 134–142) claims that colonial translation operated a mode of reinforcing Western cultural dominance by representing European literary traditions as models of both civilization and intellectual superiority. So translation works on the one hand, in the colonial period, as a means of literary modernization and then also continues to exist through hierarchical representations.

4.3 Post-Independence Sinhala Literary Nationalism

After independence from British rule in 1948, Sinhala literary culture has been characterized by the forces of nationalism, cultural revivalism and a desire to consolidate an indigenous literary identity. Translation gives way to the greater range of original Sinhala literary production that reaches its height after this time, but translation gradually passes from the dominant role to be played within the field of national literature at a more selective level.

Contrary to this logic, though, translated literature would greatly impact Sinhala literary development for some time and one of the most important types of translations were those from Russian literature. Fyodor Dostoevsky, Leo Tolstoy, Anton Chekhov and Maxim Gorky brought with in Sinhala fiction the realism, psychological depth, moral conflict and social criticism; Perera (2011: 91–104) points out that these translations had a huge impact in shaping modern Sinhala literary realism and psychological characterization Likewise, Wickramasinghe (2007: 112–128) suggests how translated literature promoted stylistic experimentation and comparative literary consciousness among Sinhala writers.

Ideological and political disputes would become increasingly intertwined with translation in the period of the long postwar. Translational choices and debate, in turn, were often influenced by broader social movement's socialist literary movements, anti-colonial nationalism and by discussions of the terms activity and literary taste. In this regard, translation acted as both a literary tool and arena for ideological contestation.

Moreover, the spread of translated literature became more and more restricted throughout literary institutions and educational systems. The translated literature can be seen as a kind of rewriting that is affected by ideological and institutional factors (Lefevere 1992: 14-26) after André Lefevere. Thus, some translated works were promoted because they aligned with mainstream political and cultural ideals, while others existed on the fringes of the literary system.

4.4 Contemporary Globalization and Cultural Translation

Contemporary Sinhala translated literature functions at the intersection of globalization, digital communication, transnational media and cultural hybridity. By the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, more and more literary works from English, Latin American, European and Asian traditions had been translated into that language as well.

Cultural movements such as magical realism, postmodernism, feminist literature and postcolonial fiction from the global literary landscape heavily impacted contemporary Sinhala literature through translation. Experimental narrative techniques and magical realist aesthetics which distinguish the works of Gabriel García Márquez and other Latin American writers were deposited in Sinhala fiction.

Translation today is also a product of the larger cultural shifts that globalization has engendered. In Sri Lanka, much of the reshaping of cultural translation focuses on the incomplete intersections of identity, migration, consumer culture and transnational interaction (Hewamanne 2014: 210–219). This means that translation operates no longer just across national, regional and linguistic systems, but through more expansive global cultural processes.

The key issues in the contemporary literary environment are that of hybridity, interaction and circulation of literatures digitally. Translators are operating within fast evolving media spaces, shaped by global publishing markets and multilingual readerships. Yet, globalization also raises issues of cultural homogenization and the inequities of literary power-relationships. Critics like Emily Apter and Pascale Casanova contend that global literary circulation tends to favor language markets and cosmopolitan literary nodes (Apter 2013: 3–18; Casanova 2004: 11–28).

On closer examination, it may be observed that the functioning of translation in the Sinhala literary polysystem is a historically dynamic process and for this reason translated literature has played a major role in the modernization of Sri Lankan literature as well as cultural exchange and identity formation.

V. Translation, Power and Cultural Negotiation in the Sinhala Literary Polysystem

Translation can never be a politically or culturally neutral process. Thus, contemporary translation studies will increasingly appreciate that at the site of translation is a nexus of power, ideology and cultural authority within systems of institutional control. Translation has served as a contested zone in the Sinhala literary polysystem since at least the inception of Ceylonese nationalism, with complex interplays between colonialism and national culture, literary authority and religious ideology, post-colonial subjectivity and global cultural forces. Thus Sinhala translated literature should not be understood merely as an aesthetic or linguistic phenomenon, but rather as a historical process of cultural mediation and ideological change.

Translation is treated in this way as a type of "rewriting" institutionally regulated by an ideological system and the forces of patronage, Lefevere (1992: 14–26). That approach is particularly relevant to Sinhala literary history because the choice, adaptation and dissemination of translated texts have always been influenced by religious institutions, colonial educational systems, nationalist movements, publishing industries and political ideologies. Thus, translation became entangled in very wide-ranging struggles over cultural representation and literary authority in Sri Lankan life.

5.1 Translation and Colonial Power

The colonial period remained a turning point in the transformation of Sinhala translated literature. Through the colonial education systems, they not only brought Western literary traditions to Sri Lanka, but established English as a language of intellectual elitism and administrative power. And thus translation turned into a conduit for Western cultural ideals, literary practices and modes of knowing to penetrate presumably Sinhala literary culture.

Translation theory within postcolonialism has long argued that colonial translation upheld cultural hierarchies and modes of domination. Translation in colonial contexts, Niranjana (1992: 134–142) argues, treated colonized societies from Western perceptual indexes that justified colonial domination and cultural hegemony. Through translation of European literary works into Sinhala, Sri Lankan culture experienced the introduction of modern literary genres and intellectual paradigms; however, it also served to reinforce the idea that Western literary traditions represented sophistication and modernity.

Colonial translation thus produced a double sided effect on one hand in Sinhala literature. Translation helped usher several aspects of literary modernity into Sinhala literary culture as realism, prose fiction, drama and narrative techniques were all introduced by translation. Conversely, it crystallized linguistic and cultural hierarchies that gave primacy to European literary canons over pre–colonial genres. Translation was both a site of literary innovation and a tool of ideological production.

In addition, missionary translations were key in developing the colonial educational and religious conversation in Sri Lanka. The introduction of these new verbal registers and moral frameworks into Sinhala literary culture aided in the wider cultural transformations that came with colonial modernity, including Biblical translations or missionary educational texts.

5.2 Translation and National Identity Formation

In the post-independence period, translation was tied to the discourse on nationalism, cultural authenticity and literary identity in Sri Lanka. Sinhala literary nationalism wanted to tighten indigenous literatures but also relate in new and more exciting ways with world literatures. Thus, translation became a kind of half-space in the post-independence literary field.

Russian, European and Asian literature was appreciated in Sinhalese literary circles as a source of intellectual and literary nourishment because they provided Sinhala readers and writers from which new philosophical ideas; political ideologies with narrative style unfold. But it also raises concerns about reliance on foreign literary traditions and maintaining a unique Sinhala identity.

Translation is a catalyst of national consciousness by adapting foreign texts to the local ideological needs (Tymoczko 2007: 15–35). Translators in Sri Lanka have frequently rewritten foreign literary texts to fit them to the prevailing Sinhala cultural norms, Buddhist moral system and nationalist ideology.

As for example translations of Russian realist fiction impacted upon Sinhala literary realism and intellectual thought in the twentieth century (Perera 2011: 91–104). As a result translation was linked not only to creative literary evolution but also political and ideological dynamics.

Simultaneously, literary institutions and educational systems dictated which translated texts were ushered into the literary canon. As we learn from André Lefevere, translation is a kind of rewriting that is mediated by ideological and institutional power (Lefevere 1992: 14-26). Thus, some translations were favored over others because they fit into established narratives and dominant cultural and political paradigms.

5.3 Domestication, Foreignization and Cultural Representation

The dichotomy between domestication and foreignization is one of the most debated concepts in translation studies. According to Lawrence Venuti domestication is a strategy that renders foreign texts as conforming to the linguistic and cultural norms of target-language readers (Venuti 1995: 1–20) whereas foreignisation preserves instances of linguistic & cultural difference.

Through data showing that translated literature into Sinhala employs domestication strategies examples of which often are found in translations for a broader market, For this reason, many foreign idioms, religious expressions, cultural references and social practices had been adapted so that the text would feel 'closer' to Sinhala readers. Sometimes, this meant swapping Western cultural items for those identifiable to local users.

Domestication, on the other hand, is ideologically complicated. Careful observations by Venuti (2004: 482–489) have shown that a high rate of domestication may obliterate the foreign cultural identity and enhance the predominance of target cultural values. Certain Sinhala translations rendered foreign literary works into localized narratives, producing readings of the work that filtered out complexities with respect to their foreign cultural context and replaced them with expectations from Sinhala culture.

On the other hand, foreignization strives to maintain cultural and linguistic difference in translation. In a few cases, some translators used foreign terminologies, plot structures and stylistic features to give the readers an experience of others culture as those terms probably did not have intelligible equivalents in Sinhala and recognized that these translations were less frequent in a conventionally Sinhala-centered translation environment. All of these practices fostered cross-cultural understanding and inter-textual awareness within the Sinhala literary tradition, influencing how Sinhala authors understood their text as literature. Translation then is a site of reception and re-signification, where the foreign meets the native on its own terms, in ways that are promising for Sinhala literature.

5.4 Translation, Religion and Ideological Authority

Sinhala translated literature was especially shaped around religion. Religious translation traditions laid the foundation of literary translation in inscriptions, and Buddhist inspired literary language, ethical discourse and cultural symbolism had a major impact on literary culture in Sri Lanka. The translation of Buddhist canon from Pali to Sinhala not only facilitated the reconsolidation of religious but also rendered an ideological role (Dharmadasa 1992: 67–81).

Translational practices and literary circulation were influenced by the control that religious institutions historically exercised over literary production, manuscript preservation and educational dissemination. So that Buddhist translation activities worked to both reinforce religious authority and establish literary and cultural identity in Sinhala society.

Concurrently, religious translation was accompanied by processes of adaptation and re-interpretation. Buddhist concepts were often translated and interpreted through local cultural lenses, resulting in uniquely Sinhala types of literary religion. Seneviratne (2005: 101–114) argues that Buddhism has become closely caught up with Sinhala cultural nationalism and political identity which from the very early times of modern Sri Lankan history comes to dominate literary discourse and cultural representation.

5.5 Globalization and Cultural Hybridity

Contemporary Sinhala translated literature increasingly demonstrates the effects of globalization, digital communication, transnational migration and worldwide literary circulation. The expansion of global media and publishing industries has made translated works from a wide range of linguistic and cultural traditions more accessible to Sinhala readers.

According to Hewamanne (2014, pp. 210–219), cultural translation in Sri Lanka reflects wider processes of globalization and changing identity formations. Translation now functions within transnational cultural networks where local and global literary influences constantly intersect. Consequently, Sinhala literature has absorbed influences from Latin American magical realism, feminist writing, postmodern fiction and various Asian literary movements, encouraging the development of hybrid literary forms in Sinhala fiction and poetry.

At the same time, globalization raises concerns about cultural homogenization and unequal literary power relations. Pascale Casanova explains that global literary systems are often shaped by dominant metropolitan centers that possess stronger cultural authority (Casanova 2004: 11–28). Sinhala translated literature therefore continues to balance participation in global literary culture with the protection and preservation of local cultural identity.

Overall, translation within the Sinhala literary polysystem can be understood as a continuous process of cultural negotiation influenced by ideology, nationalism, colonialism, globalization and literary power structures. Translation serves as a means of literary modernization, cultural adaptation and intercultural exchange, making Sinhala translated literature a significant transformative force in the history of Sri Lankan literature.

VI. Case Studies: Russian and Global Literary Influences on Sinhala Translated Literature

Some of the most significant case studies which show how translated writing is shaping Sinhala literary culture are found in relation to Russian, European and other international scripts being rendered into this native tongue. These translations ushered in substantial changes to the Sinhala literary polysystem with new literary aesthetics, philosophies, narrative modes and ideological perspectives. According to the seminal work on the theory of polysystems, translated literature plays a central role in periods of change and literary activity throughout history (Even-Zohar 1978: 45–47). This notion is well-illustrated by the development of Sinhala literature in the twentieth century, where translations from foreign literature formed a large basis for modern Sinhala short fiction and literary consciousness.

The following section discusses literary case studies in order to demonstrate the role that translated literature played as an active subsystem within a Sinhala literary polysystem. We highlight Russian literary translations that wielded immense power on Sinhala realism, psychological fiction and socio-political literary discourse.

6.1 Russian Literary Influence on Sinhala Fiction

Within twentieth-century Sinhala translated writing, Russian literature had a profoundly important influence. Translations of works by Fyodor Dostoevsky, Leo Tolstoy, Anton Chekhov and Maxim Gorky exposed Sinhala readers and writers to realism, psychological depth, existential issues and traditions of social criticism. Such translations massively altered the aesthetics of Sinhala literary tradition and the nature of narratives.

According to Perera (2011: 104), it was Russian literary translations of novels that inspired the initial developments in Sinhala fiction towards realism. Before this impact, Sinhala prose was primarily constructed upon romantic and moralistic writing modes. The introduction of primarily Russian realist literature into Sinhala literary discourse brought with it a more inner-directed and detailed form of psychological characterization, social tensions, moral ambivalence and class-based critique.

In this sense, Dostoevsky opened up themes of guilt, isolation, morality and existential conflict to Sinhala writers; Tolstoy on the other hand encouraged greater philosophical thought and moral exploration in Sinhala literature. This thus considerably expanded the thematic range and stylistic diversity of the Sinhala fiction.

Finally, Russian literature influenced not only art but also ideological and political life. By the twenties and thirties, when such literary translations began to boom in Sri Lanka, socialist and Marxist thought had already gained ground and Russian literature was frequently associated with anti-colonial thinking, social equality and a more progressive political sensibility. Thus translation played a crucial role not only in the modernization of literature but also, the transformation of Sinhala literary culture broadly.

This period of the Sinhala literary polysystem shows clearly how translated literature can function as an instrument of social creativity and transformation, enriching the texture of local literary production.

6.2 Translation and the Development of Sinhala Psychological Fiction

Among the many ways in which translated literature impacted on Sinhala fiction, one area of paramount significance was through introducing psychological realism and interior characterization. Earlier Sinhala literary narratives were more concerned with moral preaching, religious allegory and public life than they were with individual psychology. Sinhalese works were introduced to new ways of writing about consciousness, emotional turmoil and the subjective experience by way of translation.

The psychological intensity found in Dostoevsky's works had a particularly strong effect on Sinhala writers who were interested in existential questions and inner conflict. In addition, translations of European realist and modernist literature introduced techniques such as stream-of-consciousness narration, fragmented memory, introspective monologue and symbolic characterization into Sinhala prose fiction.

Dissanayake (1992: 33–57) explains that translated fiction greatly broadened the aesthetic and philosophical dimensions of Sinhala literature by encouraging experimentation with character psychology and social realism. The rise of psychologically layered Sinhala novels during the twentieth century therefore demonstrates the wider impact of translated literary traditions within the Sinhala literary polysystem.

This literary transformation supports Even-Zohar's argument that translated literature often introduces innovative literary repertoires into developing literary systems (Even-Zohar 1990: 15–17). Translation thus became an important means through which Sinhala literature expanded its narrative techniques and literary complexity.

6.3 European Literary Modernism and Sinhala Literary Experimentation

Aside from Russian realism European literary modernism, through translation, has had a marked impact on Sinhala literature. New Modernist literary trends brought experimentation in narrative forms, symbolist imagery, fragmented structures and existential concerns into Sinhala literary discussions.

Translations of European fiction and poetry encouraged Sinhala writers, however, to progress from classical narrative realism to exploring impressionism, linguistic experimentation and symbolic expressionary. As Wickramasinghe (2007: 112–128) demonstrates, comparative literary interaction through translation played an enormous role in developing aesthetic innovation and consolidating literary self-awareness in Sri Lankan literary culture.

Sinhala readers also became acquainted with existentialist, psychoanalytical and modernist humanistic philosophical ideas from these European literary translations. These intellectual currents played a role in developing more introspective and philosophically informed literary traditions in Sinhala.

Also, translation facilitated inter-regional exchanges of literary theories and aesthetic debates within the Sri Lankan space. Translators and literary critics became the cultural agents who transported global literary currents into local literary discussions. It was for this reason that translation was not simply linguistic reproduction but rather a process of negotiation and appropriation.

6.4 Latin American Magical Realism and Contemporary Sinhala Literature

Translation affected the Sinhala literature not only in the first half of the twentieth century but even during late twentieth and early twenty-first century with regard to Latin American magical realism or postmodern fiction. Translations of writers like Gabriel García Márquez and many other Latin American authors introduced new forms of non-linearity, mythologised symbolism, magical realism and hybrid modes of fiction into Sinhala literary culture.

Magical realism, with its multi-layered narratives of folk lore, spirituality, historical memory and political critique became especially attractive to Sinhala writers. Magical realist fiction organically linked with some South Asian literary traditions and also offered new creative possibilities within Sinhala literature.

This led translation to be a key mediator in constructing hybrid literary forms within modern Sinhala literature. Fragmentary narration, symbolic realism, intertextual references and postmodern literary devices introduced by imported world fiction have been embraced in modern Sinhala fiction.

Simultaneously, globalization and digital media has sped up the circulation of translated literature all around Sri Lanka as well. Currently translators operate in transnational literary networks where texts circulate rapidly across linguistic and cultural borders. Such developments have extended the reach of translated literary heritages for Sinhala readers and writers.

6.5 Translation and Cultural Adaptation

Although translated literature brought in foreign literary traditions to the Sinhala culture, these were rarely just replications of the original texts. Sinhalese translators frequently altered literary texts to accommodate local cultural norms, linguistic usages and intellectual beliefs.

According to Lawrence Venuti, domestication strategies often manipulate foreign literary texts in order for them to more closely mirror the cultural norms of the target culture (Venuti 1995: 1–20). Foreign social customs, religious beliefs and language expressions are substituted with local concepts to help Sinhala readers familiarize themselves with the text more easily.

Meanwhile, this same cultural-transmission process produced new literary meanings altogether within Sinhala translations. They therefore, served as not just copy in translation, but copy in transformation. Russian literary realism has since taken on particular ideological and emotional meaning depending on socio-political conditions within Sri Lanka, for example. Similarly, Latin American magical realism was the localized reimagining of oral storytelling heritage, folklore and historical memory. Such developments demonstrate that translated literature is itself a dynamic part of creating new literary and cultural forms in the Sinhala literary polysystem.

6.6 Translation as Literary Innovation

The case studies discussed above clearly show that translated literature played a deeply transformative role in the history of Sinhala literature. Through translation, Sinhala literary culture encountered new genres, narrative patterns, philosophical concepts and stylistic innovations that significantly shaped the growth of Sinhala fiction and literary discourse.

In this sense, the Sinhala literary polysystem strongly reflects Even-Zohar's view that translated literature often functions as a central subsystem during periods of literary change and modernization. Translation was not simply an additional element within Sinhala literary culture; it became one of the main channels through which Sinhala literature connected with global literary modernity.

Ultimately, these examples demonstrate that Sinhala translated literature functions as a dynamic and transformative literary force shaped by cultural negotiation, ideological adaptation and creative reinterpretation. Through translation, Sinhala literature continually broadened its literary possibilities while also redefining its own literary and cultural identity.

VII. Discussion

The research into Sinhala translated literature using polysystem theory indicates that translation operates as one of the key actors, perhaps even the principal driver, in a third space of cultural negotiation and ideological exchange within Sri Lankan literary history. The results endorse Itamar Even-Zohar's arguments that translated literature assumes dynamic roles in various literary systems given historical and cultural contingencies. Thus, Sinhala translated literature did not function as an ancillary or dependent branch but rather an active subsystem that had sunk its roots deep into the unfurling of Sinhala literary culture.

In general the study has one major finding that moments of literary transition have consistently raised translated literature to a central position within the Sinhala literary system. Translation also served as a foundation stone during the Buddhist period since literary production was tied almost exclusively to Pali religious texts. Likewise, translated literature opened up new genres, prose forms and narrative modes in the service of literary modernization and helped carve-out the contours of a new Sinhala prose fiction during colonialism.

The high level of connectedness between translation at the local (original) and the global (literary polysystem levels) reveals that translation was inextricably linked with ideology and power through time within this literary polysystem. For André Lefevere, translation is rewriting governed by ideology and by the status and authority of literary institutions (Lefevere 1992: 14–26). Translations of foreign texts were selected and framed by bodies such as religious institutions, colonial authorities, the educational system and publishing houses, and this selection process was also shaped by particular political ideologies.

One of the best examples demonstrating the ideological function of translation is colonialism. Translation served to insert aspects of Western literary modernity into Sinhala literature but also both depicted and substantiated colonial cultural hierarchies by presenting European literary traditions as markers for intellectual superiority. Simultaneously, the post-colonial translations of Russian realist works came to represent a discourse of anti-colonialism, socialism and social critique which were important in shaping both Sinhala literary-realism and intellectual life.

The study also shows how translation opened up new aesthetic and narrative possibilities in Sinhala literature. Psychological characterization, symbolic narration, philosophical inquiry and literary experimentation made their way into Sinhala fiction through Russian realism, European modernism and Latin American magical realism. Translation thus enabled Sinhala literature to adapt to and engage with global literary traditions.

The study also emphasizes the importance of translation to comparative literary awareness in Sri Lanka. Exposure to this literature in translation provided the incentive and tools for Sinhala writers and intellectuals to begin questioning concepts of realism, modernity, identity and social change. Translation thus became a vehicle for not just interlingual textual transfer but also inter-intellectual and inter-cultural transfer.

The contemporary Sinhala literary polysystem has also undergone extensive change due to globalization both in how translated literature functions within it and the different faces it is taking on. The circulation of translated literature in Sri Lanka has also been on the rise due to increased access to digital media and global literary markets. These influences can be traced to the postmodernism, on magic realism, feminist writing and in transnational fiction varieties that moulds a hybrid literary practice contemporary Sinhala literature.

However, globalization has also raised questions about cultural homogenization and uneven structures of literary power. Pascale Casanova and Emily Apter have demonstrated how global literary circulation privileges dominant (or empire) literary centers while undermining peripheral traditions (Casanova 2004: 11–28; Apter 2013: 3–18). As such, translated literature in Sinhala continues to negotiate between the forces of global literary participation and local cultural identity.

This cursory survey displays the wider continuum in which even contemporary Sinhala translated literature has perpetually been perceived as a critical cultural agent shaping governing discourses related to literary modernization, ideological negotiation, comparative literary consciousness and identity formation. The Sinhala literary polysystem reveals that translated literature is neither marginal nor derivative, but rather an agent of norm-refining and cultural transformation.

VIII. Conclusion

The study explores translated literature in Sinhala as a means of understanding historic and contemporary socio-literary roles which translation plays by examining the nature of historical developments within Sinhala literary culture through polysystem theory. The study reveals that translation was not simply linguistic transfer but rather a process as a part of literary modernisation, ideological formation, the exchange of cultures and identity transformation in Sri Lanka.

The results show that the status of translated literature in Sinhala literary history was contingent on historical, political, religious and cultural circumstances. Translation was central to the pre-modern phase of literary production, which relied almost exclusively upon translations and adaptations of Pali Buddhist texts. So translation played a role in the evolution of Sinhala literary language and the vernacular prose text, theological literature and national discourse.

The translated literature again performed a prominent role in the Sinhala literary system during the colonialist period. Western literary traditions were brought into the country by way of colonial education and print culture, which changed the aesthetics and narrative structures of Sinhala literature. Translation helped give birth to modern prose fiction and realism in Sinhala, as well as generating new ideas. At the same time, colonial translation reproduced colonial power imbalances and continued to favour European literary authority.

The research also shows how translated literature was a major role in 20th-century Sinhala fiction. Russian realism, European modernism and Latin American magical realism brought narrative techniques, psychological characterization, philosophical themes and literary experimentation to Sinhala literature. Sinhala literary culture negotiated international trends in literature through translation while localizing them for cultural conditions.

Such findings line up with Itamar Even-Zohar's contentions that translated literature commonly occupies a role of innovation and power during moments of literary shift (Even-Zohar 1978: 45–47). Translation in Sinhala literature has been used for expanding the parameters of literary forms available to its practitioners and further addressing new cultural conflicts.

The study also emphasizes the ideological dimension of translation, which was shaped by religion, colonialism, nationalism, educational institutions and universal cultural forces. After André Lefevere and Lawrence Venuti, translation is a process of ideologically guided cultural rewriting (Lefevere 1992: 14–26; Venuti 1995: 1–20). Thus translators were cultural intermediaries who shaped how literary and cultural meaning was mediated.

A further vital finding is that translation was a crucial force behind comparative literary consciousness in Sri Lanka. Translated works opened windows to other literary traditions, philosophical ideas and socio-political understanding for Sinhala readers and writers. Translation then became an impetus for literary experimentation, intellectual exchange and cultural reflection.

The study also acknowledges how contemporary Sinhala literature has been transformed through translation in an era of accelerating globalization. The increased accessibility of world literature through digital media and a globalized literary circulation has diversified the Sinhala fiction as well as the poetry by giving them hybrid literary influences. Concurrently, globalization has sparked and echoed fears of cultural homogenization which some view as a form of cultural imperialism and the asymmetrical power relations pervasive in transnational literary culture.

Overall, this research argues that Sinhala translated literature should not be considered as a marginal or inferior literary practice. Rather translation has very much been a principal vehicle of Sinhala literary modernization and cultural exchange, not to say identity formation. The Sinhala literary polysystem shows that literary cultures evolve by mediating, adapting and transforming one another through translation.

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