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TOWARDS ALTERNATIVE MODERNITIES: SITUATING KARNATAKA KADAMBARI AS A
VERNACULAR TRANSLATION

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ABSTRACT

Pre-colonial Kannada literary works play a significant role in developing a distinct way of modernity, which is alternative to the Western model. The manners in which these literary works were produced and the subject matter they enclosed break the defined aura of modernity that the West had created. This study attempts to analyze the role of those literary productions, which rightly differentiates the vernacular modernity and western modernity. It is right to think about the aspect of alternative modernities in the realm of Kannada literature. The distinct approach that Kannada literature has towards the idea of modernity makes it essential to analyze the development of Kannada vernacular modernity. The study attempts to complement the ongoing discourses on modernity, in which regional voices challenge the idea of singular modernity that West offered to the world.

Nagavarma's *Karnataka Kadambari* offers a brilliant account of the society and political spheres, at a time when the literary tradition enjoyed its glorious past and was far away from the colonial rule of 10th century Karnataka. The present chapter particularly focuses on how the literary, political and cultural aspects of Karnataka Kadambari contributed to the realm of Kannada modernity. Nagavarma translated Bana Kadambari under the reign of King Malwa in the late 10th century A. D, when Karnataka marked considerable progress under the patronage of new overlords of Deccan, the Western Calukayas. While looking at the reasons behind Nagavarma's translational attempt, there are many socio-political factors that answer the questions of those seeking the importance of early literary texts within the contexts of alternative modernities.

Keywords: vernacular modernity, translation, alternative modernities, kannada modernity, language politics

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Kannada literary culture has developed with the inner urge of the literary community for indigenous literature and the vernacular movements they proposed to free from the domination of classical languages. The subversive attitudes of early Kannada literary works have later become key factors for the development of modern thoughts and ideas among the Kannadigas. The true Kannada literary tradition has emerged through the very act of translations, adaptations and retellings from Sanskrit and Prakrit. The early Kannada writers introduced new literary themes and models from the great source, Sanskrit, in regional ways. They vernacularized great Sanskrit literary texts to explore their national attitudes towards their region. Modern critics like Mohanty pointed out and called to read literary texts “through the lens of alternative modernities, literary texts opened up new historical archives and suggest textualizing perspectives on a past we thought we knew well” (69) and they tried to contribute to the idea of many modernities which break the so called aura of western modernity. As Gaonkar argued that “the quest for alternative local knowledge serves to “destabilize the universalist idioms, historicize the contexts, and pluralize the experiences of modernity” (14).

Being a radical pedagogy for the development of alternative modernities in Kannada literature, *Karnataka Kadambari* substantiates the above research argument by analyzing its cultural, literary and political purposes. *Karnataka Kadambari* is produced in tenth century Karnataka, the time of vernacularization, in which Kannada literary community urged for a new literary wave. Nagavarma employed Bana's source from the Sanskrit *gadyakavya* tradition, which becomes the main literary source for Kannada literary emergence. The social and cultural values that Sanskrit tradition offered later become the factors for the early literary and social movements like *Veerashaivism* and *Vachana* movement of twelfth century Karnataka and contributed to the modern developments in the region later, which spread far beyond its place of origin. The monks and bards of the movement travelled all over the regions and spread their egalitarian thoughts, self-reflexiveness and linguistic and cultural ideas among the commoners. Those modern values of literary texts/translations and movements in pre-colonial Kannada literature provide a crucial alternate, to perform in colonial and post-colonial period.

Nagavarma's attempt of translation rearticulated Sanskrit *Kadambari* in a new vigor and dimension. The significance of *Karnataka Kadambari's* role in the development of alternative modernities lies in the rearticulated Sanskrit text, according to the literary crisis in Karnataka. By translating *Bana Kadambari* in to Kannada, Nagavarma employed different translating strategies to suit the existing literary conditions of the society.

We live in a world of distinct societies and cultures that always contribute to form a distinct way of life and understanding of the world. The multicultural and multilayered features of societies played a crucial role in forming the diverse cultural and literary identities in distinctive ways. These multiple features affect every literary and socio-cultural movement. This can also be seen in the emergence of modernity all over the world. The world defined modernity in different ways in different times and space according to the cultural and political explorations of every nation. There are so many modernities and modernisms in our world. How these modernities and modernistic thoughts have evolved differently in different socio-cultural contexts, is very important. Modernity has global impact, which is mediated by the historical and cultural backgrounds of each society and those modernistic thoughts are highly related to the cultural and ideological institutions of individual societies.

The modernity that west had defined “as in terms of the emergence of sharp critical self, which seeks to expose the weakness in traditional social structures, has often been seen as the manifestation of the western Enlightenment” (Misra113). Recent studies and writings have challenged the notion of colonial modernity that perpetuated the idea that modern consciousness among Indians is the contribution of Europeans. The basic conclusion of the studies is “that what the modernity that was imposed by colonialism replaced or destroyed belongs to the irretrievable past and is irrelevant for our purposes” (Mohanty 2). And it can also be argued that, “Indian modernity does not begin with colonial rule and that its elements can be discerned much earlier, in many different strands of culture and society. If it is likely that there are various forms of modernity, the concept of modernity can be disaggregated-that is, its constituent features can be

taken apart and imaginatively re-examined in new combinations in different social and cultural contexts (Bhatnagar 29)". The socio-cultural politics of the society forced to produce alternative modernities at different national and cultural sites. Therefore, one can safely conclude that modernity is not one, but many in forms.

Indian modernity: A case of Kannada

The beginning of Indian modernity can be traced back to that period when local speech forms were newly dignified as literary languages and entered into negotiation with the dominant Sanskrit tradition. Sheldon Pollock in his introduction to the *Languages of the Gods* raised a comment on Indian modernity:

if one of the defining or enabling features of European modernity was the vernacularization of the cultural and political spheres, the same occurred in south Asia altogether independently of European influence. Not only did Indian pre-modernity contain elements of European modernity but in some key areas of culture, such as the analysis of language, it might even be said to have provided a stimulus to the development of that modernity (9).

The richness, variety and alternative values that Indian literature encompasses contribute to the development of alternative modernities in India, which Mohanty says is a part of interdisciplinary project. The dominant modernity that the West defined is not what we know today. The great tradition of the puranas, Vedas and other ancient works and the cultural and political thoughts they offered, enable us to think and act alternatively. The modern values that pre-colonial Indian literary tradition encompasses later become the alternative locus for thought and action in Colonial and postcolonial periods in India. The literary movements and productions of pre-colonial India have to be placed in the context of complex matrix of socio-cultural and political order in modern India that suggested research on how these early literary productions/traditions contribute to the development of alternative and multiple modernities in regional literatures.

In the Indian scenario, the elements of modern thoughts have been present even in pre-colonial vernacular literatures. Pre-colonial Indian literary texts have the power to generalize and document human miseries from the position of an unnatural observer. The recent analysis of the literary texts and culture opened up new distinctly modern ideas and values, which contribute to the development of alternative modernities that shows how those modern thoughts were produced in the contexts other than the West. According to Mohanty, "literary and canonical texts, both canonical and popular or "folk" can play a major role in this revisionary analysis, revealing the alternative and non-dominating layers of modernity to which scholars have remained blind" (2). So we can say that Indian modernity is a continuation of the past and not a break from the past. The great tradition of modernity in pre-colonial Indian literature forced one to think about alternative modernities and regional modernities. Explicit views of the recent scholars on alternative modernities reveal the importance of pre-colonial literary culture and its intensive analysis. Tilottama Misra "contests the idea that a modern historical consciousness within India was something that came in the wake of British colonialism, [and] argues instead that elements of modernity were present in pre-colonial Assamese literature and that these elements remained, providing a crucial alternate locus for thinking and acting during the colonial period" (180). Early Indian literature provided the platform to act and think during the colonial period and they tried to develop alternate models according to other cultures. Hence one can argue that colonial and Eurocentric approaches to understand Indian society and literature were inadequate. At this crucial juncture it is necessary to develop an alternative approach to understand India. In such a case it is important to look at Indian vernaculars and their literary cultures like Telugu, Tamil and Kannada to know how these cultures formed an alternative model of their own.

The modernistic features of Sanskrit literary works themselves contribute to the maturity of modernistic thoughts and ideas in Indian vernaculars. The themes, narrative styles, characterizations and generic explorations of the Sanskrit literary zone played a vital role in the definite growth of regional literatures. In seventh century India, the Sanskrit prose writer and rhetorician Dandin wrote a prose romance called *Dashamukhacharita* which was composed with the challenge of presenting a socio cultural realistic picture of the period through the strings of romance in a unique literary form. By narrating the story of

adventure of ten princes from different countries, Dandin leads us to pass from pageantry to conduct, from convention to impression and from abstraction to fact. The princes in the story narrate their stories themselves, which make it clear that they are trying to dominate each other and are surviving by doing any *karma* (actions). The question of sincerity and faithfulness arises, where they are owners of their country and when they perform their karma according to their dharma, as kings. In the early periods, kings were considered as Godly figures. Here the authenticity of the notions of dharma and karma should be questioned. The question, Dandin puts forward to us echoes the political and philosophical tensions, which later become the seeds of revolutionary reactions in the colonial period.

Keith comments on Dandin's *Dashamukhacharita* as, "for the first time, these qualities, rare enough in the normal Sanskrit writing reveal themselves in a literary form, and make Dandin's delightfully unethical *romancero picaresco* not a conventional *prose kavya*, but a distinct literary creation of a new type in Sanskrit" (215). It satirizes certain aspects of contemporary modern society in an interesting period of the world that is the seventh century. Like *Dashamukhacharita* the other Sanskrit literary works of that period especially prose kavyas explores the political turns which underlines a society. The contents and themes discussed in early Sanskrit works approaches the spirit of picaresque romance of modern Europe, which gives the modern values and voices through the highly descriptive composition- a colorful blend of metaphors, similes and complex allusions.

Most of the Sanskrit works were produced on the basis of ruling Kingdoms and on its historical accounts. This is what modern critics like Velcheru Narayana Rao and others have argued that "if history writing has to be considered as an indicator of modernity that came with colonialism, then such modernity emerged for south India well before the British presence" (Mohanty 12). The Sanskrit works like *Harshacaritha*, *Kadambari* etc. said historical achievements of the Kings and their conflicts, which were translated into other regional languages and new genres like *charithrika kadamabrigalu* and *natakagalu* formed in Kannada a literary system. Through the literary works Sanskrit writers like Dandin, Bana raised their silenced voices against the authoritative powers in society. These intellectual traditions form the egalitarian projects in society, which is in its development/transition. Later those traditions became the main source for the development of vernacular literatures in India.

Kannada language and literature has developed with the sheer attempt of vernacularization and with the thoughts of nationalism in Karnataka. The encounter between Sanskrit and vernaculars of the period continued even after the colonial rule in the Indian context. To stand independently, regional literatures used Sanskrit and Prakrit literary models and movements by which they established their literary and cultural freedom. This self-criticizing power of literary products itself marked the beginning of modernistic ideas in vernacular literary tradition. The rich tradition of modernity in pre-colonial literatures has been possible through rewritings and translations. To meet with Sanskrit and Prakrit, regional languages borrowed Sanskrit literary models as their source. Like every vernacular, Kannada has also been influenced by Sanskrit literature. Early narrative communities of Kannada writers and scholars translated and rewrote Sanskrit epics and historical accounts in to Kannada. They expressed their ideas and responses on domination, autocrats, exploitation and resistance through the borrowed literary models and sources, which later became a part of nationalist discourse. The cultural project of nationalism as Partha Chatterjee argues, is "to produce a distinctly national modernity of our own" (Misra 115). They resisted the domination of Sanskrit by using the same sources, where the role of translation is important.

Polyphonic elements in *Kadambari*

The distinctive plot construction and narrative technique which Bana employed in his *Kadambari* made readers experience the real essence of the folkloric tradition of *Katha* (story). He weaved stories within stories to present his eternal characters by leaving them to narrate their own stories to the reader. As Peterson comments, "[we] live in the pages of a book which still has the power to present its shadowy creatures of romance in a way to touch the heart of the reader" (42).

In every sense, Banabhatta left his characters free to narrate themselves to other characters. The story passes from one mouth to another by narration, which is told by yet another. From the very beginning, Banabhatta, the author, left the platform of Sudraka's court to the characters for communication with each other. The interaction began with the Candala maiden, who comes to Sudraka's royal court to present him a talking parrot. After that the Parrot took charge of the interaction in the court and it began to narrate its story, which is told by Sage Jabali. Thus the stories revolve within a single strand but from different mouths. The characters determine the narration by leaving the platform one by one and some of them again become narrators. Every narration gives different sentiments to the reader. By weaving stories within stories with different intentions, Bana as an author stands outside the plot and gives importance to the multiple voices, which are coming from both the past and the present; thereby *Kadambari's* dramatic tone, resembles Bhaktin's dialogic nature of the novel.

Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of Polyphony is essentially a new theory of authorial point of view. Polyphony literally means multiple voices. The idea of polyphony in novel/fiction gives great freedom of interaction to the characters. According to Bakhtin Polyphonic novel allows the space for different consciousness to communicate with each other. According to David Lodge, a polyphonic novel is a "novel in which a variety of conflicting ideological positions are given a voice and set in play both between and within individual speaking subjects, without being placed and judged by an authoritative authorial voice" (86). Bakhtin's Polyphonic theory is also known as *dialogics*. According to Bakhtin, *dialogics* is the process by which the meaning is produced by the interactions between the author, the work and the reader/listener. Thus the multiple voices of the novel allowed characters to bring different ideological views on the objects. This dialogic nature of the novel can be seen in Bana's *Kadambari* and his characterization. Dasgupta shortly commented on the way in which *Kadambari's* tale progresses: "we have A's account of B's report of C's recounting of D's relating of what E said and so forth" (23). Thus Bana gives complete freedom to the characters to interact with each other and with the reader, who turns his ears to the multiple narrators. Because of this the reader or listener becomes the strong communicator compared to the characters.

The significant feature of *Bana Kadambari* is the employment of first hand narration, which made effective, the main form of the text, in which the main narrator or the first narrator (Parrot) did not know who the subsequent narrator would be and is allowed to describe, because the first narrator reports other's recounts on another. But every single narrative is interconnected and at the same time stands individually with individual self-consciousness. For instance, Mahashwetha's narration gives effective expression to an intimate knowledge and feeling, which is essential to the development of the plot, and her narration, becomes a large space for the multiple voices of Pundarika, Kapinjala, Kadambari, and Pathralekha. They reveal their individual identities by narrating their own story to other characters and to the reader. This multiple narration does not support the reader to identify the chief narrator and the entire event, makes the reader also a participant or a communicator.

The polyphonic effect seems more effective when Nagavarma translated *Bana Kadambari* into Kannada as *Karnataka Kadambari*. The multiple voices and the multiple discourses of a literary text are always in competition or in process, because that literary text is always in transit within a literary system through the process of translation, adaptation, retellings and so on. The target readers play a key role in this process in which they determine the nature of the individual voices of that literary text. Here Nagavarma translated *Bana Kadambari* with an accurate purpose for the Kannada readers of the tenth century Karnataka. He employed translation strategies and methods according to the literary, social and political conditions of the state. With particular intention and purpose Nagavarma as a translator and the author of Karnataka's *Kadambari* brings more effective tone of Polyphony or dialogism than Banabhatta in his *Kadambari*.

In many instances, Nagavarma makes his characters speak extensively and tries to individualize them in every place. Nagavarma provides only the idiom of language and the space to his character and leaves him to narrate himself. In *Bana Kadambari*, the author makes small intervention in some cases; this is entirely done away with in *Karnataka Kadambari*. Nagavarma gives full freedom to his characters. Bana describes

Mahaswetha's first feeling towards Pundarika. In the translation Nagavarma leaves his role as a narrator, and asked her to describe her own feelings to the reader. By doing so, he intended that the self consciousness of Mahaswetha is well revealed in her own description. Here Nagavarma frees the text from the authorial view and gives the effect of multiple voices in translation and this is what Bakhtin's polyphonic effect intends. This aspect of polyphony is seen in the representation of multiple narrators in *Karnataka Kadambari*. The peculiarity of a polyphonic novel is that the characters are free from the authorial hold. Nagavarma consciously leaves the role of the narrator and gives them freedom to express themselves. By making his characters speak at length, Nagavarma brings in a heteroglossic tone. As a translator he goes along with the characters and tries to interact with them by giving them more freedom and time to express their feelings and experiences. For this, he employed translation strategies like enlarging, abridging and omitting etc. in his translation. By doing so, he intensifies the self consciousness of the characters. To a large extent Nagavarma's translation strategies and his conscious changes reflects the aspects of Bakhtin's theory of Polyphony. Bakhtin asserts that all novels are polyphonic and that Dostoevsky's polyphonic novel had predecessors in the folkloric genres of antiquity (Bakhtin, 44). Given this, one can argue that *Bana Kadambari* and more effectively its translation by Nagavarma's *Karnataka Kadambari* remarkably demonstrate this Bakhtinian argument with its polyphonic narrative techniques.

"Karnataka's Kadambari": Translation as Resistance

The translating trend in Kannada literature continued as an accepted mode of social criticism right from the emergence of literature in Karnataka. Nagavarma's attempt of translating Bana's *Kadambari* into Kannada tried to define a regional identity distinct from the dominant Sanskrit tradition. Later as a part of this process, Kannada writers and translators were engaged in a number of linguistic and semiotic transformations, which played a vital role in the making of modern Kannada literature. *Karnataka Kadambari* was considered as the first faithful translation in Kannada literature. Nagavarma used translation as a mode of negotiation in resisting the hegemonic impositions that Sanskrit tradition forced on it. Translation was thus, built into Karnataka's literary tradition from its beginning. Karnataka used translation as a medium to define its identity and break away from the dominant Sanskrit tradition. Nagavarma used native sensibility to resist cultural influences on indigenous culture. The process of resistance was determined by the existing social and literary contexts of the time.

Translation is to articulate an alien culture, but for which the translator made considerable changes and innovations according to the target contexts. I have argued here that Nagavarma used translation as a mode to invent and legitimate the native form of poetry to resist the domination of *champu* form, which was popular in Sanskrit at the time. Therefore Nagavarma translated Bana's *Kadambari* into Kannada with an accurate feeling of cultural chauvinism. He was clear about the task he had set out to perform, insisting that, he was not purely translating, but was instead trying to *Kannadisu* (kannadization) from Sanskrit. Translating *Bana Kadambari* can be seen as a similar effort of creating regional literature and theory, whereby the translator comes out of his boundary that dominates his literary movements. *Karnataka Kadambari* is the product of the translator's specific purpose and target. The translator described his task as *kannadisu* (Kannadizing), the term carried language politics of the translator, in the beginning of his translation as,

ಆ ಕೃತಿ ಮುನ್ನಂ ಚೆಲ್ವಿಂ
ಗಾರಕಮೆನಿಸಿದು ಮತ್ತೆ ಕನ್ನಡಿಸಿತಿ
ನ್ನೀ ಕವಿತೆಯಂ ಪ್ರಗಲ್ಬತೆ
ಯಾ ಕಾದಂಬರಿಯ ಸೊಬಗದೇನಚ್ಚರಿಯೋ...

(Here Nagavarma specified his intention that he was going to transform the world wonder, *Kadambari*, which was created by Bana- Bhooshana into Kannada.) And he specified that the translation that he is going to produce is a kind of verbal manifestation of *Bana Kadambari* in the beginning. He used the word "ಕಥಾವರ್ಧಾರ" (manifestation) as a synonym for translation in his introductory verse,

ಕೃತಪತಿ ನರೇಂದ್ರ ಚಂದ್ರಂ
 ಕೃತಿಯಂ ಪೇಳ್ವಂ ಬುಧಾನಬ್ಜವನಕಳಹಂಸಂ
 ಕೃತಿ ಕಾದಂಬರಿಯನೆ ಸ
 ತೃತಿಕಥಿತ ಕಥಾವಥಾರಮಂ ಕೇವಳಮೇ...

Here he intended to denote that *Karnataka Kadambari* is a Kannada verbal manifestation of Sanskrit *Kadambari*. By using the terms like *Kannadisu* and *kathaavathara*, Nagavarma completely tried to emphasize his cultural chauvinism in the text. We don't have any translator's note and preface to *Karnataka Kadambari*, but in some of his introductory verses he revealed his intention and poetics of his translation. When we place this translation in the context of Kannada literary tradition in the late 10th century, we recognize the reason behind Nagavarma's attempt to translate this wonder of a literary text. For Nagavarma, *Bana Kadambari* was a book full of literary knowledge and verbal art where Bana filled his text with varied literary devices to create a new literary culture in a language. It is the translator who understands the text that gets translated for a specific purpose. In the process of translation, the translator becomes an active reader and writer, and here Nagavarma becomes a creator of a literary tradition by contributing his modernistic attempt of translation to the literary tradition of Karnataka.

The complex Sanskrit textual and linguistic system creates an aura of invisible dominating power, which loses its authoritative tenor when Nagavarma translated Bana's intricate prose narrative into simple rhythmic poetry, where the translator celebrated native sensibility and vernacular beauty of Kannada language. While describing Acchoda lake Nagavarma avoids complex descriptions and comparisons that Bana made in the original. Instead he used simple beautiful Kannada words like *ವಸುಧೆ*, *ಸರೋವರಂ*, *ಚಂದ್ರಕಾಂತ* (synonyms of lake) etc. which simplified the meaning of the description by using simple synonyms for lake. His portrayal of the lake enabled us to imagine the real picture of it, which seemed as a stream with shining flowers and colors. Another instance that we find in the text is when Nagavarma asked Pathralekha to explain the feelings of Kadambari when her hero say adieu. Bana described the situation through the mouths of Chandrapida and Keyuraka. Here Nagavarma believed that only the women can know the feelings of other women. Therefore the power of description is more effective in the translation than the original. As a cultural translator, Nagavarma translated cultural values with more effectively. When translating the address of Shukanasa in the time of Chandarpida's coronation, he retained whole sense of the passage with more native color because the portion of the Shukanasa's address is considered as one of the important passages of *Kadambari*, where Nagavarma becomes an active reader also. Bana explained the address of Shukanasa with subtle and short descriptions. One sentence from the address is "अधर्म भग्नगतयः पन्गव इव परेण संचार्यन्ते" (the means of *adharma* causes destruction), Nagavarma translated it with long explanation portraying the position of a person who follows the path of *adharma* in the society. By doing this kind of attempt Nagavarma tried to pinpoint the cultural and political tensions that are prevailed in pre-colonial Kannada society. Becoming a pre-text, *Bana Kadambari* is localized to accommodate distinct elements of the emerging culture of Karnataka. The author as a translator, Nagavarma is offering literary and cultural needs to a promising Karnataka language by resisting the elitist worldview of Sanskrit tradition.

When we analyze the translation strategies that Nagavarma used and the proportion of his faithfulness to the concept of equivalence, it is clear that this translation is the product of vernacularization of Kannada language. Until the 8th and 9th century A D, the political records and documents were written either in Sanskrit or Prakrit in Karnataka. In courts, political transactions appeared in Sanskrit language, making it incomprehensible to the common man. Thus cultural politics of dominant languages has continued. With the succession of Badami chalukeyas (8th c), the cultural politics of language in Karnataka become stronger and Kannada rulers showed their right to produce their administrative documents in Kannada language. This cultural politics of language is also spread to the field of literature, whereby Kannada writers began their literizing attempt and they recognized the importance of vernacularity.

In the tenth century, this language and cultural politics among Kannadigas reached its peak, when poets like Pampa, Ponna, Ranna and Nagavarma produced their works. Most of the poets of the time were Jaina poets, among whom Nagavarma was a Brahmin. Jaina poets have produced their works with the intention of religious propagation because at that time Jainism was in its infancy. While the main purpose of their writings was religious propagation, Nagavarma's translation was not religious oriented as he transformed a set of knowledge from one language to another for the benefit of the common people, who were denied this knowledge. That is why he transformed every details of Shukanasa's address on Kingdom and the duty of the King without any omissions. Thus the knowledge on administration was made accessible to the common people. Nagavarma translated *Bana Kadambari* from Sanskrit to suit the politics of Kannada literary culture. His conscious titling *Karnataka Kadambari* reflects the translator's aspirations, who wanted a local *Kadambari* that would appeal to the simple minds of the ordinary Kannadiga. Through generic transformation (prose to poetry), Nagavarma produced a magnificent Karnataka's *Kadambari*, which reflected his nationalistic approach to translation.

The result of Nagavarma's attempt offers a new way of seeing and moving away from the existing clichés of the time. The poetical rendering of prose that Bana composed gives a fictional feeling to Kannada readers and this reading experience later prompted the emergence of a new genre called *Kadambari* which means fiction/novel in Kannada. And these new literary models made writing and reading communities invent new literary models of their own. Later, more prose-centered genres like *vachana*, *ragale* and writings of *dasas* developed thereby clearly moving away from the genres such as *champu* and *mahakavyas*. It is noted that these generic formations are achieved through the process of translation and adaptations, in which translators assimilated source genres into target models, which was how the literary culture of Karnataka was defined and formed over a period of time.

Inventing literary models and interests

The literary atmosphere of 10th century Karnataka enjoyed two categories of literature, *Laukika* (secular and historical) and *Agamika* (religious and legendary). The poets like Pampa, Ranna and Ponna mainly wrote *agamika kavyas* based on religious and mythological sources of the time. They translate and adapt Sanskrit texts mainly *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* into Kannada, where they tried to localize epics into the vernacular. The readers enjoyed the extravagant literary abilities of the writers by reading regional Ramayanas and Mahabharatas. This reading atmosphere changed with Nagavarma's translation of *Bana Kadambari*, which is considered as one of the first secular works of the time. Bana's *Kadambari* is a romance based fiction translated by Nagavarma retaining the same romantic ambience in to Kannada. Nagavarma's translational attempt introduced new literary tastes for readers and new literary models for writers in Kannada literature. For all these reasons tenth century Karnataka is marked as the period of literary explorations that reached its *maarga* (mainstream).

Though *Karnataka Kadambari* was produced in the tenth century, the method of translation that Nagavarma adopted conveys modern literary sensibility and narrative style. Bana's *Kadambari* is in the tradition of *Katha* as he mentions in one of the introductory verses of *Kadambari*. *Kadamabri's* story is shaped and plotted in a ring composition of multiple stories ending with an unexpected climax of surprises. Bana's *Kadambari* becomes "a good example for how to tell a good story- a story in fact, about the telling of stories. *Kadambari* is flush with stories, people tell each other stories, they allude to known stories; and the similes themselves are packed with stories" (Layne xv). Bana uses simple and different story telling tricks to keep his readers in a state of suspense. The important method Bana employed is how a single dominant story is narrated in the midst of a lot of other minor stories. As Layne further notes, "the story is told to Sudraka by Vaishampayana about a story told to Vaishampayana by Jabali, within which is a story told to Chandrapida by Mahaswetha about a story to her by Kapinjala, ending with Jabalis's the narrative when Sudraka the auditor becomes Sudraka the actor" (xvi); the plot evolved by multiple tongues, gives a novelistic air to the readers. Nagavarma carried these novelistic features along with the story to Kannada literary platform, where he presented it more effectively in the form of poetry. Nagavarma made his characters talk more and reduced

author narration in the translation. For instance author narration of Mahaswetha's first feelings for Pundarika in *Bana Kadambari* is changed and told by Mahaswetha herself in the translation. He increased dramatic atmosphere and heteroglossic tone by making every character speak.

The long narrative technique, the arrangement of thematic elements and brilliant characterization of *Kadambari* led Kannadigas to categorize *Kadambari* as a novel. *Bana Kadambari* has been considered as a romantic fiction or a romance because of its fictitious features. "Bana's power of observation and picturesque description, his love of nature, his eye for color and ear for music, the richness of his fancy and his wealth of words, are excellences which are unquestioned; but they are seldom kept within moderate bounds" (Keith 233). Bana's selection of subject is excellent that carries full of human love and his characters are struggling between birth and curse, which are playing tools in the hands of supernatural powers (Gods and sages). In Bana's *Kadambari* "the world of fancy is conceived as vividly as the world of humanity, but whole unreal machinery fades away when we are brought face to face with a tale of human love and sorrow, set forth in its idyllic charm as well as in its depth of pathos" (Keith 234). It is admitted that Nagavarma's source possesses wonderful insights in to the currents of youthful passion and inner feeling of human love and separation. When these literary insights are translated in to Kannada, Nagavarma becomes a tutor for Kannadigas to teach how the whole world is conceived with human life and their existence. This intention of the translator is well evident in his translatum because it seems that Nagavarma never bothered about his literary status among his contemporaries. The employment of thematic content and motives like rebirth, pre-birth, weaving stories within stories, personification of birds and animals, supernatural powers, divine consolation and curse abound in *Bana Kadambari* making it a romantic fiction. Peterson commented on *Kadambari* as "separated as we are by a thousand years and one-half the world from this Indian writer, there is nothing surprising in the fact that the superhuman machinery of his tale strike us, at first, as flaws which no natural force on the author's part can remedy. As we proceed, all that falls away, and we find ourselves face to face with a story of human sorrow and divine consolation..." (44). The romantic ambience of the novel spears through the characters who tell their own stories. The story begins with the end of the story then it continued through the stories one by one and the first author recognizes himself as one of the heroes of the story. These kinds of suspense endings and techniques are modernistic features. These features of the source text complement the post-modernistic style of fiction. Later these literary features of *Karnataka Kadambari* leads to the emergence of *geetha naatakagalu* (verse dramas) in which mostly Kannada writers portrayed mythological heroines like *Ahalya* and bring them to the present.

Language politics and construction of literary identity

Language is considered as one of the major areas, where the politics of culture is more apparent than in any other fields, because the relationship between language and nationalism is intricate and deep. The role of the language in making the nation and its culture is a much debated issue in the fields of study. Kannada language played a crucial role in making Karnataka the regional world of Kannada. Benedict Anderson, in his *Imagined Communities* says "language played an important role in carving out nations, which he calls imagined communities." In traditional Kannada society, the elite carried on communications in Sanskrit, which give way to the institutional arrangements and caste prohibition. The other castes of the state used vernaculars in their daily existence. Sanskrit placed at the top of the hierarchy played a crucial tool of dominance in cultural and linguistic transactions. The power/discourse of subordinate groups remained within the closed boundaries of their vernacular dialects. The elite discourse spread all over the state at the time.

The religious and linguistic explorations of the time resulted in a sharp concern between the political power of the state and social dominance, especially inside Hindu communities. The result of this change/development gives way to the high concern about nationalism. Thus vernacular language saw a gradual development and produced a body of literature by slowly liberating itself from the high brow of Sanskrit tradition. There emerged indigenous original literature with great support from translated literature, especially from Sanskrit. Kaviraj commented that, within the formal terms of continuity with classical traditions in terms of narratives, forms, texts, those "translations" in vernaculars were hardly passive cultural reactions, and they

gradually produced an alternative literature which told the same stories with subtle alternative emphases to alternative audiences (35). Nagavarma's target readers are common Kannadigas who completely denied by accessibility of the high literature (Sanskrit). They were fully unaware of the ruling politics of the Kings. In such a context of political and literary subjugation, the translations like *Karnataka Kadambari* become an alternative source for the alternative readers. Nagavarma in his translation expanded the original account on the preparations of coronation in Ujjayini with additions for the reader who were ignorant about the royal life of the time. The passage goes like this,

“ಗೃಹಮಹತ್ತರರ್ ಮುನ್ನಮೆ ಸಮಕಟ್ಟಿದ ಮಣಿಕುಟ್ಟಮದ ನಟ್ಟನಡುವೆ ಪೊಳವ ಪಟ್ಟಮಣೆಯಾ ನಾಲ್ಕನೆಯೊಳನೇವ ರತ್ನಭೃಂಫಾರ ಘತಗಳಿಂ ಪಸುರ್ಪೆಸೆದು ನಿಮಿದ್ ಜಾಗರಗಲಿಂ ತೊಳಗುವ ಮನಿದರ್ಪಣಲಂಕೃತಂಗಳಪ್ಪ ಕಾಂಚನದ್ರೋಣಿಗಳಿಂ ಸುರಭಿಸಲಿಲ ಪರಿಮಳಕ್ಕೆರಪ ಮರಿದುಂಬಿಯ ಬಂಬಲಿಂ ನೀಲಂಬಾರದಿಂ ಬಾಸಣಿಸಿದಂತಿದ್ ಶಾಂತಕುಂಭಕಲಶಂಗಲಿನಭಿಷೇಕವಿಲಾಸಮಂ ನೋಡಲೆಂರತಂದ ವಿಧ್ಯಾಧರ ವಿಲಾಸವತಿಯರನಿಪ ವಾರವಿಳಾಸಿನಿಯರಿಂ ಬಳಸಿದ ಗಾಯಕ ವಾದಿಕವಾಂಶಿಕ ವೈತಾಳಿಕ ವಾಗ್ಗೀಕ ಮಂಟಪದೊಳ್ ಸಕಲ ರಾಜರ ಲೋಕಮುಂ ಮಂತ್ರಿ ಮಂಡಲಮುಂ...ನೆರೆದಿರೆ”

Here translator described the court of the King Tarapida, which ready for the moments of coronation of the prince Chandrapida. The above passage is absent in the original source text. Translator added this detail by picking only the context from the source text. The description gives a minute detail of the coronation ceremony for the reader. The passage describes how the ceremony of coronation is going to be held and who are the persons required in the function. By adding this passage in the translation, Nagavarma tried to bring courtly knowledge to the reader.

The politics of language thus played an important role in creating an indigenous literature in Karnataka. The language of *Karnataka Kadambari* is in *halegannada* (old Kannada) a mixture of Sanskrit and Kannada. It is the language which can be understood only by those who know Sanskrit, because the influence of Sanskrit language is high, even though they (Kannadigas) called it as *halegannada*. Nagavarma emphasized at the very beginning that he is *kannadisu* (kannadizing) not translating. The intention of the translator is thus crystal clear. Thus the language becomes the marker of social change, more as a discourse of power. This relationship between language, nation and literature is much closer and deeper in colonial and post colonial contexts.

The emergence of Kannada literature was based on certain well known Sanskrit texts through their translations into Kannada. The attempt of Kannadization forms people's identity, which mainly belongs to the sect of common tongue rather than any other. It has been said that language based identities and nation based identities are only during the colonial period not in pre-colonial or early period. The literary explorations of the early Karnataka like *Karnataka Kadambari* break the narrowest argument by being an indigenous/original literary expression in Kannada. *Karnataka Kadambari* is the result of above mentioned politics of nationalism and need for an indigenous literature. At the end of the translation Nagavarma again emphasized his attempt of making Karnataka's *Kadambari* or Kannada's *Kadambari* by saying as “ಬಾಣವಾಣೀಪ್ರಿಯನ ವಚನದಿಂ ಮತ್ತೆ ಕರ್ಣಾಟಭಾಷಾ (Karnataka language) ಚತುರತ್ಯಂಬೋದಿ ಕಾದಂಬರಿ ಪಸರಿಸಿ ರಾಜೆಂದ್ರಾಂಕನೋಳ್ ಸಂಗತಿವೆತ್ತಾದಂ...” The translator here argued that the success of the translation is lies when Bana's *Kadambari* entered in to the richness of Kannada language. His love towards his mother tongue and his confidence in the power of his language are well revealed in this passage. It is true that the complete formation of vernacular literatures took place during the colonial period. But it is clear that the beginning of national politics traced it back to the early period, unlike other northern states.

The translational attempt of *Karnataka Kadambari* did by Nagavarma in the tenth century Karnataka is of course targeted an alternative readers and its production in a distinct cultural and national site contributed to the emergence of alternative literature, which supported the argument that Kannada vernacular modernity is not the product of colonial rule and other literary movements of post-colonial period

but it bears the elements of modern literary values much earlier in a different period of cultural and political strands. And of course *Karnataka Kadambari* contributed to the development of alternative modernities by re-examining it in the new combinations of different literary contexts.

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