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## B. Venkatacharya's Novels in the Kannada Literary Polysystem and the Founding of the Novel in Kannada

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### Abstract

*This paper looks at the dynamics of the appropriation and establishment of the novel as an independent genre in Kannada literature through translations during the last decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> and the early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. With Itamar Even-Zohar's concept of 'literary system as a polysystem', as the theoretical anchor, the corpus of translated novels of B. Venkatacharya is looked at as a unified genre. Through this perspective, the role played by B. Venkatacharya's Kannada translations of Bengali novels in establishing the novel in Kannada literature is examined.*

### Background

Kannada literary historiography considers the history of the Kannada novel as nothing more than the history of the realist novel. According to Kannada literary histories<sup>1</sup>, the realist novel marks the beginning of the novel as a form in Kannada, and some of the greatest achievements in novel writing have taken place under the realist paradigm. The question to ask is: what preceded the realist novel? Little importance has been given to, or critical attention focussed on, describing and analysing the precursors of the realist novel. In documenting the development of the Kannada novel, Kannada literary histories completely ignore the content, the form and status of the early novels, the sheer numbers of such works, and negate the existence of the innumerable translated novels during that time. Effectively then, the history of the Kannada novel in these literary histories, begins only in 1899 when the first 'independent'<sup>2</sup> or 'autonomous' realist novel –

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Gulvadi Venkatarao's *Indirabai* – was published. With this publication, the field of novel writing is opened up and critical energy is diverted, and devoted to, analysing its form, content, and language. In this act of focussing, what gets completely negated is the role early narratives have played in defining the terrain of the realist novel and developing a new genre in Kannada.

The second half of the nineteenth century leading up to the early twentieth century is of crucial importance in Kannada literary history. It is during this phase that we see the dynamics of an old form making space, both socially and linguistically, for the arrival and survival of the new form, and for situating a new genre in the field of literature. Unless we study the realist novel in the light of these early novels, what we might end up doing is to account for the emergence of the realist novel in terms of a direct influence of the English novel form.

This paper attempts to focus on translation activity in Kannada literature during the second half of the nineteenth century and the early twentieth century, looking especially at the translation of Bengali and Marathi novels into Kannada by Venkatacharya and Galaganatha respectively. When we observe this process through the lens of Itamar Even-Zohar's polysystem theory, we see that these two writers bring about a turning point in the polysystem where translated novels, once treated as secondary, become the prime focus and work towards integrating the novel, a hitherto absent genre, into the Kannada literary polysystem. By reinstating themselves, the translated novels make possible the features of the realist novel to emerge and take shape, thus transforming the polysystem altogether. We begin with a quick look at the literary scene and translations of novels in Kannada during the second half of the nineteenth century and the early twentieth century.

### **Early Attempts: Several Lonely Journeymen**

The earliest appearance of what we call 'novel' in Kannada was during the second half of the nineteenth century when an entirely new and unfamiliar genre was made available through translations and

rewritings. Some of these earliest attempts in Kannada were made by the missionaries, who translated both from English and from other Indian languages<sup>3</sup> into Kannada. Among the Kannada writers, S. B. Krishnaswamy Iyengar, M. S. Puttanna and others<sup>4</sup> were involved in translating English novels into Kannada during this phase. What got translated during this period were both popular English prose narratives like John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* and less familiar novels like Mary Martha Sherwood's *History of Little Henry and his Bearer*.

These translations and rewritings were isolated individual efforts and enjoyed neither vast readership nor popularity. What they achieved however was to help in introducing a new genre. Though these were good rewritings and adaptations, they failed to interest the reading public. It is quite possible that this was due to the newness of the genre, which the reading public was not familiar with, in terms either of form or content. Novels from Telugu, Marathi, Bengali, and Malayalam too were translated into Kannada between 1860 and 1900<sup>5</sup>, but these novels too met with the same fate.

The novels and novelists translated into Kannada during the nineteenth century are not part of the canon of 'classical' Victorian novels and novelists we know today. These writers – Wilkie Collins, Marie Corelli, Benjamin Disraeli, Edward Bulwer Lytton and G. W. M. Reynolds – were then 'popular' Victorian novelists. To this list of popular writers we can add a few more unfamiliar English names that we have encountered through Kannada literature like Maria Edgeworth, Henry Taylor, Mary Martha Sherwood, Theophilus Smith and Thomas Day. The choice of the novels for translation was not motivated by aesthetic, linguistic or political concerns but essentially because they were available at that time. The availability factor was so overriding that it made no difference to the translators whether the novels were classical or popular, culturally familiar or alien, acceptable or unacceptable genre-wise or otherwise. The themes and subjects of these novels, both classical and popular, were

culturally alien, and remained so even after they were adapted/rewritten for nineteenth century Indian readers. It was not surprising, therefore, that these novels did not catch on as a major trend and have remained mostly experimental in nature. Along with the sporadic nature of these efforts, this contributed to the failure of these translated novels in taking roots in the Kannada literary soil. The prolificity that is usually associated with the emergence of a new form in a literary history was completely and conspicuously absent.

Had these translated novels succeeded and had they been replicated in Kannada as independent writings, we could have said that it was through translations of 19<sup>th</sup> century English novels that Kannada literature assimilated a new genre. Having looked at the random and sporadic nature of the translation activities, we can confidently venture the claim that these early attempts could not have directly influenced the novel as a literary form in Kannada. In other words, the establishment of the novel as a literary type in Kannada is not a clear case of assimilation of a Western form through direct translation activity.

What was required for the novel as a genre to be instituted on the literary scene was an initiated, informed, and supportive reading public. Here, we need to understand the relationship between the reading public and the emergence of a new form. Just like in movies and fine arts, a reading public is in persistent need of interesting and entertaining material. Once interest is aroused in the reading public, the reading public expects more of a similar kind. If the writers continue to sustain the interest of the readers and produce more material to fulfill the increased demands of the reading public, a large body of work is created in the new genre. This happens when something that began as an experiment becomes a popularly accepted genre. The acceptance and institutionalisation of the new genre makes space for further experimentation with the content, form, language, and helps transform it.

Let us now turn to another terrain of translation activity – translations from other Indian languages into Kannada. This is an important site of translation, because we claim that this is what set the field for the establishment of the novel in Kannada literature. In discussing translation at this level, which we call the 'micro level of translation'<sup>6</sup>, we look at the works of two prominent writers of that period – B. Venkatacharya and Venkatesha Tirako Kulakarni 'Galaganatha' – and examine the reasons that drive the popularity of their translations.

### **Venkatacharya and Galaganatha: The Two Towers of Translation**

The establishment of a dynamic relationship between the reading public and translated novels proved to be the turning point in the history of the novel in Kannada. Venkatacharya and Galaganatha industriously translated novels from Bengali and Marathi respectively into Kannada in large numbers, and established this dynamic relationship with the reading public. What is more significant is that these two writers themselves translated almost 75 novels from Bengali and Marathi, beginning from 1876 and continuing till 1930. No other Indian regional language literature witnessed such fecund prolificity of translation activity.

If we look at the literary output of Venkatacharya and Galaganatha, who have almost 130 works to their credit, we see that 75 of these are translated works. When we compare this output with the lack of critical focus on them, especially with regard to Venkatacharya's translated works, it is evident that their translations have not received the kind of critical and theoretical attention they deserve. Galaganatha is more fortunate than Venkatacharya in this regard. He has received critical and literary attention, especially from writers belonging to his home district of Hubli-Dharwad in Karnataka. Four full-length books have been written on his life and works – two by Srinivasa Havanur and one each by Ha Ma Nayak, and Krishnamurthy Kittur<sup>7</sup>. Kittur's book also has a chapter on Venkatacharya's translated novels.

For a person who had produced almost 80 literary works (including novel translations), only 10 to 12 essays are available on Venkatacharya's works in various Kannada journals published during the 1960s and 1970s. Does Venkatacharya's work suffer this indifference and neglect just because he was a translator? Have his translations played no role at all in Kannada literature? Looking at the abundance of translated novels in Kannada during the early phase, one can say with confidence that they definitely had a role to play in establishing the novel as a distinct genre in Kannada.

We can place this situation in the larger Kannada literary scene that obtained in the early twentieth century where the emerging modern Kannada had to face stiff challenges – from adherents of Sanskrit and *halegannada* 'old Kannada' on the one hand and the influence of English literature on the other. If we can analyse the growth of the novel in Kannada from the perspective of the relationships between various literary genres, we can see a scenario emerging that situates the contributions of Venkatacharya in a different light. In such a situation, when there is an interface between two or more literary systems, the literary system which considers itself weak seeks to fill the gaps in its literary system by incorporating/appropriating those features or genres that are absent in its system. One of the finest researched instances of this is the study of the process of establishment of a canon of literary works in Hebrew.

### **Hebrew Literature and the Polysystem Theory**

A group of Israeli scholars, led by Itamar Even-Zohar, studied the interaction between languages leading to the establishment of various genres in Hebrew literature and postulated the concept of the literary system as a 'polysystem'. Although examining translation was not his primary concern, it became a naturally inevitable and significant part of his research.

In explaining the special case of Hebrew literature, Even-Zohar coins and employs the term 'polysystem' to define the aggregate of literary systems in a given culture, which includes 'high' or

'canonized' forms such as poetry, and 'low' or 'non-canonized' forms like children's literature and popular or pulp fiction. A polysystem is stratified into various heterogeneous systems which are hierarchised. The struggle between or among the various strata constitutes the dynamic synchronics of the system, and the dominance of one stratum over another at a given time brings about a change in the diachronic axis. The dynamic and conflictual relationship between the different strata constitutes a continuous movement of one phenomenon being driven from the center to the periphery, and the other pushing its way into the center and occupying it. Consequently, and this is significant, there is no *one* center and no *one* periphery in a polysystem. There are several systems operating simultaneously in a polysystem, and a certain item may be transferred from the periphery of one system to the periphery of an adjacent system within the same polysystem, and it may or may not move to the center of that system.

The typology that Even-Zohar finds useful to begin with is the dichotomization of the polysystem into *canonized* and *non-canonized* systems. The two systems are further classified into various sub-systems or genres. The question that interests Even-Zohar is – *What are the kinds of relationships that can be observed between and within these systems?* In any literature, though there are many features common to different genres like detective novels, westerns, romances, thrillers, and sentimental magazine short stories, they are still considered different genres and they exist in different relations with each other, and with various genres of 'canonized' literature. However, according to Even-Zohar, in addition to all these 'whole' genres which exist in the literary system,

... it is necessary to include *translated literature* [within the polysystem]. This is rarely done, but no observer of the history of any literature can avoid recognizing as an important fact the impact of translations and their role in the synchrony and diachrony of a certain literature (Even-Zohar 1978b: 15).

What is interesting is the fact that ‘translated literature’ is seen as a constitutive member of the polysystem. After it has performed its function of transforming a polysystem, if translated literature has to continue to have the same importance, translation has to become a prolific activity and the particular genre has to be further developed.

We shall proceed from this understanding of ‘translated literature’ – as a component of a polysystem which has the catalytic capacity to transform it – to analyse the process of establishing the novel as a form in Kannada. Here we turn to the case of B. Venkatacharya whose translated works, we claim, parallels the movements of translated literature in the literary polysystem, as evidenced in the Hebrew literary polysystem. We also argue that these translated novels had a similar impact on the Kannada polysystem as had other translated works in the Hebrew polysystem.

### **The ‘Venkatacharya’ Novels and the Kannada Literary Polysystem**

Venkatacharya’s entire corpus of translated works may be said to constitute a single body of literature on the basis solely of the number of novels he translated. S. Shivanna and Srinivasa Havanur, prominent Kannada literary historians, have compiled separate lists of books written/translated by Venkatacharya<sup>8</sup>, and according to these lists the number today tentatively stands at eighty. Of these, forty are translations from Bengali. Venkatacharya has translated most of the novels of Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay and of other well-known Bengali authors too of the time (See Appendix for a list of Venkatacharya’s translated novels). As we see from the list, Venkatacharya did not restrict himself to any particular type of novel. He has translated from a variety of genres like the essay, the religious-spiritual story, history, the historical and social novel and even the detective novel. For its sheer quantum and variety, Venkatacharya’s contribution is astounding.

That Venkatacharya came in contact with the Bengali language by a curious chance is surprising. In his essay



'Karnatakada Bankimchandra, B. Venkatacharyaru' (which translates as 'Karnataka's Bankimchandra, B. Venkatacharya') (1969), Venkatesha Sangli relates an incident which could be responsible for sparking off Venkatacharya's interest in the Bengali language. "Venkatacharya", says Sangli, "had arranged for some medicines to be sent from Calcutta. These medicines came wrapped in an old Bengali newspaper. The Bengali script attracted Venkatacharya's attention. It was then that the desire to learn Bengali took birth in him." (1969) More details are found in B. Garudacharya's essay 'Divangata Bi. Vem. Bangaliyannu Kalitudu Hege' (How Venkatacharya Learnt Bengali) (1953). Garudacharya says that, when Venkatacharya was a Head Munshi in Shimoga during 1874-75, B. Satyanarayana Iyengar, who was a head clerk there, noticed Venkatacharya's interest in Bengali and procured some Bengali books for him. Venkatacharya subsequently wrote to Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar, the well-known social reformer, writer and scholar of Bengal, who began to teach Bengali to Venkatacharya. This 'correspondence course' in the Bengali language helped Venkatacharya learn the language in a short period of six months. Pleased with his student's effort, Vidyasagar sent him a copy of his novel *Bhrantivilasa* (Garudacharya, 1953).

*Bhrantivilasa* is a novelised adaptation of Shakespeare's *Comedy of Errors* and this was the first Bengali novel that Venkatacharya translated into Kannada. This was in 1876. In spite of its 'foreign' elements in content, the 'novelty' of *Bhrantivilasa* attracted the attention of the Kannada reading public. This translation was noticed immediately and prescribed as a textbook for various courses. Encouraged by this recognition, Venkatacharya translated two more of Vidyasagar's novels – *Shakuntala* (1882) and *Sitavanavasa* (1884).

At a time when interest in Kannada literature was low, Venkatacharya felt that Kannadigas could be brought back to literature only through such translated novels. He talked about this

objective in an exhaustive 'preface' to his translation of Bankimchandra's *Durgeshanandini* in 1885, which could be called the first 'critique' of the novel in Kannada. In this preface, Venkatacharya talks about the influence that English literature had on Bengali literature and the Bengali novel, and the lack of similar literary efforts in Kannada despite the presence of many English-educated scholars and tries to explore reasons for this apathy. What also comes through in this preface is Venkatacharya's strong belief in the abilities of English-educated Kannadigas to develop the Kannada language and literature. Venkatacharya does not expect this task to be undertaken by Sanskrit scholars. We discern a note of mild sarcasm when he says in this preface that these Sanskrit scholars who are immersed in their search for truth should not be asked to devote any time to worldly issues like the development of a regional language.

Venkatacharya charts the development of the Kannada novel here from its pre-novelistic stage and long narrative poems to its present day 'incarnation' as a social novel. The social novel, for him, seemed to symbolise the hopes and aspirations of the common citizen and had a big role to play and a definite purpose to fulfill. He says:

The main purpose of the social novel is to portray the evils prevalent in our society and in human beings, and to expose the dangers arising out of this unsocial behaviour. Through these, the novel would show the need for everyone to exist in harmony and to practice exemplary behaviour in public. If this purpose is to be achieved, incidents should be created and written with imagination and skill, so that by reading such novels, ideas of good behaviour get instilled in the minds of the readers. The novel should be a reflection of the society and human life and act like a mirror for every reader. The quality of a novel is to be decided on the basis of how far it is able to achieve this purpose. Many thinkers have felt that if the intention of the novel is pure, then the

novel as a genre can become a scientific study of society or become Sociology itself. Since novels of this type are not in circulation in Kannada, I felt impelled to write this book (Venkatacharya [1885]; 1930: xii) (my translation).

After the publication of *Durgeshanandini*, it was as if the floodgates had opened. Many more translations came out in rapid succession, revealing a new literary world to Kannadigas and thus popularising the novel in Kannada. Among the more popular ones were *Durgeshanandini*, *Vishavriksha*, *Anandamatha*, *Adavi Hudugi*, *Rajasimha*, *Vangavijeta*, *Kohinooru*, *Bhrantivilasa*, *Unmadini* and *Parimala*. These novels went into multiple editions and reprints (See Appendix for details). Some of his novels were serialised in popular journals of that time like *Suvasini*, *Avakashatoshini*, *Vagbhushana* and *Karnataka Granthamale*. Interestingly, not many of his regular readers knew that these novels were translated from Bengali. It was always 'Venkatacharya's novel' for them, though Venkatacharya had always made it a point to name the author of the original novels in his books<sup>9</sup>.

Due to their number and the way they impacted Kannada literature, the entire corpus of Venkatacharya's translated novels can be considered a literary system in its own right. Even-Zohar's concept of literary polysystem, where all sorts of literary and semi-literary texts are taken as an aggregate of systems "in an attempt to overcome difficulties resulting from the fallacies of the traditional aesthetic approach, which prevented any preoccupation with works judged to be of no artistic value" (1978a:119) can be constructively used to explain the role played by Venkatacharya's translated novels in the early days of the novel in Kannada.

In a literary polysystem, translated literature is no longer 'tainted' as a derivative form but has an equal standing with other forms of literature in the system. This hypothesis of the polysystem theory "enables us to observe relations" and also "helps to explain the

mechanism of these relations and consequently the specific position and role of literary types in the historical existence of literature” (Even-Zohar 1978a: 119). It is mainly concerned with the positions assumed by various systems ‘which elicit certain features’, within the polysystems. Even-Zohar explains:

When the top position is maintained by a literary type whose pertinent nature is innovatory, the more we move down the scale of strata the more conservative the types prove to be, but when the top position is maintained by an ossified type, it is the lower strata which tend to initiate renewals. When, in the second situation, the holders of positions do ‘not’ change places in spite of this, the entire literature enters a state of stagnation. (ibid: 120)

Even-Zohar’s major concern is not to identify literary types as high or low, but to see under what conditions “certain types participate in the process of changes within the polysystem.” To enable this analysis, he suggests the notions of “primary versus secondary activities,” “the primary activity representing the principle of innovation, the secondary that of maintaining the established code.” (ibid: 120)

Translated literature in this polysystem is therefore not relegated to an inferior position. It can occupy any position, but whether the position is primary or secondary depends upon the conditions operating in the polysystem. It is neither always shifting nor always unchanging. It may occupy a certain position for a long time if certain conditions are long-lasting. When translated literature maintains a primary position, it means, “it participates actively in ‘modelling the center’ of the polysystem”. In such a situation it becomes a part of the innovatory forces.

This implies in fact that no clear-cut distinction is then maintained between original and translated writings, and that often it is the leading writers (or members of the avant-garde who are about to become leading writers) who

produce the most important translations. Moreover, in such a state when new literary models are emerging, translation is likely to become one of the means of elaborating these new models. Through the foreign work features are introduced into the home literature which did not exist there before. These include not only a possible new model of reality to replace conventions no longer effective, but a whole range of other features as well, such as a new poetic language, new matrices, techniques, intonations, whatsoever. (ibid: 121)

This is exactly what happened in the case of the novel in Kannada. The novel as a genre was largely absent in Kannada<sup>10</sup> till translations of a few English novels came out. When Venkatacharya entered the scene, the conditions were ripe for the institutionalisation of the novel in Kannada. Kannada was ready, in a manner of speaking, for the novel as a literary genre. By that time, the Bengali novel had established itself as a popular genre in Bengal, and it was readily available for Kannada writers who were still trying to figure out and develop the Kannada novel form. Kannada translations from Bengali provided the form and the content, and the translated novel in Kannada attained a primary position in the Kannada literary polysystem. These novels incorporated features into Kannada literature that were earlier unavailable, like social themes, depiction of lives of ordinary men and women, everyday activities, prose narrative which had humour, adventure and suspense, and the use of the spoken idiom and colloquialisms in literary writing.

In his preface to *Durgeshanandini*, Venkatacharya says that the supernatural/ counterfactual, extraordinary incidents and heroics earlier found in marvellous and historical tales had begun to lose its charm among the reading public in the late nineteenth century. The novels translated by Venkatacharya provided a new model and fresh reading material and these translated novels maintained this primary position for a long time. Their impact was so powerful and they were

so popular that there was no clear-cut distinction between the original and the translation.

Venkatacharya's novels were actively participating in 'modelling the center' of the Kannada literary polysystem. The novel finally found its form and language. The language of Kannada prose clearly and categorically changed from *halegannada* 'old Kannada' to *hosagannada*<sup>11</sup> 'modern Kannada'. Both in terms of language and form, these novels brought in a new model of reality marking a clear break from earlier forms of 'marvellous' narratives.

When novels were being translated into Kannada, a vast body of literature with various genres already existed in Kannada. Kannada literature was neither weak nor impoverished. But changing social conditions demanded a break from the contemporary (mostly) verse-oriented *nadugannada* 'middle Kannada' based genres. When writers were struggling to find a suitable form and language as seen in early attempts, an already established form from a 'foreign' language occupied this space. Even-Zohar theorises this aspect:

. . . the dynamics within the polysystem creates turning points, that is to say, historical moments where established models are no longer tenable for a younger generation. At such moments, even in central literatures, translated literature may assume a primary position. This is all the more true when at a turning point no item in the indigenous stock is taken to be acceptable, as a result of which a literary 'vacuum' occurs. In such a vacuum, it is easy for foreign models to infiltrate, and translated literature may consequently assume a primary position. (Even-Zohar 1978a: 122)

We can get a sense of what Even-Zohar means by 'literary vacuum' in Venkatacharya's words as he describes the prevailing situation in the second half of the nineteenth century with respect to the Kannada language and literature:

People who set out to write books or essays in Kannada are the most unfortunate. However hard they may try, the pseudo-intellectuals of our region shy away from reading them. The English-loving pseudo-intellectual class firmly believes that nothing worth reading can be written in Kannada and that anyone who ventures out to write in Kannada has lost his senses and must lack talent. Not only that, they feel that anything written in Kannada is unreadable. As regards our Sanskrit scholars' concern for their mother tongue, nothing much needs to be said. If a society is to develop, it is necessary to achieve unity, and unity can be achieved only when the regional language develops (Venkatacharya 1914: 14) (my translation).

Venkatacharya drew inspiration from the developments in the Bengali language and literature. These developments, he firmly maintained, were a result of English education and literature. And this influence, in turn, resulted in the production of a number of periodicals and books on varied topics. Venkatacharya grieves over the fact that though English education has spread to all the Kannada-speaking areas, it didn't impact the development of the language as witnessed in other languages like Bengali and Marathi. In his 'preface' to *Durgeshanandini*, he explains the reasons for this:

Our English-educated scholars feel that their job is over once they get their degrees. They become complacent and pay little attention to developing their regional language. This, I think, is the main reason for the present dismal situation. They should not feel that they are being blamed. We will never blame them because the welfare of the country depends on their work. At least, now onwards, let them come out of their complacency, even if it means breaking their vows, and use their knowledge to try and develop our language, as other Indians have done for their languages. The country will benefit by this effort and they will be repaying the Government which has educated them.

They cannot but agree with this point of view.  
(Venkatacharya [1885]; 1930: x) (my translation)

Venkatacharya's novels themselves are proof of the development of Kannada. In his first translation, *Bhrantivilasa*, one can see the struggles of a writer trying to come to terms with his mission of developing a language. The Kannada in this novel is a strange mixture of *halegannada* 'old Kannada' and *hosagannada* 'modern Kannada' and long Sanskritised phrases. The abundance of Sanskritised phrases in his early translations is also because of the recurrent and heavy use of Sanskritised Bengali used in the original Bengali novels. In his later works the Kannada he uses is completely modernised, but Sanskritised phrases and Sanskrit words continued to exist in his later translations too. To Venkatacharya's credit, this acted in favour of the new genre and became a hallmark of his style. These discontinuities in diction and style signified the early shifts of a language in its transitional state. As Kirtinath Kurtkoti put it, "Since the novelty of plot, marvel of history and the natural intimacy of prose had captured the readers' minds and hearts, these defects would not have appeared so glaring at that time, as they do now, in retrospect." (Kurtkoti 1962: 184) (my translation)

In spite of the huge popularity enjoyed by his novels in the early decades of the twentieth century, neither Venkatacharya nor his novels are known to the Kannada literary world today. When Venkatacharya's and others' translated novels occupied the literary vacuum in Kannada literature and assumed the primary position, efforts were being made to write 'independent' novels in all parts of the Kannada speaking areas. Once a distinct style had evolved and the shift to modern Kannada was complete, independent novels slowly began to appear on the Kannada literary horizon. The translated novels that had been instrumental in ushering in a new genre lost its primary position. Independent novels of all sorts – literary and popular – came into the Kannada literary polysystem, pushing the translated novels as a genre to the periphery. Though Venkatacharya's novels continued to be reprinted even after his death, there are no takers for his novels now.



These novels that had emerged from the periphery to the center during a period of literary vacuum performed their function of modelling the center of the polysystem, modernising the Kannada language, and transforming the literary history of Kannada. They have now lapsed into history.

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## NOTES

1. E. P. Rice 1915 *A History of Kanarese Literature*, Calcutta: Association Press, 1921 (2<sup>nd</sup> revised enlarged edition); M. Mariyappa Bhatta 1960 *Samkshipta Kannada Sahitya Charitre* (A Brief Literary History of Kannada), Bangalore: Directorate of Kannada and Culture, 1983 (2<sup>nd</sup> edition); R. S. Mugali 1975 *History of Kannada Literature*, New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi; R. S. Mugali, 1953 *Kannada Sahitya Charitre* (Kannada Literary History), Mysore: Geetha Book House, 1998 (10<sup>th</sup> revised edition); L. S. Seshagiri Rao 1983 *A History of Kannada Literature*, Bangalore: Directorate of Kannada and Culture.
2. The term 'independent' used here is the literal translation of the Kannada word viz. 'swatantra'. This term was used to differentiate the novel *Indirabai* from the 'translated' novels that were being written at that time. *Indirabai* has the distinction of being dubbed *prathama swatantra samajika kadambari*, the 'first independent social novel'.
3. C. Campbell's translation of Mary Martha Sherwood's *The Ayah and the Lady* into Kannada as *Doresaniyannoo Dadiyannoo Kurita Kathe* (Story of the Lady and the Ayah) in 1844 is one of

the earliest translations of an English novel in Kannada. John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* was the focus of three translations in Kannada. G. Weigle translated it as *Yathrasthana Sanchaaravu* in 1847, and two subsequent translations appeared as two separate parts – part one as *Deshantriya Prayana* in 1861 by R. B. Rice and part two as *Yatrikana Sanchaaravu* in 1908 by Christanuja Watsa. Hermann Moegling translated Mary Martha Sherwood's *History of Little Henry and his Bearer* into Kannada as *Chikka Henry mattu avana Boyiya Kathe* in 1867. *The Last Days of Boosy*, a sequel to Martha Sherwood's *History of Little Henry and his Bearer*, written by Theophilus Smith, was translated into Kannada by Christanuja Watsa in 1869.

4. S. B. Krishnaswamy Iyengar translated Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* into Kannada as *Robinson Crusoe Vrttanta* in 1854; M. L. Srikantesha Gowda translated Henry Taylor's *A Sicilian Summer* into Kannada as *Kanyavitantu* in 1895 and Maria Edgeworth's *The Little Merchants* as *Chikka Banajigaru* in 1901; Annajirao Malleshwara translated Edward Bulwer Lytton's *Harold* as *Ullasini* in 1902 and Henry Fielding's *Tom Jones* as *Sharanagata* in 1905; Bapu Subbarao translated Maria Edgeworth's *Murad the Unlucky* as *Nirbhagya Murada* and *The Marvellous Adventures of Sindbad the Sailor* as *Arabian Nights athava Yavanayamini Vinodagalalli ondada Sindabad Navika* in 1901; M. S. Puttanna translated Thomas Day's *The History of Sandford and Merton* as *Sumati Madanakumarara Charitre* in 1893.
5. Kandukuri Veereshalingam's Telugu novels, *Viveka Chandrike*, *Satyavati Charitre* and *Satyaraja Poorvadeshayatre*, were translated into Kannada by Bellave Somanathayya in 1895, Nanjanagudu Ananthanarayana Shastri in 1897 and Benegal Ramarao in 1899 respectively. Joseph Mulayil's Malayalam novel, *Sukumari* was translated into Kannada by H. Roberts in 1899 and Baba Padmanji's Marathi novel *Yamuna Paryatan* was

translated into Kannada by Bhaskar Solomon in 1869. Hannah Catherine Mullens' Bengali novel *Phulmoni O Karunar Bibaran* was translated into Kannada as *Paranjoti mattu Kripe* by B. Rice in 1859.

6. See S. Jayasrinivasa Rao "Translation and Kannada Literature: Appropriating New Genres", *CIEFL Bulletin*, 14: 1&2 (December 2004), 73-91, for a discussion on the categorisation of early translation activity in Kannada literature into macro and micro levels.
7. Srinivasa Havanur 1972 *Galaganatha Mastararu*, Bangalore: Kannada Sahitya Parishat; Srinivasa Havanur 2000 *Kadambarikara Galaganatharu*, New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi; Ha Ma Nayak 1970 *Galaganatha*, Mysore: Institute of Kannada Studies, Mysore University; Krishnamurthy Kittur 1978 *Galaganatharu mattu avara Kadambarigalu*, Dharwad: Karnatak University.
8. S. Shivanna, "B. Venkatacharya Anukta Kritigalu", *Kannada Nudi*, August 1969; Srinivasa Havanur, "B. Venkatacharyara Kritigalu", *Kannada Nudi*, April-May 1969.
9. A typical 'Venkatacharya novel' had the title of the novel and the name 'B. Venkatacharya' on the cover as well as the inside cover. The name of the author of the original is usually mentioned, along with a eulogistic reference to him/her, in the foreword or preface. *Durgeshanandini*, for example, has a preface in English by Venkatacharya, where he quotes from Edwin Arnold's preface to the English translation of Bankimchandra's *Vishavriksha* – "The author is Babu Bankim Chatterji, a native gentleman of Bengal, of superior intellectual acquisitions, who ranks unquestionably as the first living writer of fiction in his Presidency. ... Bengal has produced here a writer of true genius, whose vivacious invention, dramatic force

and purity of aim, promise well for the new age of Indian vernacular literature.”

10. Srinivasa Havanur in his comprehensive study of Modern Kannada literature in its early phase, *Hosagannadada Arunodaya* (2000; revised edn.), has a different opinion. He considers Yadappa Kabbiga's *Kalavati Parinaya* (1815?), Mummadi Krishnaraja's *Saugandhika Parinaya* (1820) and Kempunarayana's *Mudramanjusha* (1823) as three home grown Kannada prose narratives in *halegannada* 'old Kannada' in the novelistic style written before the appearance of Kannada translations of English novels. For Havanur these works are proof that Kannada would have had its own indigenous prose fiction if not for the advent and influence of English novels. (Havanur 2000: 555-560)
11. Though it was in the novel that the literary language could be seen clearly changing to *hosagannada* 'modern Kannada', not all the changes took place in the novel. Winds of change can be seen as far back as the 12<sup>th</sup> century in the *vacana* period, when the *vacanakaras* used the spoken language and used common images like the chameleon, tongs, monkey, etc., in their *vacana*-s. It was from the seventeenth century onwards that we could see major changes like the assimilation of Urdu, English and Hindustani words into the language. We can see this in connection with the *kaifiyath*-s and *bakhairu*-s, i.e., chronicles, complaints, cases, letters and historical documents and records that came to be written for administrative purposes. And with the coming of printing, there was a major shift to writing in prose. Though prose was not uncommon in *halegannada* 'old Kannada', as we can see in *champu* poems (a genre where verse is interspersed with prose), since the writers had to cater to a new audience, the language of prose shifted to the spoken variety. With this we see a major change – *halegannada* 'old Kannada' words ended in consonants, but in the spoken form words ended in vowels. This was carried on

to the written form as well. The inevitable assimilation of punctuations into the written form also came during the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

## APPENDIX

*The list of novels translated/rewritten by B. Venkatacharya into  
Kannada from Bengali*

This alphabetical list is compiled from Srinivasa Havanur's (1968) and S. Shivanna's (1968) lists. I have added some more information which was not available in either of the lists. This is a list of only the translated works from Bengali. B. Venkatacharya has forty more works, so far identified, to his credit. The additional year(s) against novels refer to subsequent editions/reprints. Details of reprints, if any, of the rest of the works are not available. Among the forty other works so far credited to Venkatacharya some might be translations from Bengali. Neither Havanur's nor Shivanna's list provides any more details. So far there is no evidence of any diary or notes kept by Venkatacharya which might throw more light on his works.

Name	Year of Publication	Type	Author of the Original
1. Adaviya Hudugi	1899-1916, 1917	novel	Yogendranath Chattopadhyay
2. Attige	not available	novel	Nagendranath Chattopadhyay
3. Amritapulina	1907-1908	novel	Nanilal Bandyopadhyay
4. Ahalyabai	1899	history	Yogendra Basu
5. Anandamatha	1897-1899, 1922, 1930, 1959, 1990	novel	Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay
6. Idondu Chitra	not available	novel	Bankimchandra

7.	Indire	1897	novel	Bankimchandra
8.	Unmadini	1901-1918	novel	Yogeendranath Bandyopadhyay
9.	Kapala Kundala	1898	novel	Bankimchandra
10.	Kamalakantha	1909	novel	Bankimchandra
11.	Krishnakanthana Uyilu	1909	novel	Bankimchandra
12.	Kohinooru	1905-1920, 1921	novel	'A Bengali Writer'
13.	Geetokta Dharma	not available	religious essay	'A well-known Bengali writer'
14.	Chandrashekara	1898	novel	Bankimchandra
15.	Durgeshanandini	1885-1910, 1922, 1930	novel	Bankimchandra
16.	Devi Choudhurani	1899-1968	novel	Bankimchandra
17.	Donneya Helike	not available	short story	Sudhindranath Tagore
18.	Nawaba Nandini	1913	novel	Damodar Mukhopadhyay
19.	Neerade	1912-1920	novel	Satishchandra
20.	Parimala	1902-1912, 1919	novel (detective)	Panchkori De
21.	Bharata Mahila	1884, 1933	social tract	Haraprasad Shastri
22.	Bhrantivilasa	1876, 1899, 1911	novel	Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar
23.	Manorama	1907	novel (detective)	Panchkori De
24.	Mrinalini	not available	novel	Bankimchandra
25.	Madhavalatha	1901	novel	Sanjivachandra
26.	Malathi	1913	novel	Swarnakumari Devi
27.	Rajani	1898	novel	Bankimchandra

28. Rajasimha	1898, 1929	novel	Bankimchandra
29. Radharani	1898	novelte	Bankimchandra
30. Rameshwarana Adrushta	1919	novelte	Bankimchandra
31. Leele	1910, 1960	novel	Yogeendra Babu
32. Lokarahasya – Vol.1 and Vol. 2	not available	not known	Bankimchandra
33. Vangavijeta	1913, 1921, 1930	novel	Romeshchandra Dutt
34. Vishavriksha	1900, 1912, 1990	novel	Bankimchandra
35. Shakuntala	1882	novel	Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar
36. Shanti – Part 1	1920	novel	Damodar Mukhopadhyay
37. Shanti – Part 2	1922	Novel	Damodar Mukhopadhyay
38. Sadhane	1911	novel (detective)	Satyendranath Kumar
39. Seetharama	1898, 1901	novel	Bankimchandra
40. Seethavanavasa	1884	novelte	Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar
41. Yugalanguriya	1898	novel	Bankimchandra

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