

TRANSLATION OF FIVE NAMBOORI LORES

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DISSERTATION

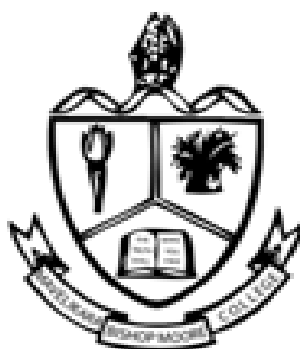
Submitted to the University of Kerala in partial fulfilment of the

Requirements for the Degree of

BACHELOR OF ARTS

IN

ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE



DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

BISHOP MOORE COLLEGE, MAVELIKARA

MARCH 2022

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PREFACE

Folklores are stories told by people of a particular community. It has many forms such as songs, stories, paintings, artforms, dance, ballads, myths, legends and epics. It has a crucial role in preserving regional culture. Ancient people orally transmitted these folklores to the next generation. This oral tradition itself was a part of our culture. But nowadays the oral tradition has declined due to the emergence of nuclear families. Each region has its own folklores which present their cultural as well as historical background. The transmission of these folklores also strengthens the human relationship. Through folklores one can remain in touch with ones culture and heritage, even if he is far removed from his motherland. The translation of folklores is crucial spreading our culture beyond boundaries. In this process, we are introducing and familiarizing a culture to another. Our project is a translation of five folklores taken from *Aithiyamala*, the magnum opus of the legendary writer Kottarathil Shankunni. This project aims at cultural transmission across borders and preservation of our rich cultural heritage for the benefits of posterity. The project has three chapters. The introductory chapter tells about folklore and its significance in culture and the process of translation. The second chapter deals with the translation of five folklores. The concluding chapter summarizes the discussion on translation of folklore by looking at the translated texts.

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

The project entitled “Translation Of Five Namboori Lore” attempts a translation of five folklores. Translation simply means the process of reworking a text from one language into another to maintain the original message and communication. There are different types of translations. Among them literary translation is very specific. It requires specific language preparation and skills, a particular sensitivity to language, a certain creativity, a good ability in the artistic and figurative exposition of speech. In the 21st century which is known as the age of translation, anything can be a subject of translation. But studies say that translation of folklores is the most difficult one because it represents the culture itself. We should be able to preserve that culture and its soul during translation.

Folklore is made of two words: folk, which means regional people and lore, which means stories. Therefore folklores reflect stories told by people in a particular region. Folklores can define a population's values, beliefs and preferred way of life with its literary themes. Folklores initially have an oral tradition. Each generation would tell their children these stories and it became part of a culture's tradition. Later these stories have been compiled and published by many writers. But these culture specific stories are shared with the world by the process called translation. Thus folklores have a crucial role in transmitting and preserving regional culture.

Our country, India is diverse in its culture and language. In the “introduction” to the edited volume ‘*Another Harmony*’ (1986), Stuart H Blackburn and A K Ramanujan identified five periods in the history of Indian folklores. The first period in

the nineteenth century saw a growing interest with the publication of Jacob Grimm's work '*Deutsche Mythologie*' in 1835. In the second period the publication of William Crooke's two volume work '*The Popular Religion and Folklore of North India*' in 1894 and R C Temple's four volume work, '*Legends of the Punjab*' (1884-1900) created an awareness of India's rich oral tradition. Philology and collection made during fieldwork shaped research in the field of Indian folklore during third period. The study of Indian folklore made by Saratchandra Mitra and some others led to the publication of many oral stories. During the fifth period, starting from the 1970's till date, many scholars like J D Smith, Claus, Blackburn and many others have rendered many rare oral traditions into textual forms.

Folktales have different forms such as folk songs, folk art, legends, myths, fairy tales etc. These are not only for entertainment but also to learn about moral and values. It allows the reader to exercise his or her imagination. It may also allow the reader to locate possible answers to their experiencing the real world. Sharing folklores create strong family or community bonding and also bridges the gap between different social classes. Folklores offer simple human values and ethics, which may be used to counter the ills of the present world. They have been documented over the years for fear of being lost altogether.

Kerala, the land of panoramic coastal beauty has a unique and varied tradition and culture. Some of the writers compiled and published these folklores there by enriched our literary tradition. There are folklore about the state, religions, festivals, temples, faith, belief, personalities and so on. The origin of Kerala itself is related to the legend of Parasurama; then there is the St. Thomas tradition related to the origin of Christianity and Mahabali legend relating to the origin of Onam. Each temple in

Kerala has *Sthala Puranas* which throws light on some aspect of the ancient Kerala culture.

Aithiyamala published by Kottarathil Shankunni, is one of the best examples of such books. Dr M V Vishnu Namboori, the Chairman of Kerala Folklore Academy has written and published about 56 books in the field of folklore studies. *Folklore Identity Of Culture, Folklore Nighandu, Nadotivijnaneeyam, Thottam Pattukal Oru Padanam, Keralathile Nadan Sangeetham, Mandrika Vinjana* are some of them. There are other books like *Folklores Of Kerala* by Kavalam Narayana Panikkar, *Folk Tales of Kerala* by I K K Menon, *Folklore Sidhanthangal* by C R Rajagopalan and so on. *Folktales From India* by A K Ramanujan, *Indian Folktales Retold* by Anupa Lal, *Grandma's Bag Of Stories* by Sudha Murthy, *Indian Folktales and Legends* by Pratibha Nath, *Tales of Indian Folk Tales* From Bengal, Punjab, and Tamil Nadu by Svabu Kohli and Viplov Singh are some of the notable ones.

The project work entitled "Translation Of Five Namboori Lores" attempts a translation of five namboori stories from *Aithiyamala* pertaining to Kerala culture by Kottarathil Sankunni. He is an Indian writer born in 1855 in Kottayam as the second son of Vasudevanunni. His real name is Vasudevan. Later it was changed to Sanku because his father's name is also Vasudevan. The name Sanku is followed by his caste name Unni and he became popular later as Sankunni. He was a renowned Sanskrit Malayalam scholar who gained his knowledge through informal education. He translated many works from Sanskrit to Malayalam and made a compilation called *Aithiyamala*. He wrote *Subhadraharam Manipravalam* and *Kesavadasacharitam* under the influence of Kunjikuttan Thamburan. He was a close friend of Varghese Mapilla, who was the founder of Malayala Manorama and Bhashaposhini. He

influenced Sankunni to compile the legends and publish it as a series in his magazine, Bhashaposhini.

At first, he wrote the stories in a simple way but later gave a serious and grand style in his book. All these legends are versions of stories passed from generation to generation. His tales can be classified based on their subject as dealing with the super natural, religious, historical, mythical and legendary people. He had a personal passion for legends and travelled extensively for its collection. He took detailed information of the region and culture and edited the works himself. He completed the unfinished stories with his creative flair, rectified the mistakes and preserved them for posterity.

The five Namboori stories that have been selected deal with the deeds of legendary people. The first one was slightly difficult to translate but interesting. Transliteration is not possible in this case. The real essence will be lost by doing so. Translation being a novel experience, we tried our best in this process by giving importance to the idea and the essence of the work. We also focused on the style, structure, linguistic aspects of these folklores. There are some words and phrases that we couldn't replace by another language. Each folklore is culture specific, some words and phrases give it a signature style and also lend the work its local flavour.

Being the translator has been a great job, because we are translating from our mother tongue to an acquired language. The procedure followed can be summarized in no better way. We read the work which was in our mother tongue and tried to comprehend it. Then focusing on the idea, structure, meaning and message without losing its essence, we translated it into English. The unique experience of a translator is that we are not only readers in unison with the mind of author but also speakers. We

are very proud of doing this in a different tongue, because it is an opportunity for us to go deep into our own culture and preserving it in another language.

In this modern world, everyone is moving far away from our indigenous cultures and languages. In this scenario, translation provides an opportunity to go through our culture and present it before the world. If the compilation, publication and translation of folklores do not happen, they will be lost for ever. Disappearance of joint family system and emergence of nuclear family pose a threat to the oral tradition of folklore. So we need to document and preserve our rich cultural heritage for the future generations, otherwise we will lose our roots. As such, the present project work has a great significance.

CHAPTER TWO

The Namboori of Poonthaanam

We are told that Poonthaanathu Namboori was not one of the accomplished Vedic brahmins. While young he had learnt only few books, and he was not a scholar. His illam was in a place called Angaadippuram. It is more or less accepted that Poonthaanam Namboori and Melppaththur Bhattathiri were contemporaries. Bhattathiri's book called *Narayaneeyam* was edited and printed around the Malayalam year 762 and so we surmise that Poonthaanathu Namboori also must have lived around this time.

After a long period of waiting and longing, a son was born to Poonthaanathu Namboori. All the relatives were invited for the ceremony known as *choroottu*, the first meal of rice given to a baby. The auspicious time was at night. In their haste to get ready, and without noting their mistake, the brahmin women who were invited flung their bags and baggage where the baby was sleeping. When the auspicious time approached, the baby's mother came to carry him to his bath and found that the child was suffocated to death.

Needless to say this was shocking and horrible for all those present, but all the more for the child's parents. Poonthaanathu Namboori, who was already a Vishnu devotee and a virtuous person, very soon became almost like an ascetic, indifferent to all pleasures and self-interest. The well-known book of religious poems called *Gnanappana* was written by him after this tragic incident. There is no doubt that if you read this collection of poems when you are in great distress, you will surely find peace of mind. It is written in such a simple and pleasant style that almost everyone can understand its meaning and message.

After the death of his baby boy Poonthaanathu Namboori spent most of his time in his daily ablutions, prayers and worship at the Guruvaayur temple. At this time Melppaththur Bhattathiri also arrived there for worship. When Naarayana Bhattathiri started to compose *Naaraayaneeyam*, Poonthaanathu Namboori began to compose *Santhanagopalam* in the style of a *paana*. The high-priced vedic scholar Bhattathiri had a lot of concealed contempt towards Poonthaanam whom he considered ignorant of vedic knowledge, a scholar of no importance and also ridiculed his vernacular style of writing. The guileless PoonthaanathNamboori, without knowing the inward contempt with which Bhattathiri held him, one day took his almost completed *Santhanagopalam* to the great scholar and requested him to make the necessary corrections. Bhattathiri remarked “what is there to look into vernacular poems? Can anyone see any good in it? Moreover, Poonthaanam is not yet so knowledgeable. Therefore, I am sure the book will be full of mistakes.” Bhattathiri said this loud enough for many to hear and unable to bear the insult, Poonthaanam broke down and wept.

Just then there came an ethereal voice from the *sreekovil*, “Poonthaanam’s vibhakti may not be as much as that of Bhattathiri, but his bhakti is much more than Bhattathiri’s.” When bhattathiri heard these words of Guruvaayoorappan, he felt greatly ashamed and filled with remorse. He went in search of Poonthaanam and when he found him lying in a corner of the temple and weeping , Bhattathiri comforted him saying: “Hey Poonthaanam, are you lying here annoyed with what I said? I was thinking of something else when i said that. Your old work Gnanappana proves that your style of poetry is really good. Therefore, why are you grieved at a little joke of mine? Do bring me *Santhanagopalam* as much as you’ve finished and I will make the necessary corrections.” Then he took the book of poems, whatever was

completed so far and after correcting it, he praised the work highly, which made the Namboori very happy.

There is a section in the *Santhanagopalam* where Sri Krishnan and Arjunan pay a visit to Vaikundam [the abode of lord Vishnu]. Poonthaanam was at his wit's end how to describe Vaikundam and the saying goes that Guruvaayurappan showed it to him in a dream and the Namboori described it accordingly. It is also said that the same day that Bhattathiri's *Naarayaneeyam* was completed Poonthaanam's *Santhanagopalam* was also finished. There are a number of stories which narrate how Guruvaayurappan had made fools of many others in order bring honour to Poonthaanam, this jewel among his devotees. One day when Poonthaanam Namboori was reciting devotional songs, he read a phrase as padmanaabho maraprabhu meaning "O lord of trees, Padmanaabha" when another namboori scholar heard this and ridiculed him saying: "You fool! What you have said is wrong. It should be sung as pamanaabhoo amaraprabhu meaning : "O, immortal lord Padmanabha".

Suddenly there was an ethereal voice heard from the sanctum, "then who is the lord of the trees? I am the lord of trees also". No need to say, the scholar Namboori looked a blunder himself. Although Poonthaanam Namboori lacked scholarship, he often used to listen to the scholars reading the *Bhagavatham* in the temple premises and, interpreting the meaning of the shlokas, he soon became an expert in giving explanations to any of the shlokas. Gradually, everyone was interested in listening to his pious and fruitful explanations and it became a practice that whoever read the *Bhagavatham*, people wanted only Poonthaanam Namboori to interpret and give the meanings. This naturally made the rest of the scholarly nambooris jealous of him. The daily reading of the *Bhagavatham* is a particular custom at Guruvaayoor temple. Once a namboori scholar was reading the *Bhagavatham* and as usual, Poonthaanam was

explaining the meaning of the verses. Numerous people, both illiterate and learned, thronged to hear the reading. That day it was the story of Rukmani Swayamvaram, the story of Rukmani's wedding by her choice. Since Poonthaanam did not have any scholarly knowledge of the *puranas*, he used to tell the meaning according to his imaginative power and not the literal meaning of the verse. Therefore, at the part of the story where Rukmani was sending the brahmin to lord Krishna, our namboori explained that, "Rukmani said all this and sent a letter by the hand of the brahmin." Since it was not written in the *Bhagavatham* that a letter was sent, a scholar namboori listening to the reading quipped, "which shloka in the book says that a letter was sent?" The unscholarly Poonthaanam found it difficult to answer. Instantaneously, there came a heavenly voice from the *sreekovil*: "which shloka says there was no letter sent? When the brahmin came to me, there was a letter from Rukmani." Hearing this, the namboori who asked the question with the evil intention, felt less than mediocre and Poonthaanam was delighted, and indeed all the people wondered.

In course of time, everyone began to respect the erudition of Poonthaanam Namboori. Thus, when all the vedic scholars and such learned brahmins sat down to the meals after worship, Poonthaanam was given the best place among them in spite of the presence of so many other scholars. This became an accepted custom and nobody questioned it. During this time there once came to Guruvaayur a well-known vedic scholar and erudite namboothirippaad from a faraway place. He was also going to partake of the meals at the temple and so the managing namboori decided to give him the foremost place at the table. As Poonthaanam did not know this, he went in for the meals and sat at his usual place. When the temple manager saw this, he admonished him saying, "It is highly improper for you to sit in this place when there is another better and more qualified brahmin here. So get up soon and move away."

But Poonthaanam was not prepared to give up that easily a place allotted to him willingly by the other respected members of the community. As he refused to move, the temple manager forcibly took him by his hand and pulled him up. Thinking that this had happened to him because he was not a noted vedic scholar and as such unworthy of any respect, Poonthaanam felt humiliated. Weeping in disgrace and shame, he went out. Immediately, a voice was heard from the *sreekovil*:

“Poonthaanam need not live among these wrong-doers nor should he come here anymore. If poonthaanam wishes to see me, I shall come to his illam.” The namboori was overjoyed to hear this and he left immediately for his home.

After the namboori reached home, he sat in a place, deciding to eat his meals only after the lord visited him. Then lord Sri Krishna, the divine protector of devotees, appeared before him in his illam. Namboori, the best among devotees, saw his gracious lord clearly on his left side. Immediately the namboori got up from his seat and falling headlong at his feet worshipped him. Then the lord spoke to him, “Hereafter Poonthaanam can worship me from here. My presence will be here with you.” Having given the assurance, the lord disappeared from view. The namboori had a small *sreekovil* built at the spot where he saw the lord, set an idol of lord Krishna in the place and regularly worshipped him there with prayers and *pooja* offerings. Since that shrine was to the left of where namboori sat when he saw lord Krishna, he named the shrine, as the Edathu Purathu Ambalam – the temple on the left side. By the grace of the lord, the sincere devotion of Poonthaanam, and his constant familiarity with the reading of *Bhagavatham*, the namboori subsequently became so well-versed in Sanskrit that he could write poems in Sanskrit as well.

Since Poonthaanam left the temple premises and started living in his own illam, he had, by the grace of the lord and his blessing, many sons. He lived a long

and happy marital life with his wife and children, but always with steadfast devotion and punctual worship of his benevolent lord Krishna.

The Namboothiri of Kumaaramangalam

The Namboothiri's illam was situated in Parampuzha in Kottayam district.

These namboothiris were well-known magicians, sorcerers and astrologers.

The Thiruvithaamkoor [travancore] state of that period consisted of small principalities of the present Kayamkulam, Kollam, Ambalappuzha and many others. Years ago, these were independent kingdoms under small chieftains recognized as Rajas. In the village called Krishnapuram of Kayamkulam, there lived a terrible *yakshi* whose horrible deeds were a fearful nightmare for the people. They were so greatly frightened that, as much as possible, they avoided that particular area. Her mode of action was as follows: disguised as a ravishingly beautiful woman, she would stand along the wayside and when a man passed that way, she would go to him, and with a bewitching smile, ask him for a *murrukkaan*. When she got it, she would invite him to her house for a meal. Most unsuspecting men would be by that time under her spell and follow her. But even those who had pre-knowledge about her wouldn't dare to refuse her through sheer fear. As people mostly had to walk from place to place in those days or go by bullock carts, they badly needed rest and food on the way and so, when it was offered kindly by a bewitching woman, men found it beyond their control to refuse. Forests covered most of the land those days and the pathways were narrow and dark. She would take them to a dense part of the woods, and suddenly regain her original terrible form. By then the men would swoon with mortal fear and the rest was easy for her. She would tear them to pieces with her claws and hungrily drink their blood.

This went on for a long time, till the people completely stopped using that pathway and area. When the *yakshi* could not get her prey anymore, she even entered the villages which frustrated the inhabitants all the more. Their hue and cry reached

the King of Kayamkulam and he called for any clever sorcerer who could put an end to her. Many tried in vain and in some cases she devoured a few sorcerers. The king and the people were at their witsend.

One day the king heard that in the land of the Thiruvithamkoor king and in the village of Parampuzha of Kottayam district, there lived a namboothiri of the *illam* of Kumaramangalam, who was a very capable and famous sorcerer. The king immediately sent a letter to the Travancore king, requesting him to send the namboothiri to help him and his people. Accordingly, the namboothiri arrived at the Kayamkulam king's palace and was told all the details. After refreshing himself from the tedious journey, he left for Krishnapuram and soon met with the *yakshi*, who as usual, asked for the betel leaf mixture. Smiling at her, the namboothiri invited her to go with him, promising to give her whatever she wished. Saying this he quietly uttered a mantra which bound her up to his will.

After that he started walking towards the north. Since she could not break this connection, the *yakshi* too followed him in her human form. It became dark and the sun had set but they walked on. By early dawn, they reached the Namboothiri's own *illam* and everyone saw the beautiful woman who came with him, and filled with curiosity, asked him, "Who is this? Why has she come here?" He answered, "Oh! Well, I met her on the way and as she is an orphan, I brought her along. Just give her something to eat and she can stay in the outhouse as one of the servant maids." But he ordered, "Never allow her into the main house" and all the other namboothiri women agreed to obey him. Meanwhile, by very strong magic, he summoned her power on to an iron rod and struck it on the floor of the middle courtyard of the *naalukettu*.

Soon after, the namboothiri had to travel to a distant place for some work. Taking advantage of his absence, the crafty *yakshi* made friends with the guileless namboothiri women and begged them to allow her into the main building because she “would love to see the inside of their illam”. At first, they refused her request, fearing the wrath of the namboothiri, but later gave in to her winsome entreaties and allowed her to quickly walk around the rooms and leave immediately, to which she readily agreed. While surveying the rooms, she saw the iron rod in the middle courtyard and guessing what it meant, she pulled it out when nobody was looking, regained her powers and ‘flew’ away from there in no time. When each namboothiri women returned from her work, they did not see the maid anywhere, called out and searched everywhere and were filled with fear and despair on how to answer the namboothiri. So when he returned the next day, he promptly asked, “Where is the maid?” and the women answered, “Since yesterday, she is missing and we don’t know where she has gone.” Immediately he went outside and looked for the rod and seeing it nowhere, he asked the women, “Did you at any time allow her inside the main house?” and of course they had to tell him the truth.

The unleashed *yakshi* returned to Krishnapuram, resumed her misdeeds and consumed the unwary wayfarers. The terror-stricken villagers feared worse than before and complained to the king who was completely at a loss, himself trembling with fear and anxiety. Seeing him so listless, his counsellors suggested, ‘We think this is the work of the Namboothiri who was not given any rewards for helping us. We are sure that he has unleashed her on to us to take revenge. Since only he has the power to control this horribly fierce evil spirit, let us call him back and reward him suitably, after which he may help us again.’ The king agreed that this was good advice and very soon requested the Travancore king to once again send the namboothiri to them.

When he came to the palace he related what had happened, assuring them that he had no thought of revenge in him and that he never asked for any reward for such work. But he would accept anything that anyone gave him as a gift. He told them that this time he would get rid of her permanently and the king could give him whatever he wished to give. Saying this, he left for the place where she lived. Sensing that since they had already met, she would recognize him and may not appear before him, he took another route in the wilder part of the forest and stood behind a tree. Then uttering a powerful mantra, he tied three knots into a chord and bound her into it. As before, he walked towards the north but she too took a precaution this time; she made herself invisible to anyone but the namboothiri and followed him obediently.

As they neared his illam, she said to him, “ I know that I had deceived you earlier and ran away. But I beg you, do not punish me for that. I’ll do whatever you ask me. I promise not to hurt anyone hereafter, but I have a request: please do not use me as a menial servant maid; I feel it extremely humiliating.” He replied, “If you keep your word and promise to behave properly, I shall respect you as a goddess and establish you in a temple in my household. But if you deceive me again, I vow that I’ll destroy you in the burning furnace.” After this he tied her by magic to a temple tree near his illam, constructed a *sreekovil*, magically enshrined her inside an idol and established her there to be worshipped along with the other deities.

After doing all this, the namboothiri returned to the king and told him what he had done. Greatly pleased with him, the king and his people were overwhelmed with gratitude and gave him many presents. The king presented him with the tax-free ownership of a large area of land called Chavara [called so even today] for him and his family. The Namboothiri was overjoyed with these unexpected and highly valuable gifts, thanked all of them and went home happily.

Thereafter, the *yakshi* did not trouble any one till this day. It is believed that she is still worshipped and respected as a deity by the folks of the *illam*. There is an amusing anecdote connected with this *namboothiri* and the famous Sooryakaladi Bhattathiri, both contemporaries and outwardly friends but covering up their rival jealousy. Their *illams* were also situated close to each other and shared in this rivalry as well as outward friendship.

Once there was a big function at the Bhattathiri's place and the *namboothiri* was politely invited. After the sumptuous feast, the Bhattathiri wished to prick his rival; so he asked him, "Today is Karthika day and the famous weekly feast at your place; aren't you going for it?" "I'll go if you are also coming" replied the *Namboothiri*. When he agreed, both started towards *Kumaramangalathu illam*. Towards the west of Kaladi, there is a small tributary of the Meenachil river. It was a small stream but was quite deep where you have to cross to reach Kumaranallur and the undercurrents were very strong. When they reached the place, there was no boat to cross over. Having known this beforehand, the Bhattathiri, who was well versed in the arts of sorcery and the magical control of the elements like water and air, wanted to make fun of his companion. So he turned to him and said, "What a pity, there is no boat to take us to the other side. I can manage by some means but what will you do? I am sorry but you may have to turn back." Hearing this, the *Namboothiri* answered, "Don't worry about me. Let me see how you cross over." Then the Bhattathiri went to the neighbouring house, got the tip end of a plantain leaf, sat on it and rowing with his hands, reached the other side, showing his prowess. Then the *Namboothiri* plucked a basil leaf, sat on it and rowing with his hands joined him.

The Bhattathiri bowed his head in shame.

Translator's note: the tree is called *paala maram* in Malayalam (latin name: *alstonia scholaris*) with small white flowers and a strong scent similar to the night queen, usually planted in temple premises and in the compounds of old households in Kerala.

Srikrishna Karnaamrutham

Once upon a time, a namboori of the illam called Vilvamangalam had married a Brahmin woman who lived a few miles from his own *illam*. She belonged to a sub-caste of the brahmins that worked in the temple and its premises. He had unlimited love for his wife and he made it a point to return to her every night whatever the impediment or difficulty. Once he was returning to her when it started to rain heavily. He had his supper and waited for the rain to stop or reduce, but it became heavier and darkness settled in. It was also the waning period of the moon and the night was very dark; still, holding a burning torch in his hand to show the way, he started from his house. His umbrella broke with the heavy wind and in half an hour, the torch was extinguished in the relentless downpour. In the pitch dark, he could not see anything but feeling the way with his hands, he kept going. At last he reached the river.

In the morning when he had left his house, there was just enough water to wet his feet, but now the river overflowed its banks. There was no one nearby to help him cross it. The rain and wind made so much noise that even if he had called out for help; no one would have heard him. He had to go to her at all costs, but how? His brain was busy finding a solution inspite of his overwhelming distress. Luckily, there was a sudden brilliant flash of lightning followed by crashing thunder. In that brilliance, he saw that he was at the river shore and there was a log of wood lying on the water. Quickly getting hold of it, he scrambled on to it and using both his hands and feet, he rowed himself across the river. As he stepped down from the log he felt rope near his feet. Finding that it was a rope at the end of the log, he took the ends of the rope and tied the log on to a tree to let it not float away.

By midnight he reached home, wet and exhausted. His wife had not yet gone to sleep. She was reading a book in the light of the lamp. As soon as she heard the

knock, she opened the door and the namboori went in and quickly changed into dry clothes. Then, chewing the betel mixture which his wife had prepared for him, he described the agonizing experience he had while coming to see her. When she heard the adventurous account she felt very sad, but being a well-learned woman, more or less like her husband, she pointed to a picture on the wall, and said to her husband, “If you had as much love and concentrated devotion towards him as you hold for me, you would have attained *saayoojyam* long before this time. It is a pity that you are wasting this brahmin birth of yours like this.” The picture was that of Lord Krishna.

The wise words of his wife pierced his heart and he realized the absolute truth and wisdom in them. He sat there speechless for a while, looking at the picture and said, “You are perfectly right. Only now I see the truth of the supreme soul. Now I find my heart and mind transferred from you to the divine God. Since you have turned my mind from vanity towards the divine path, I consider you as my teacher and mentor.” Saying this, he sat there without taking his eyes away from the picture. His mind must have filled with divine love and absolute concentration and then there flowed a torrent of golden verse from the mouth of this noble brahmin which later came to be called Srikrishna Karnamrutham [it is called so because this string of verses is about Lord Krishna and is sweet and melodious to those who hear it, and as good as *amrutham*, the nectar of the gods or perhaps it is as acceptable as nectar to the Lord himself.]

When the Namboori began to recite the verses, his excellent wife understood the great value of the noble poetry, that she immediately started to write them down. Strangely, she did not write down every word of the recitation, because, she observed that when the recitation started, the figure in the picture also nodded its head and she wrote those down, but whenever the picture did not give its nod of acceptance, she

omitted those verses. She believed that the Lord himself was enjoying those verses and whenever he did not, he showed it by this disapproval.

Only after he finished the entire poem did the Namboori stop or get up from his position. Later, he got up from there and without a word he went to the river to look at the log of the previous night. From far he saw that it was still lying there. When he came nearer he saw that it was the corpse of a man and that he had travelled on it to cross the river. The man had committed suicide with the rope round his neck and someone had untied it and thrown it into the river.

Immediately the Namboori got a boat, crossed over to his illam, had his bath, and called five brahmins and got himself purified by the sprinkling of holy water by the brahmins. Soon afterwards he left his house and became a devoted sanyasi. This was the brahmin who later became famous as Vilvamangalaththu Swamiyaar.

The Namboori of the House of Kaaraattu

Once, long ago, a few Namboori students and their teacher from the Brahmaswam Mutt of Thrissur, a vedic school, went to worship at the local Vadakkunnaathan temple. There they spotted a most venomous serpent hanging from the bell in the sanctum, with part of its large body wrapped round the bell. Frightened at the terrible sight, all of them as well as the other devotees fled. Seeing the people fleeing with screams and shouts, Kaarattu Namboori who was at that time praying in the main hall of the temple asked them what the matter was. Kaarattu namboori was well-known for his excellent ability to cure all kinds of snakebites. There was no other person in the whole of Kerala at that time, to compare with his deep knowledge of snakes and their poisons. So when the Brahmin teacher told him about the snake at the altar, Kaaraattu Namboori got up saying, "It is a small matter," and chanting an invocation he bound it immovable and pulled its tail. Surprisingly, its tail became longer and longer as he kept pulling, so the Namboori wrapped it six times round the bell and pulled again.

Then with the snake's tail in hand, he perambulated three times round the sanctum sanctorum. The tail kept growing longer without losing its grip on the bell. Deciding now to know the whole length of the snake's tail, the Namboori stepped out of the altar and went thrice round the temple and the tail did not stop growing in length. Now the Namboori guessed that this was no ordinary snake and feeling a little fear in his mind, he withdrew his hold on the tail and ran towards a pond where he immersed himself in the water and started a chant to invoke Garuda. Now, Garuda is considered the mortal enemy of snakes, but is also the vehicle of Lord Vishnu. Suddenly, there was an ethereal voice from the temple altar, "Vaasuki, do not try to play with Karaattu. It is better that you come back here." Instantly the serpent

disappeared. No doubt, everyone there knew it was the voice of Lord Shiva and that the serpent was definitely Vaasuki, the King of Snakes and the neck ornament of Shiva.

When Kaarrattu Namboori rose from the water, there appeared Garuda behind him, but now that the danger of the snake was ended, the Namboori worshipped Garuda and sent him back.

Later, Kaaraattu Namboori, deciding to learn more magic and get a deeper understanding of the subject of snakes and their poison-bites, travelled to many places. Since he could not find a more knowledgeable person than himself in Kerala, he crossed over to other lands and finally reached Badari Ashram, where he met with a sanyasi who was known to be extraordinarily brilliant in dealing with snakes and snakebites. When Kaaraattu Namboori told him that he wanted to learn more of the subject, the sanyasi asked him, “What do you know about snakebites?” And the Namboori answered, “I can cure all kinds of snakebites.” The sanyasi remarked, “Is that so?”

Then he took the Namboori with him and travelled for six days and reached a dark forest. Afterwards both climbed up a tree and the sanyasi bound Namboori tightly to the tree. Then he took a medicine in his hand and pointed it towards the east. Suddenly, there was a tremendous roaring sound as if an avalanche was approaching and then Namboori saw, with great trepidation, an exodus of all the wild animals and birds rushing towards the west –animals like elephants, tigers, bears and lions were flashing by as if to save their lives. Trembling with fear while he was watching this mass movement he saw another terrible sight. A huge serpent with an elephant in its mouth and holding its fierce hood upright was coming towards them. If the snake could carry a huge tusker like a python carrying a frog in its hold, we can imagine the

size and strength of the venomous snake. Namboori saw trees and green plants smouldering in the poisonous fumes emitting from its mouth. Seeing this hellish sight, the Namboori swooned away and would have fallen down if he was not tied so well to the tree.

Then the sanyasi took another medicine and pointed it to the west. Immediately all those wild beasts and birds which had gone westward a while ago, returned to the east and the serpent also vanished.

By then the Namboori regained consciousness and the sanyasi asked, “Hey, you told me that you could cure all kinds of snakebites and poisons? Can you deal with snakes like this?” The namboori cried out, “Oh I cannot. In fact, I did not even know there are these kinds of snakes.”

Afterwards both of them got down from the tree and returned to Badari Ashram. There the sanyasi taught namboori the various medicines, treatment and chants needed for this vocation. Kaaraattu Namboori learnt everything quickly and diligently, and after getting the blessings from his guru, he returned to Kerala. Coming back to his native place, Kaaraattu Namboori became more famous than before and was well-known all over the country. He had performed brilliant cures for snakebites and students came from far and near to study under this illustrious person.

The Nambooris of Paathaayikkara

The Brahmin *illam* called Paathaayikkara is in a place called Angaadippuram in Kerala. Once upon a time, there were two sturdy and powerfully-built brothers in this *illam*. They were so huge and strong that each of them needed more than twelve measures of rice cooked for each meal. They had a strange habit that they did not need any side dish or buttermilk like the other brahmins wanted; instead they used only coconut milk with the rice. The *antharjanam* of the elder brother cooked for herself another three measures of rice, thus altogether more than twenty five *edangazhy* of rice were cooked every day. She would serve the rice equally between the two brothers and then place twelve full unhusked coconuts next to each plate. This used to be their daily custom.

The Nambooris would sit at the meal and with their left hand, squeeze out the milk from each of the full coconuts and mix it with their rice. By the time the rice was over, the coconuts would be finished too. The wife also did the same, but she used the milk of only one coconut squeezing out the milk with her bare hands.

One day when the brothers were about to sit down for their meal, one of their relatives, living next door, came hurriedly to them and said, "Today is my birthday. Both of you must come to lunch at my place. I had told my son yesterday itself to come here to invite you and when you did not show up, I asked my son and he said that he forgot. Believe me, I felt very bad about it and so I have rushed to your house myself. I was afraid that you may refuse my invitation since it is too late. Hence, I myself have come to call you and you must come with me just now. Everything is ready and it is time to serve food."

Not wishing to upset the feelings of the relative, both the brothers got up and went with him to the feast. Now, the wife thought to herself, "What shall I do with all

this cooked food? It will turn cold for the night, but surely I do not want to waste it; I shall find a way.” So saying, she sat down and ate it all up, their share as well as hers!

Late in the evening, the brothers sat down for supper which she served hot and fresh. Then the elder brother asked his wife, “What did you do with the morning’s rice?” She replied, “I thought that it would become cold so I ate it.” Hearing this reply, her husband said, ”Is it so? Not bad at all. From tomorrow cook another twelve measures for you also.” Thus, from the next day she started to cook three meals of twelve measures for each.

Once during this time, the brothers were invited to a feast somewhere. When they were about to leave, the elder Namboori took the grinding stone from the inner courtyard and placed it up on one of the roof beams of the hall. That was a new moon day and it was the custom of the household to forego cooked rice for supper, instead it would be a meal made from ground rice.

One can imagine how monstrous that stone must have been if the *antharjanam* could grind thirty six measures of rice in it and her husband had deliberately put it up so high to test the strength of his faithful wife. When it was time to grind the rice for supper, the *antharjanam* could not find the stone in its usual place and so, wondering who could have taken it, she looked around and at last found it on top of the roof beam. Then she said to herself, “Who has placed it here? Could be either of the brothers; I do not know how but I have to grind the rice and cook the meal.” Then she went to the beam and lifting the stone placed it on the ground. Very soon she finished grinding the rice and supper was ready. After this, she put the stone back on the beam.

In the evening after their bath and evening worship, when the Nambooris saw the freshly cooked supper before them, the elder Namboori asked his wife, “How did

you grind the rice today?” She replied, ‘On the stone itself and I have put it back in the same place.’ When he heard this, the husband said, “Very well. That will do.” Apparently he was satisfied in his mind that she was most suitable for him.

Once, a Namboori from Kozhikode came to the illam of Pathaayikkara. He was a well-known athletic performer and a well-built person. He and the people of Kozhikode believed that there was no one as strong and powerful anywhere else. He used to have a meal cooked with four measures of rice and its accessories, twice a day. Apart from the Pathaayikkara Nambooris, this was an unusual meal for any one. He came to the illam wishing to meet those Nambooris of whom he had heard much and he hoped to compete and defeat them, if possible.

When he arrived at Pathaayikkara, the servant informed him that the Namboori brothers had gone out and would return only late in the evening. Then the guest Namboori sent the reply back through the woman servant to the *antharjanam* that he would wait for them as he had come all the way just to meet them and so he would need his lunch. He added also that his single meal was cooked with four measures of rice. When the *antharajanam* heard this she sent her answer through the servant, “No problem. The meal will be ready when you come after your bath.” When the Namboori came after his bath he saw that his lunch was served in the main hall and a pot of water, a wooden seat and four full unhusked coconuts placed near the rice. After serving the food, the Brahmin woman went into the next room and standing behind the door she informed him through the servant woman, ‘Tell him to have his food.’ Then he went to the hall and sat down. But as he did not see any side dish or other accessories along with the rice, he said to himself aloud so that the servant could hear, “How come there is no buttermilk or any other dish?” For this query the reply came from within, “We are not in the habit of accessories. All of us here eat rice with

coconut milk and so I have kept four coconuts next to the plate of rice.” Again the Namboori asked doubtfully (as if to the servant), “But how can I get the milk from the full coconut?”

Then the *antharjanam* opened the door a little, kept another bowl beside the door and another four full coconuts next to it. Then taking a coconut in each hand she squeezed the milk into the bowl as one would squeeze a ripe mango. She did this once more, finished the four coconuts and then gently pushed the bowl of milk towards the guest. The guest Namboori saw with mounting wonder that the shell and husk of the coconuts had become like soft in her hands. Now completely caught dumbfounded with fear and surprise he thought to himself, “If the Brahmin woman is so strong, what could be the immense strength of the two men? I am sure that I cannot face them.” Then he quickly ate his meal and left the place in a hurry.

There was a temple near the illam of Pathaayikkara. Both the Nambooris worshipped at this place every day. As usual one day the elder Namboori went to the temple early in the morning after his bath. The pathway to the temple was quite narrow. Later in the day when the younger Namboori was on his way to the temple he saw an elephant coming towards him. The mahout was taking the elephant back after that day’s temple festival procession. After his morning prayers, the elder Namboori was returning home and was right behind the elephant. Since the way was narrow and the elephant was big, the brothers could not see each other and the brothers were never in the habit of giving way to anyone.

Thus, not knowing that his elder brother was on the opposite side, the younger brother ordered the mahout, “Take the elephant back!” And placing his hands on the elephant’s forehead, he pushed it backwards. The elephant stepped back. Seeing the elephant stepping back and without knowing that his brother was in front, the elder

brother shouted, “Go forward!” and pushed the huge animal from its backside. Caught in the middle, the elephant could not move. Now the elder brother, suspecting that his young brother must be on the opposite side, pushed it forward forcefully, saying, “Alright then, here catch it!” At the same time the younger brother pushed it backwards with all his might. The miserable animal suffered between the might of the two strong men and soon the elephant was lifted upwards across the fence and thrown into the next compound. Then both the brothers went, each on his way.

There are several such stories about this interesting pair of brothers. Since we have already defined their mighty strength in the above illustrations, we shall stop here.

CHAPTER THREE

CONCLUSION

Translators have an essential role in the way knowledge and information travels across the globe, overcoming communication barriers and bringing people together. Translators change the world and add cultural value. Language is so much more than just a tool allowing us to communicate. It is the expression of culture, society, and beliefs than just changing the words from one language to another. Translation builds bridges between cultures. It allows you to experience cultural phenomena that would otherwise be too foreign and remote to grasp through your own cultural lens. Skillful translators build these bridges

We took tales from *Aithiyamala*, written by Kottarathil Shankunni who compiled different folk tales ingeniously. The five works we translated are *The Namboori of Poonthaanam*, *The Namboothiri of Kumaramangalathu*, *Srikrishna Karnamrutham*, *Namboori of the House of Karaattu* and *The Nambooris of Pathayikkara*. “*Namboori of Poonthanam*” tells the story of Poonthanathu Namboori, how his life changed after his only son’s demise and how he turned into a great poet and a man of honours due to his sincere devotion to Lord Krishna. “*The Namboori of Kumaramangalathu*” tells the story of Kumaramangalathu namboori, a well known magician and sorcerer; of how he had saved the people of Krishnapuram from a terrible ghost (*yakshi*). “*Srikrishna Karnamrutham*” tells the story of the great Vilvamangalath Swamiyar and his journey from a common namboori to the greatest devotee of Lord Krishna. “*The Namboori of House of Kaarattu*” tells the story of Kaarattu Namboori who was a well known person to cure snakebites and save many precious life. “*The Namboori of Pathayikkara*” tells the story of two mighty namboori brothers of the Pathayikkara *illam* and the interesting stories related to their strength

and valour. Kottarathil Shankunni seems to have had a good knowledge about geography, art and culture of the region. This accounts for the impressive manner in which he has dealt with the legends relating to the place and the people with such impressive dexterity.

Folklore is oral history that is preserved by the people of the culture, consisting of traditions belonging to a specific culture. These traditions usually include music, stories, history, legends, and myths. Folklore is passed down from generation to generation and is kept active by the people in the culture. Folklore allows people to give meaning to their lives and their surroundings. Because every culture has different historical backgrounds and traditions. Folklore has a different definition to each culture. They are a collection of fictional stories about animals and people, of cultural myths, jokes, songs, tales, and even quotes. Folklore is also known as folk literature or oral traditions.

Folklore depicts the way main characters manage their everyday life events, including conflicts or crises. Simply put, folk literature is about individual experiences from a particular society. The study of folk tradition and knowledge is called folkloristics. Although some folklores depict universal truths, unfounded beliefs and superstitions are also basic elements of folklore tradition. The major forms of folklore are folk song, folk tales, fairy tales, ballads, folk dramas etc. Examples of folklores can be found in literature also. Rudyard Kipling was keenly interested in folklore. Kipling's popular work, '*The Jungle Book*' consists of plenty of stories about traditional folktales. The main purpose of folklore is to convey a moral lesson and present useful information and everyday life lessons in an easy way for the common people to understand. Folk tales sugarcoat the lessons of hard life in order to give the audience pointers about how they should behave. Currently, many forms of

folk literature have been transformed into books and manuscripts, which we see in the forms of novels, histories, dramas, stories etc. Folk literature is, however, not merely a carrier of cultural values; rather, it is also an expression of the self.

The significance of translation in our everyday lives is more multidimensional than we realize. Translation itself refers to the form of translating experience recorded in one language to another language, which means it ease the process of understanding the other person's culture and much more. Translation helps people to connect with each other. It makes the understanding process easier. It breaks language barriers and helps connecting people from different regions and so on. A good translation of a text serves the purpose it intends. In some cases the purpose is to produce the same effect on readers of the translated version as the original would produce on the readers of the original version. On the other hand, sometimes the purpose is to communicate the ideas in the text to readers of the target language.

Folklore gives us the wisdom to understand experiences from different points of view. It showcases that all of our problems and successes happen in every culture and throughout different periods of history. We are unique as individuals, but we are all connected through these moral truths. Folklore is all about human sufferings and pains which are transmitted in the forms of folk narrative, material culture, social folk customs and performing folk arts. Notwithstanding disparate ethnicity, people also share at least one important cultural element in common that is tradition. This tradition renders communities to share some common elements like folktales, folksongs, folk customs, folk arts and so on. This facilitates to generate a shared identity for the group.

Folklore is like the long term memory of human society. Human society cannot function and does not function without it. Folklore embraces all of the things

that matter the most to us, to our loved ones, to our friends, and to our fellow community members, in all of the multiple forms in which community can be imagined. When societies, or parts of society, have collapsed at different points in history, oftentimes the most deeply important aspects that survive do survive because individuals have handed or orally passed that important aspect of living on from one person to another person. That transmission of unofficial, intimate culture represents the heart of folklore.

Translation enables us to communicate beyond borders and helps to convey ideas far and wide. Folklore translation is essential as it enables to carry out the tradition and cultures of different nations. This helps in such a way that our future generations will also get the essence of our culture and tradition.

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