

Construction of Mother-tongue: Translation, Culture and Power

ASHOK K. MOHAPATRA

Abstract

Mother-tongue is a construct of translational consciousness that is mediated through colonial culture. It is commodified as a cultural and symbolic capital on which literacy and literariness are predicated, and these constitute cultural nationalism. All this is illustrated in the case of the Odia language as explored by this paper. The paper also discusses the cultural process of the emergence of Odia mother tongue, focusing on the shift from desaja and tadbhava register to Sanskritic tatsama register with regard to the word 'kokila' that eventually replaced 'koili' in a changing poetic context.

Keywords: Translation, literacy, orality, vernacular, mother tongue, literacy.

Introduction

Any study of the history of translation from Indian languages into English or vice versa necessitates unpacking the term 'Indian languages' into Indian vernaculars and Indian mother tongues. This is because both concepts point towards a process of cultural shift not only from orality to literacy, but also from pre-print to print literacy, which was made possible as a colonial capitalist economy came to replace an earlier pre-capitalist subsistence economy. As a consequence of this the native's tongue or vernacular became standardized to become mother tongue through the agency of translation. Mother tongue, despite its originary overtones, is a cultural product of standardization and translation, predicated upon literary modernity and literacy. Its intent and effect are building its own hegemonic notions of literacy, purity and refinement and

structures of domination over the non-standard varieties (regional dialects and sociolects).

The relation of English and Indian languages is extremely fraught as the former exercises its cultural authority over the latter ones and influences them. This power relation is best understood through the prism of translation. In her story 'Translator Translated' in the anthology *The Artist of Disappearance* (2011), Anita Desai has explored very well the relation of power between English and Odia. At a superficial level the story illustrates how Prema, the translator of Suvarna Devi's Odia stories into English, feels that her discovery of this writer is part of her search for her mother's tongue that was lost to her after the mother died when she was a child. But this search is motivated not simply to compensate the cultural and psychic loss Prema has suffered on account of her mother's death, but also to carve out a niche for herself within the academia as an English teacher. English is evidently far richer an institutionalized cultural capital than Odia in the field of literary production, from which much greater benefits of power and privileges are accrued to those who master it. It is metropolitan, and a mediator among tongues unintelligible to each other in the postcolonial Babel that India is, and has the highest market value for literary production. Prema affirms all this through her unconscious imitation of the elegance, suavity and smartness of Tara, the head of the publishing firm of English translations in Delhi. This way she plays out her role as a mimic woman, someone already translated as the colonized, and ontologically, as Robert Young would say, someone "in the condition of being a translated man or woman" (140). Once she has translated the stories into English with some success, she begins to assume power over Suvarna Devi. However, towards the end of the story she admits that the mother tongue has greater power over her, and in trying to

be a short story writer herself in Odia, she discovers that she has written all these months “under the influence” of Suvarna Devi, “with her voice” (91).

On the face of it, Desai seems to credit creative writing in the mother tongue with originality and primacy that translation can never claim to have, since the translator is already translated. Being translated, Prema comes to realize the untranslatability of many parts of her proposed writing and acknowledges that she is helplessly caught between English and the mother tongue. And yet, at a deeper level, the story offers to us insights into the power structure of the cultural economy of translation of Odia into English, through which Prema claims Suvarna Devi as her protégée, her trophy (70), and “the camouflaged speckled bird”(73) she has ‘discovered’. So, the mother tongue embodied by Suvarna Devi is seemingly retrieved, albeit steeped in the sentiments of nostalgia, and even exoticized. But in the story, which is a postcolonial fable, the moment of defining the need for the mother tongue is coeval with the moment when the English-educated native discovers that s/he has been colonized and translated. The moment in question is far more complex than it is first thought, for the mother tongue actually does not exist *a priori*, waiting to be salvaged and restituted after a spell of linguistic and cultural amnesia; it is not a moment of return to one’s roots either. Rather the mother tongue is constructed through cultural shifts resulting from academic commoditization of vernacular in the colonial power structure and market economy.

As for the shifts from orality to literacy and transformation of vernacular into the mother tongue, Walter Ong (1982) has written with great erudition the formal and cultural aspects of such shifts. But my essay is not so much concerned with Ong’s study as with the ideological implication of the shifts as

correlates of larger changes in the political and cultural economy of the modern nation state that Ivan Illich's essay 'Vernacular Values' (1980) deals with. Illich makes a perceptive study of the changes that came about in linguistic ideology within the context of the rise of the modern nation state. He analyses the cultural economy of vernacular and charts the semantic inflections the term acquired over the years. According to him, the term 'vernacular', with Indo-Germanic root, signified "rootedness" and "abode". *Vernaculum*, a Latin word, was used for whatever was homebred, homespun, homegrown and homemade in a pre-modern subsistence economy as opposed to what was obtained in formal exchange in a relatively modern commodity-intensive economy. In the pre-modern subsistence economy the child of one's slave and of one's wife, the donkey born of one's own beast, were known as 'vernacular' beings. It was the Roman scholar Marcus Terentius Varro (116 BC – 27 BC), who applied the term to language, redefined the same conceptual distinction between the 'homegrown' and the 'bought-from-the-market' categories linguistically so that vernacular speech was to be regarded as one made up of the words and patterns grown on the speaker's own ground, as opposed to what is grown elsewhere and then mediated through market.

With the rise of the early forms of capitalist market economy, commoditization of goods and professionalization of services took place alongside the production and marketing of various forms of specialized knowledge as cultural capital. Coterminous with these developments were rise of the modern capitalist state such as Spain in the late 15th century, from where Columbus set out in search of sea-routes, initiating a saga of overseas trade routes and colonial conquest. Around that time within the State, Antonio Martinez de Nebrija was,

with the sanction of the Queen Isabella, standardizing the Castilian variety of Old Spanish through the codification of its grammar and dictionary. This attempt on the part of Nebrija led to the building up of a regime of what is popularly known in Spanish as *armas y letras* consisting in an exercise of authority of the Queen over cultural diversity in the Empire and political consolidation of her secular power in the modern Spain. Indeed, Spain was getting modernized with the rise of the letrados, the bureaucrats, in various governing councils, who were replacing the traditional nobles and grandees. Castilian emerged as the standard language to be taught as the mother tongue to students besides Latin. It came to be regarded as the Queen's language, the tongue of the Supreme Mother. Besides assuming power, the 'mother tongue' also acquired the valence of nutrition and cultural authority, which had been derived from the classical concept *educatio prolis* that ascribed to the mother the duties of the feeding and nurturing the baby. It was only later that in an extended metaphorical sense the church and school came to be regarded as performing such duties. This somewhat simplified historical account helps us understand how the term mother-tongue, notwithstanding its biological naturalism, was deeply imbricated with the process of its teaching in the academia in the colonial state and its market economy in the Indian context.

In the context of colonial India we know all too well how a certain strand of the Utilitarian philosophy underpinning Macaulay's project of English education in the early 19th century was instrumental in the formation of a colonial bourgeoisie that brought about a movement of revival and reforms within indigenous society and culture. Thus, what is popularly known as the conflict between the Anglicists versus the Vernacularists within the field of education in 19th century was a dialectical process within the self-same utilitarian logic,

and leading eventually the win of Vernacularists, with the Wood's Despatch (1854) becoming the cornerstone of education policy.

Mention may be made here that vis-à-vis the English language in the colonial context, the term vernacular did not exactly signify the idea of any homegrown product in the sense Ivan Illich meant it. Rather it simply meant the language of the natives or the colonial subjects in the official usage. But the native, or the colonial bourgeoisie, redefined it as the mother-tongue within the relations of colonial power, adjusting them carefully, so that a distinctive and exclusive cultural identity could be claimed on the basis of the mother-tongue, and the material benefits of colonial government jobs could be secured for them. The cultural adjustment on the part of the colonial elite had to serve the purpose of claiming cultural respectability for itself, and distancing itself from the uneducated masses of natives. Such distancing was reflected in the discursive strategies of the shift of registers in Odia poetry. I shall focus very narrowly on the shift from '*koili*' to '*kokila*' in Odia poetic usage as an explanation of the ideological configurations of the mother tongue and the cultural politics of the Odia colonial elite. To understand the cultural discourse of that period, a few views of Odia intellectuals on mother tongue and Odia literary usages from Odia newspapers and journals in the late 19th and early 20th centuries are worth discussing. I shall present them in my English translation.

The rise of Odia mother-tongue in the late 19th and early 20th centuries in the context of Odia linguistic and cultural nationalism is a well-documented cultural narrative. What underlies it is the formation of the English-educated colonial Odia elite that invoked the notion of linguistic purity for Odia not only to mark it off from Bengali and Telugu, but also was to be differentiated from the non-standard, rustic, colloquial

varieties of Odia. This was a strategy worked out for cultural empowerment: to be educated, credited with literary and intellectual values and invested with colonial administrative power. Education being a privilege, in his impassioned editorial 'Bibidha Prasanga' (Miscellany of Topics), Bishwanath Kara wrote in *Utkal Sahitya*:

People in this region harbour a wrong notion that one should not labour to teach Odia, which is after all our mother tongue. This is preposterous. If learning to read and write Odia were enough, all native speakers of Odia would be considered experts in the language (...). However, the way Odia is being abused in the cutcherry or zamindar's office, as if it is free for all, the aforesaid notion seems quite natural (...). In our opinion primary education should be imparted in Odia, and mother tongue learning should never be dispensed with till the upper classes (39-40).

Kara emphasized that Odia as mother tongue was a teachable concept within the colonial cultural economy at the primary level, and insisted that its impurities be cleansed away, given the high stakes it had in the colonial administrative setup.

In an essay titled "Jatiya Sahitya" (National Literature), published three years earlier than Kara's in the same journal, Sadashib Vidyabhushan had opined:

Only when poets and authors of Utkal themselves embody moral values and write books of learning in a cultivated, tasteful style, and draw upon Sanskrit and English tomes of leaning through translation, then only will they enrich their mother-tongue, and the literature of Utkal acquire a *celestial aura* of its own (Italics for emphasis 163).

A highly Sanskritized and ornate Odia diction of this essay testifies to the agency of translation from English and Sanskrit, the languages of scientific knowledge and literary values, by which Odia 'mother-tongue' could be empowered. The celestial-ness, predicated upon the Sanskritized idiom, was played off against the rustic, non-standard Odia. This, however, does not mean that the non-standard varieties of Odia were dismissed right away. On the contrary, the literate class conceded to these the values of naturalness and purity, even as considering them culturally inferior. In the cultural economy of colonial education, untutored varieties of Odia had low prestige value. The remark made by the lexicographer Mrityunjaya Ratha at Cuttack Debating Society in 1904 is case in point:

The pieties, customs, manners and language of the village people are looked down upon as inferior. Although pure and pristine, these distinctly lack in the ideals mediated by education (...), the language of the townsmen may be confronted and contaminated on all fronts, but the tongue of the villager faces no opposition and has its natural modes and sentiments intact. Although the villager's tongue is inferior, certain aspects of it have nevertheless their own merit (...) (59-60).

The remark of Ratha uncannily brings into play the nature-culture dichotomy and cultural anxiety of early European modernity, which was the *raison d'être* for culture to cleanse away nature's grossness and impurities while, at the same time, it has to struggle to get rid of its artificialities. Although for entirely different reason, this dynamics also profoundly informed the cultural politics of Odia modernity that was becoming self-conscious as to its translatedness under the cultural authority of Bengali. G. N. Dash cites an interesting instance of even Fakir Mohan Senapati, the foremost among

the cultural leaders of the movement for the distinctiveness of the Odia language, drawing flaks from Gauri Shankar Ray for the Bengali inflections in the prose he used in his *The History of India*, the first volume of which was published in 1869 (4802). Many educated Odias feared for a long time that they were losing out on their linguistic and cultural identity for being territorially scattered and subsumed under the Bengal and Madras Presidencies and later being clubbed with Bihar within the administrative setup of Bihar-Odisha Province. The committee for Orissa Language Agitation (1868-1870) and the Utkal Sammilani that was founded in 1903 by Madhusudan Das were important agencies to fight for Odia political and linguistic distinctiveness.

The mother tongue issue was embedded in the Odia cultural distinctiveness vis-à-vis Bengali, and the discourses relating to it emphasized purity as the key concept. In this context, Gopal Chandra Praharaj, the most important Odia lexicographer, defined the ‘purity’ of language in the sense of the propriety of usage: “Whatever is in usage is in fact pure” (Pure Language 51) in a speech at Utkal Sahitya Samaj in 1904. He believed that literary language could encompass many registers, and said that language of the book and the language spoken at home are both integral to literary idiom (Pure Language 49). However, we still find Praharaj saying on 25 July, 1936, at the same forum that the Odia language should be governed by rules of spelling, orthography and grammar as well as proper usages. To this end, he had already worked since 1929 on his dictionary that was completed in 1940; four years after a politically unified Odisha state came into existence.

The dictionary *Purnachanda Odia Bhashakosha* in seven volumes, charged with the ideology of Odia nationalism, was a mammoth effort on Praharaj’s part to standardize Odia as a mother tongue. Since the unification of the Odia speaking

tracts on the strength of linguistic commonness and distinctiveness of the Odia language were the main ideological thrust of the dictionary, the notion of linguistic purity underpinning it was both inclusive and exclusive. Inclusive in the sense it accommodated a great number of *tadbhava* and *desaja* words and those of various regional dialects, informed by the linguistic theory of John Beames, as the markers of Odia distinctiveness and its prevalence in various regions. Exclusive because it marked itself off as different from Bengali and Hindi by listing Hindi and Bengali synonyms of the Odia words it defined. Thus Praharaj's dictionary served the purpose of justifying the distinctiveness of Odia as the mother tongue on the one hand, while standardizing it on the other hand.

It is universally true that standardization through lexicography inevitably entails regulation of orthography, and it is a normative process through which a language is academicized to become a mother tongue. Evidently, the norms Praharaj was prescribing were literary, academic and well suited for polite circles as well as public domains of use, and these were to be entrenched through the teaching of the Odia language and literature. Encyclopedic information provided by many educated people to illustrate the dictionary entries served to amplify Odia print literacy as an academic depository as well as repository of various fields of knowledge. The educated usages of a fairly large numbers of authors of poetry and prose had been invoked to define and stabilize the literariness of the language. Also, a large number of meta-lexical markers that usually emerge through philological study of a language at a sufficiently advanced stage of print literacy were used by Praharaj to specify the provenance, registers and stylistic implications of the Odia vocabulary. Above all, the occasionally offered English versions of the semantic

definitions of Odia words, together with the English, Hindi and Bengali synonyms of the entries in the dictionary, gesture towards the translatability and translational propensities of Odia to ensure that it is qualified as a mother tongue. It would not be, therefore, unreasonable to state that Odia was mapping itself as a mother tongue along the horizontal axis as distinct from other mother tongues such as Bengali, Hindi and English, the colonial master's tongue. Along the vertical axis, it acted as supra-regional variety, subsuming the non-standard varieties and dialects, and placed above them. This mapping could not have been possible within the translational matrix formalized within the dictionary, given its multilingual scheme. To enter the zone of epistemic visibility as mother tongue, Odia was negotiating the coordinates of linguistic difference with other languages in a translational mode.

One can ill afford to ignore that the dictionary project as part of a larger pedagogic project of Odia cultural nationalism was mediated and supported by colonial power structure. In the introduction to the first volume of his dictionary, Praharaj mentioned that the idea of it had been suggested to him by W. W. Henderson, Principal of Cuttack Training College in 1913-14 (Introduction viii), and the Vernacular Development Committee of the Department of Education of the Government of Bihar and Orissa resolved in 1927 that the dictionary was to be published. The project took off with the patronage of the government in terms of the reviewing, partial funding for the printing and selling of the copies.

The emergence of the *Bhashakosha* is only the crystallization of a culture of academic literariness that had already begun from the late 19th century through the mediation of colonial education. The English-educated colonial Odias invoked nationalist sentiments and discursively constructed the Odia mother-tongue as a cultural capital while redefining Odia

literariness in terms of the constructs of purity, propriety and genuineness. The transnational impulse embodied by the *Bhashaokosha* also came from a secular and literary tradition formed since the late 19th century, if one chooses to ignore the English translation of the *Bible* and the religious writings by the missionaries during the early 19th century. It is important to note that Madhusudan Rao and many great Odia poets like Radhanath Ray and Nadakishore Bal had also been translating many English lyrical poems into their mother-tongues with a view to enriching it. As I have stated elsewhere, “Given its slender base of print literacy, fledgling educational institutions in the late nineteenth century and lack of adequate number of academic texts, the Odia language often needed to draw on the exotic literary resources of themes, imagery, forms, sentiments to energize itself and stand on equal footing with Bengali, its main cultural and political rival. The urgency of the moment of Odia colonial modernity was to assimilate and domesticate as much of English poetry through translation as was possible (...)” (Mohapatra 38). So, the context of the mother tongue was, to a large extent, a context of cultural translation in which the negotiation with the resources of another language and its culture entailed two things: firstly, Odia appropriated the external resources as its own, and secondly, it found new ways to use its own indigenous experiential and expressive resources in consonance with those appropriated. This is how modern literary idiom of Odia was shaped out of the negotiation between the foreign and indigenous resources. In fact, era of Odia poetic modernity, inaugurated by Radhanath Ray, owes much to his adaptation of European literary resources. One could cite any number of examples from Ray’s celebrated poems such as *Kedaragouri*, *Chandrabhaga*, *Usha* and *Parvati*, or prose pieces like ‘Bibbeki’ or *Italia Juba*’ to notice an accomplished deployment

of Sanskrit for developing the Odia mother tongue with high literariness.

Now I shall make a few observations about a shift of poetic idiom from distinctly oral and colloquial to written and Sanskritized register with regard to the changes in the genre of the Cuckoo poems. Priyadrashi Patnaik (2009) has made an insightful study of these poems as Dutakavya or Messenger poems, which were popular between the 15th to the 17th century AD in Odia poetry, in imitation of Kalidasa's *Meghaduta*. The messenger in question was the cuckoo, who served to carry to the addressee a message of longings and sorrow.

In Markanda Dasa's 'Keshaba Koili' (15th -16th century AD) the cuckoo is addressed by a tearful Yashoda, who asks her to carry the message of her sorrowful state to Keshaba, who left for Mathura but never returned. Some other Cuckoo poems, namely Jagannatha Dasa's 'Artha Kolili' (Meaning of 'Koili' as revealed), and two other poems like Lokanatha Dasa's 'Gyanodaya Kolili' and Vairagi Dasa's 'Sisu Veda Koili' in the subsequent period (16th-17th century AD) also belong to the tradition of Dutakavya. My purpose in making reference to these poems is not to discuss their themes individually, but to focus on the very word 'koili' which variously meant the messenger, 'jiva' or prana (life-force), or the ignorant, unenlightened self, searching for supreme knowledge. Anchored upon the indigenous traditions of Vaishnava and Buddhist philosophy and adopting the forms of Chautisha, Charyachhaya, Sandhyabhasa etc., these poems were diffusive in their cultural presence in a largely oral medium of recitals that encompassed the rustic and illiterate as well as the literate and urbane audience. Combining wonderfully the demotic *desaja* and *tadbhava* with the urbane, Sanskritized *tatsama*

diction, these poems created a literary idiom that had wide acceptability and appeal.

But 'koili' was eventually replaced by 'kokila', and its synonym 'pika' when the western (mostly English) poetic forms of ballad, lyric, sonnet, ode and epic were appropriated through translation into Odia in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, along with the blank verses and stanza patterns. It might be a sweeping statement if no mention is made of the use of this word in pre-colonial period between 17th and 18th century. We know of the famed *Rasakallola* by Dinakrushna Dasa (1650-1710) where *kokila* is used many a time figuratively as what is called an *udippana bibhaba* or the excitant factor of the *sringara* rasa in Indian aesthetics, especially in the Bhakti tradition. A case in point is the lines in my English translation:

In these blissful floral moments, in a night of the moon
at that,

No bosom shall remain unmoved when Kokilabhārati
stirs love.

Here it is a love bird with a decorative epithet 'bhārati', signifying Saraswati and the muse. It is also metaphorically used as a vehicle in expressions like 'koilavachanā' or 'kokilavachana'. In his equally acclaimed *Lābanyabati*, Upendra Bhanja (1680? -1740) also used it as an excitant of love in spring. Kokila was, however, reinvented in the poetic vocabulary with new inflections when the English-educated Odia natives like Nanda Kishore Bal translated John Logan's poem 'To the Cuckoo' and Wordsworth's more famous homonymous poem as 'Kokila Prati' and 'Kokila' that carried the semantic baggage of highly valorized English Romantic and Victorian poetry. Both poems were published in the *Utkal Sahitya* in 1901. Kokila was not just a tatsama word with

conventional figurative, but a new poetic trope carrying suggestions and valences of the mystic, noumenal, transcendent and immortal as opposed to the quotidian and mortal. It became a marker of literary modernity as well as mother-tongue literacy.

In the poem 'Bana Priya', written by Bal about the same time, under the influence of 'Ode to A Skylark', the same word *kokila* features in *Prabasi*, which Bal wrote under the influence of Tennyson's 'The Princess'. Interestingly, in *Prabasi*, another synonym 'pika' is brought into use along with 'kokila', and here the bird functions as a messenger of love, carrying over into a new context its residual meaning from the past. We have many more instances of the poetic currency of *kokila*. In the 10th volume of the *Utkala Sahitya*, published in 1917, Dinabandhu Mohanty wrote a poem entitled 'Bāni Agamone' which invokes Saraswati, in a high-flown, grand style, and where *kokila* is the preferred word among a plethora of Sanskritic words. Upendra Kishore Mohanty's poem 'Basanta', and 'Kokila Prati', published in *Sahakara* in 1931-32, and Hara Narayan Singh's 'Pika Prati', published in the same year in the same journal are some instances of its usage. These poems are creative translations from English into Odia, without being faithful to the original except in a very broad sense. But these helped the mother tongue re-invent itself with new creative possibilities of a modern subjective sensibility and idiom emerging from the material grounds of print literacy which had deeply entrenched itself from the late 1860s with the emergence of newspapers and journals. The literacy base developing in an ambience of cultural nationalism academically created the mother-tongue by standardizing the vernacular, assigning to it the status of literacy and investing in it cultural power. What happens here is a shift of register in the literary usages from the low prestige, oral pre-colonial literary

vernacular to an educated and cultured register of the mother tongue facilitated through the re-invention of literariness, which had already been nourished by poets like Dinakrushna and Upendra Bhanja.

In his essay “On Lyric Poetry and Society”, Adorno defined the impulse of lyrical poetry as reflecting a distinctly progressive and idiosyncratic subjectivity. He believed that it was “a form of reaction to the reification of the world, to the domination of human beings by commodities” that had developed since the beginning of the modern era, since the industrial revolution became the dominant force in life” (40). The lyrical subjectivity, in his opinion, was at war with a collective consciousness of capitalist reason, although, paradoxically, it was mediated through the objectivity of society and language. One might as well argue that in the Odia colonial cultural scenario, lyrical subjectivity in Odia poetry was much less idiosyncratic and less independent. On the contrary, the liberty of subjectivism was guaranteed by the nature of translation which I have mentioned to be adaptation. Adaptation guaranteed creative freedom of the poet from the burden of faithfulness to the original English poems and helped the formation of a modern derivative lyrical subjectivity that reworked the Sanskrit diction into a culturally translated sensibility. This is not the only way, but one of the important ways in which the mother-tongue was constructed and regulated in literary terms in a cultural spectrum where the literate and literary were a continuum enabled by the colonial Odia-English bi-lingual education that entailed translation from English into Odia.

Translation is a broad-spectrum activity embedded in an equally broad range of diverse contexts. While at one end of the spectrum the word-for-word, literal translations are preferred in the theological, juridical and scientific contexts; in

the literary context, and especially that of lyrical poetry, transcreation or adaptation comes forth more naturally, with great scope available to the author to reanimate the indigenous semantic resources and expressive modes. The latter mode has in fact been the cause of the shifts and changes in literary status of languages – be they at the stages of pre-print or print literacy and in their respective modes of production. Writing a cultural history of the vernaculars in India and examining the relative authority of Sanskrit, Sheldon Pollock holds that Oriya developed as a ‘literary’ vernacular around mid-fifteenth century, with Sarala Dasa’s adaptation of the *Mahabharata* and Balarama Dasa’s adaptation of the *Ramayana* (*The Language of the Gods in the World of Men* 396). The adaptations were a long way from the time when Sanskrit had been the only literary language for the genre of Kavya, having monopoly in the field of scribal production of literacy and literariness. Vernacularization of literature in the pre-colonial context of Odia and many other Indian languages was a revolution, one might say, replacing Sanskrit, although drawing on its poetic resources. But in the colonial times, once again, through the same process of adaptation, the mother tongue emerged from the pre-print vernacular by drawing on the resources of both English and Sanskrit. While Sanskrit was invoked as a hallowed cultural tradition for its moorings, English was assimilated into it through translation.

To conclude, one would do well to rethink the issue of mother tongue in the literary context – which is usually overlooked by linguist – and explore in greater depth the cultural logic of translation underlying mother tongue in the colonial times.

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