

‘Thisaidhorum Dravidam’: vast and liberating expanse of translation

PREMIUM

An initiative of the Tamil Nadu Textbook and Educational Services Corporation to identify and translate Tamil literary works into English and other Dravidian languages has picked up steam. Several books are set to be released around November

September 30, 2022 12:45 am | Updated 01:52 pm IST - CHENNAI

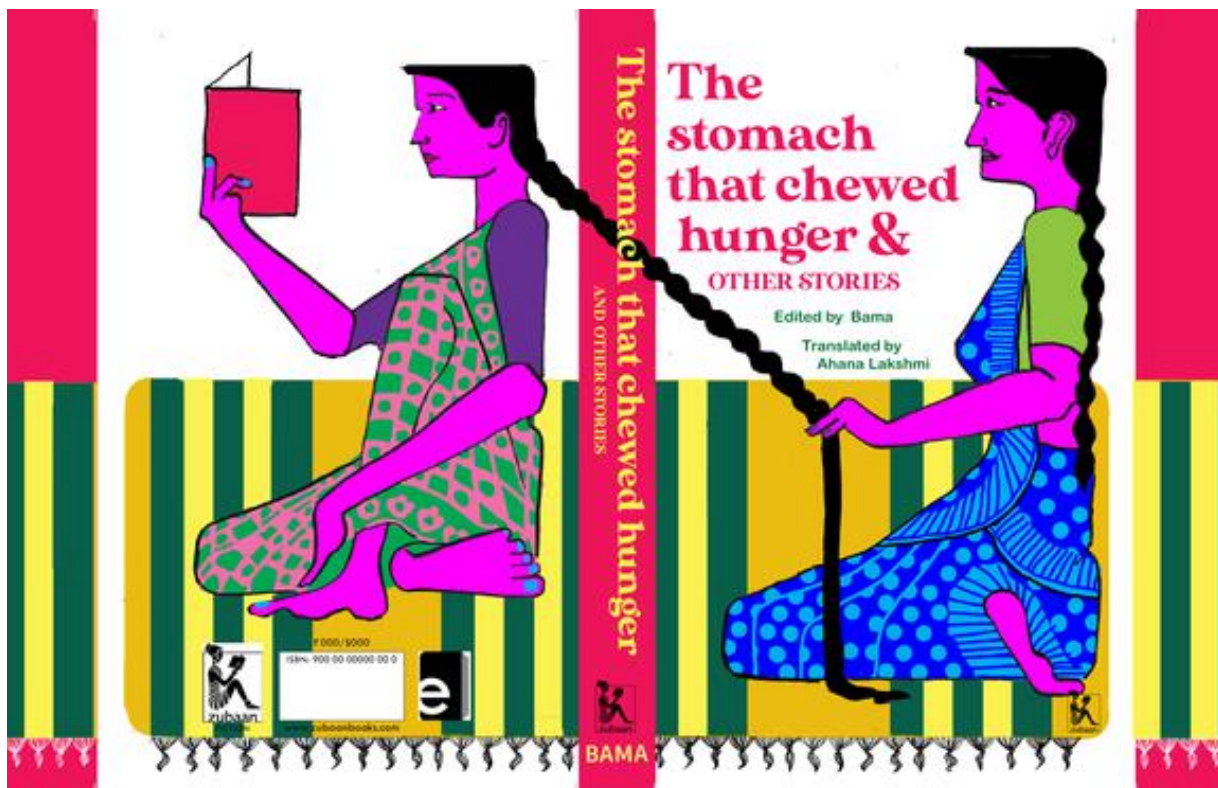


T.K. ROHIT

COMMENTS

SHARE

🔖 READ LATER



Ready for roll out: Currently, 14 publishers are part of the project to translate Tamil works into English. There are 20 titles that are forthcoming, and nine of them are already in the press. | Photo Credit: Special Arrangement

An initiative of the Tamil Nadu Textbook and Educational Services Corporation (TNTB & ESC) to identify and translate Tamil literary works into English and other **Dravidian languages**, ‘Thisaidhorum Dravidam’ has picked up steam. A number of books are set to be released around November by Chief Minister M.K. Stalin.

The TNTB & ESC is also running two other projects — ‘Muthamizh Arignar Mozhipeyarppu Thittam’ (MAMT) for translating technical books into Tamil and ‘Ilanthalir Ilakkiya Thittam’ aimed at attracting children categorised in different age groups. ‘Thisaidhorum Dravidam’ is an ambitious project aimed at translating Tamil literary works into the other Dravidian languages — Kannada, Telugu and Malayalam — that might enhance the reach of Tamil antiquity, tradition and contemporaneity and enrich world literature. There are also proposals to translate works from the three other Dravidian languages into Tamil.

A boon for publishers

Gita Ramaswamy of the Hyderabad Book Trust, who is overseeing the Telugu translations, said the programme has come in as a boon as publishers are able to negotiate Indian language-to-Indian language agreements and are helped financially.

“It’s a wonderful project. Indian language publishers have a tough time paying royalty and negotiating agreements with English language publishers. Tamil Nadu should be proud of this programme where you carry your literature to other States. This is an indication of the great pride you have in your language. This is what all languages need,” she said.

Ms. Ramaswamy said the initiative was the need of the hour since “Indian languages are being swamped by English”. She pointed out that children in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana were learning primarily in English and losing out on their mother tongue. “They end up losing the command of both English and Telugu. The mother tongue is part of the culture of the people. This initiative will go a long way in retaining and enriching this heritage,” she said.

V.S. Sreedhara, who is overseeing the project in Kannada, said there used to be a healthy interaction between the cultures of Karnataka and Tamil Nadu in the past. “As far as popular culture goes, Kannadigas have been patronising Tamil films, which run to packed houses even in moffusil areas. Old Kannada is very close to Tamil. But politics took over in the last two decades and it seemed as if their interests were always opposed to each other, which is not true.”

A.J. Thomas, who was formerly editing Indian Literature of Sahitya Akademi for close to 25 years and is the regional language editor for this project in Malayalam, concurs. He said there was a

lot of give and take between Tamil and Malayalam with respect to cinema, music, classical Carnatic music and classical Bharatanatyam, but only now disputes were being amplified. But these points of convergence were not exchanged as easily in literature as in movies, he added.

“Tamil is the oldest culture, the mother culture. Whatever comes after that has the imprint of the Tamil culture. We may have points of disputes among the five Southern States. But the unity is obvious. It’s like five brothers in a family. Each will have his own role. Even though there are quarrels, the fact remains it’s a family,” he said.

Mr. Thomas said this initiative of the Tamil Nadu Chief Minister would bring out the linguistic ecology of south India. “There’s a shared culture in south India. As an identity, ‘South Indianness’ needs this kind of organised leadership.”

Mr. Sreedhara said ‘Thisaidhorum Dravidam’ was a very significant step towards bridging the relations between the people of the two States. He said consistent efforts have not been made so far towards translation of books in these languages. “So every year, 3-4 books coming out will fill this gap.”

Mini Krishnan, Coordinating Editor, TNTB & ESC, tasked to harmonise the government’s plan with the goals of the publishers, said the idea was also to promote these books in the academic world. She said English language faculty members who are now in their 40s and 50s want to move away from their colonial past and see how to balance the old with the new.

T. Sankara Saravanan, Joint Director, TNTB & ESC, said the objective of the project was to take the best Tamil books and translate them into English and other Dravidian languages.

“The term, ‘Thisaidhorum Dravidam’, means the languages of the five States, not merely what is understood as Tamil Nadu’s Dravidian ideology. We have co-publishing agreements with the publishers, whereby we will purchase 500 copies of each of these books. We can sell them, gift them. Recently, we gifted P.S. Sundaram’s translation of The Thirukkural to dignitaries at the International Chess Olympiad,’ he said.

Currently, 14 publishers are part of the project to translate Tamil works into English. There are 20 titles that are forthcoming, and nine of them are already in the press such as Ashokamitran’s Chennai, Kalki’s Alai Osai, Vanna Nilavan’s By the Sea, Barnett’s Politics of Cultural Nationalism and Zubaan’s anthology of Dalit WW.

Among the books that are being translated from Tamil into Telugu are Vaadivasal by C.S.

Chellappa, Ambai Kathaigal, Periyar Anthology and Kuraloviyam by late Chief Minister M. Karunanidhi. Among 10 books being translated from Tamil into Malayalam are Vaikom Satyagraham by P. Athiyaman, Thirukkural-Kalaigal Urai and Dravida Iyakkam by Periyar, Ariyapadatha Thamizhagam by Tho. Paramasivan and Ambedkar Oliyil Enathu Theerppukal by K. Chandru.

Mr. Saravanan said there was an increasing demand for these translations from colleges, researchers and rare book collectors. The TNTB & ESC is also planning to translate books from Telugu, Malayalam and Kannada into Tamil. He added that under the MAMT, it was bringing out translations of technical books, for example, Philip Kotler's book on marketing and books on engineering, physics, chemistry and medicine. A total of 13 publishers are collaborating. The translation of the popular books in medicine is on and 13 professors are on the job, he said.

Under the 'Ilanthalir Ilakkiya Thittam', the TNTB & ESC is publishing children's books categorised age-wise. "Some of these are in the form of stories, some are in poems. The issues that are taken up range from classification of land, lessons about the third-gender and how to differentiate between good touch and bad touch," he explained.

The regional language editors are in unison about the fact that all the other southern State governments need to take up on this initiative of the Tamil Nadu government and provide support to the regional language literature.

COMMENTS

SHARE

Latest News



2023-06-01T12:35:54+05:30 - India

PM Modi, Nepalese counterpart Pushpakamal Dahal 'Prachanda' hold talks
