

Bible Translation in the Indian Context

K. Regu*

Introduction

India is a multilingual, pluricultural and multiethnic nation. India is known for its religious plurality also. There are more than 1652 languages spoken by different social groups, sometimes spreading beyond socio-cultural barriers, in India. All these languages come under 4 families such as, Indo-Aryan, Dravidian, Austro-Asiatic (Munda) and Tibeto-Burmese, among which only a very few languages have their own scripts and written records available in different forms. The Bible comes first in terms of translation across most of the world languages. In India also the Bible more than any other literature has been translated into many languages : i.e., in more than 60 languages in full and partially available in many other languages—200 languages approximately.

It is through Bible translation that many scholars ventured into the preparation of grammar for various Indian languages. Linguistics played a major role in identifying, classifying and grouping these languages under different families according to the genetic relations with one another. Through Bible translation the people of India are linked together across the social, cultural and linguistic boundaries within India and outside India. A global unity also is being developed through Bible and biblical thoughts in this millennium.

1. India and Her Languages

1.1. *The Indian Empire* is a well-known book which was published in the year 1881 by Sir William Hunter. Later the same was revised and published in 4 Volumes under the title *The Imperial Gazetteer of India : The Indian Empire* during 1907-1909. It was Sir George Grierson who contributed a chapter on Languages to *The Imperial Gazetteer of India*. Later two first generation linguists of India, Prof. Sunniti Kumar Chaterjee, Prof. of Philology, Calcutta University and Prof. S. M. Katre of Deccan College, Pune revised and developed the same into *Indian Languages* which gives a very detailed account of various Indian languages. Indo-Aryan languages constitute more than 60% of speakers, mostly Sanskrit-based languages. The second major language family is Dravidian with 30% of speakers. The third group is Austro-Asiatic family with 5% of speakers, and the fourth group, Tibeto-Burmese, is spoken by 4% people from north eastern parts of India. Geographically, majority of central Indian languages come under the Indo-Aryan languages.

1.2. *The South Indian languages* mostly come under the Dravidian group, though Konkani, spoken by a group of people in the south and west coastal region, comes under the Indo-Aryan

* Dr. K. Regu is Professor of Linguistics, Theology Department, Serampore College

family. It has also been found that there are Dravidian languages like Brahui spoken in some parts of north Pakistan, and a few areas in Nepal. Languages like Kui, Kuvi, Kurux are being spoken by some of the social groups of Orissa and Bihar. The Gondi language spoken in Chatishgargh (MP) also comes under the Dravidian family. This made some scholars develop the notion that the Indus Valley civilization is pre-Aryan and could also be Dravidian. It is dated as far back as 2500 years before the arrival of the Aryans in India. Apart from these languages there are a few Arabic tongues of the 'Semitic family'. In the coastal belt from Goa to Kanyakumari and Kanyakumari to Calcutta, there are a few English mother-tongue groups called Anglo-Indians, and Chinese, Burmese and Vietnamese, who are seen in West Bengal, Chennai and Pondichery respectively. Indian languages are being enriched by English, Persian, Arabic, Dutch and French languages also. There is a small village in Kerala (North Paravor) where one can see black Jews who came even before the advent of Jesus Christ and settled with natives. They are not even permitted to go back to Israel when the Jews from Kochi desired to go back to their Promised Land. The Mahabharata myth is supposed to belong to Mohanjodaro culture, which existed on the Brahmaputra valley of Assam, where the Tibeto-Burmese settled. Aryans occupied these areas between 3500-2500 BC. The Manu Samhita and the Veda literature were written about 1500 BC. These Aryans would have studied and preached the existing culture and philosophy and it would have been recorded by them. Historians have yet to confirm the source(s) of the Vedas. The questions raised by a group of scholars is that if all these are Aryan cultural elements why do the Aryans of other countries like Germany and other parts of Europe not possess any of these or similar mythical and religious concepts like the stories of Mahabharata and Ramayana? Ultimately it can be said that Indian culture is a mixture of Aryo-Dravidio and Austric and Tibeto-Burmese culture—a blended one. Language being a cultural item all Indian languages have the loan words, loan blends, loan translation, etc.

The Arabic *baaki* 'balance', *dimaag* 'brain', *muchkil* 'difficult', sweets like *jileebia* 'jilebi', *sarbat* 'sweet liquid', etc.; Chinese clay items like jars, *chilli*; Persian administrative and law terms like *vakiil* 'advocate', *adaalat* 'court/justice', *chaukkidar* 'peon/attendant', *deffeedaar* 'officer', *khajaana* 'treasury', etc. have become pan-Indian terms. Moreover, English words like *cycle*, *car*, *workshop*, *computer*, *pencil*, *bench*, etc. have also become Indian language vocabularies, because language has a major role in acculturation. When the Aryans came to India religions like Buddhism, Jainism, etc. were well-established in different parts of the country. The proto forms of Hinduism, which could have been developed from Indus valley area also became widespread. The Aryans came to India and started settling on the rich lands of the Gangetic area and Punjab by chasing the then natives to different interior parts of India. They Sanskritized (modernized) the then dialects and languages of Paali, Prakrit and Apabhramsa and other Austroloid languages and hence the name *Sanskrit*, 'the renewed one'—the language used by scholars and poets. The pundits and sastris even started interpreting this as gods' language (*deeva bhaasa*). This language was not the variety of anybody's mother-tongue. That is why still it is in the classical stage and almost all classical languages are considered to be dead languages by linguists.

1.3. It is interesting to note another important feature of Indian languages that all scripts of Indian languages are derived from Brahmi Script which was developed and propagated by Emperor Asoka through his instructions to spread Buddhist principles after the war of Kalinga. His daughter took a team of scholars and rock-cutters to inscribe the 8-fold paths of Buddha

on Rock-cut-planks. This is not only a common origin for scripts in Indian languages but also a common pattern of syntactic structure. The word-order-pattern of *subject + object + verb* is another common feature of all these four families of language in India.

2. Language and Politics

After independence our leaders had to break their heads to settle the Socio-cultural and linguistic differences between the different social groups of India. After a long struggle, our leaders arrived at a feasible decision on the formation of 'linguistic states'. According to the linguistic state concept Urdu, one of the major Indian languages did not get any state. Kasmiri, a spoken language of Kashmir did not get identity. The official language and the state language of Jammu-Kashmir has become *Urdu*. But very recently Kasmiri has been accepted as the state language. When Goa was accepted as a state English was their state language. Sanskrit being the holy language of India it did not get any state! When Hindi was declared as national language of India the linguistic sentiments of different language groups created a lot of confusion and chaos in our nationalism. The languages like *Maithily, Bhojpuri, Magahi, Awadhi, Urdu, Sindhi, Dakkini-Urdu etc.* lost their linguistic identity. The anti-Hindi agitation mooted from Tamil Nadu was well-received by other language sentimentalists and the constitution of India had accepted the 8th Schedule language where, all mother tongues are accepted as national languages. *Hindi* was declared as official language, English as official associate language and so on. *Sanskrit, Urdu, Konkani, Kasmiri,* etc. were included in the 8th schedule. The language sentiments aroused by the politicians still continue and the claims for a separate Gorkhaland, Bodo State, Komaon State, Telengana are some examples.

Most of the ethnic violences in India and also in other countries are socio-culturally, linguistically-and ethnically-motivated ones. The change of names like Madras state into Tamil Nadu and Madras city into *Chennai* may have undesirable consequences in future if states become linguistically reorganized. *This may affect our national integrity.* In short, language has a major role in the socio-cultural, political and religious realms.

3. The Sociological and Historical Factors of Bible Translation

3.1. Hebrew dates from 2nd Millennium BC. Its classical form is retained in the written language of Judaism. Old Aramaic, the language of Jesus and his Apostles, also dates from 2nd Millennium. Still Aramaic is being used by a small group in the Middle East. A modern form of *Aramaic* dialect is *Syriac* (Assyrian), which is being spoken by as many as a million people in and around Middle East and in the USA. *Amheric*, another Semitic language (Afro-Asiatic), was the official language of the Semitic family. This language was predominant in South-Eastern Turkey and the Euphrates Valley.

3.2. Jewish and Christian communities existed in the Arabian Peninsula before the dawn of Islam. They engaged in missionary activities. The people from Yemen converted themselves into Judaism during 517 AD. For their use, *the Arabic* translation came into being. The first attempt by a Christian scholar and translator Hunayan-ibn-Ishak (Johannitus 808-873) and the subsequent one by a Babylonian Jewry Sa'adyah Gaon (882-942) used Hebrew script for the translation into Arabic. It was Abu Said (AD 13th century) who with the help of Yefet ben Eli brought out a full Arabic translation for the use of the Karaite communities in the East.

3.3. The Arameans and Chaldeans became powerful social groups under the Assyrian domination. Aramaic language became the language of diplomacy and trade throughout the

areas of Neo-Assyrian Empire (722 BC). All over the Persian Empire (539-333 BC) too the official language of administration was Aramaic.

3.4. Christianity started spreading over to Greek-speaking areas, to Coptic, Ethiopic, Armenian, Georgian, Gothic through the old Latin version. During the Roman Empire, it spread through the Latin versions. These Latin Bibles were widely used in the Mediterranean coastal regions of Africa. But in Rome, Greek remained as the prestigious or cultural language of the Church till the 3rd century, while among the African communities under the Roman Empire, the Latin version was popular.

3.5. It was Jerome who translated the Bible into Vulgate (the Latin language used by the common masses), which was printed in Guttenberg's Press at Mainz (1456). This was then declared as the authoritative Bible of the Catholic Church. This was followed by *Clementine Bible* of 1592 by Clement VIII (*The Encyclopedia of Religions : Vol. 2*, New York : Macmillan Pub. Co., 1987).

3.6. During the Neo-Babylonian Empire (626-539 BC), Aramaic was the important language. After the distinction of Judha in 587, Hebrew language became dominant and Aramaic language became vernacular—the language of the common masses. The Aramaic translations are known as *Targumin* 'translations' or *Targum*. When Alexander the Great conquered Egypt, the Jewish population concentrated in Alexandria accepted Greek as their official language (3rd century BC). Through the spread of Judaism, the traditional scroll format changed into '*Codex*' 'leaf book', which started coming for the use of other linguistic groups. When the Roman Empire was very powerful under Constantine (AD 280-337), 332 volumes of Greek Bibles were produced for the use of the Churches.

3.7. *Martin Luther & Protestantism* : In October 1517, Martin Luther posted his historic *Ninety-five Theses* on the door of the Church in Wittenberg. This was the birth of a new era in the history of Christianity—the Reformation. The Gospel light started shining all over Europe putting an end to all ignorance of the common masses. The Feudal mentality of the priest class was totally stopped—the Bible became the possession of the people from all walks of life.

3.8. At first, Martin Luther interpreted Galatians (1519-1535), which task was done again by John Bunyan and John Wesley. The scholastic works of Abraham Calov—*Exegetical Works* in IV Volumes—*Biblia-Illustra* 1672-1676 came in black and white.

During the years from 1741 till 1750 Robert Lowth, a Professor of Poetry at Oxford, became the first English scholar to interpret the *myth* in biblical studies. Until 6th century A.D., the different books of the Bible were kept in separate *scrolls*.

4. *Bible Translation*

4.1. Christianity is believed to have reached India during the first century itself. Kerala claims that St. Thomas, one of the 12 disciples of Jesus Christ, landed at Kodungallur through the Arabian Sea, entered into the Back Waters of Kochi and stepped on the other side of Kochi. He preached the Gospel to the then Jewish residents of Kodungallur. He converted the upper caste people and established seven Churches and gave these churches to the Namboodiri converts. There are some disputes still about the arrival of St. Thomas with Knaya Thoma, a Syrian merchant who came to Kerala in AD 345 with a group of 400 of his own people belonging to 72 families who claimed to be the progenitors of Syrians of Kerala—*Thomas of Cana*>.

Thomas of Cananite > *Thomas Cananeo* > Thomas of Jerusalem. The Christians of Kerala are also called as 'Nasraaniis' which means 'followers of Jesus of Nazareth'. Only after the 15th century, missionaries started coming over to other parts of India.

4.2. The term Bible means a collection of books, which is derived from *biblion* 'book' and *biblos* > *bublos* > *papyrus* 'paper'. The word translation originated from the Latin prefix *trans*— 'to cross from one side to the other side'. For instance, we have transfer, transport, transplant, transaction, transcribe, etc. Translate means to change from one language to another. Translation also has the meaning of 'to convey or introduce a new idea'. The Old Testament was available from 13th century BC to 1st century AD in Hebrew, *Aramic*, *Syriac* and also *Amheric* (language of Ethiopia). It was written by many scholars, or prophets in different periods. Till the Reformation, translation of the Bible was not allowed. It was punishable and considered to be a sin. It was John Wycliffe an English Professor from Oxford University who first translated the Bible (1375-1384) in 9 years. His translation was kept in manuscript form only. The first printing mechanism was invented by John Guttenberg in 1450 and he printed the Latin Bible on 24th August, 1456. It was Martin Luther who translated the Bible into German in the year 1534. By translating the Bible in the German language, he became the first scholar and authority of German language. Because of Martin Luther, the feudal attitude of the priest class in Europe came to an end. The first printed Bible in English came out during the year 1526 under the supervision of William Tyndale. It was the time of British colonialism that the Bible scholars also started going to different parts of the world and studied the languages of the natives and started translating the Bible into different vernaculars.

4.3. Translation needs one source language (SL) and a Target Language (TL) to which the ideas, theories technologies, philosophical thoughts, literature, etc., have to be transferred. Translation is like a bridge to give and take knowledge from one SL to TL and vice versa. In the learning-teaching situation also, translation is inevitable.

4.4. Aitiyan Dolette, a French scholar, wrote the following on the principles of translation theory. They are :

1. Translators should thoroughly know the purpose, the content and the aesthetics of the source materials.
2. He/She must equally be competent in the SL and also the TL.
3. Word to word translation must be avoided, because this may spoil the effectiveness and comprehension of the TL groups.
4. The variety of language used for translation must be socially accepted or be the standard variety of that language so that any dialect group of the language would have no difficulty understanding the translation.
5. Suitable words, phrases, syntactic structures without losing the aesthetics should be followed.

4.5. Drayden, during the 17th century gave 3 principles to the theory of translation. They are : *metaphrase technique*—word to word and sentence to sentence balancing, *paraphrase technique*—content translation, and *imitation technique*—where the translator has a little freedom in using his own style.

4.6. Tittler (1790), an 18th century Scottish scholar, became famous as a theoretician. According to him :

1. Translation should give the complete idea of the source material SL.
2. The literary style of the TL must agree in total with the SL.
3. The simplicity of the SL must be maintained in the TL.

4.7. Matthew Arnold, a famous English poet and a critic, wrote an article *On Translating Homer*, which was another eye-opener to the translator. He commented, (that) “Newmann the translator could not justify his work when he translated the Greek Homer into English”. He argued that a poetic translation should result in “Transcreation” and not mere translation—that is, content matter, poetic beauty, etc., must be maintained and at the same time the aesthetics and expressions of the target language must be attested properly.

4.8. During the beginning of 20th century, through Bible Translation quite a number of scholars revolutionized the area of translation-organizational effort. It was Eugene Nida, both a linguist and a Bible scholar who came out with a book *Towards Translation : a Science*. He had a lot of field experience before bringing out this book which has a theoretical touch. For him, *translation consists of producing in the receptor language, the closest natural equivalent to the message of the source language first in the meaning and second in style*. He gave much importance to the semantic content and the style. He also uses two terms such as : (i) *The formal equivalence*, and (ii) *The dynamic equivalence*. While translating the Bible, both these aspects have to be taken into consideration. In the case of meaning also he interprets as—(i) Grammatical meaning, (ii) Dictionary meaning, and (iii) Stylistic meaning. He also points out the importance of componential analysis.

4.9. Cats Ford, another linguist came out with a definition that *Translation is the replacement of textual materials in one language (SL) by equivalent textual material in another language (TL)*.

4.10. New Mask, a British scholar in his book *Approaches to Translation* gives two deeper methods of interpretations, *communicative translation* and *semantic translation*. Thus through Bible translation, scholars developed a new school of thought under *Applied Linguistics*.

5. New Coinages in Target Language :

Human thought process accepts many new styles and introduces into the TL, especially proverbs or wise sayings, through a process called *Loan Translation*. Initially, we take an idea from SL to TL, but some translators bring newly coined forms with equally effective or sometimes more effective translations. This helps the vocabulary enrichment in the TL and ultimately the language grows into a highly literary or standard variety. Thus, many new Biblical proverbs started coming into our day to day use of languages. Instances like “Alpha and Omega” have come to almost all literary languages “A-Z” in English “Aadyanta” in Sanskrit and so on. The term “Amen” is used in different contexts; such as to say “yes let it be so” or to support one’s view. The concept of *Promised Land, Sermon on the Mount, The Crown of Thorns, Good Samaritan, Prodigal son, to take up the cross, one has no hand in that blood, wash one’s hand* and so on have been commonly used by different writers in the apt contexts.

6. Some Problems

6.1. Equivalents of some native registers¹ or expressions of SL may not be available in the TL. So, the translators may have to use the nearest equivalents or some parallel expressions of TL. Sometimes, the nativisation of the phonetic as well as the phonemic pattern could be seen. For instance, “Holy Bible” has two meanings in most of the Indian languages—

1. Satya Veeda Pustak and
2. Visudha Veeda Pustaka

We also have other forms like “Parisudha...samsudha..punya...” and for “Behold” the meaning may be “Look!” or “take notice”, which will need to be translated into a language of declamation style(!). Some words like “Amen”, “Hallelujah”, “Praise the Lord” are being used as such without translating to give a certain effect. In the case of names also, some kind of nativisation could be seen; Jesus is known as *Isa*, *Yeesu*, *Issamassih*, and for *Matthew: Mathai, Mathan, Matthaikutty, Maattunni, Mattaccan, etc.* can be seen within a single language like Malayalam.

6.2. Sometimes translators go to *under translation* where the total semantic content may be lacking and also *over translation* where more ideas are added. This also should be avoided. That is to say, translation is not an easy job; and it needs special skill and sincere effort. Translation of a story from a SL to TL may be easier than translating a philosophical thought, scientific or technological articles from SL to TL. In short, Bible Translation is really a ‘task master’. Hence it is an on going activity throughout the world. In India too the Bible has outnumbered all other translations. Towards the end of the 17th century and in the beginning of 18th century, missionary activities became somewhat strong in England. SPCK (Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge) was started in 1698; followed by the Society for Propagation of Gospel in Foreign Parts (SPGFP) in 1701. As a result of Evangelical revivalism in England, dedicated missionaries like William Carey came to India, and the first batch of Protestant Missionaries, Dr. Leadkinds and Bartholomew Ziegenbalg came to Tranquebar in the year 1706. Both were Danish missionaries. With the help of Germans, they published the complete Bible in the year 1726 from Tranquebar with the help of Henry Plutschau and native scholars.

6.3. A Baptist missionary, Rev. William Carey, came to Bengal in 1793 and started a printing press in 1798. He translated the New Testament in 1801 with the help of native Pundits. The Fort William College was started by the Britishers to give language education for the British officers. From then on with the help of Chaplains like Rev. David Brown and Dr. Cladius Buchanan, translations in Persian, Hindustani, Oriya, Marathi, and other languages came out. William Carey and his group published the Bible in more than 40 Indian languages and also in the languages of the neighbouring countries like Burma, ‘Ceylon’, etc.

6.4. It was the Bible translators who did a thorough linguistic study and produced grammars, dictionaries and many other language studies. Most of the scholars were trained linguists also. For instance, Bishop Robert Caldwell (1856), identified that there is a family of language in the south called Dravidian and wrote a comparative grammar for all these languages. Max Mueller identified the Munda group of languages, which is different from Dravidian and Indo-Aryan languages. J.C.F.S Fobers did some linguistic studies on *Khasi language, Mon-Khamar*, etc. Brian Hodson innovated that there is a fourth family of languages like *Tibeto-Burmese* under the Sino-Tibetan major group. William Carey wrote the Bengali Grammar and composed many dictionaries for North-Indian languages.

The foundation of the school of Indian philosophy too was laid by these Western missionaries. The pioneers of Sanskrit studies like Sir William Jones (1845-94), Sir Charles Wilkins (1850-1936) and Henry Colebrooke (1765-1837) did a lot of studies in Sanskrit and related languages. The Asiatic Society of Calcutta was founded and organized by Sir William Jones and his Scholar-friends. Sir William Jones established the relationship between Sanskrit and Latin, Germanic, Iranian as well as Celtic languages. Further more, he translated the work of Sakuntalala and the Manu Samhita into English. Sir Charles Wilkins translated the Bhagavat Gita into English in 1784. Max Mueller translated the Vedic Literature into English. Till then, the Vedic literature was only the property of the Brahmins of India. Though Astadhyayi Panini's Sanskrit grammar was available, Colebrooke stands out as the first European scholar to bring out a grammar for Sanskrit language in 19th and 20th century. India was the linguistic laboratory of the Western linguists and Bible scholars, and most of them were missionaries. In South India Rev. Kittel did quite a number of studies in the Kannada language; Dr. Arden in Tamil and Telugu, and Herman Gudert in Malayalam. Well-known linguists like Kenneth Pike and Eugene Nida, who developed their linguistic theories in Morphology and Phonemics respectively, came to India as missionaries and Bible translators. In short, the Bible paved the way for developing linguistic studies in both major and minor languages of India.

6.5. The development of literature, studies in culture and language were initiated through Gospel literature and as part of missionary activities. Through Christian faith and Bible Translation, the native literary artists have acquired new insights for their writings, including poems. For instance, Tagore's *Geetanjali* was influenced very much by the Psalms, Mahatma Gandhiji's philosophy, and leaders like Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, Vinoba Bhave, Chinmayananda Swamy, Swami Vivekananda and others were very much influenced by biblical thoughts. In short, we can see people from all walks of life inspired or influenced by biblical thoughts.

7. Bible in Mother Tongues

7.1. It is only a fact that mother tongues are like mother's milk for their babies. The thought process of human beings are through their own mother tongues. Mother tongues can arouse one's sentiments, feelings, and also can attach or detach the human relationship. The language sentiments have been widely utilized and exploited by political leaders today. Human communication will be more effective if you get an idea or a piece of learning through mother tongue. Educational psychologists insist that the primary learning should be and must be through the mother tongue. Whatever may be the complicated concept, if it is given through the mother tongue the comprehension part is easier. Mere chanting through high sounding literary or classical or 'dead' language will not be of much help. That is why the interpretation of Vedas or Quran is difficult by the people who chant very nicely throughout the day and night. If we need to have effective communication mother tongue plays a major role. That is why after Reformation, the Bible started coming in most of the languages of the different social groups. Translation needs the mastery of SL and TL. Otherwise, the communicative efficacy would be lost. Translation of Bible cannot be accomplished by an overnight job. It needs patience, time, checking, testing and comparing with the original text for clarity, simplicity, effectiveness, style, structure, aesthetics, etc. Moreover, it needs personal commitment and scholarly guidance. That is why scholars like William Carey selected respective language scholars and made the translation. With social change, cultural change and situational change, the language also is liable to change, which also accounts for the growth of language. So after a certain period of

time, many usages would become obsolete or change meaning, and newly-coined linguistic forms develop. And hence, timely updating of language use is also a must.

According to Tony Hilton², there are 43 language Bibles, 47 language New Testaments and there are portions of Bible in 44 languages. At the same time according to another quarterly³, there are 222 language Bibles available in India Where are we now?

Now, the time has come and it is our duty to identify our own people and to come forward and venture into the task of translating the scripture for our community, through our own people. It is really appreciable that a good number of agencies are going into the different social groups to study their languages by living with them, serving them, planning with them and taking their help and cooperation to bring out Bibles in their own languages.

8. Bible Translation in the New Millennium :

A Few Recommendations :

1. Institutions like Bible Society of India (BSI) should conduct a national survey to identify which social groups are in need of the Bible in their own languages (TLS).
2. Before translating the Bible as a whole, Bible stories and some of the NT books should be made available in the TLS.
3. Bible themes should be incorporated in the literacy programmes, teaching materials etc.
4. Native tunes and folklore style should be taken into the composition of Christian music.
5. With the help of native scholars, the language style, structure etc. of the Bible in each language should be updated at least once in 10 years.
6. Organizations like BSI should co-ordinate all the independent evangelical organizations and field-test the translated version before publication. Authorized versions of the Bible in vernacular must be brought out by BSI.
7. The threat of incompetent translations particularly by partisan Christian groups must be strongly resisted.

ADDENDA

1. Indo-Aryan Language :

The Indo-Aryan languages are from the main branch of 'Primitive Indo-European', which flourished about 5,000 years ago. They were partially agriculturists and partially pastoral. They were worshippers of the forces of nature. They might have come through Northern Mesopotamia (Iraq) around 2500 BC. While coming to India, they might have been influenced by the religion and mythology of the Assirio-Babylonians and perhaps the earlier Sumerians as well. They would have settled in Iran too. The very term Indo-Aryan could be derived linguistically from Indo-Iranians. Their arrival to India is roughly calculated as 2000 BC and not beyond that. When they came to India, they could see the fortified structures with burnt bricks and a highly civilized people settled already in the Indus region and Northern Punjab. The pre-Indo-Aryan languages like Palim Prakrit (Asoka's) and Apabrams might have been modified into neo-Indo-Aryan Sanskrit. The *Rg-Veda* language shows the middle-Indo-Aryan

features—*Magadhi, Ardha-Magadhi, Saurasam, Aavanti, Gandhari* and *Kukayu*—According to the census report of 1962, these languages can be classified as :

1.1. **North Western Group** : Kakeyam Vrachada, 'Gandhari', Hindki/Lahnada/Western Punjabi dialects, Sindhi.

1.2. **Southern Groups** : *Maharashtri—Marathi, Konkani, etc.*

1.3. **Eastern Groups** : Maithili-Magahi-Bhojpuri group, Bengali, Oriya, Assamese, Bihari, Sadani/Chota-Nagpuri, Halbi, etc.

1.4. **East-Central Goup** : Avadhi-Bagheli-Chattisgrahi group, Kosali/Eastern Hindi and other dialects.

1.5. **Central Group** : Rajasthani-Bhil-Gujarathi group, Western Hindi, Hindustani, Khari-Boli Hindi, High Hindi, Urdu, Bangam, Braja Bhasha, Kanauji, Budeli, Punjabi, Rajasthani, Gujarathi, Marvari, Mewati, Jaipuri, Malvi, Bhili, Saurashri, Gujar (Punjab and Kashmir).

1.6. **Northern/Pahari/Himalaya Group** : Gorakhali, Khas-kura, Prabatiya, Nepali, Garwali and Kumayuni, Chemeali, Kului, Mandeali, Kiunthali, Sirmauri, etc.

1.7. **Non-Indian Group** : Sinhalese, Maldivian, etc.

1.8. The Romani or Gypsy dialects of West Asia Group.

2. Dravidian Family of Languages :

There are more than 20 identified languages in Dravidian, most of which are seen in Southern and Eastern areas of India. But there is an isolated Dravidian language *Brahui* spoken by a group in North Pakistan. Dravidian language speakers are found throughout South East Asia and in the eastern and southern parts of Africa. The very term Dravida is Sanskrit form which might have been derived from *Diramila Tiramila Tamila*. Tamil has the oldest written records dating from 3rd century BC, which looks to be very closer to proto-Dravidian (PD). There are evidences that Dravidian languages were only spoken in North India, which would have gradually been displaced by the Aryan invaders. The remaining of one group in Nepal, Bihar, Orissa, Pakistan areas support this view. Telugu has got the maximum number of speakers among all Indian languages. There may be roughly 60 million and Kannada around 35 million. Tamils are seen in Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Indonesia, Vietnam, parts of East (Senegal) and South Africa and many islands in the South Pacific oceans. Written records for Kannada—5th century; Telugu—7th century and Malayalam—9th century.

Gondi, Kurukhi, Konda, Kolami, Kui, Kuvi, Tulu, Malto, Naiki, Pargi, Kodaga, Gadaba, Pengo, **Manda**, Kota, Toda, Kurumba, Irula, Malto, spoken in the North East India, Brahui in North Pakistan are some of the identified languages of the Dravidian family (*Languages of the world : the Cambridge Encyclopedia of Language*, Cambridge University Press, USA, 1991. p. 308).

● The Dravidians are said to have migrated from Asia Minor and east Mediterranean. They have features of pre-Hellenic and Crete, and people of Greece. They would have come to Sind during the first millennium before Christ. Some kind of African features can also be noticed. They are not the aboriginals of India. Historians, sociologists, anthropologists and linguists have to explore more to establish the origin of this group.

3. Austric Languages :

Most of the languages of this family are spoken in South East Asia, in the countries between China and Indonesia. A few are reported from Nicobar Islands, and in the central part of India, we have the Munda/Kol speakers—Kherwari group of Eastern India, Chota Nagpur, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh and eastern India. It includes Santali/Saontali, Mundari, Ho, Birhor, Bhumji, Korwa, Korku/Kurku, which is spoken in the West of Bihar. Closely related to Munda/Kol group, we have Sarvara and Gadaba languages also.

Mon-Khamar group is mostly in South Vietnam, Laos and Kampuchea and in some parts of Burma and Malaysia. Mon/Talang is spoken in Burma and Thailand. Khamar/Cambodian is the official language of Kampuchea. There are inscriptions available from 6th-7th centuries AD.

Mon-Khamar branch of the Austric is spoken by Khasi-Jaintis of Khasi Hills. Austric languages are considered as one among the oldest languages of India. Among these, Santhali, Mundari and Ho have rich literature, and the oral tradition consists of many mythical stories of Indian culture and history. Christian missionaries from Europe have done a good number of researches in these languages during the 19th century. Skrefrud, Bodding, Hoffmann, Campbell and W.G. Archer have brought out volumes of stories and poetry of Santals, Mundas, Hos and other Kol tribes. The missionaries used both Bengali and Nagari scripts for printing out their literary, cultural and customary folk songs. Some have used even the Roman scripts for collecting the folk-literature. A Norwegian missionary, P.O. Bodding edited and published with English translations the *Encyclopedia Mundarica* (edited by J. Hoffman and published by the Government of Bihar). This contains the life, culture and religion of the Mundas, who had even developed their own scripts. This language was accepted by the University of Calcutta and some other universities—in the three scripts like Bengali, Roman and Nagari scripts also used for Santali. Khasi also has folk literature.

4. Tibeto-Burman Sub-Group :

This sub-group is from the major family of the Sino-Tibetan languages. These include Bod or Old Tibetan and various modern colloquial dialects of Tibetan—*Mran-an* or Bod or Old Burmese from which the New Burmese is derived, including Arakanese. There are many dialects under this group : Kuki-Chin, Naga-Bodò, Mikir, Abor-Miri, Aka, Dafla and Singpho and the various other dialects of Nepal and Himachal Pradesh. The Mizo and Nagami languages also come under this group.

Manipuri is an exception. It is also known as Meithei, another dialect Newari. Manipuri's literature in its earlier phase was pure Meithei without much Hindu influence. Later Bengal Vaishnavism and Sanskrit influenced it (mid-18th century). Manipuri is now written in Bengali script. They are proud of their language and culture. Manipuri dance is also known to the dance schools of Indian stage artists.

Newari, another Tibeto-Burman language, came with the settlers in several thousands from Nepal due to various socio-political and economic reasons. Nepal<Newar<Newah. Nepala is the earlier tribal name. When the Gorkhas from West Nepal were conquered in 1767, they might have been freed to come down to these areas of Newar, where they encountered Indian religion and culture. Mostly, they were settled in Patan, Kirtipur, Bhatgaon and Kathmandu, and adopted the Old Bengali, Old Maithili or Old Assamese. To their credit go

quite a number of literature in Newari as well as in Sanskrit. One of their chronicles dates back to about 988 AD. Now they have started using the Nagiri scripts.

Lepecha is another Tibeto-Burman language spoken in eastern Nepal, Sikkim and Darjeeling with a script of its own. The Christian missionaries have published a few books. An American linguist, Robert Shafar says that they have their roots in the Nagas. Tibetan languages are rich in their literature. The dialects of Bhutan, Sikkim, Lahul, Ladakh are dialect varieties of Tibetan.

The Tribhuvan University Linguistics Department and the South Asia Group of Summer Institute of Linguistics are doing commendable studies in their language, culture, socio-political and historical studies. The Royal Nepal Academy recently published a book, *Topics in Nepalese Linguistics*, edited by W. Glover, which covers a wide range of language/dialects like Chapang, Dhimal, Terai, Jirel, Magar, Limbu, Kiranti, Chandyal, Kulung, Gurung, Dzongkha and many more. It is noteworthy that there are a few Dravidian language settlements in Nepal also.

NOTES

1. *Register* : Socially, philosophically, phonetically an accepted term to denote certain scientific, legal, idomatic and other expressions. e.g.: Amen, Principal, Dalit, camca, etc.
2. Tony Hilton *From Every Language India*, 1999, p. 21.
3. *Indian Missions*, July-Sept, 1999, p. 45.

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