



## Translating ancient Indian manuscripts into English: Translation as a research methodology

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**Abstract:** Manuscripts—handwritten compositions on materials such as paper, bark, cloth, or palm leaves—serve as invaluable records of human knowledge, often dating back centuries and holding immense historical, linguistic, and cultural significance. This paper explores the role of translation in preserving and disseminating ancient manuscripts, with a particular focus on the translation of Sanskrit texts into English. By examining the historical impact of translation, particularly during the Renaissance, the study highlights how this process has been instrumental in shaping scholarly discourse. Beyond its function as a preservation tool, translation is positioned as a research methodology that bridges past and present, offering insights into ancient Indian philosophy, culture, and thought systems. Engaging with these texts through translation not only facilitates interdisciplinary research but also contributes to the decolonization of knowledge by amplifying marginalized voices and challenging Eurocentric perspectives. The study emphasizes the urgent need for scholars to undertake systematic translation efforts, as India houses over 10 million manuscripts—two-thirds of them in Sanskrit—that remain untranslated and at risk of deterioration. By centring translation within academic research, scholars can promote a more inclusive and globally relevant knowledge production framework.

**Keywords:** translation; treasure-saving technique; preservation; ancient knowledge; research methodology.

### 1. Introduction

“When we read a translation, we are also reading a text that allows us to enter into a dialogue with another culture, another time, another society” (Edith Grossman).

In 1944, T.S. Eliot delivered an address before the Virgil Society entitled *What is a Classic?* where he interprets a classic in terms of maturity: maturity of mind, manners, style and language. According to him, “A classic can only occur when a civilization is mature; when a language and a



literature are mature; and it must be the work of a mature mind” (Eliot, 1944, p. 10). A classic, for him, is anything universal and timeless whose relevance echoes despite changing eras.

A classical work is produced when the author is aware of the past and present, conscious of the traditions and civilizations, and familiar with his predecessors and their works. History and culture are two critical characteristics related to a classic. A classic can only be made with the knowledge of the history of its people and the relatedness between cultures of those times. The language of a classic must be the language of the people, of that time, language in its perfection: “The classic must, within its formal limitation, express the maximum possible of the whole range of feeling which represents the character of the people who speak that language” (Eliot, 1944, p. 27). Thus, Eliot’s definition holds forth that a classical work extends beyond its original language and age. They belong to the whole of human existence.

Access to such classical knowledge can often be achieved through one crucial process – translation. Therefore, the text will be accessible across generations. Translations have become necessary in today’s world to preserve ancient knowledge and advance scholarly research. Translation is a way of preserving culture, history, and ancient wisdom and it is not just a mere linguistic endeavor. Not only are texts preserved when we translate them, but the culture embedded in them is also saved from oblivion. Consequently, in contemporary studies, translation serves as a bridge linking the past and present, possibly elevating itself as a research methodology connecting epochs.

With an emphasis on the history of translation, focusing on the significance of translating Sanskrit manuscripts into English and how translation can be elevated as a vital research methodology, this paper explores how translation can be a treasure-saving technique. This paper discusses the relevance of translation in bringing forth renaissance and reformation across Europe and India and how it paved the way for the preservation and dissemination of ancient knowledge texts and manuscripts.

## 2. Early historical development of translation

Translation was a need even from the beginning when humans started interacting with each other and between different communities. It was used as a tool to help facilitate trade, marketing and business across countries and languages during the early ages. Religion also played a crucial role in bringing translation as a vital activity throughout history from which religion also benefited by expanding across language communities. Science, literature, medicine and administration were also highly influential on translators in Europe from Roman times to the present.

The word ‘translation’ derives from a Latin root which implies “to bring or carry across”. Similarly, the term ‘metaphrase’, which refers to “word-to-word translation”, was coined from an Ancient Greek word “metaphrasis”, which means “to speak across”.

The translation of the Sumerian *Epic of Gilgamesh*, one of the oldest known literary works, sometime around the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium BCE, is cited as one of the first translations in history. Initially written in Sumerian, the epic was later translated into the ancient Mesopotamian lingua franca of Akkadian. Another significant example of early translation, the Rosetta Stone, dates back to 196 BCE. This artefact has the exact text written in three scripts – Greek, Demotic, and hieroglyphs. Its discovery proved to be of great value in decoding Egyptian hieroglyphs and emphasising the power

of translation in comprehending many cultures. Most of the translations during those times were concerned with administrative and commercial matters. In ancient Rome, Greek works were translated from about the first century BC, especially theatre, technical works and scientific texts.

It was during the second century AD that the Christian translations from Greek to Latin began with the *Shepherd of Hermas* and parts of *The Bible*. Religious translations between East and West were in full bloom from the sixth until the sixteenth century AD during the Middle Ages.

Many schools were set up as significant translation centres during these times. One example of this is the schools of the Muslim world set up in various places to transfer Greek philosophy and science into Arabic. Another example was the Kingdom of Two Sicilies, where translations were done in Latin, Arab and Greek languages on diplomatic, scientific, and religious texts. During the tenth to the twelfth century, places such as Toledo were major centres where translations of Arab texts were done into Latin by Christian philosophers. These translations were significant in bringing Greek texts that had been lost back to the West. These Arabic translations were brought back to Europe by scholars, which later led to their translation into European languages. This process laid the foundation for the intellectual awakening during the Renaissance period.

Around the tenth century, translations into the vernacular languages were seen as “a way of bringing the language into maturity” (Kelly, 1995, p. 421). Indian medical and pharmaceutical literature was translated into Arabic during the Middle Ages, mainly in Baghdad. Translations of Sanskrit astronomical and astrological texts were done only on formal levels. However, these translations lack evidence of Indian material. August Müller (1880, p. 500) described the source text as “a miserable edition of a bad Latin translation of an Arabic translation of a Sanskrit book”.

### 3. Relevance of translation during the Renaissance period

The Renaissance was the revival or rebirth of the classical model or literature from the Ancient Greek and Roman eras. The ancient past, which was lost, was rediscovered during the revival period. The period called the “the Dark Ages”, was between the fifth and sixth centuries and the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. There was a decline in science, culture, and individual freedom during this period. A cultural movement began in Italy when revivalists escaped the Turkish invasions of Italy and brought the manuscripts of Plato, Aristotle, etc. This movement, called The Renaissance, had a significant impact on the intellectual life of Europe and, consequently, the world in the early modern period. Renaissance made man an individual. It changed the outlook of the society. It affected people’s thoughts and world thought, leading to new inventions, explorations, travels, discoveries and many more. Renaissance gave independence to man. The two major ideas put forward during the Renaissance were humanism and realism.

The translations from Greek to Latin were the most prominent works during the Renaissance. Translators like Marsilio Ficino (1433-1499) translated Plato into Latin, and Leonardo Bruni Aretino (1369-1444) translated Aristotle into Latin. They also emphasised the need to translate works in a style appropriate to their elegance. Many Greek medical and scientific manuscripts were translated into Latin by the professors of Medicine at Oxford. The texts on alchemy were also translated first into Latin and then into the local vernaculars.

Humanism was highly religious during the sixteenth century. Just like other manuscripts, the religious texts were given importance, accessing their worth and comparing them with parallel

readings. The Greek-Latin New Testament (1523) of Desiderius Erasmus was the most influential Latin Bible translation. Among the vernacular translations of the Bible, Martin Luther's was the most prominent. The translation of liturgies was essential in the Reformation. Martin Luther's liturgies were translated into Scandinavian languages as the movement spread.

When a more standardised language of political and cultural relevance – like English, French, Spanish and Italian – rose, the translation shifted its focus onto literature. The translations produced during both the Renaissance and Reformation provided commentary on the political scenarios of the day and the worldview of the translators. For the most part, the English translations of texts, especially those of the Bible, do not reflect the original texts. This was, however, because of the curious interpretive practices of the translators, as translating the Bible during those times was against the law.

Michel Ballard (2015, p. 22) said, “The Renaissance coincided with an increase in the sheer number of translated texts [...]. The development was undeniably connected to historical events [such as] [...] the invention of print”. The invention of the printing press was the most influential force in the reformation of European social, political, linguistic, religious, economic and intellectual domains. The printing press made translations accessible to ordinary people. Latin texts were for an elite audience. Their translated versions in the vernacular were disseminated to a much less educated and sometimes younger audience.

The Byzantine manuscripts were believed to have been “a prerequisite for Western Renaissance” (Hunger, 1981, p. 35). Byzantium, during the early Middle Ages, was famous among the Arabs for its remarkable collection of Greek manuscripts.

#### 4. Orientalism and the discovery of Sanskrit

Orientalism, as conceptualized by Edward Said, refers to the Western academic and political construction of the East, often treating it as an object of knowledge rather than an autonomous cultural entity. Said (2003, p. 73) defines Orientalism as “the discipline by which the Orient was (and is) approached systematically, as a topic of learning, discovery and practice”, allowing Europe to exert intellectual and political authority over Eastern civilizations. Through Orientalist discourse, the “Orient” was framed as the binary opposite of the “Occident”, reinforcing notions of Western superiority (Said, 2003, p. 203).

Historically, many European scholars dismissed ancient Indian civilization as unworthy of serious study. As Schwab (1984, p. 21) notes, “Europeans doubted that ancient India was worth the trouble of knowing. This was a tenacious prejudice against which Warren Hastings still had to struggle in the last quarter of the eighteenth century”. Similarly, Mary Douglas (1972, p. 12) described India as “a mirror image” of Europe and thus a totally opposite world to the West. In Romanticism, the discovery of foreign began with the discovery of the most primitive, first in the *Avesta* of ancient Persia and then in the *Vedas* of India.

The emergence of Sanskrit studies in Europe fundamentally altered the scope of Orientalist scholarship. The translations of the *Upanishads* by Anquetil Duperron from Persian to Latin were the beginning of oriental influence. The Latin translation titled *Oupnek'hat* was the first translation of the *Upanishads* in a European language, published in 1801 and 1802. This translation—rendered from Persian rather than Sanskrit—demonstrated that even indirect translations could play a role

in reviving lost philosophical traditions. These translations influenced many European scholars, especially Arthur Schopenhauer (1881, p. 355), who called the *Upanishads* “the production of the highest human wisdom”. The fact that the Latin translation of the *Upanishads* by Anquetil came from another language and not the original source language in which the text was written proved that lost writings can be retrieved and revived through translation.

The restricted intellectual and linguistic framework of ‘oriental languages’ as only ‘Semitic languages’ was removed with the rediscovery of Sanskrit. The recovery of Sanskrit is credited half to Western genius and the other half to the transmission of knowledge in local traditions (Schwab 1984, p. 25). Anquetil was the first to assert the significance of finding the *Vedas*, although his predecessors were confident that lost or guarded manuscripts were of lesser significance in a country where oral transmission was the primary medium of knowledge traditions. In 1789, Colonel Polier unearthed the *Vedas* and gave it to the British Museum. The translation of the *Vedas* in intermediary languages still remained as the main approach towards Vedic literature for a long time.

As Schwab (1984) observes:

Landing in an India fused with Islam since the eleventh century, where Persian and Hindustani were the principal languages, the Dutch, French, Danish, Italian and English missionaries discovered and announced the existence of an earlier language – a dead language, sacred, liturgical, and erudite, restricted to a high priestly caste, renowned for an immense and mysterious body of literature, and written in a script to which the key was missing [...]. In 1806, Adelung termed it *Samskrda* (Schwab, 1984, p. 31).

## 5. Sir William Jones and the Asiatic Society of Calcutta

Sir William Jones is an 18<sup>th</sup>-century British philologist who is known for his pioneering works in Sanskrit and his contributions to the field of Indo-European linguistics. Jones, who was interested in knowing more about the oriental languages after following the footsteps of Anquetil, was posted as a judge of the Supreme Court in Calcutta during British rule in India in 1783. Jones was interested in everything, starting from chronology, history, literature, poetry, nature, and ecosystem, but giving more significance to law.

In 1784, in order to encourage oriental studies, William Jones founded the Asiatic Society, later the Asiatic Society of Bengal. The formation of this society was an important milestone leading to the Indian Renaissance. The society was established to study Asian history, both natural and civil, as well as antiquities, laws, arts, sciences and literature. As Sir William Jones said in the memorandum of the Articles of the Asiatic Society, “The bound of investigations will be the geographic limits of Asia, and within these limits, its enquiries will be extended to whatever is performed by man or produced by nature” (Wood-Mason, 1890, p. 1).

The knowledge of the ancient language Sanskrit was of great importance to Sir Jones as it enabled him to discharge his duty as a judge with confidence and satisfaction. He realised that exploring the law, religion, and literature of India would be imperfect and unsatisfactory without the knowledge of Sanskrit. His famous speech, delivered in 1786 to the Asiatic Society of Bengal, called “Third Anniversary Discourse”, made a turning point in the history of language studies. He illustrated the remarkable parallels between Sanskrit, Greek, Latin, and other European languages, which points to a shared ancestor language, “which, perhaps, no longer exists”, later came to be known as Proto Indo-European, and this assumption gave way to the birth of modern comparative linguistics.

His words go like this;

The Sanskrit language, whatever be its antiquity, is of a wonderful structure; more perfect than the Greek, more copious than the Latin, and more exquisitely refined than either; yet bearing to both of them a stronger affinity, both in the roots of verbs, and in the forms of grammar, than could possibly have been produced by accident; so strong, indeed that no philologist could examine them all three without believing them to have sprung from some common source, which, perhaps, no longer exists. There is a similar reason, though not quite so forcible, for supposing that both the Gothic and the Celtic, though blended with a very different idiom, had the same origin with the Sanskrit; and the Old Persian might be added to the same family (Jones, 1824, p. 28-29).

It was Sir William Jones who made manuscripts or literature written in India familiar to Europe. He was the first to translate one of the greatest works of Indian literature, *Shakuntala* by Kalidasa, into a Western language. He translated it as *Sacontala*, or *The Fatal Ring: An Indian Drama by Calidas*. He used Latin as an intermedial language to translate this drama into English. In 1789, the first translation into English was published in Calcutta.

Additionally, Jones translated some parts of the *Gita Govinda*, as *The Indian Song of Songs* (1807), which was also a first. He also printed and assisted with the translation of the Sanskrit text *Rtusamhāra*. Jones translated *Hitopadesa* and *Manusmṛiti* (*Institutes of Hindu Law: or, the ordinances of Menu*, 1794). Although most of his famous works were translations from Sanskrit to English, he also wrote on Indian music, the game of chess, the solar and lunar years of the Hindus, Indian chronology and many more.

Through his translations, Sir William Jones was able to put Indian literature on the world map. It was the Asiatic Society that discovered the significant contributions of the ancient civilisations of India to the world history. Jones helped shift the perception of the West on India. He proved that the ancient knowledge embedded in the Indian philosophical and literary texts is valuable and comparable to those of ancient Greece and Rome. His translation of *Shakuntala* introduced the Indian drama, which was entirely different from Aristotelian Tragedy and Comedy, to the West. It greatly influenced many German and literary scholars and romanticists but not explored in detail.

These contributions of Jones in introducing the cultural and linguistic richness of Indian manuscripts to the world are highly influential, and there is no doubt in that. But, Jones' outlook on India was primarily colonial. He always viewed and approached the Indian texts from a position of superiority, which can be regarded as a 'colonial mission' for incorporating European knowledge to the East. His translations of religious laws were an attempt to create a new legal system in India for colonial rule. The British laws were created using his translation of *Manusmṛiti*. Despite these, Sir William Jones' admiration and respect for Indian civilisation and Sanskrit literature paved the way for the expansion of European knowledge of them. His comparative studies were also valuable in building a ground for East-West cooperation.

## 6. Max Müller

Another key figure in the Orientalist movement of India is Max Müller. He was a German-born philologist and Orientalist who is regarded as one of the founders of the discipline of the study of religions. Swami Vivekananda (1896) once stated about Professor Max Müller:



Max Müller is a Vedantist of Vedantists. He has, indeed, caught the real soul of the melody of the Vedanta in the midst of all its settings of harmonies and discords – the one light that lightens the sects and creeds of the world, the Vedanta, the one principle of which all religions are only applications (Vivekananda, 1896, n.p.).

Müller's primary objective in studying Sanskrit was to examine how religious and philosophical thought evolved throughout time. Therefore, he focused on Vedic literature. Max Müller came to recognition through his critical edition of the *Rgveda Samhitā* published in six volumes. He started preparing the text in Paris, studying the manuscripts available there and at the library of the East India Company. The first volume was published in 1849. At first, his text was a critical analysis of *Sāyana's* commentary of *Rgveda*. However, Müller was not satisfied with this, and he found it essential to consult the newly available manuscripts. His second edition of the *Rgveda*, published in four volumes in 1890-92, was completed with the help of Maurice Winternitz. Another significant project of his was a series of English translations of important texts of the Eastern religions called *Sacred Books of the East*. Between 1879 and 1910, the Oxford University Press published it in 50 volumes. It contains translations of parts of *Upanishads*, *The Bhagavad Gita*, *Vedanta Sutras*, *Vedic Hymns*, and many more. *Hitopadesha* was also translated into English by him.

Müller believed that it was essential for a “reformation to take place within the Hindu religion”. He stated, “Not only their religion but their philosophy also was connected with the national character of the inhabitants of India” (Müller, 1889, p. vii). He wanted to study the Veda as the oldest book composed, which would give a picture of the primitive state of man, his primitive ideals, ideas and the most primitive language he spoke. The aim of Max Müller in coming to India was to promote Christianity. He said in a letter written on August 25, 1856:

Whatever finds root in India soon overshadows the whole of Asia, and nowhere could the vital power of Christianity more gloriously realise itself than if the word saw it spring up there for a second time, in a very different form from that in the West, but still essentially the same (Müller & Müller, 1902, p. 182).

Like any other European scholar translating Indian manuscripts, Max Müller's objectives to study and translate the Sanskrit texts were based on his Oriental and colonial perspectives. However, even then, we cannot ignore the fact that his scholarship and translations paved the way for the preservation and dissemination of this ancient knowledge. Also, his studies were helpful in performing a comparative analysis between the European and Indian civilisations and philosophies. Orientalism and Oriental scholars had a significant impact on the Indian Renaissance. The translations of Sanskrit manuscripts into English and the discovery of the original manuscripts inspired many Indian revolutionaries to make reforms within India, thus leading to the Indian wave of Renaissance and Reformation. Now, let us have a look at the Indian route of Renaissance and translation.

## 7. The Indian Renaissance and translation

The Indian Renaissance was a significant movement during the nineteenth century. The educated Indians started depending on the Western style of living, manners, literature, etc., losing faith in their own culture by the end of the eighteenth century. The Indian Renaissance was an effort

to revive the lost traditions and culture of India, reforming the society, religion and every aspect of life. An important factor in India's Renaissance was translation. It was because of the translations of religious manuscripts and holy scriptures marking these texts among the world's best religious treatises by foreign intellectuals such as William Jones, Max Müller, Charles Wilkins, etc., that religious reformation started. The discovery of ancient Indian works of literature written in Sanskrit, Prakrit, Pali, etc., was aided by the Renaissance. Western scholars were the ones to discover and obtain Indian manuscripts from other nations, which they translated into English and published. *Manusmriti*, *Shakuntala*, *Gita*, *Hitopadesh*, *Ashtashyayi* and the *Vedas* were all collated and translated into English. These translations led to the revival of ancient Indian wisdom and enhanced their standing in the world, giving the people in India more confidence in their culture, religion, and community. The translations, along with the introduction of Western education, led to the emergence of Indian nationalism during the colonial era.

Raja Ram Mohan Roy was the first to translate some principal *Upanishads* into English and Bangla. Max Müller mentioned about his translation of the *Katha Upanishad* and commented, "It was first introduced to the knowledge of European scholars by Ram Mohan Roy, one of the most enlightened benefactors of mankind" (Müller, 1901, p. 332). The aim and motive behind Raja Ram Mohan Roy's translation of the *Upanishads* is very much known. It was directed against the Christian and European missionaries who were busy in ridiculing the idol worship of Hinduism. Ram Mohan Roy wanted to prove that although the existing practices did promote the worship of many small and big gods and goddesses, the original ideology behind Hinduism was monotheism. Therefore, he did not just use the literal translation of the text. He added explanatory notes and phrases so that the reader would understand the points he intended to highlight. Apart from this intention, Ram Mohan Roy wanted to bring about religious and moral reformation in India through his translation of the *Upanishads*.

Raja Ram Mohan Roy talked about the difficulty in translating a Sanskrit text into a European language. He stated:

Ideas, in general, are differently expressed in the idioms of the East from those of the West, as the East is remote from the West. Greater difficulty, therefore, must be experienced by a native of Europe in communicating European ideas in the idioms of Asia than in conveying Asiatic ideas into the language of Europe; so a native of Asia experiences greater inconvenience in expressing Asiatic ideas in European idioms than in translating ideas into an Asian language (Roy, 1906, p. 51-54).

Therefore, we can say that these translations of Raja Ram Mohan Roy were essential in bringing forth the Renaissance and Reformation to India. As has been seen, translation has played a dominant role in bringing the Renaissance and reformation across the world. The translation of manuscripts and classical texts brought back the ideologies and practices that have been lost in the society. Thus, translation became an essential tool in the revival of ancient knowledge and wisdom of a community, thus transcending it across the world. With that being said, now we can look into how translation can be elevated into a research methodology, connecting past and present.



## 8. Translation: A treasure-saving technique

The ancient manuscripts and texts are considered as valuable treasures of a community. These texts remain the base on which each value and tradition of a community has been built. A manuscript is a written composition on paper, bark, cloth, metal, palm leaf or any other material dating back at least seventy-five years with significant scientific, historical or aesthetic value (National Mission for Manuscripts). The handwritten documents, or ‘manuscripts’, were the most essential form of knowledge, along with oral traditions. As an age-old practice during times without proper technology or techniques to preserve the texts or manuscripts, many of the original copies have deteriorated over time. As has been noted through the course of this paper, translation has been serving as a medium to save this ancient knowledge from going into oblivion. In other words, translation has been a treasure-saving technique. It was because the Arabs preserved Greek, Roman and Sanskrit manuscripts and ancient texts through translation that the world was introduced to the Renaissance and Reformation. Thus, we can say that translation is a bridge that interconnects past and future knowledge, culture and wisdom.

The modern disciplines of science, history, philosophy, literature, and spirituality all developed its contemporary theories with the help of the knowledge that was preserved in older texts and manuscripts. After the creation of the texts, these were translated into many different languages across the world, incorporating the knowledge of each language, thus forming the discipline as it is seen today. The translation of classical texts like *Mahabharata*, *Bhagavat Gita*, *The Iliad*, *Odyssey*, etc., into modern Indian languages made new generations to understand the linguistic, cultural and ancient treasures embedded in them. Without translation, this knowledge of the civilisations, culture, values, beliefs, and of the intellectual landscapes of ancient India and Greece would only have been accessible to a limited number of generations or a limited number of people who are scholars. Consequently, translations keep classical texts or manuscripts and the knowledge within them alive and thriving through generations, withstanding the test of time.

Language plays a fundamental role in shaping cultural identity. Manuscripts and classical writings are the manifestations of this cultural identity. A civilisation is characterised by the myths it believes in, the stories it tells, the poetry and songs it sings, the customs it upholds, and the values it cherishes. A piece of the identity of that culture is gone with it once any one of them is lost. We came to know of the ancient *Vedas* or *Upanishads* or the works of Homer, not just as literary works. They shaped the traditions, morals, and attitudes of India and Greece. Through translation, these cultural identities and heritage became accessible across the globe, allowing others to form civilisations based on them. Translation made people appreciate and recognise their own cultural heritage and ancient wisdom. These texts were also translated into various international languages, which made a global understanding of its culture. Thus, translation promotes a feeling of continuity and shared identity in addition to protecting cultural treasures.

Ancient languages like Sanskrit or Pali are known to today’s generations, and the linguistic nuances of these languages have become a source of research for scholars only because these languages were preserved in texts and manuscripts. However, the difficulty of understanding these ancient languages increases as languages evolve over time. Translation adapts these texts into a

contemporary simpler version of the language so that these texts can become more accessible to common people, thus lowering the impact of linguistic erosion.

Many Greek and Roman texts, which later caused the Renaissance in Europe, survived through historical upheavals and political shifts only because they were translated into Arabic and were preserved in libraries. These texts were later brought back to Europe and re-translated, thus re-introducing the knowledge and wisdom. Similarly, it was because Sanskrit texts were translated into Arabic that the Orientalists started their search for the original manuscripts of the *Upanishads*, *Vedas*, etc. Thus, translation made this wisdom thrive without getting lost in history. The translation is responsible for ensuring that the ancient thoughts, wisdom, qualities, etc., survive through wars, political and social changes and revolutions. In order to preserve and disseminate knowledge across languages and cultures, translation is essential. It guarantees that important and ancient knowledge and wisdom are not lost or forgotten as a result of historical events by traversing linguistic barriers. The revival and translation of the *Vedas* and *Upanishads* into English facilitated the Western civilisation to know more about Indian traditions and religion. These works changed the perspective through which the West has always seen Indian religious traditions. Translation of the Sanskrit texts uplifted the status of India in the eyes of the world. Thus, translation opens the door for cross-cultural exchange and enrichment. It promotes mutual understanding between civilisations and societies around the world.

When classical texts and manuscripts on philosophical theories are translated, it makes way for different interpretations throughout generations. This develops and makes evolve new intellectual thoughts. Translation helps preserve the legacy of intellectual evolution. During the years of evolution, many of these texts may remain obscure or endangered. The translations of these texts make sure that they are widely recognised by the world. Even translations into vernacular languages can make sure that texts that were known only to scholars and academics once are now accessible and understandable to common people, too. Thus, translations help in establishing a shared knowledge heritage throughout the globe.

Translation has, from older times, been used as a pedagogical tool that helped people learn various sciences and philosophies. Translations of classical texts have been used for teaching ancient literature, history, science, etc. Even during the reformation, colonial and post-colonial periods, pedagogical translation played a crucial role in providing students access to intellectual traditions of both East and West through the introduction of English medium education. The Greek and Latin texts, the *Vedas* and the *Upanishads* were all introduced to the students all over the world in their respective languages and in English with the help of translation. Even today, in a multilingual country like India, translation remains an important pedagogical tool.

By going through all these historical aspects and the evolution of translation and of ancient texts and manuscripts, it can be argued that translation has always been preserving the wisdom and knowledge of civilisations, acting as a 'treasure-saving technique'. It has proved its importance in the preservation and revival of religious, political, literary and philosophical values, knowledge, and ethics. The translation was a part of the religious and moral reforms of the world. It played a crucial role in establishing a nationalist response through the Renaissance and Reformation. Thus, translation is not just a mere linguistic activity; it makes sure that the most valuable treasure of history – ancient knowledge – remains alive, accessible, and relevant across the ages.

## 9. Translation as a research methodology: Its challenges

Translation, other than a mere linguistic activity, can be raised as a robust research methodology. India has a repository of over 10 million manuscripts, two-thirds of which are in Sanskrit and almost rotting in various places. It has become crucial that researchers and scholars make efforts to translate these texts so that they can be preserved. Engaging in the translation of ancient texts into English can contribute to decolonising knowledge by providing an opportunity for amplifying marginalised voices, questioning Eurocentric perspectives and broadening scholarly discourse. Scholars can enhance their understanding of knowledge production, making it more inclusive and global by centering ancient texts in research methodologies. The validation and credibility of translations can be enhanced when they are produced at the roots, particularly texts of historical, linguistic, cultural, and religious importance.

Translation as a research methodology opens access to a wide range of previously inaccessible knowledge. It facilitates linguistic and cross-cultural interdisciplinary studies. Translation helps researchers gain a means of approach to ancient knowledge texts. These texts provide information on historical perspectives and cultural insights of past civilisations. Sanskrit texts are written with a wide range of disciplines included in a single text. Thus, the translation of such texts can pave the way for interdisciplinary research. Translating can also help scholars and researchers to conduct comparative studies, recognising the parallel between ancient Indian philosophies and thought and others that existed worldwide. Translation can also help in expanding the discourse of academic research.

Although translation is an impactful research methodology, it comes with its own challenges, especially while translating an ancient language into a more contemporary one. As said earlier, as language evolves, it becomes less and less complex. Thus, the depth of the ancient language cannot be fully translated into English, maintaining the linguistic complexities and structure. Sanskrit is a language which carries multiple meanings which are dependent on context. These challenges the translators in finding the best words to translate to in the target language. The translators must have adequate knowledge of the specific ancient language and its discipline to be able to accurately translate the text without losing its intricate elements. Likewise, there are many challenges that arise when translation is elevated as a research methodology. Sometimes, the translation of an ancient text might not be digestible to a modern audience due to its ancient philosophies and thought. These kinds of ethical dilemmas should be overcome by the translator in order to raise the status of translation as a research methodology.

Making translation a research methodology can ensure that the text is analysed in a deeper perspective for its linguistic nuances, cultural contexts, and intellectual references. It also maintains accuracy in the selection of target language equivalents, in words, and in cultural context, and preserves the author's tone, style, and voice. Translation as a research methodology can also facilitate critical and comparative analysis even by considering the reader's interpretation of the translations.

The challenges that come with the translation of ancient texts can be overcome through adopting various strategies. Annotations and footnotes can be given to culturally untranslatable terms. Collaborative translations can make the process a bit easier as more than one interpretation is involved. The translations can also be peer-reviewed. Incorporating modern tools might also aid

translators in facilitating access to more resources. Other than these challenges, nothing can prevent translation from emerging as a powerful research methodology. In the case of Sanskrit text translations, ultimately, translating them into English enables these ancient treasures to influence contemporary studies, guaranteeing their prolonged applicability and enhancing scholarly discourse worldwide.

## 10. Conclusion

Sanskrit is often referred to as the mother of many Indian languages. It plays an important role in the preservation of India's cultural heritage. Many religious and spiritual texts were written in Sanskrit, including those of Hinduism, Jainism and Buddhism. This ancient language holds a significant linguistic value. It holds the repository of India's ancient knowledge in a number of disciplines including medicine, astrology, mathematics, science, and literature. New education policies, such as the NEP 2020, acknowledge the importance of revitalisation of Sanskrit education. This ensures that future generations study and appreciate the classical texts of Indian traditions. The Indian Knowledge System (IKS) is a cell under the Ministry of Education (MoE) established in order to facilitate the transfer of knowledge from one generation to the next generation. It is based on the Vedic literature, the *Upanishads*, the *Vedas*, and the *Upvedas*. The IKS provides assistance in research activities and preservation of ancient Indian knowledge traditions. Sanskrit acts as a link between India's rich legacy and modern society since it creates a balance between the two. Thus, translation of Sanskrit into English is a challenging yet rewarding process.

Translation has as its central function the preservation of knowledge. As Eliot (1944) said in his essay, translation can provide access to classical and ancient knowledge for generations to come. The works of Homer, the *Vedas*, and the *Bible*, all these works are read and understood even today only because they were preserved and disseminated through translations. Translators not just merely translate words from language to language. Translation of a classical text involves the translation of its historical perspective, cultural and intellectual thoughts, identity, etc. It helps preserve the heritage and wisdom embedded in these texts. The translations also help to introduce modern audiences to new concepts from other civilisations, like how ancient Indian Sanskrit texts were introduced to the West. The translators can interpret these texts in a way that the readers understand the concepts, thus paving the way for global recognition and appreciation of the ancient knowledge texts.

In the age of digital era, many tools and technologies have been introduced to the academic field, which eases the process of preservation and dissemination of these translations. The ancient manuscripts which were once present only in libraries or temples or museums are now digitised and are available to every person at their fingertips, on their computer or mobile screens. They are translated and shared among readers across the globe. They are translated and shared among readers across the globe. Thus, translation is a method to establish a shared global culture where the thoughts, ideas, values and morals of the past can still have an impact on the present and the future. It enables a global understanding of human knowledge.

Translation resurrects a vast knowledge and wisdom that would have been lost forever to the unending list of writings if not translated. In this sense, translation serves as a treasure-saving technique, whether it is used for scholarly or cultural goals. Imagining a world without the teachings

of the *Vedas* and *Mahabharata* or Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* is never possible. The world would never have developed in its intellectual, cultural, spiritual, philosophical, and political level where it is today. This wouldn't have been possible without the knowledge from the ancient texts and manuscripts. And this was made accessible because of translations. Thus, translation serves as a method that ensures that the treasures of ancient knowledge remain alive, accessible and relevant to future generations.

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