

Translation of Culture and Culture of Translation

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When the young Alexander, the Greek conquerer of the world, came to India in 3rd Century B.C., accompanying him was his Guru Aristotle, the well known philosopher of the time. When they reached the Indian territory, Aristotle's requirement was that he would like to interact with the half a dozen Indian counterparts whose names he mentioned to Alexander. Now, the question that comes to mind is: How did Aristotle know the Indian philosophers?

Surely, Aristotle must have known Sanskrit, the reigning Indian language at the time, the mother of all our thirty and odd languages and over three thousand dialects spoken in the different parts of our sub-continent. A clear implication about it emerges that these philosophers had the ability to know and translate each other's thoughts. For sure, at that time, and in the subsequent times, right upto the middle of the 20th century, literature was known to be of universal value containing human stories of life and death, joys and sorrows. No wonder Aristotle said that literature combines history and philosophy. The word culture had different connotations then and thereafter. It was not what we mean by it in our present-day context.

Culture, before THEORY, with capital T took the centre-stage in literary criticism, was known to have the twin-components of open-mindedness and decency. Matthew Arnold, the great poet-critic of the Victorian Age in English literature had emphasized these two qualities of culture. But all this was abandoned after the advent of THEORY in the post World War II period. Then culture got linked up to the community, a group of people having a common way of life, their customs and