

**A Comparative Study of the Novel Madol Doova by Martin Wickramasinghe and its  
English Translation by Ashley Halpe**

Jayasinghe H. S.<sup>1</sup>✉

**Abstract**

The translation is a broad area that involves numerous factors rather than converting written words from the source language (SL) to the target language (TL). Hence, language and culture are two important aspects that cannot be disregarded, especially in literary translations. The disparities of translations arise when translating a text which belongs to a different cultural context. The methodology adopted in this research study is qualitative. The primary data was collected by referring to Martin Wickramasinghe's *Madol Doova*, and the secondary data were mainly collected through its English translation by Ashley Halpe. The similarities and the differences in the two texts were noted concerning the usage of idiomatic expressions and figurative language. It was observed that Halpe has directly used the socio-cultural terms in the translation. For example, *mala ilawwa* (Halape 2002: 16), *gal-ibba* (Halpe 2002: 27), *Porisadaya* (Halpe 2002: 34), *mahadenamutta* (Halpe 2002: 84), *andara demala* (Halpe 2002: 84). These are some unique terms associated with the socio-cultural environment that prevailed in Sri Lanka especially around the time when this book was published. Hence, Halpe may have wanted to maintain the socio-cultural environment through his translation by using these direct terms. When analyzing the translation, it is clear that since there are no equivalent terms in the TL, Halpe has adopted the technique of borrowing. The usage of some direct translations was also observed. For example, "*Inda! The silly old coquette!*" (Halpe 2002: 20), "*He's a tough nut all right*" (Halpe 2002: 36), "*Sons of she-devils!*" (Halpe 2002: 16). These direct translations may confuse the English readers since it is culturally distant to them. However, it is familiar to the Sinhala-English bilingual community. Nevertheless, translating the source text is not easy as the cultural background, cultural terms, and characters belong to a different context of the target language. The language used by Wickramasinghe is also challenging since the book belongs to 1947. In conclusion, it can be stated that Halpe has tried to maintain the spirit of the original text by using simple language. However, as the researcher believes, the translation appears culturally distant to the readers who are non-native because Halpe was mainly focusing on a Sinhala-English bilingual community. Nevertheless, Halpe's effort in maintaining the socio-cultural environment can be considered as successful especially to the bilingual readers.

**Keywords:** *Bilingual community, literary translation, local context, socio-cultural terms*

---

<sup>1</sup> University of Colombo School of Computing, UCSC Building Complex, 35, Reid Avenue, Colombo 7, Sri Lanka

✉ Corresponding author: sasajaya93@gmailcom