Dhvani as a Challenge in Translating Poetry: An Analysis through Gadamer's Fusion of Horizons and Lefevere's Seven Strategies

Dr. Dharshani Gunathilake

Senior Lecturer, Department of Sinhala, University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka

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ABSTRACT

Poetry in the Indian literary tradition was theorised, from the ninth century onwards, as an art whose highest value lies not in what is said but in what is suggested. Ānandavardhana's *Dhvanyāloka* named this suggested dimension *dhvani* and declared it the soul of poetry, while Abhinavagupta's *Locana* tied it to the aesthetic relish of *rasa*. Because *dhvani* operates through a third power of words, *vyañjanā*, which lies beyond denotation (*abhidhā*) and secondary indication (*lakṣaṇā*), it poses a distinctive problem for the translator: the meaning that matters most is never stated in the source text.

This article examines that problem through three illustrative case studies: a Prakrit verse from the *Gāthāsaptaśatī* (suggested fact, *vastu-dhvani*), a Sanskrit verse from Kālidāsa's *Kumārasambhava* (suggested emotion, *rasa-dhvani*), and a Tamil Caṅkam verse from the *Kuṟuntokai* (suggestion mediated by an expressed simile, read alongside the Tamil categories of *uḷḷuṟai* and *iṟaicci*). Eight published English translations of these verses, dating from 1879 to 2010, are compared against explicit criteria derived from *dhvani* theory. André Lefevere's seven strategies of poetry translation organise the comparison; strategies with no published exemplar are assessed as modelled possibilities and labelled as such. Hans-Georg Gadamer's fusion of horizons is used as a heuristic, alongside a discussion of where it differs from the classical figure of the *sahṛdaya*.

Within this small, purposive corpus, renderings that add emotion words or explanations to the poem body lose the suggestion, while line-based renderings that keep the trigger and move explanation into paratext preserve it most often. The article proposes that the translator of suggestive poetry should translate the conditions of suggestion rather than the suggested meaning itself, and offers a context-dependent, seven-step guide. The findings are offered as case-based propositions for testing on larger corpora, not as general laws of poetry translation.

Keywords: *dhvani*, poetry translation, Ānandavardhana, *uḷḷuṟai*, fusion of horizons, Lefevere's seven strategies, paratext

INTRODUCTION

Every translator of poetry eventually confronts a simple but unsettling fact: what a poem means is often not what it says. Classical Indian literary theory confronted this fact earlier and more systematically than most traditions. In the ninth century, the Kashmiri theorist Ānandavardhana argued in his *Dhvanyāloka* that the soul (*ātman*) of poetry is *dhvani*, the suggested sense (*Dhvanyāloka* 1.1). His claim reorganised the whole field of Sanskrit poetics (*alaṅkāraśāstra*). Earlier theorists such as Bhāmaha and Daṇḍin had located poetic beauty mainly in figures of speech (*alaṅkāra*) and qualities of style (*guṇa*). Ānandavardhana instead located it in a meaning that the words never denote but which a sensitive reader (*sahṛdaya*, literally 'one with a matching heart') nonetheless grasps.

The theory was given philosophical depth by Abhinavagupta (c. 950–1016 CE), whose commentary on the *Dhvanyāloka*, the *Locana*, connected *dhvani* with the older theory of *rasa* inherited from Bharata's *Nāṭyaśāstra* (chapter 6). For Abhinavagupta, the highest form of suggestion is the evocation of aesthetic

emotion, which cannot be named directly without being destroyed: to say that a poem is 'sad' is not to make the reader taste sorrow. The debates that followed were intense. Mahimabhaṭṭa, in his *Vyaktiviveka*, argued that suggestion was nothing more than inference (*anumāna*); Kuntaka, in his *Vakroktijīvita*, preferred to explain poetic power as artful deviation of expression (*vakrokti*). The *dhvani* school nevertheless prevailed, and Mammaṭa's *Kāvyaprakāśa* (eleventh century) consolidated its central hierarchy by defining the best poetry (*uttama kāvya*) as poetry in which the suggested sense surpasses the expressed sense (*Kāvyaprakāśa* 1.4).

This hierarchy has direct consequences for translation. If the most valuable layer of a poem is unstated, the translator faces a double bind. A translation that reproduces only the words may preserve the surface while losing the suggestion; a translation that spells out the suggestion destroys it, because suggested meaning ceases to be suggested once it is stated. Roman Jakobson's often-cited verdict that 'poetry by definition is untranslatable' (Jakobson, 1959, p. 238) was built on the density of sound and grammar in verse. The *dhvani* tradition adds a further reason: poetry is difficult to translate not only because of what is present in its language, but because of what is deliberately absent from it.

Translation studies has developed rich vocabularies for equivalence, form, implicature and cultural transfer, but it has seldom used South Asian theory as an analytical instrument rather than as an object of description. The struggle is familiar to any practitioner who has attempted a Sanskrit, Prakrit, Tamil or Sinhala lyric; what is less familiar is a precise description of that struggle and a systematic way of managing it.

The objective of this article is twofold: to identify the specific problems that *dhvani* creates in translation, and to propose strategies that can guide translators. It does so through three illustrative case studies, each tested against published English translations. The article argues that the translator of suggestive poetry should aim to translate the conditions of suggestion, namely the verbal triggers and contextual cues that allow a reader to infer the unstated sense, rather than the suggested meaning itself. Because the corpus is small and purposively chosen, the conclusions are framed as case-based propositions rather than universal principles.

Research problem and research questions

Dhvani makes the most important meaning of a poem dependent on a reader's contextual and cultural competence, so that translation into another language and readership threatens to break the link between the verbal trigger and the suggested sense. The study addresses three questions.

1. In what ways does *dhvani* resist transfer from a source poem into a target language?

2. In the case studies examined, which of Lefevere's seven strategies of poetry translation preserve, and which fail to preserve, the different types of suggestion, as shown both in published translations and in modelled alternatives?

3. How does the translator's own interpretive horizon determine which suggested meaning is carried across?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Dhvani in Sanskrit poetics

The primary sources for the theory are Ānandavardhana's *Dhvanyāloka* and Abhinavagupta's *Locana*, accessible in the annotated English translation of Ingalls, Masson and Patwardhan (1990), which remains the standard reference for both texts. Ānandavardhana defines *dhvani* as the kind of poetry in which the word and its literal sense subordinate themselves in order to reveal another meaning (*Dhvanyāloka* 1.13). He distinguishes three kinds of suggested content: a suggested fact or idea (*vastu-dhvani*), a suggested figure of speech (*alaṅkāra-dhvani*) and a suggested emotion (*rasa-dhvani*), of which the last is declared the most essential (*Dhvanyāloka* 1.4–1.5). The famous illustration of the last type is the origin myth of poetry itself:

Vālmīki's grief (*śoka*) at the killing of one of a pair of *krauñca* birds became verse (*śloka*), which shows that emotion becomes poetry only when it is transformed and suggested rather than reported (*Dhvanyāloka* 1.5).

The typology classifies what is suggested, not what does the suggesting. A suggested idea may be triggered by a plain statement, by a figure, or by a situation; conversely, an expressed figure may itself trigger further suggested content. This distinction, elaborated by later theorists, matters for the Tamil case study below.

Modern scholarship has clarified the linguistic basis of the theory. Kunjunni Raja (1969, pp. 275–315) devotes a full chapter to *vyañjanā*, explaining how the *dhvani* theorists argued for suggestion as a separate semantic function (p. 283) and reviewing rival attempts to reduce it to inference, presumption, indication or denotation (pp. 289–302). Gerow (1977) and McCrea (2008) situate the theory within the history of Sanskrit poetics and Kashmiri intellectual culture, Pollock (2016) gathers the key texts on *rasa*, and the essays in Chakrabarti (2016) bring Indian aesthetics into dialogue with contemporary philosophy of art. On the Prakrit side, Ollett (2017) shows how Prakrit verse such as Hāla's anthology functioned within the wider language order of premodern India. These works establish that *dhvani* is a theory of meaning, not merely of ornament, which makes it directly relevant to translation theory.

Implicit meaning in Tamil poetics

Tamil poetics developed its own, independent account of implicit meaning. The *Tolkāppiyam* (*Poruḷatikāram*) distinguishes the explicit comparison (*ēṉai uvamam*), in which a marker such as *pōla* ('like') states that one thing resembles another, from *uḷḷuṟai uvamam*, an 'inner' comparison in which a landscape element (*karupporuḷ*) parallels the human situation without the comparison being stated. It also recognises *iṟaicci*, a further sense that the reader infers from natural imagery without any implied one-to-one comparison. Takahashi (1995) gives the fullest modern account of these categories and their commentarial interpretation; Zvelebil (1973) and Hart (1975) relate them to the conventions of the five landscapes (*tiṇai*); and Wilden (2006), working directly on the *Kuṟuntokai*, analyses the anthology's symbolic code, similes and insets as formal techniques.

Two points follow for this study. First, *uḷḷuṟai* and *alaṅkāra-dhvani* are not equivalent: the former is a type of comparison defined by its unstated status within a landscape code, while the latter, in Ānandavardhana's scheme, is a figure that is suggested rather than expressed. Second, both systems agree that the most valued meaning of a love poem may lie in what its imagery implies rather than in what it states. A. K. Ramanujan's afterword to *The Interior Landscape* (1967) made this second point accessible to English readers by arguing that the external landscape of Caṅkam poems encodes the inner situation of the speakers. In Sri Lanka, the ninth- to tenth-century Sinhala treatise *Siyabaslakara*, modelled on Daṇḍin's *Kāvyādarśa*, shows the early reception of Sanskrit poetics in Sinhala literary culture (Godakumbura, 1955). The problem of suggestion is therefore a regional problem for South Asian translators, though each tradition frames it in its own terms.

Poetry translation in translation studies

Within Western translation theory, the debate about poetry has long oscillated between the impossibility thesis and pragmatic accounts of strategy. Jakobson (1959, pp. 232–239) concluded that poetry permits only 'creative transposition'. Nida (1964, p. 159) shifted attention from formal correspondence to dynamic equivalence, defined by the response a translation produces in its reader; this reader-centred approach is suggestive for *dhvani*, although Nida's orientation towards clarity tends to favour making implicit meaning explicit. Holmes (1988, pp. 23–33) distinguished mimetic, analogical, organic and extraneous approaches to verse form. Venuti (1995, p. 20) framed translation as a choice between domesticating and foreignising strategies, and his later critique of 'instrumental' models of translation (Venuti, 2019) questions the assumption that a source text contains an invariant meaning that can simply be transferred.

Several strands of more recent scholarship bear directly on suggestion. Gutt (2000), applying relevance theory, argues that what a translation communicates depends on the contextual assumptions available to the target audience, and that weakly communicated implicatures are especially vulnerable when contexts differ. Boase-Beier (2006) treats the style of a literary text as a set of cues for the reader's cognitive engagement, including

what the text leaves open. Jones (2011) studies poetry translators' actual decision-making and shows how competing loyalties to sense, form and voice are negotiated in practice. Genette (1997) supplies the concept of paratext (titles, headings, prefaces and notes) that frames a text without belonging to its body, a distinction that proves central in the analysis below.

Lefevere's *Translating Poetry: Seven Strategies and a Blueprint* (1975) is particularly useful because it is both descriptive and evaluative. Taking the sixty-fourth poem of Catullus and its English translations as a test corpus, Lefevere examined seven strategies and weighed the gains and losses of each. His framework has been applied widely to European poetry, but rarely to classical South Asian verse and, to the author's knowledge, not systematically to the problem of *dhvani*.

Research gap

Existing studies of *dhvani* tend to treat it as an aesthetic or philosophical doctrine, while studies of poetry translation tend to measure loss in terms of sound, meter, image and cultural reference. Relevance-theoretic work addresses implicit meaning in general but does not engage the South Asian typology of suggestion. Few studies use *dhvani* itself as a criterion for evaluating actual translations, and fewer combine it with a hermeneutic account of why suggested meaning is unstable across readerships. This article addresses that gap by bringing the *dhvani* typology, and its Tamil counterparts, into dialogue with Lefevere's strategies and Gadamer's hermeneutics, and by testing the resulting criteria on published translations.

Theoretical Framework

Gadamer's fusion of horizons

Hans-Georg Gadamer's *Truth and Method* describes understanding as an event in which the horizon of the interpreter meets the horizon of the text. A horizon is the range of vision available from a particular historical and cultural standpoint (Gadamer, 1989, p. 302). Understanding consists neither in abandoning one's own horizon to enter the author's nor in imposing one's own horizon on the text, but in a fusion of horizons that are never in fact separate and self-enclosed (Gadamer, 1989, p. 306). Gadamer also insists that every translation is already an interpretation, because the translator must decide what the text means before rendering it.

This account helps explain why *dhvani* is a hard case. The expressed words provide a trigger, but the suggested meaning arises only when the reader brings the relevant context. A translator therefore cannot transfer *dhvani* as an object. What the translator transfers is his or her own understanding, and the target reader must then perform a second act of understanding from a different horizon. The more the target horizon differs from the source horizon, the greater the risk that the trigger will fire nothing at all. Steiner's account of the 'hermeneutic motion' in translation (Steiner, 1975, p. 296) develops a similar insight.

Gadamer and the *sahṛdaya*: affinities and differences

The figure of the *sahṛdaya* invites comparison with Gadamer's interpreter, but the two are not interchangeable. This study uses Gadamer as a heuristic for explaining variation across readerships, not as a restatement of Indian theory. Table 1 sets out where the concepts meet and where they part.

Table 1. The *sahṛdaya* and Gadamer's interpreter compared

Point of comparison	***Sahṛdaya* (Ānandavardhana, Abhinavagupta)**	**Gadamer's interpreter**
Where meaning arises	In the meeting of the text's suggestive power and a prepared reader	In the fusion of the text's horizon and the interpreter's horizon
Status of the reader	A normative ideal: a connoisseur whose sensibility is refined by repeated exposure to poetry and by latent impressions (*vāsanā*)	A descriptive condition: every reader has a horizon, shaped by history and prejudice in a neutral sense
Criterion of	Recovery of the suggested sense the tradition	No single correct reading; a text is always

success	recognises; misreading is possible and can be corrected	understood differently by later readers, though not arbitrarily
Role of the self	In *rasa* experience the emotion is generalised (*sādhāraṇīkaraṇa*) and relished beyond the reader's personal circumstances	Understanding always involves application to the interpreter's own situation
Relation to tradition	Competence is acquired within one literary tradition and its conventions	Tradition is the medium of all understanding, including across cultures and periods

The affinities justify the pairing: both reject the view that meaning lies wholly in the words, and both make the reader's preparation decisive. The differences set limits on it. Classical theory supplies a normative target, a recognisable suggested sense that a trained reader should grasp. Gadamer supplies an explanation of why that target shifts when the reader's horizon changes. The analysis therefore uses the *sahṛdaya* to define what a translation should make recoverable, and Gadamer to explain why recovery varies across readerships.

Lefevere's seven strategies

Lefevere's strategies provide the analytical grid. *Phonemic translation* seeks to reproduce the sound of the source while giving an acceptable paraphrase of the sense (Lefevere, 1975, p. 19). *Literal translation* privileges word-for-word semantic correspondence, at a cost Lefevere judged high, since it tends to distort both sense and syntax (p. 27). *Metrical translation* takes reproduction of the source meter as its dominant concern. *Poetry into prose* sacrifices verse form to secure sense, though Lefevere observes that it still distorts communicative value and literary quality (pp. 42–43). *Rhymed translation* imposes a double constraint of rhyme and meter. *Blank verse translation* removes the constraint of rhyme while retaining line structure, allowing greater accuracy. *Interpretation* covers versions, which keep the substance of the source but change its form, and imitations, which produce a new poem related to the source only by title or point of departure (p. 76).

In this study, 'blank verse' is used broadly for line-based, unrhymed English verse, including modern free verse, since few translators of South Asian lyric use metrical blank verse in the strict English sense. The two frameworks are complementary: Gadamer explains why *dhvani* is unstable in translation, and Lefevere organises what translators can do about it.

METHODOLOGY

Design and corpus

The study adopts a qualitative design based on comparative textual analysis of three case studies. It is library-based and interpretive. It does not include interviews with translators, and it does not use the author's own translations as data, since that would make the analyst both producer and judge of the material.

The three source verses were selected by purposive sampling. Each is canonical in its tradition and shows one channel of suggestion with unusual clarity. Verse A, from the Prakrit *Gāthāsaptaśatī* attributed to Hāla, is cited by Ānandavardhana as an example of *vastu-dhvani* (*Dhvanyāloka* 1.4). Verse B, from Kālidāsa's *Kumārasambhava* (6.84), conveys emotion through physical gesture (*anubhāva*) and so exemplifies *rasa-dhvani*. Verse C, poem 40 of the Tamil *Kuṟuntokai*, conveys its central meaning through what an explicit simile implies. Verse C is not presented as *alaṅkāra-dhvani* in the strict sense; the reasons, and its relation to *uḷḷuṟai* and *iṟaicci*, are set out in the Results. The three languages allow a first test of whether the problem is specific to one tradition.

The sample is deliberately small. Three verses cannot establish general laws about seven strategies, and the findings are offered as propositions to be tested on larger corpora.

Published translations examined

For each verse, all accessible published English translations by scholar-translators were examined. Eight translations were included (Table 2).

Table 2. Published English translations examined

Verse	Translation	Form of rendering	Paratext	Nearest Lefevere strategy
A	Ingalls, Masson and Patwardhan (1990)	Line-based English verse	Running commentary on *Dhvanyāloka* and *Locana*	Blank verse with paratext
A	Khoroche and Tieken (2009)	Short line-based renderings of the full anthology	Introduction; poems grouped under thematic headings	Blank verse with paratext
B	Griffith (1879)	Rhymed heroic couplets	Preface; few notes	Rhymed
B	Heifetz (1985)	Line-based free verse	Introduction and annotation	Blank verse with paratext
B	Smith (2005)	Close English rendering facing the Sanskrit text	Introduction; notes	Literal
C	Ramanujan (1967)	Line-based free verse	Speaker title ('What He Said'); afterword on landscape conventions	Blank verse with paratext
C	Shanmugam Pillai and Ludden (1976)	Complete translation of the anthology	Notes on speaker and situation	Literal
C	Wilden (2010)	Philologically literal annotated translation	Critical apparatus, commentary, glosses	Literal with scholarly apparatus

No published exemplars were found for phonemic or metrical translation of these verses, for prose renderings of Verses A or C, or for imitations of any of the three. These cells are assessed as modelled possibilities (see below).

Evaluation criteria

Each rendering, published or modelled, was assessed against four criteria derived from *dhvani* theory.

1. **Trigger retention (C1).** The *vyañjaka* (the word, image, gesture, address or logical gap that triggers suggestion) is present and not replaced or softened.

2. **Non-explicitation (C2).** The body of the poem does not state the suggested sense, for example by adding an emotion word, a motive or an interpretive gloss.

3. **Activation support (C3).** The poem or its paratext supplies enough of the source context for a target reader to infer the suggested sense.

4. **Formal fit (C4).** The chosen form does not introduce padding or a tonal colouring that pre-empts or distorts the suggestion.

Ratings were assigned as follows. *Preserved*: C1–C4 met. *Partial*: C1 and C2 met, but C3 or C4 only weakly met, so recovery depends on reader competence. *Lost*: C1 or C2 failed.

Documented and modelled assessments

Lefevere's categories are applied at two levels, to existing translations and to constructed possibilities. A *documented* assessment (D) rates a published translation that exemplifies a strategy. A *modelled* assessment (M) applies the criteria to the probable effect of a strategy for which no published exemplar exists, reasoning

from the identified trigger and from tendencies documented by Lefevere (1975) and in the D cases. Modelled ratings are hypotheses and are marked as such in Table 3.

Procedure and limitations

Each verse was analysed in four steps: (1) the expressed sense (*vācyārtha*) and suggested sense (*vyaṅgyārtha*) were identified with the help of the commentarial tradition; (2) the trigger was isolated; (3) each translation, and each modelled strategy, was rated against C1–C4; (4) the results were interpreted through the hermeneutic framework. Literal glosses given in this article are analytical aids, not translations.

Three limitations should be stated. The corpus covers three verses and one target language. The ratings were made by a single analyst, so inter-rater checking remains a task for future work. And the modelled ratings, though reasoned, have not been tested against actual translations in those strategies.

RESULTS

Verse A: suggested prohibition (*vastu-dhvani*)

> *bhama dhammia vīsattho so suṇao ajja mārio teṇa* |
> *golāṇaïkacchakuḍaṅgavāsiṇā dariasīheṇa* ||
>
> Sanskrit *chāyā*: *bhrama dhārmika viśrabdhaḥ sa śvā adya māritas tena* |
> *godānadīkacchakuḍaṅgavāsinā dṛptasiṃhena* ||
>
> Analytical gloss: 'Wander about without fear, pious man; that dog was killed today by the proud lion that lives in the thickets on the bank of the Godāvarī.' (*Gāthāsaptaśatī* 2.75; cited in *Dhvanyāloka* 1.4)

The expressed sense is an invitation: the monk who comes to gather flowers may now roam freely, because the dog that used to frighten him is dead. The suggested sense is the opposite, a prohibition. The speaker, understood by the tradition as a woman who meets her lover in the thicket, warns the timid monk that a lion now lives there, so that he will stay away. Ānandavardhana uses the verse to show that the suggested sense can contradict the expressed sense completely (*Dhvanyāloka* 1.4). Three elements trigger the suggestion together: the address *dhammia* ('pious one'), which identifies a timid, ritual-bound listener; the logical gap between the death of a dog and the presence of a lion; and the implied situation of a secret meeting.

Published translations. The Harvard translation (Ingalls, Masson and Patwardhan, 1990) renders the verse in lines and keeps all three triggers. Its interpretive explanation, including the identity of the speaker, sits in the surrounding commentary rather than in the poem. The verse therefore meets C1–C3, and the commentary supplies the horizon a modern reader lacks. Khoroche and Tieken (2009) translate the whole anthology in short lineated renderings grouped under thematic headings. In their arrangement the thematic heading works as the main paratextual cue: it signals the situation of the speaker without stating the prohibition inside the poem. Both published renderings are therefore rated *Preserved*, with the qualification that their success depends on paratext.

Modelled strategies. Phonemic translation is irrelevant to the suggestion here, since sound plays no part in the trigger. Literal translation keeps the triggers, but without paratext a modern reader may take the verse as a plain, even comforting, statement. A rhymed version risks making the speaker sound playful and revealing the trick too early. A prose rendering would usually add the woman's motive, and once the explanation enters the text the suggestion is gone.

Verse B: suggested emotion (*rasa-dhvani*)

> *evaṃvādini devarṣau pārśve pitur adhomukhī* |
> *līlākamalapatrāṇi gaṇayām āsa pārvatī* ||

Analytical gloss: 'While the divine sage was speaking thus, Pārvatī, at her father's side, with lowered face, counted the petals of the lotus she held in play.' (*Kumārasambhava* 6.84)

The divine sage has come to ask Pārvatī's father for her hand on behalf of Śiva. The verse does not say that Pārvatī is shy, joyful or in love. It describes only two actions: lowering her face and counting the petals of a toy lotus. In *rasa* theory these actions are *anubhāvas*, the bodily consequences of an inner state, and they suggest a blend of modesty (*lajjā*), suppressed joy and erotic anticipation, contributing to *śṛṅgāra rasa*. The verse's power lies in its restraint: the more the poet withholds, the more the reader supplies.

The triggers here are visible gestures, which translate easily at the literal level. The difficulty lies in their conventional value. In the Sanskrit horizon, the lowered face (*adhomukhī*) is a codified sign of bashful assent. To a modern English reader, a downcast face may suggest sadness, reluctance or submission.

Published translations. Griffith's rhymed version (1879) shows the predicted loss clearly. To complete his couplet, he adds that she bent her head 'to hide her cheek, now blushing rosy red' and counted the petals 'in sweet maiden guile'. Both additions name what Kālidāsa leaves unsaid: the first supplies the emotion and its motive, the second interprets the gesture as coyness. C2 fails, and the rating is *Lost*. Heifetz (1985) renders the canto in line-based free verse with notes. Reviewers observed that he occasionally inserts a brief explanatory phrase into the line itself (Brockington, 1987); where he does not, his version keeps both gestures without naming the emotion. [AUTHOR CHECK: confirm whether Heifetz's rendering of 6.84 adds any emotion or motive word; if it does, change the rating below to *Lost*.] Smith (2005), printing the translation opposite the Sanskrit, stays close to the source. His version keeps both gestures and the context of the proposal, but leaves their conventional value to the reader Heifetz is rated *Preserved* and Smith *Partial*.

Modelled strategies. Metrical translation faces the same pressure as Griffith's couplets: filling a fixed line invites an adjective such as 'timid' or 'blushing'. Prose tends to explain the emotion outright. A version that keeps both gestures and the marriage proposal visible, and avoids any word naming the emotion, comes closest to preserving the suggestion. The case supports Abhinavagupta's principle that *rasa* cannot be conveyed by naming it.

Verse C: suggestion through an expressed simile

yāyum ñāyum yār ākiyarō
entaiyum nuntaiyum emmuṟaik kēḷir
yāṉum nīyum evvaḻi aṟitum
cempulap peyalnīr pōla
aṉpuṭai neñcam tām kalantaṉavē

Analytical gloss: 'My mother and yours, who are they to each other? My father and yours, in what way are they kin? You and I, how did we come to know each other? Like rain-water on red earth, our loving hearts have mingled.' (*Kuṟuntokai* 40)

The poem by the poet known only as Cempulappeyanīrār, 'the poet of the red earth and the rain-water', is spoken by a man to a woman and assigned to the *kuṟiñci* landscape of lovers' union. Its fourth line contains an explicit simile, marked by *pōla*: the union of hearts is like rain falling on red earth. The suggestion lies in what the simile implies but does not say. Rain on red soil cannot be separated again and takes on the soil's colour, so the union is irreversible and transforming. And because the three opening questions stress that the lovers have no prior kinship, the poem quietly justifies a love made outside family arrangement.

Classification. This verse requires careful classification. In Ānandavardhana's scheme, *alaṅkāra-dhvani* is a figure that is suggested rather than expressed. Here the figure is expressed, so the verse is not *alaṅkāra-dhvani* in the strict sense. What is suggested is a set of ideas (irreversibility, transformation, union without kinship), triggered by an expressed figure. In Sanskrit terms it is better described as suggestion of a fact arising from a figure. Tamil terms point the same way. Because the comparison is stated, the verse is an explicit simile (*ēṉai uvamam*), not *uḷḷuṟai* in the *Tolkāppiyam*'s sense of an unstated, landscape-borne comparison. Its further implications, inferred from the natural image of rain and red soil, are closer to what Tamil poetics calls *iṟaicci*

(Takahashi, 1995). The verse is retained because it tests a channel of suggestion the other two do not: meaning that runs beyond the stated ground of a comparison. The categories are kept distinct rather than treated as interchangeable.

Form is also part of the trigger here. The three parallel questions build a rhetorical sequence that the simile resolves; break the parallelism and the logical link between 'no kinship' and 'inseparable union' weakens. This differs from Verses A and B, where meter plays no role in the suggestion.

Published translations. Ramanujan (1967) compresses the image into a short phrase and does not explain it inside the poem. He keeps the three-question structure, names the speaker in the title ('What He Said'), and explains landscape conventions in his afterword. His title is itself a translation of traditional paratext: the anthology transmits each poem with a colophon naming speaker and situation. The rendering meets C1–C4 and is rated *Preserved*. The image later supplied the title of Vikram Chandra's novel *Red Earth and Pouring Rain* (1995), evidence that it kept its evocative force in English without explanation. Shanmugam Pillai and Ludden (1976) and Wilden (2010) both keep the image and the questions in close renderings supported by notes. Wilden's critical edition places the poem within a full philological apparatus, which gives specialist readers what they need to recover the implications. For general readers, however, a literal rendering may obscure the logical relation between the questions and the simile. Both are rated *Partial* for general readers; Wilden's is *Preserved* for specialist readers.

Modelled strategies. A metrical or rhymed translation would struggle with the extreme compression of the Tamil. A prose translation would almost certainly turn the implied irreversibility into a stated claim. A free imitation risks replacing red earth with a more familiar image, which domesticates the poem and erases the *kuṟiñci* landscape on which its implications depend.

Comparative Findings

Table 3 summarises the ratings. Six of the twenty-one cells rest on published translations (D); the remaining fifteen are modelled (M) and should be read as hypotheses.

Table 3. Effect of Lefevere's seven strategies on suggestion in the three case studies

Strategy	Verse A (suggested fact)	Verse B (suggested emotion)	Verse C (suggestion via expressed simile)
Phonemic	Lost: sound plays no part in the trigger (M)	Lost (M)	Partial: sound of the image only (M)
Literal	Partial: irony hidden from unprepared readers (M)	Partial: gestures kept, cultural value uncertain (D: Smith)	Partial for general readers (D: Shanmugam Pillai and Ludden; Wilden); Preserved for specialists with apparatus (D: Wilden)
Metrical	Partial: risk of padding (M)	Lost when emotion words fill the line (M)	Partial: compression lost (M)
Poetry into prose	Lost: motive explained (M)	Lost: emotion named (M)	Lost: implication stated (M)
Rhymed	Lost: tone becomes comic (M)	Lost: emotion and motive added (D: Griffith)	Lost (M)
Blank verse with paratext	Preserved (D: Ingalls et al.; Khoroche and Tieken)	Preserved if no emotion word is added (D: Heifetz)	Preserved if the parallel questions are kept (D: Ramanujan)
Interpretation (version / imitation)	Partial (version) / Lost (imitation) (M)	Partial (version) (M)	Lost if the image is domesticated (M)

Source: author's analysis, based on Lefevere (1975) and the translations listed in Table 2. D = documented in a published translation; M = modelled.

Three patterns emerge within this corpus. First, the strategies most faithful to sound and meter did not reliably protect suggestion, because in these verses the triggers were mainly semantic and situational. Verse C is a partial exception, since its parallel questions are part of the trigger. Second, the one documented loss (Griffith) and the modelled prose cases share a single cause: explicitation, the addition of emotion, motive or implication to the poem body. Third, line-based unrhymed renderings with paratext performed best in each case where an exemplar exists. That result depends on two conditions: the translator adds no explanatory words to the poem, and, where form carries the trigger, the form is kept. It is a context-dependent tendency, not a guarantee.

DISCUSSION

The case studies support the central argument of this article: *dhvani* cannot be translated as content, but its conditions can be. Because suggested meaning arises only where the text's horizon meets the reader's (Gadamer, 1989, p. 306), a translation succeeds when it keeps the trigger and gives the target reader enough of the source horizon for that meeting to occur. Paratext proved decisive in all three documented successes. A title that identifies the speaker, a thematic heading, a note on landscape convention or a commentary placed after the poem extends the reader's horizon without collapsing the suggestion inside the poem, in Genette's (1997) sense of a threshold that frames a text without belonging to its body.

The Tamil case adds an important nuance. Paratext is not a modern intrusion on these poems: the *Kuṟuntokai* reaches us with colophons that name speaker and situation. Ramanujan's titles translate this native paratext. In this tradition, then, the paratextual strategy recommended here continues the source culture's own way of framing suggestion. Whether the same holds for Sanskrit and Prakrit verse, where the commentarial tradition plays a comparable role, is a question for further study.

The results also qualify Lefevere's evaluations. Lefevere judged strategies largely by their success in reproducing the communicative value of the source as a whole, and he was critical of literal translation (1975, p. 27). For suggestion, literal translation is not the worst option: in every case it kept the triggers intact. The most damaging move is explicitation. This finding complicates Nida's ideal of dynamic equivalence (1964, p. 159). Producing an equivalent response in the target reader is the right goal, but the usual means of achieving it, making implicit information explicit, is what defeats suggestion. The translator of *dhvani* must pursue equivalent effect while refusing equivalent explicitness. Gutt's (2000) relevance-theoretic account reaches a compatible conclusion by another route: when the target audience lacks the contextual assumptions on which an implicature depends, the remedy is to supply context, not to convert the implicature into an explicit statement.

Verse B shows that the problem is not only one of missing knowledge but of conflicting conventions. Griffith's couplet resolves the conflict by naming the emotion, and the suggestion is lost. Venuti's distinction (1995, p. 20) is relevant here. A domesticating translator might replace the lowered face with a gesture that signals shy happiness in English, while a foreignising translator keeps the original gesture and relies on context and paratext. The analysis suggests that, for suggested emotion, foreignisation supported by context is safer, because substituting a gesture changes the network of associations on which the suggestion depends.

Verse C, finally, limits the general preference for unrhymed line-based verse. Where the source's form is itself part of the trigger, as with its three parallel questions, the translator must keep that form even within a free-verse rendering. The recommendation is therefore conditional: free the translation from formal constraints that add words, but keep any formal feature that does suggestive work.

The study returns, lastly, to the *sahṛdaya*. Classical theory presupposes a reader trained within one tradition. Gadamer's hermeneutics allows that requirement to be restated for translation, with the differences noted in Table 1 kept in view. The translator must first become, as far as possible, a *sahṛdaya* of the source tradition. In the translation, he or she must then help form a target reader able to recover the suggestion. That reader will not be a classical *sahṛdaya*, since his or her horizon remains different; the aim is a reader for whom the suggestion is recoverable without being stated. Translation of suggestive poetry is thus also a form of reader-formation.

Strategies for minimising the loss of *dhvani*: a practical guide

The following seven steps are offered as a guide for translators of suggestive poetry. They are drawn from three case studies and should be adapted to the text in hand.

1. **Diagnose before translating.** Identify the expressed sense, the suggested sense and the channel of suggestion (a stated fact, a gesture, a figure, a situation), consulting the commentarial tradition where it exists. Choose a strategy after the diagnosis, not before it.

2. **Locate and protect the trigger.** Isolate the *vyañjaka*, whether a word, image, gesture, address or logical gap, and treat it as the element that must not be lost, replaced or softened.

3. **Do not state the suggested meaning in the poem.** Avoid adding emotion words, motives or explanations to the translated text itself. A suggestion that is stated has ceased to be a suggestion.

4. **Choose a form that does not force additions.** A line-based, unrhymed form often allows semantic accuracy without padding. Where the source's formal features are themselves part of the trigger, as with parallel structure or sound play, keep them even at some cost to smoothness.

5. **Move explanation into paratext.** Use titles, speaker headings, headnotes, endnotes or commentary to supply the cultural horizon the target reader lacks, keeping it outside the body of the poem. Where the source tradition has its own paratext, such as Tamil colophons or Sanskrit commentary, draw on it.

6. **Foreignise culturally coded cues where possible.** Retain source gestures, landscapes and images, and support them with context, rather than substituting target-culture equivalents that carry different associations.

7. **Read the draft as a prepared target reader would.** Test whether a competent target reader, with the paratext available, can recover the suggestion without being told it. If it cannot be recovered, strengthen the context; if it is recovered too easily, remove explanation.

CONCLUSION

This article has examined *dhvani* as a challenge in the translation of poetry. Drawing on Ānandavardhana's account of suggestion, the Tamil categories of *uḷḷuṟai* and *iṟaicci*, Gadamer's fusion of horizons and Lefevere's seven strategies, it analysed three classical verses from Prakrit, Sanskrit and Tamil, each conveying its central meaning through a different channel of suggestion, and compared eight published English translations of them.

In these cases, *dhvani* resisted translation because its meaning lay not in the words but in the interaction between verbal triggers and a reader's contextual competence. The single most damaging move was explicitation: adding emotion, motive or implication to the poem body, as Griffith's rhymed rendering of the *Kumārasambhava* verse shows. Line-based, unrhymed renderings that kept the trigger and placed explanation in paratext preserved the suggestion most often, provided that formal features doing suggestive work were also kept.

The study's contribution is to reposition *dhvani* from an object of aesthetic description to an instrument of translation analysis, and to turn it into explicit criteria that can be applied to actual translations. Its limitations are equally clear. The corpus comprises three verses and one target language; most strategy ratings are modelled rather than documented; and the ratings were made by a single analyst. The findings should therefore be read as propositions for testing, not as general laws.

Further research could apply the criteria to a larger corpus of verses and translations, involve independent raters, and extend the analysis to translation between South Asian languages such as Tamil and Sinhala, where source and target horizons partly overlap. Modern poetry, where suggestion operates without codified classical conventions, offers a further test.

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