

## How do I translate “Evandi” into English?

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**Abstract:** Translation is a challenging process. Finding the true translation equivalent is more challenging. A translator is no less than an artist because he converts a message from a source language into the desired target language without missing the essence in the message. This art can be fruitful only when perfect translation equivalences are located in the target language. For this, thorough knowledge in both the source language and the target language is required. Narrowing down to the topic, the word in question is the Telugu word *Evandi*. This word has a lot of hidden meaning associated with it and its translated version needs to be on par with it. The article is a discussion of the possible translations and an explanation of why they cannot be considered as equivalences. An explanation to the roots of this tradition and the stories associated with it are briefly mentioned in the article. The manner in which women are moulded as submissive beings to their husbands also forms a part of this article. The conclusion would provide a possible solution to the word in question.

**Key words:** Translation, translation equivalent, Indian culture & tradition.

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### I. FULL ARTICLE

Translation is the process of communicating a word or a set of words of a source language by means of an equivalent word or a set of words in a target language. The process gains its value due to the basic fact that the actual sense of the text in a source language need to be delivered literally into the target language. Thus lies the responsibility on the shoulders of the translator as to choose the best or nearest possible equivalent in order to satisfy the norms of translation.

The act of translation is a very sensitive process. It is difficult and easy at the same time. Although the words used in the text of the source language seem to be very ordinary, when the actual act of translating it into the desired target language comes forth, the real problem arises. All the daily used terms do not find an equivalent in every target language so easily. Even if they do, fitting them contextually will become the next challenge. Not all target languages give a satisfactory substitute to certain language-specific words or usages or adages.

Particularly in cultural context, the ideas or concepts refuse to be so easily translated. These terms deeply rooted in cultural contexts may be very simple, apparently. But they defy translation. One such term which creates difficulty in finding a target language equivalent is the most popularly used word in Telugu language – the word “*Evandi*” – it has been used in almost every Telugu speaking household till late 90’s. It is used to address the husband by almost all Telugu speaking Hindu women till recently. The word “*Evandi*” is a term of respect and devotion. “*Suniye*” is a Hindi equivalent to that word. Calling the man in relation to their children, like “*Raju ka Pitaji*” – meaning Raju’s father – is yet another mode of addressing a husband. It becomes easier to translate “*Raju ka Pitaji*” than “*Suniye*” or “*Evandi*”.

The main drawback in translating “*Evandi*” into English is the value system we inherit in Telugu culture – which is totally absent in the English culture. Unlike the “you” used for both second person singular and also plural according to English grammar; in Telugu grammar, we have a singular usage – “*Neevu/Nuvvu*”, a plural usage – “*Meeru*”, and an honorific usage – “*Tamaru/ Meeru*” used both for singular or plural. The honorific usage of “*Tamaru/ Meeru*” has been culturally used to address an elderly person by Telugu speaking people. The concept of honorific addressing is absent in English speech but for the use of a ‘Mister’. ‘*Sire/ Esquire*’, which we often come across in Shakespeare’s plays, has gone out of use towards the end of 17<sup>th</sup> century.

We can see in one of Kamala Markandaya’s novels, *Nectar in a Seive* (1954) that the protagonist, Rukmini, calls her husband as *Nathan* throughout the novel. A short explanation is given at the beginning of the novel by Rukmini, herself, that the word was to avoid using her husband’s name in the several occurrences where she was supposed to call or address him. This novel was also written around the same time where the proposed novel has been written. Hence a comparison may be drawn in the delicacy felt in addressing the husband by name. The term *Nathan* can be equated with the *Naadha* used in Telugu epics. The royal ladies refer

to their husbands as *Naadha*. The nearest English translation equivalent to it can be ‘saviour or protector’. Since one of the duties of a husband is to protect his wife, *Naadha* may be considered a synonym to the word in question – ‘*Evandi*’. All said and done, it is not an English equivalent, so the search for an English translation equivalent is still on.

All the ancient Hindu scriptures and Vedas guided people to worship Mother, Father, Teachers and Guests on par with God-

*Matru devo bhava;*

*Pitru devo bhava;*

*Aacharya devo bhava;*

*Atithi devo bhava.*

Meaning “Mother is equal to God; Father is equal to God; Teacher is equal to God and Guest is equal to God”.

Women, especially, were made to concentrate on a fifth entity – worshipping the ‘Husband’. Women in legends and epics like Anasuya, Ahalya, Taramati, Sita, Savitri, Rukmini were idolized for their unwavering faith and devotion towards their husbands. Anasuya was an extremely devoted and chaste wife of Sage Durvasa and could transform the Holy Trinity into six-month babies, when they seek alms from her with the clause that she donates in nakedness. Ahalya was the wife of Sage Gauthama. When Indra seeks carnal pleasure from her disguised as Gauthama, the latter arrives in time to curse Indra and transform her into a stone. She humbly accepts the punishment and awaits Lord Rama’s chaste touch to be united with her husband. Taramati is the ideal wife of Raja Harischandra, who accepts to be auctioned in the slave market to clear her husband’s debt to Sage Viswamitra. Sita is the noble wife of Lord Rama, who believes that a wife’s rightful place is by her husband, be it in luxuries or in forests. Hence, she follows her husband into an exile for fourteen years. Savitri loses her heart to the exiled Prince Satyavanta, and marries him even on knowing that his lifespan is limited to only twelve months from thence. On the day of doom, she follows Lord Yama all the way to his abode and wins her husband’s life back, thus proving her steadfast devotion towards her husband. Satyabhama donates her husband, Krishna to sage Narada with a prior agreement of buying him back in exchange for gold equal to Krishna’s weight. When she fails to realize that the universal Lord cannot be weighed with mere gold ornaments, she rushes to her co-wife, the chaste Rukmini, who balances the scales with a Basil leaf, proving that steadfast devotion to husband is more worthy than gold.

These tales are all imbibed into the minds of the present-day women ever since their childhood. The tales of *pativrata*s or the chaste women of the epics are the watermarks to be followed. It is with almost the same faith and devotion that women continued to worship their husbands on par with God. All their lives used to revolve around the well-being of the husband and next, his off-springs. This has evolved as an unbreakable convention. This is precisely why it is so crucial to find a justifiable equivalent to the word “*Evandi*” with which the Telugu women so dutifully call out to their husbands.

There are still a considerable number of women, who continue to follow the same tradition in addressing their husbands, but modernity has taken over and women have begun changing their traditional outlook. They have not only modernized physically but also mentally such that they are now calling their men by their name. This is not to be taken as derogatory in any way but as an evolution from the age-old tradition. The novel taken for translation is written in the 1960’s and in it we can find the older generation of women still sticking to the traditional practices.

Now we are back to square one – how do we translate “*Evandi*” into English without losing its original sense and essence? The possible alternatives which may be considered are – calling the husband by his name (the modern way used by all the present-day women), calling him ‘Dear’ (shows love and intimacy, sounding more personal and intimate than social in the Indian context; this will be an inappropriate expression in front of strangers), Mister (to show formal respect; but is it right to call so at home?), Hello (a casual way of calling anybody; this is not a special addressing to be used exclusively for a husband), Listen or Listen here (one can call any stranger whose attention is required, in this manner; which is also a more suitable equivalent of “*Suniye*”), Hey (too casual addressing; used like the one above), Look or Look here (a way of drawing attention; again the same utterance like listen or look here), Sir (to show respect; but Indians call their male teachers as Sir – which does not mean all the male teachers are husbands), Lord (an extreme form of respect equating the husband to God; the former reference to *Nathan* and *Naadha* come under this title). Yet another mode of addressing a husband is by referring to his social status as someone’s father or brother or son and so on. All these are not directly addressing the husband, and cannot even be considered as the names used to address only the husband. To call him just ‘Husband’ would be a mere reference to the relation and nothing more than that.

After pondering over many such alternatives, the best word one could find to translate the word “*Evandi*” would be ‘My Dear Husband’. This word imbibes the love and respect, affection and humility, possession and surrender of power intended by the word in question - *Evandi*. This is the best equivalent this researcher could think of. Can you suggest a better one?

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