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Translating Modern Indian Literature: Bama's Karukku and Sangati

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ABSTRACT

As a discipline, Interpretation studies is nearly new and is still during the time spent planning its region because the method of communicating social components through scholarly interpretation is a confounded task enveloping a summary of encounters: including history, social construction, religion, customary customs, and ordinary use. The interpretation is key to enquiring about one language's tenor into one more without giving the focal felt feelings. It has been observed that interpretation has at any point been rudimentary to Indian English writing. Showing interpretation quickness in India is even a moderately new furthermore, interesting break. Since the vernacular scribbles have been converted into English, it's getting easier for the perusers to figure out the perspective of the scribes. It is the strength of this vernacular pen that makes compositions so powerful in Indian dialects. In the Indian setting interpretation of English colossally works likewise as an understanding as it brings the voices of dissent and those of the inferior too, to the benefit, what's more, the strong testing them in their space. This examination will particularly zero in on Marathi's inferior works converted into English and their impact on the perusers, particularly the writing made by Dalits, one of India's most draining and taken advantage of networks.

Keywords: *Interpretation, Cultural Construction, Religion, Traditions*

1. INTRODUCTION

Translation studies gained serious academic attention in the late 1970s, with growing interest and recognition. Over the past two decades, numerous books and new journals dedicated to translation studies have been published. The field expanded significantly during the 1980s, and by the 1990s, translation studies experienced global growth. This expansion has led to an increasing body of research that reflects a more nuanced approach, especially as historical archives and resources become more accessible. Researchers are now beginning to explore how translation has played a role in shaping the literary canon.

Despite the diverse methods and perspectives in translation studies, a common theme across much of the research is the focus on the cultural dimensions of translation, emphasizing the contexts in which translation occurs. The term "Anuvaad" in Hindi comes from the root word "Vaad," meaning argument or statement, and the prefix "Anu," meaning "following" or "after." Historically considered a sub-field of linguistics, translation is now recognized as an interdisciplinary practice that bridges the gap between language and the broader context of human life. This shift highlights how translation is not just the transfer of texts from one language to another but is seen as an interaction between cultures, where the translator's identity influences the interpretation.

The scholar Homi K. Bhabha views cultural translation as a discursive strategy, a way of negotiating different discourses through various forms of cultural production, including literature, media, and knowledge-making. According to Bhabha, translation is not just a transactional process between texts and languages; it involves movement across genres, symbolizing the broader global context where migration and cultural shifts are constant. In this globalized world, translation is essential for meaning-making, and Bhabha argues that the "in-between" space of translation carries the weight of cultural significance.

It is important to note that the translation of literary works goes beyond academic exercises at secondary school levels. Translation is also a vital cultural act that influences multilingual societies. Translators are increasingly seen as artists in their own right, on par with authors. A successful translation does not merely replicate the original text but reinterprets it to resonate with the target audience. English, being a global language, plays a significant role in translating vernacular narratives, which allows readers worldwide to engage with them.

Translation has always been integral to Indian literature, particularly in Indian English literature. Encouraging translation in India is a relatively new but exciting development. Until the 19th century, Indian literature was largely shaped by creative translations, adaptations, and retellings of sacred texts like the Ramayana, Mahabharata, and works from Sanskrit, Persian, Arabic, and other regional languages. These translations helped to connect diverse communities, languages, and cultures.

As Indian literature continues to grow, translation remains a key tool for preserving and recording cultural histories.

While translation is a creative process, it is also increasingly recognized as an academic endeavor. The rise of both national and international publishers has boosted the volume of translated books, making them accessible to a larger audience. Translators often include glossaries and additional explanations to bridge cultural gaps and make the texts more relatable to readers.

However, it is important to recognize that translated works do not always carry the same weight as original works written in English. Translated literature, especially in languages like Marathi, may not always receive the same recognition or academic attention as English-language works.

The accessibility of translated books is also hindered by high prices and limited availability, which further marginalizes these works. Translation is crucial in ensuring that the emotional essence of one language is preserved in another. In the context of India, translation must also consider caste dynamics, as language varies greatly across caste lines. Higher castes tend to use more sophisticated language, while lower castes may use more colloquial or even derogatory forms of speech. Dalit literature, which emerged as a voice for the oppressed lower castes, has made significant contributions to Indian literary discourse. Works in the dialects of these marginalized communities, such as the Kannada short stories in "Dyavanuru," have sparked controversy and calls for translation into more formal versions of the language.

Language is closely tied to culture, and translating culture-specific terms can be challenging. Certain cultural concepts, deities, and rituals may not have direct equivalents in other languages, posing difficulties for translators. To address these challenges, translators often include footnotes or appendices to explain the cultural context and meanings of terms.

Ultimately, the process of translating vernacular writings into English has made it easier for readers to understand the perspectives of the original authors. The power of these translations lies in their ability to express the voices of protest and the experiences of subaltern communities. This research focuses on the impact of Marathi Dalit literature translated into English, highlighting its influence on readers, particularly in shedding light on the struggles of the Dalit community in India. The term "Dalit," meaning "oppressed" or "crushed," was adopted by the community itself as a self-identifying term. The roots of Dalit literature are still being explored, with significant contributions from the Dalit Panthers movement in the 1970s and writers like Namdeo Dhasal and Arjun Dangle, who were inspired by the works of Jotirao Phooley and Dr. B. R. Ambedkar. Prominent translators from Southern India, such as M. Vijayalakshmi, Padma Ramachandra Sharma, and Lakshmi Holmstrom, have made significant contributions to translating Dalit literature into English, further enriching the field. The detailed exploration of power, gender, and caste within the context of Bama's works *Karukku* and *Sangati* reveals the intricate struggles of Dalit women in India, focusing on their personal experiences and collective resistance to oppressive social systems. The themes in her works are intertwined with the political dimensions of caste, gender, and patriarchy. Through the lens of Bama's writing and its translation, we understand how literature, language, and translation can challenge entrenched power dynamics and give voice to those who have been marginalized and silenced for centuries.

2. BAMA'S LITERATURE: DALIT WOMEN'S STRUGGLES WITH CASTE AND PATRIARCHY

Bama, a Tamil Dalit woman writer, uses her literature to narrate the intersectional oppression faced by Dalit women, particularly focusing on caste and gender. Her works such as *Karukku* (1992) and *Sangati* (2005) deal with the triple burden of oppression — by caste, by gender, and by the structural patriarchy of society. In *Karukku*, Bama's autobiographical narrative gives a detailed account of her personal journey as a Dalit woman within a Christian context, revealing how caste-based discrimination persists even within religious institutions like the Roman Catholic Church. In this novel, Bama describes the struggles of the Dalit community to rise above the social stigma of untouchability and caste exclusion, particularly focusing on the role of women. Her writing reveals how the Church, despite its alleged promise of equality, continues to uphold the social hierarchies of the caste system by favoring upper-caste individuals.

In *Sangati*, Bama extends the narrative by focusing on the collective experiences of Dalit women in her community. These women, despite facing severe social exclusion, violence, and economic deprivation, exhibit resilience. The novel not only emphasizes their suffering but also showcases their rebellion and will to live with dignity. The Dalit women in *Sangati* laugh in the face of adversity, defy social expectations, and create a vibrant cultural identity that resists the crushing weight of caste-based patriarchy.

Through these narratives, Bama presents the struggles of Dalit women against two forms of patriarchy: the one within their own community (patriarchy of caste) and the one imposed by upper-caste society (patriarchy of the caste system). The women's lives are marked by a constant negotiation with power structures — both within and outside their communities.

The Role of Translation in Gender and Caste Discourse

The translation of Bama's works into English by Lakshmi Holmström serves as a bridge between the marginalized voices of Dalit women and the global literary audience. Translation becomes a powerful tool for not just linguistic conversion but also ideological transformation.

Feminist Translation Theory

Translation is not a neutral act. It involves complex processes of negotiation where gender, power, and identity play significant roles. Feminist translation, as explored by theorists like Susan Bassnett, recognizes translation as an act of political mobility. Bassnett proposes an "orgasmic" theory of translation, where the translator's task is not merely to encode and decode language, but to bring about a new creation that respects and enhances the original text. By translating *Karukku* and *Sangati*, Holmström contributes to the feminist movement by ensuring that Bama's female Dalit voices reach a broader audience without losing the power and essence of the original Tamil narrative.

Lakshmi Holmström's Contribution

In her translation of both *Karukku* (2000) and *Sangati**(2005), Lakshmi Holmström tackles the challenge of rendering Bama's Tamil Dalit dialect into English, which is no easy task given the cultural and linguistic nuances. By doing so, she not only makes Bama's work accessible but also preserves its emotional and political potency. Holmström has been praised by Bama herself for maintaining the "pungency" of her original prose in the translation, which reflects the emotional intensity and lived reality of Dalit women.

Gender and Caste in Translation

The act of translating Dalit literature is fraught with specific challenges. The translation of Dalit texts is not just a linguistic exercise; it involves decoding complex histories of oppression and resistance. Dalit literature often challenges dominant power structures and represents marginalized voices, which makes it particularly difficult to translate. Translators must contend with the context of oppression, the subaltern culture, and the nuanced portrayal of caste and gender issues that may not have direct equivalents in other languages or cultures.

Through translation, the gendered and caste-related oppressions articulated in Bama's work are brought into the global conversation, helping to highlight the social realities of Dalit women, who have been historically silenced.

Dalit Feminism and Translation: A Complex Political Task

Dalit feminism, a significant strand of the feminist movement in India, addresses the intersection of caste and gender. Dalit women face a unique form of oppression, where their suffering is compounded by their lower caste status and their gender. In *Karukku* and *Sangati*, Bama does not explicitly use terms like "feminism," "patriarchy," or "casteism," but the struggles she narrates are inherently feminist and anti-caste. Her works implicitly challenge caste-based patriarchy by foregrounding the lives of Dalit women, who have historically been excluded from both mainstream feminist discourse and upper-caste society.

Role of Translators in Dalit Feminism

Feminist translators like Holmström play a crucial role in making these stories accessible to global readers. Their task is not merely to translate the words but to ensure that the social, cultural, and political nuances are preserved. As Bama acknowledges in her preface to *Sangati*, it was through the collaboration of Holmström and editor Mini

Krishnan that her works found a wider audience. This collaboration highlights the role of women in the production, translation, and dissemination of Dalit literature, further emphasizing how women translators have become central figures in making Dalit women's voices heard on the global stage.

The Broader Context of Dalit Literature and Translation

Dalit literature, as a whole, has faced immense challenges in achieving international recognition. Despite its rich narratives and innovative use of language, much of Dalit literature has remained confined to vernacular languages like Tamil, Marathi, Malayalam, and others. The translation of Dalit literature into global languages like English has been a slow process, but it is gaining momentum.

The Painful History of Dalit Writers: Dalit literature is not just a literary genre; it is a response to centuries of oppression. Writers like Sharan Kumar Limbale, Omprakash Valmiki, and others have chronicled their painful histories of untouchability and social exclusion. Valmiki's autobiography *Joothan* is an example of how Dalit writing brings to light the personal and collective struggles of those who have been marginalized. Writing for these authors is an act of both personal catharsis and political resistance. Their works aim to create a space for Dalit voices in mainstream literary and social discourse.

Translation as Discovery and Recovery

The act of translating Dalit literature is often described as both a "discovery" and a "recovery." As Sujit Mukherjee explains, translation allows works that were once hidden or marginalized to be discovered by a wider audience. For Dalit writers, their stories often exist in the shadows of mainstream literature, and translation helps to bring these narratives to light. However, this process is also a recovery — recovering the voices of Dalit writers who have long been silenced or ignored by dominant social and literary institutions.

Challenges of Translating Dalit Literature

Dalit literature has yet to receive the international recognition it deserves. Despite the fact that the Indian Constitution outlawed untouchability in 1950, the caste-based discrimination continues, reinforced by societal norms. Dalit literature, particularly in regional languages, has been highly creative in its narrative structures and use of language, but the translation of these works into English and other global languages is still a limited process. However, the increasing translation of Dalit texts represents a growing recognition of their importance in global literary discourse.

Bama's works, particularly *Karukku* and *Sangati*, offer profound insights into the lived realities of Dalit women, and their translation into English plays a significant role in bringing these voices into the global conversation. Through the careful translation of these texts, particularly by Lakshmi Holmström, the struggles of Dalit women against caste-based oppression and patriarchy are made visible to a wider audience. The translation process itself, rooted in feminist theories of translation, helps to challenge the power dynamics of language, gender, and caste, and positions Dalit women's voices as powerful agents of change.

Dalit literature, though still underrepresented internationally, is slowly gaining the recognition it deserves, and translation plays a crucial role in this cultural shift.

3. CONCLUSION

The Translation has played a pivotal role in the socio-political landscape of India by fostering cultural unity and empowering marginalized communities, particularly Dalits. Through translation, Indian literature has transcended regional boundaries, created a cohesive national identity and facilitated the exchange of ideas and philosophies across cultures. Translation has not only brought global literary masterpieces to Indian audiences but has also served as a crucial tool for amplifying the voices of the oppressed, giving them a platform to be heard. In the context of Dalit literature, translation becomes more than just a linguistic process; it is a powerful instrument of resistance against caste-based discrimination, enabling Dalits to communicate their struggles to a wider audience. Furthermore, translation in Dalit literature is not a neutral act but a politically charged one, as it seeks to preserve the integrity of the original voice while navigating the complexities of cultural and social context. As a cross-cultural event, translation serves as a bridge between diverse cultures and communities, making it an essential tool for promoting social justice, equality, and human rights. Thus, translation becomes not just a means of communication but a dynamic force for social change and empowerment.

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