Of Ravens and Owls: A Methodological Framework for the Historiography of Translation in Marathi

"Marathi literature is so heavily influenced by the foreign literatures that it is not sufficiently influenced by foreign literatures."

– B.S. Mardhekar in 1941 (quoted in Hatkanglekar 308).

Keshavasut (1866-1905), one of the earliest modern Marathi poets 'translated' the famous Edgar Allan Poe poem 'The Raven' into Marathi as '*ghubad*,*'* or the owl. Can the owl be an 'equivalent' for a raven? Can this process of transforming the raven into an owl be called translation? Whatever name one gives for such a process of transformation, they have played a crucial role in developing the language of Marathi poetry towards the end of the twentieth century.

Almost half a century later, the noted bilingual poet and translator Dilip Chitre (1938-2009) translated Baudelaire's poem 'The Owl' into Marathi and discussed it by explicitly evoking the Keshavasut's bird as well as Baudelaire's fascination for Poe (167). Chitre called his translations of international modernist poets into Marathi '*apabhranshas'*. These *apabhranshas* were particularly influential and played a considerable role in the development of the language of modernist Marathi poetry. No history of literature or culture is complete if we do not take this process of transforming ravens into owls, the process of *apabhransha*, into account, as this is the process of artistic innovation and the process of reconstitution of cultural memory.

As E. V. Ramakrishnan (2017) observes, in the context of modernist Indian poetry, translation played an integral role, enacted a critical act of evaluation, a creative act of intervention, and a performative act of legislation in evolving a new poetics during the modernist phase of Indian poetry. Translations interrogated the self-sufficiency of an entrenched Indian poetics (238-239). In fact, this insight is applicable to the analysis of translational acts in the development of the history of Marathi literary culture since the very beginning.

In order to engage with the evolution of Marathi literature and culture, it is critical to move beyond the restrictive understanding of literature as a written or printed object, the notion which itself seems to be *a translation* of the colonial notion of literature. Literature, especially poetry in India, implied performance, music, retelling, improvisation, and transmission of texts through oral traditions. Besides, it was constituted by intensive inter-medial, cross-lingual, and cross-cultural intercourse, in short, by translational activity. We also need to revise our restrictive understanding of translation and equivalence as the setting up of inter-lingual synonymy hounded by questions of fidelity and freedom. This restrictive notion of translation, too, seems to be a colonial import. We need a theoretical framework that allows us to see translation as an inter-medial, intercultural phenomenon inseparable from the questions of cultural memory, artistic innovation, and cultural change. The Soviet school of cultural studies, known as the Tartu-Moscow School of cultural semiotics (or semiotics of culture), developed a full-fledged theory of culture under the leadership of Yuri Lotman (1922-1993) from the late nineteen sixties, which seems to address these complex questions theoretically.

In this paper, I intend to propose and lay out the methodological framework for writing and theorising the history of translation using the cultural semiotics model rather than merely providing a chronological account of the information regarding translation activity in Maharashtra.

1. A Methodological Framework: Semiotics of Culture

Apart from drawing upon the Euro-American developments in semiotics, cultural semiotics also draws upon the soviet intellectual tradition embodied by Vernadsky, Vladimir Propp, Bakhtin, and Prigogine. They also incorporated developments in information theory, cybernetics, biology, complexity, chaos, and system thinking into semiotics. This approach goes beyond some of the limitations of Saussurean structuralist semiotics. The Saussurean approach was founded on the assumption that the only function of any semiotic system was to transfer the message adequately. This model, explicitly formulated by Jakobson (*Closing Statement*), became the basis of most of the later models of communication, which assumed that the addressor and the addressee share not just the same language but also a completely identical code, a common linguistic experience, and identical cultural memory. The most desirable condition for adequate transmission is the complete overlap of codes between senders and receivers of messages. Since this situation is virtually impossible, an intermediary is developed, which Lotman terms the "text-code." The text-code, of which the Bible is the most obvious example, serves an interpretive and prescriptive role in the transmission of texts (1994 377).

Besides, the very idea of code, Lotman notes (*Culture and Explosion* 4), “carries with it the idea of an artificial, newly created structure, introduced by instantaneous agreement. A code does not imply history. That is, psychologically, it orients us towards artificial language, which is also generally assumed to be an ideal model of language. “Language,” albeit unconsciously, “awakes in us an image of the historical reach of existence. Language – is a code plus its history.” A minimally functioning semiotic structure consists of not one artificially isolated language or text in that language but of a parallel pair of mutually untranslatable languages which are, however, connected by a 'pulley', which is a translation (*Universe of the Mind* 2). In Lotman’s framework, the basic unit of meaning generation is a complex mechanism consisting of semiotically heterogeneous *space*, non-identical *agencies*, and cultural histories of the participants involved in the act of communication.

In this *bilingual* model of semiotic communication, translation plays a decisive role in the generation of new information and meaning. In fact, Lotman goes on to define what is ‘new information and new text’ in terms of translation in a bilingual situation: “If the translation of text T1 from language L1 to language L2 leads to the appearance of text T2 in such a way that the operation of reverse translation results in the input text T1 then we do not consider text T2 to be new in relation to text T1” (Ibid 13–14). According to this view, a new text or information is defined as that translated text that, when retranslated into the matrix code or the language, is not identical to the matrix text. He argues that “translation is a primary mechanism of consciousness. To express something in another language is the way of understanding it” (Ibid 127). He also adds that “the elementary act of thinking is translation” (Ibid 143). This understanding of translation goes beyond the restrictive notion of translation as the transfer of information between two natural languages, what Jakobson calls ‘interlingual translation.’ In Lotman’s theory, it is the primary mechanism of consciousness underlying all communication, thinking, and generation of new meaning. In short, Lotman’s theory is not only a theory of what Devy (182) terms ‘translation consciousness’ but consciousness as translation.

Moving away from the mono-lingual orientation of Saussurean semiotics and linguistics, cultural semiotics or semiotics of culture is built on the axiom that no single isolated semiotic system, including natural language, can be functional in itself. It always relies on other semiotic systems for the generation of meaning. Not just that, for a semiotic system to be functional, it has to be immersed in a space made up of heterogeneous semiotic systems and spaces. Such semiotic space is called 'the semiosphere.' Thus, the entire cultural space or 'the semiosphere', instead of individual isolated languages, functions as the generator of meaning.

Semiosphere is the space outside which semiosis or generation of meaning cannot exist. The dynamic semiosphere, whose chief characteristics are internal semiotic heterogeneity, boundaries, and asymmetries, generates meaning, memory, and cultural innovation using translation (from one semiotic system into another relatively incompatible one – across boundaries and asymmetries) as its principal mechanism. This translation operates due to the *tension* between these relatively incompatible languages. Thus, translation is the mechanism underlying communication, creative innovation, and the constitution of cultural memory. The core of the asymmetrical and boundaried semiosphere is made up of metalanguages of self-description. The self-description is always notional and does not accurately reflect semiospheric heterogeneity.

Apart from its potential to cut across the restrictive idea of 'literature' as a static printed object (itself a translation of a colonial counterpart into Indian languages) into the visual, musical, performative expressions of culture, the distinctive emphasis on semiotic polyglottism, multiple cultural boundaries, asymmetries and translation in this theoretical framework makes it valuable for analysis of Indian cultural practices in general, and polyglottism of Indian cultural spaces existing in dialogic relations with other spaces.

Following Lotman (*On the Semiosphere*), we can conceptualise the Marathi semiosphere, which is a part of the 'Indian semiosphere' (for more discussion of 'Indian Semiosphere', see Ketkar, *Translating Darkness into Light* 181–183), made of heterogeneous, interconnected, hierarchic and asymmetrical semiospheres of dialects, castes, villages, cities, and localised spaces which in themselves are heterogeneous, asymmetrical and hierarchic, and where each of them is both a participant in the dialogue and the space of the Marathi semiosphere as a whole. At the same time, the Marathi semiosphere and the Indian semiosphere are a part of the planetary semiosphere.

In *Culture and Explosion* (2004), Lotman postulates that culture and semiotic systems change in two ways: they change gradually, i.e., linearly and predictably, or they change abruptly, non-linearly and unpredictably or, in his terms, "explosively" (7). The relationship between the two processes is dialectical in the case where the semiotic system is a binary one. However, in systems with ternary structures, explosive processes rarely penetrate all layers of culture. As a rule, what occurs in this instance is the simultaneous combination of explosion in some cultural spheres and gradual development in others (Ibid. 172). He notes,

> Culture, whilst it is a complex whole, is created from elements which develop at different rates, so that any one of its synchronic sections reveals the simultaneous presence of these different stages. Explosions in some layers may be combined with gradual development in others. This, however, does not preclude the interdependence of these layers. Thus, for example, dynamic processes in the sphere of language and politics or of morals and fashion demonstrate the different rates at which these processes move. (Ibid. 12)

This theorisation is particularly useful in the analysis of the phenomenon of Indian modernity.

Lotman's model of cultural change goes beyond the simplistic, deterministic, and reductive models of cultural historiography by incorporating the developments from Chaos theory, cybernetics and system thinking. It is not a theory based primarily on discontinuity like Thomas Kuhn or Foucault, nor is it based on the linear deterministic continuity of traditional historiography. Unlike Kuhn or Foucault, it also seeks to describe and explain the mechanisms underlying cultural change. The historical consciousness retrospectively removes the role of unpredictability and chance. He points out, "In this way a radically transformative event occurs: that which occurred, as we have seen, by chance, now appears to be the only possibility. The element of unpredictability is substituted in the mind of the observer by an element of regularity. From this point of view, the choice was fictitious; in "objective" terms it was predetermined by the entire cause-effect motion of the preceding events" (Ibid. 14–15). Lotman notes that "the historian may be compared with the theatrical spectator who watches a play for the second time: on the one hand, he knows how it will end and there is nothing unpredictable about it for him" (Ibid. 126).

Historians, according to Lotman, are condemned to deal with texts which are already made of narrativised, interpreted, and selectively organised information, in short, 'translations' of what had happened. Historiography, according to this framework, would be itself a translational activity, an activity of translating the texts from the past into the conceptual metalanguages of the present moment and thus subtly reconstructing the past in the present for the future, in short, a programmatic and ideological activity. It becomes possible to see a historian as a translator. From a cultural semiotic perspective, all historiography is the historiography of translation and historiography as translation. This formulation allows us to pose the question: why do we need a history of translation in India now? What sort of image of the past do we want to construct by translating our cultural archive into the languages of the present? What sort of cultural memory do we want to constitute? From the perspective of the semiotics of culture, the cultural historiography of India is understood simultaneously as a history of translation as well as the project of self-description that seeks to reconstitute cultural memory and identity as Indians. In the contemporary context when the forces of globalization seek to impose a homogenous and dehistoricized global culture on planetary cultural diversity on the one hand, and the forces of cultural nationalism seek to enforce the idea of homogenous, ahistorical, Hindu nationalist notion of culture on civilizational diversity of the subcontinent on the other, this cultural semiotics perspective of ourselves that foregrounds our ' translational self' is invariably bound to have a critical political dimension.

2. Translation in Pre-colonial Marathi Semiosphere

Anne Feldhaus (1986), in her discussion on the development of the concept of Maharashtra and the tradition of Maharashtrian regional consciousness, has pointed out that some historians have seen the rise of this idea and consciousness as a nineteenth century phenomenon. Others see it as having its roots in the seventeenth century Maratha 'nationalism' or 'Maharashtra dharma' preached by Shivaji's contemporary saint Ramdas. The idea can actually be traced to the Old Marathi literature of the Mahanubhavas in the thirteenth century. She notes that the *sutras* from the *Sutrapatha*, the late thirteenth or fourteenth-century collection of the sayings of Chakradhar, the founder of the Mahanubhava sect, refer to Chakradhar saying, "Stay in Maharashtra, do not go to the Kannada country or the Telugu country" (Feldhaus 536) The sutras also use the phrase "*deshacha shevat"* or "the end of the land" as an area where Marathi and other languages intermingle. In terms of cultural semiotics, this emergence of a distinctive Marathi semiosphere divided asymmetrically into 'us' and 'them' and separated by a bilingual boundary seems to be a thirteenth century phenomenon.

Cultural semiotics also sees the semiosphere as a heterogeneous space with *internal* asymmetry and internal boundaries. This helps us to understand the cultural politics behind the Mahanubhava sect's decision to encrypt their texts into a specially invented script called 'sakala'. It can be seen as an attempt to limit their cultural space by restricting access to their texts in order to escape persecution from the upper-caste Hindus in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. It consequently led to pushing themselves into the margins of the Marathi cultural memory, only to be retrieved in the mid-twentieth century when the script was decoded.

From this perspective, the works of writers like Mukteshwar, Dnyaneshwar, the Varkaris, and the poets of the Mahanubhava sect, which are retellings and commentaries on the classical Sanskrit texts and narratives like the *Bhagwad Geeta* and the *Rukmini Swayamwar* in the language of non-literate masses that had no access to Sanskrit manuscript-based traditions can be conceptualised as translations across asymmetrical and hierarchic languages and spaces, and creative innovations at the same time. The language into which these manuscript texts were translated used primarily the folk, oral and performative meters and genres, thus shifting the space of the elite texts into non-elite spaces.

Dnyaneshwar's celebrated commentary on the *Bhagwad Geeta* in the late thirteenth century can be seen as constituting the text as the core text in the memory of the Marathi-speaking community that had no access to the older Sanskrit text, and thereby constructing cultural memory. In fact, even the phenomenon of 'bhakti' as Christian Lee Novetzke has argued, can be understood not so much as a "movement" or "personal devotion" but as an "ongoing effort to construct publics of belief, maintained through intricate systems of memory" (xi).

Dhyanadev's use of the folk *ovi* meter for his *bhashya* of the Sanskrit text can be simultaneously read as the Brahmanisation or Sanskritisation of the folk or as a democratisation of the spiritual canon, though the use of *ovi* dates back to the Mahanubhava compositions. Dnyaneshwar is forging a new language for literary composition in Marathi which becomes a model for the later '*bhashya-teeka*' of the *Geeta*. It set a model for the long and seminal tradition of bhashyakaars or commentators on the *Geeta* like Dasopanta in the sixteenth century, Waman Pandit and Tukaram in the seventeenth century, and Amber, among others. The text, in fact, becomes what Lotman has termed a 'text-code' (for a more detailed discussion on the *Dnyaneshwari* as a translation, see Ketkar, *Dnyaneshwar's 'Duji Shrushti'*).

Dasopant (1551–1615) is reported to have composed around five commentaries on the Geeta, out of which *Geetarnava* and *Geetarthachandrika* are available. His *Geetarnava* is a long commentary on the *Geeta* in about one lakh and a quarter ovees. Waman Pandit's (1608–1695) *Samashloki* translation of *Bhagwad Geeta* is known as *Yathartha Deepika*. He claims to be more precise than Jnaneshwara, Dasopanta, and others. *Yatarthadeepika* is three times the length of *Jnaneshwari* and emphasises Knowledge instead of Bhakti. Father Stephens (1549–1619), who composed the *Christa Purana* in Marathi, was also deeply influenced by *Dnyaneshwar.*[1] In Lotman's terminology, *Dnyaneshwari* can be seen as introducing 'explosive' changes, i.e., unanticipated and abrupt changes in the language of Marathi poetry. Creativity and innovation in the cultural semiotics models are products of the translational mechanism.

After the fourteenth century, the Persian and Arabic lexis and idioms entered the language of Marathi poetry under the rule of Sultans and as a consequence of the altered structure of the Marathi semiosphere under Islamic rule. Eknath's famous experiment of using the folk genre of *bharuds* to propagate Vaishnavism and Vedanta could be seen as a

translation of the philosophical discourse in Marathi into the folk idiom and language of the *bharuds* and consequently making inroads into marginal cultural spaces made up of a different audience.

Likewise, the school of narrative poetry '*akhyana* tradition' started by the Mahanubhava composers flourished in the sixteenth century with Eknath's influential retelling of the Puranas and the Itihasa in Marathi can be seen as constituting the memory of the community through its dialogic and translational interaction with the older texts on the one hand, as well as developing newer language of the genre of narrative poetry on the other. Eknath, Dasopanta, Rama Janardan, Jani Janardana, and Vitha Janardan are known as 'Natha Panchayatan'. Vishnudas Nama wrote the lives of the saints and is probably the first poet to render all the eighteen *parvas* of the Mahabharata into Marathi. The cultural semiotic perspective, which emphasises the agency and historical nature of the audience's memory, also helps us understand why in Mukteshwar's *Mahabharata*, a product of the seventeenth century Marathi semiosphere, the Pandavas are shown at war not just with the Kauravas but also with the Turks and the Europeans.

The Marathi prose genre of the Bakhars (inversion of 'khabar'), which gave accounts of battles, orders, and instructions of the political and administrative kinds, can be seen as an innovation brought about by the 'translation' of the '*tawarikh'* genre used in the Sultanate courts and also as an attempt to constitute the cultural memory by recounting significant historical events and personages. The translational process can be seen in producing the text-code for the *bakhars* (for a more detailed discussion on the *bakhar* genre, see Ketkar, *Critical History of Marathi Literature*).

There was a revivalism of Sanskritised poetics and idiom under the Brahmin rulers, the Peshwas in the eighteenth century. Brahminism at the core of Marathi literature and culture was strengthened during this period. According to cultural semiotics, the division and asymmetry between the core and the periphery is a law of the internal organisation of the semiosphere. The core generates a self-description of who 'we' are and the boundary which separates 'us' from 'them'.

3. Translation and Semiosphere of Colonial Modernity

Efforts to consciously generate 'national' culture on the Indian subcontinent can be traced to the colonial period and are intimately connected to the project of anticolonial nationalism and modernity. As Benedict Anderson demonstrates, the establishment of print capitalism, which allowed people to 'imagine' a community called a nation, also resulted in the standardisation of vernaculars (38–42). The processes of standardisation of Indian languages, the consolidation of the idea of the 'nation,' the proliferation of prose, and the emergence of anticolonial modernity seem to be interconnected semiotic processes.

The nineteenth century colonial culture and the rise of modernity and nationalism in Maharashtra have been more elaborately researched and documented compared to the pre-nineteenth century. Ellen E. McDonald (1968), in her analysis of the modernising of communication due to vernacular publishing in nineteenth century Maharashtra, draws upon the theorisation of Karl Deutsch and provides an account of how nationalism in Maharashtra was a product of the system of communication through which Marathi social groups perceived their common interests and membership.

The Marathi semiosphere developed in a dynamic asymmetrical relationship between the colonisers ("them") and "us," generating new external boundaries between the colonising culture and colonised on the one hand, and new equations and patterns of *internal* boundaries, heterogeneities, and asymmetries as well. Modernity, according to the cultural semiotics model, is no longer a singular secondary modelling system or code that pervades or would pervade the entire cultural space. Rather it could be seen as a translational phenomenon, i.e., a phenomenon produced by the semiotic mechanism of translation, generating new information or explosive changes in some layers, which in ternary structures such as India, changes would hardly penetrate all the layers in the same dramatic way.

Theorists such as Partha Chatterjee note how the Euro-American models of modernity and nation were not adopted wholesale as Benedict Anderson's analysis of nationalism and modernity seems to imply but adopted strategically by dividing the culture into 'spiritual-inner-essential' domain and 'outer-material' domain and asserting anticolonial sovereignty in the domain of the former. From the point of view of cultural semiotics, one can say that 'the anticolonial nationalist model' of Indian culture was constructed with the idea of spiritual sovereignty at its core. This is not surprising given the nature of the cultural hegemony of upper castes during this period. As McDonald points out that while colonialism sharply reduced the powers of the traditionally literate high caste groups associated with the preceding Indian governments of the region, the members of these groups remained in the leading communicative positions in the new general communicative genres and played a pivotal role in furthering the growth of a network of new institutions of vernacular communication in the form of the periodical press. These massive structural changes in communication did not result in widespread changes in the social character of communicative leadership.

The core of the semiosphere, which generates the self-description of who 'we' are, remained in the hands of the traditionally literate Brahmin castes. This core was built on the exaltation of what Ramanujan (348), following Singer and Redfield, would call the 'great traditions' or high-textual '*margiya'* traditions, which are pan-Indian. The language of self-definition of the anticolonial nationalist model of Indian culture is largely in terms of the Sanskritised and Brahminical views of culture. This model was built not only upon the bilingual boundary of the coloniser-colonised but also the internal boundaries separating the 'materialistic' activities from the 'spiritual' ones. However, this new asymmetry produced a new figure on the cultural scene: the English-educated upper-caste bilingual intellectual who was simultaneously on the boundary of the colonising culture and at the core of colonised Marathi semiosphere. This bilingual intellectual was a critical agent in the creation of translation culture in the nineteenth century.

As Veena Naregal has shown, the political agenda and the cultural strategy of the upper caste colonial intellectual shifted in the latter half of the nineteenth century. While in the early part of the century, these bilingual intellectuals predominantly tried to address, in Naregal's words, "a wider audience for the radical discourse of modernity," in the latter half of the century, they developed a "distinctive awareness of the political influence to be derived from their positions as mediators, that they preferred to assiduously employ their privileged educational training to publicise effectively their own particular assessment of colonial power" (3450). Naregal also shows how this colonial intelligentsia progressed in their ambitions to acquire a positional hegemonic influence. She notes that after the 1860s, the emphasis was not so much on dissemination but on defining the norms of a 'high' vernacular literary canon of Marathi writing and its past. She says, "Such attempts to articulate a collective self-identity of the Marathi people were part of the vernacular intelligentsia's ambition to assert their exclusive right to speak behalf of the modern Marathi community. These efforts to define a relatively homogenous literary/cultural identity through vernacular were part of a larger

ambition – to assert representative claims over the numerically significant, non-English-educated 'public'" (3451).

Historically speaking, as Maya Pandit has pointed out, the translation activity during this century can be understood as undergoing three phases: during the first phase, between 1818 and 1850, the emphasis was on the instructional and moral purpose of the translation; in the second phase, between 1850 and 1874, the emphasis was on 'literary' translation, and in the third phase, between 1875 and 1900, there was a greater self-consciousness and rethinking of translation strategies and standards for translation. The shift in emphasis can be seen as linked to the shifting cultural and political agendas of the bilingual intellectuals in this period. Sunil Sawant has demonstrated how the Marathi literary polysystem emerged in this century by developing a heterogeneous, hierarchical subsystem of translation culture and how it was comprised of the emergence of three new models of translation during the nineteenth century: 1) the missionary (objective: proselytising); 2) the pedagogical (objective: enlightenment) and 3) the adaptive (objective: entertainment).

In the early phase, the emphasis is on what Sawant calls the pedagogical or proselytising intention behind translation. During this phase, various influential institutions and organisations like Fort William College and The Royal Asiatic Society in Kolkata, The American Mission, the Scottish Mission, and The Bombay Native Education Society in Bombay were established, which played a considerable role in the establishment of vernacular modernity and literary culture in India. The Missionaries at The Serampore Mission near Kolkata wanted to acquaint themselves with Indian languages and use them. They establish a press, and under the guidance of Dr. William Carey, they start working vigorously on a Marathi dictionary with the help of pundits. Dr. Carey published *A Grammar of the Marhatta Language* in 1805, *The Gospel of St Mathew* in 1805, *The Bible* in 1807, *Sinhasan Battishi* in 1814, and *Panchatantra* in 1815. The Bombay Native Education Society published a Marathi Dictionary in 1829, which was followed up by the great Molesworth dictionaries. Production of these dictionaries helped to develop the modern bilingual-meta language of lexicography and also facilitated the formation of modern languages of sciences, social sciences, and political and cultural discourses. It was in the early phase that Balshashtri Jambekar (1812–1846), influenced by the Bengal Renaissance, started a bilingual daily named *Darpan* in 1832 and later *Prabhakar,* a weekly in 1840. The emergence of the vernacular press laid the foundation for the formation of modern prose in Marathi. The underlying mechanism of translation, as described by Lotman, is at work in the development of modern languages in Maharashtra.

In the second phase, noted by Pandit, the emphasis is on the 'literary' translation, and the emphasis moves to what Sawant has termed 'adaptive' translation, whose intention is primarily to entertain. In 1841, Hari Keshavji translated Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* as *Yatrik Kraman*. Translations of *Gulliver's Travels, Robinson Crusoe, Paul and Virginia,* and *Arabian Nights* appear. Krishnashashtri Chiplunkar (1824–1878) translated Samuel Johnson's *Rasselas* as well as Kalidasa and Jagannath Pandit.

Hari Narayan Apte (1864–1919) wrote his first novel, *Madhli Sthiti*, in 1885. An adaptation of W.M. Reynold's *Mysteries of London*, the author depicted the paradox of western notions of modernity and the depravity of orthodoxy in Pune of his times. His first historical novel *Mysorecha Wagh* (1890), is a translation of Meadows Taylor's English novel on Tipu Sultan. Parshuram Tatya Godbole, who sought to revive old Marathi poetry by starting a periodical named *Sarvasangraha*, also brought out an anthology of Old Marathi poems called *Navneet* (1854), which was used as a textbook in schools and colleges. He also translated from Sanskrit drama. These adaptations and rewritings played an important function in developing the language of modern Marathi fiction and drama.

During the third phase, K. K. Damle 'Keshavsut' (1866–1905) translated from Palgrave's *Golden Treasury* and indigenised the sonnet form. Keshavsut's rendering of many poems from the *Treasury* towards the end of the nineteenth century can be studied as an attempt to establish and develop the language of modern Marathi poetry by establishing the 'text-code' or texts which function as codes in cultures that do not have such codes. Keshavasuta's bilingualism and translational intelligence are critical to the development of the language of modern Marathi poetry.

At the same time, Bengali, along with Sanskrit, played a vital role in the development of Marathi culture. K. R. Mitra (1871–1920) ran a highly reputed periodical called *Manoranjan* (1895–1935), which provided a generous platform for translations from Bengali. His love for Bengali can be understood by the fact that he changed his surname from Ajgaonkar to Mitra. There was a trend to have Bengali surnames. It seems that the Bengali language and culture became a sort of successful model of Indigenised cultural modernity for Maharashtrians as well as for many other cultures in India. I have tried to conceptualise this larger transregional presence of Bangla literature and culture on the Indian subcontinent using the notion of 'the Bangla Cosmopolis' (see Ketkar, *Calcutta Collage*). Turning to the fiction of this period, Vasant Bapat notes that between 1874 and 1920, the figures of novels translated from other languages into Marathi are: Tamil-1; Urdu-2; Gujarati-5; Hindi-13; Bengali-59; English-98. This analysis is indeed significant. It shows that Bengali novels enjoyed popularity only next to English. The credit for introducing the earlier Bengali novelists goes to a number of writers like Kashinath R. Mitra, Vitthal Seetaram Gurjar, and Vasudeo Govind Apte, but especially to Apte, for he translated the entire repertoire of Bankimchandra with almost a missionary zeal.

B. V. Warerkar or Mama Warerkar (1883−-1964) is a major translator, novelist, and playwright. He wrote 28 Novels and 40 translations, mostly from Bengali. His translations of the novels of Saratchandra Chatterjee were quite influential in the development of Marathi fiction. Warerkar, too, displayed the same when it came to translating Saratchandra. He translated almost all of Saratchandra's works. The Saratchandra translations played a significant role in the development of the language of Marathi fiction, as can be seen in the works by later novelists like G. N. Dandekar and S. N. Pendse (see Bapat).

Along with Bengali fiction, Shakespeare was a major presence in Marathi. About sixty-five translations of Shakespearean works appeared between 1867 and 1915, and they transformed the Marathi stage (Rajadhyaksha). In the same period, plenty of Sanskrit plays were also translated. The impact of Shakespearean characterisation, poetry, plot construction, and stagecraft was immense. Shakespearean translations, along with translations from Sanskrit, played a formative role in the development of the language of theatre in Marathi, as in many other languages. Thus, cultural innovation goes hand in hand with the constitution of cultural memory or tradition. Both these processes are produced through translational mechanisms.

During the third phase, as noted by Pandit, there was a greater self-consciousness and reflexivity regarding translation. We see the emergence of translation theory and criticism with the noted Marathi essayist, scholar, and translator Vishnushashtri Chiplunkar (1850–1882), whose essay '*Bhashantar*' appeared in *Nibandhmala*, Book 1, and the twelfth issue in December 1874. This essay is one of the earliest theoretical writings on translation in Indian languages and therefore is of immense importance to the historian of translation in our country.

Chiplunkar's agenda is not only to defend the Marathi language against unjust comparisons with English as was common during the period but to promote the development of Marathi as the language of modern knowledge (for more elaborate discussion on Vishnu

Sashstri Chiplunkar, see Ketkar, *Critical History of Marathi Literature*). Chiplunkar goes on to defend Marathi against the criticism that it is a poorer language compared to English by saying, "just as the fact that some food items grow there (in the West) and do not grow here (in India) does not make our country pauper, in same way the fact that certain ideas and thoughts are unknown here does not make our country a poorer one." Translation, for him, was a tool for modernising Marathi and a process of generating new languages of sciences and technology. Hence, he gives as much importance to technical translations as to the translation of literary texts. Chiplunkar believed that technical texts are easier to translate than literary ones. He comments on a very important aspect of the translation of technical texts: finding Marathi equivalents for technical terms in English. He recommends generous use of Sanskrit and cautions that the technical equivalents in Marathi should not be too familiar and colloquial.

Elsewhere, Chiplunkar has remarked that the dearth of translations into Sanskrit was due to the fact that it was extremely rich and had no need to take anything from other languages and that the word *bhashantar* did not exist in classical Sanskrit simply because Indians then had all the knowledge available in Sanskrit and did not have any need for translations (Phadke 48). The glorification of Sanskrit and Sanskritic heritage, while discrediting other languages, exposes the casteist outlook of a certain form of nationalism represented by Chiplunkar.

As Naregal points out, Chiplunkar's "trenchant, exclusivist, upper caste claim to define the collective identity and the boundaries of the vernacular sphere [...] stemmed from a deeply fraught position. Indeed, there were signs that upper-caste attempts to assert their dominance by articulating 'Marathi' identity were not backed by an underlying social consensus" (3452). This is visible in Chiplunkar's vicious and abusive attacks on most reformers, including Jotiba Phule. He criticises the annual report of Phule's *Satyashodak Sabha* for not conforming to the norms of the current literary poetics. This fraught position emerges due to the internal asymmetry and heterogeneity of the Marathi semiosphere that produces a contradiction due to the development of the core.

As Lotman points out, the core, which provides a self-description of who 'we' are, generates a world-picture and a model of the universe. The world-picture created in this way (by the development of the core) will be perceived by its contemporaries as reality. However, the relationship of this metalevel of the semiosphere to the real picture of its semiotic 'map' on the one hand and to the everyday reality of life on the other will be complex. He notes that at the core, where the self-description originated, the self-description, in fact, represents "an idealisation of a real language" then, on the periphery of the semiosphere; this ideal norm will be a contradiction of the semiotic reality lying 'underneath' and not a derivation from it.

4. Translation and the Postcolonial Semiosphere

Following the events like the Partition and the Independence, the gap and the mismatch between the anticolonial nationalist model of Indian culture and the historical realities became sharply pronounced. The relationship between the metalevel of the core self-description of the semiosphere and the everyday reality of life became deeply conflictual.

In the mid-twentieth century, with the poetry of B. S. Mardhekar (1909–1956), the modernist code exploded on the Marathi scene. This code was constituted by the translation of the language of Euro-American avant-gardes, like surrealism, imagism, and so on, into the language of modern Marathi poetry. It also questioned the self-description of nationalist romanticism by translating the dark degraded world of urban squalor, explicit sexuality, and despair into the language of lyrical sentimentality of the culture's 'core' poetics that has

dominated the modern Marathi poetry (for a more detailed discussion on Mardhekar and the Avant-garde Marathi poetry, see Ketkar, *Laughing Skeletons and Aging Metaphors*).

The Mardhekarian avant-garde tradition was continued by many major Marathi poets like Arun Kolatkar (1932–2004), Dilip Chitre (1938–2009), and Vasant A. Dahake (b. 1942). Dilip Chitre's influential *'Apabranhshas'* of major Western modernist poets like Baudelaire, Rilke, Eliot, Stevens, Neruda, Paz, and Vallejo into Marathi along with critical commentaries at the beginning of the 1960s can be interpreted as an attempt to establish and develop a modernist language by establishing modernist 'text-codes' in the altered semiosphere of Marathi which had indigenised the western poetics through the semiotic translational mechanism.

In another work (see Ketkar, *Self-Translation as Auto-communication*), I have attempted to show that while bilingualism and translation, in the broadest semiotic sense of the terms, are intrinsic to any creative phenomenon and any communication according to Lotman, the Anglo-Bhasha self-translations of literary texts are distinctive historical products of the postcolonial 'semiosphere', hence caught up in the politics of identity, cultural asymmetry, and cultural change. The Anglo-Bhasha bilingual writers situated on the boundary separating English and the Bhashas were critical agents in generating not only modernity but also providing a 'self-description' of who we are culturally. They found themselves embodying this boundary within and without. In a sense, the act of self-translation is an act of what Lotman calls 'auto-communication', where although the addresser and the addressee of the communication are the same people, the act subtly transforms the personality of the subject. Self-translation as a cultural phenomenon can involve not just bilingual individuals; the entire culture can generate new information for itself and restructure its own personality. In the historical context of colonialism and its aftermath, this generation's new information and restructuring of personality describe the phenomenon of modernity. As the bilingual writers were the upper caste elites generating 'self-description' of the semiosphere, this theorisation may help us to understand how the emergence of modernity and reformulation of identity in the nineteenth century was a form of self-translation not just by the individuals but by the entire culture. It was not derivative but a creative journey of self-discovery and self-reformulation by a culture in conversation with itself. The cultural semiotics perspective would shed further light on the creative or 'incestuous' processes of cultural change and modernity.

Mardhekar's novels like *Ratricha Divas* (1942), *Tambdi Maati* and *Maati* (1943) introduced modernist devices into Marathi literature in a significant way: the stream of consciousness, interior monologue, absence of conventional plot, psychoanalytical view of the characters, and the existential themes of alienation, dehumanisation, mechanisation social fragmentation, and sexual despair. This modernist idiom in fiction was further developed by later writers like C. T. Khanolkar, Bhau Padhye, G. A. Kulkarni, Dilip Chitre, Vilas Sarang, and Kiran Nagarkar. The nativist accusation that the modernist code in India is a derivative one and hence inconsequential to Marathi culture is inaccurate and chauvinist. The modernist code, like the code of realism, is a product of underlying semiotic translational mechanisms like any innovative cultural practice anywhere in the world.

It is in the space opened up by Mardhekar's radical poetics that the little magazine movement's non-conformist, urban, sexually explicit, and politically charged practices, such as Dalit literatures, could develop after the 1960s (for a more detailed discussion on Dalit literature using the semiotics of culture approach, see Ketkar, *In the Organized Harem of the Octopus*). However, this modernist code was as elite, Savarna, and masculinist as the pre-modernist colonial modernity of earlier Marathi poetry. In the context of the Marathi semiosphere, as of many other semiospheres in India, the 'core' has been monopolised by the elite minority comprising of Savarna, upper and middle classes, patriarchal hetero-

normative languages and idealised cultural spaces, who have defined what Marathi culture is and "who we are" for Maharashtrians, and generated what cultural semiotics would term as 'the world picture' and the hegemonic notions of 'what reality is' for the Maharashtrians for a long period of time.

Some noteworthy developments in the field of translation and literary culture of the post-independence period include the establishment of national organisations like the Sahitya Akademi, National Book Trust, Children's Book Trust, and Maharashtra Sahitya and Sauskrutik Mandal in the fifties and the sixties. Translation is an important component of their activities. Apart from these, United States Information Services (USIS) and the Soviet Centre for Culture promoted their literatures by getting their important writers translated into Marathi and other languages as part of the Cold War cultural rivalry.[2] How the geopolitics of colonialism, the Cold War, or the post-Cold War phenomenon of globalisation shaped the regional or the local is a critical question. Whether we are looking at the pre-colonial Marathi semiosphere, the colonial semiosphere, the postcolonial semiosphere, or the globalised semiosphere, it is important to understand that the Marathi semiosphere cannot be understood in isolation from the 'Indian' semiosphere, which again cannot be understood in isolation from the planetary semiosphere at any point of time.

The postcolonial model of Indian culture continued its anticolonial thrust on the one hand and emphasised the democratic and inclusive aspects on the other. It started defining itself on the regional, the local, the 'desi' or 'little traditions', especially the folk and the performative ones, which were excluded from the high textual elite traditions. The language of the postcolonial model of Indian culture was the regional language. The various movements for the linguistic reorganisation of the states, the complex politics of scripts, and linguistic chauvinism that followed independence can be interpreted from this viewpoint. The great obsession of many Indian English writers like A. K. Ramanujan, Dilip Chitre, and Arun Kolatkar with Bhakti poetry, the great treasure of the bhashas, also has to be seen in the light of this shift in the language of self-definition following independence. The rise of various kinds of nativist movements, the desiwadi movements, like in Marathi, and the 'Parishkruti' movements in Gujarati; the search for 'indigenous modernity' and self-definition of an 'authentic' Indian in terms of the dialects (as against standard languages), folk and performative traditions instead of textual traditions seem to characterise the postcolonial model of Indian culture. The agenda proposed by noted critics like Namwar Singh in Hindi, Bhalachandra Nemade in Marathi, and Ajit Thakor in Gujarati can also be understood in this context. However, the region is rampant with casteism, feudalism, misogyny, and communalism rather than being a reservoir of the 'authentic' Bhakti values. The idealisation of the regional identity found in the self-description of nativist thinking is inconsistent with the everyday lived realities of the region.

In the age of globalisation, both the models of national culture: the anticolonial model of national culture, which describes itself in terms of spirituality and *margiya* traditions as well as the postcolonial model of culture, which describes itself in terms of regional 'roots' and identity, appear to be irrelevant to the lived realities of contemporary culture. However, these languages have not disappeared or lost their function from the Indian semiosphere. These languages are being driven to the margins.

Obviously, the market is the most important driver behind literary translation projects in globalised India today. Many non-government and commercial enterprises are engaged in translation activity in India, as in Maharashtra. Newer publishing houses like Mehta Publishing House, Shrividya, and Rajhans, along with traditional publishers like Mauj, Popular, Majestic, and Continental Publishers, are involved with publishing translations. Translations of best sellers, especially those found on the streets in pirated prints, with little regard for quality, seem to be a significant trend in producing and publishing translations. For the most part, best-seller

fiction and some genres like non-fiction like self-help are produced, but non-profitable genres like poetry and drama seem to receive very little attention in Marathi and probably in other languages as well.

Notes

[1] For a more detailed discussion of Dasopanta, Waman Pandit, and Father Stephens, see Ketkar, *Critical History of Marathi Literature*.

[2] A useful list of the books translated into Marathi by all these organisations is found in Mrinalini Gadkari's articles in *Marathi Vangmaichya Itihas* 7.4 (2011). However, its impact on the Marathi literary culture has not been studied in detail. Gadkari provides valuable information about books translated into Marathi from other Indian languages as well as from world literature. She also provides some information about Marathi literature translated into other languages.

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