

A Critical Study of Marathi Autobiography UPARA Translated Into English

Dr. Bharati S. Khairnar

Department of English,
S.P.H. Mahila Mahavidyalaya, Malegoan camp

Abstract :

Many Marathi Dalit autobiographies have been translated into English. Laxman Mane's UPARA has been translated into English as AN OUTSIDER by Prof. A. K. Kamat. The language of Dalit autobiographies is regional. The colloquial language is used naturally and simply. Dalit autobiographies have enriched the vocabulary of Marathi language. In UPARA Laxman Mane has employed words in the colloquial language, some English and other words to depict the plight and protest of his Kaikadi community. Language acts as an index of culture and the rural Dalit language in the first part of the autobiography paves way for the refined, polished language in the third part of the autobiography. This change in the mannerisms and language of the protagonist on acquiring education and due to urbanization and acculturation is mirrored in UPARA. This self-narrative contains idiomatic expressions and heteroglossia. In spite of the use of the devices of code mixing, code switching or borrowing, English translation of this Marathi autobiography has failed to provide exact equivalents to vernacular words and idioms. English language is alien to Indian culture and ethos and hence falls insufficient and inadequate. This paper is a humble study of the translation of this Indian regional work into English.

Key Words: Translation, Dalit Autobiography, Heteroglossia, Acculturation

Many Marathi Dalit autobiographies have been translated into English. Laxman Mane's Upara has been translated into English as "An Outsider". Laxman Gaikwad's "Uchalya" has been translated as "The Branded". Kishor Shantabai Kale's Kolkhayache Por is entitled "Against All Odds" in the English translation. Dr. Sharankumar Limbale's "Akkarmashi" is translated as "The Outcaste" and Narendra Jadhav's "Aamacha Baap ani Aamhi" is well known as "Outcaste: A Memoir. Dalit autobiographies are documents of their agony and protest. The titles of their autobiographies in original marathi versions are metaphorical and possess varied nuances of meaning, gradually unfolded through the narrative.

In translated autobiographies, one selected for the purpose of this paper Laxman Mane's "An Outsider" is the autobiography of a writer from a nomadic tribe. It is written almost like a novel and has described the individual and communal experiences. Dalit literature deals mainly with life in villages or rather outside the village bounds. Naturally the language used by the writer is rural language (Gramin Bhasha). The factors-society, period and place influence a language. The language of the Dalit autobiographer depends upon the geographical locale of the writer and his community. These writers resided outside the village. So they were unacquainted with the language and culture of the Savarnas and the middle class people. They used the language of the community, the language of their everyday life, to share their experiences with others. The language was used along with all its distinctive features and regional flavor. Laxman mane belongs to the Kaikadi tribe- a nomadic tribe in Maharashtra. The autobiography is a record of all his varied experiences in life. While talking about it, he says;

"What shall I say about the book? Whatever I lived, experienced and saw, I poured into my writing."



The Marathi word 'Upara' literally and figuratively means 'An Outsider'. Laxman Mane always remained an outsider in the Indian social order. He lived outside the village boundary and led a neglected, ostracized, marginalized existence. He could not become a part of the mainstream society. The titles (both Marathi and English) signify this peculiar plight of the narrator. The translator of the autobiography is prof. A.K.Kamat, professor of French in Mumbai University. He has translated Upara into French too. The original 'Upara' in Marathi has been published by Granthali whereas the English translation is by Sahitya Akademi. Upara proclaimed Laxman Mane's debut on the literary scenario. Due to the spontaneity, genuineness and sincerity of Laxman Mane's realistic emotional expression, the autobiography received an overwhelming response and bagged many coveted prestigious awards.

Upara has total 154 pages which have not been divided into chapters. The autobiography commences with Laxman Mane's childhood and ends with his marriage to Shashi and acceptance by the panchayat into the caste community. 'An Outsider' begins and ends on the same note but here it is divided into parts. In English edition there are 212 pages that are divided into XIII chapters or parts. The kind of diction used by the writer tells us a great deal about the quality of the writer's mind and style. The writer has to choose his words according to the subject matter, occasion, purpose and audience. Dalit autobiographies are without any literary pretensions or pseudo literary traditions. Their vocabulary is a product of their marginalized, inhuman, animal-like existence. It is picked up in childhood from family members and the community... as a circle of their social interaction is very restricted, the range of vocabulary is also limited. Laxman Mane's family moved from place to place incorporating various strains and nuances of the language and dialect used in the region of Nirgudi, Satara, Kolhapur and its vicinity. In Upara rural colloquial language becomes an apt vehicle to reveal in all honesty, agony, pain, exploitation, marginalization, poverty, anger and protest of the dalits.

The translation of such a document into foreign language is a tedious task. The translator of 'Upara' Prof. Kamat has made a worthwhile effort in translating it into English. The autobiography has been translated into simple, plain, unadorned prosaic English to reveal the stark reality of human life in 'An Outsider.' The translator has remained faithful to the source text and through his literary maneuvering has succeeded to a great extent in depicting the essence of 'Upara'. The translator has embarked upon voluntarily inculcating mode of code mixing and code switching with strong determination. He has gone a step further and introduced multiple lexical features from the vernaculars, Marathi and Konkani. Upara is an authentic socio-cultural document depicting Indian panorama of life via Indian ethos, people, customs and traditions, rites and rituals, the translator has sometimes substituted English equivalents for words in the vernacular. The cultural associations have strong tie ups with the colloquial language and hence here the translated version 'An Outsider' has suffered a loss.

The author has attempted to incorporate many lexical items from the vernacular into the text corroborating Prestan's view of "language shift to meet social demands"² There are many proper nouns used in this narrative that are steeped in Indian culture and ethos. Laxman Mane is addressed as Laksha or Lakshya. It is used as a pet name. Most of the proper nouns are shortened to express love, affection, tenderness, anger, displeasure, irritation or mockery. For exam. Pushpi, Kishya, Mahadya, Shardi, etc. the higher caste people are addressed respectfully as Raosaheb, Anantrao, Bapusaheb, etc. There are frequent references to gods and goddesses such as Khandoba, Kalubai, Yellamma, Mariai, Bhawani, etc. The names of Marathi months like Paush, Chaitra, Ashad, words depicting relationships such as Mama, Kaka, Vahini, the names of festivals like Dassera, Navaratra, Diwali, Ramnavami are used in the English translation also. Besides this there are the names of food items (bhakari, bhel, missal, bhujias) names of musical instruments (Padghan) names of castes and



tribes (Dhangar, Kaikadi, Joshi, Makadwale, Dombari, Mahari) are found in 'An Outsider'. Other Marathi words include Mangalsutra, Rickshaw, Decksha, Namaste, Paanwallah, Sanyasi, etc. These words impart a distinctive flavor to the narrative. This is an example of code mixing and code switching. In "An Outsider" as well as in Upara. The local dialect and the standard language are mixed up. Both the versions of the autobiography rely on the process of borrowing. Majority of the lexical elements in "An Outsider" such as gulal, bukka, kunku halad, papal, vad keli, usa, kapur, udabattya, possess multi-dimensional religious and cultural connotations. Equivalence in English or mere translation of such terms into English by retaining the original word in Marathi fails to unfold the cultural ethnicity of the word. It is surprising that in "An Outsider" the footnotes include only thirteen words. The rest of the words (mostly Marathi) are without any explanation.

The translator has tried his best to translate some popular saying, phrases, idioms, proverbs into English. Laxman Mane's phrase "Kala ala vhatta, par yel ali navhati" in Upara is translated as "the messenger of death had arrived but the moment had not" in "An Outsider". Mane has used a combination of colloquial language, Kaikadi and Dalit words in "Upara." So the translation of "Upara" written in regional and local language was a tedious when emotions run high. There are many emotional scenes of fear, anger, happiness, protest, etc. in "Upara." It is interesting to observe how the translator has handled various scenes depicting emotions. The change in the language of the narrator in scenes depicting different emotions is remarkable in "Upara" but in English translation many of these nuances are lost.

Laxman Mane's parents, in moments of anger switched over to Kaikadi. The father's language was very abusive. The incident of the rape of Parumami is an example of this. Here the limitation of translation in a foreign language immediately comes forth. The change in Laxman Mane's language and style of speaking is crystal clear after his education and shifting to a city. His language and expression had undergone a vast change. This change is mirrored in "Upara." As Laxman went for higher education and shifted to hostel, more English words became a part of his vocabulary. His initial language, a mixture of rural, Dalit and Kaikadi, gradually paved the way for more refined Marathi. This very important aspect of the development of the personality of the writer is reflected in Marathi "Upara." The English language retains the same tone right from the beginning to the end in "An Outsider"

A remarkable feature of "Upara" is its change in language of people belonging to different castes. When one Savarna talks to another Savarna, the language used is cultured and polished. When a Savarna person talks to an untouchable, his language undergoes a subtle change. The conversation among Raosahab, Khalata, Datta kaikadi and Laxman Mane's father illustrates this. The same conversation throws light on how a person from a lower caste addresses a Savarna. There is plenty of internal discrimination prevalent amongst the lower classes. This is witnessed in Laxman's father's conversation with Dagadya Ramushi. The language used for communication between a dombari and Lakshya's father shows how two different lower caste persons talk to each other. Many varieties of language usage are reflected in "Upara." Some of the usage are: master's conversation with Lakshya's father, Ba's replied to the other people, father's conversation with a Wadari, Lakshya and his friend's meeting with a prostitute and her language of civilized, cultured and well educated persons like Narendra Dabholkar and Mr. V.S.Khandekar. In "An Outsider" all this variety disappears as everything is narrated in plain, simple English. The variety of dialects and styles used in Marathi cannot be shown and translated or transliterated into English. This lacuna in "An Outsider" is due to the fact the "Upara" is polyphonic (multi-voiced).

In "An Outsider" Parumami's rape has been reported in an adult's language with a child's perception. Laxman's confesses, "I was burning with an inner anger. Even at my age I could



understand the situation."⁴ The dispute in the panchayat related to Dharmeas and Punnapa is again narrated in an adult's language-within an adult's perception. In another panchayat dispute a punished man was made "to carry (on his head) an earthen pot filled with shit"⁵ The members of the panchayat made holes into the pot with stones as he went around the god. The shit and piss fell in his body. This incident has been described in the language of an adult. Yet here both perspectives (that of an adult and of child) are merged. The treatment of both these perspectives in "Upara" and "An Outsider" is different and worth studying. In English, the same language is employed where as in Marathi, due to dialect variations; it is much more appealing- and effective. Thus, the narrator has used Heteroglossia-literally different languages. All the subtle and finer aspects of language usage are lost in this translation.

References :

1. Mane, Laxman, "An Outsider" Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi, 1997.
2. Prestan, D.R.: Sociolinguistics and Social Language Acquisition, Oxford House Publisher Inc, 1989.
3. Mane, Laxman: "An Outsider" P.43.
4. Mane, Laxman: "An Outsider" P.43.
5. Mane, Laxman: "An Outsider" P.43.

