

# THE FUNCTION OF TRANSLATION IN THE ADVANCEMENT OF MAHARASHTRA DALIT LITERATURE

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## Abstract :

*This study examines the significant function of translation in the progression of Maharashtra Dalit literature, transitioning from a localized form of resistance to a literary and socio-political discourse that is acknowledged on both national and global platforms. Dalit literature, which has its roots in the Marathi language, serves to express the lived experiences of individuals facing caste-based oppression, drawing significant inspiration from the transformative vision of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar. The translation of literary works into English and various Indian languages has facilitated broader access to the writings of authors such as Namdeo Dhasal, Sharankumar Limbale, and Urmila Pawar. This process has not only enabled academic discourse but has also fostered intercultural solidarity and enhanced political consciousness among diverse audiences. This research examines the role of translation in bridging linguistic divides, transforming narrative structures, and positioning Dalit literature within global contexts of resistance. This discourse further examines the complexities associated with the preservation of cultural and linguistic nuances, as well as the imperative of maintaining authenticity. In conclusion, the paper posits that translation operates not solely as a linguistic endeavor but as a transformative process that amplifies marginalized voices and reconfigures the Indian literary canon.*

**Key Words :** Dalit Literature, Translation Studies, Caste and Social Justice, Maharashtra Literature, etc.

## Introduction :

Dalit literature in Maharashtra has functioned as a significant vehicle of defiance against caste-based oppression and societal discrimination. Arising as a unique literary movement in the twentieth century, it contests prevailing Brahmanical narratives and seeks to restore the voices of marginalized communities. Although Marathi serves as the principal medium of expression for Dalit authors in Maharashtra, the dissemination of their literary contributions has been notably enhanced through the process of translation. The act of translation serves to broaden the audience while simultaneously fostering socio-political awareness of Dalit concerns on both national and international stages.

## The Emergence and Evolution of Dalit Literature in Maharashtra :

The origins of Dalit literature in Maharashtra can be traced back to the anti-caste movements spearheaded by Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, whose philosophy of social justice

established a significant ideological framework for Dalit authors. The emergence of Dalit literature as a distinct movement can be traced to the 1960s and 1970s, during which writers such as Baburao Bagul, Namdeo Dhasal, and Sharankumar Limbale commenced articulating the pain, rage, and aspirations of Dalit communities (Zelliot 47). Their literary contributions, predominantly composed in Marathi, diverged from the romanticized representations of Dalits found in conventional literature, instead providing a candid and unmediated portrayal of their lived realities.

### **The Role of the Dalit Panthers and the Assertion of Identity :**

The establishment of the Dalit Panthers in 1972 represents a pivotal moment in the evolution of Dalit literature in Maharashtra. Drawing inspiration from the Black Panther movement in the United States, the Dalit Panthers employed literature and poetry as tools to contest the prevailing hegemonic structures of caste and Brahmanical supremacy. Namdeo Dhasal's *Golpitha* (1972) serves as a notable instance of radical literary expression, intertwining raw language with a fervent call for social transformation (Dhasal 22). Nonetheless, these significant literary contributions were largely beyond the reach of non-Marathi audiences until they underwent translation into English and various other languages, consequently expanding their influence.

### **The Rise of Dalit Autobiographies :**

A noteworthy dimension of Maharashtra Dalit literature is the emergence of autobiographies that chronicle the individual challenges faced by Dalit writers. Limbale's *Akkarmashi (The Outcaste)* and Daya Pawar's *Baluta* offer firsthand narratives that elucidate the humiliations and injustices endured by Dalits (Limbale xvi). The autobiographies in question serve dual purposes; they are not merely personal testimonies but also act as significant political statements challenging the oppressive caste system. The translation of these narratives into English has facilitated their accessibility to a wider audience, encompassing scholars, activists, and international human rights organizations.

### **The Significance of Translation in Disseminating Dalit Literature :**

The process of translation has been instrumental in facilitating the accessibility of Dalit literature across various regional and linguistic confines. The importance of translation within this framework can be elucidated through the subsequent dimensions:

### **Bridging Regional and National Literary Contexts :**

The predominant use of Marathi in the composition of Maharashtra Dalit literature has historically confined its impact to a localized readership. Nevertheless, the translation of these works into Hindi, English, and various other Indian languages has significantly contributed to their incorporation into the national literary discourse. Arjun Dangle's edited anthology, *Poisoned Bread* (1992), represents a seminal effort to present Maharashtra Dalit literature to an audience beyond the Marathi-speaking populace. The anthology serves as a significant platform for the amplification of Dalit voices throughout India by compiling and translating a diverse array of short stories, essays, and poetry authored by various Dalit writers (Dangle xv). The translation of Namdeo Dhasal's poetry into English has facilitated access to a broader audience, enabling both scholars and activists to interact with his radical and thought-provoking concepts.

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### **Promoting Political and Social Consciousness :**

Dalit literature possesses an intrinsic political dimension, as it unveils the harsh realities of caste-based discrimination and advocates for social justice. The act of translation serves to enhance these narratives, facilitating their resonance with audiences who, while not directly impacted by caste oppression, can identify with the overarching themes of inequality and resistance. Sharankumar Limbale's *The Outcaste*, as translated by Santosh Bhoomkar, has played a significant role in enhancing the comprehension of caste oppression beyond the confines of Maharashtra. The translation has rendered the text accessible to English-speaking audiences, thereby promoting discourse on caste discrimination within the contexts of global human rights and literary discussions (Limbale xviii).

### **Advancing Academic and Scholarly Participation :**

The presence of translated Dalit texts has markedly enhanced scholarly discussions within disciplines including postcolonial studies, subaltern studies, and Dalit literature. Gail Omvedt and Eleanor Zelliot have significantly contributed to the translation and analysis of Dalit literature, thereby facilitating its integration into global academic discourse (Omvedt 112; Zelliot 56). The incorporation of Dalit texts into university curricula, both within India and on an international scale, facilitates a scholarly engagement with caste-based oppression, positioning it as a significant area of academic inquiry for students and researchers alike.

### **Promoting Intercultural Solidarity :**

The translation of Dalit literature facilitates comparative analyses with other literary traditions that have been marginalized. Namdeo Dhasal's poetry exhibits notable parallels with the Black Arts Movement in the United States, particularly in its employment of radical language and exploration of themes centered on resistance (Rege 92). *The Weave of My Life*, authored by Urmila Pawar and subsequently translated into English, has been subjected to analysis through feminist and intersectional lenses, emphasizing the distinctive challenges encountered by Dalit women (Pawar 35).

### **Challenges in Translating Dalit Literature :**

While the advantages of translating Dalit literature are evident, it is important to acknowledge the numerous challenges that arise in this endeavor. As noted by Dangle, Marathi Dalit literature is characterized by distinct dialects and idioms that often lack direct equivalents in English or other languages (Dangle xv). Dalit literature frequently exemplifies an unmediated representation of anguish and indignation. Translators are faced with the critical decision of whether to preserve the original intensity of the text or to adapt it for a wider audience (Rege 114). The prevalence of translations executed by scholars outside the Dalit community prompts critical examination of issues related to authenticity and potential bias (Omvedt 98).

### **Future Prospects of Translation in Dalit Literature :**

The future of translation in Dalit literature indicates a significant evolution in the production, dissemination, and reception of these narratives across various linguistic and cultural contexts. With the rising awareness of caste-based inequalities in India and across the globe, it is anticipated that there will be a growing demand for genuine and varied

representations of Dalit voices. A notable avenue for future exploration is the engagement in collaborative translation initiatives, wherein Dalit authors collaborate with translators to meticulously maintain the linguistic subtleties, cultural expressions, and emotional depth inherent in the original works. This collaborative model effectively mitigates the risks associated with misrepresentation and facilitates translations that are more deeply anchored in their contextual frameworks.

A significant advancement is observed in the digitization of Dalit literature, facilitated by the emergence of e-books, dedicated websites, and audiobook platforms. The implementation of these digital formats is poised to significantly improve accessibility for visually impaired readers and younger demographics who are accustomed to multimedia consumption. Furthermore, this initiative will facilitate the global circulation of Dalit narratives through online repositories, thereby making these important stories available across various continents. The translations of audiobooks, specifically, have the potential to rejuvenate the oral traditions that are profoundly rooted in Dalit culture, thereby preserving the performative and communal dimensions of storytelling.

Moreover, the inclusion of multilingual translations, encompassing Indian regional languages as well as prominent global languages such as French, German, and Spanish, serves to dismantle the linguistic dominance of English. This approach enables Dalit literature to reach and engage a broader audience of readers. The proposed expansion has the potential to facilitate cross-cultural comparisons with various subaltern literatures, including African American, Indigenous, and Latin American texts, thereby fostering new avenues for solidarity and scholarly investigation. Engagement in international literary festivals, translation residencies, and global publishing initiatives is essential for the incorporation of Dalit literature into the broader literary canon. The aforementioned prospects suggest that translation transcends its role as a mere communicative tool, emerging instead as a formidable instrument of literary justice. Through the facilitation of Dalit literature's movement across linguistic and cultural boundaries, translation serves to uphold the dignity of marginalized voices, thereby fostering a more inclusive and equitable global literary landscape.

## Conclusion :

Translation has played a crucial role in enhancing the visibility of Maharashtra Dalit literature, thereby facilitating its accessibility to wider audiences and promoting global discourse on the issue of caste oppression. Translation facilitates the dissemination of potent Dalit narratives across various linguistic, regional, and cultural divides, serving not merely as a linguistic endeavor but as a profoundly political and transformative undertaking. This development has facilitated the inclusion of perspectives from historically marginalized communities within both mainstream and academic discourses, thereby fostering awareness, empathy, and critical engagement with matters pertaining to caste, social justice, and human rights. Furthermore, translation serves a pivotal function in the reconfiguration of the Indian literary canon, as it interrogates prevailing narratives and facilitates the emergence of subaltern voices. This development presents novel pedagogical opportunities, prompting academic institutions worldwide to incorporate Dalit texts into their curricula and research endeavors. Translation transcends the boundaries of academia, functioning as a vital mechanism for fostering intercultural solidarity. It establishes connections between the struggles of Dalits and those of other marginalized groups globally.

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