Chapter – 5

Evaluations of the Translated Stories
Chapter - 5  Evaluations of the Translated Stories

This chapter covers critical evaluation of translated stories of five anthologies and inferences drawn from them as under.

Saurashtra Ni Rashdhar an anthology of five volumes falls in the category of Charni lore. It is debatable whether Saurashtra Ni Rasdhar is a folk tale or not. After evaluating Saurashtra Ni Rasdhar on the basis of the definitions of folktales; it is obvious that it contains all elements of folktales. Saurashtra Ni Rasdhar is a short narrative consisting of elements of myths and fairy tales embellished by imagination and charani narrative to produce a single vivid effect on the mind of readers. These narratives have gripping fluidity and they are not creations of any one author but are created by the folk and circulated verbally. Another question that is often raised by readers as well critics is regarding the ratio of history and imagination in Saurashtra Ni Rasdhar. One point must be kept in mind that Saurashtra Ni Rasdhar is a form of literature so it cannot be a static conventional historical record. As a form of literature its motive is to entertain readers without violating the norms set by aesthetics. So far as the question of history is concerned, it was mentioned by Meghani in the preface of Saurashtra Ni Rasdhar that each village stands as a unique historical character. Dantt Katha (Legend) is also a type of history but unvalidated in the modern empirical sense. During 1923-1927, men of higher caste married women of lower caste, even men who were ‘untouchables’ made women of higher caste their religious sisters. Mingling of different castes in the society was a reality in itself and it is reflected in Saurashtra Ni Rasdhar. Another salient feature

447
of *Saurashtra Ni Rasdhar* is that, they are adventure tales unattempted before Meghani in Gujarati.

*Sorathi Baharvatiya* is a collection of adventurous exploits of audacious outlaws. The Oxford Dictionary (2001) defines Outlaw as, ‘a person who has broken the law, especially one who remains at large or is a fugitive.’

If problem is created to himself or to the Royal Authority; then a person by overlooking Royal Authority goes across the territory of the state is called Baharvatiya/outlaw. The term connotes a person who crosses the territory of the region of rules and law. The one who renounces dependence upon laws and as a result of his disobedience he remains deprived of protection provided by law. (*Sorathi Baharavatiya* part-3)

The Saurashtra region is abundant with variegated history of the Baharvatiyas. To take revenge against the injustice done to them they launched either successful or unsuccessful exploits. It is not that Baharvatiya were found only in Saurashtra, even in England there were many eminent outlaws. Robinhood, Adam Bell, Clogno Clym and Cloudelsee William were known in England not only as outlaws but were also popular for their skill of archery.

**Causes of the Origin of Outlawry in Saurashtra**

As far as the history of outlawry is concerned till the time of the rule of Ra’ Mandalik (King of Junagadh 15th century), the following reasons accentuated the rise of outlawry:

1. Landowners: they rebel unjust usurpation of their land.
2. Benevolence: there are many examples that many became outlaws because they rebelled against the exploitation of the common folks by authorities such outlaws made welfare of the people their mission.

3. Personal enemity: due to individual hostility many accepted outlawry by violating boundaries set by laws thereby becoming outlaws.

4. Thieves and robbers: the motive of many outlaws was simply to rob others but they strictly followed a method of principled robbery.

Characteristics of Outlaws

- Worship of family deity: outlaws were staunch observers of religious vows and regularly worshipped at their chosen holy places.

- Respect for women: all the outlaws revered women. They neither looted nor physicallyaulted them.

- Audacities of the outlaws: outlaws were audacious and they fearlessly rode horses even in flooded rivers and made their horses vault over lofty mountains. To jump and swim even with hand-cuffed legs or hands was very natural to them.

- Haughty and whimsical by nature: to revel by participating in dandiya raas, to host programes during festivals, to challenge the authority, to hoist their mascots and flags, to live in caves etc. were the whimsical ways of life of the outlaws.

If one peeps into the psyche of outlaws then one realizes their frustration for not getting a fair deal after knocking the doors of justice repeatedly. They looted but never lived a luxurious life. They never hoarded money; whatever they raided, they spent for the welfare of the downtrodden. By leaving the warmth of their family and undergoing agonies of biting cold and scorching heat they involved themselves in outlawry. Thus, behind their bloody, chaotic life, the chief cause was injustice, insults and abhorrence
received from the society. Inspite of bearing with agonies they never violated laws of outlawry and always honoured women. The outlaws are remembered even today because they never did any barbaric acts like the modern thieves and extremists. They had their own code of conducts and ethics. Their basic priniciple was to seek justice by challenging the explotative authorities and they never tried to suppress the poor or weak. The demarcating line between outlaws and modern thieves is that outlaws were not rogues, immoral and inhuman like the latter.

In the beginning of every saga of outlaws, the life span of every outlaw has been mentioned but the records of dates have not been taken from any government sources. Meghani gathered all the information about outlaws from the people. The age of outlaws began at the end of 18th century, continued throughout 19th century and it was over by the beginning of the 20th century. According to Jhaverchand Meghani the last representative of outlaws was Ram Walo. After Ram Walo whatever continued was simply unethical robbery and there remained no actual outlaws. The tales of outlaws and their exploits in the dense forests, deep caves and lofty mountains vividly recreates the life of Kathiawaad before almost a century ago.

_Kankavati_ is a collection of 45 _vrat kathas_ (tales about religious fast as well as vows). The original word of _Kankavati_ is _kumkumavati_. In all _vrats kumkum_ or the vermillion (the mark on the forehead of usually married women in India) is auspicious, so its usage is important. _Vrat kathas_ are of two types: _Shastriya_ and _Lok_. Shastriya _vrats_ are religious performances as laid down by the _shastras_ (shastra is a revered religious/knowledge texts). _Shastriya vrats_ can be observed by those who obey caste system and disciplines set by the Four Ashrams (Bhramachariya, Grihastha, Vanprastha...
and Sanyas.) Penance is a severe stricture in shastriya vrat. If an observer fails to keep the penance, then he/she cannot eat for three days. In any case if he or she fails to adhere to the vows then tonsure is mandatory. Such punishments make Shastriya vrat a feared and terrible ritual. In contrast Lokvrat (the rituals followed variously by the people as a way of practice happening over a long period of time, and not according to the scriptures) does not have the strict restrictions of Shastriya vrat. The rule of Lok vrat is very simple. If an observer fails to keep fast or fails to read or to attend the part of the holy text, then that fast is not counted and it can be substituted by another. Lok vrats are independent of the barriers of caste, class or gender. Additionally, Lokvrats are often the narrative material in folklore evenicng a significant part of folk life.

In the present collection each tale deals with the ritual vows observed by women of Gujarat during the twelve months of a year. All the vrat kathas of Kankavati are Lok vrats and are totally different from Shastriya vrats as mentioned in the massive volumes of Vratraj. All these simple vrat kathas have originated from worship by young girls, as well as unmarried and old women.

All the vrat kathas narrated in Kankavati are quite original and were narrated to Meghani by Shree Dayashankar Shukla, Sushree Monghiben Parmanand Thakkar of Bhavnagar, Meghani’s landlady of Ville Parle in Mumbai and by Balvantrai Mehta’s maternal granny Bijima (Balwantrai Mehta of Bhavnagar State was the second Chief Minister of Gujarat). Meghani has attempted to present all the vrat kathas in their original form without making any significant amendments in style and language. Generally there is a maximum usage of jodakna in vrat kathas. Jodakna means extempore rhyming
poems. Meghani’ old land lady who was his next door neighbour at Ville Parle in Mumbai used to sing *Jodakna* for Meghani’s son, for e.g.

*Batku rotlo*

*Thi nu ghee*

*Naach mara nanka raat ne di*

*Aaj maro Nanko*

*Nacchiyo nathi*

*Kudiyo nathi*

*Kediyni ghughri vaagi nathi*

Half a loaf of bread

Layer of ghee on top

Dance Nanka dear day and night.

Today my Nanka

Has not danced

Nor has he jumped

Nor the bells around his waist jingled.

Meghani had observed practical effect of all these *jodakna* on the mental as well as physical growth of his son. He has admitted that due to constant singing of *jodakna*, his son learnt to walk and talk early. So to boost the spirit of childhood and to promote healthy growth of children he kept all *jodakna* intact in *vrat kathas* of Kankavati. To sum
up many vrat kathas translated in this thesis are observed in Gujarat till today. All these vrat kathas deal with nature, birds as well as animal world. On reading these vrat kathas it becomes obvious that men of early ages led a more symbiotic life with their surrounding and were far less utilitarian. All these vrat kathas draw attention, by juxtaposition, to overstressed modern human beings and to fact that the key to a healthy, happy and successful life is to remain ‘eco-friendly’ and humane.

_Dadajee Nee Vato is Adbhut Katha_ (miraculous). _Adbhut_ means the sentiment of wonder, surprise or marvel. It is called _Adbhut Katha_ because magic, charms, disguise, element of wonder, imaginations are some major ingredients of Adbhut katha and they are prevalent in the stories. The story _Shihasan_ consists of all the characteristics of Adbhut Katha for example the discovery of the throne itself, the animated dolls affixed on it and their narration create a sense of awe. The tales of _Dadajee Ni Vato_ are also known as _Kathya Kathao_ (Oral tales). It too is a collection of orally transmitted stories. These stories have been designed for teenagers, but the narrative form is the _Charni_ Style. _Charani sahitya_ is a very popular type of Saurashtra and Rajasthani folktale which needs some discussion at this juncture.

_Charan_ is the name of a caste living in Gujarat and Rajasthan. They are highly revered for their unflinching readiness for martyrdom, bravery in war, high literary sensibility and deep loyalty to their patrons. They are also known with surnames Gadhavi (also spelled Gadhvi) and Barot (or Barath). As the _Charan_ was keeper of keys of forts (gadh) of the kings, so they came to be known as _Gadhvi_. Although they made their living singing paens to their kings, many a times they reproached their patrons on their unethical deeds. This community is considered divine by a large section of society.
Women of this community are adored as mother goddess (or Aai) by other major communities of this region. Many times these holy and solemn Charans prevented kings from committing crimes. It is reputed that Charans are the embodiment of the qualities of Rajputs and Brahmins. Alike Rajputs, Charans were brave and loyal and like Brahmins they were respectable and excelled in knowledge. The chief characteristic of Charni literature is that there is maximum use of regional poems. In the stories of Dadajee Ni Vato regionals proverbs like: Dhol dhamke pani, Chitraman na ghoda ma samay gayo, Vidhata na lekh ma mekh mari, Aankho mali gay, Thinkra jevo thay gaayo, Vadhe to pan lohi na nikel, Dharti marag aape to samay jav, Koi koi na kapal mathi be aankda bhushi na sake, Raja ni kaya ma Batriseya kothe Diva thai gaya are cited frequently. Another stylistic characteristic of Charni sahitya is the use of onomatopoeia for example: Batrisey Na hoth khad khad khad hasi padya, Ghatak, ghatak, Kadddd Dhub! Bharo bhoi par nakhine, Hu hu karto Chhalang marto, pucchdu farkavto savaj aviyo, Dannn... n karta Ghoda hankta Raja Anne Badhsagra hali nikaliya etc are ample in the anthology of Dadajee Ni Vato.

Charani Literature is also known as Dingal literature. The original word for Dingal is Dinga. In Rajasthan, the term dinga suggests ‘high’ which means the words used in their composition are sung on a high pitched note. Dim means damru (tambouraine) and gal means galu (throat). Thus, a dingal work is one in which throat is as robust as a tambourine. Thus, the works that evoke the spirit of chivalry became well known as Dingal. Dingal literature is also known as pingal literature. Sakti Upasna (worship of Divine Mother), Surya Upasna (prayer to sun God), Peer ni Stuti (Prayer to a Muslim Saint), Eko Upasna (monotheism) etc., are the chief subjects of Charni Sahitya.
Kaag Dulabhai, Pushpdan Gadhvi, Raj Shekhar, Rohadiya Ashaji, Rohadiya Ishwardanji, Rohadiya Ganesh Puriji, Shinda H. Raviraj, Pinglacharya and many others are the exponents and bards of *Charani Sahitya*. There were many poetic societies even in Europe namely ‘the Scop’, and poets belonging to ‘the Scop’ usually glorified the wealth, the valor and the lineage of their patron-lords; in return of this appreciation they used to receive from their masters precious gifts like ornaments / gold or land. The poetic tradition of Gleeman is also same. Glee (‘gleo’) means minstrelsy, merriment. A glee or glee-song was a part-song for three or more voices, not necessarily with an accompaniment. They had a particular vogue from c.1750 to c.1850. Choirs of glee-singers are still to be heard in the United States. Another European poetic tradition akin to *Charni* was well known by the name of ‘Scald’; the term implies smoothers and polishers of language. In short, the *Charni* poetic tradition is ancient, time-attested and its unique variants are found in many countries.

*Dadajee Ni Vato* is an interesting collage of *Charni sahitya, adbhut katha* and folk literature. It would be an injustice to limit the scope of the evaluation of *Dadajee Ni Vato* by applying the tag of ‘Children’s tale’. Even Meghani admitted at the time of publication that: “My main aim was to collect these tales as distinguishing types of folk tales and with the same aim I am releasing new edition of it and not as children’s literature.” (*Vivechnasandoh* 15)

10 stories of *Doshi Mani Vato* were cancelled on the ground of morbidity. In this research in order to compare morbid tales with non morbid tales, one story has been translated from the five selected stories and one story titled ‘Sonbai’ has been translated from the anthology cancelled by Meghani himself. The gruesomeness of ‘Sonbai’ exerts
very unhealthy effect on the mind of the teenagers. It is full of abusive language (obscenities like… raand (contemptuously a widow or a prostitute), dam daish (to cause a blister or swelling caused on the skin by a burn) and there is a chain of ruthless events like … ‘brothers of Sonbai first strangulated her, then slayed her and finally they colored Sonbai’s chundadi with her blood and buried her body. Evaluation of stories of Dadaji Ni Vato along with the one story from the selected stories of Doshi Mani Vato shows that they are designed as per the parameters of Folk literature that to entertain readers, and they are not the creations of any author but told and circulated by folk of a particular region, further more like folk literature they are full of myths, legends and in it element of wonder and imaginations are prevalent. The implied message in these fairy tales is that a real wealth of narrative and cultural treasure, also a mnemonic legacy of our grand parents is on the brink of becoming extinct and this heritage is in dire need of not just preservation but also propagation.

The tales of Raang chhe Barot are Adhut Kathao narrated in Charni style rendered through duha. Duha which is also called dohra a kind of poetic metre. Generally it consist two lines. Many tales of this collection delineate the saga of dauntless spirit, philanthropic attitude, and benevolence of the erudite and good samaritan King Vikram. Vikram was well versed in 14 domains of knowledge and skills namely:

1. Education
2. Theatre
3. Language and grammar
4. Archery
5. Skill of ornamentation
6. Marine life
7. Skill of swindling
8. Knowledge regarding child birth
9. Horsemanship
10. Ability of examining
11. Music
12. Knowledge of prostitution
13. Art of chanting god’s name
14. Skill of pilfering

Raang Chhe Barot is a collection of Fairy Tales but they are not merely the stories of fairies but they are packed with adventures, marvels narrated in aphoristic and pithy style. The title Raang Chhe Barot is not inkeeping with themes of tales but Meghani in the introduction of an anthology mentioned that all the stories complied in the anthology of Raang Chhe Barot were narrated to him by Jetha Barot. He was an officially appointed bard who kept the record of the genealogical tree of Kathi community. All the stories read (from his own manuscript) to Meghani by Jetha Barot were so applaudable that to express his feelings of gratitude Meghani cited the title Raang Chhe Barot (Hats off! Barot).

The close study of these five anthologies of folktales reveals that there is predominance of Rasas in the folktales of Meghani. In Sanskrit the root word of Rasa is ‘rasah’ which primarily means essence, juice, taste, flavor or relish but metaphorically it means the emotional experience of beauty in any work belonging to art and literature. As
there are six tastes (*rasa*) - sweet, salty, sour, bitter, tangy and astringent in cooking and medicine; similarly there are eight *rasas* in *natya*, art of representation. The ninth one is *santa rasa* (tranquility) which was added afterward. The term *rasa* has its root in the Vedic period; in the 2\textsuperscript{nd} century B.C. Bharat Muni elaborated the concept of theory of *Rasa* in his *Natyashastra* and explained the sources and types of Rasa. The theory of *Rasa* is built around the concept of *bhava* (a state of mind). A work of art/literature appeals to human emotions; it evokes a certain state of mind and evocation of emotions and leads to joy (*rasa*). *Rasa* is the basic emotion but it is generated by *bhavas*. *Rasa-bhava* is hyphenated as the two constitute forming a continuum in the rasa theory. It is claimed that *bhava* evokes *rasa* and *rasa* cannot come into existence without *bhava*. *Rasa* is the consequence of the experience of these emotional states. Nine *Sthayibhavas* corresponding to nine *Rasas* as listed in *Natyasastra* are stated below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sthayibhava</th>
<th>Rasa corresponding to Sthayibhava</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. <em>Rati</em> (love)</td>
<td>1. <em>Sringara</em> (erotic)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. <em>Hasya</em> (comic)</td>
<td>2. <em>Hasya</em> (comic)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Meghani’s folktales reveal the prevalence of rasa in them, for example, *Saurashtra Ni Rasdhar* is dominated by *Sringara* (erotic) & *Karuna* (compassionate) rasas, there is prevalence of *vira rasa* (heroic) in *Sorathi Baharvatiya*, tales of *Kankavati* evokes *Santa rasa* (tranquil) because all the stories are ritual vows, they are governed by feeling of devotion, sense of sacrifice and spirit of dedication, in the stories of *Dadajee Ni Vato*, *Adbhutta rasa* (marvelous) reigns, tales of *Raang chhe Barot* are abundant with *Vira rasa* (heroic), *Karuna rasa* (compassionate), *Raudra rasa* (wrathful), *bhayanaka rasa* (terrifying), *Bibhatsa rasa* (odious) and *hasya rasa* (comic).

Thus, on evaluating five anthologies of folktales of Saurashtra contributed by Jhaverchand Meghani it can be concluded that all stories bear similarities to folktales in general. Alike other folktales these create a fascinating maze full of legends, myths and fairytales and there is prolific use of imagination, adventure and ornamentation of language. All the stories paint a vivid kaleidoscopic picture of Gujarat.