Chapter 1

Introduction

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Chapter 1

Introduction

This research is a translation of Joseph Macwan’s seminal text Vyathana Vitak along with a critical study and a translator’s note. The research intends to translate Gujarati dalit text into English, to study the challenge of translation and to derive some techniques or practices to overcome the challenges. The research is also an attempt to place the select writer critically beyond the confines of Gujarati dalit literature and critical history. The research discusses the importance of translation for dalit literature and the newer challenges for translating a dalit literary text.

Dalit literature immerged as a part of social reformation movement. During the 20th century, in the age of post-modernism and post-colonialism, the world faced a democratic revolution which demanded a society with equal human rights. It brought forth the marginal, aboriginal and the oppressed. The new waves of humanism spread across India also and many social revolutionaries started movements against the stigmatized social practices. The movement also challenged the hierarchy of caste system which is believed to be a root cause of the
oppression of millions of dalits for centuries. Along with other social revolutionaries Jyotiba Phule and Dr Ambedkar protested against the oppressive and discriminating caste system. And out of the protest emerged dalit literature primarily to support the movement.

Dalit literature first emerged in Marathi and then spread across India. Gujarati dalit literature emerged from the influence of Marathi dalit literature after 1960s and flourished in 1980s after the anti-reservation agitation of Gujarat. Today, Gujarati dalit literature has flourished enough to contribute in all the genres extensively.

Dalit literature is primarily written to give voice to the dalits. Hence, it has its own aesthetics with newer subjects, styles, techniques and forms. It is mostly written in regional languages as it is rooted in the soil. It’s also a paradox for dalit literature as on one hand it is written in regional languages for authenticity and on the other hand the sole purpose of its creation is to make the world hear about their existence and oppressed condition. In such a case, one of the best ways to fulfill both the needs is translation. Translating a dalit text will serve the purpose of its existence by reaching to a large number of people.

It should also be noted that most of the dalit literature available in English is through translation against little that is written originally in English. Hence, translating a dalit literary text is very crucial contribution to dalit literature. As it is the case with any literary text, translating a dalit literary text is enrichment for both the dalit literature and the mainstream literature.

In case of Gujarati dalit literature, very few works have been translated into English. The significant work of Gujarati dalit literature Angaliyat by the pioneer writer Joseph Macwan has been translated into English as The Stepchild. Vyathana Vitak is Macwan’s another
important work. It was his first work which gave him recognition as a writer. It’s a collection of nineteen character sketches. The research is an attempt to translate the text into English with a critical analysis of the form, themes, impact, and contribution of Macwan to dalit literature. Translating and critiquing the text will be very important contribution to dalit literature. Macwan has depicted the painful condition of the dalits of the Charotar region along with their culture and ethnography. The text has been awarded by the Gujarati Sahitya Akadami as well as appreciated by the literati, critics and readers.

The work has been divided into four chapters. This chapter primarily discusses objectives of the work, dalit literatures, Gujarati dalit literature, dalit literature in translation, Gujarati dalit literature in translation and the pioneer Gujarati dalit writer.

**Objectives:**

The research work is intended to attain the below mentioned objectives.

- To avail Gujarati dalit literature to a larger readership in India and Abroad.
- To add to the Indian dalit literature and English literature as a whole to make its place firm among the global marginal or aboriginal literatures.
- To make it an empowerment tool by bringing forth the dalit problems, specifically dalit women’s double oppression so they can be addressed.
- To broaden the horizons of academic research.
- To help in dismantling the mainstream literary aesthetics by developing new perspectives as well as strengthening the dalit aesthetics.
Brief Note on Dalit Literature

The origins of dalit writing can be traced back to Buddhist age but it flourished during Bhakti period. Bhakti period marked a shift from upper caste privileges to common mass that became a cause for the immergence of many dalit saints like Gora, Raidas, Chokhamela, Karmamela, Tukaram (His abhangs have been translated by Alexander Grant) and dalit writings. They tried to find its solution through spiritual practices. “But it was after the democratic and egalitarian thinkers such as Shri Narayan Guru, Jyotiba Phule, B. R. Ambedkar, Iyothee Thass, Sahodaran Ayyappan, Ayyankali, Poylakali Appachan and others cogently articulated the sources and modes of caste oppression that modern Dalit writing as a distinct genre began to emerge in Indian languages.” (Satchitanandan 1) Dr. Ambedkar started a periodic Mook Nayak in 1920. He was not a literary person but he has written few poems which primarily give voice to the dalits’ sufferings.

Post 20th century is an era of the immergence of marginal discourses across the world and dalit literature is part of it. Heidegger and Derida’s idea of decentering the center perhaps broke the hegemony of the main stream literatures and brought the marginal literatures into place. With the development of the democratic idea across the world, specifically the liberation of the Blacks in America came with the awareness about new humane society which promises equal human rights to all. It gave a call to bring the marginal under the purview of literature. The social-democratic revolution affected India too. Among many other factors, the arrival of British in India too spread awareness about the new world. All these factors and the arrival of the social revolutionaries made it possible to protest against the hegemony of the upper castes and get equal human rights. The protest caught fire and dalit literature emerged as a part of the movement for the reformation of the society. It
primary aims to depict the lives of dalits, their search for identity, their protest against brahminical hegemony and their culture and ethnography. As Dr Ambedkar and Jyotiba Phule, both of the important revolutionaries, were Marathi from Maharashtra, the dalit discourse first immerged in Maharashtra and then spread across India.

In a narrow sense, Dalit literature is about the communities or castes which are being oppressed since ages and have been denied even basic human status. While in the broader sense, dalit is anybody who is “oppressed in the name of religion, social, economic or cultural structures”. (Limbale) The word ‘dalit’ has its root in Sanskrit ‘dal’ which means to suppress or split. The term was appropriated by the dalit reformists Jyotirao Phule and Dr B R Ambedkar. Now, dalit is a political identity as opposed to the caste one. In the words of Bishop A. C. Lal quoted in Joothan, “The word Dalit is a beautiful word, because it transcends narrow national and sectarian frontiers. It is a beautiful word because it embraces the sufferings, frustrations, expectations, and groaning of the entire cosmos.” (xiii) “The term ‘dalit literature’ was first used in 1958 at the first ever dalit conference held in Bombay. However, as an identity marker, the term ‘dalit’ came into prominence in 1972, when a group of young Marathi writer-activists founded an organization called Dalit Panthers.” (Mukherjee xii)

Modern dalit literature first emerged in Marathi during fifties and since then it has been flourishing in many languages of India. Earlier dalits used to be presented in the mainstream literature but “as victims in need of saviors, as objects without voice and agency”. (Mukherjee xi) The anti-caste movement brought awareness among the dalits. They felt a need of a platform to express their voice. Many such platforms had already been created by Dr B R Ambedkar. Apart from that, the dalit writers and activists started many organizations
like *Siddharth Literary Union* in 1956 which later on came to be known as *Maharashtra Literary Union*. It provided a platform to many dalit writers and poets to publish their works.

The *Maharashtra Literary Union* also organized the first ever conference on dalit literature in 1958. Then many such unions, conferences, magazines, journals like *Maharashtra Buddh Parishad*, *Milind Sahitya Parishad*, *Asmita* magazine etc. which were committed to dalit literature appeared.

Importantly, *Dalit Panther*, an organization for social, political and cultural development, was established by many prominent dalit writers and activist like Daya Pawar, Arjun Dangle, Namdev Dhasal and others on 9th July 1972. The organization *Dalit Panther* was inspired by the American Blacks’ movement – *Black Panther*. Like the black writers, the dalit writers also challenged the ideology, forms and aesthetics of the mainstream literature.

Baburav Bagul’s short story collection ‘*Maran Svast Hote Aahe*’ (Death is Getting Cheaper) (1968) and Namdev Dhasal’s a collection of poems ‘*Golpitha*’ challenged the existing forms, themes and narrative techniques as well as opened up new vistas for dalit literature. The dalit writer felt it more appropriate to narrate their own experiences. Hence, the *anubhava* (experience) takes precedence over *anuman* (speculation) in dalit literature. That is why many times dalit literature is also defined as the literature which articulates the first hand dalit experiences.

The dalit writers also introduced autobiography as an important literary genre of dalit literature. They felt that the pain, suffering and anguish could be better presented in the personal narratives only. Hence, many autobiographies came up in Marathi dalit literature as well as in regional languages. Not only they wrote autobiographies but they also
experimented with its form as they had done with all other genres. They wrote the autobiographies which were not only their personal accounts but the collective or community stories. The autobiographies brought to the front the true picture of the Indian society with the worst condition of dalits. We have autobiographies like Daya Pawar’s *Baluta*, Laxman Mane’s *Upara*, Sharankumar Limbale’s *Akkarmashi* (The Outcaste) and Prof. P. E. Sonakamble’s *Athvaniyech Pakshi*.

Apart from Marathi dalit writers, Surendra Mohan, L R Bali, Mataprasad, Avantika Prasad Maramat, Omprakash Valmiki (*Joothan*), Mohandas Naimishray (*Apne Apne Pinjare*), Surajpal Chauhan (*Tiraskrit*), Ajay Navaria (*Udhar Ke Log, Unclaimed Terrain*), Sheoraj Singh (*Mera Bachapan Mere Kandhon Pe*) have contributed and expanded dalit literature in Hindi. The revolutionaries P Lakshminarasu and Periyar Ramaswani have marked the beginning of dalit literature in South Indian languages like Tamil, Kannad and Malyalam. There are many eminent dalit writers like Tamil writer Bama (*Karukku, Sanagti*), Susie Tharu, K Satyanarayana, Telugu writer Kesava Reddy (*He Conquered a Jungle, Ramudunnadu, Incredible Goddess, Smesanam Dunneru*). The dalit literary movement has also greatly influenced Indian English and Gujarati literatures as well.

In case of English literature, least has been written by the dalit writers in English. Except one or two, hardly we find any dalit writer who writes in English. There are several reasons for that. One, dalit writes prefer to write in regional languages for the authentic articulation of their experiences; second, the English education has not yet reached to the dalit writers; and third, Indian English literature is all about a few cosmopolitan and class specific people. Discussing the case of Indian English literature, Paranjape says,
A study of the social and cultural context of the Indian poetry in English reveals several important insights into its origins. Indian poetry in English began in Bengal, the province in which the British first gained a stronghold. In addition, this poetry was largely an urban phenomenon, centered in Calcutta. In fact, for the first fifty years, it was confined entirely to a few Bengali families who where residents of the city. Then, gradually it moved to other urban centers such as Madras and Bombay; even today, Indian poetry in English remains largely urban. Moreover, because English was an elite language in India, Indian poets in English came from the upper classes and castes. (2-3)

What Paranjape says for Indian poetry in English is true for whole Indian literature in English. Hence, it hardly talks about the dalits and the adivasi. It was during the Gandhian era that dalit started to appear in English works. It was Mulkraj Anand who wrote The Untouchable in 1935 having a child Bakha as the protagonist. It brought forth the caste issues of India on the global platform. This work drove attention of dalit and non dalit writers towards the grass root problem need to be addressed. Afterwards, some English writers have enriched the corpus of dalit literature like the Booker Prize winner The God of Small Things (1997) by Arundhati Roy, A Fine Balance (1995) by Rohinton Mistry. But these are non-dalit writers writing about the dalits. The dalit writers writing in English are hardly few. One among them is Meena Kandaswamy who has given poetry collections Touch (2006), Ms Militancy (2010), and a novel The Gypsy Goddess (2014). Naredra Jadav’s autobiography Outcaste, a Memoir is also written in English.

Poems, short stories, novels and autobiographies written by dalit writers provided useful insights on the question of dalit identity. ‘Now, the subaltern communities found a new name
by coming together with the perspective of “dalit is dignified’ thereby rejecting the subhuman status imposed on them by the Hindu social order.” (“English”)

To explain the cause of dalit literature, Prabhakar Mande is quoted in Joothan – A Dalit’s Life saying, “The event of the development of Dalit literature is not just a literary event. Therefore this literature should not be viewed only from a literary perspective. Unless this literary chain of events is seen from a sociological perspective against the entire background of the changes happening in society, its significance will not be grasped.” (Mukherjee xiv)

Dalit literature has basically immerged as a part of dalit liberation movement. Therefore, it primarily and purposefully brings in the styles, subjects and genres which can serve its prime purpose. In that case, dalit writers demand a different set of literary theory which can evaluate dalit literature from its own perspectives. While many times, the main stream literary writers evaluate dalit literature negatively. They want to subsume dalit literature under the wider category of mainstream Indian literature. Sharankumar Limbale talks about the objections of the so called main stream literature towards dalit literature. “It has been charged that Dalit literature is propagandist, univocal and negative; that it does not represent the individual person; and that excessive resentment is heard in dalit literature.” (Limbale 34)

Responding to the charges to dalit literature by the mainstream writers many dalit writers have explained as Limbale explains, “Dalit literature is not neutral because dalit writers cannot ‘sever their relationship with pain.” […] “If dalit literature appears to be propagandist, it is because it presents dalit writers’ anguish and their questions.” (35) More to it, dalit writers accuse the main stream writers for not being neutral. The mainstream writers are charged by the dalit writers saying, “The mainstream literature is not ‘good’ literature because it has ignored the sufferings and exploitation of dalits.” (Mukherjee xxvi) They also
believe that the non-dalit writers can never understand the condition of being a dalit and therefore they can neither truly write nor sensibly criticize dalit literature. Like the aboriginal writers in the United States and Canada, the dalit writers too believe that the dalit narratives can be best captured and narrated by dalit writers only. Dalit writers have created their own aesthetics as Limbale says, “That work of dalit literature will be recognized as beautiful, and therefore ‘good’, which causes the greatest awakening of Dalit consciousness.” (Limbale 117) Gujarati writer Joseph Macwan too believes that “Dalit literature cannot be and should not be judged by the criteria of the mainstream literature.” (Gohil 7)

_Gujarati Dalit Literature_

Gujarati dalit literature emerged in 1970s and flourished after 1880s. It has its root in the dalit protesting movement and Marathi dalit literature. Being inspired by the anti-caste movement of _Dalit Panther_, some writers and activists of Gujarat also started similar organization. The founding chairman of the organization Dr Rameshchandra Parmar started a dalit magazine called _Panther_ in 1975. It was the first ever Gujarati magazine exclusively for dalits. Before that, in 1956, many poems had been written as tribute to Dr Ambedkar by the little educated dalit mill workers which had been collected and published in _Anjali_ (Tribute) by Dr Rameshchandra Parmar but the conscious writing began in 1970s only. The dalit voices were freed from the mainstream hegemony and a distinct dalit consciousness was given voice. The poems published in that magazine received very warm response hence many started writing prose also. The first ever Gujarati dalit novel _Angaliyat_ (The Stepchild)


Gujarati dalit writers have explored others forms of literary writings as well like eight collections of character sketches including Vyathana Vitak (1985) by Joseph Macwan, Madi Mane Sambhale (1994) edited by Chandu Maheriya. Apart from that, Gujarati dalit writers have also explored critical essays like Samvati (1984) by Mohan Parmar and Harish Mangalam, Anasaar (1989), Vidit (1989), Pratyayan (1994) by B N Vanakar as well as plays, biographies, autobiographies, travelogues, literary essays, folk literature, Bhakti Literature etc.

Apart from the above some of the works, many dalit literary works, specifically autobiographies have been translated into Gujarati. The translations into Gujarati have helped a lot to awaken the spirit of the Gujarati dalit writers.

Dalit literature was accepted as instrument for dalit empowerment during 1980s. The writers started expressing the dalits’ miserable condition, their exploitation and oppression on the real ground. In the preface of Ashmita, Macwan says, “The last ten years of the history of dalit literature is essentially the history of the expression of the agony experienced by the exploited.” The authenticity of expression of their true experiences was carried out by the rural or dialectical language. The dalit writers use variety of languages from rural areas to semi-urban areas as per their migration and experiences. Expressing his view on dalit
Macwan appreciates and encourages the use of dialects or *janpad* language by the dalit writers. He sees it as a way of more authentic self expression.

“At one point of time, Gujarati literature was under heavy influence of Gandhian ideas. Gandhi wanted literature to reach and be accessible to the last man of the society. Hence, he always emphasized on the simplicity of presentations, realistic elements and dialectical language but he strongly believed literature to be a carrier of moral lessons also.” (Achyut xiv) This is what killed the literary beauty of the works of the Gandhian era. However, like an offshoot of the Gandhian ideology, Dalit literature is also intended to reach to the last man of the society but it has not been burdened with moral lessons always. Along with the simplicity of expression, common man’s language, reach unto the last, it has also beautified the subjects artistically. Gujarati literature is also seen as ‘rootless’ with its land as it was heavily influenced by the western concepts of existentialism, symbolism and Marxism during 1960s and 1970s. It was the dalit literature which became instrumental in bridging the gap between the writer and its public. The dalit literature made its roots in the Gujarati life itself. That is what makes dalit literature distinct from the *lalit* or mainstream literature.

*Dalit Literature in Translation*

The translation practices in India are as old as the nation is. But the modern translation practices in India started during the colonial period. A lot of Indian texts had been translated into English and vice versa. In the later part of the 20th century, the movement of translating regional or national language literatures boosted up for global reach and Dalit literature was not an exception to it.
The prime objective of Dalit literature is to make the world hear their voices, to make the world know their existence. Dalit literature has served the purpose at some extent by creating their own literature. But, as dalit literature is mostly written in the Indian regional languages, it has failed to make its impact at global level. Now, to serve the prime purpose of making the world hear, it is necessary to either write in the global languages or to translate the works in the global languages. A few important works of dalit literature have also been translated into the global languages including English.

The translation of the dalit literature has also begun with the Marathi dalit literature. In 1992, Mulk Raj Anand, and Eleanor Zelliot translated the first ever Marathi dalit poems as *An Anthology of Dalit Literature*. In the same year, Arjun Dangle edited *Poisoned Bread*. *Poisoned Bread* made a deep impact in the literary circle. It is a collection of the translations of the literary pieces as well as critical articles of dalit literature. In 2004, Arun Prabha Mukherji translated another important work of dalit literature, Sharankumar Limbale’s *Towards an Aesthetic of Dalit Literature: History, Controversies and Considerations*. Arun has also translated a very remarkable Hindi dalit autobiography *Joothan* by Omprakash Valmiki in 2003.

Dalit literature is dominated by autobiographies and poetry primarily. Hence, the most translations of dalit literature are of autobiographies and anthologies of poetry. Many Marathi dalit autobiographies like Lakshman Mane’s Sahitya Akadami Award winner autobiography *Upara* (1980) has been translated into English as *Upara – An Outsider* (2003) by A K Kamat; Lakshman Gaikwad’s *Uchlya* (1987) has been translated as *The Branded* (1998) by P A Kolharkar; Sharankumare Limbale’s *Akkarmashi* (1984) has been translated as *The Outcaste* (2003) by Santosh Bhoomkar; Urmila Pawar’s *Aayadan* (2002) has been translated
as The Weave of my Life: A Dalit Woman's Memoir (2008) by Maya Pandit; Bebi Kamble’s Jina Amucha has been translated as The Prison We Broke (2008) by Maya Pandit; Kishor Kale’s Kolhatyacha (1994) has been translated as Against All Odds (2000) by Sandhya Pandey and many other literary works have been translated in various books and journals.


Apart from the above translations, many dalit works have been translated and published in anthologies like Nissim Ezekiel and Meenakshi Mukherjee’s edited Another India: An Anthology of Contemporary Indian Fiction and Poetry (1990), E V Ramkrishnan’s edited An Anthology of Modern Indian Poetry (1999) (Translation of poems from Hindi, Gujarati, Marathi, and Malyalam), E V Ramkrishnan and I V Ramkrishnan’s edited Indian Short Stories 1900-2000 (2005) and others.
In 1999, the autobiography of the acclaimed Tamil writer Bama’s *Karukku* was translated into English by Lakshmi Holmstrom and edited by Mini Krishnan. It brought forth the condition of dalit women, specifically those dalits who have converted to Christianity. Lakshmi Holmstrom also translated Bama’s *Sangati*, autobiographical character sketches of dalit women in 2005. It has also been translated into French by L’Aube in 2002. The translation of Bama’s works in the global languages revealed the sufferings as well as the life spirit of the dalit women of the south India. These translations also started a new wave of feminism.

Many departments in the universities are translating dalit literature as well as few special centers have also been designated for translation of dalit literature like The Centre for Translation and Study of Dalit and Tribal Literature at the University of Hyderabad - India, AHRC funded Research Network at UEA.

**Gujarati Dalit Literature in Translation**

Even though Gujarati dalit literature is proliferating since last two decades, there are hardly some translations of dalit literary texts. The groundbreaking translation was Joseph Macwan’s *Angaliyat* translated as *The Stepchild* by Rita Kothari in the year of 2004.

As quoted about the condition of translation in Gujarat, Rita Kothari says, “...approximately 1000 works from Indian and some European languages exist in Gujarati translations. In contrast, very little Gujarati literature has made inroads into other languages, particularly English.” (Kothari 74-75)

Unlike Marathi autobiographies, there are a very few translations of Gujarati dalit autobiographies. One of them is B Kesharshivam’s *Purnasatya* (2002) translated as *The Whole Truth and Nothing But the Truth – A Dalit’s Life* (2008) by Gita Chaudhari.

Apart from the above translations, some of the works have been published in the reputed journals. As it is the evident that very few Gujarati dalit literary works have been translated into English, there is a seer need to translate Gujarati dalit literature into other languages and specifically global languages.
**Dalit Literature and Translation:**

As the above discussion shows, least dalit literature has been translated particularly in the global languages though translation is the basic need to serve the purpose of the dalit literature. This portion discusses the need, importance and aim of translating dalit literature.

*The Need:*

The dalit literary works need to be translated in other languages and primarily in the global languages as it helps the dalit community to make their voice reach to the world. On one hand, it is the fact that dalit literature is written in the regional languages because it authenticates and empowers their identities. It helps them to communicate their way of life, their wretchedness, their culture. The regional languages connect the dalit literatures with its roots/milieu. But at the same time, on the other hand, it is the fact that keeping themselves limited to the regional languages will never help them to serve the very purpose of its existence. As it has been proved and learnt that dalit literature is not written primarily for aesthetic pleasure but to raise their voices against the caste based oppression and discrimination. This purpose can be better served only if the voice is heard by others than the community or regional members. How would the world come to know about the miserable condition of dalits along with their particular way of life unless and until they communicate in the language which the world can understand. Therefore, it is very necessary to translate dalit literature in other languages to serve its basic purpose of existence. In fact, dalit literature could not have been part of the social and political equality movement as it is now, had the regional narratives not been translated into other languages. The world had learnt
about the dalits and the dalit literature because first it has been written and second, it has been translated.

Many dalit writers have corroborated that their lives are their literature. This fact of articulating life into literature has given rise to emergence and spread of dalit autobiographies. In that context, translating a dalit text into other languages creates an opportunity for them to communicate to the world which otherwise would go unheard. The world would not have come to know about condition of Marathi dalits, had Daya Pawar’s autobiography *Baluta* not been translated into several other languages including Gujarati and English. The world would have never come to know about the wretched condition of Chuhara community in Dehradun, had Omprakash Valmiki’s Hindi autobiography *Joothan* not been translated into several other languages including English.

The translation of a dalit text not only benefits the dalits and dalit literature but also literature at large. Translating a dalit text is an attempt to enrich and empower the target language and literature as well. Translation of the dalit texts adds new themes, new narrative techniques, new points of view, and new characters to mainstream literature. It also helps to bring in new words and usages into the target language as it is evident in the translation of Joseph Macwan’s *Angaliyat* into English as *The Stepchild*.

*The Importance:*

In the world of intellectuals, writing weighs always heavier than translating. The writing has always been applauded and admired more than the translation of the same work. But many may not agree with this. As, first, the process of translating is not less complex than writing and second it is through translation only that the literary master pieces have entered in the
various cultures across the world. And in the same line, I wonder how otherwise the world would have ever learnt about the Blacks in Africa and America and the Tribals and the Dalits in India. In fact, for dalit literature being translated is as important as being written because, the basic purpose for writing dalit literature is not to please but to draw an attention of the world towards their existence as well as their wretched condition. And because most of the dalit literature is written in regional languages, this goal cannot be achieved only by writing but by translating into other languages. Today, the world knows about the Gujarati writer Joseph Macwan as well as the dalit community in Charotar region of Gujarat because, one of the reasons, his work Angaliyat has been translated into English and several other languages. The world knows the plight of the women in Tamil Nadu as Bama’s Sangati has been enabled to reach to the people by translating it into English and several other languages. But the world hasn’t been able to learn about the discrimination against Satiya, the plight of Lakshmi working day and night in a tobacco barnyard, the motherless burdened childhood of Joseph, the plight of Heta who was raped by the owner of a barnyard and left with the only option of sinking herself in a well, the unchanged plight full condition of the dalits who had converted to the Christianity with the hope to getting dignified life but in vain because the people from Joseph Macwan’s character sketches collection Vyathana Vitak haven’t been empowered to talk to the world. Translating these character sketches will help the characters to be able to reach to the world and, in turn, the world to them.

The Aim:

“Some voices are mute, some others are hushed and some others are heard ineffectively and infrequently. If verbalization is empowerment, literature sanctions an opportunity for the voices that have been silenced or remained silent for long time.
If being heard by a huge community is empowerment, translation is the most appropriate platform for it.” (Kiran 2)

Translating dalit literature is an act of empowerment for dalits. Appiah has stated, “A translation aims to produce a new text that matters to one community the way another text matters to another.” (Appiah 425) Translation helps to bridge the gap between the dalits and rest of the India or world. It also helps in creating awareness about the thrice oppressed worst condition of women in India. The women have been traditionally denied equality with the men in the rigid patriarchal society and the dalits have been placed at the bottom of the hierarchy. Wherein, to be born as woman in the dalit community is to be at the lowest rung of the society being thrice down then an upper caste man in India. Their voices have never been noted in the thousands of years of history. But translation is such a platform that enables them to speak with the world, to draw an attention of the world towards their thrice oppressed traditionally worst condition. As Teeho, Valji and Methi have been given tongue to speak to the world by translating Angaliyat into English so is the aim of translating dalit literature.

A Raconteur Author: Joseph Macwan

As said earlier, Gujarati dalit literature provided a platform to the dalits to express themselves who had otherwise remained silent. Gujarati dalit literature came to an existence as well as recognized with the pioneer of Gujarati dalit literature Joseph Macwan. He has won several Gujarati Sahitya Academi Awards and also Bharatiy Sahitya Akadamy Award (1986) for his valuable contribution to literature.
Macwan, a great character sketcher, an excellent novelist, an eminent story teller, and vigilant critic of literature, has made significant contribution to Gujarati literature. His works have been appreciated by the masses primarily due to the element of wholeness of life that touches every one. He said he had cultivated art but hadn’t deceived life. And therefore, his creations are full of jivan laxita (life orientated). For him, his real life experiences are the very valuable resources for creating literature.

“[…] Josephbhai was a community archive, storing in his narratives the life and times of the Vankar community he belonged to. Painting with words the aspirations and tragic losses of the untouchables Satiyo, the raped Heta, the elegy singer Hazel, he created a vivid ethnography of a region, people and caste. People who touched his life – Jeevikaaki, Patak kaka, Pannabhahbi, Bhavan Bhagat – inhabited his literary landscape and became a part of Gujarat’s collective memory through Vyathana Vitak and Angaliyat. Josephbhai’s fictionalized reality, or realistic fiction is to my mind an outcome of a formidable and receding tradition of orality, incidentally produced as written literature.”(Kothari ix)

Macwan was a committed writer to dalit literature as well as mainstream Gujarati literature. His literary works have emerged from his real life experiences. At no point in his works, the facts are merely in form of information but rather articulated artistically well. His compassion towards oppressed, unprivileged and dalits has always been at the centre of his artistic creation. He has brought the core of humanity in his literature by creating the lifelike characters.
He was born on 9th October 1935 in a small village of Tranol of Kheda taluka, Anand district, Gujarat. His original native place was Odagam, a small village in the same region. But, as his father Dahyalal was working with Christian Missionary in Tranol, hence he was born there.

Macwan was brought up in very critical economic and social conditions. His mother had passed away at his very young age. His childhood had passed striving for motherly love. At one point in his collection of character sketches Vyathana Vitak, he says, “I am a motherless child now but once I had not less than three mothers. They had filled my life with different indistinct colors of motherhood, humanity and compassion! But they have all gone forever in a way that kills a desire for life. I am left behind with such an inclination of a mother which pinches me every day.” (1)

His childhood was painful as his father got married to another woman soon after his wife’s death. Joseph’s step-mother was cruel to him. Her dislike for him worked as a propeller for the sufferings of Joseph. As a young boy, he had started working hard. He had been helping his mother at home and his father on farm. He used to wake up early in the morning and by the time the first ray of the sun would spread light on the earth, he would have completed the work of drawing water from a distant well. After completing the chore in the cockcrow, he used to go for attending school. After school, he used to go to his land to help his father and family members in farming. Life was drudgery for him and, moreover, he had never received a word of warmth and compassion from his step-mother.

He passed his life with pain and severe poverty. He wore the hands-me-down, worn out clothes and footwear. On one hand, he was drawn away from his life and burdened with work
and, on the other hand, he had been losing his loved ones. This had created an ocean of pain and anguish within him and such predicaments became the force for his literary creation.

A Brilliant Student and a Genius Teacher

Joseph was a brilliant student. He attended school in those days when it was not usual for the people of his community to go to school. Due to his teacher father and wise mother, he learnt to read and write at the age of five only. In those days, students used to be admitted in the first standard at the age of seven but, keeping in view, his ability to learn, he was admitted in the school at the age of five only. He could quickly remember and recite poems by listening to his brother when he used to recite the poems to his mother in bed due to her illness. He had always stood first in the Missionary Primary School. Listening to various thinkers and creative writers, he had felt to be an artist in his childhood itself.

He studied up to fourth standard in the Missionary School of the village Oad. Then, he joined a local board school for fifth and sixth standard. He passed his vernacular final with 73% from I P Mission School of Nadiyad in 1950. Afterwards, he joined Christian Missionary School, Khamloj as a teacher at the age of fourteen to be helpful to his poor family. After his short tenure in Khanloj, he was transferred to Missionary School of Nadiyad as a Deputy P T C in 1955. His studies were also going on when he was working. He passed the exam of Matriculation with 72% in the year of 1955. Then, he joined Primary Teacher’s College (PTC) and completed the course with 72%. In 1957, he joined St. Xavier’s School in Anand as a teacher of Hindi language.

He passed the exams like Vinit Visharad and Rashtrabhasha Rama while pursuing PTC. Due to his strong desire to study further, he passed MA in Hindi by attending weekend classes even
after joining St. Xavier’s School. During 1970-71, he served the College of Dakor as a visiting Hindi Lecturer. He also worked as a visiting Hindi lecturer at M. B. College, Vidhyanagar during 1972-77. Simultaneously, he was working with St. Xavier’s School. After working hard for years, he decided to concentrate on his job at the school. Hence, he resigned from other posts and completely devoted himself to the school till he retired in 1994.

*Conversion to Christianity*

His family along with many others had adopted Christianity towards the end of nineteenth century. It was primarily due to the exploitation of the people of this community by the so-called upper caste people in Hindu religion. In those days, the farmer and other higher caste people of the Charotar region were wealthy and happy but the dalits didn’t have even enough food to eat. They were poor, suffering from diseases, homeless and devoid of any basic human need. Meanwhile, Christian Missionary came in that region and provided food, homes, education, employability and better life. They were not practicing untouchability with the dalits. That is what made the poor dalits to embrace Christianity. Joseph Macwan’s grand-grandfather adopted Christianity in the year of 1892. Since then, the legacy has continued.

*Literary Creation*

Macwan won a prize for an essay on ‘Prohibition of Wine’ when he was in the fifth standard. The prize was conferred upon him by Shri Morarji Desai. At his very tender age, he had felt the presence of artistic ability within him and understood the power of words.
Apart from the above incidents, he had listened and learnt the folklores like the Sinhasanbatrisi, Sudaboteri, Baranskasturi, Vikram ane Vetal, Sadevant Saavaliga and songs and hymns from Bhavan Bhagat and Jetha Kaka of Vyathana Vitak. He was very much influenced by Bhavan Bhagat’s stories and songs.

His painful experience since his childhood had made him ponder over the nature of life which ultimately led to the literary creation. All his loved ones like his mother, his grandmother, his elder brother Manubhai and his uncle Somakaka had passed away when he was a lad. His father didn’t love him ever and his step mother had always kept him devoid of motherly affection. That pain of loss, devoid of love and care, absence of his loved ones, drudgery from the childhood gave him a lot of miseries. He always kept on pondering over the nature of life and death and developed his understanding of life out of pain. He transformed his pain into universal human experiences and presented it artistically.

He started his career as writer with a novella, Gegadi Na Phool in 1954 which was published in the periodical Savita with the title of Jashavant. From 1954 to 1964 he wrote many novellas which were published in various literary magazines. But, then suddenly, he stopped writing for as long as sixteen years. During those sixteen years of writer’s block, he read many writers of India and abroad. He was influenced by Hindi writer Premachand’s realism as well as the life philosophy of Maxim Gorky and Sharad Babu. He polished his artistic sense and human understanding. After sixteen years of study and meditation of literature, he returned to his writer’s self by writing a short story Maru Kon? in 1982.

His return in the literary world gave a new and hitherto uncultivated literary works. He delivered aesthetics of pain, sufferings and exploitation of dalits. Macwan himself had
experienced a dalit life hence he could express it more authoritatively. He also documented the dalit communities’ other qualities like honesty, self respect, spirituality, bravery, customs, language and social and cultural life as well. He brought forth the sacred qualities of the untouchables. His earlier character sketches were published serially in Jansata. The artistic presentation and authenticity of these character sketches had influenced the readers deeply. The character sketches written between 1981 and 1984 were published in Vyathana Vitak in 1985 as his first character sketches collection. In 1986, he wrote a novel Angaliyat (The Stepchild) which was awarded by Sahitya Akadamy.

Joseph Macwan was honest to his life and committed to his dalit community and he was balanced it well in his writings. His writings reflect the various plays of life he had lived, the lessons he had learnt from various situations as well as the pathos of human life. He had seen deaths many times. He had loved words, read and meditated the best writers of the world, and had cultivated his ability of creating master pieces. He had depicted life with various colors of his real experiences. He himself has said about his writing, ‘I have created art but haven’t deceived life.’

Many critics have tested his writings and have given their opinions about him. Dr. Joseph Parmar says, “He seems a descendant of Premchand’s dynasty of writers and, at the same time, close to Sharadbabu.”

Rajanikumar Pandya says, “Joseph’s importance in literary world is not only compassion but also humanity. After Suresh Joshi, the practices of promoting events came into place as life is expressed through events. If a literary work is to express life, then it is inevitable to forsake events. The only thing needs to be meditated is whether the writer wants to express the
events dramatically or in the eternity being expressed in the events. Joseph addresses the hard and painful but routine events of life. Even though his imagination soars high, it is rooted in the ground of reality which doesn’t allow him to go away from the honest experiences of life.” While Manilal Patel says, “Many times, Joseph seems life oriented writer at the cost of art.”

Macwan has contributed to all the literary genres as mentioned below:

**Novels**

Angaliyat (The Stepchild): 1986

Laxman Ni Agni Pariksha: 1986

Mari Parnetar: 1988

Mankhani Mirat: 1992

Bij-Trij Na Tej: 1995

Ajanm Aparadhi 1995

Dada Na Deshma 1996

Mavatar 1996

Amar Chandalo 2002

Dariya 2006

Sangavato
Bhini Mati Kora Man 2004

Apano Paras Aap 2005

Charushila 2011

His novels are actually a documentation of the vibrant life of Charotar regions. His first novel Angaliyat is considered to be one of the three best Gujarati novels. It has won several prestigious awards and honors like Bharatiya Sahitya Akademi Award, Kanaiyalal Munshi Award, Gujarati Sahitya Akademi first prize, Dalit Sahitya Akademi Ambedkar Award, All India Open University Andhrapradesh Award. His another novel Mari Paranetar has been awarded by Gujarati Sahitya Acadami and Laxman Ni Agni Pariksha was awarded Matunga Garden Group Maumbai Gold Medal and all other novels have been well received and appreciated by the critics and readers.

Macwan is known more for his character sketches than his novels. He in fact started his second phase of literary career with a collection of character sketches. He has given eleven collections of character sketches.

**Character Sketch Collections**

Vyathana Vitak 1985

Vahalana Valakha 1987

Mari Bhillu 1989

Janamjala 1990
His character sketches are the reflections of the society he has lived in. After Swami Anand, it was Joseph Macwan who has made a layman the subject of his sketches. Almost all character sketches are autobiographical. His first Vyathana Vitak was awarded first prize as well as Sadvichar Family Award, Takhtsinh Parmar Award, ‘Sandhan’ CAS Award, Dhanji Kanji Gold Medal. His other sketches collection Janamjala and Mari Bhilu also have been awarded by Gujarati Sahitya Akademi. Macwan has also contributed short stories and essays significantly.

**Short Story Collections**

Sadhanani Aradhana 1986

Aagalo 1991

Pannabhabhi 1992
Fari Amba Mohre 1998

Orchid Na Phool 2004

Biji Boni 2008

Essay Collections

Pagala Prabhuna 1991

Vyatit Ni Vaate 1992

Sanskar Na Vavetar 2011

His short story collections like Sadhanani Aradhana and Pannabhabhi both have won Gujarati Sahitya Acadami Awards.

Edited Books

Amar Samvedan Kathao 2013

Anamat Ni Andhi

Aravind Saurabh

Ek Digant Atmani Jeevan Saurabh

Some of his works have also been adopted on screen such as ‘Lohino Sambandh’ has been adapted in the movie Bas Yari Rakh (English version: My Little Devil) and a sketch ‘Baheuru Ayakhu Mungi Vyatha’ as been adapted as a tele-film. “His Angaliyat marked a turning point in Gujarati dalit literature as well as Gujarati lalit (Mainstream) literature. Long time after
Pannala Patel’s *Manavini Bhavai* (Endurance: Droll Saga), it was Angaliyat which became an authentic voice of not only Gujarat’s rural people but also of the further downtrodden dalit of the villages of Gujarat.” (Achyut xiii)

Joseph’s writing also proves him a completely realistic writer. His all works are artistic presentation of his own experiences, and events of his own life. “Fiction and real life overlap in his works. Many of his stories read much like his life sketches. Macwan’s style and treatment are simple but sensitive and evocative.” (Oza 101)

It is also observed that Macwan could have been more authentic voice of dalit community had he gone beyond his personal world. As it is the evident, his all writings in any form ultimately are rooted in his own life with some tints of imagination. Rita Kothari says, “He did not go beyond his personal universe to justify his claim that he was the representative voice of Gujarati dalit writing. The matter remains contestable. Meanwhile, Josephbhai carried the burden of representation and became a symbol of both Dalit aspirations and disappointments.” (ix)
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