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# ARTICLES

## Review

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**Women by the woman – Kamala Das**
Sofia C. Jose
Anita Desai mostly concerns the questions of survival and existence in her novels. She tries to understand and explore the machinery which subjugated and conditioned othering process. In the novel, Urdu poetry, and two women - Sarla and Imtiaz Begum - are othered through power. Power operates always in a network and extends its reach everywhere. The othering process is accelerated by power syndrome. It is a desire to rule over. One is dominated by other. In the othering operation, the hero of the novel Devan proves himself the custodian of Urdu at the cost of his family. He could not rise above patriarchal hold. He pays least attention to Sarla due to his bloody patriarchy and towards the end Imtiaz. The present author intends to highlight instances having been othered.

Key Words: Other; othering; process.

INTRODUCTION

Anita Desai in most of her novels engages the question of survival or existence. All social relations are marred by power-knowledge synthesis. Power is immanent. It races fast when it is aided by knowledge. Power is exercised through social and cultural discourses. “In politics, art and science, power is gained through discourse: discourse is ‘a violence that we do to things’. Claims to objectivity made on behalf of specific discourses are always spurious: there are no absolutely ‘true’ discourses, only more or less powerful ones” (Selden et al., 2006). The term ‘other’ or ‘othering’ has been taken simply in the context of marginalization.

In the novel In Custody, Urdu and women are victims to power structure. Both are othered in some unique way. In fact, this is colonial-colonized type of relation. One is dominated by other. Narhari Kaviraj Writes:

“The Western scholars realized that the best way to dominate over the Orient is to know it as best as they could. The more complete the knowledge, the more enduring will be the power to hold it. It is this that inspired them to lay the basis of a new discipline called Orientalism” (Kaviraj, 2005).

Edward Said having been influenced by Michael Foucault writes:

“The relationship between Occident and Orient is a relationship of power, of domination, of varying degrees of a complex hegemony” (Said, 1995). The othering strategy is a very powerful tool to silence someone or something without facing any threatening opposition.

DISCUSSION

Anita Desai is basically in the novel concerned with the fall in Urdu literature and Muslim culture. As she
expressed in an interview with Magda Costa:

I was trying to portray the world of Urdu poets. Living in Delhi I was always surrounded by the sound of Urdu poetry, which is mostly recited. Nobody reads it, but one goes to recitations. It was very much the voice of North India. But although there is such a reverence for Urdu poetry, the fact that most Muslims left India to go to Pakistan meant that most schools and universities of Urdu were closed. So that it’s a language I don’t think is going to survive in India… There are many Muslims and they do write in Urdu; but it has a kind of very artificial existence. People are not going to study Urdu in school and college anymore, so who are going to be their readers? Where is the audience? (Costa 2001)

Our historians tell two, three reasons namely India-Pakistan partition, communalization of language that is, Urdu for Pakistan and Hindi for India, and Muslim’s great interest in wine and woman. The novel centers on the present condition of Urdu poetry, Urdu poet’s and lovers’ feelings of disillusionment, frustration, endless nostalgia, and contemporary Muslim society. With the partition of country, Urdu became the official language of Pakistan and Hindi of India. The concerned governments began promoting their official languages. As a result, Hindi got upper edge on Urdu in India and Urdu in Pakistan despite their sufficient readership. The novel centers on Devan, a Hindi lecturer in Lala Ram Lal College at Mirpore. He has great respect for Urdu poetry. Urdu has been his first love and first language since childhood. He is a big fan of Urdu poet Nur Shahjahanbadi. His interest in Urdu literature made him a boring teacher in the class and failed in the maintenance of order and discipline. Murad Beg his friend and editor of Urdu magazine Awaaz, one day visits Devan’s college and asks him to interview Nur the great Urdu poet of India. Murad is well aware of the difficulties that come bringing out a magazine especially Urdu:

‘Worries, worries, worries. And where are the readers? Where are the subscriptions? Who reads Urdu any more?’ (IC 13-14)

Murad is committed ‘to keep alive the glorious tradition of Urdu literature’; and therefore he decided of bring out a special issue on Urdu poetry and Nur would be the star of the issue. Murad also told Devan that this issue would carry full feature on Nur before his death. Murad says:

If we do not do it, as whatever cost, how will it survive in this era of – that vegetarian monster, Hindi?’ ‘That language of peasants’…raised on radishes and potatoes’, ‘Yet, like these vegetables, it flourishes, while Urdu – language of the court in days of royalty – now languishes in the back lanes and gutters of the city. No place for it to live in the style to which it is accustomed, no emperors and nawabs to act as its patrons. Only poor I, in my dingy office, trying to bring out a magazine where it may be kept alive (IC 14).

The ethos of Devan’s society and college is communal. Communal riots engulf the society frequently which falsifies Indian secularity:

The Hindus slaughtered pigs in their own quarter, the Muslims took to slaughtering buffaloes in place of cows, realizing that the latter would have been tantamount to suicide (IC 21).

At Murad’s request, Devan visited Nur’s residence. He found the residence unsuitable to a poet. “All he could hear were the pigeons complaining to and consoling each other up on the dusty ledges of the high skylights, and the labored sound of the poet’s breath, snarled in his throat with some elderly phlegm” (IC 45). After a brief talk with Devan, Nur nostalgically comments:

‘How can there be Urdu poetry where there is no Urdu language left? It is dead, finished. The defeat of the Moghuls by the British threw a noose over its head, and the defeat of the British by the Hindi-wallahs tightened it. So now you see its corpse lying here, waiting to be buried’ (IC 45).

Nur suspects Devan because the latter happened a Hindi teacher. Devan explains to him that he only took his degrees in Hindi for the sake of bread and butter. He has great respect for Urdu and wants to show his appreciation. Nur seemed as if he were not listening to all his arguments. Nur continued his tirades:

Those Congress-wallahs have set up Hindi on top as our ruler. You are its slave. Perhaps a spy even if you don’t know it, sent to the universities to destroy whatever remains of Urdu, hunt it out and kill it. And you tell me it is for an urdu magazine you wish to interview me. If so, why are you teaching Hindi (IC 46)?… It seems you have been sent here to torment me, to show me to what depths urdu has fallen (IC 47).

After all Devan tried to arrange interview but it was almost impossible because of excess noise in the premise of the poet. His house was packed with children, women, louts, clowns, jokers and jugglers. Devan feels that “these louts, these lalangas (vagabond) of the bazaar world – shopkeepers, clerks, bookies and unemployed parasites- lived out the fantasy of being poets, artists and bohemians here on Nur’s terrace, in Nur’s company” (IC 55). And around the residence of the poet, the city hustle-bustle made the atmosphere boring and irritating:

Perhaps the rooftop of his house caught some of the
electricity that seemed to rise from the city, its sparks flying from the wildly circling and flashing neon signs that lit up the sky, its cacophonous noises from the traffic in the streets, the shops in the bazaar and the cinema soundtrack, now reaching its deafening climax in which songs, screams, gun shots, armoured tanks, galloping horses and hysterical laughter and weeping all joined together in an incredible chorus (IC 57).

Devan recited an Urdu poem to Nur in a very modest manner. Nur does not approve of the manner and reacted:

“We need the roar of lions, or the boom of cannon, so that we can march upon these Hindi-wallahs and make them run. Let them see the power of Urdu”, he thundered. ‘They think it is chained and tamed in the dusty yards of those cemeteries that they call universities, but can’t we show them that it can still let out a roar or a boom’ (IC 58)?

Out of frustration and anger, Nur suggests Devan, “If you want arms, you had better cross the border and go find them in Pakistan. Here we live as hijras, as eunuchs’ (IC 58). Nur even taunts Devan. Devan gets terrified. Nur further sheds light on the partiality played in the selection of books for Sahitya Akademi award:

“No book was judged worthy of the award this year.” Why such treatment of Urdu, my friends? Because Urdu is supposed to have died, in 1947 (IC 61).

He tells him that even film songs are better than Urdu poems. This is the account of first round attempt of Devan to have an interview of Nur. It was all mere fuss and no success at all. After first round trip to Chadani Chowk, Devan returned home late finding Sarla “standing in the doorway with her arms and her sari wrapped about her shoulders and her face bent under the thin straggling hair as she talked to a neighbor outside- the picture of an abandoned wife” (IC 73). Sarla is living a marooned life in the house of Devan. She is othered by Devan. There is no mutual understanding among them. Both are emotionally at logger heads. She is silenced permanently. Her taciturnity increases Devan’s mental burden. The novelist writes:

Devan had been more a poet than a professor when he married Sarla – he had only been taken on as a temporary lecturer and still had confidence in his verse – and for the wife of a poet she seemed too prosaic. Of course she had not been his choice but that of his mother and aunts, crafty and cautious women; she was the daughter of a friend of an aunt’s, she lived on the same street as that family, they had observed her for years and found her suitable in every way; plain, penny-pinching and congenitally pessimistic (IC 75).

After the first round failure in interview project, Devan got introspective and practical. From now on he wished to look after his household- wife and son. Meanwhile Murad meets Devan to have information about the interview. Devan told him that it was all unsuccessful. He cannot lose his family and salary, provident fund, pension, housing, and medical allowance. He cannot let them starve. Devan protested and jibes at him. Anyhow, Devan got ready for the second round trip to Nur. But this time he saw something different. He expected that he would have a chance to listen Nur. Nur second wife Imtiaz Begum a young lady is ready to recite her Urdu poems. She wished to have training in the company of Nur. As Imtiaz began her poem, Devan sensed and thought:

She said she was a bird in a cage that she longed for flight that her lover waited for her. She said the bars that held her were cruel and unjust, that her wings had been hurt by beating against them and only God could come and release her by lifting the latch on the cage door, God in the guise of her lover, when would he come (IC 92)?

Murad dislike Imtiaz Begam. He thought her of her as a so-called poetess having a connection with female mafia (don). “She would need only to shed her silver and black carnival costume and take on the drabness of their virtuous clothing. Dressed as she was, she would of course be barred from their society - they would have thought her no better than a prostitute or dancing girl” (IC 94). This all proves Devan’s as a bloody patriarch. The so-called fans of Nur gathered to celebrate Nur’s birthday. Devan is sat on a cane stool as he had on his first round trip. Nur keeps on drinking. Nur told Devan that Imtiaz took the place of my secretary since she came to my house. Devan got fed up with family dramas and performances, and excess noise making all possibilities to have an interview in the written form null and void. With all of this Devan told Murad Beg. Murad suggested to frustrated Devan to tape his poetry and interview. Devan knows very well that he cannot bear the cost of tape recorder. So, he protested at first. Murad asked him to draw the amount from the college fund. No doubt, it seemed him a serendipitous idea.

Next day, Devan met Abid Siddiqui, the head of the department of Urdu. He is short-sized man like his department “whose youthful face was prematurely topped with a plume of white hair as if to signify the doomed nature of his discipline” (IC 109). Siddiqui also accepts that Urdu “is becoming rarity- it is only grown for export” (IC 111). The chief librarian of the college also objected on the ground that the tape would be only useful for Urdu learners. Devan went to his department and asked for few days leave to complete the project of interview. Mr. Trivedi, the head of the department flared at him and warned him, “I’ll have you demoted, Sharma- I’ll see to it you don’t get your confirmation. I’ll get you transferred to your beloved Urdu department. I won’t have Muslim toadies in my department; you’ll ruin my boys with your
Muslim ideas, your Urdu language. I'll complain to the Principal, I'll warn the RSS, you are a traitor- (IC 168-69). This is all due to communal feelings.

Mr. Trivedi's treatment made Devan to think about his relationship with Sarla. Devan has tamed and domesticated her badly. She even trained herself to remain silent. He found Sarla never opposing lady. She is just carrying the burden Hindu womanhood:

Sarla never lifted her voice in his presence- countless generations of Hindu womanhood behind her stood in her way, preventing her from displaying open rebellion. Devan knew she would scream and abuse only when she was safely out of the way, preferably in the kitchen, her own domain. Her other method of defence was to go into the bedroom and snivel, refusing to speak at all, inciting their child to wail in sympathy (IC 169).

Devan does not have faith either in Safia Begum (First wife of Nur Sahib) or Imtiaz Begum. He takes Safia as a snake, an impostor who has stolen her husband's verse. Imtiaz is also a problematic character. He hates her. Safia informed him about the arrangement so that he could interview Nur. Devan is almost on the verge of starvation bearing the cost of interview. He was dying for Nur's interview. She arranged in a prostitute room. But all his attempts and Safia's assistance were only to destroy Devan:

"It was a fiasco. There was no other word for it. Disbelievingly, Deven had the first tape removed, the second tried and then the third and the fourth…. Everyone's tempers were frayed by the constant stopping and starting. When the tapes could be induced to produce sound, there seemed to be nothing to listen to long intervals of cracking and sputtering interspersed with a sudden blaze of horns from the street, the shrieking of nest-building birds, loud explosions of laughter and incoherent joviality, drunken voices bawling, singing, stopping short. Where was Nur" (IC 202)? Safia repeatedly sent letters to Devan for the payment of bills charged for interview arrangements as well as other domestic problems. Devan is obliged to pay. On the other hand, Sofia has been bloody opponent of Imtiaz. She does not like Imtiaz and her ambitions. Even in public it is heard that Nur had brought her from a brothel much younger to him and in future he may bring third one too. Imtiaz Begum in a confrontational tone sent letter along with her latest poems for critical evaluation to Devan shedding his patriarchal character:

The recording is no secret. Whatever your reason for concealing it from me, Nur Sahib could not conceal it from me. Was I considered incapable of understanding the need to record Nur Sahib's voice for posterity? Was Safiya Begum considered wiser and more capable because of her greater age and her longer years with him? Dear friend, I beg to put it to you that you have insulted my intelligence by your deception (IC 228).

She continues her tirades against him:

... you thought I was a prostitute who dazzled Nur Sahib's eyes with my dance and so inveigled my way out of a house of prostitution into the house of a distinguished poet. Is that not an insult to the poet you claim to idolize, quite apart from the insult to me?... Kindly remember that unlike Nur Sahib and unlike your respected self, I am a woman and have had no education but what I have found and seized for myself. Unlike poets and scholars who have won distinctions, I have had no patron apart from my honored husband, no encouragement and no sympathy (IC 229).

Finally she wrote:

...I am enclosing my latest poems for you to read and study and judge if they do not have some merit of their own. Let me see if you are strong enough to face them and admit to their merit. Or if they fill you with fear and insecurity because they threaten you with danger-danger that your superiority to women may become questionable. When you rose to your feet and left the mehfil while I was singing my verse, was it not because you feared I might eclipse the verse of Nur Sahib and other male poets whom you revere? Was it not intolerable to you that a woman should match their gifts and even outstrip them? Are you not guilty of assuming that because you are a male, you have a right to brains, talent, reputation and achievement, while I, because I was born female, am condemned to find what satisfaction I can in being maligned, mocked, ignored and neglected? Is it not you who has made me play the role of the loose woman in gaudy garments by refusing to take my work seriously and giving me just that much regard that you would extend to even a failure in the arts as long as the artist was male? In this unfair world that you have created what else could I have been but what I am (IC 229-30)?

**CONCLUSION**

To the very end of the novel, Anita Desai proved that Devan is the real inheritor and custodian of Nur's spirit and poetry. For this distinction, he even destroyed his family. In the novel, Nur is seen more interested in wine and gossips. Devan has obsession for Urdu. In the othering of Urdu, and Sarla as well as Imtiaz Begum, patriarchy and power politics played major roles. Patriarchy is single-eyed ghost. It only learnt the lessons of domination.

**Conflict of Interests**

The authors have not declared any conflict of interests.
REFERENCES


Review

On “strategy” as the pivotal concept in transfer operations

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No consensus has been reached on an umbrella term for covering various macro- and micro-transfer operations in translating in the field of translation Studies. Writers have offered a wide spectrum of terminologies of their own for the operations in the past decades. This paper first discusses the reasons for use of “strategy” from a dictionary-based translational perspective. Then, it deals with the global strategies, such as literal/free translation and foreignizing/domesticating translation, analyzing the similarities and differences between the four categories. Finally, the paper summarizes the specific foreignizing/domesticating translation strategies on the basis of Venuti’s 1998 entry on “strategies of translation” in Routledge Encyclopedia of translation Studies, with a supplementation of some other strategies.

Key words: Transfer operation, conceptual issue, strategy, reason, type.

INTRODUCTION

Which term can be used to cover Cicero’s word-for-word translation, Jerome’s sense-for-sense translation, Xuanzang’s bufan (不翻, zero translation), or John Dryden’s metaphrase, compromise and imitation? No consensus has so far been reached in the field of translation studies with regard to a proper concept for encompassing these classical writers’ nomenclatures for translation operations. In the sections that follow, we will discuss the concept of “strategy”, reasons for use of the term, types of translation strategies and the similarities and differences between literal/free translation and foreignizing/domesticating translation.

Conceptual inconsistency

The relatively “old” term used to describe how translators handle the source text and create the target text seems to be a “method” (Methode in German) employed by Schlieiermacher (2006). In the past few decades, scholars have used different terms to mean something similar, such as “mode” (MacFarlane, 1953), “procedure” (procédé) (Vinay and Darbelnet, 1958; Newmark 1988), “technique” (Nida 1964; Newmark 1982; Fawcett, 1997; Molina and Albir, 2002), “shift” (Catford, 1965; Leuven-Zwart, 1989/1990), “strategy” (Lefevere, 1975;

In discussing literal translation, Shuttleworth and Moira (1997: 96) call it both a “strategy” and a “technique”. It is absolutely necessary to sort out the mess and settle on a term or a set of terms to cover the overall process of translating, from selection of the source text to macro- and micro-operative procedures of actual translating, including the general orientation of translation in handling the whole source text and local operations in dealing with a word, phrase, sentence and sub-text (example, an epistolary text) in the source text. Our discussion will be restricted to English-language research that has been published over the past five or six decades.

Reasons for use of strategy

Of the terms employed by translation scholars in recent decades, Macfarlane’s “mode” is used loosely in a very general sense to refer to such global translation orientations as actual translation, ideal translation or literal translation (Hermans, 2004: 17 to 21). The concept of “procedure” proposed by Vinay and Darbelnet seems to describe various kinds of resulting differences between source and target texts, rather than real procedures taking place through time (Chesterman, 2005: 19).

“Technique” focuses on local operations, especially in Molina and Albir (2002) who have summarized 18 techniques, such as adaptation, amplification, borrowing, calque and so on.

“Shifts” are defined by Catford (1965: 73) as “departures of formal correspondence”; they are in nature a kind of dissimilarity or difference obtained by comparison of source and target texts. Therefore, it is a generic textual term covering all kinds of changes that has taken place in the translation product. The research paradigm focusing on shifts seems to take formal correspondence/equivalence or literal translation as a default (that is, natural) tool that is self-evident in translation practice and that need not be studied. The underlying assumption relating to the terms like “procedure”, “shift”, “technique”, “solution”, and so on, is that literal word-for-word translation or formal correspondence is a kind of mechanical operation that is so easy that even a machine can do it. Nothing deserves scholarly research in this kind of default translation activity, which is deeply rooted in the belief that the target text, of course, should be faithful or equivalent to the source text.

“Strategy” is a term preferred by many scholars, most notably Lefevere (1975), Chesterman (1997/2005) and Venuti (1998). In discussing poetry translation, Lefevere proposes seven strategies, such as translation of poetry into prose. Clearly, his concept of “strategy” works at the global level. Chesterman (1997: 94-112) develops the term as referring to various local procedures, including syntactic, semantic and pragmatic strategies. Venuti combines global and local procedures into a concept of “strategy” that is manifested in the selection of a source text and the determination of the overall method for it, as well as such specific methods as explanation, addition and replacement in turning it into the target text (Venuti 1998: 240-244).

James Holmes’ “form” is interpreted as “strategy” by Shuttleworth and Moira (1997: 106). True, his “form” is indeed a kind of global strategy. For example, among the four forms of verse translation proposed by him, mimetic form is the one in which the form of the source text is retained in the target text. “Trajectory” does not seem to be popularly adopted by translation researchers in mainstream translation studies today. According to Malone (1988: 15), trajectory contains a number of basic translation patterns into which a given source-target pairing may partially be solved, such as amplification, reduction, reordering, and so on. It is something like Molina and Albir’s “technique”.

“Solution” is the nominalization of the verb “to solve”, thus enabling a possibility of understanding it as a process or result. It can be used to deal with the description of the translation outcome or with the reformulation of the actual translating process. Some researchers (Zabalbeascoa 2000; Pym 2011) like to use “solution” or “solution type” to describe the actual translation product. Translators will inevitably encounter problems in the process of translating and they have to find methods or techniques or follow procedures to solve them. It can be argued that “solution” presupposes a problem and thus is naturally associated with problem-solving. However, a solution is not the method itself, even though the former is related to the latter in that a method or a set of methods are used in order to solve a problem. We need a term to describe a wide range of translating operations, from selection of the source text to local procedures in rendering it. It seems that “strategy”, “method”, “technique”, “procedure”, “solution” and “shift” are used with high frequency nowadays in the field of translation studies. Therefore, it is rational to choose and determine term(s) from among them. Let us first look at their definitions in non-technical everyday English.

1) Strategy: A plan of action designed to achieve a long-term or overall aim.
2) Method: A particular procedure for accomplishing or approaching something, especially a systematic or established one.
3) Technique: A way of carrying out a particular task,
especially the execution or performance of an artistic work or a scientific procedure.

4) Procedure: An established or official way of doing something.

5) Solution: A means of solving a problem or dealing with a difficult situation.

6) Shift: A slight change in position, direction, or tendency.

The definitions might elicit various presuppositions from advocates of the terms. “Strategy” implies that translation is a kind of cognitive activity that achieves a goal. “Method” and “procedure” suggest that translation has some laws or rules for translators to obey, such as literal translation that may be viewed as an “established” translating rule for translation practitioners. “Technique” might indicate that translation is an art. “Solution” and “shift” imply that only studies focusing on problems or difficulties in translating are of some value. However, ways of actual translating go beyond those to deal with problems and difficulties.

If we look at the terms from a textual perspective, strategy seems to be at global level, technique at local level, and method in between. Procedure, solution and shift may be used at different levels. If we do choose an umbrella term to include all kinds of operations in a specific translation event, “strategy” seems to be the most general term. It is a plan of action(s) whose implementation requires the making of methods or techniques that are called “tactics” in the military field. In other words, a strategy contains a set of methods or techniques that may be established or provisional, and that are used to deal with easy or difficult things to achieve the expected or unexpected result. Therefore, strategy is indirectly linked with procedure, solution and shift. In our opinion, “strategy” can be adopted to mean a general or specific plan of action(s) used to achieve a certain goal or solve a certain problem by the translator with an objective. Pym’s (2011: 92-93) definition of “strategy” seems to be scientific and thus can be accepted by translation scholars:

A strategy is better seen as an action that aims to achieve a purpose where:

a) There is no certainty of success (that is, it is not a mechanistic application of a rule), and

b) There are viable alternative actions (that is, other ways of aiming to achieve the same or similar purpose).

Types of translation strategies

Along the line, prescribed by the concept of “strategy” in the above section, various kinds of classifications of translatorial actions under different nomenclatures may be viewed as those of translation strategies. According to John Kearns (2009: 282 to 285), translation strategies may be grouped into such big dichotomous categories as literal/free translation, local/global strategies, comprehension/production strategies and domesticating and foreignizing strategies, certainly also including strategies concerning selection of source texts. The categories can be sub-divided. For example, Vinay and Darbelnet’s procedures, Nida’s techniques of adjustment, Catford’s shifts and Malone’s trajectories are all of production strategies. Confronted with so many confusing divisions of translation strategies, we will mainly refer to Venuti’s and Chesterman’s classifications of strategies.

Literal vs. foreignizing translation and free vs. domesticating translation

It seems necessary to make a distinction between two pairs of strategies, namely free/literal translation and domesticating/foreignizing translation. There is a misunderstanding in the field of translation teaching and research in China that some students and even teachers identify literal translation with foreignizing translation and free translation with domesticating translation. But a logical distinction of them presupposes a good command of their definitions and features.

Features of domesticating/foreignizing translation

For Venuti (1998: 241 to 242), free translation may lead to domesticating translation and literalism leads to a foreignizing translation. However, they are not the same thing. A domesticating translation, as Venuti (1998: 240) implies, “conforms to values currently dominating the target-language culture, taking a conservative and openly assimilationist approach to the foreign text, appropriating it to support domesticating canons, publishing trends, political alignments”, while a foreignizing translation, on the other hand, “resists and aims to revise the dominant by drawing on the marginal, restoring foreign texts excluded by domestic canons, recovering residual values such as archaic texts, translation methods, and cultivating emergent ones”.

One of our previous studies on domesticating/foreignizing translation shows that, with regard to its etymological meanings of taming wild plants/animals or converting humans, “domestication seems to mean that a lower-class species is upgraded to an upper-class species and an outsider is turned to an insider” (Tian 2010: 81). As far as domestication in translation is concerned, it has several metaphorical meanings. First, the author, the source text and the source culture are like
a lower-class species. Domesticating translators are egocentric and ethnocentric, viewing their own culture as superior to foreign cultures. The source text is like a wild plant or animal that is of lower class in the eyes of domesticators. Only through domestication can it become something of higher class, just like a domesticated plant or animal. Second, a domesticating translation is a variation.

Domestication of a plant or animal involves a change in living conditions or environment. Translation also relates to the change in the environment for a text to live in, which is implied in the statement of “translation works on distance” by Anthony Pym in his translation and text transfer (1992).

Translation usually involves the transfer of a text from one place to another except for a bilingual/multilingual community (example, Hong Kong) where translation may be done for those who know only one of the languages used in the community. When a text leaves its own language-culture environment for another language-culture environment, its relation to its own environment will be severed because the language in which it was written has been replaced by another language, namely the target or receiving language. The target language is not necessarily related to the source-language culture but intimately to its own culture. In other words, the language replacement is a kind of domestication. Weng Xianliang (1983: 135), a late Chinese scholar and translator, points out that translation from a foreign language to Chinese, in some sense, is a kind of sinocization. True, most words and expressions in a language contain some historical residues of their own culture. When target language readers read the translated text, some words and expressions will remind them of something in their own history or culture. This kind of linguistic variation cannot be avoided and may be labeled “passive domestication”.

“Active domestication” does not link with the use of language, but with the translator’s attitude and purpose, which may be regarded as another metaphorical meaning of domestication for translation. Domesticating animals involves moral training. Translation also concerns a moral attitude taken by a translator. It is almost impossible for a translator to take a neutral stance, neither source-biased nor target-biased. Venuti points out that adoption of domestication or foreignization, in its final analysis, is a moral attitude (Guo, 2009: 35). The translator’s attitude toward the source text is influenced by their purpose.

Domestication and foreignization are directional. They are like equivalence in translation (Pym 1998). When we mention equivalence, it usually means that the target text is equivalent to the source text, not vice versa. Otherwise, it cannot be called a translation. Domestication and foreignization revolve around the target text rather than the source text. The target text’s swaying to the source language and culture (SLC) or to the target language and culture (TLC) determines whether it is a domesticating or foreignizing translation. The directionality of domestication and foreignization may be illustrated in Figure 1.

Domestication and foreignization are mutually convertible. Whether it is domestication or foreignization is determined by one’s perspective. Suppose that you were a Chinese who lived in England for some years.

You began to speak English, eat the local food, wear the local clothes, follow the local customs and even think like a native in England. We Chinese people would say that you had been foreignized. But English people would say that you had been domesticated. In the case of translation, target language readers will say that a translated text with strong target language-culture characteristics is a domesticating translation. If the target text keeps the source language-culture characteristics, target-language readers will feel that it looks exotic and will claim that it is a foreignizing translation. In the circles of translation studies, it seems that researchers always put themselves in the shoes of target-language readers when they talk about domestication and foreignization, which has almost become a default discourse for translation scholars. However, we need to know that they are convertible to each other. That is to say, a domesticating translation for target-language readers will become a foreignizing translation for source-language readers, and vice versa.

Domestication and foreignization are quantitative and qualitative. Various kinds of translation strategies, such as foreignization and domestication, or literal translation and free translation, coexist in many translations. In this case, we can only claim that these translations are more domesticating or more foreignizing. In other words, quantitative analysis of the use of domestication and foreignization in rendering items in the source language can help consolidate a qualitative analysis which, in turn, can convincingly decide the inclination of a translator in employing them to render a certain text. Both strategies are multi-layered. They deal with both macro- and micro-structures of the source text. Before translating, the

Figure 1. Directionality of domestication and foreignization.
translator will decide on their general strategy. In Schleiermacher’s words, they have to decide to bring the author to the reader or to bring the reader to the author (Robinson 2006: 229). Or they choose to stand in between in the case of somewhat balanced employment of the strategies in translating. Schleiermacher’s indication of the existence of the distance between the author and the reader implies the degree and process of domestication and foreignization. The distance can be short or long, which determines that the extent of the strategies varies. But they are not specific translation techniques. They are achieved by various techniques or sub-strategies, such as addition, omission, substitution for domestication and sound-retained transliteration, meaning-retained loan translation, form-retained transplantation for foreignization. Like domesticating wild plants and animals, domestication and foreignization involve a process of transforming the source text into the target text in terms of textual micro- and macro-structures. The destination of the process is a product that may be labeled a domesticating or foreignizing translation.

Features of free/literal translation

Literal translation is a translation “made on a level lower than is sufficient to convey the content unchanged while observing targeted language (TL) norms” (Barkhudarov 1969: 10, quoted in Shuttleworth and Moira 1997: 95). In other words, literal translation, including word-for-word translation, revolves around the representation of literal meanings of individual words, phrases and sentences as well as the preservation of the word order in the source text. Free translation, on the other hand, is “a type of translation in which more attention is paid to producing a naturally reading TT than to preserving the ST wording intact” (ibid.: 62). It is also known as sense-for-sense translation. It focuses on the reproduction of the true meaning in the original without much consideration of keeping the source-text form, including literal meaning and word order. A simple distinction between literal/free translation may be made as follows: if form and meaning cannot be retained at the same time, a literalist will choose to preserve the former, while a free-hander will tend to reproduce the latter.

However, Professor Douglas Robinson (Baker, 1998: 87-90) combines word-for-word translation (that is, literal translation) and sense-for-sense translation into the concept of faithful translation. Free translation, according to Robinson’s examination of translation discourse in human history, is actually an unfaithful translation or an imitation because such translation goes against some hegemonic tradition or norm. In the second edition of Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies (Baker and Saldanha, 2008), both entries of free/literal translation have been omitted. The reason for the omission might be that they are conceptually too vague, loose, dynamic and controversial. But we have to look them in the face because translators have been using them to talk about their translations throughout history.

It might be advisable to adopt the definitions of free/literal translation by Shuttleworth and Moira (2004). It might also be of some help in understanding the terms if we refer to the definitions offered by the contemporary Chinese dictionary (1999). According to it, literal translation refers to a kind of translation in which more attention is given to the preservation of literal meanings of words and syntactic structures of sentences in the source text (1999: 1615), while free translation is a kind of translation that is done according to the general meaning of the original but not word for word and sentence for sentence (1999: 1496). They are basically what Chinese translators mean by literal or free translation.

Relations between free/literal translation and domesticating/foreignizing translation

As for the relationship between literal translation and foreignizing translation, some writers hold that foreignness or strangeness is achieved through literalism (Shuttleworth and Moira, 1997: 96; Robinson, 1998: 127), but nobody, to our knowledge, has so far discussed the relationship between free translation and domesticating translation.

In our view, a literal translation is not necessarily a foreignizing translation. It can become a foreignizing translation only when target readers feel that the target text has a strange effect or an exotic flavor. Likewise, a free translation that is restricted to sense-for-sense translation is not a domesticating translation. It is domesticating translation only when target readers feel the unique color and flavor of their own language-culture from the target text. In other words, if free/literal translation makes target readers feel linguistically and culturally novel or unaccustomed to it, all translations of such kind may be seen as a kind of foreignization. In a similar vein, if target readers feel that a free or literal translation is familiar and natural, with no sense of distance in language and culture, it can be taken as a type of domestication.

Foreignizing and domesticating strategies

A careful examination of Venuti’s (1998: 240 to 244) discussion of “strategies of translation” in the first edition of Routledge encyclopedia of translation studies indicates that, as strategies, domestication and foreignization are
Statements on domesticating strategies

1) Domesticating strategies have been implemented at least since Rome, as Nietzsche remarked, “translation was a form of conquest” and Latin poets like Horace and Propertius translated Greek texts “into the Roman present”: they had no time for all those very personal things and names and whatever might be considered the costume and mask of a city, a coast, or a country” (Nietzsche 1974:137). As a result, Latin translators not only deleted culturally specific markers but also added allusions to Roman culture and replaced the name of the Greek poet with their own, passing the translation off as a text originally written in Latin. (Venuti 1998: 240 to 241)

2) Nicolas Perrot D’ablancourt (see French Tradition), a prolific French translator of Greek and Latin, argued that the elliptical brevity of Tacitus’s prose must be rendered freely, with the insertion of explanatory phrases and the deletion of digressions, so as “to avoid offending the delicacy of our language and the correctness of reason” (1640: preface; translated). (ibid: 241)

3) Under D’Ablancourt’s influence, the English translator Sir John Denham (see British tradition) rendered Book 2 of Aeneid in heroic couplets […]. In domesticating foreign texts D’Ablancourt and Denham did not only simply modernize them […]. (ibid: 241)

4) The multi-volume English version of Freud’s texts known as the standard edition (1953-74) assimilated his ideas to the positivism dominating the human sciences […]. (ibid: 241)

Segments on foreignizing strategies

1) From its origins in the German tradition, foreignizing translation has meant a close adherence to the foreign text, a literalism that resulted in the importation of foreign cultural forms […]. Johann Heinrich Voss’s hexameter versions of the Odyssey (1781) and the Iliad (1793) introduced this prosodic form into German poetry […]. Friedrich Hölderlin’s translations of Sophocles’ Antigone and Oedipus Rex (1804) draw on archaic and non-standard dialects […]. (ibid: 242)

2) Nott rejected the “fastidious regard to delicacy” that might have required him to delete the explicit sexual references in Catullus’ poems, because he felt that “history should not be falsified” (1795: x). (ibid: 243)

Segments on domesticating/foreignizing strategies

The distinction between their strategies is particularly evident in their additions to the Provençal text:

Shapiro makes his version conform to the familiar image of the yearning courtly lover by adding gently sighing and complained; Blackburn seeks estranging effects that work only in English by adding the pun on night in Day comes and the knight goes, as well as the surreal image of the sun sprouting. (ibid: 244) (Our addition of bold face throughout)

The key words in the above segments that directly or indirectly indicate some kind of strategy have been put in bold face. As Venuti suggests, domestication includes such global and local strategies as deletion, addition, replacement, free translation, insertion, explanation, genre switching, modernizing and assimilation. Foreignization is related to strategies like literal translation, introduction of new literary forms, archaizing, use of nonstandard dialects, and retention of differences. The one strategy may not be unique to or exclusively belong to domestication or foreignization. For example, addition, as a local strategy, may be domesticating or foreignizing. The criterion for judging whether a strategy is domesticating or foreignizing is whether it signifies canonical or marginal values in the target language-culture, which is the basis for Venuti’s classification of domesticating and foreignizing strategies. As for the use of archaic terms, it is thought that we should distinguish them from culture-specific expressions that may be archaic in that they were produced long ago. The latter show the tendency of the target text to privilege the target culture. Therefore, use of archaisms may be an indication of domestication. It is not necessarily to “invite the recognition that it is a translation produced in a different culture at a different period” (Venuti 1998: 244). We do not think it is scientific to establish a correspondence between archaizing/modernizing and foreignization/domestication. In some sense, almost all translations are intended for contemporary readers and thus they have to use modern language. This kind of universal should not be seen as part of a type of translation strategies in terms of its general tendency in human translation practices. It might be advisable if domestication and foreignization were restricted to the ways in which differences in language and culture are handled. As for selection of the source text, the strategy is not self-evident, nor can it be described by a key word or phrase. It can only be determined by placing the translator's choice in the proper cultural context where the target text is produced.

CONCLUSION

Hermans (2006) points out that the “precariousness and insecurity” of translation studies as an academic discipline, are due to its lack of large-scale encyclopedic
reference works and comprehensive historical studies, as well as disputes on some basic issues in the discipline. In our opinion, the terminological or conceptual mess with regard to transfer operations as one of the most basic element in translation studies will prevent it from developing into a mature, widely recognized science in the academic community, although a few scholars, such as Shuttleworth and Moira, have devoted their endeavors in this respect. In a word, “strategy” can be used as the central or general concept in describing the way the target text is turned out on both global and local levels, because its basic meaning is roughly in agreement with the features of transfer operations.

Conflict of Interests

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http://wenku.baidu.com/view/8604403343323968011c92f0.html
Full Length Research Paper

Narrating a subaltern consciousness: Bama’s ‘Sanagti’

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Bama is one of the first dalit women writers whose work has been translated into English. While ‘Karukku’ was personal in nature, ‘Sangati’ deals with the community at large: the community of Dalit women who are marginalized both on grounds of caste as well as gender. This paper looks at Bama’s ‘Sangati’ as a narrative of resistance and voicing. Bama loosely strings voices that demonstrate how Dalit women’s bodies are scarred by the many burdens of domestic, farm and sexual labour and yet how in ways they are better placed than caste-Hindu women. Touching upon Spivak’s ‘Can the Subaltern speak?’ the paper reads ‘Sangati’ as a work which gives voice to the doubly marginalized Dalit woman. The paper questions the hegemony of the non-Dalit women writers in claiming to speak for the Dalit women as well as that of the Dalit men who claim to speak for the women. The paper tries to explore how Bama has, through her narrative, especially the form of the autobiography, relocated herself and other Dalit women to the centre and regained their self-esteem and carved out an identity for them. The paper analyses the Dalit woman’s voice and questions whether it is clearly articulated and heard through a study of Bama’s non-conventional language.

Key words: Subaltern, Dalit woman, marginalization, consciousness, identity, caste and gender, voicing.

INTRODUCTION

There is enough work to and there is always much work to do: But that is behind. The worst that you can do is set me back a little more behind. I can’t catch up in this world, anyway. Robert Frost (A Servant to Servants). These lines taken from Robert Frost’s poem ‘A Servant to Servants’ clearly articulates the feeling of being put at the back on the societal front. It is this feeling of being behind the others that is explored by subaltern writers. Subalterns are those people or groups who are located outside the hegemonic power structure in society. They are discriminated on various grounds and lack the basic rights and opportunities in society. The term was first used in the non-Military sense by Marxist Antonio Gramsci (1881 to 1937), an Italian writer, to refer to any person or group of inferior rank and station, and can be employed in discussions of race, class, gender, sexuality, ethnicity and religion. Some thinkers use it in a general sense to refer to marginalized groups and the lower classes—a person rendered without agency by his or her social status. Others, such as Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak use it in a more specific sense. She argues that:

Subaltern is not just a classy word for oppressed, for Other, for somebody who’s not getting a piece of the pie....In postcolonial terms, everything that has limited or no access to the cultural imperialism is subaltern—a space of difference. Now who would say that’s just the oppressed? The working class is oppressed. It’s not subaltern....Many people want to claim subalternity. They are the least interesting and the most dangerous. I mean, just by being a discriminated-against minority on the university campus, they don’t need the word ‘subaltern’...

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They should see what the mechanics of the discrimination are. They’re within the hegemonic discourse wanting a piece of the pie and not being allowed, so let them speak, use the hegemonic discourse. They should not call themselves subaltern. (de Kock 1992)

In current criticism it has come to be refer as those who lack agency in society and access to social power. The Dalit in India is one of such marginalized and excluded community lacking agency and power in society. There are numerous Dalit writers who have tried like the subaltern historians to "dismantle the past by decoding biases and value judgments in records, testimonies and narratives of the ruling classes and also restores the subaltern groups and their agency" and role in history as subjects “with an ideology”. (Perusek 1993) And one such writer is Bama.

Bama is a Tamil Dalit writer and Lakshmi Holmstrom's translation of her work ‘Karukku’ established her as a distinct voice in Indian literature. Born in 1958 as Faustina Mary Fatima Rani (her grandfather had converted to Christianity) in a village called Puthupatti in Tamil Nadu (southern India), her landless ancestors and parents worked as laborers for the landlords. Bama’s father, who was in the Indian army, was very particular about the children’s education. “If he had not joined the army, we would never have had the regular income for education. Education also gave us freedom to get away from the clutches of the landlords and lead our own lives,” says Bama. Her brother Raj Gautaman, also a writer, introduced her to the world of books. “I read Tamil writers like Jayakantan, Akhilan, Mani and Parthasarthy. In college I read my favorites - Kahlil Gibran and Rabindranath Tagore. I didn’t have many books to read so I read the same ones again and again,” she recalls.

In college she also wrote poetry. But after college Bama became a schoolteacher and chose to educate very poor girls. Her life took a big turn when at the age of 26 she took the vows to become a nun. This was an attempt to break away from caste bonds and further pursue her goals to help poor Dalit girls. But seven years later, in 1992, Bama walked out of the seminary. Her family insisted she get married and settle down. “I had lost everything. I was a stranger to society. I kept lamenting about life and harked back to my happy childhood days in the village,” narrates Bama. Struggling to find herself again, Bama followed a friend’s advice and started to write her childhood memoirs. She also created her pen name - Bama - a blend of different sounds from her Christian name. (Dutt Nirupama 2012, Half the sky)While ‘Karukku’ was more personal in nature, ‘Sangati’ talks about the community and as the name means it is a recollection of events from the lives of the marginalized dalits.

This paper seeks to study ‘Sangati’ (2009) as a narrative articulating the Dalit mind. How does her choice of form and style help in centralizing the Dalit woman and her daily struggles? The paper seeks to use Spivak’s ‘Can the Subaltern Speak?’ to show how Bama has successfully brought to the centre a group from the margins and shown their ability to speak and to be heard. The paper also focuses on the demand of the Dalit women to speak for themselves instead of any male or upper caste woman becoming their voice.

Before entering into a discussion on the above mentioned, one needs to be clear about what is consciousness or subjectivity. If we take Descarte’s cogito ‘I think, therefore I am’ to be a self-conscious "I" to be in command of its destiny, we are stressing on ‘self-conscious reflection’ (Hall 2003), one of the traits of modern life. Subjectivity is a concept which invites us to consider the question of how and from where identity arises, to what extent it is understandable, and to what degree it is something over which we have any measure of influence or control.’ (Hall 2003). Spivak in her discussion of 'subaltern consciousness' talks of the counterpoint suggestion that ‘subaltern consciousness is subject to the cathexis of the elite, that is never fully recoverable, that it is always askew from its received signifiers, indeed that it is effaced even as it is disclosed, that it is irreducibly discursive.’ (Spivak 1998) And generally it is elite documentation that gives us news of the consciousness of the subaltern. Spivak refers to the retrieval of the subaltern consciousness as ‘subaltern subject-effect.’ (Spivak 1998).

Identity, on the other hand, is the particular set of traits, beliefs and allegiances that gives one a consistent personality. When we apply these theoretical concepts to Dalit life, we find that Descarte’s Cogito is present in the individual but repressed. And their identity is something not made by them but given over to them by society through the Lacanian symbolic order. It is the realm of language, the unconscious, and an otherness that remains other” (Bowie 1991) The ‘i’ of the dalit consciousness is suppressed by the society at large though its laws and belief systems and the existing systems hegemonize them in such a way that in Althusser’s words ‘the subject freely accepts his subjection.’ (Hall 2003) And the process of narration is one of the ways in which the subaltern subject can make his voice heard and prove to the world of the existence of a free self.

Historians visit the archives for information about the natives during colonial times with the aim of producing a body of knowledge about the colonial encounter. But generally the native subject remains unheard and apart from his own history. This has also happened in the context of the women where the first world women usurped the right to speak for the third-world women. And again if we look at the case of Indian feminism, the upper-caste women took on themselves the task of speaking for all women thereby excluding the already excluded dalit women. Bama through the arduous task of
narrating her experiences and of her fellow women brings the dalit women to the centre of the discourse.

In ‘Sangati’ Bama uses the form of the autobiography not only to portray her life but also to portray the lives of other Dalit women by giving them an identity through the narration of their story. This narration is generally done either through observation as in the following:

After a few days, she set out again to find work. Her younger sister Annamma too was ready to go with her……

One day Mariamma gathered her firewood as usual and came home in the burning heat carrying her bundle…….She happened to be in Kumarasami Ayya’s field. The man was actually in the pump-set shed at that time. When she went innocently to get some water, he seized her hand and pulled her inside. Frightened out of her wits, she left everything and ran home, hardly knowing how she escaped. (Sangati 2009).

Or through a narration by another individual as in the case of the story of Pechiamma who left her first husband and married a second time. (Sangati 2009). The narration of events through observation method enables the writer to act as a journalist drawing a portrait of the events with details and leaving the readers to examine and analyze the situation for themselves. When a third person tells a story to the narrator, the readers get the story and the time to ponder over the issues and the narrator also gets the time to express her opinion leaving the readers free to agree or disagree.

When I thought about all that she had told me, I was quite shocked. But it seemed to me that it was a very good thing that some of our women had the option of ending their marriages. Because it meant a woman need not spend her entire life, burning and dying, with a man she dislikes, just because of this thing called marriage. But I also feel sad that Christian women didn’t have this chance. On the other hand, many upper-caste women could not even think of it in their wildest dreams. If a woman leaves her husband and chooses to live apart from him, people will keep on tormenting her and even drive her to death. She has to accept that even if he is only a stone or a blade of grass, he is still her husband. (Sangati 2009). Things get richer when we look at the opening sentence of the text:

‘If the third child is a girl to behold, your courtyard will be filled with gold.’ This shows the working of Barthes’s cultural code which designates any element in a narrative that refers “to a science or a body of knowledge” (Barthes 1974).

In other words, the cultural codes tend to point to our shared knowledge about the way the world works, including properties that we can designate as “physical, physiological, medical, psychological, literary, historical, etc.” (Barthes 1974). The “gnomic” code is one of the cultural codes and refers to those cultural codes that are tied to clichés, proverbs, or popular sayings of various sorts. Through these codes or say language, Bama goes on to create the Dalit woman’s subjectivity. And this ‘subject’ is an individual being, a person speaking and acting purposefully in a world illuminated by rational freedom or the impersonal “structure in dominance” – what Marx called the “forces and relations in production” that “operate outside man and independent of his will,” and set the pattern and horizon of individual action. (Hall, 2003).

DISCUSSION

Bama, through her narrator and the use of language challenges the institutional apparatuses that work on the reader’s concept of self and social order and goes on to produce a subject free of subjection. An instance of this can be seen in the story of the pey in Sangati. This story is narrated by the author’s Patti, Vellaiyamma. She tells the narrator that Peys do not have feet and that nothing should be said loud after dark. (Sangati 2009) Such stories not only reveal the popular superstitions and cultural beliefs of people in a region but also show gender discrimination. Peys are frightened of men. A woman becomes its prey easily and especially the ones belonging to the Dalit communities. (Sangati 2009).

Bama again uses proverbs to show the condition of the Dalits women who are treated with contempt not only by the public but also by government agencies and she exhorts them to uphold their rights and declare that they too are human beings:

“It’s like the proverb that says, if a man sees a terrified dog, he is bound to chase it. If we continue to be frightened, everyone will take advantage of us. If we stand up for ourselves without caring whether we die or survive, they’ll creep away with their tails between their legs.

Another proverb says, so long as it is hidden in the earth, it claims to be big, but when you start peeling it, it’s nothing but skin. These fellows are just like that – like onions. They’ll shout themselves hoarse, making great claims. They’ll forbid us to speak a word. They’ll see the like cobras and say that they alone own everything. But why should we hide our own skills and capabilities? (Sanagti, 2009).

Though Bama uses the form of the autobiography, it emerges as an extension of short stories or narratives and this not only acts as a mode of self-assertion and protest for the figures in the narrative but also for the dalit populace at large. Such autobiographies or personal testimonies act as documents of ‘social history’ (Abedi, 2010). Moreover, what makes Sangati special is that it is...
not the autobiography or personal testimony of an individual in isolation but the story of the community. The narrative focuses on the struggles, oppression, assertion and quest for identity of the self as well as the world of Dalit women.

What again makes Sangati special among Dalit autobiographies is the exhibition of double discrimination which Dalit women face. Untouchability, along with machismo mark out a woman’s body as a site for control and oppression. (Abedi 2010) Narrating the death of her daughter to the narrator, Paatti said:

*When a man is hitting out like that, can a woman go and pull him away?...... even if the bystanders had tried to stop him, he would have shouted at all of them, “She is my wife, I can beat her or even kill her if I want.”* (Sangati 2009)

Woman’s memoirs do not display laments, resentment or shame of oneself. They do not beg for pity but draw upon internal forces to survive with respect. Though Paatti’s daughter had been killed by her son-in-law, her narration of the event does not ask the reader/audience for pity or sympathy but actually shows her will to survive and her self-respect and her anger:

*I reared a parrot and then handed it over to be mauled by a cat…. My womb, which gave birth to her, is still on fire. He killed her so outrageously, the bastard. I give my word on this. You just wait and see. Heaven alone knows what kind of death he’ll die.* (Sangati 2009)

The focus on minute peculiarities of women’s lives and their daily chores brings the women to the space of knowledge. While social institutions ignore the women, the writing of their stories shows the roles they have to play and the labour they are destined to perform. (Abedi 2010). It was always like this in our streets. Although both men and women came home after a hard day’s work in the fields, the men went off straight away to the bazaar or the chavadi to while away their time, coming home only for their meal. But as for the women, from the minute they returned home, they washed vessels, cleaned the house, collected water, gathered firewood, went to the shops to buy rice and other provisions, boiled some rice, made a kuzhambu or a kanji, fed husband and children before they could eat what was leftover, and go to bed.

Even if they lay down with bodies wracked with pain, they weren’t allowed to sleep. Whether she died or survived, he had to finish his business. When I thought about all this, I was often disgusted by this daily routine. Men at least, I thought, had a better time of it. (Sangati 2009). The narration and creating of an identity for the marginalized is accomplished not only through the form of the book but also through the language used by the author. In this context Lakshmi Holmstrom writes:

*Throughout her work, Bama uses the Dalit Tamil dialect more consistently and easily than many of her contemporaries; for narration and even argument and comment, not simply for reported speech. Besides overturning received notions of decorum and propriety, she bridges spoken and written styles consistently. She breaks the rules of written grammar and spelling throughout her work, elides words and joins them differently, demanding a new and different pattern of reading in Tamil.* (Sangati 2009)

In Sangati Bama has reclaimed the language of the women of her community. We find multiple female voices speaking to and addressing one another and sharing the events of daily lives. The language is reported exactly and is full of expletives, often sexual in nature. An apt example is the abuses hurled at Thaayi by her husband:

*You common whore, you, any passing loafer will come in support of you, you mother f*ucker’s daughter. You’ll go with ten men.* (Sangati 2009).

Another one is from a wife towards her husband:

*Go on, da, kick me, let’s see you do it, da! Let’s see if you are a real man. You only know how to go for a woman’s parts. Go and fight with a man who is your equal and you’ll see. You’ll get your balls burnt for your pains.* (Sangati 2009).

The text is replete with such examples. Husbands hurling abuses at wives, women hurling abuses at men and at other women, and the violence and irritability evident from the time they wake up till they go to bed work to shake the readers’ consciousness and realize the existence of the Dalit mind as an independent force. Bama makes an analysis of such linguistic behavior. She draws attention to the fact that male violence is due to the fact that men do not get an opportunity to exert their pride and authority in the outside world. Therefore they vent their suppressed anger at home on their wives. (Sangati, 2009). Lack of sleep and rest, according to Bama, is what drives women to irritability and quarreling and the lack of pleasure and fulfillment in sexual relations is what tends to make them use terms of abuse for their body part. (Sangati, 2009).

There is another aspect to the language of Dalit women which shows a bright side to their life. It is the vigour and closeness to proverbs, folklore and folk songs and songs and chants which lay before the readers the cultural heterogeneity and richness of Dalit lives. While on the one hand, the lives of the Dalit women is full of pain and turmoil, one the other they find time for the affairs of life: coming of age, wedding, even death. Bama writes:

*From birth to death there are special songs and dances.*
And it is only the women who perform them. Roraattu (lullaby) to oppaari (dirge), it is only the women who will sing them. (Sangati 2009).

The form and language of Bama along with the events narrated go towards talking about Dalit feminism and carving a separate identity for the Dalit women: an identity different from the upper caste women and Dalit men. While carving out an identity for the Dalit community, Bama compares the Dalit women and children with the upper-caste women and children and comes to the conclusion that the ‘marginalized’ are in a better position than the ones at the ‘centre’. In various descriptions of Dalit life, one can trace the concept of racial exclusiveness. Chittu comments on her daughter:

She talks as if the upper-caste women are all beautiful, like Rambhas stepping down from the heavens. As if she knows anything about it! As if a donkey would recognize the scent of camphor! Always the wretch must put down her own community. (Sangati 2009).

Marypillai (Sangati 2009) feels lucky to be born into the paraiya community as she does not have to face the checks, rules and regulations the upper caste women have to face:

It’s only on the surface that they look so good, really. It isn’t that easy for them to get their daughters settled. They have to cover the girls’ necks with jewellery, give them cash in their hands, and write off property and land in their names. Even after all this do you think the girls are happy in their new homes? Their in-laws keep on complaining that this and that is not enough, and they torment the girls.

In the paraiya community the groom’s family sees to the wedding expenses and the groom gives a cash gift and takes away the girl and marries her. (Sangati 2009) Bama and the other women feel that this is better than the dowry system prevalent among the upper-caste. Since colonial times, Indians have been discriminated on the basis of their colour but in Sangati one finds a positive approach towards dark complexion:

Even if our children are dark-skinned, their features are good and there’s a liveliness about them. Black is strongest and best, like a diamond. (Sangati 2009).

Generally the notion of a good society implies the protection of its women. This is a problematic statement which implies that women are objects in need of protection. In light of such critical argument, one can come to a false conclusion that the Dalit world is not a ‘good’ one since the women are threatened both by their men at home and the landlords in the outside world. To become ‘good’ in that case means to follow the life pattern of what is considered, generally, as ‘good’ and in this case it would be the upper - caste life. Bama is critical of this attitude of copying the upper-caste:

These people, for some reason, want to copy the upper-castes. It’s becoming a real problem having to make so many jewels for the bride and giving a lump sum worth so much, on top of that. Such people can change themselves into a different caste only in these superficial matters, though. Because, whatever we do, whatever rituals we copy from other castes they, for their part, always rate us as beneath them. So what is the point of trying to copy them? Why should we lose all the better customs that are ours, and end up as neither one thing nor the other? It’s like forgetting the butter in one’s hands and going in search of ghee. (Sangati 2009).

We can see an anti-colonialist ideology at work here. Bama is critical of those dalits who are ‘aping’ or ‘copying’ the upper-castes as the colonized Indians tried to copy the colonizing powers during colonial times. Bama subscribes to Nativism and outlines the positives of Dalit life. Bama’s writing of the book Sangati and her narration of the events from the lives of the Dalit women is an attempt to overthrow the cultural hegemony of the upper-caste. Capitalism, Gramsci suggested, maintained control not just through violence and political and economic coercion, but also ideologically, through a hegemonic culture in which the values of the bourgeoisie became the ‘common sense’ values of all. Thus, a consensus culture developed in which people in the working-class identified their own good with the good of the bourgeoisie, and helped to maintain the status quo rather than revolting against it (Anderson 2010: 102). The working class needed to develop a culture of its own, which would overthrow the notion that bourgeois values represented ‘natural’ or ‘normal’ values for society, and would attract the oppressed and intellectual classes to the cause of the proletariat. This is what Bama hints at when she talks of elections and votes:

However much we strain to leap forward, caste holds us down like a tap root. It is at the centre of religion, politics, education, and every other wretched thing...Our women never know a thing about who’s in power, what they do, and why they do it; why we should vote and who we should vote for. Why even the men don’t understand any of this.

...Given how many women there are altogether, there is so much we could achieve. We could demand the rights that are due to us. We could fling away the beggarly coins the party workers bother to give us when they ask us to vote for them, an elect an M.L.A. from our own community. We could demonstrate our own strength through political power.... (Sangati 2009)

Spivak in ‘Can the Subaltern Speak?’ (1988)
acknowledges the "epistemic violence" done upon Indian subalterns, she suggests that any attempt from the outside to ameliorate their condition by granting them collective speech invariably will encounter the following problems:

1) A logocentric assumption of cultural solidarity among a heterogeneous people, and
2) A dependence upon western intellectuals to "speak for" the subaltern condition rather than allowing them to speak for themselves.

As Spivak argues, by speaking out and reclaiming a collective cultural identity, subalterns will in fact re-inscribe their subordinate position in society. The academic assumption of a subaltern collectivity becomes akin to an ethnocentric extension of Western logos—a totalizing, essentialist "mythology" as Derrida might describe it—that doesn't account for the heterogeneity of the colonized body politic. But as far as women are concerned, Spivak takes a pessimist stance in Other worlds where she writes:

"...the figure of the woman, moving from clan to clan, and family to family as daughter/sister and wife/mother, syntaxes patriarchal continuity of community or history, for subaltern or historian alike, is produced on...the repeated emptying of her meaning as instrument." (Spivak 1998). She pays little attention on how the subaltern woman may come to voice.

As critics our goal must be to 'listen to the subaltern subject' and interpret what we hear without ascending to a position of dominance over that voice. (Coronil 1994) Traditionally the academic wants to know about the subaltern's experiences but not their own explanations of those experiences. Hooks argues that according to the received view in Western knowledge a true explanation can only come from the expertise of the academic. The subordinated subject, gives up their knowledge for the use of the Western academic. Hooks describes the relationship between the academic and the subaltern subject:

No need to hear your voice when I can talk about you better than you can speak about yourself. No need to hear your voice. Only tell me about your pain. I want to know your story. And then I will tell it back to you in a new way. Tell it back to you in such a way that it has become mine, my own. Re-writing you I write myself anew. I am still author, authority. I am still colonizer the speaking subject and you are now at the center of my talk (Hooks, 1990).

CONCLUSION

Bama in Sangati shows the ability of the Dalit women to think and rethink and analyze situations for themselves. They are independent subjects in the process of realizing their value in society. A close and critical reading of Sangati shows how Bama has given voice to the Dalit women but in doing so she does not ‘objectify’ them as was the case regarding women during colonial times. Rather the Dalit woman becomes the subject and an agent who ‘acts it out’ (Spivak 1988). Whether the woman rebukes and leaves her husband, whether she changes her religion, the choice is hers irrespective of the fact whether it’s for better or worse. Bama does not portray a case of ‘White men saving brown women from brown men’ (Spivak 1988) but rather one of ‘brown women saving themselves from brown men’. And in doing so is constructed the consciousness of Dalit women.

Conflict of Interests

The author(s) have not declared any conflict of interests

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Short Communication

Women by the woman – Kamala Das

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Kamala Suraiya (also known as Kamala Das or Madhavikutty) had made it clear to readers, critics and family that she do not want to be “categorized”. Das’s poetry have flung open its doors to let in, topics that women had kept decorously out (the boredom of marriage, the thrills of love, the pains of being a woman, of being a writer, the loneliness of being unloved, the joy of being in love).

Key Words: Kamala Suraiya, poetry, feminist and woman.

INTRODUCTION

Kamala Suraiya is the first and the most famous poem in the confessional mode. She begins by self assertion but later she remarks various situations, where she was down trodden. The poet, an individual woman tries to voice a universal womanhood trying to share her experiences, good or bad with all other women. Love and sexuality are the strong component in her search for female identity (Raveedran, 1994).

Women by the woman – Kamala Das

Kamala Das was an exemplary new woman in many ways. She was bold, uninhibited, full of creative energy that she sustained to the very end as is proven by her last few poems in Closure, and secular enough to try another religion in the last days of life…Her burial in a mosque was a great lesson to those with insular minds.

Malayalam poet and bilingual critic K. Sachidanandan

Writing according to Kamala Das is a sort of spiritual therapy. She says:

“If I had been a loved person. I would not have become a writer. I would have been a happy human being.”

Das became the subject of her writing, viewing herself with a persistent lens that saw it all, later putting everything onto the page in confessional bursts of poetry or prose. This allegiance to the moment, the urgent need to capture it in words, often gave her writing a first draft, see-through quality that made critics complain of inconsistency. But Kamala Das did not care what others said, she was willing to be swept away by her writing, without stopping to make formal considerations about the composition or to make it reader friendly. She had to write it all out.

Kamala Das lived an intensely uneasy life, and the fact that she neither gassed herself nor jumped off a cliff is proof of the faith she kept in her chosen trade, of her conviction that writing was no charlatan occupation, incapable of giving life. When she poured herself out in poetry, stories and features, Kamala Das was working at life, looking in her own words for
reminders of the importance of wanting to be, wanting to
write, wanting to live and no writer can pay greater tribute
to her trade than to acknowledge it as the reason for
living. And as her readers, we too are privileged with this
tribute.

Das's poetry has been intimately connected to critical
perception of her personality and politics; her provocative
poetry has seldom produced lukewarm reactions. While
reviewers of Das's early poetry have praised its fierce
originality, bold images, exploration of female sexuality,
and intensely personal voice, they lamented that it lacked
attention to structure and craftsmanship. Many critics
have analyzed Das as a "confessional" poet, writing in
the tradition of Sylvia Plath, Anne Sexton, and Denise
Levertov. Kamala Das begins by self-assertion:

I am what I am.

The poetess claims that she is not interested in politics,
but claims to know the names of all in power beginning
from Nehru. She seems to state that these are
involuntarily ingrained in her. By challenging us that she
can repeat these as easily as days of the week, or the
names of months she echoes that these politicians were
captured in a repetitive cycle of time, irrespective of any
individuality. They did not define time; rather time defined
them. Subsequently, she comes down to her roots. She
declares that by default she is an Indian. Other
considerations follow this factor. She says that she is
'born in' Malabar; she does not say that she belongs to
Malabar. She is far from regional prejudices. She first
defines herself in terms of her nationality, and second by
her colour:

I am Indian, very brown, born in Malabar,

And she is very proud to exclaim that she is 'very brown'.
She goes on to articulate that she speaks in three
languages, writes in two and dreams in one; as though
dreams require a medium. Kamala Das echoes that the
medium is not as significant as is the comfort level that
one requires. The essence of one's thinking is the
prerequisite to writing. Hence she implores with all-
"critics, friends, visiting cousins" to leave her alone.
Kamala Das reflects the main theme of Girish Karnad's
"Broken Images": the conflict between writing in one's
regional language and utilizing a foreign language.
The language that she speaks is essentially hers; the primary
ideas are not a reflection but an individual impression. It
is the distortions and queerness that makes it individual.
And it is these imperfections that render it human. It is the
language of her expression and emotion as it voices her
joys, sorrows and hopes. It comes to her as cawing
comes to the crows and roaring to the lions, and is
therefore impulsive and instinctive. It is not the deaf, blind
speech: though it has its own defects, it cannot be seen
as her handicap. It is not unpredictable like the trees on
storm or the clouds of rain. Neither does it echo the
"incoherent mutterings of the blazing fire." It possesses a
coherence of its own: an emotional coherence.

She was child-like or innocent; and she knew she grew
up only because according to others her size had grown.
The emotional frame of mind was essentially the same.
Married at the early age of sixteen, her husband confined
her to a single room. She was ashamed of her femininity
that came before time, and brought her to this predica-
cement. This explains her claim that she was crushed by
the weight of her breast and womb. She tries to
overcome it by seeming tomboyish. So she cuts her hair
short and adorns boyish clothes. People criticize her and
tell her to 'conform' to the various womanly roles. They
accuse her of being schizophrenic; and 'a nympho'. They
confuse her want of love and attention for insatiable
sexual craving.

As the girl seeks fulfillment of her adolescent passion, a
young lover is forced upon her to traumatize and coerce
the female-body since the same is the site for patriarchy
to display its power and authority. When thereafter, she
opts for male clothing to hide her femininity, the
guardians enforce typical female attire, with warnings to
fit into the socially determined attributes of a woman, to
become a wife and a mother and get confined to the
domestic routine. She is threatened to remain within the
four walls of her female space lest she should make
herself a psychic or a maniac.

But the poet is an individual woman trying to voice a
universal womanhood and trying to share her expe-
riences, good or bad, with all other women. Love and
sexuality are a strong component in her search for female
identity and the identity consists of polarities.

She explains her encounter with a man. She attributes
him with not a proper noun, but a common noun—"every
man" to reflect his universality. He defined himself by the
"I", the supreme male ego. He is tightly compart-
mentalized as "the sword in its sheath". It portrays the
power politics of the patriarchal society that we thrive in
that is all about control. It is this "I" that stays long away
without any restrictions, is free to laugh at his own will,
succumbs to a woman only out of lust and later feels
ashamed of his own weakness that lets himself lose to a
woman. Towards the end of the poem, a role-reversal
occurs as this "I" gradually transitions to the poetess
herself. She pronounces how this "I" is also sinner and
saint", beloved and betrayed. As the role-reversal occurs,
the woman too becomes the "I" reaching the pinnacle of
self-assertion.

Das once said, "I always wanted love, and if you don't
get it within your home, you stray a little"(Warrior
interview). Though some might label Das as "a feminist"
for her candor in dealing with women's needs and
desires, Das "has never tried to identify herself with any
particular version of feminist activism". Das' views can be
characterized as "a gut response," a reaction that, like
her poetry, is unfettered by other's notions of right and wrong. Nonetheless, poet Eunice de Souza claims that Das has "mapped out the terrain for post-colonial women in social and linguistic terms". Das has ventured into areas unclaimed by society and provided a point of reference for her colleagues. She has transcended the role of a poet and simply embraced the role of a very honest woman.

Conflict of Interests

The author have not declared any conflict of interests.

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