

# *Chapter-I*

## *Introduction*

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

People belonging to one country speaking their native language do not understand other languages of the world other than English. If the literary works of other world languages are available in English, people belonging to one country may understand the cultural and religious beliefs of people of other countries. Hence, transmission of knowledge from the regional and national languages of one country into the international language of English is gaining momentum at present. Translation is an important vehicle of knowledge sharing among people all over the world. Now it has attracted the attention of literature lovers, critics and translators and as such it has become a universal literary trend.

Even the native speakers of Tamil find it very difficult to understand the meanings, message and the philosophy which their Tamil novels convey. They need some guidance or some secondary sources about the novel they want to understand. If such novels are translated into English, the native speakers of English or those who are well-versed in English can understand the Tamil novels through these translated versions. However, they have the chance of missing the real meaning conveyed by the Tamil fiction in Tamil. If there are many research writings in English about such Tamil novels, such writings will be of great help to the scholars to understand the significance of the originals in their translations. J.M Synge in his *The Aran Islands* (1907) is of the view that “a translation is no translation unless it will give you the music of a poem along with the words of it” (79).

The process of translation from one language to another is a very difficult task and those who are involved in translation work face not only theoretical problems but also practical problems. The translator should be well-versed in both the language of the original and the language in which he translates. If the writer of the book and its translator belong to the same culture, the translator will not face practical problems during the course of his translation. However, if both the writer and the translator belong to different cultures, the translator will face a lot of problems while doing his translation. According to Jean Migrenne: “A text produced by a human being in one language and rendered into another language by another human being who is not its author is not only the work of the body but also that of the mind. Anyone who translates must be fully equipped with the nature of his work and well-versed in both the languages-source as well as the target.”

Hence, translation demands more and careful attention on the part of the translator. It provides not only a platform for global interaction but also an opportunity to undergo socio-cultural survey of various literatures in different languages. All those who pursue it as their special field bring out their rich experience and knowledge through their translated works.

Translation is a kind of creative art because it converts a text in the source language into a proper version of target language. While doing so, the translator should not lose any significant points found in the source language text. Any artist who becomes a translator cum creator should be essentially bilingual. But the skills associated with it are built and developed on the basis of his communicative and writing skills and experiences in both the languages. However, as a matter of fact, translation is a process of a new creation and it is based on the theory of extracting the meaning of a text from its present form in one language and reproducing it with a different form in another language.

Linguistically, translation involves the study of the lexicon, grammatical structure, communication situation and the cultural background of the source language and its text. It also involves the analysis of determining its meaning, reconstructing the same meaning using the lexicon and grammatical structure quite relevant to the target language and its cultural context. The process of translation begins with the understanding of the source text closely. Then the meaning of the text is discovered. After this, the translator has to re-express the meaning, which he has drawn in the target language. While doing this, he should keep in mind that there should be very minimal loss of meaning of what the original gives in the translated language.

Many famous works written in different national and regional languages have been translated into English. If the works of Homer and Ovid had not been translated into English, the lovers of great epic poems would not have got acquainted with the great themes of Rome and Greek. Nowadays, many great Tamil works have been rendered in English for those who are interested in learning the merits of Tamil literature. Thiruvalluvar's *Thirukkural* has been translated into English and it has been in constant use by people all over the world mainly for its moral content. As a result, it has become universal in its appeal just like the plays of Shakespeare and the great poetical works of Milton. The holy book of the Christians, *The Bible* has been translated in almost all languages of the world.

R. K. Nayak in the book *Dalit Youth: A sociological study* says:

Almost every fourth Indian is a Dalit and is easily identified. He may be a beggar near a temple or a church, a permanent squatter, a prematurely old person in his forties, a child labour in a factory, a labourer in a village, a child domestic help, a porter, a rickshaw puller in a city, a bonded

labourer, a migrant Slum - dweller. And a Dalit Woman is always ill cared, a bag of bones, often with a malnourished child in her arms, a temple Devadasi. Although they constitute a significant number of the Country's population they remain unseen and unnoticed since- unsuitability and untouchability are the hall marks of their identification.(15)

Dalit literature is one wing of Indian literature that has been born out of pain and poverty. Dalit literature or literature about the Dalits deals with the oppressed class of people under Indian caste system. Dalit literature shot into prominence after 1960 starting with the Marathi language followed by other languages like Hindi, Kannada, Telugu and Tamil through narratives like poems, short stories and autobiographies. Dalit literature and the autobiographies are based on the experiences the Dalits faced in their real life. Dalit literature denounced as petty and false the then prevailing rather bourgeois and romantic portrayal of life by the Sadashiv pethi literature which failed to deal with the issues of the Dalits like poverty and oppression by caste Hindus. It is compared with the African-American literature also especially in its depiction of racial discrimination and injustice, as seen in slave narratives. Dalit is not a caste but a symbol of change and revolution. The main motive of Dalit literature is the liberation of Dalits. Their struggle against the higher castes can be traced to the eleventh century. Madara Chennaiah, regarded by some scholars as the "Father of Vachana Poetry" was the first Dalit writer in the eleventh century; he was a cobbler saint, who lived in the light of western Chlukyas. In the twelfth century Kalavve challenged the caste system in the following words:

Those who eat goats, fowl and tiny fish:

Such, they call caste people.

Those who eat the sacred cow

That showers frothing milk for Shiva:

Such, they call out –caste. (21)

Another poet is Dohara Kakkaiah, a Dalit by birth and six of his confessional poems survive. In the twentieth century the term ‘Dalit Literature’ came into use in 1958. Dalit, meaning oppressed, broken and downtrodden –came into use officially in the first conference on Dalit literature in Mumbai. In Marathi, Baburao Bagul (1930-2008) was the pioneer of Dalit writings. His first collection of stories, *Jevha Mi Jat Chorali* published in 1963, created a stir in Marathi. Gradually with other writers like, Namdeo Dhasal these Dalit writings paved the way for strengthening Dalit politics.

The term Harijian meaning ‘God’s people’, used for the so-called ‘low’ caste was popularized by Gandhi. Ambedkar thought that Gandhi was not prepared to go far enough in the direction of the emancipation of the Dalits. In *What Gandhi and Congress Have Done to the Untouchables*, Ambedkar claimed that Gandhi never wanted to ‘hurt’ the interests of the upper caste Hindus. He argued in his book *Contemporary Dalit Literature: Quest for Dalit Liberation* in the following manner:

In Gandhism, the common man has no hope. It treats man as an animal and no more. It is true man shares the constitution and functions of animals, nutritive, reproductive, etc. but these are not distinctively human functions.

The distinctively human function is reason, the purpose of which is to enable man to observe, meditate, cogitate, study and discover the beauties of the universe and enrich his life and control the animal elements in his life.(11)

Dr.Ambedkar, the father of Dalit Movement in his book *Ostracized Bharat* writes: “Dalithood is a kind of life condition that characterizes the exploitation, suppression and marginalization of Dalit people by the social, economic, cultural and political domination of the upper caste Brahmanical ideology”(31). In Tamil Nadu, Ka. Ayothidass Pandithar is the pioneer of the Dalit writers and philosophers. Rettamalai Srinivasan (Editor, Parayan), Rev.John Ratnam (Editor, Dravida Pandian), K.Appadurai (Editor Tamilan), Periasamy Pulavar (poet) and many other writers contributed to dalit literature. Yakkan, Stalin Rajangam, Kudiarasan, Ravikumar, Aranga Mallika, M.P.Ezhilarasu, Vadivel Ravanan, Raj Gowthaman, Gowthama Sannah, Punitha Pandian, Meena Mayil are all major writers who contributed to the Non fictional Dalit Literature and the first few are ideologues of Dalit political ideologies in contemporary Tamil Dalit politics. Anbu Ponnoviam, T.P.Kamalanathan, Arya Sangaaran, X-ray Manikam, and some others contributed to Dalit literature. P.Sivakami and Bama who wrote the first modern dalit fiction, Ambimani, Poomani, Chanakya, Vizhi.Pa.Idhaya Vendhan, Artist Chandru, poet Sukirtharani, poet Pratibha Jayachandran, Yazhan Adhi, and some others worked on Dalit modern fiction and poetry. V.Gheetha, M.S.S.Pandian, Senchattai Panjacharam, A.Marx, S.V.Rajadurai are Non-Dalit writers of dalit ideology and dalit literature. Sakya Mohan who edited “Dhamma” in English and Tamil authored the first book on Dalit History of Tamil Nadu titled *History of Dalit Struggle for Freedom* (2001). Sakya Mohan has introduced “Kala Parayar Empire” (Buddhist Era) in the history of Tamil Nadu supported

by a lot of primary sources negating the historical view that Kala Parayar period was “the dark age” in Tamil Nadu. A homegrown movement of the Untouchables, Dalit is oppressed at all levels-caste and class. And the theoretical variety of revolutionaries cannot imagine the predicament in which these wretched people live in. In the book *Contemporary Dalit literature: Quest for Dalit Liberation* Zakir Abedi quotes the cries of Namdeo Dhasal:

This world’s socialism,

This world’s communism

And all those things of theirs,

We have put them to the test

And the implication is this -

Only our shadows can cover our own feet.(9)

Their painful experience is not just the suffering of the individual and there is nothing romantic about it. They do not seek poetic beauty, similes, metaphors and symbols are not important. The reality of their life is too hideously shocking, beyond the capacity of fantasy or imagination. Arjun Dangle in his book, *Past Present and Future of Dalit Literature Quoted in Poisoned Bread* voices out “The creation of Dalit literature is inevitable until the structure of society changes and as long as exploitation exists”(7). Dalit literature deserves to be known to the entire world - the children, the elders and the next generation of this country. The misery of the Dalit is brought through the words of Om Prakash Valmiki in his poem, “My Ancestor.” He presents the condition of the Dalits as,

The body Unclothed

The stomach unfed

Hurt, and yet

They smiled

For they saw you smiled.

They did not know

How to loot

The weak and the innocent!

Did not know

That murder

Is the badge of courage

That robbery is not a crime

It is but culture.

How innocent they were

My ancestor

Humane

Yet untouchable.(30)

Dalits have broken the silence and have made their voices heard through literature.

The writers try to portray the fact that materially Dalits may be very poor but inwardly

they are wealthier. The revolutionary ideas of Dr.B.R.Ambedkar, as argued by Arjun Dangle, a Marathi Dalit writer and leader of the Dalit Panther Movement paved way for Dalit literature. Ambedkar's ideologies reach out to the masses through Dalit literature. Sharma says in the book *Indian Society Institution and Change* "those disabilities which were imposed upon the scheduled caste by the superior castes"(77). The Dalits were forced to form a group for themselves. For example, "Cheris" in South India and "Basti" in the North. These writers have created the literature of the oppressed with the vision of removing untouchability and establishing equality.

Om Prakash Valmiki is an acclaimed poet and literary critic in Hindi. Valmiki was born in the Chuhra caste. His work *Joothan* is an autobiographical story of his painful growing up, continual struggle for survival in this caste-ridden society. The meaning of the word "*Joothan*" is 'left over' on plate that is to be disposed into the garbage. Being a Dalit child he was avoided and abused in the society. In his first novel '*Joothan*' he talks about the discrimination he faced in his school at different points of time. He says: "During the examination we could not drink water from the glass when thirsty. To drink water, we had to cup our hand. The peon would pour water from way high up, lest our hand touch the glass"(16).

Valmiki published three collection of poems *Sadiyon Ka Santaap*(1989), *Bas!Bahut Ho Chuka*(1997), and *Aur Nahin*(2009) and two short stories *Salaam*(2000) and *Ghuspethiye*(2004). He also wrote *Dalit Saahity Ka Sundaryshaastr*(2001) and a history of the *Valmiki Community*, *Safai Devata*(2009), and *Dochera*(play). Arjun Dangle in his book *Poisoned Bread* says "Dalit literature is marked by revolt and negativism, since it is closely associated with the hopes for freedom by a group of people who, as untouchables, are victims of social, economic and culture inequality"(92).

Dalit poetry combines the spirit of rebellion against social injustice with dreams of a life of dignity for the oppressed. Namdeo Dhasal, wrote the poetry closer to the modernist sensibility but with an unmistakable stamp of the anger of a rebel. In his celebrated collection *Golpitha*, he wrote,

I curse you, curse your book

Curse your culture, your hypocrisy\_

I wasn't going to say this

but now my hands have woken up.(25)

Bama, known as Bama Faustina Soosairaj, a noted Tamil writer, is a significant voice in Dalit women's writing today and her forceful portrayal of atrocities on Dalits in Tamil Nadu becomes an act of empowerment. Bama was born in 1958 as Faustina Mary Rani in a Roman Catholic family from Puthupatti. Her grandfather had converted from Hinduism to Christianity. Bama's parents from the Dalit community worked as agricultured labourers. After early education in her village and after graduation, she served as a *nun* for seven years. Her first novel was *Karukku* published in 1992. *Karukku* was critically acclaimed and won the Cross Word Book Award in 2000. Bama followed it with *Kusumbukkaran* and *Sangati*. Bama started a new school for Dalit Children in Uttiramerur. Her major themes were caste and gender discrimination. She says about her writing experience in the novel *Karukku* "the threw of leaving home, work and family to concentrate on a book is thrilling but unreal, like a dream. Especially for middle class women writers. . . (40). Bama herself is a teacher, writer, a Dalit Christian, and Tamil woman and above all these what she values and cherishes most is her identity as a human

being. Bama believed that her writing would help her to get her wounds healed and give her liberation.

Sivakami, another Dalit writer in an interview to the Gulf News has pointed out the need for Dalit writers, especially feminist to speak out boldly. She said,

. . . Dalit feminists, who speak for their women and spearhead causes like inter-caste marriages, are often branded separatists. They may be on the periphery — but they ironically form the core issues because they speak for large numbers who have been affected by discrimination. The Dalit feminists need more encouragement from the country to emerge from their shells.

P.Sivakami, born in 1957, got her post graduate degree in History. Later she took up IAS exams because “it is socially well-laced and paying well” and she got through. However, she considers herself more as a writer. She derived a lot of pleasure from reading and writing. So even after becoming an ISA officer she continued writing. She became a full time writer in 2008 after taking voluntary retirement from government service. From then on she has been working for the upliftment of the Dalit. She is the first Tamil Dalit Woman to write a novel *Pazhiyana Kazhidalum* in 1989. A literary and commercial success, the novel created a stir by taking on patriarchy in the Dalit movement. The novel is translated by the author herself and published in English as *The Grip of Change* (2006). The second novel *Anandhayi* is about the violent treatment of women. The novel is translated by Pritham K Chakravarthy as *The Taming of Women* (2011). Sivakami has written four critically acclaimed novels, all of them centered on Dalit and Feminist themes. Sivakami has written numerous short stories and poems. She is the founder editor of the literary magazine *Pudiya Kodangi*. Sivakami made a short film

*Oodaha* (through) based on a story written by one of her friends. Set in 1995, it was selected by the National Panorama and won the President Award the same year. In literary circle, Sivakami is considered a strong Dalit writer with a feminist penchant.

The two Dalit novels, Bama's *Sangati* and Sivakami's *The Grip of Change*, were originally written in Tamil. Through these novels they emphasize their use of oral traditions. Their merely offering 'authentic' pictures of Dalit oppression or culture is to negate the significance of their choice of form, a political choice. The novels of Sivakami and Om Prakash Valmiki can be analyzed on a similar note. Valmiki's *Joothan: A Dalit's life* and *The Grip of Change* respectively are significant for their depiction of ill treatment of the Dalit by their high caste counterparts in free India. Sharma says that "The Harijan children did not have the right to enter the schools because if they sat down to study along with other children, it would have defiled the latter" (78). Such treatment meted out to the children of the lower caste would hurt them. Bama says in her novel *Karukku*. Who are Dalits? All those are oppressed: all hill peoples, neo Buddhists, laborers, destitute farmer, women and all those who have been exploited politically, economically, or in the name of religion are Dalits (28).

Dalits are always discriminated by the society; wherever they move their name could not change. In a literary world that was used to comfort and pleasure, Sivakami's novels slapped the reverie out of reading and forced the reader to face what was also real about this India we are living in the touchy subject of caste and gender discrimination. Sivakami's deftness at characterization and her amazing word-building ability shines through her works. The idea is found in her interview with Gulf news. She says about the Dalit women;

Dalit women are confronted with discrimination, exclusion and violence to a larger extent than men. Land and property issues in particular, tend to cause or be at the root of conflicts over which Dalit women have faced eviction, harassment, physical abuse and assault. Dalit women are often denied access to or are evicted from their land by dominant castes, especially if it borders land belonging to such castes. They are thus forced to live in the outskirts of village, often on barren land. Reportedly, on many occasions, cases of violence against dalit women are not registered and adequate procedures are not taken by the police.

Indian society has a very rigid social system which is caste-based. Every Indian is identified by his caste in the society. One enjoys or regrets the caste in which he is born. The so called dominant or upper class of people consider themselves superior to the subordinate class of people in social, economic and political terms. The attainment of freedom or the equality of women has not yet received their state of development which is in turn the freedom of expression, liberty, decision making opportunity. At this stage it is very important to look whether the women community is able to express themselves and demand respect and dignity in the society. Active participation of people irrespective of their religion or caste is a very important need for a democratic country like India. However, the prevalent current situation is very different. Dalit Women are portrayed as lively, courageous, hard working individuals with tremendous inner strength to face any kind of crisis. Hence, the discrimination shown between the uppercaste and the lowercaste women, becomes the subject of the writer. Bernadine Evariso, a black British writer has said in the book *Dalit Literature: A Critical Exploration*, “we have to write about ourselves. Otherwise we won’t exist in literature or history”(179). Dalit writers have

moved from the margin to the centre, from invisibility to visibility, from speechlessness to speech. Women writers gaining equality, justice, opportunity and dignity at home and at society have become the vision and mission of Dalit literature. Dalit literature portrays fragments of truth aspiring to effect change in the society. Only people from a creamy layer occupy a politically and socially privileged status. In education, improvement in literacy has a direct connection with Dalit women. In spite of the facilities and reservation in education for the development of Dalit women, the current status of women in literacy especially the Dalit women is alarming. The school going girls discontinue their education and they sacrifice their studies and start working due to the family's economic condition. So it is necessary to start vocational courses and training along with the general education for the Dalit women. And the image of the women created by a few upper caste women holding high positions conceal rather than reveal the low status and educational level of Dalit women. Even if they are able to gain a little freedom and education women suffer the effects of violence due to patriarchy. The social and cultural behaviour of men and women influence the social expectation in determining the position of women in the society. Dalit women under the name of religion such as 'nude worship' or the practice of Devadasi system are made more submissive. The atrocities on Dalits by upper castes are also directly affecting the normal life of Dalits. The murder of Dalits, stabbing, social boycott, loss of property, preventing them from using the public places such as temples, cinema halls, and denial of employment to the Dalit women and many such types of incidents bring only distress to Dalit women. The social security and protection of Dalit women are low. Early marriage and child rearing and hard work in the field make them weak. Such physical violence makes them lose interest in their life. Moreover, lack of awareness about socio-economy and polity is another barrier for Dalit women. Sivakami says, in her interview to the Gulf News "In the society that is known as mainstream, the

problems of Dalit women are considered separatist. They face the worst expressions of male chauvinistic society - atrocities like raping, . . . physical assault and murder.”

In Indian society unemployment is a severe problem that affects both men and women. Women working in both organized and unorganized sector should have equal pay, pension, training, promotion, security and other benefits. Dalit women are mostly employed in unorganized sector as labourers in agriculture, construction works, factory work, and as domestic workers, as landless labourers and as daily wage workers. The proportion of Dalit women below the poverty line is comparatively higher than the uppercaste women. About 99% women working in unorganized sector are mainly the lower castes. The policies totally ignore women's role in Indian economy especially rural untouchable women. There is necessity to plan for certain jobs in a massive scale, particularly in the agrarian sector through Agro based industries, and special vocational training for selfemployment with proper funding. The economic oppression of women leads to social and cultural oppression hand in hand with the thinking that one person is superior to another.

Regarding the political status in India, women constitute half of the total population but unable to get equal share in active politics of the country. The organizational structure of leadership and sharing of power in government are dominated only by men. Unfortunately all the political parties in India speak much about the equality of women and have totally ignored the Dalit women. As far as Dalit women are concerned, they face multiple jeopardy at the hands of uppercaste men and women. Dalit women face sexual harassment from the upper caste landlords for whom they work and also from the patriarchy of their own society. They have failed to get adequate representation in women's movements which have remained only upper-class. Through

this concept it can be said that in a country divided along caste, class and religious lines, feminism as a movement needs to be more multifaceted, complex, taking into consideration the multiple identities of women. Dalit women writers have the dual responsibility of defending their community against the greater atrocities of the caste system on the one hand and at the same time critiquing the gender discriminations by their own patriarchy, on the other.

When Dalit writers started writing, their first instinct was to write autobiographies about their painful experiences of being untouchables. As against the very westernized form of autobiographies these autobiographies represented the community rather than the self. Dalit literature is generally based on the autobiographical elements because it legitimizes its narrative on the score of real life experience. The Dalit women writers do often vigorously support some of the more positive social and cultural aspects of the Dalit communities, disregarded by the mainstream communities. The dual duty of resistance and responsibility shouldered by the Dalit women writers make their position complex, sometimes even indeterminate. What has evolved out of the writings of these radical Dalit women writers can be called Dalit feminism which has in it a larger potential to address all types of domination and subjugation, be it the caste system or patriarchy or subalternity in general. It can be said that it 'thematizes' 'dalitism' in order to empower its own identity but at the same time 'problematizes' it in order to transcend the binary logic inherent in the very constituency itself. Dalit reality in India today is miserable and pathetic. As per official statistics one million Dalits are manual scavengers who clean public latrines and dispose dead animals, 80% of Dalits live in rural areas; 86% Dalits are landless and 60% depend on casual labours. Only 37% Dalits are literate, and 3 Dalit women to a hundred are harassed every day. At least one crime is committed against a

Dalit every day. The state and condition of the Dalit are becoming worse day by day. It is worthwhile to make note of a poem by Mudnakudu Chinnaswamy here in this context,

If I was a tree

The bird wouldn't ask me

before it built its nest

what caste I am.

When sunlight embraced me

my shadow wouldn't feel defiled.

My friendship with the cool breeze and the leaves

would be sweet.

Rain drops wouldn't turn back

taking me for a dog-eater

When I branch out further from my roots

Mother Earth wouldn't flee shouting for a bath.

The sacred cow would scrape her body on

my back...(52)

Unless all human beings are treated equally and with dignity without any discrimination of caste, class or gender man cannot call himself the crown of beings. The researcher has taken two translated novels of P.Sivakami for her research work entitled Dalit's Quest for Freedom: An Analysis of Select Works of Sivakami. It deals with the

Dalit issues and the psychology of the dalits with reference to Sivakami's *The Grip of Change* and *The Taming of Women*. From time immemorial, Tamil literature, particularly Tamil fiction, has been a motivating force in the lives of the Tamil-speaking people. In spite of its rich traditional and human values, its incomparable quality has remained in the dark because of the non-availability of many of its works in English translation. Hence, many scholars and the reading public speaking other languages are still unaware of its real merits. The augmentation of Dalit literature in translation itself is a representation of Dalit empowerment. The novels taken for the study have already been translated into English. The first chapter - Introduction explains how Dalits are empowered by their writings translated into English. The second chapter, Sivakami as a Dalit Woman Novelist deals with the making of Sivakami as a writer, a brief analytical outline of her works and major themes discussed in them. The third chapter A Dalit's Place in Society, deals with the position of Dalits in the society. The fourth chapter Marginalization, discusses how the Dalits are treated differently by the other caste people. The condition of Dalit needs to be analyzed so as to pave way for their empowerment. Steps are being taken to improve their status and they have come to the state of having their own literature. And as Prasad says, "Dalit literature has the power to change the Indian social structure but Indian society is yet to recognize that power." (65)

The final chapter Conclusion suggests ways for Dalit empowerment. The two novels explore the issues of the Dalits and trace out the culture and language of the Dalits. The novels highlight the fact that whatever heights a man might scale, his caste follows him as a shadow and it remains as an inseparable part of his identity. Through the novels has given voice to all unheard agonies, sighs and tears of Dalits especially Dalit women Sivakami with a hope that the voice would be heard and responded.