



RETHINKING MAHATMA GANDHI

The Global Appraisal

Editors

Terry Beitzel • Chandrakant Langare

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From Urban to Rural

The Gandhian Shift in Marathi Literary Culture

Sunil Sawant

The phenomenon of the relationship between Gandhian ideology and regional literary cultures in India has not received the kind of critical attention it deserves. This relationship can be studied at several levels, Gandhian influence on Modern Marathi literature being one of them.

Both Bal Gangadhar Tilak (1856–1920), born to a Marathi Chitpavan Brahmin family in Ratnagiri (Maharashtra), and Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (1869–1948), born to a Hindu Modh Baniya family in Porbandar (Gujarat), had the similar goal of resistance against injustice. Although both aimed at the same goal, there was a great deal of difference in the means proposed by them to attain this goal. Whereas Tilak approved the use of violence in order to give a fight against injustice citing *Bhagavad Gita*, Gandhi disapproved any use of violence to seek justice citing the same *Gita*. Instead of Arjuna's readiness to wage a war, what Gandhi appreciated most was *sthithapradnya darshan* (divine revelation) attained by him through the purification of his soul.

Gandhi had a strong faith in the spiritual message released by *Gita* according to which the goal of each individual soul is to attain *moksha* (a kind of union with the universal soul). The attainment of *moksha* requires the dissolution of the human ego. Every individual has to adopt a definite path to attain his or her spiritual redemption. The path of knowledge requires the individual to attain the dissolution of his or her ego to realize that he or she is nothing but one of the manifestations of God.

The path of action requires the individual to practise such principles as non-violence, truth, *asthaya*, celibacy and *aparigraha* to attain the purification of the inner being, the dissolution of the ego and the revelation of God. Gandhi who followed the path of action made a strong recommendation of practising the principle of non-violence in all social relationships as well as in all personal relationships. He aimed at the creation of a social system in which care was taken for the welfare of the lowest of the low and for the survival of all living beings.

Gandhi called himself a humble practitioner and a sincere seeker of Truth and a servant of the underprivileged. For him, Truth was God. His idea of Truth differed from scientific truth. His idea of Truth was deeply rooted in Indian tradition. The attainment of his kind of Truth was possible only through the purification of the soul. His quest for Truth depended upon such principles as love, compassion, non-violence, peace, etc. Although he believed in the attainment of *moksha*, his own redemption, he can hardly be called self-centred as he worked for uplifting all. The non-violent *Satyagraha* and civil disobedience were his means to attain *moksha*.

Gandhi disapproved Western culture and values which gave undue recognition to violence. He, on the contrary, asserted the supremacy of the principle of non-violence in all struggles of human beings. Nevertheless, he felt need to unite spiritual quest with the material advancement of the human beings. Hence, his assertion 'service to mankind is service to God'. The famous Dandi march, for him, was a kind of pilgrimage. He took active interest in the diverse facets (economy, social system, education, health, etc.) of human life. Instead of centralization, he advocated decentralization and instead of urbanization, he paid attention to the development of the villages.

Gandhi strongly advocated the dignity of human labour. Although Gandhian values appear to be highly spiritual, they are equally ethical. Gandhi was against the division of manual and intellectual labour. For him, Truth was ethical rather than scientific. He, therefore, refused to surrender before science exclusively.

For Gandhi, nationalism was not a mere struggle for freedom. It was one of the experiments in spiritual progress, fearlessness, moral fortification, social reform, and above all, quest for Truth.

Let us now examine how Maharashtra responded to Gandhian ideology. Maharashtra had provided leadership to India from the time of the dynamic rule of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj till the fall of the Peshwa rule in 1818. Even during the British rule, it produced such great leaders as Mahadev Govind Ranade (1842–1901), Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Gopal Krishna Gokhale (1866–1915), and several others. Marathi mind could hardly accept the leadership of others. Right from the beginning, the Marathas, who had fought several battles against different forces at so many different places, were extremely aggressive and violent. They held in high regard the exemplary valour revealed by the Queen of Jhansi

(1835–1858), who spearheaded Indian Rebellion of 1857, Vasudev Balwant Phadke (1845–1883), who waged an armed rebellion to overthrow the British rule, Chapekar Brothers – (Damodar Hari Chapekar (1870–1998), Balkrishna Hari Chapekar (1873–1899) and Vasudeo Hari Chapekar (1879–1899) – who were involved in the assassination of W.C. Rand, the British Plague Commissioner of Pune, Vinayak Damodar Savarkar (1883–1966), who advocated complete Indian Independence by revolutionary means, and other revolutionaries. The Marathi people largely approved of the aggressive resistance proposed by the hawks like Tilak and Savarkar and mocked at the passive resistance advocated by the doves like Ranade and Gokhale.

As the initial generation of Marathi writers belonged to the urban English-educated middle class, these writers were influenced by the extremist politics of the hawks. Many of them preferred to revisit Indian past in search of some viable tradition. They came to believe that India had a great civilization before the advent of Islam and Christianity. The alien powers succeeded in establishing their rules due to our wrong emphasis on non-violence. The natives felt an urgent need to revive our lost strength. Even those who were greatly impressed by English education and Western science wanted to invigorate our society in order to give a strong fight against the British. The Maharashtrian intelligentsia, thus, found it very difficult to appreciate Gandhi's advocacy of non-violence and civil disobedience.

The elite class from the urban centres of Pune and Mumbai, mostly Brahmins, strongly supported Tilak's aggressive and extremist politics. However, after the death of Tilak, the masses belonging to diverse castes and sub-castes and residing in the remote villages of Maharashtra began to give a very positive response to Gandhi's passive and moderate politics. Women, farmers, tribals, people belonging to the oppressed classes began to participate in large numbers in Gandhi's political movements of Civil Disobedience and *Satyagraha* after 1930. Gandhi's innovative practices such as *Satyagraha*, civil disobedience, boycotting of foreign goods, non-cooperation, etc. found several followers among the otherwise vertically and horizontally divided Indian communities. Whereas the mainstream forces from the urban pockets did not much approve of Gandhian politics, the marginalized forces from the distant villages joined freedom struggle under the charismatic leadership of Gandhi.

Gandhi succeeded in spreading new political awareness among the thousands of villagers. He also succeeded in drawing attention of the sensitive people to the plight of the underprivileged. Where women social reformers failed, Gandhi succeeded in developing a sense of identity among several women. Gandhi's emphasis on handmade goods and homemade products made the people to reconsider the importance of crafts (earthen pots, bamboo huts, woven sheets, etc.). Although the elite class had revived interest in the past, it was largely confined to the

study of ancient Sanskrit scriptures and literature. Gandhi's focus on simplicity laid to the arousal of interest in folk culture, folk arts, folk literature, folk traditions, folk rituals, etc. Such Maharashtrians as Acharya Shankar Dattatraya Javdekar (1894–1955), Kaka Kalelkar (1885–1981), Acharya Vinoba Bhave (1895–1982), Pandurang Sadashiv Sane alias Sane Guruji (1899–1950), Acharya Dada Dharmadhikari (1899–1985), and several others did the pioneering work of shifting the focus from the West to the East and from the urban to the rural under Gandhi's influence.

English as a language of the masters created a colossal divide between the few who had the privilege to acquire it and the many who lived in the remote corners of India without such privilege. Those who acquired English continued to dominate the ill-educated majority even after Independence. Gandhi had developed his own unique approach to art and literature. He applied his spiritual vision also to the realm of art and literature. The most central tenet of his philosophy of art was: 'The act of creation is the realization of the soul.' He found only that art valuable which helped the soul onwards towards self-realization. Similarly, for him, purity of life was the highest kind of art. For a long time, under Western influence, Marathi writers had been making use of ornamental, rhetorical and witty style. Gandhian insistence on art and sincerity made many writers give up this artificiality and adopt ease and grace in their style.

Rooted in the Indian saint tradition, Gandhi's aesthetics combines the care for the downtrodden and the underprivileged with the faith in God. For him, the great tradition of literature included the Upanishadas, the Bhagwad Gita, the Bible, the Ramayana, the Mahabharata, medieval saint poetry, etc. Compassion for the oppressed has the highest importance in Gandhian aesthetics. Credit to bring the common man at the centre of literary discourse during the era of freedom struggle goes to Gandhi.

Addressing the 12th Gujarati Literary Convention in 1936, Gandhi, presiding over the Convention, claimed that real democracy persists in the villages and the function of literature is to nurture this democracy. In this context, he preferred *Ramcharitmanas* (1574–1576) by Goswami Tulsidas (1511–1623) in comparison to *Kadambari* by Banabhatta, a 7th century Sanskrit writer. His preference highlights his taste for that kind of literature which is more ethical than beautiful.

Gandhi wrote a limited number of books such as *Hind Swaraj* (1909), *The Story of My Experiments with Truth* (1925–1929/1948), and *Key to Health* (1948). However, he wrote several articles, essays, and letters. He founded and edited such newspapers/journals as *Harijan*, *Indian Opinion*, *Young India*, and *Navajivan*. Such compilations of his writings and speeches as *Constructive Programme: Its Meaning and Place* (1941), *India of My Dreams* (1947), and *Village Swaraj* (2006) aim at the capacity building of the ordinary people.

Commenting on the difference between the vulgarity or commonness exemplified by Indian middle class and the exceptional inner peace radiated by Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru wrote:

Gandhiji had little sense of beauty or artistry in manmade objects, though he admired natural beauty. The Tajmahal for him was an embodiment of forced labour and little more. His sense of smell was very feeble. And yet in his own way he had discovered the art of living and had made his life an artistic whole. Every gesture had meaning and grace, without a false touch. There were no rough edges or sharp corners about him, no trace of vulgarity or commonness, in which, unhappily, our middle class excel. Having found an inner peace he radiated it to others and marched through life's tortuous ways with firm and undaunted step. (Nehru 1962: 130)

Along with this divine presence of inner peace, Gandhi had cultivated a very disarming sense of humour. This rare combination helped him cast his unmistakable spell on the people of the diverse background.

To overthrow the oppressive regime of the British invaders, a large section of the upper caste Hindus, under the influence of Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Veer Damodhar Savarkar, Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose (1897-1945) and others had sympathy for the political struggle involving sabotage and open offensive against the oppressors. After Tilak's death in 1920, Gandhi became the topmost national leader. He started suggesting and employing his own alternative means of resistance such as *Satyagraha*, non-cooperation, civil disobedience, boycott of foreign goods and clothes, etc.

Mahatma Gandhi's leadership, his method of work, his style of speaking and writing, in fact his whole personality was quite different from that of Tilak People from all walks of life, whether peasants, workers, traders, or dalits and many women as well, joined the movement led by Gandhi. The Gandhian movement consisted of new programmes like wearing Khadi, educating the illiterate, development of villages, prohibition, eradication of untouchability, non-cooperation with Government and passive resistance or *satyagraha* (non-violent defiance of salt-laws, forest laws, etc.) (Joglekar in Banhatti and Joglekar 1998: 18).

The Maharashtrians were in a dilemma: some continued to support Tilak's aggressive ideology and others embraced the moderate leadership of Gandhi.

Commenting on the spread of anti-colonial wave in Marathi literature, Joglekar writes:

After 1880 Marathi literature came very close to life. It had its inspiration in the contemporary social and political milieu. The youth was dominated by the nationalism brought to them by *Nibandhamala*. Marathi literature changed with every new tide in the society. Self-sacrifice by patriots like Tilak and Agarkar, the foundation of *Rashtrasabha* (Congress) and the impact of armed rebellions, all had influenced Marathi literature. The idea that dedicated sons of India will bring glory again to India, was simultaneously echoed by Bengal and Maharashtra. The spirited language of

radical journalists like Tilak, S.M. Paranjape, Khadilkar greatly impressed the readers. Creative literature like drama, novels, poetry, equally and effectively nurtured patriotism. This was no easy task while being under the grip of British laws. Therefore, creative writers started expressing their strong urge for independence under the veil of stories from history and mythology. From *Ushakal* to *Suryasta*, Haribhau Apte narrated the biography of Shivaji in a very attractive form of the novel. Nathmadhav continued on the same lines. S.M. Paranjape used historical incidents and mythological stories with a special skill to arouse the youth against the British rule. Brilliant expression as well as the beauty of sarcasm can be seen in many of his essays like 'Shivajichi Ek Ratra', 'Shivajiche Punyavachan', 'Dilliche Takhta ani Bhausahabancha Ghan' and 'Arjunacha Vedepana'. They make a very strong impact. K.P. Khadilkar wrote mythological and historical dramas like *Kichakvadha*, *Bhaubhandhaki*. In them he very skilfully suggested contemporary incidents. Many poems gave the message of patriotism. The poem 'Majhya Janmabhumiचे Naav' by N.V. Tilak or 'Hatabhagini', 'Yapudhe', 'Professor Chhatryencha Kesari' and such other poems by the poet Vinayak can be quoted as examples. Savarkar offered his all to the nation. His poems whipped up the minds of the youth for fighting back the foreign rule. It is obvious that Marathi literature of this era gave a strong stimulus to the urge for independence. This was done through every possible form of literature. This literature was so genuine and its impact so strong that the British rulers had to take its cognisance by banning it. But the ban was in vain, as it magnified the effects of such literary works by authors like S.M. Paranjape and K.P. Khadilkar on the minds of the readers. (Joglekar 1998: 32-33)

The 1943 translation of *No Pasaran* (1937) by Upton Sinclair (1878-1968) produced by Vyankatesh Shankar Vakil appeared at the crucial moment of Indian struggle for Independence. Vakil translated this 'cry for freedom' when the entire nation was charged with the spirit of Gandhi's Quit India Movement. Well aware of the special significance of the novel to the Indian situation, K.A. Abbas (1914-1987), in his introduction written to the translation, expresses hope that the translation will arouse the reader and give him inspiration. It was very bold on the part of Vakil to write, for instance:

The biggest British lion among these has been lying idly in the corner and forcing others to be mum by threatening each alternatively. All fear him. Yet all know that he has grown aged. And all suspect that his teeth are no longer good. (*No Pasaran* 1943: 63; my translation)

True to the original purpose, Vakil's translation of *No Pasaran* performed the function of being 'a weapon in the struggle for freedom and justice' in Marathi translation culture.

There appeared three translations of only one American novel, viz. *The Moon is Down* (1942) by John Steinbeck (1902-1968), within a brief span of four years. *Moon is Down* by Ganeshjoshi was published in 1946, *Chandra Dhalala* by Dinanath Matre and Sadanand Rege (1923-1982) in 1947 and *Navi Rajvat* by Sadashiv Anant Shukla (1902-1968) in 1949.

Instead of Steinbeck's concern for the plight of farmers, his attempt to gain first-hand knowledge through living and working with them, and his commitment to authentic reporting of their lives as reflected in his strongest and most durable novel of social protest *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939), what appealed to the Marathi middle class sensibility of the time was his treatment of free men's resistance to the fact of 'occupation' in *The Moon is Down*. In terms of the inner compulsions of the literary polysystem we can see how translation of *The Moon is Down* in 1946 establishes a retrospective continuity with the translation of Upton Sinclair's *No Pasaran*.

Steinbeck's novel describes how the aggressive power occupies a town on the coast of a peaceful country and how the people react to its tyranny. The seaside town is obviously a Norwegian town and the enemy is Nazi Germany. But Steinbeck does not specify time and place, meaning this to be 'a universalized statement about the outraged response of a free people duped by greedy traitors in their community into leaving themselves too trustingly open to occupation by an enemy force seeking to exploit their resources as part of its plan for world conquest' (French 1994: 88). The value of the book lies, thus, in generalizing the context of occupation and resistance so that any town under occupation would identify itself with Mayor Orden and the people in *The Moon is Down*.

Steinbeck's novel reflected the Indian situation under the British rule very exactly. India had been occupied by the British invaders for more than 100 years. And Indians, like the people in the occupied seaside town in Steinbeck's novel, were fighting to overthrow the oppressive powers of the invaders. Three translations of *The Moon is Down* seem to have resulted from admiration for political struggle involving sabotage and open offensive against the oppressors (Sawant 2009).

The urban middle class had been overwhelmed by Western influence to such an extent that it found it very difficult to digest Gandhi's critique of Western education and philosophy. Gandhi's emphasis on simplicity and truth failed to make any appeal to this class which had already started enjoying the benefits of English education. Their obsession with Formalism further alienated the people of this class from Gandhian way of life.

Although literature produced by this urban middle class was not rooted in the native tradition, the practitioners of this literature tried to develop their own defence and justification for the kind of literature they produced and enjoyed. '... everyone including the novelists themselves indulged in a superficial classification such as Khandekar's 'art for life's sake' and Phadke's 'art for art's sake'. Actually, there is little qualitative difference on the formal level between Khandekar's idealism, humanity, freedom, purity, sublime love, sacrifice, love, *yagna*, and such other nice 'Sanskrit' ideas on the one hand, and on the other hand, Phadke's colourful *saris*, scents, perfumes, puff and powder, tennis, kisses,

courtship, etc. Both of them are essentially formalistic, entertaining type of novelists' (Nemade in Devi, 2002/2004, 202).

To counter Formalism, the Marxists of the time tried to evolve the theory of socialist realism, but it failed to rise above mere propaganda. Others such as Vaman Malhar Joshi (1882–1943), Vishnu Sakharām Khandekar (1898–1976), and Sane Guruji criticized Formalism of the urban middle class and drew inspiration from Gandhian values and principles. V.M. Joshi was influenced by the greatness of Gandhi and his mass leadership. However, being urban and moderate, he might have found it very difficult to accept Gandhian rejection of modernity and rationalism. The urban readers appreciated his novels as he catered to their taste without giving any jolt to their sensibility. Khandekar was a teacher in a small school in a village Shiroda near Vengurla. He had witnessed Gandhi's Salt Satyagraha from close quarters. He was moved by the plight of the oppressed, idealism, compassion, etc. He had great respect for the freedom fighters. He felt the need for social transformation. However, his idealism lacked any depth as his writings smacked of pseudo-romantic sentimentality.

In comparison with Joshi and Khandekar, Sane Guruji outright refused to accept the dominance of contemporary taste. He dismissed the work of his contemporaries as 'Sahebi art' (in *Navbharat*, April 1999: 10). Expressing his dissatisfaction with the novels produced by the urban writers of his time, he writes:

The real Maharashtra consists of the people from the villages. Which books have reached the thousands of villages? Which poem or which novel of a popular poet or a popular novelist has reached this real Maharashtra? The popular Maharashtrian simply means the popular among the few educated; it does not mean more than that. These (so-called popular) novelists have not seen the real Maharashtra. They do not have love or respect for the real hardworking and resourceful Maharashtra. (quoted in Kulkarni G.M. and V.D. Kulkarni 1988: 67, my translation)

Sane Guruji was the first to speak against the portrayal of the pseudo life in urban fiction and shift the focus to the rural Maharashtra which had remained unrepresented in Marathi literature till then.

Sane Guruji opposed the rules of fiction prescribed in *Pratibhasadhan* (1931) by Narayan Sitaram Phadke (1894–1978). This book provided a sort of lame defence for Phadke's own brand of fiction which lacked any connection with the social reality of his time. Phadke's model of fiction was based on the so-called doctrine of 'art for art's sake'. Phadke was in search of an alternative to the model of social fiction popularized by Hari Narayan Apte (1864–1919). He found in *Love and Mr Lewisham* (1899), *Ann Veronica* (1909), and *The Secret Places of the Heart* (1922) by H.G. Wells (1866–1946) his ideal model of narration (1967: 73). Wells' novels which so influenced Phadke in fact belong to his early phase of literary career; they are brief novels of romantic adventure and fantasy written in the manner of Kipling. Phadke's reading of Bruno Frank

(1887–1945), Vicki Baum (1888–1960), Howard Spring (1889–1965), A.J. Cronin (1896–1981), James Hilton (1900–1954) and other Western novelists estranged him from his Indian environment and made him argue that ‘content’ and ‘form’ are different and the worth of the novel depends not on its content but on the extent to which the novelist has shown imagination and skill in expressing the content (1973: 53). Quite early in his literary career, he developed a technique of plot construction which had no place for loose ends and rough edges and a style of writing which was spruce and lucid. He grew very fond of his model and produced a series of novels such as *Kulabyachi Dandi* (1925), *Jadugar* (1928), *Atkepar* (1931), *Pravasi* (1937), *Indradhanushya* (1941), *Pratijnya* (1942) – almost all of them dealing with an elegant, romantic world of happy love with only a few variations in theme, structure and background. ‘Art for art’s sake’ movement in the West was concerned with man himself and his psychology in opposition to the social and economic conditions in which he lives. Phadke’s simplistic model shunned the naturalistic portrayal of life of common man because of its ‘non-aesthetic’ aspects and equally failed to explore man’s psychology with any depth and subtlety. He simply presented an elegant, make-believe life, a pleasant day-dream to entertain the middle-class reader casually. Unlike Phadke’s, Sane Guruji’s characters have closeness to life. Also, unlike Phadke, Sane Guruji chooses the rural and small-town environment.

Sane Guruji attacked the educated, white-collared class of his time for their inability to communicate with the masses. He did not like to associate with them, for he found in the masses more mind and more heart than in a pedantic and formal middle class, proud of its apparent morality. His Marathi fiction *Shyamchi Aai* (1935), *Dhadpadnari Mule* (1937), *Punarjanma* (1939), *Astik* (1940), *Sati* (1940), *Kranti* (1940), *God Shevat* (1943), etc. all deal with the humble folk and their ways. *Shyamchi Aai* can be called a genuine Gandhian novel. Like Gandhi’s autobiography, this novel is a classic example of plain, lucid and straightforward style of narration. *Dhadpadnari Mule* portrays a devoted teacher determined to bring out a kind of transformation among the students by developing the solid bond of love and affection between the teacher and the students. The novel *Punarjanma* has the background of the Salt Satyagraha, civil disobedience, jungle *Satyagraha*, etc. Even though Sane Guruji chose the mythical background of the conflict between the Nagas and the Aryas for his novel *Astik*, his intention was to bridge the contemporary gap between the Hindus and the Muslims by achieving their emotional unity; the goal he set for them was not to take revenge but to commit sacrifice through spiritual transformation. Guruji’s novel *God Shevat* depicts the life in the village Erandol from Khandesh in Maharashtra; this tradition of bringing alive some village in the novel started by Sane Guruji was later expanded by Shripad Narayan Pendse (1913–2007) and Gopal Nilkanth Dandekar (1916–1998).

About Sane Guruji, it is said that 'he remained a child all his life – with a child's angelic innocence and day-dreaming, untouched by reality. And it was in some ways a wholesome influence, for in a world darkening with scepticism and disillusionment, he provided through his books a steady light of faith' (Deshpande and Rajadhyaksha 1988: 162). Every work he wrote was, in fact, charged with idealism and sincerity. His masterpiece *Shyamchi Aai* has run into more than 30 editions, which testifies to its phenomenal popularity among the reading community. Sane Guruji was a staunch supporter of Gandhi. He was imprisoned several times. Following the call given by Gandhi, he worked for the welfare of the Untouchables tirelessly. Like Gandhi, he was influenced by Leo Tolstoy (1828–1910). Acharya Rajaram Shastri Ramakrishna Bhagwat (1919–1969) called Sane Guruji 'the first Satyagrahi author'.

The 1838 Nobel Prize winner Pearl S. Buck (1892–1973) has left a lasting impression on the minds of Marathi readers. Immediately after her winning of the prize, Marathi periodicals wrote a number of articles on the qualities of her literature. In *Usha's* December 1938 issue, H.V. Desai, the editor of the periodical, wrote an article of eight long pages on her literature and of these eight pages, five give a detailed analysis of Pearl Buck's novel, *The Mother* (1934). According to Desai, '*The Mother* presents a good and poignant portrait of a life of a Chinese family. The resemblance to Indian way of life is so sharp that all characters seem to live in one of the Indian villages' (in *Usha* (December 1938): 2; my translation). He praises Buck for the portrayal of the life of the oppressed in a language which is both simple and evocative. Ramchandra Madhav Pai, on the other hand, criticizes the decision of Swedish Academy and argues that she has not written great literature which could occupy a chapter in the history of literature. Not only does she fall short of ranking with Sinclair Lewis (1885–1951) and Eugene O'Neill (1888–1953) but also her own art is less brighter than those of Miss Willa Cather (1873–1947) or Miss Ellen Glasgow (1873–1945) (in *Kala* July 1939: 7), he continues. The Marathi bilingual readers nevertheless enjoyed the reading of *The Mother* and *The Good Earth* (1931). The popularity of these novels led B.D. Satoskar (1909–2000), originally a publisher, to translate these novels into Marathi.

Satoskar, as an eminent publisher, must have visualized success for the translation of this novel. He kept aside the work of printing and undertook his first ever writing enterprise. In translating Buck's novel, he was especially attracted to the close resemblance between Chinese and Indian life. In his 'Introduction' to the translation, he reveals his main purpose for selecting Pearl Buck for translation:

Pearl Buck's entire writing is based on Chinese background. All characters in her literature belong to China. She has done portrait-painting of numerous people living in Chinese villages in her novels and short stories. And the village in China so resembles a village in India that if the Chinese names in her literature are Indianized all events

will start looking like those happening in India itself. Her novels, if translated into Indian languages, will never be thought as translations. (author, 1944/1989: 3; my translation)

Satoskar was, thus, impressed by the resemblance between Chinese and Indian farming life.

Instead of Buck's classic *The Good Earth*, Satoskar first chose *The Mother* for translation. About this preference, he states:

The Mother occupies the first place in Pearl Buck's all literature. *The Good Earth* is indeed excellent for a different reason, but Pearl Buck's portrayal of the mother in *The Mother* is unique. The author has drawn a picture of life of a deserted wife on the background of China, and the shades of colours in this picture are so natural that actual incidents seem to be happening before our eyes ... The pages of the novel contain hard life of a deserted wife, a sin resulting of dire needs of sex, and painful events in the mother's life as a penitance. All incidents in *The Mother* are heartrending ... But this is not a plot-oriented novel. Events have no importance in themselves. The author intends to record a subtle effect of them on the psychology of the mother. The portrayal of an individual is the main purpose of not only this novel, but also of Pearl Buck's entire literature. And in *The Mother*, the purpose has been served very successfully. (Ibid.: 4-5; my translation)

Satoskar's exaggerated claim runs contrary to what Paul A. Doyle says about the character of the Mother: 'The basic fault with the Mother is that she becomes too much a type and too little a realized individual' (1980: 65). Comparing Buck's mother to Bertolt Brecht's Mother Courage and John Steinbeck's Ma Joad, Doyle comes to the conclusion that Buck's mother is less vividly realized and therefore, less memorable (Ibid.: 65).

In the heyday of middle class literary sensibility dominating the Marathi literary culture, Satoskar's translation was widely appreciated and praised for its fidelity to Buck's narrative style. M.N. Advant, for instance, in his review of *Aai* published in *Maharashtra Sahitya Patrika*, claims:

Shri Satoskar has made a translation of a very effective novel, *The Mother*, by the well-known writer Pearl S Buck. As far as the method of translation is concerned, the way followed by Shri Satoskar is the only appropriate way. Marathi has been used in a right manner so as to engage the Marathi reader with the original story. The reader's mind becomes one with a rural family in China quite easily while reading the novel. (author 1945: 63; my translation)

Commenting on the function of Satoskar's translation, Advant remarks:

The plot contains many mind-blowing and heart-rending pictures of the mother's life ... The urban reader starts comparing the attitude of the mother and other people in her world to common experiences in life, at various places in the story, to his own attitudes and experiences. It is the

strength of this book to produce some such ripples of thought in the mind of the reader, isn't it? Because of such translated texts as *Shravanatale Khede*, *Aai*, etc. the Marathi reader has been able to see the weakness of Marathi novels which show superficial 'freedom' only. Therefore, such translations need to be praised and welcomed. We will be able to decide by means of these books whether we are poor by experience or by sight. (Ibid.: 64; my translation)

Advant, thus, draws attention to the failure of the contemporary novel to capture rural realities in their naked form and congratulates translators for introducing the vigorous strain of the rural novel in Marathi (Sawant 2012).

Satoskar's *Aai* won a prize of 50 rupees each from the *Deccan Vernacular Translation Society* and *Gomantak Marathi Sahitya Sammelan*. In *Gomantak Marathi Sahitya Sammelan*, it also received Varerkar Gold Medal for the best book in Gomantak literature published during 1943–45. Such reception by common readers and literary experts of the time led Satoskar to translate Buck's masterpiece *The Good Earth* into Marathi.

Satoskar's preface to *Dharitri*, his translation of *The Good Earth*, is a plea for faithful translation. He argues:

The atmosphere in the original novel is non-Marathi. Is it not against the purpose of translation if it becomes Marathi and if characters in it start speaking Marathi instead of their mother tongue? The translator must faithfully reproduce the country in which the original author has made his characters move and the specific features of the language which he has made them speak. While reading the novel, the reader must always know that characters in it are not Marathi, the atmosphere in it is not Marathi and the language of the characters is not Marathi. (Preface to *Dharitri* 1949/1988: 6; my translation)

He further claims that he has done this translation faithfully in order to familiarize the Marathi reader with Chinese life and language as represented in the original novel.

S.V. Kirloskar, reviewing Satoskar's text in *Manohar*, upholds the translator's claim and congratulates him on his faithful rendering of Chinese customs and rituals. He writes:

While reading this novel one does not get bored at all. It is very interesting to read occasional references to a variety of customs in the life of a Chinese farmer. The distribution of red-dyed eggs among the people is to be taken as the birth of a son! A coffin is to be bought well before an actual death; mourning is to be made by wearing shoes of coarse white cloth, by binding bands of white cloth about the ankles and by binding the women's hair with white cord! (author 1950: 416; my translation)

Satoskar was, thus, praised for retaining the details of Chinese life in his Marathi translation. And indeed he successfully familiarizes the Marathi reader with Chinese New Year's customs, marriage ceremonies, burial rituals, meal preparations and soil cultivation.

Prior to Satoskar's *Dharitri*, Vyankatech Vakil had made a translation of *The Good Earth* in an abridged form. This translation entitled *Mati* (1945) was inspired by Sane Guruji's positive and sustaining approach toward life which Vakil found reflected in Buck's novel, too. In his 'Defence' written to the book, he indirectly attacks Phadke for his romantic descriptions and proposes an alternative model of folk literature. His reasons for translating *The Good Earth* are:

1. Need for purposeful literature like the one Sane Guruji produced in Marathi and Pearl Buck did in English.
2. Need to disseminate amongst people views in which we strongly believe.
3. Need to introduce to newly literate readers literature from other languages.
4. Need to emphasize the marked resemblance between the lives of farmers in China and Maharashtra.
5. Need to introduce the life of the Chinese people (Preface to *Mati* 1945).

Pearl Buck's translated fiction presents the harsher realities of Chinese life and the way Chinese characters such as Wang Lung and his wife Olan give a spirited fight against famine, hunger and poverty.

Before the advent of Gandhi and his influence, mainstream Marathi literature was largely occupied with the values, concerns, ideologies and issues of the urban, middle-class, educated society. It represented class consciousness of the urban people almost to the exclusion of people from rural areas. With the rise of Gandhi in Indian politics, the focus began to be shifted from the urban to the rural poor. The Gandhian influence paved the way for the rise of rural literature in Marathi.

Modernism in the Marathi literary culture provided, as in the poetry of Bal Sitaram Mardhekar (1909–1956), in the fiction of Arvind Gokhale (1919–1992) and Gangadhar Gopal Gadgil (1923–2008) as also in the later fiction of the 1960s, a critique of industrial culture with its dehumanizing effects. Parallel to this, the tradition of rural literature developed by such writers as Shankar Patil (1926–1994), D.M. Mirasdar (1927–), Uddhav Shelke (1931–1992), Anand Yadav (1935–2016), R.R. Borade (1940–), Sadanand Deshmukh (1959–) and others depict rural life realistically. Ideologically, this can be traced back to Gandhi's call for return to village in the 1930s and 1940s. But from a purely literary point of view, the Marathi literary culture saw in the 1960s the emergence of the tradition of rural literature which drawing its inspirations from Mahatma Jotiba Phule (1827–1890) said that the mainstream Marathi literary tradition basically was so bourgeois and urban that it had neglected the portrayal of rural community life.

The process of decolonization unleashed by Gandhism brought in a number of positive activist modes such as the Little Magazine movement, the Dalit Movement, Muslim Satyashodhak Movement led by

Hamid Dalwai (1932–1977), Shramik Sanghatanas working in tribal areas, Yuvak Kranti Dal and a host of such activities and groups in post-independent Maharashtra. These movements brought about a radical change of sensibility. A significant feature of these movements was that a number of writers, poets, intellectuals directly participated in them. Even those who did not take a direct part were not left totally untouched (Jahagirdar 2001: 174). G.A. Kulkarni (1923–1987), Jayawant Dalwi (1925–1994), Bhau Padhye (1926–1996), Narayan Surve (1926–2010), Vijay Tendulkar (1928–2008), Arun Kolatkar (1932–2004), Bhalchandra Nemade (1938–), Dilip Chitre (1938–2009), Kiran Nagarkar (1942–2019), Namdeo Dhasal (1949–2014) are some of the prominent names one can mention in this context. Indeed, the experimentation which modernism triggered off inaugurated an era of cultural soul-searching and self-definition (Ibid.). When the wave of modernism subsided, many great and significant writers in Marathi expounded the theory of nativism. The theory of nativism, with Bhalchandra Nemade as a leading exponent and practitioner, is a bold postcolonial attempt seeking creative strength in the forgotten resources of indigenous culture and tradition. These significant changes in the Marathi literary tradition in the context of serious literature indicate a return to native roots.

The present author is indebted to the Marathi book *Gandhivad ani aadhunik Marathi Sahitya* (Gandhism and Modern Marathi Literature) edited by Dattatray Punde (Pune: Pratima Prakashan, 1995) for many valuable insights.

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