

TRANSLATION OF ANNABAHU SATHE'S TRAVELOGUE "MAZA RUSSIA CHA PRAVAS" INTO RUSSIAN

<http://ijrs.online/ijrs/index.php/journal-archives/published-volumes/volume-2-2020/details/2/29> 



Anagha Bhat Behere

Asst. Professor

Department of Foreign Languages,
Savitribai Phule Pune University,
Pune

anaghab2@gmail.com

Abstract: *Noted Dalit Writer of the First generation in independent India, Annabhau Sathe visited the Soviet Union in 1961. He recorded his experiences and his understanding of the Soviet Union in a small travelogue, Maza Russia cha Pravas (My journey to Russia). This travelogue could be said to be the first travelogue by a Dalit writer. It also enjoys iconic status in Marathi literature. The paper explores the hermeneutic movement which occurred while translating the travelogue from Marathi into Russian. It also comments on the role and the agency of a translator in the process of translation.*

Keywords: *Dalit Literature, Travelogue, literary polysystem, Hermeneutic motion, translation, SL, TL, translatorship, role of a translator.*

The year 2019-20 was a birth centenary year of noted Dalit writer in Marathi Annabhau Sathe. As a part of his birth centenary year, a lot of his works were revisited. For me, as a Rusist and a translator, his travelogue published in 1961 and chronicling his visit to the then Soviet Union was of utmost interest. As a tribute to Annabhau Sathe in his birth centenary year, I decided to translate it into Russian (which to my utmost surprise was not translated into Russian earlier.). I completed the translation in December 2019. The entire process of translation helped me in analyzing the source text 'Maza Russia cha Pravaas' by Annabhau Sathe in ways that as a reader of the text I might have missed. The process also raised certain questions in my mind as to the role of a translator, role of the source text in the literary polysystem¹ (a network

1 I have used the concept developed by Itamar Even-Zohar, who views a literary polysystem as some sort of cultural and verbal network of relations. (The position of Translated literature within the Literary polysystem, Poetics Today, 11, 1990)

of literary and verbal relations existing in any language) of the source language, role of the translated text in the literary polysystem of the target language and the cultural significance of translatorship².

I would like to begin my article by first locating the source text in the literary polysystem of the source language, i.e. Marathi.

Annabhau Sathe was born on 1st August 1920 in a Matang family in Wategaon in (today's) Sangli district, Maharashtra. His birth date was determined later, based on his mother's memory. She referred to the day as 'the day when a great national leader had died.' That great national leader was most probably Lokamanya B.G. Tilak. It is quite an interesting coincidence that Annabhau Sathe was born on the very same day the first Indian national leader, who showed keen interest in the 1917 October Revolution and who also gave impetus to the labour movement in Mumbai, died. Tilak became aware of the political potential of the labour class in the first decade of the 20th century. Tilak's interest was reciprocated by Comrade Lenin. He asked one of the members of the British Communist Party to meet Tilak when Tilak visited England in 1919 to attend the convention of the Labour Party. (Ketkar Kumar, 2020, 24-25)

Another popular periodical published in those days in Marathi from Pune, that was dedicated to social issues and nurturing of the nationalist sentiment, 'Chitramay Jagat' brought out a special issue on the occasion of the 10th anniversary of the Russian Revolution in June 1928. This coverage was based on the eye witness account of Indian representatives attending the 10th anniversary of the October Revolution. Thus Russia, the Russian revolution and the ideals behind it had started making inroads in the Marathi socio-political and intellectual life by the middle of the third decade of the twentieth century.

Mumbai (or Bombay as it was then called) was the up and coming centre of industry, trade and mercantile activity in British India. People from rural Maharashtra thronged the new city in search of livelihood and dignity. They were absorbed in the rapidly expanding industrial and trade activity. By the mid 1920s the labour movement in Bombay was being shaped by Comrade S.A. Dange, who was associated with Lokamanya B.G. Tilak. It was to this thriving urban centre, that Annabhau Sathe's family migrated to in search of livelihood when Annabhau was 11 years old. (Sathe Annabhau, 1979, 57) Though there is no authentic record of the exact date of the family's arrival in Bombay, it can be safely assumed that it was sometime around 1931-32. Another interesting coincidence is that the year, when Annabhau Sathe arrived in Bombay is also the year when Gorky's 'Mother' was first published in Marathi. (Mule Veena, 1998, 537)

In Bombay Annabhau Sathe grew up near the Matunga Labour Camp. The Communist Party of India and the Scheduled Caste Federation held sway in this area. The ideological and creative nurturing that Annabhau received was at the hands of these two sources (Dangle Arjun, 1998, 11-12) Annabhau read a lot of communist literature which was banned under the British regime

2 I have used the word Translatorship for the entire gamut of activities of a translator from the moment she selects a text for translation, the role she plays and the significance of her activity for the literature and the culture of the TL.

(Sathe Annabhau, 1979, 2), as well as Russian literature in translation. He had special affinity for Maxim Gorky, whom he has lauded as 'the founding father of the Soviet Literature who created Dalit literature and Dalit writers' (Sathe Annabhau, 1979, 25, tr. ABB). More about this affinity for Maxim Gorky will be discussed later.

Annabhau started his writing career in the 1940s by penning agitprop pieces for the Communist Party of India to be performed. He relied heavily on Ambedkari Jalsa and Powada, the traditional folk art form of Maharashtra. He was instrumental in the formation of the theatre group 'Laal Bawta' (the Red Flag) and performed all around Maharashtra under the flag of Laal Bawta. In the year 1943-44 Annabhau Sathe wrote (his now famous) powada (a ballad like lyrical composition) of the Battle of Stalingrad. This powada garnered a lot of praise and popularity for Annabhau Sathe. The 1940s and 50s saw prodigious literary output by Annabhau. He started with folk forms like *vag* (a main play in the Tamasha), powada and lavni in the 1940s but soon graduated to short stories, novels and plays; not to overlook the travelogue under discussion in this paper. Until his death in 1969 he had nearly 35 novels, 15 collections of short stories, 3 plays apart from poetic works like powada and lavni to his credit.

In 1961 Annabhau's novel 'Fakira' written in 1959 was awarded a literary prize by the newly formed state of Maharashtra. The same year he travelled to the Soviet Union and penned the travelogue 'Maza Russia cha Pravaas'. Despite the accolades, immense popularity and prodigious literary output, Annabhau Sathe remained a literary figure on the periphery of the literary polysystem of Marathi in the 1950s and 60s. The hegemonic position in the world of letters was occupied by upper caste, upper class and urban writers, who were busy debating about the purpose of Art and the technical craft of writing. Debates centered around the theme of "Art for Art's sake".

In 1972 poet Raja Dhale along with fellow Marathi Dalit poet Namdeo Dhasal and others founded the Dalit Panthers. (Bhat-Behere Anagha, 2017, 138). The formation of Dalit Panthers was a turning point in Marathi socio-political and cultural sphere. The Dalit literary movement which went hand in hand with socio-political activism, revolutionized the stagnant Marathi literature, bringing in earthquake like upheavals in the dominant narrative about Art, Literature and aesthetics. The works of Annabhau Sathe were revisited and evaluated in the light of emerging Dalit sensibilities. It would not be an exaggeration to say that Annabhau laid the corner stone of Dalit literature much before the term gained currency in Marathi literature. In his 1958 speech at the inauguration of the first ever Dalit literary meet Annabhau said that the 'Earth does not rest on the hood of Sheshnag but on the palms of a Dalit'. (Bhat-Behere Anagha, 2017, 141)

The protagonists in Annabhau's works are always invariably coming from the poor, marginalized and the downtrodden communities of rural and urban Maharashtra. For a Rusist, they essentially serve as a reminder of the motley characters of Gorky's play 'На дне'. Annabhau not just shares empathy with the characters of Gorky but designates Gorky as the source of Dalit literature and Dalit writings. What Annabhau understood instinctively about the kind of role played by Gorky and his literature in shaping of the Dalit literature is borne out by contemporary critical studies. 'Gorky provides a theorization of the relationship between art and life that is considered valuable for the Dalit writer's negotiation between Dalit art and Dalit life.' (Gajarawala Toral

Jatin, 2020, 336) The socialist realism championed by Maxim Gorky indeed provided a basis for an alternative aesthetics.

The classical Sanskrit literary tradition was alien to the Dalits. They were excluded from it under the threat of corporal punishment. The aesthetics and the world view expressed by this literature did not belong to the Dalits. Those, who were unable to lay claim to the 'high (or Margi)' canon or those, who wanted a break from it relied on Gorky and the Russian literature that followed Gorky's tradition. Gorky thus became a literary ancestor, who laid foundations of an alternative literature. It would be essential to mention a recent article here as an interesting aside. In the Indian Express from 15th October 2020, in the aftermath of Tanishq ad³ controversy, Sameena Dalwai, a child of an interfaith marriage wrote about the alternative reality of being a child of an interfaith marriage and how the parents helped them cope with it. "They had misgivings about how their children will cope in an increasingly communal atmosphere. They tried hard to give us the world, through *Russian books* (italics mine ABB) and other mixed families and friends." The role of Russian literature in nurturing the modern, secular outlook of Indians is indeed a topic for more in depth research. It is likely to yield interesting results.

Getting back to Annabhau Sathe's literature we can say that for a very long time he remained a writer on the periphery of the Marathi literary world. He became a source of an inspiration to many a Dalit writer but he also became bogged down by the 'Dalit' tag and the universal human values enshrined in his literature have remained under appreciated till this day.

Having thus located the literature of Annabhau Sathe in the Marathi literary polysystem in this fashion, I would now turn to the role of a translator and the cultural significance of translatorship.

I have been translating literary and non-literary texts for last thirty years or so. Typically, I have dealt with the following languages: Marathi, Russian and English. I have mainly translated literary texts from Russian into Marathi, as also some philosophical essays from English into Marathi. On certain occasions I have translated Marathi literature into English and on a couple of rare occasions I have translated from Marathi into Russian (mostly Marathi poetry). So my Source Language (SL) has been mainly Russian while my Target Language (TL) has been Marathi. Whenever I have translated any Russian literary text into Marathi, the choice of the text has been entirely mine. As a native speaker of Marathi and as somebody who is located within the literary polysystem of Marathi, I have chosen the texts to be translated into Marathi. I would like to assume that my choice has been entirely based on subjective considerations but at the same time I would also like to put a disclaimer and say that it has not been arbitrary or just a result of whims and fancies. It can be said that I have been partial to the classical writers of Russian literature like Pushkin, Chekhov, Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, Turgeniev, Lermontov, Saltykov-Schidrin, Afanasy Fyot and Balmont etc. But then I can be excused, for these writers have indeed created templates of literature that have been milestones of world literature in terms of ideas, techniques, genres and style. Unlike Hindi, many of these classics are not available in

3 Tanishq, a leading jewelry brand in India launched an advertising campaign titled 'Ekatvam' (or Unity). One of the advertisements showed a Muslim mother in law carrying out certain Hindu rituals for the daughter in law who is a Hindu. The advertisement faced a severe criticism, especially on the social media and was eventually pulled down by Tanishq

translation in Marathi. Some are available only partially.

I have also focused on children's literature in Russian because of the paucity of quality children's literature in Marathi. My selection of contemporary texts is also based on the criteria of bringing in something new, something not known to the Marathi literary polysystem. So selection of source texts is also determined by the aim of doing some value addition to the TL literary polysystem. I have played a social role here, 'fulfilling a function allotted by a community' (Tourey Gideon, 1995, 53-69) and have tried to bring into the Marathi literary polysystem, what was not there. The essence of my role as a translator or my 'translatorship' can be described thus.

This role is usually played by translators all around the world, when they work with a pair of SL-TL in which a foreign tongue is SL and the native tongue is TL. The translator becomes a cultural emissary of the foreign tongue. Standing firmly on the literary and the cultural ground of the TL, the translator selects a text from the SL. As soon as she selects the text, she marks the Source text as something special that deserves attention. In the process of translation, she accords a great deal of attention to it and 'interprets' it in the light of this attention. Any translation is a hermeneutic act in this sense. The process of interpretation which is an essential part of the act of translation is outward in and inward out. A translator coming across a Source text starts 'reading' it, a word is understood better in the context of a sentence, a sentence is meaningful when surrounded by a paragraph, a paragraph is a key to understanding a chapter and so on. This is an inward out movement. When the translator 'reads' the source text completely in this fashion and locates it in the temporal or cultural context, she then starts the movement outward in. When the temporal and socio-cultural setting of the Source text and the role it plays in the SL polysystem is known to the translator, the meanings of the words, phrases, sentences and paragraphs become more pregnant with interpretative possibilities. This inward out and outward in movement in a way expands the scope of the Source text.

This is the hermeneutic motion involved in the act of translation. In selecting a Source text every translator launches herself at it, encircling it cognitively. This is a kind of forward bending. The translator then comes to the Target Language laden. In this way she is off tilt again and she must compensate and complete the hermeneutic act. (Steiner George, 1975, 296-303). What drives this hermeneutic motion is essentially a native's instinctive knowledge about the literary and cultural norms of the Target Language.

In case of Annabhau Sathe's 'Maza Russia cha Pravaas' the situation was exactly reverse. I was working with a SL-TL pair where my TL was not my native tongue. So I was deprived of a native's instinctive knowledge of cultural and literary norms of the TL. Annabhau Sathe's literary works were translated into Russian in the 1960s. A crucial role was played in it by the language experts of the Leningrad University. I am totally unaware of the motives, that dictated the selection of the Source text by those native Russian translators. (A list of Annabhau Sathe's works translated into Russian is given by way of annexure at the end of the present article). Apparently some of Annabhau's works in translation enjoyed great popularity in the Soviet Union, especially his short story 'Sultan' (Sathe Annabhau, 1979, 11-12). So it can be said that the motivation of the translator in selecting the Source text was justified. The works of Annabhau Sathe were published in Russian beginning from 1951 upto 1970, almost till the death of Annabhau. His travelogue 'Maza Russia cha pravaas' was not among those published in Russian. The Russian

native translator probably did not find it worthy of attention. The reasons for the oversight cannot be accurately identified by someone who is located outside the literary and cultural system of the TL, Russian. But I can hazard a guess and say that they focused more on the text of the travelogue (which indeed is uncritical, bordering naiveté almost and extremely fulsome in praise of the Soviet state. It is also inaccurate as regards to details in a couple of places) and did not pay enough attention to the context or the subtext. The context and the subtext provide enough cues to 'read' the Indian reality better. Ostensibly, the work describes the Soviet Union but in reality, the Soviet Union is used as a touchstone to assess the Indian realities and situations.

The process of translation always involves a choice. The translator chooses this or that phrase from the multiple options available to her. The choice of this or that option is determined by the following three criteria: the type of the text, the function it fulfills and the targeted reader. In this instance the source text was a literary text, it aimed at enlightening the reader as well as affording him aesthetic pleasure and the targeted readership is typically consisting of non-elite class, an ordinary reader in short. Keeping this in view I chose the option of Distant and Re-encoding translation. In translation theory we have Decoding translations (the translations that answer the question 'What does the Source text say?') and we have Re-encoding translations (translations that answer the question 'How can this be said in the Target language?') We have supporters of both the positions throughout the history of translation from Hegel to Schleiermacher. We also have Close translation and Distant translation. Close translation takes smaller units (like words) for processing while in Distant translation sentences are considered as units for processing. In my experience as a translator, Decoding translation works better in case of translation of poetry because a lot depends on the form of the text and the numerous interpretative possibilities that ensue through the form. In prose, where the content has primacy over the form, Re-encoding translation is a better option. Since prose is free from metric considerations, sentences can be used as units for processing. The third criteria, that of readership was also instrumental in deciding the Re-encoding translation as an option. I expected the same ordinary readership, like that of the original; in short ordinary Russian reader and not just Indologists or India specialists.

The travelogue consists of eight chapters. They describe the life and impressions of Annabhau Sathe during his visit to the major Soviet cities. The style of the prose is quite simple. But it has a broad context in terms of time and locale. Annabhau's text refers to several Indian realities which include geographic locations, people, places, journals, Bollywood films, literary debates, socio political movements and even Indian attire. Many of these are specific to the 1960s, like Nehru jacket or Meena kumari or the movement for Unified Maharashtra. So it was absolutely essential to give proper annotations.

While giving annotations the translator typically faces a dilemma: how far she should take the reader for granted? Or whether she should treat him as a total ignoramus and explain in detail each and everything. Explaining each and every thing tends to smother the original text. It can overwhelm the reader and at times it can also curtail the process of interpretation which the reader undertakes. On the other hand giving too little by way of annotations makes the text inaccessible to the reader, who then tends to lose interest in it.

The method I followed was I gave annotations to all the places and persons mentioned, for example, Jilbya Maruti (Джилъбя Марути – Марути, один из героев-богатырей из Рамаяна. В Индии его обожают. В городе Пуне разные храмы разных богов называются ласкательными кличками. Этот храм Марути, например, называется Джилъбя (от названия индийской популярной сладости Джилеби) по каким то неизвестным причинам.) The well known geographical locations like Bombay and Madras also required explanations. Especially since the source text uses both Bombay as well as Mumbai.

There were other oblique socio-cultural references in the Source text which needed explanation, for example, Annabhau is surprised when alcoholic beverages are offered by the India Embassy or when alcoholic beverages are on sale on the train. So an explanation was given as follows: В 1960х годах в штате Махараштра продажа алкоголя была полностью запрещена. Наказывали и штрафовали и тех, которые пили и тех, которые его продавали. Or one of the members of the delegation is 'dressed in Nehru style', so the style had to be described and explained as : Некоторые политические деятели того времени любили одеваться как Джавахарлал Неру. Эта одежда состояла из узких брюк-гамаш (сурвар), светлого кителя (шервани) и шапки пилотки-ганди.

The annotations were kept short and care was taken as to not break the narrative link for the reader. So all in all the text was made accessible to the reader without trying to spoon feed him/her.

Just as the translator undergoes a hermeneutic motion while translating a text, the reader too undergoes a hermeneutic motion when s/he reads the translation. This process too is inward out and outward in. The reader of a translated text encounters the text in an inward out fashion when reading it for the first time. That creates a curiosity in the reader, making her explore the socio-cultural context of the Source text. In the light of this context the text yields to more enriching interpretations. These are the interpretative possibilities, which a translator should not smother. I can quote an instance from the text under discussion by way of example. Annabhau Sathe met his fellow members of the Indian delegation only in Delhi and he was mostly ignored by them. Annabhau Sathe describes it as follows: Я был последним пассажиром, поднимающимся на борт самолёта «королева Читтора» в Дели. Мои спутники относились ко мне снисходительно. «Деревенщина! Пошехонец!» такое выражение на их лицах. Они не обращали на меня внимания. Я спокойно сидел. Я был смугл и просто одет.. Так кто мог угадывать, я не глуп. (Translated by Anagha Bhet Behere) This is a very apt comment on the uncanny ability Indians seem to have to identify and slot people in class and caste hierarchies based on their outward appearances. It also indicates the systemic inequities that Indians seem to have ingested. A Russian reader might overlook this point. He might not understand why the others behaved in this fashion. But I have not burdened the reader with an annotation at this point. There are more instances like the one mentioned above. But I have not given any explanation for them. This is in a way a cue for the reader to explore the context further. I have tried explaining the situation of Dalits in India in general in the introduction. An interested reader can take it further from there.

The reasons causing hermeneutic motion for the present translator are obvious and are partially explained in the first part of the present article which locates Annabhau Sathe's

work in the literary polysystem of Marathi. I could identify the ideological nurturing received by Annabhau Sathe from the Soviet literature. I could also rather clearly see the society that India was in the 1960s. In my opinion this travelogue brought out the ideological sustenance received by Marathi Dalit writers. In my opinion this travelogue was an important document that mapped the cultural exchange. I could identify its significant features, because contrary to the usual translator's position, my SL was my native tongue and TL was a foreign tongue. This was also a movement to give back to the TL what my native tongue, my SL had received from it. By selecting a Source text from my native tongue for translation into a foreign tongue I have marked it as worthy of interest, as something special based on the socio-cultural context of the Source text and also on the basis of some knowledge of the literary polysystem of the TL. The criteria for selection of a Source text vary entirely from those which would be employed by the natives of the TL - Russian in this instance. The travelogue by Annabhau Sathe may not be assessed for its literary merit alone but it definitely provides interesting insights in the way Russian (especially Soviet) literature was perceived by a set of people who were outside the Soviet reality, what role it played in shaping their ideological outlook and mentoring them. The travelogue is an important historical document in this regard and has the potential to generate deeper socio-cultural studies.

I became a student of Russian language in 1983, when a country called the Soviet Union was in existence. I spent some time in the Soviet Union in 1989-90 when the tremours that led to the breakup of the Soviet Union were felt. A lot of water has flown under the bridge since then. It's now time to look back and assess the history, especially that part of the Soviet history which served as a beacon to the movements of the downtrodden people in other parts of the globe. The literary polysystem of Russian does not have Social realism at its centre now, but it may be interesting and illuminating for those who study the literary history Soviet Union to examine it in the light of works such as 'Maza Russia cha Pravaas'.

As remarked earlier, the role of a translator is crucial in the process of translation. The translatorship could be subject to the constraints of individual likes or dislikes. There is a danger of the translator becoming a filter allowing or rejecting texts that can enter the polysystem of TL by way of translation. So just as it is advisable to have multiple translations of a single Source text, it is advisable to have a diverse pool of translators, whose motivation for selecting a Source text may be varied and divergent.

A list of the titles of Anna Bhau Sathe's stories and novels, translated into Russian and names of the translators:

1. Short story 'Sultan' was translated by I. Borisov and published in the 'Zvezda Vostoka' (Star of the East) journal, in Tashkent in 1951.
2. A collection of Indian short stories titled 'Drevo Vody' ("The Water Tree") was published in Moscow in 1955, in which his short story titled as Rab (Slave) tr. by A. Sashin was included.
3. A collection of short stories titled 'Sovermennyy indijskiy rasskaz' (Modern Indian Short Story), published from Tashkent in 1958, has his story Barbadya kanjari tr. by T. Redko from English.

4. His novel "Chitra" was translated by A. Anuchkin Timofeev and published in 1959 from Moscow. The same novel was translated into Uzbek language – from Russian translation and published as "Guzal" (Beautiful).
5. Some of A.B. Sathe's lyrics have been translated and published in the volume Stikhi o Lenine (Poems on Lenin) published in Moscow in 1960.
6. His short story Zoloto mertvikh (Gold of the Dead) was translated by Nina Krasnodembskaya and published in the journal Zvezda Vostoka in 1965.
7. His novel "Vaaranechaa vaagh" and short stories were collected and published under the title V doline Varany (In the Varana plain) in 1969. The novel was translated by T. E. Katenina, she wrote a Preface also. The stories were translated by V. K. Lamshukov.
8. A.B.Sathe's short story Hira translated by Yu. Maslov was included in a collection of short stories titled "Rasskazy indiiskih pisateley" (Short stories by Indian writers), published in 1969 from Moscow.
9. His poems on Lenin (Praise Lenin) and "If You attack the Soviets" were published in the collection titled "Glaza Istorii" (Eyes of History) from Moscow in 1970.

Note: My friend, Head of the Department of Russian in Shivaji University, Kolhapur, Dr. Megha Pansare along with the teacher and translator of Hindi Guzel Strelkova has compiled this list. I want to express my sincere thanks to them for this.

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Перевод путевых заметок Аннабхау Сатхе на русский язык

Аннотация: Известный писатель – далит первого поколения в современной Индии, Аннабхау Сатхе съездил в Советский Союз в 1961. Сборник его путевых заметок опубликовался под названием «Моё путешествие в Россию». Можно считать его первой книгой путевых заметок в традиции литературы Далитов. Этот сборник пользовался огромной популярностью в литературной полисистеме языка Маратхи. В настоящей статье обсуждается вопрос герменевтического сдвига при процессе перевода текста с Маратхи на русский. Статья так же комментирует роль и деятельность переводчика.

Ключевые слова: Литература далитов, путевые заметки, литературная полисистема, герменевтический сдвиг, перевод, язык оригинала, язык перевода, деятельность переводчика, роль переводчика