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THREE TUKARAMS: STUDYING DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE TRANSLATIONS

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This paper undertakes a comparative analysis of three English translations of Tukaram's *abhangas*, verse compositions of the 17th-century Marathi saint-poet. It interrogates the role of linguistic strategies and metaphorical transpositions in shaping the reception, interpretation, and intertextual positioning of translated texts. While prior scholarship has foregrounded the cultural and spiritual significance of the bhakti movement, the translational operations that mediate the transmission of its poetics and ethos remain underexplored. This study interrogates how different translational strategies shape the intertextual positioning and cultural resonances of Tukaram's poetry within Anglophone literary sphere. Through a comparative study of translations by Dilip Chitre (1991), Jerry Pinto, and Shanta Gokhale (2023), the paper delineates shifts in metaphorical articulation and linguistic mediation, foregrounding their broader implications for processes of intercultural transmission and reception. By situating these translations within a framework of plurality and multiplicity, the research addresses a critical gap concerning the impact of translation practices on the reception and circulation of devotional literature. Ultimately, the study argues that Tukaram's poetry, by virtue of its linguistic, cultural, and spiritual density, necessitates a plurality of translational approaches, foregrounding the contingent and dialogic nature of both devotion and poetic expression.

Keywords: Bhakti; intercultural understanding; intertextuality; translation; Tukaram

Introduction

The period from the 6th to the 19th century, marked by the rise and growth of regional languages in India, often overlaps with what is considered the Bhakti movement – an era that represents a critical phase of cultural confluence, characterized by profound artistic expressions, philosophical formulations, and social equanimity. Jack Hawley articulates the multidimensional nature of bhakti, noting,

> "Bhakti", as usually translated, is devotion, but if that word connotes something entirely private and quiet, we are in need of other words. Bhakti is heart religion, sometimes cool and quiescent but sometimes hot – the religion of participation, community, enthusiasm, song, and often of personal challenge… It implies direct divine encounter experienced in the lives of individual people. These people, moved by that encounter, turn to poetry, which is the natural vehicle of bhakti, and poetry expresses itself just as naturally in song. There is a whole galaxy of bhakti poets who have been moved to song in the course of Indian history, and their songs are still sung today, everywhere across the subcontinent and in all its major languages [Hawley 2015, *2*].

It was a polyphonic movement where poetry and philosophy co-existed supporting each other and the barriers between the physical and the metaphysical grew thin in their

aesthetic-spiritual practice. This poetic tradition emerged not from Sanskrit, the elite language of scripture and ritual, but from regional vernaculars. By rejecting Sanskrit, bhakti poets also rejected the hegemonies embedded in Brahminical discourse, choosing instead to articulate their spiritual vision in the languages of the people. In doing so, they enacted a broader cultural and ideological dissent – not only against the ritual authority of the Brahmins but also against political reliance on Kshatriya patronage. The poets themselves were not often aware that they belonged to or were creating a movement, though it seems so in retrospect. Nonetheless, their collective output reflects a shared resistance to religious, social, and gender hierarchies.

Christian Lee Novetzke underscores the semantic richness of the term "bhakti", which appears across multiple South Asian religious traditions but assumes particular significance in Hinduism. Deriving from the Sanskrit root *bhaj*, meaning "to share", bhakti encompasses a wide semantic range. Novetzke elaborates:

> They include sentiments such as to divide, distribute, allot or apportion; to share with; to grant, bestow, furnish, or supply; to obtain as one's share, receive as, partake of, enjoy (also carnally), possess, or have; to turn or resort to, engage in, assume (as a form), put on (garments), experience, incur, undergo, feel, go or fall into, including falling into a feeling of terror or awe; to pursue, practice, cultivate; to prefer, choose; to serve, honour, revere, and adore [Novetzke 2008, *9*].

Novetzke further challenges the narrow interpretation of bhakti as solely "personal devotion". While that dimension exists, bhakti is equally present in abstract, collective, and even political contexts. In particular, he identifies bhakti as a medium of social protest, confronting systems of inequality rooted in caste, class, gender, and religious discrimination [Novetzke 2008, *10*]. It is in this sense that *bhakti* serves as a continuation of the *śramaṇic* tradition – promoting spiritual inquiry alongside ethical critique. Through local languages, bhakti achieved an unparalleled cultural ubiquity and accessibility. The dominating note of Indian religious poetry in the medieval period is that of ecstasy, a longing of the devotee for union with god and to merge his or her identity in the godhead. The god of the Bhakti movement is no longer a transcendent or immanent reality beyond all comprehension and sense; it is a god close to the heart of a common man – everyone's god. At times the deity appears as a child, at times a friend, and at times a parent.

It is within this context that the poetry of Tukaram, a 17th-century Marathi saint-poet, becomes especially significant. This paper studies his poetry in translation to explore his distinctive articulation of devotion and the transformative effect of his verses, both in their original language and as translated texts that continue to carry the emotional and spiritual resonance of bhakti across linguistic and cultural boundaries. Through an analysis of three sets of his *abhangas* this paper underscores the relevance of Tukaram's poetic legacy in today's times, emphasising his role in promoting syncretism and unity through literature. An *abhanga* is a form of poetry, which comprises a series of *ovis*, song sung by women while grinding grain on the hand mill, in Maharashtra. The meter of the *ovi* keeps time exactly with the rhythm of the work [Gokhale and Pinto 2023, *14*]. This study will ascertain the nuances and implications of translation practices and demonstrate that translation involves the interplay of two distinct systems into contact, where comprehension and articulation exist within separate frameworks: one being "carried over" into the other [Chanda 2012, *2*]. It highlights how different interpretative choices and linguistic strategies alter the reception and understanding of Tukaram's poetry. Furthermore, it discusses the broader ramifications of these differences in today's literary landscape, emphasizing the role of translation in shaping cultural discourse and preserving the essence of literary conventions.

Walter Benjamin claims, "translation is a form. To comprehend it as a form, one must go back to the original, for the laws governing the translation lie within the original, contained in the issue of its translatability" [Benjamin 2016, *135*]. This paper will study three

sets of translations to corroborate Benjamin's claim through a comparative framework. Translations under study are by poet-translator Dilip Chitre published in 1991, by poet Jerry Pinto and translator Shanta Gokhale published in 2023. Chitre was a bilingual poet, Gokhale is a translator proficient in Marathi, and Pinto, though a monolingual poet, is also a translator with a strong command of Marathi. The translations under consideration are from Marathi into English. My initial exposure to Tukaram's poetry was through Dilip Chitre's translation, which subsequently led me to explore additional translations and, eventually, the original Marathi texts. The impetus for composing this article arose from encountering the same *abhanga* presented in three distinct translations, wherein I noted considerable variations in the translators' selection of words and metaphors. These divergences prompted a closer examination of the interpretive choices inherent in the translation process.

How these translations constitute bridges between cultures and how poetic metaphors mean in these translations became an inquiry that I wanted to follow. What does it mean to "understand" one systemic formation from a location in another? Yet, can any single translation claim authority in validity, correctness, or truth over another? Do these translations operate autonomously from the original text, or do they interdependently construct a collective entity? Are they independent entities, or are they part of an expansive and evolving corpus of Tukaram and *bhakti* literature that now encompasses diverse elements across multiple languages? These queries strike at the core of the philosophy of literary translation, questioning the very possibility and nature of such a theoretical framework. Do these varying interpretations collectively contribute to a richer understanding of Tukaram's oeuvre, or do they fragment its essence? My submission is that it contributes to a richer understanding and underscores not only the transformative nature of translation but also probes the dimensions of textual authenticity and intertextuality. It is important to talk about the poet before his poetry because the original text of his collected work is not available in the form of his own manuscript or even as transcriptions. His *abhangas* have been collected from different sources, some are represented in a *gatha* (collection of verse) that is said to be the one he wrote with his own hand and some collected from oral traditions with no chronological sequence or titles. Despite these difficulties, Tukaram's work still exudes an impression of monolithic integrity related to *bhakti* and poetry. As Chitre puts it, "our contemporary translation of Tukaram must make his work appear here and now, yet suggesting also that it is really out there. Translation is often the literature of no-man's land between cultures. But with luck, it can hope to reach the target culture and like an immigrant, begin to relate" [Chitre 1991, *231*].

Tukaram

Tukaram was born in 1608 in Dehu, Maharashtra and vanished without a trace in 1650. Much of his life story is enmeshed in legends and myths. However, scholars have tried to put together an authentic account of his life from scattered biographical references in his *abhangas* and through the hagiography provided by Mahipati Taharabadkar, an 18th century poet-saint from Ahmednagar, Maharashtra. Mahipati's chronicles came out after 125 years of Tukaram's disappearance and by that time myths and legends about him had found a firm establishment in the souls of his followers [Gokhale and Pinto 2023, *10*]. Tukaram was born to a family of *Shudras* (low caste) but besides tilling fertile land the family occupation was to run a grocery shop and to trade and lend money. To run a business and lend money was an occupation of the *Vaishya* caste. As a family member of grocers and money lenders Tukaram had learnt to read and write. *Vitthal* had been their family deity for generations.

The *varkari panth* (devotees of Vitthal are called *varkaris*) is a sampradaya or devotional movement within the bhakti tradition centered on the worship of Vitthal. Vitthal literally means "one standing (*thal* or *sthala*) on a brick (*vit*)" which is also depicted in

the iconography of Vitthal. This depiction is representative of a story about Vitthal and his devotee Pundalik. Pundalik was a young man known for his devotion to his parents. After learning about Pundalik's piety, Krishna came to Pandharpur to see him. Pundalik was busy taking care of his parents and tossed a brick toward Krishna, asking him to stand on it and wait until Pundalik had time to meet him. In the form of Vitthal, Krishna has been standing on the brick for twenty-eight *yugas* (millions of years), waiting for Pundalik to have time for him [Deleury 1960, *14*]. Another traditional etymology of the name Vitthal, besides the Pundalik story, gives each syllable in "Vitthal" a philosophical meaning: *vida* (through knowledge), *than* (ignorant people), *lati* (grasp) – that is, "Vitthal is the one who accepts ignorant people through knowledge" [Dhere 2011, *12*].

Tukaram had a happy childhood but suddenly at the age of seventeen found himself at the head of the family who had to manage farming, the shop and also the money lending trade which appeared to defeat him. In midst of this the Deccan suffered a drought the likes of which it had never experienced before. Famine as a result of the drought knocked Tukaram right out and he had become a pauper. In search of peace, he withdrew to the tranquil surroundings of Bhandara Hill. There, with an abundance of time, he immersed himself in contemplation of Krishna's/Vitthal's life and deeds, to be in dialogue with himself and sort out the problems of devotion and life. Some scholars believe that he began to compose *abhangas* there, as he seemed to have decided that poetry was his only path to Vitthal, poetry was devotion and devotion poetry. He saw himself as an inheritor of the legacy of poet-saints like Dnyaneshwar, Eknath, Namdev and Kabir. When Tukaram returned from the hills he spend all his days performing *kirtans* (a form of group worship through songs in praise of Vitthal) regularly in front of ever growing gathering of devotees from all over Maharashtra. Tukaram's growing influence unsettled the local Brahmins, who saw him as a threat – a literate *Shudra* challenging the authority of the established Vedic religion. In their eyes, the only legitimate path to God lays in rituals conducted exclusively by Sanskrit-speaking Brahmins. Tukaram's audacity lay in his efforts to offer the common people a direct and unmediated path to the divine, which was seen as a direct challenge to their authority. Adding to the affront, Tukaram deliberately composed his *abhangas* in Marathi, thereby forsaking Sanskrit – the sanctified language upheld and regulated by the Brahminical order. The gravest transgression of Tukaram, a *Shudra*, was his boldness in discussing faith and religion and spreading divine teachings, actions deemed intolerable by the Brahmins. Mambaji, the leader of the local Brahmins is believed to have asked, "How can knowledge exist in a *shudra's* brain" [Gokhale and Pinto 2023, *12*]. The Brahmins decreed that Tukaram should renounce his writings by submerging them in the Indrayani River. Succumbing to their demands, he fasted by the riverbank for thirteen days, intent on sacrificing his life. Remarkably, at the end of this period, the manuscripts are said to have resurfaced intact. Following this trial by water, thirty-seven-year-old Tukaram began to speak of being summoned to *Vaikuntha*, the divine abode of god. In 1650, at the age of forty-two, Tukaram vanished like a breath on the wind, leaving no trace but his verses. Where he went remains an unanswered question, a mystery folded into the silences between his verses.

Despite the lack of an authentic collection of Tukaram's works, it is evident why his *abhangas* continue to survive. The *abhanga* form is inherently suited for musical rendition, and Tukaram's accessible language ensures that these verses remain memorable by the people. Also the poetry produced was developed on local literatures and inherited oral traditions, and the literariness of conventional poetic language was replaced by the spontaneity of everyday speech. Poems composed were filled with the intensity of passion, not of self-love but of love for the Lord, while pleading for ultimate human equality.

Analysing the Translations

Roman Jakobson outlines three methods for interpreting a verbal sign which can be translated into other signs within the same language, into a different language, or into a

non-verbal system of symbols [Jakobson 1959/2000, *114*]. He classifies these methods into three types: intralingual translation, also known as rewording, which involves interpreting verbal signs using different signs within the same language; interlingual translation, or translation proper, which entails interpreting verbal signs using signs from a different language; and intersemiotic translation, or transmutation, which involves interpreting verbal signs using signs from non-verbal sign systems. Jakobson's distinctions underline the multifaceted nature of translation and its role in bridging various modes of communication. All translations of Tukaram are interlingual, from Marathi to English. Dilip Chitre writes,

> In a world where native languages and cultures were continually diminishing and vanishing, the least I could do was to try to transform the values of Marathi into English. There was nothing in English resembling Tukaram's poetry and the task before me was to invent in English something that resembled the few original poems of Tukaram that I would translate [Chitre 1991, *225*].

How does language persist in its role of conveying meaning? Chitre writes,

> Translation need not dwell too much on the metaphysical concept of what language is; it must carefully account for what it does and how. What is expressed, in totality, is the form of the source text; what it does and how it functions as a whole is what translation replicates, using the building blocks of the target language [Chitre 1991, *226*].

Translation, thus, becomes a tool for replicating contact situations. By adopting translation as a method, we comprehend, as Benjamin urges translators to do, the nuanced differences in specific usages between source and target languages. Beyond these distinctions lies an objective level of "meaning" that transcends linguistic boundaries, which Benjamin terms pure language [Benjamin 2016, *137*]. The practice of translation inherently challenges the purity of language, even as it aspires to approach it through the target language. Translation occurs within a context of contact and reception, leading to a process of recoding, which culminates in the creation of the translated text. In the Task of the Translator Benjamin indicates that a specific significance inherent in the original text manifests itself in its translatability [Benjamin 2016, *137*]. The next section of this article will focus on the issues of translatability, interpreting the poetic metaphors within the source language, followed by its recoding in the target language. Below are analyses of three sets of *abhangas*, it follows a pattern where the original Marathi by Tukaram appears first in Roman transliteration, followed by translations by Dilip Chitre, Shanta Gokhale and Jerry Pinto. Analysis of differences comes after each set.

Analysis of Abhanga – I

Original by Tukaram

āmhā gharī dhana śabdāñcīca ratne | śabdāñcīca śastre yatna karu 1.
śabdaci āmucyā jīvāce jīvana | śabda vāṭū dhana janalokā 2.
tukā mhaṇe pahā śabdaci hā deva | śabdeci gaurava pūjā karu 3

[Gokhale & Pinto 2023, *41*].

Translation by Dilip Chitre

Words are the only/ Jewels I possess/ Words are the only/ Clothes I wear/ Words are the only food/ That sustains my life/ Words are the only wealth/ I distribute among people/ Says Tuka/ Witness the Word/ He is God/ I worship Him/ With words [Chitre 1991, *42*].

Translation by Shanta Gokhale

Words are the jewels that fill our homes/ Words the tools we put to the test/ Words are our breath, life of our lives/ The wealth we offer the world as gifts/ Says Tuka:/ Behold! The word is God/ To honour the word is worship [Gokhale & Pinto 2023, *41*].

Translation by Jerry Pinto

Words, our wealth/ Words, our tools/ Words, life of our life/ Words, the wealth we offer the world/ Tuka says: The Word is God/ The Word be praised [Gokhale & Pinto 2023, *41*].

These translations of Tukaram's "āmhā gharī dhana śabdāñcīca ratne" abhanga reveal significant variations reflecting differences in process of translation. Chitre's translation is very personal, he translates "āmhā" as "I" whereas Gokhale and Pinto translate it as "we". As a result, the appeal of devotion in Chitre's poem is significantly more intimate compared to other translations. This intimacy transforms the poem's overall intentionality and the poet's positionality, both as a reader of Tukaram and as a poet himself who is drawing inspiration from the poetic conventions of *bhakti*. Chitre's translation emphasizes the personal and intimate relationship between the poet (devotee) and words that he uses as his tool of worship, portraying words as essential elements of existence – jewels, clothes, food, and wealth, with an emphasis on personal sustenance and distribution. Gokhale's translation stays close to the rhythm, structure and metaphors of the original. Her translation shifts towards a communal perspective, exclusive of participation of the devotees/readers emphasising "words" as a collective breath and life force that are offered to the world as gifts. Pinto's translation adopts a more concise and abstract approach, reducing the imagery to wealth, tools, and life force, and framing the act of offering words to the world. His translation is terse, minimalist and suggestive of an English vocabulary of contemporary times. An important phrase to be noted is the translation of "jīvāce jīvana"; both Gokhale and Pinto translate it as "life of our lives" and "life of our life" whereas Chitre translates it as "words are the only food" because in Marathi "jīvana" means food, sustenance for life. Both Gokhale and Pinto's translations emphasize the essential and vital nature of the words to human existence, metaphorically suggesting that words are as crucial as life itself. Whereas Chitre takes a more literal approach by underscoring the idea that words nourish and sustain life, just as food does. This variation in translation illustrates how different translators interpret the same phrase in diverse ways, how translation extends beyond mere linguistic conversion to encapsulate deeper cultural and philosophical meanings.

Before moving on to the second analysis it is necessary to revisit the differences between these translations. Chitre emphasizes on a personal and intimate relationship with words. Words are described as possessions with the idea of words sustaining life and being distributed among people which is very similar to the idea of *bhakti* derived from the Sanskrit *bhaj* that means "to divide, distribute, share with", just like Vitthal devotees who share a deity, a pilgrimage, and poet-saint's *abhangas*. His concluding lines read "witness the Word/ He is God/ I worship Him/ With words" – there is a double entendre here. Chitre says that word is god and he worships Vitthal with words – as a poet that is his offering. Gokhale highlights a communal perspective, emphasizes on the aspect of sharing and concludes with the reverence for the word as god. Pinto's translation is concise and focuses on the offering of words to the world and ends with an almost Biblical metaphor "the praise of the Word as God".

Analysis of Abhanga – II

Original by Tukaram

nāmdeve kele svapnamājī jāge | save pāṇḍuraṅg yeuniyā 1.
sāṅgitale kāma karāve kavitva | vāuge nimitya bolo nako 2.
māp ṭākī saḷe dharilī viṭṭhale | thāpaṭoni kele sāvdhāna 3.
pramāṇācī saṃkhyā sāṅge śata koṭī | urale te śevaṭī lāvī tukā 4

[Gokhale & Pinto 2023, *33*]

Translation by Dilip Chitre

I was only dreaming/ Namdeo and Vitthal/ Stepped into my dream/ "Your job is to make poems",/ Said Namdeo/ "Stop fooling around"/ Vitthal gave me the measure/ And

slapped me gently / To arouse me/ From my dream/ Within a dream/ "The grand total/ Of the poems Namdeo vowed to write/ Was one billion",/ He said,/ "All the unwritten ones, Tuka./ Are your dues" [Chitre 1991, *3*].

Translation by Shanta Gokhale

Namdev walked into my dream/ With Pandurang by his side/ "Wake up, Tuka", Namdev said/ 'No extra talk. Here's work for you/ He slapped me awake. Vitthal held the scales. He piled his poems in. "A billion were pledged. / Some remain. Tuka, / You do the rest" [Gokhale, Pinto 2023, *33*].

Translation by Jerry Pinto

Namdev and Pandurang/ Roused me from a dream. / Namdev said. "Write poems. No excuses". Vitthal had a pair of scales. Namdev put his poems in one pan. / "I owed You a billion poems. / Tuka will write the rest" [Gokhale, Pinto 2023, *33*].

Chitre vividly captures the metaphor of dreaming, presenting Namdev's and Vitthal's appearance as a surreal and mystical experience. This dream metaphor emphasizes the divine existence suggesting that poetry and divine inspiration intertwine in a realm beyond ordinary reality. Chitre introduces a metaphor of awakening by highlighting the metaphor of being "slapped gently to arouse" from a "dream within a dream," which reinforces the idea of a deeper spiritual awakening and the layered nature of consciousness. It suggests that the poet's task transcends mere physical existence, plunging into a metaphysical commitment. The use of the phrase "grand total" of poems and the "dues" that Tukaram must fulfill places a burden of responsibility on the poet, framing his work as part of a cosmic duty to complete an unending literary legacy. As noted above, this was Tukaram's livelihood: he sold produce, he weighed and understood financial liabilities. Gokhale's use of the phrase "Here's work for you" transforms the poetic task into a straightforward, almost secular duty. This metaphor grounds the poet's role in a tangible, day-to-day context, highlighting the labour and effort involved in poetic creation. The image of Vitthal holding the scales, with Namdev piling his poems on it, serves as a powerful metaphor for balance, measurement and commodity. This also signals to his caste-based work, the quotidian world. This metaphor suggests a weighing of literary tradition, where each poem is part of a larger, cumulative oeuvre of poetry that needs to be balanced and complimented. The reference to a "pledge" of a billion poems introduces a contractual element, suggesting an obligatory commitment that transcends individual effort, binding the poet to a collective aspiration and responsibility.

Pinto's direct instruction, "Write poems. No excuses", employs a metaphor of command and authority, emphasizing the imperative nature of the poet's task. This metaphor accentuates the urgency and non-negotiable nature of the poetic duty. Similar to Gokhale, Pinto uses the metaphor of scales to signify measurement and balance, but his phrasing is more abstract and succinct. This metaphor reinforces the idea of a collective literary effort that must be quantified and achieved. The closing line, "Tuka will write the rest", introduces a metaphor of continuity and succession of the *bhakti* poetry. This suggests that the poet-saint's work is part of an ongoing tradition that extends beyond individual lifetimes, with each poet contributing to an ever-expanding legacy.

Translations of this particular *abhanga* highlight how metaphors shape the interpretation and conveyance of the original poem's meaning. Chitre's translation emphasizes a mystical and metaphysical journey, using metaphors of dreams and awakening to suggest a deeper spiritual responsibility. Gokhale's translation focuses on tangible, day-to-day labour, employing metaphors of work and scales to ground the poet's task in measurable, secular terms. Pinto's translation underscores the imperative and authoritative nature of the poetic duty, with metaphors of command and continuity suggesting an unbroken literary tradition. Davidson claims that metaphors are not built through rules and devices, but it implies a degree of artistic success, as no metaphors fail. He says, "Metaphors

mean what the words in their most literal interpretation mean" [Davidson 1978, *32*]. Davidson stands against the idea and the claim that the metaphors mean something beyond their literal meaning. These metaphorical differences reflect the translators' interpretive choices and cultural contexts, illustrating how translation is not merely a linguistic transfer but a complex interplay of creativity, interpretation, and cultural transference. Each version enriches the original text, offering diverse perspectives that deepen our understanding of the poem's thematic and philosophical dimensions.

Analysis of Abhanga – III

Original by Tukaram

nāhī saro yeta joḍilyā vacanī | kavitvācī vāṇī kuśaḷatā 1.
satyācā anubhava vedhī satyapaṇe | anubhavācyā guṇe ruco yete 2.
kāy āgīpāśī śṛṅgārile cāle | poṭīce ukale kasāpāśī 3.
tukā mhaṇe yethe karāvā ukala | lāgeci nā bola vāḍhavūni 4

[Gokhale & Pinto 2023, *33*]

Translation by Dilip Chitre

To arrange words / In some order/ Is not the same thing/ As the inner poise / That's poetry. / The truth of poetry / Is the truth / Of being. / It's an experience/ Of truth. / No ornaments / Survive/ A crucible / Fire reveals/Only molten/ Gold. / Says Tuka / We are here / To reveal. / We do not waste / Words [Chitre 1991, *23*].

Translation by Shanta Gokhale

Words strung together don't make the cut/ Poetry speaks with the tongue of art./ It's all about truth, truthfully sought. / The truth of experience gives poems their weight. / The heat of fire melts ornaments/ A touchstone reveals what lies at the heart. / Says Tuka: No need for further talk. / It's here and now. Let's have it out [Gokhale & Pinto 2023, *33*].

Translation by Jerry Pinto

The right words in the right order? / That's not enough for poetry. / This goes beyond language. / This is a search for truth. / Only experience, real experience / Gives flavour, brings substance. / Fire will claim the fake. / Real gold will shine through / Tuka says: You are what you need. / Use no less, say no more [Gokhale & Pinto, 2023, *33*].

Chitre contrasts the superficial act of arranging words with the intrinsic quality of inner poise that defines true poetry. The crucible metaphor, where ornaments are subjected to fire, serves to reveal only the molten gold, highlighting the process of purification and the stripping away of superficialities. This metaphor suggests that honest poetry, like pure gold, is revealed through an intense, transformative process. The repeated emphasis on revelation "We are here to reveal" positions poetry as an act of uncovering poetic truths about existence and being, thus aligning the poet with a purpose of seeking the truth. By doing this Chitre includes himself in the illustrious line of *bhakti* poets in Marathi. Gokhale's metaphor of poetry speaking "with the tongue of art" suggests that poetry surpasses mere verbal construction, by embodying a form of expression that can be categorised as art and is integrally connected to truth. The idea that "the truth of experience gives poems their weight" introduces an idea that lived experience endows poetry with substance and authenticity. The touchstone metaphor reveals what lies at the heart, contrasts with Chitre's molten gold, emphasizing the core truth and essence that honest poetry must possess. The concluding lines "No need for further talk. It's here and now. Let's have it out" suggest a metaphor of immediacy and direct expression, urging the poet to engage with the present reality without unnecessary embellishment.

Pinto's dismissal of merely arranging "the right words in the right order" critiques the scantiness of superficial linguistic precision, advocating for a deeper search for truth that transcends language. The notion that only "real experience gives flavour, brings substance" uses a culinary metaphor, like a well-prepared dish, poetry must be infused with genuine

experience to have true significance. Similar to Chitre, Pinto employs the fire metaphor to differentiate between fake and real elements, reinforcing the idea of purification and authenticity. The final directive "You are what you need. Use no less, say no more" introduces self-reliance and minimalism, emphasizing that true poetic expression requires no superfluous additions. Chitre's translation employs metaphors of inner poise, fire, and revelation to explore the transformative and existential dimensions of poetry. Gokhale's translation emphasizes the artistic craft, experiential authenticity, and immediate expression, using metaphors of weight, touchstone, and directness. Pinto's translation critiques superficial linguistic adequacy and stresses the importance of genuine experience, authenticity, and self-sufficiency, using metaphors of culinary flavor, fire, and minimalism.

Conclusion

Translation constitutes an act of intercultural negotiation, extending far beyond the literal substitution of words to engage with the interplay of cultural contexts, metaphoric structures, and diverse worldviews. It is a practice embedded in the interpretive processes of meaning-making, wherein the translator navigates the conceptual and cultural frameworks of both the host and guest languages. Rather than functioning as a neutral conduit, the translator actively mediates between linguistic systems, revealing the inherent asymmetries, tensions, and resonances that arise in the process of cultural transference. The movement of texts across languages and cultures provides a fertile ground for examining broader dynamics of hospitality, contact, and reception. These translational encounters, much like language itself, are not static but dynamic – constantly shaped by historical, and social forces. This fluidity requires an ongoing re-evaluation of linguistic and cultural paradigms, as each translation is situated within evolving socio-cultural contexts. Through the critical analysis of such translational processes, we gain deeper insights into the complexities of cross-cultural exchange and the ways in which meaning is negotiated, adapted, and reconfigured. Translation thus emerges not only as a linguistic practice but also as a site of cultural production, one that reflects and informs the shifting contours of intercultural understanding.

Each translation of a text like Tukaram's *abhangas* exists as both an independent literary artefact and as part of a broader intertextual network that includes the original text and its various translations. This interrelationship foregrounds the inherent tension between fidelity to the source and the creative agency exercised by the translator – a tension that reveals translation's transformative capacity to mediate across linguistic and cultural boundaries. In this framework, translation is not a mere transfer of semantic content from one language to another, but rather an act of re-creation that engages with the cultural, spiritual, and literary dimensions of the source text. The translator's task requires engaging with the guest language as an autonomous system, not as a straightforward substitute for the host, but as one capable of conveying equivalent resonances and layers of meaning. This imaginative engagement allows the translator to bridge not only the linguistic gap but also the deeper layers of meaning embedded in the source culture.

Tukaram's poetry, situated firmly within the bhakti tradition, presents particular challenges and possibilities. Bhakti, characterized by an intimate and affective relationship with the divine, is predicated on the idea of an immanent, accessible god – a presence deeply intertwined with the everyday lives of devotees. Tukaram's role as a bhakta-poet underscores the centrality of poetic expression as both an act of devotion and a practice. His *abhangas* are not merely religious verses; they are the medium through which he enacts his devotional awareness. Thus, translating Tukaram's work demands more than semantic accuracy; it requires an attunement to the philosophical and cultural dimensions that inform his poetry. As noted above, translators navigated the complex task of rendering not only the semantic content but also capturing the devotional sensibility and socio-cultural framework embedded within the poetry. This process echoes theoretical perspectives that regard translation as a dialogic act – one that incorporates the original's unique modes

of meaning-making while reframing them within the structures of a different linguistic and cultural system. In this sense, both the source text and its translations can be seen as fragments of a broader, interconnected literary and philosophical discourse.

Tukaram's poetry, by virtue of its spiritual and poetic richness, invites multiple translations. Each iteration reconfigures the *abhangas* as independent yet dialogically linked poems, revealing new interpretive possibilities. This plurality of translations underscores the polyphonic nature of Tukaram's work, emphasizing how meaning is not fixed but continually reimagined through the act of translation. Translation, in this interplay, functions as a site where linguistic structures intersect with the rearticulation of literary and cultural forms, foregrounding the constructed nature of meaning.

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С. Банерджі

Три Тукарами: дослідження відмінностей між перекладами

У статті проводиться порівняльний аналіз трьох англійських перекладів віршів-абгангів Тукарама (XVII) ст. – святого й поета, що писав мовою маратхі. Досліджується роль мовних стратегій та метафоричних трансформацій у формуванні сприйняття, інтерпретації та інтертекстуального позиціонування перекладених текстів. Попередники у своїх дослідженнях робили наголос на культурному та духовному значення руху бгакті, тоді як методика перекладу, що опосередковує поетику та дух твору, залишалися недооціненими. Пропонована публікація шукає відповідь на запитання про те, як різні стратегії перекладу формують інтертекстуальне позиціонування та культурні резонанси поезії Тукарама в англофонній літературній сфері. Завдяки порівняльному дослідженню перекладів Діліпа Чітри (1991), Джеррі Пінто й Шанти Гокхале (2023) праця окреслює зсуви в метафоричній артикуляції та мовній медіації, висвітлюючи їхній значний вплив на процеси міжкультурної передачі та сприйняття. Розглядаючи ці переклади як вияв різноманітності й плюралізму, дослідження торкається критичних відмінностей між методологією перекладу та їхнього впливу на сприйняття і циркуляцію літератури, предметом якої є бгакті. Зрештою, дослідження стверджує, що поезія Тукарама з огляду на свою мовну, культурну та духовну насиченість потребує плюралістичного підходу до перекладів, здатних урівноважити передачу сутності ідей бгакті з поетичною формою та виявити їхню діалогічну природу.

Ключові слова: бгакті; інтертекстуальність; міжкультурне розуміння; переклад; Тукарам

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