

Translating Gender and Sexuality:
A Study of Select English Translations of Maithili Short Stories.

A dissertation submitted to the University of Hyderabad in partial fulfilment of the degree of

MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

in

Translation Studies

By

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled “**Translating Gender and Sexuality: A Study of Select English Translations of Maithili Short Stories.**” submitted by Ms Pragya Singh bearing the Registration No. 18HATL01, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Master of Philosophy in Translation Studies, is a bonafide work carried out by her under my supervision and guidance.

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The following papers related to this thesis have been presented:

1. 2019: “The Question of Religion and Gender: Placing the ‘other’ in case of Sabrimala” National Conference on Religion in Cultural and Comparative Perspective, organized Center for Comparative literature, University of Hyderabad. 26th -27th February 2019.
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DECLARATION

I, Pragya Singh, hereby declare that this dissertation entitled “**Translating Gender and Sexuality: A Study of Select English Translations of Maithili Short Stories.**” submitted by me under the guidance and supervision of Prof. Shivarama Padikkal, is bonafide research work. I also declare that it has not been submitted previously in part or in full to this University or any other University or Institution for the award of any degree or diploma.

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Title of the Dissertation

**TRANSLATING GENDER AND SEXUALITY: A STUDY OF SELECT ENGLISH
TRANSLATIONS OF MAITHILI SHORT STORIES**

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To Maama ji, my Maama Jaan.

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Chapter-1

Introduction: Translation as Representation and Discourse Formation

“The imaginary is not formed in opposition to reality as its denial or compensation; it grows among signs, from book to book, in the interstice of repetitions and commentaries; it is born and takes shape in the interval between books. It is the phenomena of the library.”

- Michel Foucault

1.1: Introduction

The conventional understanding of translation is a transfer of meaning from one language to other. According to Eugene Nida and Charles Russel Taber, “The process of a translation is a process of transferring meaning from the source language (SL) into the target language (TL). Translating a text might be transferring the meaning and the message equally” (Nida & Taber 1982, 12). Nida, in his now-famous *Toward a Science of Translating*, defines translation as follows,

translating consists of reproducing the receptor language to the closest natural equivalent of the source language message, first in the term of meaning and secondly in the term of style (Ibid.)

Similarly, Peter Newmark too opines,

The translation itself is not only about finding the equivalent word which is accurate, acceptable and readable but also connecting the word with the culture where the language belongs to.” (Newmark 1988, 98)

We see in the above statements what Tejaswini Niranjana has rightly designated as the

‘humanist’ conceptualization translation. According to her, “Writers on translation have always been concerned with *how* to translate, and their evaluations and assessments belong properly to the question of method” (Niranjana 1992, 49). She opines that though the emergence of Translation Studies coincides with the rise of post-structuralism, it is “largely unmarked” by it.

She further says, “The Liberal-humanist conceptual framework of the new field of Translation Studies, however, differs very little from ideas the ideas that have informed debates on translation over centuries” (Ibid.50).

However, the Liberal-humanist conceptual framework, its understanding of language and reality empiricist methodology, misplaced belief in “objective” knowledge, claims to universal “truth”, its assumptions about language, meaning, and the text, the notion of universal, transcendental, unequivocal *the* meaning, etc., have been laid, a new space for critical theories that broadly come under the term “Theory” has been opened up by critical theorists and scholars much before the last decades of the previous century. Though the discipline of Translation Studies has been beginning through the concerted efforts of several scholars across disciplines and geo-political regions, as mentioned by Niranjana above, initially, it did not take cognizance of the new developments. However, the humanist translation theory did not last long, even though it was taught in a few literary and linguistics departments. Translation Studies has evolved as a truly interdisciplinary area using the insights of post-structuralism, deconstruction, cultural studies, postcolonial studies, gender studies, queer theory, and the likes. We shall not go into details as it’s already part of our common knowledge, and the scope of our humble thesis with the reasonable goal would not permit us to do so. Harish Trivedi has summarized the present status of the discipline beautifully,

It is widely agreed to be the case that translation and Translation Studies have never had it so good. Over the last two or three decades, translation has become a more prolific, more visible, and more respectable activity than perhaps ever before. And alongside translation itself, a new field of academic study has come into existence, initially called translatology (but not for long, thank God!) and now Translation Studies, and it has gathered remarkable academic momentum” (Trivedi, Net.1)

Today, scholars across the globe from varied disciplines are doing fascinating work on translation. Translation Studies have become one of the most interdisciplinary areas of theorizing of two said texts and two languages and the very act of cross-cultural communication of various kinds. We want to place our study in this recent, engaging, and fantastic domain.

1.2: Translating Gender: A Study of Select English Translations of Maithili Short Stories

Maithili is a language spoken by people living in the northern and eastern regions of Bihar and the Eastern Terai of Nepal. It is the second most prevalent language of Nepal. The primary and the former script of Maithili was Tiruhāt, but it adopted the Devanagari script in the 20th century. In 2003, Maithili was recognized as an independent language and was included in the Eighth Schedule of the Indian Constitution. This allowed Maithili to be used in education, government, and other official spheres. George Abraham Grierson (1851-1941) was the first to write about Maithili literature in his book *An Introduction to the Maithilī Language of North Bihār Containing a Grammar, Chrestomathy and Vocabulary* (1881). The book was the first anthology of the existing materials on Maithili literature. After the recognition accorded to Maithili literature in the 8th schedule of the constitution, Maithili literature began to get more attention. Institutions like Sahitya Akademi started publishing and translating Maithili texts.

Such efforts not only did expand the readership but also influenced the kinds of writing coming from the region. It became more inclusive of the genre as well as the content. This proposal attempts to study the translated texts of Maithili Literature into English and raise questions about how various aspects of gender have been translated.

1.3: Research Problem

Translation Studies has been evolved as is an interdisciplinary area of research in which one can study concepts as complex as gender. Currently, not much work has been done on the translation of gender and particularly the translation of gender in Maithili literature. There have been works on the translation of gender outside India but not much in Indian languages. A thorough discussion of translating gender and sexuality in Maithili literature is, in fact, due. This dissertation intends to analyze select English translations of Maithili short stories from the collection *Contemporary Maithili Short Stories* (2005, 2009) edited by Murari Madhusudan Thakur and published by Sahitya Akademi.

The following research questions form the core of my dissertation:

- ❖ If gender is translatable, how do translators approach texts to communicate varied aspects of gender from one culture to another? How are the unique experiences of women, such as menstruation or breastfeeding, which are specific to the female body, translated?
- ❖ How are expressive traditions carried over in translation to gain insight into the physical, emotional, and cultural translation of gender? By expressive traditions, I mean bodily performances, care, desire, and so on.

- ❖ To see translation as representation in the context of power and knowledge. By this, I mean: Language is the medium that helps in meaning-making, and representation is one of the functions of language. When a text gets translated, it participates in the meaning-making process and becomes an essential part of the cultural production and exchange of meaning. Often, representation leads to the dominant production of power and knowledge and may lead to the formation of dominant gender narratives. As Sherry Simon puts it, “Language does not simply mirror reality but intervenes in the shaping of meaning” (Simon 1996, 11)

1.4: The significance of the study

Writing does not happen in a vacuum, it happens in a context, and the process of translating texts from one cultural system into another is not a neutral, innocent, transparent activity. The translation is instead a highly charged, transgressive activity, and the politics of translation and translating deserve much greater attention than has been paid in the past (Bassnett 1993, 160-61).

Bihar did not witness a language movement as strong as the rest of India. The clubbing of different regional languages of Bihar under the homogeneous umbrella of Hindi was then not seen as a threat to other language cultures of Bihar. The state of Bihar has three major languages. Maithili, Magahi, and Bhojpuri. Bhojpuri continues to be the most popular language, and it is part of Bihari popular culture. However, Maithili is the only language that managed to get the status of one of the official languages of independent India and found a place in the coveted eighth schedule of the Indian constitution. Caste, community, and power play a significant role in including the Maithili language in the eighth schedule. As Uday

Narayan Singh puts it,

Maithili Movement is a socio-cultural regional movement for the promotion of Maithili linguistic cum cultural identity within the framework of a separate territorial state formed based on linguistic homogeneity and cultural uniformity (Singh, 2003, 156).

The Maithili language enjoys a dominant space in Bihari literary space. There is a considerable number of literary productions happening in Maithili. But the number of texts getting translated is significantly less than its literary production. In the case volume understudy, I found that most translations are by men. If we look into the gender of the two languages, Maithili and English, both differ from each other. In a scenario where men dominate the literary space and when there is a difference of gender in the source language and the target language, it becomes interesting to look into gender treatment in the translation from Maithili to English. The Studies on translation among and within languages clubbed under the name of Hindi would bring nuances within what has been now perceived as Hindi, homogenizing differences.

1.5: Methodology

Considering that the thesis has examined the translation of gender in English translations from Maithili an inter-lingual translation, I had to use a general textual and narrative analysis method to question translation and gender, specific to the translation of cultures regional specificities of Maithili into English. The study will also be interdisciplinary as we shall theoretical frameworks from Translation Studies, Gender Studies, Comparative Literature, and Cultural Studies.

While studying language and gender, particularly in translations, it's natural to use the Gender studies perspective. It's practical and productive to consider Sherry Simon's work in the area of "feminist translation theory, which aims to identify and critique the angle of concepts which relegates both women and translation to the bottom of the social and literary ladder." (Simon 1996, 1) In the context of this thesis which examines the translation of gender, elaborating on Simon's ideas would be a fruitful exercise.

The translation is a linguistic task that involves the dual exercise of production, exchange and circulation of ideas and meanings. It is one of the ways that allows interpretation, reinterpretation, presentation, representation, and rewriting. It is almost a deconstructionist task in which rewriting and transforming happen. Therefore, translation is a powerful political tool of cultural production, exchange, and representation. The translation is one of the forms of representation that has the potential of political control, for what has been reproduced in translation forms a narrative and discourse. In such a scenario, when female sexuality gets translated, it becomes an intervention in the dominant narratives about sexuality, and it potentially intervenes into the history and politics surrounding female sexuality. As Brinda Bose in her book *Translating Desire* rightly points out, "translation does not just mean translating from one language to another or from one medium to another, but to "transform", to "transport" and "retransmit" the one entire trajectory of a particular aspect of socio-political experiences into a variety of a particular aspect of socio-political experience into a variety of artistic and cultural forms." (Bose 2003, X)

Borrowing from Brinda Bose's argument, we can infer that when the transmission of one socio-political experience happens into another, a space of negotiation gets created for further investigation into the question of the representation of female sexuality. Both translated text

and the source text interact with each other, and cultural exchange takes place and, in the process, different sexual representations occur. The intersection of sexuality and translation leads to a new kind of discourse, reshaping the existing structure of knowledge about female sexuality due to the interaction of different representations of female sexuality in another region. The translations of texts representing female sexuality also lead to the normalization of sexuality by making it more pronounced. The representation of female sexuality is a political victory. However, it is also imperative to see if the patriarchal structure is replicated in such representations. The translation here becomes a tool for equality, as it implies more visibility and representation. It is also crucial for women to represent or acquire the language in which their personalities are built, which may require writing or translating a text by ignoring norms. Ignoring translation norms may cause a certain level of difficulty to the readers. Still, such writings allow women to express what has hitherto been hidden, deprived of the opportunity to express it. Femininity explored through translated writings can fill the historical gap where female voices have been absent or create an alternative space for expression.

Sexuality is central to human culture. According to Philips Stevens, what distinguishes people from other animals is their capability of communication and thinking, which they reveal through knowledge, belief, behavior and the things they are surrounded by. This is what he calls culture. And this culture has become a fundamental weapon of repression and control. That apart, as Raymond Williams famously said, “culture is ordinary.” According to him, “culture is ordinary: that is where we must start... culture is ordinary: that is the first fact. Every human society has its shape, its purposes, its meanings. Every human society expresses these, in institutions, and arts and learning.” (Williams, 1958, 53-59)

Significantly rightly Williams “placed considerable emphasis on the close connection between

the culture, meaning, and communication.”¹ Hence, culture, dealing with more transient things like “signs, images, languages, and beliefs”, has been foregrounded in today’s Cultural Studies. (Paul du Ge et al. 1997, 12)

[C]ulture is then inextricably connected with the role of *meanings* in society. It is what enables us to ‘make sense of things. But how does ‘meaning making’ work? Partly, we give things meaning by the way we *represent* them, and the principal means of representation in culture is *language*. By language, we do not only mean language in the strict sense of written or spoken word. We mean *any system of representation*-photography, painting, speech, writing, imaging through technology, and drawing-which allows us to use signs to represent or *represent* whatever exists in the world in terms of a meaningful concept, image, or idea. Language is the use of a set of signs or a signifying system to represent things and exchange meaning about them” (Ibid. 13-14)

This study used the expression ‘translation as representation’ with the context mentioned above to understand the culture. Like any other writing practice, translation is a social practice, and indeed, it does produce meanings. Hence, the way “translation as a practice, shapes, and in turn takes shape takes shape” within a particular literary culture is worthy of studying and, “what is at stake here is the representation” (Niranjana, 1992, 2)

In the Indian context, female sexuality is used to maintain the caste and class order and purity of the blood. Female sexuality must be suppressed to maintain order in society. The obscenity laws against the “inappropriate representation” of women in media came into force in 1987

with the concern not about women but the nation's social fabric. The law reflects the patriarchal nature of society at large, which looks at female sexuality as something that needs to be suppressed as it can corrupt society and, precisely, men. It fails to link the connection between the social structure responsible for the subordination of women and the sexist representation of women. What and how women are represented in media reflects how they are positioned in society at large. Therefore, banning an image portrayed in the media will not solve the problem for women. It cannot by any means put an end to the subordination of women at any structural level, be it family or society. Such laws cannot alter the power structure; however, solutions lie in counter representation and forming alternative space at various sites, the translation being one such site.

In his book, *Civilisation and its Discontents*, Sigmund Freud posits that repression is the price humanity pays for its civilization. In this world that we are living in, writing functions within the realm of this oppressive society. Sexual oppression is ensured by the ideological status apparatuses and institutions of both moral and juridic-political law. The subjugation of pleasure in writing is one of the important aspects of forming subjectivity of any kind. It is interesting to inquire how the subjectivity of writing changes once it gets translated. In a repressive society writing and translating sexuality becomes an act of resistance—the question of agency, the visibility of female sexuality as a political victory.

Translation of a text also implies expansion of reception of a text its reach to the larger audience. There is a shift of space, and what changes in this shifting of space? What gets hidden, and what becomes visible? What happens to the blurred category of obscenity and appropriate representation in translation? How do the moral constraints operate in translation? Exploring the languages of sexuality in translations is also an exploration into how sexuality is

being treated in different parts of the world. It attempts to document and study comparatively, the cultural history of sexuality in different languages. Sexuality, when translated, becomes more than just the change in the language, culture, or medium and becomes a political act; it is not simply the manifestation of sexual desire into other cultures; it becomes a political category with the play of power around it. In translation or writing, sexuality becomes a construct with social and political relations surrounding it. What has been considered sexy? Which parts of the body, the people and objects with which one performs sexual activities, the places where such sexual acts may be performed and accepted? Or the impact of sexuality on political and economic life. These aspects of sexuality are part of social relations of production. The analysis of sexuality is also essential and fruitful in examining how power works and the kinds of change imaginable. Translation also implies more readership, recognition, and reception of the work. Women and translation both have been given a peripheral position in social and literary radius. Therefore, the translation of female sexuality becomes an intervention in the dominant discourse about sexuality and creates an alternative discourse. Translation becomes an intervention, one of the sites where the representation of sexuality can include different locations, languages, and movements. It also becomes an act of resistance where translated writings contest the marginal position they are forced to occupy and thus to form an alternative.

There have been various attempts to define “Indian women and their sexuality,” and the norms of representation of sexuality has been patriarchal. One of the dominant narratives of Indian women is that of chaste women almost deprived of sexual desire. The project of nationalism has contributed to such narratives by various myth-makings. Most of it happens by going into the past and validating the control over female sexuality in contemporary society. Multiple attempts have been made to validate or rather hijack the traits of contemporary women by going into the past. Tanika Sarkar points out,

It had already been established that 19th Century reformers initiated a long tradition of myth-making about the ancient Hindu women as a free, mobile, intellectual people, the interesting point is not so much the mythical nature of the construction, like the fact that an intelligentsia, committed to domesticity for contemporary women, needed to see independence in ancient women as ideal, perfect, if now unattainable qualities. (Sarkar 1995, 102-03)

Such representations become part of institutionalization and knowledge production, reinventing the ‘tradition’ and ideologically establishing it. It becomes imperative to contest such discourse formations by making interventions from different sites. Translation as a marginalized literary genre and particularly women’s voice in translated works become an important site of resistance. It is a genre of literature that includes the assertion of identity, leading to more cultural transmission and forming a discourse. Female sexuality is seen as a feeling, expression, and behavior to be controlled because it is unruly. Hence, female sexuality is watched by the panoptic eye of society. It’s susceptible to suspicion, gossip, controversy, unlike men’s sexuality. In 2016, the movie *Lipstick Under My Burkha* (2016), directed by Alankrita Shrivastav, was banned by the Censor Board of Film Certification because the story is female-oriented and talks about a fantasy about their life. The movie was criticized for having sexual scenes and abusive words. Such a rigid view shows the attitude of the Censor Board that as soon as women start expressing their sexual desires, it becomes a threat and the conventional society and its ruling institutions cannot simply accept it.

We often see people blaming the colonial rule, Westernization, women not being cautious, their dress, etc., for losing respect, or/and attacks on women in India. However, it’s nothing but a false narrative that takes one away from the real issues in the patriarchal attitude and structure.

The notion of caste ‘purity’ and the notions of sexual purity (women must remain chaste) is the main reason for men controlling ‘their’ women. Such questions and comments are absent; there is no problem with movies or texts dealing with expression of men’s sexuality when it comes to men. The censor board here embodies the existing social structure, which has difficulty accepting when women express their sexuality. Women expressing their sexuality is a fantasy; it does not happen in real life, hence unacceptable in reality. The authors of such rules and members of such boards contribute to keeping those structures alive, which have chained women’s sexuality for centuries, fearing that it will lead to social disorder. They fear that the open expression of female sexuality is detrimental to society, and society will break caste endogamy. Women are seen only in the roles that society ascribes them - as wives, sisters, daughters, and above all, as mothers. Our country has become a mother who needs men as a savior to save the “poor she”. In all this, nowhere is she treated as an individual. Sexuality which is a significant part of our life, becomes an unholy alliance in the case of women. She is denied even her individuality, which violates her rights and freedom of expression and is inhuman. In every walk of life, we observe that the female body gets objectified, contested like a piece of land, and their sexuality gets roped and robbed. In a few instances, we see women resisting subordination and expressing their desires, but in society at large, we see many succumbing to patriarchal forces.

Like elsewhere, the Maithili writers write about sexuality. The genre of short stories is one of the few signifying practices to look at translations of gender and sexuality. Hence, in this dissertation, I have used translation at two levels—first, translation of sexuality by the Maithili writers in their short fiction and, second, translation of the same in English translations of contemporary Maithili short stories. Therefore, I haven’t discussed the “method” or linguistic problems of translation. Instead, the thesis focuses upon the representation of sexuality in

Maithili fiction and its dissemination in English to a larger audience.

Chapter-2

Contextualizing Translation: A Brief History of Maithili Literature

“When we consider the more familiar case of India’s new national language, in relation to its so-called dialects such as Awadhi, Brajbhasa and Maithili, we are confronted with the curious image of a thirty-year-old mother combing the hair of her sixty-year-old daughters.”

-Sitanshu Yashashandra

2.1: Language in Public, Language in Literature, Language and Identity

Language policy is a powerful tool to preserve or destroy languages. The existence of a minor language and its presence in a multilingual country like India raises the question of the domination of one language over the other. For example, the whole debate about a language and dialect is often mainly related to power relations, not linguistic definitions or scientific explanations. According to Delvin, “There is no scientific difference” between the dialect and the standard language, but “when you’re reading an article, the writer will likely refer to *the standard* as a language and everything else as a dialect.” (Delvin, Net.2). That’s why Max Weinreich famously said, “A language is a dialect with an army and a navy.” which he supposedly heard one of his audiences in a lecture on linguistics was saying. (Max Weinreich, in Delvin) Therefore, broadly speaking, language is both spoken and written, whereas dialect is considered to be mostly spoken until it was accorded a status and writing system. In other words, “Languages are afforded more prestige than a dialect because they are given a title, a nation and a canon of literature that give it its elite status.” (Delvin, Net.) Hence, the above distinction is purely political and operates within a linguistic community’s realm of power relations. The contemporary plight of different languages of India raises serious questions. Is

the implementation of the three-language formula by the union government of India enough for the survival of hundreds of mother tongues and indigenous languages that are endangered and near extinction? Is the education policy of India favorable for the different ‘dialects’ spoken in the country? Along with discussing the above questions in this chapter through the lens of translation, we shall present a brief overview of the - Maithili literature, its presence in the educational spaces, and how educational policy has affected the Maithili language.

We cannot discuss the Maithili language without talking about its relationship with Hindi, as the location of the Maithili language is the ‘Hindi heart land’. During the nationalist fervor post-independence of India, there has been a construct of Hindi as the national language, and the linguistic economy of the region mentioned above has been fraught between Hindi and Urdu. The ideological significance of Hindi concerning the idea of the nation became prime owing to its nationalist construct. There was also an issue of religion connecting with language. In general understanding, Hindi is considered the Hindu community’s language, and Urdu is associated with the Muslim community. There is no basis for such conceptions as great writers from both languages wrote in both languages. However, in this religious construct, the various linguistic groups of the currently Hindi-speaking region supported Hindi and its claims to be a national language. After partition, it almost became necessary to suppress the minor linguistic identities and have Hindi as the national language, and these linguistic identities were often discouraged and viewed with suspicion. However, the speakers were conscious of their own identity and literary traditions. Many among them have not been as vocal as the linguistic groups in other parts of India, but the discomfort has always been there, and they have kept their linguistic traditions alive.

In comparison to Bhojpuri, Magadhi, and other languages of Bihar, Maithili has challenged the

supremacy or imposition of Hindi in a stronger voice than the rest. The resistance towards Hindi has been consistent by Maithili speakers and have evolved over the period, from poster to publication of novels, magazine, journals, etc. Now in the post Information and Technology era, in the mode of literary production, there has been the inclusion of audio, video, social media, and other forms of expression. Print, however, played a very significant role in Maithili's literary and language movement. Through producing a lot of literary work and writing about the rich tradition of Maithili and its literary production in 14th and 15th-century Vidyapati, Chanada Jha, and other literature began to establish the richness of Maithili tradition, which helped the Maithili linguistic group to establish themselves as having a separate identity. The journey, which began at Kolkata University, Patna University, then Sahitya Akademi, got finally recognized by the constitution of India. The information and technology have added to this expansion, and the so-far was orally sung songs, poetry, etc., are now getting preserved and documented on various social media platforms. It is empowering and liberating to see such documentation taking place. The social media platforms and audio-video technologies are open for access, unlike print media which involves a lot of power play in what content and language gets accepted and published. The vernaculars have always had rich literary culture, but access to print was more to Hindi than Maithili. These linguistic groups faced various obstacles in expressing their identities through print. Still, the age of new mass media has an enabling effect on these linguistic groups, and these impediments do not exist anymore. The public sphere is now easily accessible for expressing and claiming one's identity, thereby contributing to more visibility and changing the dynamics of language politics in India.

The Maithili movement has a history of 150 years, but it has persistently been accused of an indifferent attitude towards the masses. Even after these many years, mass participation remains negligible within the organization and leadership. In his book *The Intimate Enemy*

(1983), What Ashish Nandy advocates help understand this situation.² Nandy opines that in India and across the world, language became a source of identity in the 19th and 20th centuries. However, this formation of identity, based on the language, was not necessarily the concern of the speaker of the languages on a day-to-day basis. They did not perceive the threat on the language\identity as the elites or leaders of the nation did, which is called the modernizing of the elite and who then begin to mobilize the masses. During the national movement, it was through Gandhi that mass mobilization happened.

According to Nandy, the nationalist movement was first perceived by the elites. Similar was the case in linguistic movements and mobilizations in India when through print media and the process of standardization, Hindi began to expand itself, its geographical reach expanded to appropriate the other linguistic spaces. Then, among the speakers of less dominant languages, the cultural elites of Awadhi, Maithili, etc., first realized the threat to their literary tradition. The masses continued to use the same language without realizing the danger. The elite leaders desired to modernize India themselves and not through colonizers.

Similarly, the elite leaders became custodians of the literary culture and linguistic identity in the linguistic movements. Still, they tried to reach the masses and translate the consciousness they acquired, but most failed, unlike the linguistic movements such as Tamil, Marathi, and the like. The political and historical situation in Northern India did not allow articulation of linguistic identity, as it was highly discouraged by the officials of the colonial as well post-colonial states.³ Hence, mass mobilization of people around language issues and the proliferation of the linguistic consciousness amongst the masses became an arduous task. In

In North India, generally, Hindi was not opposed by the people. On the contrary, it was supported as a national language. However, the linguistic identity and culture remained a matter of awareness. The two explicit scenarios here are that of acceptance of Hindi as an acquired language of the national movement during the colonial period while remaining aware of original linguistic identity. It is also important to note that before Hindi, Urdu enjoyed its domination. Historically, the Hindi belt has witnessed a bigger struggle between Hindi and Urdu and English and Hindi. Though there has always been a certain discomfort with Hindi in these locations, the elites supported Hindi in the bilingual and trilingual regions because they were not comfortable with either Urdu or English. A double loyalty to Hindi as a national identity and regional languages in the present Hindi belt resulted in engulfing of regional languages by Hindi within the larger frame. Such a development weakened the anti-Hindi agitation in North India, which was not the case in South India. The double loyalty did not exist, and that led to more prominence in their agitation against the imposition of Hindi.

Another criticism of the Maithili literary movement is its domination by the upper caste. Maithili Brahmins and Karn Kayashts were the first who began to write literary texts novels in the early phase. These two caste groups were vocal about Maithili being distinct from Hindi. Though at present, we see the presence of other caste groups for a long time, they dominated the organization and leadership of the movement.

Another cause of the failure of the Maithili movement was the historical, political, and economic context, which did not appeal to the masses, which is still the case with many languages. People saw Maithili as a pre-modern and anachronistic presence, not as a language of opportunity, so the demand made by the leaders of the movement was seen as far-fetched, and it did not appeal to the popular consciousness.

2.2: Why Short Stories?

Someone might ask, why the Short Fiction? Why Short Stories? Firstly, like novels, short stories are also, to borrow the title of the book by Dirk Wiemann, are “Genres of Modernity” (Wiemann 2008). Theorizing fiction in the post-colonial context may help problematize received notions about translation, gender and sexuality. Considering India and the appearance of various new literary genres in Indian languages, short fiction and its translation also reflect the colonial nature of colonial modernity and the changing notions of sexuality in Maithili literature. Short stories depict the quotidian life of people and, therefore, best to theorize our everyday. Jan Vána provides an exciting method to read short stories,

My argument in this article is based on three claims. First, when referring to social experience, both sociological and literary texts employ *aesthetic devices* to mediate understanding for the reader. Second, within the literary genre, the understanding of social experience relies much more on the *emotional engagement* of the reader through a reading process facilitated by these aesthetic devices. Third, to benefit from the *lyrical understanding* of social experience mediated by literature, cultural sociologists must be particularly sensitive to the subtlety and ambiguity of meanings mediated by the aesthetic. The benefit is twofold. Methodologically, it allows for an analysis of the deeper cultural meanings grounded in, yet also going beyond, an emotionally and existentially experienced social reality, which is intersubjectively shared and filtered by various groups of readers and cultural intermediaries. (Jan Vána 2020, Net.)

Following Jan Váňa, I shall argue that literature theorizes the real world by transforming the everyday details into a ‘meaningful whole’ or ‘a landscape of meaning’ (Ibid.) Therefore, theorizing short stories means theorizing the perceived real world in them. On the one hand, the Maithili short reports and their translated versions reveal how the Maithili society treats gender and sexuality and, on the other, how the Maithili literature handles the question of gender and sexuality.

According to Louis Althusser and Pierre Macherey, literature and its “ ‘aesthetic effect’ is relatively autonomous from ideology. However, it is also restricted by it. This understanding allows us to construe the dual essence of artistic creation. Art is characterized by simultaneous contextual dependence and contextual critique (Resch 1992, Net). Hence, it is essential to read short stories carefully. The Maithili short stories are rooted in a patriarchal culture. All their content comes from there. At the same time, the texts are critical about patriarchy which shows through their portrayal of gender and sexuality.

When we think of Maithili, the first name that comes to our mind is Vidyapati, one of the greatest poets of India. Maithili had rich and valuable poetry and poetic drama tradition. But the language is not much known for its prose tradition until the twentieth century. Literary histories inform that even by the 1920s, Maithili was struggling to establish a prose tradition. Hence, fiction writing is a relatively recent phenomenon in the language that barely has a hundred years of history. Despite the late start, Maithili today can be proud of good fiction. Writers like Baldev Mishra, Surendra Jha ‘Suman’, Radha Krishna Choudhary, Jaykant Mishra, Binod Bihari Verma, Parichay Das, Gajendra Thakur, and many others have made a significant contribution to the Maithili literature. Undoubtedly, their short fiction is on par with short fiction in world literature.

2.3: The Legacy: Placing Maithili literature and language

The Maithili language is spoken by people living in the northern and eastern regions of Bihar and the east of Terai of Nepal. In Nepal, it is the second most common language. The primary and former script for Maithili was *Tirhuta*⁴, but it adopted the *Devnagri*⁵ script in the 20th century. In 2003, Maithili was recognized as an independent language and was included in the Eighth Schedule of the Indian Constitution. Since then, the Maithili language has been used in education, government, and other official works. In 2007, Maithili was also part of the Interim Constitution of Nepal 2063, Part1, section 5, as a recognized Nepalese language. George Abraham Grierson (1851-1941) was the first to write about Maithili literature in *Maithili Chrestomathy* (1882). The book was the first anthology of the existing materials on Maithili literature. Jayakanta Mishra, in 1949, made a successful attempt to write a history of Maithili literature in his book, *History of Maithili Literature* (1976). It was his PhD thesis. In this book, not to my surprise, I found mention to only male literary historians and critics like Baldev Mishra, Jayakanta Mishra, P. R. Brass, Ram Vilas Sahu, etc. The absence of female writers speaks volumes about their space in the formation of the literary history and to locate women's space in it.

Let's now consider the brief literary history of Maithili literature, majorly drawing from Jayakanta Mishra's *History of Maithili Literature*. (1976). According to Jayakant Mishra, Mithila's rulers have been great scholars and patrons of the best scholars of their empire. The

⁴ Tiruhat: Script used for the Maithili language originating in Mithila region of Bihar. Now the use of Tiruhat has reduced and it has been replaced by Devnagri

⁵ Devnagri: script, also called Nagari, is an abugida used in India and Nepal.

house of Khandava, ancestors of the Rajas of Darbhanga, the scholarly culture and patronage contributed to their political power. Many great kings were also great scholars, and a few of them are the famous Vedic *Jivan-mukta*, *Vaideha Janaka*, the Navya-Nyaya scholar Maharaja Mahesh Thakura. Mishra calls these kings the “Philosopher Kings”. Mithila is the land where the foundation of four of the six orthodox systems of Indian Hindu Philosophy was laid from about 1,000 B.C. to 600 B.C. Gautama, Kanada, Jaimini and Kapila were first to proffer Nyaya Vaisesika, Mimamsa, and Sankhya. Vaishali, one of the still existing cities in Mithila, was the seat of Buddhist thought from the sixth to the third century B.C. Jayakanta Mishra states that Kumarila and Udayana were responsible for re-establishing the supremacy of Brahminical thought in Mithila. They were incredibly proud and protective of this form of knowledge. Mishra also demonstrates that the people of Maithila were always guided by the Brahminical Laws in their everyday lives and suspicious about the rest of the Laws and knowledge systems. Looking at the history of Maithili literature, one can find the dominance of Brahminical literature and culture. The significant presence of Brahmin writers in the history of Maithili literature explains the continued and still existing Brahminical hegemony on Maithili society and knowledge. According to Mishra, the dominance of Brahmins and their suspicion regarding anything non-Brahminical has delayed the development and growth of the Maithili language and literature.

2.4: Periods of Maithili literature:

2.4.1: Proto Maithili Period (8th -12th Century AD)

This period was ruled by *Palas of Bengol (750-1130 A.D.)*. The tremendous impact of later Buddhism and Tantric learning constituted this period, in which Caryapadas were written in

Maithili by 84 monks. Later, this great tradition of padas was neither followed nor developed because Mithila was too Brahminical to allow Buddhist thought to flourish.

2.4.2: Early Period (1300-1600 AD)

In 1097 A.D, under the Karnata kings, Mithila emerged as an independent dukedom. Various kinds of activities in different fields flourished In the Karnata dynasty of Nanyadeva (1097-1325), who was a great warrior, musician and diplomat. His traditions were followed by his grandson Narasimhadeva who very actively encouraged learning and culture in his reign. During the time, several commentaries on Vedas were compiled, and rules were framed. For the guidance of the Hindus in their religious and social life, commentaries on Vedas were compiled, and regulations for social reform were formed. In the history of the Mithila, the Karnata dynasty holds a significant place. The intervention of the kings in the reorganization of the administration, social customs, and religious affairs resulted in the cultivation of a new way of thinking and living. The Karnata rulers were also interested in studying and cultivating various arts and patrons of Sanskrit learning and vernacular literature. Vidyapati was one of the eminent poets of this time. The Karnata rulers extended their support to him at the beginning of his career, however after the fall of the Karnatas, a new line of Oinivar rulers ruled over Mithila from 1353-1527. Maharaja Siva Singh (1412-1429) became the great patron of the poet Vidyapati. Laksminathadeva, the last ruler of this dynasty, also followed the tradition and is regarded as a great patron of arts and letters. He himself was a great poet and had eminent poets, artists and scholars in his court. Though a lot of literature was produced in this period, there is no account of the publication of literature of any kind from this period. Extensive fieldwork would be required to get hold of the content of writings from this period. There can be a possibility of survival of literature of this period in oral form.

2.4.3: Middle Maithili literature (1600-1860 AD)

After a period of flourishing art and literature, Mithila witnessed a period of unrest and uncertainty. The development of art and literature came to a halt in lack of patronage and administrative unrest. However, in 1557 the Moghul Emperor Akbar handed over the Mithila kingdom to Maharaja Mahesh Thakur, which marked the establishment of a new dynasty, the House of Khandwa. Literature, art and scholarship again took a prime seat and cultivated with zeal. In 1799 after a complete overtaking of the administration from the rulers of Mithila by the British, the downfall of art, culture and scholarship began to happen, as the erstwhile rulers were reduced to the status of Zamindars.

2.4.4: Modern Maithili literature (1860-1970)

In the late sixties of the 19th century, modern Maithili literature embarked on its beginning. After the Sepoy Mutiny of 1857, the kingdom was passed into the hands of the British crown. The use of the native language (Maithili) and the native script of the land (Tiruhata) were debarred by the new administration, and it was no longer deemed fit to be used in public life. This period faced constant decadence with the new administration's imposition of English and Hindi. However, in 1880 with the re-establishment of Darbhanga Raj (the rulers of Khandawa), some patronage to Maithili literature was resumed. However, it could not last longer as Maithili literature faced various hurdles in its expansion and growth without recognition. Its absence as a language of education in the province's educational system led to further decadence.

The focus of the literature of this period remained the modern individuals and the various problems they suffered. Nature too attracted many poets, and they wrote about the same in their poetry. Experiment with its form and content constituted the new literature written. The writers successfully used forms like Blank verse and many other meters, rhythms and rhyme styles. Maithili Literature also imported new styles of writings such as the humorous verse, the lyric, the ballad, the ode, etc. Under the influence of English Literature, the *Mahakavya*, *Khandakavya*, the *Giti* and the *Muktaka Kavya* etc., were re-invented.

2.4.5: Literary journals

With the advent of print technology, several printing establishments came up in Mithila, which led to the publication of several literary magazines like *Mithila Hita Saadhana*, Jaipur (1905), *Mithila Moda* (1906), *Mithila Mihir*, Darbhanga (1908) were begun. In 'Maithili Patraakaaritaak Itihaas' (1981), Chandranath Mishra's 'Amar' discusses in detail the successes and failures of Maithili periodical publications—journalistic as well as literary. One can also find some of these references in Jayakanta Mishra (1956; 1976) and Radhakrishna Chaudhury's (1976) literary historiographies. One finds 78 literary journals and magazines, until the 1980s, 11 of them being weeklies, five fortnightlies, 31 monthlies, eight quarterlies and two bi-annuals.

4.6: Short Story:

Time immemorial, Mithila was the one of traditional learning. For example, the *Darbhang District Gazetteer* observes, "The history of Mithila does not centre around various feats of arms, but round court engrossed in the luxurious enjoyment of literature and learning. While Mithila's bid for fame does not rest on heroic deeds, it must be duly honoured as the home

where enlightened learned might find a generous patron, peace, and safety.” (Gazztteer, 22, Mishra 4)

The author observes that kings themselves were great scholars in this different land, and they respected scholarship. The Khandaves, ancestors of the Rajas of Darbhanga, and most of the kings have been “philosopher kings, observers the gazetteer, The earliest records show that the court of Mithila kings was a place of enlightenment, “The foundation of four of the six orthodox systems of philosophy were laid in Mithila from 1000 B.C. to 600 B.C. Gautama, Kanaada, Jaimni, and Kapila respectively expounded Nyaya, Vaisesika, Mimamsa, and the Sankhya philosophy for the first time in Mithila” (Mishra 1976, 4-5). Jayakanta Mishra’s *History of Maithili Literature* (1976), written from a nationalistic perspective, informs us that Maithili scholars have jealously guarded her teachings and established learning institutions during the Muslim invasion. (10).

However, prose writing was sparse in Maithili literature. And the modern period began only in the sixties of the nineteenth century. Sine, the Darbhanga king, has handed over the Kingdom of Mithila to the Court of Wards, it was easier for the colonial government to begin everything new. Initially, the Maithili language and the Tirhuta script were abandoned in the interest of Urdu and Persian. After such a setback, when the House of Khandavas took over the reign, the Maithili Literature began to regain its earlier status. This modern era is continued until 1970, according to Jayakanta Misra. (29-31) In the middle Maithili period, *varnana* and dramatic prose varieties were popular. However, such a scenario has changed along with the advancement of colonial rule. Journalism, essays, travel writing, and fiction made their way into the Maithili world. That apart discursive prose and writings on religion, philosophy, biography, history etc., appeared in the language. Short stories are part of this development.

Let us have a bird's eye view of the Short Story in the Maithili literature. When the King of Darbhanga died, leaving behind two minor sons, in 1860, the British government had placed the charge of Mithila in the hands of a Court of wards. It proved detrimental to the growth of the Maithili language as the Court of wards abolished the use of Maithili and the script from public life and encouraged the use of Urdu and Persian. However, when the new king ascended to the throne after his education, he changed the Maithili language landscape. The new king Lakshmishvrasimha “first encouraged English education in Mithila. His regime infused fresh energy into the people's social, cultural, and literary life” (Mishra 1976, 222). However, by this time, the Educational Despatch 1854, the Government of India also took active steps to encourage English education, Maithili language speakers took advantage of the new situation. The disgruntlement caused by reducing an ancient kingdom to a zamindari has given way to a new enthusiasm for fashioning new literature, tradition, and the literary public sphere.

The Maithili Short Story begins in such a context. Shri Krishna Thakur, Vaidyanath Mishra, Kalikumara Das, Gunavantala Das, Hatinandana Thakura “Saroja” wrote their stories in the 20s of the twentieth century. The titles, *Chandrabhaga* (1885), *Kamala* (1929) etc., indicate that their stories, like many in Indian languages, deal with the question of women and something evil in society. However, their stories gave less attention to the form than the content.

1930s saw a massive spurt of short stories. K.N. Thakura, ‘Pagal’ ‘Viksipta’, Kanchintana Jha, ‘Kirana’ Yadunandana Jha ‘Pralankara’ Paramanand Dutta ‘Paramartha’ to name a few are significant writers of the period. Several of these stories are published in newspapers and Magazines, and according to Jayakanta Mishra, “They play upon stock emotions and feelings.” (Mishra 1976:245)

Peabodhnarayana Chaudhuri, Surendra Jha ‘Sumana’, Harimohan Jha, Bhimeshwara Singha, Narendra Kumara, Upendra Jha, ‘Vyada’, are a few major writers published in the 1940s of the last century. Among the writers mentioned above, Surendra Jha ‘Sumana’, who wrote under the pseudo names “Kashyapa”, “Madhukara” and “Dvireoha”, said to have brought in the class consciousness in Mythili literature. Harimohan Jha, known for his novels and the short story collection *Carcari* (1960), is a progressive writer. He criticized and mocked at blind imitation of the west, educated suspecting their wives, the unfortunate mismatch between an uncultured husband and a cultured wife. His satire, and humour, were able to shock the readers and the Maithili society. As the name suggests, Kumar Gangananda Simha’s “Bihadi” is a powerful story. It describes the awareness and the spirit of revolt burning in the hearts of the lower classes of the Mithila society.

Harimohan Jha “Vyasa” is considered one of the best storytellers of this age. Though he deals with minimal, insignificant, day to day events or content, his mastery over storytelling is marvellous. Mishra calls his style “didactic tumultuously sarcastic” (Mishra 1976, 247) and says that readers are enriched by Harimohan Babu’s stories’ “Supreme moments of revelation” (Ibid.)

Shrimati Shambhavi Devi, Anupama Dai, Lakshmiwati Devi ‘Lila’, and Gauri Mishra wrote about the female subjects, friendship, brotherly relationship, and pathos of womanhood in the Maithili language. The stories may not be classified as feminist stories from today’s perspectives. However, they are interesting to know what was possible for a woman writer to express at that period. We need to consider them against the historical conditions of female and female writers.

Pre-independent short stories mainly deal with social issues. Mishra opines that “Maithili literature is written best when it deals with the system of Mithila Marriage”, especially the institution of “Kulinsim” (Mishra 1976, 248). According to this system, women of high status must marry someone of the same class or higher status and not a man of lower status. Several best Maithili stories deal with the above issue. The conflict of ideas between the traditional and the modern values give ample scope for writers to give their best.

In the post-independence period, the Maithili Short story scaled to its glorious heights with Upandranatha Jha Vyasa, Shailendra Mohan Jha, Rajmohan Jha, and Mayanand Mishra.

Lalit, Rajkamal, Ramanand Renu, Hansraj, Prabhas Kumar Choudhury, Jivakanta, Dhumaketu are a few other writers in the post-independence period. An acute criticism of life, depiction of the lower-middle-class life, alienation, untouchability etc., mark their stories. Devakanth Jha says, “The story in post-independence period has travelled a long way from socio-psychological trend to existential growth of the individual. It has made several experiments with form and theme. Now we have almost every form of short story writing available in Maithili with a wide range of varieties. (Jha 2007, 253-4).

The short stories published after the nineties of the last century and in this century depict the recent social changes in Maithili society. Dalit consciousness, identity politics, women empowerment, etc., are at the heart of these new stories. Jyotsna Chandram, Udaychandra Jha, Sushila Jha, Kanchinath Jha Kiran, Shephalika Varma, Govind Jha, Ramesh Jha, Ashok, Devkanth Jha, Vibha Rani, Upendra Doshi, Ripuraman Lal Das, Usha Kiran Khan, Marandeya are a few notable writers of the period. However, this list is incomplete. Devkant Jha’s *A History of Modern Maithili Literature: Post Independence Period* (2007) provides a survey of Short stories written during 1947-2000. However, a thematic and conceptual discussion of

Modern Maithili Short Stories is required. Ramakanth Jha feels that “Popular patronage of literature has still to grow in Maithili. People of Mithila, even among the educated classes, have still to learn that Maithili books too should be paid for” (Jha 1966, 56)

2.4.7: Women writers

Maithili literary history mentions women writers as successful poets. However, their prose writing was not insignificant. The prose works by women writers include *Shambhavi Devi's Mithilaka Vidushi Mahila*, *Raja Laxmhi's Bhagavataprakasa*, *Gayayatra etc.* There were several women writers and researchers after 1956. They include Kameshwari Devi (1928), Anima Singh (1924), Chandrapriya Devi (?), Shyam Jha, (?), Kalindi Devi (?) Ilarani Singh (1945—), Shyama Devi: Shephalika Verma (1943—), Chitralkha Devi (?), Jayanti Devi (1944—), Anupamaa Adya Jha (1924—), Gauri Mishra (1934—), Tulika Jha (1924—), Rajlikshmi's (1915—1976). Religious discourses later brought out as *Shrimad Bhaagavat Prakash* 1969, or *gruha vijnaan* 1971 by Aparajita Devi. In early or middle Maithili, there has been mentioning of women writers like Chandrakala, who has been described as the daughter-in-law of Vidyapati by Lochana. However, one does not find a book-length work by women writers during the period under consideration. I tried to find out the content of the writings by women in the early and middle periods but could not succeed. It will require me to go through the archives, and since women writings remain unpublished, it requires extensive fieldwork to get hold of the content of their writings. There is a possibility that their writings may have survived in oral form.

2.4.8: The politics of Maithili literature in Bihar

Bihar did not witness a language movement as strong as the rest of India. We won't find any

significant resistance for the clubbing and bringing the various regional dialects and languages of Bihar under Hindi. One of the possible reasons for this could be the lack of script for the different Languages of Bihar. However, Maithili managed to get the official language status and found a place in the coveted eighth schedule of the Indian constitution.

The state of Bihar has three major languages, Magahi, Maithili and Bhojpuri; Urdu, Santhali, Kberwari are minor languages. Bhojpuri continues to be the most popular language, and it is part of Bihari popular culture. In every corner of Bihar, people listen to and sing Bhojpuri songs no matter to which language they belong. The language has become popular all over India through its cinema and songs. However, this popularity did not give Bhojpuri constitutional recognition like Maithili. Magahi or Magadhi, the third most commonly used language, is genealogically related to Magadhi Apbhransha, which once had the status of *rajbhasha* during the reign of Emperor Ashoka. Although Magadhi has great oral literary culture, it continues to be the least known of the rest of the languages. An attempt to write grammar and study the language linguistically is going on.

In 1881, the nationalist agenda of establishing Hindi as the national language dented the other languages spoken in Bihar. Before Hindi, Urdu was used widely by the masses, and for administrative purposes, during the nationalist project, Hindi displaced Urdu as the sole official language of that province. In the long-drawn battle between the two competing regional standards (Hindi and Urdu), the potential claim of the large mother tongues (Maithili, Magahi and Bhojpuri) got subsided. The state declared Hindi the sole official language under the Bihar Official Language Act, 1950. However, according to the Mother Tongue census of 1961, only 44.3 per cent had accepted Hindi as their mother tongue. In this tussle between national, state and regional language, the Maithili language claimed a different position. It is interesting to note that the Maithili supporters have always insisted that it is an entirely distinct language

from Hindi. At the same time, Bhojpuri and Magahi accepted the ambit of Hindi over them. The first Maithili movement started in 1910 when the Maithili Mahasabha came into being. Another significant organization was Maithili Sahitya Parishad, established in 1931. According to Uday Narayan Singh;

Maithili Movement is a socio-cultural regional movement for the promotion of Maithili linguistic cum cultural identity within the framework of a separate territorial state formed on the basis of linguistic homogeneity and cultural uniformity.” (Singh 2003, 156)

Interestingly, the Maithili language movement has mainly belonged to the upper-caste elite. In contrast, many caste groups belonging to the middle and the lower strata in the Maithili speaking districts of north Bihar have accepted Hindi as their official state language. So far as identification with the Maithili language is concerned, there seems to be a variation and hierarchy along the caste lines. Maithil Brahmins and Karno Kayasthas were the key role players in the Maithili language movement. Most of the leaders for the movement came from the upper caste.

Another thing that gets ignored is that several caste groups living in the Mithila region claim Bajjhika and Angika as their mother tongues and do not identify themselves with the homogenizing linguistic identity of the Maithili language. The social base for a linguistic movement is missing in the case of the Maithili language. According to Uday Narayan Singh, Maithili language organizations were caste-based. He says that the “caste-based organizations keep intact, the cultural heritage and purity of Maithili Brahmins and Karno Kayasthas”. (Singh 2003, 158). Thinking about the language and mobilizing people along the caste lines

makes the Maithili language movement highly upper caste and upper class.

Related to the above is the Maithili language movement was not based on the masses and mass mobilization but the literary production by the elite. In a multilingual society, a language needs to equip itself with measures to promote itself and meet the demands of the changing socio-economic dynamics of the world. Maithili must create the cultural context in the modern world to interact outside its location. Politico-ethnic identity, which generally is the focus of linguistic movements, is missing in the case of Maithili. Suppose one enters into the corpus of literature produced in all four periods of Maithili literature, one will find most of the works have been written by the upper caste and majorly Brahmins.

In my Wikipedia search for Maithili literature, ninety per cent of the name constituted Brahmin names. The power and domination of Brahmins have swept the Maithili identity making it homogenous. It would not be wrong to call Maithili Language Movement a caste-based movement. According to George Abraham Grierson, among Maithili, Bhojpuri, and Maghai, only the Maithili language claims the literary tradition of several centuries while the other two have had rich oral and folk literature. If one believes this view, then the Maithili literature's superiority owes itself to the colonialist view of literature and culture, which maintains a strong hierarchy between "oral" and "written". The fact that Maithili has its own script allowed it space in the Eighth Schedule of the constitution. The position of minority and dominant language is not a permanent one. Maithili language movement began as resistance towards the domination of the Hindi language. But currently, in the context of Bihar, it has become the most powerful language of the state and enjoys dominance over the rest. Owing to Maithili's literary and political power, the other languages of Bihar have been marginalized. The constitutionalizing of any language makes it politically acceptable and shifts the power dynamics of language, identity and politics. We know that in the situations explained above,

language is often a much-contested site to access several resources, including political power, where larger politics unfolds itself. Maithili has become an absorption instrument for the powerless languages and caste in Bihar. It doesn't represent the mass but a few elite, upper-caste groups.

The failure of the Maithili language movement owes to its inability to become part of the public sphere. Just opening Mithila academy, university, and inclusion in the eighth schedule does not ensure its presence in the public sphere. The large population does not read and write in Maithili. Most schools do not teach in Maithili. No regular newspapers and magazines are circulated amongst the masses in the Bihar or Mithila region. Many magazines and newspapers were started but did not live long because of a lack of readers. Dhanakar Thakur, Editor, *Maithili Sandesh*, has collected all the necessary data regarding magazines published from 1905 to 2011. According to him,

Though every magazine has contributed to the growth of Maithili, the magazines have been started more on whims, and many such had no second issue and almost have resulted in Aniyatkalin (non-fixed time) because of the lack of consistency and financial non-support by the subscribers. The print order of such magazines had been much less than expected. It is my candid opinion that unless we get Mithila state in India, Maithili newspapers can't thrive for lack of advertisement; Ironically Maithili magazines (and also organizations) have not starved for Mithila State, though without statehood, Maithili's recognition in the VIII Schedule is not going to yield desired results (Thakur, Net.3)

In the overview of Maithili literature, I found that female authors were not given much space

except a tokenized space. The literary history only mentions some of the names without much discussion, and we do not know what kind of writings came from women and their struggles. It is relevant to read, contextualize, and interpret women's literature and sexuality in a male-dominated, casteist scenario discussed so far.

Chapter-3:

Construction of Gender and Sexuality in Select English Translations of Maithili Short Stories

“A feminine text cannot fail to be more than subversive. It is volcanic; as it is written it brings about an upheaval of the old property crust, carrier of the masculine investments; there is no other way. There is no room for her if she is not a he. If she is a he-she, it is in order to smash everything, to shatter the framework of institutions, to blow up the law, to break up the “truth” with laughter.”

-Helene Cixous

3.1: Gender, Sexuality, and Translation

3.1.1: Introduction

One's biology determines sex and, it is not identical to gender. Hence, “sex” and “gender” are not similar. “Sex” refers to “the physical or physiological differences between male, female, and intersex bodies,” while “Gender” refers to social or cultural distinctions associated with given sex. Feminists generally consider gender as a social and cultural construct. Sexuality is about people's “sexual interest, attraction towards others, and the capacity to have erotic experiences and responses” and sexual attitudes. Subsequently, it also refers to how others see and represent a person's sexuality. It involves human agency and history. Thus, it too a social construct. Women's sexuality has been constructed and reconstructed throughout the history of ‘mankind.’ Women's sexuality has been deployed to represent the ‘woman’ and to ‘control’ her sexuality, which is an enigma to men.

The question and representation of gender and sexuality have been constants throughout the history of humankind and literature. The literary genres like epics, songs, poems, stories cannot be imagined without narratives of gender and sexuality. Sexuality is not understood as a mere physical experience but as a larger cultural concept and value predominant with the accompanying gender identity issues. Therefore, they have been discussed within the framework of gendered oppression, suppression and violence. Gender Studies scholars agree that the structure of patriarchy, which is profoundly rooted in the “cultural, social, political and economic apparatuses of the public and the private domains”, is maintained by the objectification and marginalization of the female body. Any literature in the world, primarily written by men, testifies to the above fact, and the Maithili literature is no exception.

3.1. 2: Gender in Translation Studies

In the 70s of the twentieth century, along with the advent of critical theories (Post-colonialism, Postmodernism, Post-structuralism, Feminism) and Cultural studies, an alliance between Feminism and Translation Studies has also benefited both disciplines. Both Translation Studies and Feminist thoughts emerged as fields of inquiry. They gained increasing institutional recognition through the 1980s grounded similarly in the undercurrents of a period that gave decisive importance to language. As a result, very fresh enquiries considering the “hermeneutic act” emerged, paying close consideration to the concepts of “identity and the representation of women in and through language.” In this context, issues of Gender and Sexuality gained prominence in Translation Studies. The discussion of gender in translation, apart from questioning and subverting patriarchy, inscribes women's subjectivity and agency. Sherry Simon aptly points out,

Translation studies have been impelled by many of the concerns central to Feminism: the distrust of traditional hierarchies and gendered roles, deep suspicion of rules defining fidelity, and the questioning of universal standards of meaning and value. Both Feminism and translation are concerned by the way "secondariness" comes to be defined and canonized; both are tools for a critical understanding of difference as it is represented in language. The most compelling questions for both fields remain: how are social, sexual and historical differences expressed in language, and how can these differences be transferred across languages? What kinds of fidelities are expected of women and translators—in relation to the more powerful terms of their respective hierarchies? (Simon 1996, 8)

One of the first visible results of this alliance was incorporating the feminist ideology into translation, which allowed critique and freedom from the patriarchal language and rules. Such self-reflexive and transformative translations explored women's experiences in a highly experimental style where their translations/texts "almost always included considerable translators' introductions, commentaries, or even short articles on the translations." (von Flotow, 2006, 15) Their works also "constituted efforts to attack, deconstruct, or simply bypass the conventional language they perceived as inherently misogynist." (von Flotow 1991, 72) Canadian feminist translators and researchers such as Barbara Godard, Luise von Flotow, Susanne de Lotbinière-Harwood, and Sherry Simon significantly built the feminist translation theory and conceptual vocabulary to discuss gender and translation. Scholars working in the areas of Gender Studies, Deconstruction, Feminism, Cultural Studies, and Translation Studies too contributed in this direction.

The following studies were of particular importance to the development of the field and have become essential references for Translation Studies all over the world: *Theorizing Feminist Discourse/Translation* (1990) by Barbara Godard, *Re-belle et infidèle/The Body Bilingual* (1991) by Susanne de Lotbinière-Harwood, *Gender in Translation. Cultural Identity and the Politics of Transmission* (1996) by Sherry Simon, and *Translation and Gender: Translating in the 'Era of Feminism'* (1997) by Luise von Flotow. Various issues raised in these feminist writings have become topics and themes of Translation Studies and Gender conferences worldwide.

Alongside the avant-garde women writers of Canada, sporadic theoretical works appeared in North America. In her influential theoretical and historical article that brings together gender and translation through reading metaphors of translation, "Gender and the Metaphorics of Translation," first published in the *Signs* journal in 1988 and republished both in the books *Rethinking Translation: Discourse, Subjectivity, Ideology* 1992 and *The Translation Studies Reader*, 2000, Chamberlain traces the origins of sexist translation discourse to the beginnings of the seventeenth century in France when Gilles Ménage coined the phrase *les belles infidèles* to define Nicolas Perrot d'Ablancourt's free translations of the classics. From Perrot d'Ablancourt onwards, the concern for faithfulness or unfaithfulness in translation has given rise to many metaphorical discourses related to gender.

"The Politics of Translation" (1992), by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and Carol Maier's influential text "Women in Translation: Current Intersections, Theory, and Practice" (1994) are two articles that are contemporary to Chamberlain's essay. Their works have dealt with other aspects relevant to the intersection of gender and translation. Maier poses a leading question about the intersection of gender and translation, "What is 'happening' in the field of

Translation Studies now that "woman" and "translation" are associated explicitly?" (1994: 29). Her answer develops five themes which more or less organize the work carried out in the discipline and at the same time question and propose new goals, "...the identity of the translator...the relationship between translator and author(ity)...the translator's decision about what to translate...specific translation strategies...the translation "product" (Ibid.)

Maier's works, in particular, were motivated by Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble* (1990), who put forward that "gender" should be understood as a social construction rather than a static cultural label as had been the case until then. After reviewing various feminist and queer theories (mainly that of Judith Butler), and the experiences of women translators (such as those of Susanne de Lotbinière-Harwood and Miriam Diaz-Diocaretz, and her own), Maier gives more credence to "woman-identified translation practice" than to a feminist translator, "such practice implying a permanent clarification of the feminine identity." What she has said in an interview titled "Interviewing Carol Maier: A Woman in Translation" by Godayol in 1998 has become a strong foundation for theorizing later on.

Nevertheless, Luise von Flotow rightly points out in her 1995 work that much work remains to "synthesize academic work on gender and language, especially gender and translation." After a decade and a half, we are still in a similar situation.

3.1.3: Metaphors of Translation: Gender and Sexuality

In the history of translation, the relationship between the author-original-translation-translator is often sexualized. The metaphors used to explain the act of translation testify this. Even today the conventional translation theory deploys a language of patriarchy, gender, sexism, the

dominance of the original, inferiority of the translation, insisting on the fidelity to the so-called original text. Chamberlain's influential essay "Gender and the Metaphorics of Translation" (1992) reveals that almost all translation thinking across theoretical frameworks uses misogynic concepts to describe translations. It is believed that these conceptions adversely contribute to the legitimization of these gender roles.

Lori Chamberlain has elaborately cited different authors for demonstrating the misogynic concept of translation. Let us see just one example. Thomas Durant, who translated Horace in the sixteenth century, boldly announces,

First, I have now done as the people of God were commanded to do with their captive women that were handsome and beautiful: I have shaved off his hair and pared off his nails, that is, I have wiped away all his vanity and superfluity of matter... I have Englished things not according to the vein of the Latin propriety, but of his own vulgar tongue ... I have pieced his reason, eked and mended his similitudes, mollified his hardness, prolonged his sort all kind of speeches, changed and much altered his words, but not his sentence, or at least (I dare say) not his purpose. (Chamberlain 2000, 318)

Similarly, George Steiner, in the *After Babel*, gives a four-step translation procedure. The first step in translation is "initiative trust," or "translator's willingness to take a gamble on the text, trusting that the text will yield something." In the next step, "the translator goes towards the foreign and aggressively takes the meaning of the original text." He does it by "penetrating" and "capturing" the text. According to Steiner, this act he calls the "appropriative penetration" captures the meaning entirely and appropriately. It's astonishing to observe that several translation theorists were neither hesitating nor embarrassed to describe translation as an "erotic possession." The third step is about "naturalizing" the "imprisoned text" and making

it one's own or part of the translator's language. They are literally incorporated or embodied. In the fourth step is to "compensate for this 'appropriative 'rapture,' in which "the translator must restore the balance, attempt some act of reciprocity to make amends for the act of aggression" (Ibid. 320-21).

After the publication of Chamberlain's essay, many translation theoreticians, over the years, endeavoured to re-evaluate the process of translating and the concept of faithfulness employing the metaphor of intervening spaces, detached from old and male-centric writings. The feminist translators and Translation studies scholars contest the notion of fidelity, its narrow meaning, sexism, and patriarchal underwriting of translation.

The translation is consistently described in terms of an unequal struggle for authority and paternity over the text, the notion of the property indicates that "women belong to men as the text belongs to its author" or "the author is the landlord, the translator simply a tenant" (Simon, 9). Even more tenacious of metaphor is the idea that the translation process is like a marital relationship with the wife's unfailing promise of faithfulness or translation's fidelity to the original that guarantees legitimacy. Hence, the fear, "without such a vow, translators might sire textual bastards!"

The sexist metaphors of translation indicate power relations in the West. Chamberlain raises the question, "why have the two realms of translation and gender been metaphorically linked?" and argues that the "implied narrative concerns the relation between the value of production versus the value of reproduction. What proclaims itself to be an aesthetic problem is represented in terms of sex, family, and the state, and what is consistently at issue is power" (Chamberlain 2000, 322).

Two consequences follow when one treats the original text as a “female virgin.” Firstly such an understanding ensures the originality of the translation guaranteeing the right of parenthood of the original text. It’s expected that the translator must assume the author's role by protecting the virgin's purity and innocence. Second, in the process of translation, the original text - the virgin is consummated. She is penetrated, violated and even raped, no matter what. In both instances, the translator usurps the author's role to reproduce his offspring by taming the virgin, either protecting her or violating.

Chamberlain informs us that the Western translation tradition is imprisoned “in the logic and thinking based on the dichotomy of creating (writing, authoring, fathering) versus re-creating.” The dichotomies of the male-female, original- derivative, primary-secondary, etc., privilege the male creative genius and the original text. Translation has been dubbed as the female activity, and therefore, non-creative. Unfortunately, such dichotomy echoes a struggle for power and authority prevalent in the translation theory discourse since the beginning. For example, Serge Gavronsky's essay, “From Piety to Cannibalism” (1977), uses such logic of sexual and dichotomous rhetoric. According to him, the “cannibalistic translator” notion is based on George Steiner's hermeneutic model. He argues for the translator to be either submissive or aggressive. As the title speaks, Gavronsky emphasizes two types of translators: the pietistic and the cannibalistic. The pietistic translator is overly obedient and devoted to the original and “is a mere conduit for the author/creator's thoughts(the phallus pen). (Chamberlain, 2000: 221-23)

It’s obvious, Gavronsky’s characterization of the relationship between the author and the translator is in reclusive terms with the “vows of chastity, humility, poverty, obedience, and inferiority.” Whereas the alternative to the pietistic translator is cannibalistic, that awaits

pleasure for the translator. According to him, the cannibalistic model liberates translators from servility to "cultural and ideological restrictions" where the cannibalistic translator "seizes possession of the 'original,' who savours the text, that is, who truly feeds upon the words, who ingurgitates them, and who, after that, enunciate them in his tongue, thereby having explicitly rid himself of the 'original' creator" (1977: 60). According to Imchasen,

"The Feminist translators/theorists propose new rhetoric of translation that deconstructs the hierarchies between sexes and texts and reveal how language reflects power relations between sexes. They seek to disturb the clichéd language used to describe the translation and replace it with terminology capable of conveying the active play of identities within translation practice. This new rhetoric could redefine the practice of translation, thereby freeing it from its oppressing patriarchal burden. In other words, introducing such strategies not only subverts the negative (reproductive/passive) character of women based on their traditionally devalued status but also raises reservations about the secondary and underrated conception of translating as a profession" (Imchasen 2021, unpublished).

3.1.4: Feminist Translation Project and Theories

Sherry Simon pays attention to women's identity, language, and fidelity in the role of a translator. She says that Feminism helped construct the cultural identity of both from a social and linguistic perspective over the decades. She mentions the three stages of evolution of women's subjectivity. First is the essentialist phase that "sets women's reality against patriarchy." The second is the constructionist stage, in which "the difference comes into being by historical positioning within language and culture, along with a realization of women's

“third position” and the difference (Simon 1996, 133-34). Hence, it's vital to look into the construction of gender roles in literature and translation. Here, on the one hand, we may unravel how female sexuality is being constructed in literary texts. On the other, we may analyze translation strategies deployed by translators to understand to what extent translations contribute to patriarchal discourse or contest it.

Simon's translation project is significant in many ways. It challenges the patriarchal discourse in Translation studies effectively. It allows the writer and the translator to work together and consider the translator the co-producer of meaning. Also, this project “helps fix the false equivalence between the translation and women and makes the translator (symbolizing female) and the author (symbolizing male)” equals. As an example of the ideological stance in the translation project, Simon quotes the introduction to a translation of *Lise Gauvin's Lettres d'une autre* by the feminist translator, Susanne de Lotbinière-Harwood, who describes her translation strategy as political. She says,

My translation practice is a political activity aimed at making language speak for women. So my signature on a translation means: this translation has used every translation strategy to make the feminine visible in language. (Simon 1996, as qtd. in Imchasen).

Feminist translation theorist and translator Barbara Godard emphasizes their identity and ideological stance, asserting openly the female identity and the need to manipulate texts, “the feminist translator, affirming her critical difference, her delight in interminable re-reading and rewriting, flaunts the signs of her manipulation of the text.” (Godard 1990 as qt. in Imchasen, 2021)

Godard coins the term *Womanhandling* of the text to explain the strategies she has preferred as a feminist translator:

Womanhandling the text in translation would involve the replacement of the modest, self-effacing translator. Taking her place would be an active participant in the creation of meaning, who advances a conditional analysis. Hers is a continuing provisionality, aware of the process, giving self-reflexive attention to practices. The feminist translator immodestly flaunts her signature in italics, in footnotes - even in a preface. (1990: 91 qt.in Imchasen, 2021)

Thus, the feminist translation project questions the concept of fidelity or sexist metaphors and reconstructs the translator's role.

Quebec Feminist translator Susanne de Lotbiniere-Harwood favours an interventionist practice. Interventive translations promote assertiveness in feminist translations and writings. Harwood is unapologetic about her interventionist translation strategy and defines her translation practice as a political praxis. Her works make "women visible and resident in language and society" by using French neologisms in her English translations and thus feminizing (von Flotow 1997, 28).

Feminist Translators perceive translation as "rewriting" in the feminine and consider it part of their cultural politics. The task is to make language speak for women to make the feminine gender visible. Towards that end, von Flotow in *Feminist Translation. Contexts, Practices and Theories* (1991, 72-79) systematizes four supplementing strategies, prefacing, footnoting, and hijacking. She proposes a model of female aestheticism to achieve equal status for female

translations. Now, of course, the women translators can create new poetic language and new vocabulary, disrupting the male-domination and creating a semiotic female world.

While Feminist translation scholars examined that language use that is gendered and male-oriented, gendered and sexualized language is also often used by women scholars and translators. However, the apparent difference is that they use it to express pleasure, not aggression; their theory on language and woman's subjectivity is formed through language. An example is Carol Maier's essay *A Woman in Translation*. Reflecting on the "textual pleasure" she experiences when she translates. Simon informs us that Susan Bassnett argues favouring the "orgasmic" translation theory (Simon 1996, 12). It refers to a "mutual, pleasurable, respectful" (ibid) translation encounter. In other words, "the orgasmic theory of translation indicates that translation has its insidious messages similar to the desire concealed in women's bodies. It considers translation an act of intervention, self-assertion, pleasure, and respect" (ibid).

3.1.5: Translating literature and the question of gender and sexuality

For a long history, writing and literature have been considered masculine activities, and the literary values and aesthetics have been defined from male perspectives. This approach excluded women from authorship, subjectivity, history, and agency. Representation of women through the male gaze and objectifying them has been taken for granted by literary cultures. Hence, there is a need to re-read literary texts, translate them, and rewrite the literary history from women's perspective. One of the ways of doing this is to examine the existing translations. Hence, this study aims to describe inscribing of gender in Maithili short stories. The present section of the chapter tries to determine how gender roles are defined. For this purpose, I have selected the short story collection *Contemporary Maithili Short Stories* translated into English

and published by the Sahitya Akademi (Thakur 2005). I also chose a couple of Stories from the volume *Dasil Bayana* published by the National Book Trust. (Viyogi 2007.) Following Bonny Ball Copenhaver, "this study was based on the symbolic interaction theory of gender that suggests that social roles are learned over time and are subject to constant reinforcement. The significance of this study was derived from the broad topic of gender because gender issues are relevant to a variety of fields and exploring the effects of gender in one field contributes to the understanding of gender in another field" (Copenhaver 2002, 2)

Indian Writing in English (IWE) and Indian Writing in English Translation (IWET) have flourished in India in recent years. The English language is a means to reach a larger audience, and translators across India use it to reach out to readers in other Indian languages and English. Similarly, readers from languages other than the language of the original text look forward to translations. The mainstreaming of IWET is more or less an accomplished goal. The English, Comparative Literature and Translation Studies departments prescribe translated texts to graduate and postgraduate classes. The M.Phil. and PhD research on translations is also quite common.

It's interesting to see how texts from the modern Indian language are translated into English and theorize the activity. Another issue is what happens to the cultural differences while rendering them into English translation and maintaining them in translations. However, I focus on gender and sexuality in Maithili short stories and their translation to English.

In her article "The Politics of Translation," Gayatri Spivak presents the dilemma of the "difficulties and contradictions inherent in translating texts by authors of the third world into Western languages, principally into English." She claims that a great deal of judgment is

needed to avoid falling into the trap of representing third-world women writers as if they speak the same language as first-world feminists. (Spivak, 1993, 179-200)

Hence, this section has two specific goals: First, to present the representation of Gender and Sexuality in selected Maithili short stories. The second is to analyze English translations of selected short stories and discuss the issues arising out of them with a particular focus on the questions of Gender and Sexuality. I hope my analysis of selected stories from the collection chosen for study would help me understand and realize the above mentioned two goals.

3.2. Analysis of Select English Translations of Maithili Short Stories

3.2.1: Introduction

In this section, I shall analyze the select short stories translated from Maithili to English by different authors from the *Contemporary Maithili Short Stories* (2005, 2009) edited by Murari Madhusudhana Thakur and published by the Sahitya Akademi and a few other translated short stories. The stories in the collection mentioned above “were rendered into English at a Translation Workshop at Patna sponsored by Sahitya Akademi in collaboration with *Samprati*, Patna, from December 25 to December 29, 1999” (Thakur, 2009, p. 7) As we know, the Sahitya Akademi Translation Workshops intend to make available the Bhasha literature written in different Modern Indian languages to a larger audience translating them into English. According to the editor of the volume, writers represented in this collection belong to three generations: the first, born before the 1930s, the second, born in the 1930s and 1940s and the last, born in the 1950s and 1960s. A representative collection of thirty Maithili short fiction is represented in the translated text by thirteen translators. These stories deal with various issues

of the lived experiences of the Maithili people, including gender and sexuality. However, the volume's editor has characterized the stories as fiction depicting the "variety of tensions between different worlds, clash of value-systems, characteristic of the present generation, accompanied by several experiments with form and language (Ibid. 9). He mentions the tension between the City and the Village, master and servant, traditional ways, and modern self-consciousness (Ibid, 9). The question of patriarchy, gender relations, and sexuality remain invisible in the "Introduction."

In the following pages, I shall discuss a few Maithili to English translations of short stories from the perspective of gender and sexuality. A thorough discussion of all thirty short stories translated is out of the purview of this modest dissertation. However, discussing select texts would help understand how gender relations, gender roles, and sexuality are represented in the stories under study. I am not analyzing the linguistic problems involved in translating short fiction from Maithili to English. Instead, I shall focus on the politics of translation and the cultural politics of constructing gender and sexuality in the Maithili short fiction and disseminating the same through translation.

3.2.2: Women asserting identity and sexuality.

The first story has taken under this section is "Congratulates Mummy" by Jyotsana Chandram. (Thakur 2009, 272-75). Rupa, a young widow with a 14-year-old daughter, wants to marry a psychologist who is under treatment. She is in a dilemma as to how to convince her only daughter. By the end, the daughter understands her position, stands by her decision, and Rupa gets married to the doctor.

The daughter's eye, the gaze, the shocking expression in her eyes when she gets to know about her mother's desire to get married can be seen as an expression of society. The social censorship existing has influenced her personal decision regarding her mother. The feeling, or the mother's fear and shock of the daughter at her mother's decision, is shaped by societal pressure. The astonishment of the daughter after hearing about her mother's decision is representative of the difficulty of the society in understanding and accepting the mother's choice as this act of a widow and a mother remarrying is a form of transgression and assertion by a woman who should at best just be a mother devoid of any kind of self. The struggle doesn't stop with the daughter, and she must answer society for stepping out of widowhood and accepting a man in her life. Her sexuality and her desires become a social threat; any choice of this kind where a widow remarries or finds love should be controlled if not killed. An easy target as a widow, the mother in the story is vulnerable as a child.

Society cannot accept that she can take care of herself and her child, colleagues monitor her, neighbors keep an eye on her. In the story, Rupa and Doctor Pawan discuss the cold and insensitive social gaze. It's a way to find a space for themselves, sympathize, empathize, and connect. Having lost their partners, they try to find completeness by coming together, asserting one's freedom, space, individuality, and challenging the conventionalities. This story and the desires of Rupa remind us of Geeta Hariharan's "The Last Remains of the Feast" discussed by Susie Tharu. In that story, the female body of a Brahmin widow desires everything that was a social taboo to it in the face of death. Susie Tharu argues:

This body-person has a native wit that can play social injunction off against social injunction like a fish in post-structuralist water (caste-gender taboos as well as the secular norms of middle-class propriety are forced to move aside when the demand is

the gratification of a desire expressed in the face of death) and laughs subversively in the very face of authorities that would control her. This is a body-person that can compel the reiteration essential to its maintenance” (Tharu 1996, 1311-15)

According to her, in Hariharan’s story, “the enemy is not patriarchy, but a social world that fails to sustain the spirit. The victim is fleshly nature itself, not women.” It “asserts the claim of a natural appetite for life - be it male or female - against an order which seeks to deprive or discipline it.” (Ibid 1311-15). Hence, Rupa’s desire to remarry a person of her likes is not so much a rebellion against the ‘traditional values’ but a critique of the secular-modern and nationalist norms that seek to control her body and sexuality. Her daughter’s acceptance is a recognition of her own “more contemporary appetites and deprivations” that “come into focus and may be recognized for what they actually are” (Ibid).

Even with the changing scenario of India being at the cusp of modernism, the Indian modern society does not allow women to live by themselves assert their freedom and freedom of choice. Such women are generally criticized and looked down upon for asserting themselves. Rupa says, “Wearing the skin of modernity, and the society is nothing but barbaric like dark ages”. (Chandram, 2009, 273)

Rupa’s comment puts a question mark on the nature of modernity itself. How fit and inclusive is it for women? The story seems to have an ambivalent stance on the position of women in modern society. On the one hand, a widow falling in love and marrying a man of her choice is shown as an act of courage., and on the other, when she says that “she has failed to face the society, she cannot bear the eyes on her” (Ibid. p. 274), it becomes a contradiction of her own stance, at this point, the purpose of presenting her as a strong and assertive woman gets

jeopardized. It seems the very decision to marry results from her failure to face society alone. She needs a man to rescue her!

The secular-modern patriarchy is not an exception to the preconceived notion that women are incompetent, lack courage, are in constant need of help, and cannot arrive at rational solutions—the notions of superior shape its other and the agency of the perceived inferior. Thus, a woman is supposed to be petite and not vocal about her opinions, particularly her sexuality. Society constantly scrutinizes how and what she does. Appearance and good looks are considered the hallmark of femininity, and the patriarchal standards check her femininity. The story “Congratulates Mummy” demonstrates the tension between assertion and submission of Rupa.

Some of the translated stories depict that financial independence has allowed women to make choices about the expression of their sexuality. Let us consider two short stories. The first story presents a well-educated and financially independent protagonist, asserting her will. The second story depicts a woman who is never allowed to speak or to have an opinion about herself.

In the story “Sachi Rahthu Chauth Maiya” by Vibha Rani (Rani, 2007, 218-226), the protagonist Muniya was not educated as her parents married her very early. She became a widow at a very young age, and she was so innocent that she didn’t even know anything about marriage, husband or marital relationships. She has not even reached puberty. Hence, as per the local custom in such an eventuality, her in-laws and parents decide to marry her to her dead husband’s brother. Because her marriage was not consummated, she is young and “pure” and, therefore, a chaste woman and fit for remarriage. Moreover, she will remain in her in-laws’

place and have a man from the same family to protect her and control her. In the whole of the story, Muniya does not express herself even once what she desires, and she is voiceless.

In contrast, in “Ajnas” by Usha Kiran Khan, Ajnas is an educated and economically independent woman. Her father is a politician, and the Chief Minister asks her hand for his brother-in-law. Her parents are overwhelmed by this proposal; it was a God-given opportunity for their political future. In this scenario daughter’s body becomes a means for them to advance their political career. Ajnas, however, refuses to marry. She challenges her father and asks why he can’t help marry unmarried women willing to marry? Why does he not become a father to them? As a minister from the area, he must help those who need help. She also asserts that she is not dependent on them and will never be, and therefore, they should respect her decision to remain unmarried.

Marriage is one of the ways to control female sexuality and maintain social and financial order in society. In the context of India, it also supports the caste order. Marriage accords the ownership of the female body and her sexuality to a man. Fedrick Engels argues that the husband-and-wife relationship is a by-product of private property. (Engels 1884, 20) And a woman being a possession of men. Therefore, the female agency concerning marriage means an assertion of a woman’s sexuality, not letting men control it through the social institution of marriage. In the Indian context, marriage is also a means to reproduce and maintain the caste or any such order. In India, mostly among caste Hindus, the idea of women as *Nari Sampatti* (treating women as property) has existed and continues to exist. In the marriage, a girl is *donated* as a treasured object to the groom in the marriage practice called *Kanya Daan*. It is common and conspicuous in many cultures to treat women as property, except in matrilineal, tribal, or minor religions.

The stories discussed above reflect the social conditions of womanhood and sexuality in contemporary Maithili society. While men, irrespective of their caste, social status, or financial independence, have complete ownership and control over their body and sexuality and can exercise agency over their being, sadly, women cannot. They are denied property rights and treated as weak and vulnerable. A woman needs to struggle to elevate her social status through education and economic freedom to assert herself and take full possession of her body, otherwise denied to her. Financial independence can assure sexual and reproductive freedom.

3.2.3: Caste and the treatment of sexuality

In the story “The Rice” by Somdeva (Somdeva, 2005, 80-85), the protagonist Phoolchand lives with his wife, four daughters, and mother. The wife was the family's breadwinner as she earned and sustained the family. But one day, she went to work one day and never returned. The story begins with Phoolchan's mother standing in a queue to get the ration for the family. We see the gendered role of women at work here. The woman is always associated with food. Though *Phoolchan* has worked for five days and had just two *Rotis*, to once a day, she was to get the ration and groceries for the family. The story recalls Premchand's “Sadgati”, in which Dukhi, the protagonist of *Deliverance*, similar to Phoolchan, works without food and dies working in the sun.

Phoolchan's wife mostly was not in the house as she was working in the contractor's place. One night when she went there and did not return. The contractor denied her entry to his place that night. As the master belonged to the powerful community, the questions of caste and sexuality are foregrounded in the story. The wife might have gone there; she might have protested against his sexual advancements; he might have raped her and killed her. The scenario depicted reminds us of a similar situation in *Manjhi, 2015*, directed by Ketan Mehta. In the

scene where the labourer and his family working at Chimney were thrown into the burning Bhatti (furnace). The movie shows how the upper-caste owner of the Chimney sexually exploited women working for him. The film brings in the reality of caste and sex in urban and rural places in India.

Phoolchan's story also shows how gender roles vary in different castes. Here Phoolchan's wife brings food clothing and sustains the family. Upper caste women in a village set up of Bihar will be called transgressive if they step out to work. It is the patriarch of the family who earns and runs the family. However, unlike Dalit women, upper-caste women enjoy social and economic power in society through their husbands. Their caste keeps them in a powerful position as compared to Dalit women. As Uma Chakravarti rightly points out,

If we look at women today, their lives are located at the intersection of class, caste, and patriarchy. These structures can work to oppress them, as in the case of Dalit women, but most others are located in a way that they can be both subordinated and also wield a degree of power. This is so especially if women belong to an upper caste and have access through their menfolk, to economic resources and social power.”

(Chakravarti 2003, 32)

Phoolchan's wife sustained the family. She brought enough leftover food from the contractor's house to satisfy children's hunger. She would get a saree every three months, very expensive and dazzling. The story's powerfully depicted the politics and use of food as a tool to control a woman as the leftover food and sarees may lure her and her sexuality. If it were the other way round and the object of sexuality was an upper-caste woman, the gatekeepers of women's sexuality would have burned down the entire lower caste village, something we witness in the

movie *Sairat*, 2016, directed by Nagraj Manjule. The story runs around the issue of hunger, poverty, caste, and sexuality.

The sexuality of upper-caste women is guarded by the same upper caste men who sexually exploit them and the lower caste women, bringing in the question of how sexualities of women belonging to upper caste and lower caste are treated differently in the same society. Anupama Rao argues, “the male-dominant landlord can with impunity directly act out his sexual desire for Dalit women, whereas her husband being a Dalit man, is seen to have crossed the limits when he suggests a what if the counter move towards the controlled wife as an empty threat?” (Rao 2003, 10)

More value and izzat (honour) are attached to upper-caste women’s bodies than Dalit women’s bodies. Dalit women suffer exploitation at multiple levels: caste, gender, class, and sexuality. They are physically and sexually more vulnerable and abused than the upper caste women. Most of them are underpaid as labourers, and there is a higher possibility of Dalit women being sexually exploited than upper-caste women. Dalit feminists have argued that a Dalit women’s body is capable of casteist and sexiest violation. Their bodies have been seen as sites of extreme violence and violations. Feminist’s internal critiques have realized that Even Indian feminists could not articulate the caste angle due to their narrow focus on patriarchy. Fortunately, of late such perspective is changing,

The social construction of masculinity and femininity gives ground to justify male violence due to the patriarchal structure. Ironically, due to such justifications and notions, many feminist groups in India consider patriarchy as the sole reason for violence heaped on women. It is primarily due to such narrowed conclusions of violence on women that the literature of the Indian feminist framework has not been

able to capture a better picture of violence on Dalit women (Darapuri as qt. in Diwakar 2020, 1).

The story “Murder of Conscience” by Taranand Viyogi (Viyogi, 2005, 320-335) leaves a compelling message. The story is set in a school where the teaching community is divided into three groups. A “forward caste” group, a ‘backward caste” group and a “mixed caste” group. None supposedly believe in the caste system. They argue for a casteless society. The head of the school belongs to “backward caste”. There is always competition and fight amongst the three groups. The “mixed caste” group is hated and targeted by the other two groups. All the groups use their students as tools in their armoury. Once, Boss, the most powerful leader of the forward group, gets beaten by a group of students belonging to the “backward caste” as he fails one of the ‘backward caste” students when he refuses to take tuition from him. In this situation, a plot is laid by Manju Singh, who has been having an affair with Boss, to take caste revenge.

She uses one of her students, Sweta Singh, to punish the “backward and mixed caste group”. She instigates Sweta to file a rape case against some members of the other two non-forward groups. Manju Singh gets Sweta raped by two “forward” caste men and calls this act a sacrifice for the “forward caste” to get positive medical reports. In the end, the school principal and members of the non-forward cate group get arrested, and one of the members of the “mixed caste” group, Mr Singh, is killed by Sweta’s father.

The story can be read as an allegory of how women’s bodies are used to contest various kinds, nationalist, religious, casteist, propaganda, etc. In the story, both backward and forward caste group women complain about how men control them and are not given the position they deserve in their struggle or dominance (in the case of upper-caste women). Women are denied authority and autonomy, irrespective of their caste and class. The school principal says, “Till

long after these affairs began, the women stayed women, but later they began to acquire manliness”. (Viyogi, 2009, 326)

Madhuchhanda, one of the members of the forward caste group, complains, “women have always been the slave of men, and are so even today. However well-educated we might become, our slavery is still going on.” (Ibid.)

The story critiques the settling scores between castes patriarchal nature of the “caste struggle”. However, it’s worth noting using the female body and sexuality in settling scores between castes. The direct inclusion of women is feared, and they are denied autonomy within the caste struggle. But they were used as sexual objects to achieve men’s desires. Ironically Manju Singh, herself a woman, is a catalyst in the whole process.

One of the feminist arguments is that women are denied history, action, and agency. Generally, they are expected to remain silent, obedient, be a token, and not to transgress the bounds of their defined femininity by men. One such critique has come from the Dalit feminist Swathy Margret Maddella, who writes about her experience as part of the Ambedkar Student’s Union, University of Hyderabad,

“Like the majority of men, they (Dalit men) acknowledge a Dalit woman’s presence as the only fit for handing over bouquets to the guest speakers they invite for their meetings. At the most, she can give the vote of thanks. They do not consider her in important decisions or writing papers. Later, I learned that excluding women from their committees was a deliberate policy they followed as they believed women’s presence would cause ‘problems’ and come in the way of serious politics. Women

inevitably mean ‘problems’, their sexuality being an uncontrolled wild beast waiting to pounce upon the unassuming Dalit men.” (Margaret, 2013, Net.1)

She further says, “Dalit men, even those identified with the movement, do not want to see us as intellectuals.” It’s a reminder that, “You are a Dalit body, a Dalit female body. Why can’t I possess it? Why can’t I just come near you”. It is intimidating. (Margaret, 2010. Net.2)

In the story *Murder of Conscience*, Sweta’s sexuality is used to restore the lost honour of the caste; she gets raped by two forward men “they are being forward was considered needful as they would do the act to save the honour of their caste”. (Viyogi, in Thakur 2009, 335) This speaks volumes about the hypocrisy of the upper caste men, who, on the one hand, make female sexuality the repository of their honour at the same time, take the liberty to play with the same ‘honour’ whichever way they want to. A woman becomes the silent goddess, incapable of protecting herself, and she needs men to save her, objectified and dehumanized; her womb must be controlled; her body must be protected. As many feminist scholars observe, women are dehumanized, objectified, and reduced to embody the nation, merely an area of land to be acquired, controlled, and protected.

In the Indian context, the representation of women and sexuality cannot be seen without considering the power structures operating, such as caste and class. These inequalities are sustained by the very structure of marriage, sexuality, and reproduction. Hence, biological reproduction, the very essence of the institution of marriage, is a social reproduction in which the woman’s body becomes an object of the male gaze, desire, domestication, ownership, and contestation—an embodiment or repository of “Izzat” (honour) of a community. The notion of honour is not the same for men and women; it is gendered. The first step towards keeping this “izzat” intact is endogamy. This practice of same caste marriages maintains the caste hierarchy.

Any violation of this practice is considered disobedience to the cultural norms of the society as it disturbs and imbalances the *savarna* caste order. Therefore, as it happens in the story we are discussing, violence is the ultimate step towards keeping the “izzat” intact. Uma Chakravarti points out, “the safeguarding of the caste structure is achieved through the highly restricted movement of women or even through female seclusion. Women are regarded as gateways—literally points of entrance into the caste system.” (Chakravarti, 1993, 579). Hence, they are the repository of caste honour that must be protected at any cost, including violence. According to Jyoti Diwakar,

In the Indian context, caste controls the gender norms as women are producers of the notion of ‘caste purity’. Historically, the violation of caste codes, including those related to women, have been subjected to punishment through the instrument of social ostracism. Dalit men and women have been encountering culturally sanctioned violence from higher caste people in the name of ‘violating social norms’ such as temple entry, untouchability, inter-caste marriages, and so on. As a result, Dalits, especially women, become easy targets for the ‘guardians of social authority.’ (Diwakar, 2020, 121)

Honor-killing, physical torture, eviction from the family are some of the caste-based violence that is more frequent, particularly in the northern parts of India. For example, On September 13 2012, a 35-year-old man was lynched in a village in the Araria district of Bihar. Instead of punishing the perpetrators, the court found the victim guilty of eloping with a newly-married woman with whom he had fallen in love. Araria district falls in the Mithila. In another incident in the same year, in the Kaimur district of Bihar, a person and his two minor children were murdered, and his wife was critically injured for marrying outside their caste. Such honour

killing by village people and village and decisions of the courts happen in Bihar and other states like Haryana, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh. The “khap panchayats” have a vital role in such honour killings, which are, in fact, a disgrace to any modern, democratic society.⁶

3.2.4: Women as Soldiers of Patriarchy

The story “Lights going out” by Mayan Mishra depicts the spaces and actions in which female sexuality is being controlled and how women participate in the process of disciplining and curbing other women’s sexuality.

“Lights going out” is about ageing, remembering, changing times, differing socialization, and sexuality. Though not presented directly, the story hints at the son and daughter-in-law- of uncle Kariya wanting to have a get-together of sorts. This new notion of socialization was embarrassing to the uncle. However, his wife tries to convince him even though she never approved the social behaviour of her daughter-in-law. She still wanted to wield her power at home and control her home affairs. She was uncomfortable with the loving relationship of her son and his wife. So, the narrative begins with the husband and wife, i.e., uncle Kariya and Aunt discussing their son’s request to permit something. Both relapse to the memory of their marriage, consummation, and sexual relationship,

Uncle Kariya could not remember anyone ever seeing ever with his wife so long as he

⁶ A Khap Panchayat is an assembly of elders of the village. It is a community organization representing a clan or a group related to clans of the same caste. They are not affiliated with the democratically elected local assemblies that are termed as Panchayats.

had been physically fit. At night when everyone had gone to sleep on the front verandah, he would stealthily pick up his wooden sandals and creep in his wife's bed. He would return to the verandah early in the morning to sleep there (Mayanand Mishra in Thakur 2009, 94)

Aunt's reminiscences are no different,

How she used to wait all through the night! Next night when they would meet, she learnt that on the verandah, people were awake till late at night. And then her husband himself fell asleep (Ibid, 95).

Uncle Kariya was proud that he was never seen with his wife even inside his home when other house members were present, let alone in public. He and his wife hardly got a chance to meet in his time. But now the times have changed. And when the lights are going out, the two older people understand the delight of sexuality and togetherness. In the end, Aunt was trying to get up to leave, uncle Kariya said, "Sit with me a little longer. Aunt was about to get up, but she sat down again" (Ibid. 100).

It's an irony of the idea of masculinity. The Maithili society conventionally expects men not to express sexual desire in public but never mind violence related to sexual behaviour and choice out in public.

I shall argue that the aunt in the story is the woman playing soldiers in the hands of patriarchy. Patriarchy's primary function is to maintain a hierarchy, control, and inequality. In the absence of the patriarch in the personal spaces, women take up the role of the patriarch. Women play an essential role in ensuring that girls/women in the family learn subordination and patriarchal values get passed on from one generation to another. Aunt takes pride in the fact that she spent

nights without her husband. The wait is expected of women, which implies controlling their sexuality. It is a feminine quality expected in women. Aunt considers women as dirty during periods. She suspects that her daughter-in-law slept with her husband while she was going through her periods, and she finds it shameful, hates her, and disapproves of her husband's likeness to the daughter-in-law. These are patriarchal ideologies that the orthodox women perpetuate to other women in the family and society.

Another such story where women perpetuate patriarchy is "*Sinurhar*" by Shivshankar Shreenivas. (*Shrinivas, 2005, 279-90*) In the story, Kalyani, a widow, remarries by her family's consent. Her family and she with her husband stay in the same city. Her parents invite her to her brother's "sacred thread ceremony". Kalyani goes to her village, and her parents and her husband are to attend the ceremony. But her mother does not allow her to participate in the rituals during the ceremony, despite her protesting against her. Kalyani's grandmother was a widow, and she was kept away from any celebration or ritual. She was considered inauspicious and impure. Although Kalyani has married again, her mother considers her inauspicious enough not to be part of the rituals. Kalyani's mother is an example of a woman carrying and reproducing patriarchal beliefs. Here the dead man is respected even after his death but not the alive woman. Women continue to be the gatekeeper of patriarchy. Such women keep correcting other women and ensure their subordination.

3.2.5: Identity and sexual essentialization

The story "Evening tree" by Rajkamal Choudhary (Thakur, 2009, 420-54) questions sexual essentialization. The story is in the form of an extended monologue. It begins with the

protagonist's existential crisis. He stands alone, under the tree, looks at the fields gardens. Since he is mentally worn out, nothing seems to belong to him anymore. The sun going down looks ill, and Mithila, too, is as worn out like him. He recalls that once, he belonged to a village but no more. He has been detached from everything and everyone. He had a kitchen where a sad-looking woman in a dirty saree sat silently. One day the woman poured kerosene over her dirty saree and burnt herself. Everything was burnt down with her; his kitchen, village, everything. So, his village is now in the loneliness of his heart. He feels that he is rootless. He had to leave the village because he failed to live in conventional ways. His sister-in-law said, "if you don't work on the farm if you don't tend the cattle, what would you live on?" (Thakur 2009, 45)

"I can laugh and horse around, no cattle, no farm, work for me. Daughter-in-law left the house because she could not bear the non-masculinity" (Ibid).

"My dear, won't you work on a farm" (Ibid).

Everyone questioned the protagonist's unconventionality. His brother's ghost haunting him may be construed as the burden of masculinity haunting him. He must perform his gender. His wife was 'invisible', sitting alone in the kitchen providing him and performing her gender. He found joy in her but never had a meaningful relationship, was always at the run, hardly stayed at home. He was absent even at her death and considered himself sexually incapable of going near her. He never had sexual hunger, no desire to sit on *dalan*⁷ and welcome friends like others. In the end, she committed suicide. What was in the minds of this silent and invisible person is a mystery. Considering the modernist narrative style showing the darkest side of the human psyche with the monotony that pervades the story, we may read the "unsaid" as frustration about the non-recognition of her sexuality. In the story, the person, body, and the silent pain of sexuality is the most striking part.

⁷ front area of the house where generally men gather, sit and talk

The narrator makes a distinction between two kinds of women. First, introvert like his wife and the second, “women that move about in towns and market places like his sister-in-law.” He fled from the first kind, and the second kind that moved away from the village haunted him (49). He explains his paradox with the famous lines of Rabindranath Tagore, “The one that I wanted was a mistaken want; the one that I found, I did not want to find at all “(49).

The absence or incapacity to perform the received social role seems to result in the rootlessness and loneliness of the narrator. He can “play” a role, good or bad, far away from his village cannot “act” within it.

The narrator and his body fail to perform his gender. His crisis is not just existentialist but also his identity and body. No sexual hunger and coldness towards passion is not masculinity in conventional ways. The insecurity about the protagonist’s sexuality can also be seen in the form of the fear of acknowledging his unconventional sexuality. This crisis, in turn, has created detachment and identity crisis in his life.

Rooting oneself in space, place, and time could be the solution for his loneliness and meaningless life. Hence, throughout the narrative, the dream of the village follows the narrator. He longs to be to have belonged, belonged to his village. However, he fears even if he begins no guarantee that his fate will be different. Hence, the feeling: “ I *am* the evening tree-there is no telling when I sink again in darkness” (53).

The Shahijan tree mentioned in the story is symbolic as its leaves and seeds are intoxicants. The narrator is really thirsty for life and wants to have a full drink to satiate his thirst and hunger for life. In a way, his unconventional wanderings, leaving the fate of two women and three

nephews to fend themselves, is a journey and search for meaningfulness. However, a modernist hero must fail. He failed only to learn that one must live here and now, the “present. Gender and sexuality bring in such realization.

In the stories that we have analyzed, the characters struggle because of their sexual identity. Caste, culture, religion, and gendered body division control and dominate their existence and influence their sexual attitude. Some assert their desires, while others succumb to the dominance of the societal structure.

Chapter -4

Conclusion

“Life is the art of drawing sufficient conclusions from insufficient premises.”

-Samuel Butler

“Great is the art of beginning, but greater the art is of ending”.

- Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

Formation, interpretation and search for knowledge can never be put to a conclusion. However, as the convention demands, I must conclude this dissertation. The act of completing involves satisfaction, acceptance of the end and detachment, I must say the final words. Still, this finality does not imply that my quest has come to a conclusion, and this act of conclusion would embark a new beginning for the search for new knowledge about my work.

In this dissertation, I have attempted to look at the trajectory of meaning production regarding gender and sexuality and their translation to address questions central to Maithili language, literature, culture and society about gender and sexuality. In such a search, one also unravels the connection between power relations involved knowledge production, including translation, and society that is worthwhile to explore. Maithili literature enjoys an important position amongst the literatures of various languages in Bihar. Hence, it becomes imperative to pose questions about how gender and sexuality were inscribed in Mathili and how they have been translated to English. A more important endeavour is to look into the representation/translation of gender and sexuality in the Maithili literature, which remains not a much-explored area of research and production of knowledge in Maithili literature.

Chapter one of the thesis titled “Introduction: Translation as Representation and Discourse Formation.” In it, I have explored the different meanings of translation, theorizations about translation and their relevance. The chapter also includes discussions about Maithili literature, its contemporary position in literary space, and the significance of researching it. In this chapter, I have proposed my research problems and the research methodology I have adopted in my attempt to resolve these questions.

I have placed my study in the context when the translation production is in abundance, if not in prime. Translation enables cross-cultural communication, discourse formation, and engagement of various kinds, cutting across disciplines. The theoretical framework of deconstruction, cultural studies, and feminism in translation studies has assisted my examination of translation of gender and sexuality in the English translations of Maithili literature. That apart, I have also used the methodology of comparative literature. After all, any analysis textual or otherwise of the translation includes comparing, analyzing the representation of gender and sexuality, bringing in the question of comparative cultural representation becomes inevitable.

In chapter two, titled “Contextualizing Translation: A Brief History of Maithili Literature,” I have tried to place Maithili literature and language in relation to Hindi and the existing language policy, Maithili language movement and formation of its identity, and the criticism surrounding it. I have also given a cursory account of the history of Maithili literature and have elaborated the reason for choosing Maithili short stories for my research.

In my exploration, I found out that the language policy is a powerful tool to preserve or destroy languages. It determines the position of a language and the distribution of resources amongst

the languages. I have also realized that the whole debate about a language and dialect has more to do with power relations between different languages than any linguistic or scientific explanation for the existence of power hierarchy. Hence, the above distinction is purely political and operates within the realm of power relations within a linguistic community. In my research, I realized that the contemporary plight of different languages of India raises serious questions. Is the implementation of the three-language formula by the union government of India enough for the survival of hundreds of mother tongues and indigenous languages that are endangered and near extinction? Is the education policy of India favourable for the different 'dialects' spoken in the country? What kind of presence does Maithili have in educational spaces, and how educational policy has affected the Maithili language? A satisfactory answer for the above questions is beyond the scope of this dissertation, and of course, my quest for the answer shall continue in future.

I have also discussed the two primary criticisms surrounding the Maithili movement. Despite its long history of struggle, the movement has been accused of an indifferent attitude towards the masses. The elite custodians of the literary culture and linguistic identity in the linguistic movements tried to reach the masses and translate the consciousness they acquired, but most failed, unlike the linguistic movements such as Tamil, Marathi, and the like.

Another criticism of the Maithili literary movement is its domination by the upper caste. Maithili Brahmins and Karn Kayashts were the first to write literary texts such as novels in the early phase. Though at present, we see the presence of other caste groups for a long time, Brahmins and Kayashts dominated the organization and leadership of the Maithili movement.

In the last section of my second chapter, I have justified my selection of short stories for my

work. I have argued that considering India and the appearance of various new literary genres in Indian languages, short fiction and its translation also reflect the colonial nature of colonial modernity and the changing notions of gender and sexuality in Maithili literature. Short stories depict the quotidian life of people and, therefore, best to theorize our everyday. The Maithili short stories are rooted in a patriarchal culture, and all their content comes from there. At the same time, the texts are critical about patriarchy which shows through their portrayal of gender and sexuality.

Chapter three, titled “Construction of Gender and Sexuality in Select English Translations of Maithili Short Stories,” deals with various definitions of translation from the feminist perspective. This chapter also consists of an analysis of Maithili short stories translated into English.

I have discussed the importance of exploring the representation of sexuality in translation. I have argued that exploring sexuality in different languages is also an exploration into how sexuality is being treated in different parts of the world. It is also a documentation of the cultural history of the world. Sexuality, when translated, becomes more than just the change in the language, culture or medium but a political act. It is not simply the manifestation of sexual desire or attitude into other cultures, and it becomes a political category with the play of power around it.

Further, according to my understanding, I have given different definitions of sexuality and what it includes and excludes, and have explored the historical account of the alliance between feminism and Translation studies. Sexuality denotes people’s sexual awareness, curiosity, attraction towards others, ability to have erotic experiences and responses, and sexual attitudes. Subsequently, it also refers to how others see and represent a person’s sexuality. It involves

human agency and history. Sexuality is not understood as a mere physical experience but as a larger cultural concept and value predominant with the accompanying gender identity issues. Therefore, they have been discussed within the framework of gendered oppression, gendered suppression and gendered violence. In the 70s of the twentieth century, along with the advent of critical theories (Post-colonialism, Postmodernism, Post-structuralism, Feminism) and cultural studies. An alliance between Feminism and Translation Studies has also taken place, which benefited both disciplines. Both Translation Studies and Feminist thoughts emerged as fields of inquiry. They gained increasing institutional recognition through the 1980s grounded similarly in the dynamics of a period that gave strong prominence to language. As a result, a new way of considering the hermeneutic act of translating began to pay close attention to the concept of identity and the representation of women in and through language. In this context, issues of Gender and Sexuality gained prominence in Translation Studies. The discussion of gender in translation, apart from questioning and subverting patriarchy, inscribes women's subjectivity and agency.

The last section of the chapter deals with analyzing select Maithili short stories, both original and their English versions. In my analysis, I have tried to achieve two specific goals, first to see the representation of Gender and Sexuality in selected Maithili short stories. The second is to analyze English translations of selected short stories and discuss the issues arising out of them with a particular focus on the questions of Gender and Sexuality. I did not analyze the formal linguistic problems involved in translating short fiction from Maithili to English. Instead, I have focused on the politics of translation and the cultural politics of constructing gender and sexuality in the Maithili short fiction and disseminating the same through translation. In the section, I discussed women asserting their identity and sexuality, the question of caste and the treatment of sexuality, women as soldiers of patriarchy, and identity and sexual

essentialization.

To conclude, any translation reforms, transforms, modifies, and re-presents the text, thus reshaping the linguistic reality constructed in it. Hence, an enquiry into the translated texts is an act of looking into how reality is being constructed through translation. For example, patriarchy constitutes and produces various kinds of practices akin to it. Translation studies is interested in how those practices are represented in translation. Whether patriarchy is carried forward or contested in translation? Translation also leads to discourse formation. It may help institutionalize the social/cultural practices and structures in society about gender and sexuality or deconstruct, contest, and subvert them. All this needs to be understood, challenged if required, and changed and, this work is a small move towards that.

At last, I would propose that sexuality be used as a plural category as one does not experience it singularly or possesses only one kind of sexuality. Therefore, perhaps we need to consider ‘sexualities.’ Sexualities can involve body, mind, object, emotion, aesthetics, sensory experience, reading, writing, dancing, singing, or saying anything and everything under the sun the body and mind can perceive, experience, and which, of course, is undefinable. Sometimes, sexuality is almost philosophical, residing between the two subjects; the other subject can be anything, not necessarily a human being. It becomes a Derridean task in which there is no final victory. So final text is not realizable in translation, and what one can have is a certain approximation or a tentative translation. As no definitive version of the text is ever realizable, translation becomes just an approach.

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