

Translating Punishment: Reading Select Women Perpetrators' Narratives

A thesis submitted during 2020 to the University of Hyderabad in partial fulfilment for the
award of the PhD degree in Translation Studies

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN TRANSLATION STUDIES

by

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Declaration

I, Subha Chakraborty, hereby declare that the doctoral thesis entitled “**Translating Punishment: Reading Select Women Perpetrators’ Narratives**” submitted to the University of Hyderabad in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Translation Studies is a record of the work done by me under the guidance of Dr. Sriparna Das, Centre for Applied Linguistics and Translation studies, School of Humanities, University of Hyderabad, Hyderabad.

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Further the scholar has the following publications before the submission of her thesis for adjunction and has produced evidence for the same in the form of acceptance letter or the reprint in the relevant area of her research.

Chakraborty, Subha. "Countering Punishment: A Study of Nandini Oza's Whither Justice: Stories of Women in Prison", *Journal of Comparative Indian Language and Literature*, University of Calcutta, Volume-V, to be published in early 2021 (letter of acceptance is enclosed in the end)

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Chapter One

Preamble

The title of the thesis is “Translating Punishment: Reading Select Women Perpetrators’ Narratives”. The present study argues how micro narratives of ‘criminals’ depicted in the narratives of the researcher’s sources are performatives where the victim is the subject of self-representation and signification. The doctoral thesis further examines translation as metaphor and as an act of retelling and re-memory.

Gender issues have become entangled with language issues as the result of women’s movement. Since the 1990s with the impact of post-structuralism on Gender Studies, newer understanding of gender as contextually varying performance and as a multiple and fluctuating identity that is continually being constructed in context has largely shaken the essentialist notion of gender. Consequently, research focus has been shifted to the discursal representations or constructions of women and men in particular gendered ways in speeches or written texts in a given context. Within the field of translation, which has long been recognized as implicated in power relation and ideological struggles, Gender and Translation Studies have become an independent field of interdisciplinary enquiry, integral of feminism in general. Discussion of gender and translation at its earlier phase of development was largely based on a radical and essentialist understanding of the female identity and patriarchy. However, later on, it has taken a post-structuralist perspective upon gender and language. Research that focuses on the discursive and contingent aspect of gender starts to emerge at the crossroad of the disciplines of Translation Studies, Language and Gender Studies. The aim of the present study is to explore gender construction and representation in literary and cultural translation from the perspective of the post-structuralist discursive conceptualizations of gender and language. The results of text analysis are interpreted and explained as gender is. The texts selected for the present study revolve around women perpetrators’ narratives and lived

experiences. Shivani's *Apradhini: women without men*, translated in English from Hindi by Ira Pandey and *Whither Justice: Stories of Women in Prison* by Nandini Oza are, for instance, compilations of short narratives of eighteen and twelve women perpetrators respectively. Besides these, the project analyses prison memoirs by political prisoners such as Urmila Shastri, Joya Mitra, and Minakshi Sen and their respective novels *My Days in Prison*, translated from Hindi into English by Sonal Parmar, *Killing Days: Prison Memoirs*, translated in English from Bengali by Shampa Banerjee, and *Jailer Bhetor Jail* (Jail within Jail). These volumes are both testimonial writings and compendiums of several other women perpetrators' narratives. The present study also explores the victim narratives collected from the archival sources of Anweshi, Research Centre for Women's Studies, an institutional culture based out of Hyderabad. This thesis is an endeavour towards a concentrated study on the themes of gender and translation; within the limited period of this course.

Gender and Translation

What is gender? It is perhaps a dated inquest in present times and yet the researcher wants to start with such a question! When, in the proverbial sensibilities, girls were admonished for being heard rather than being seen, when boys were told not to be sissies when they cry or when young girls were punished for attempting to climb trees like boys, behavioural codes were being ascribed for boys and girls in certain ways suppressing their capabilities to be exactly the ways they were. Boys have tear glands and they can cry; girls have vocal cords and limbs and they can speak and climb trees. And yet, there are, almost everywhere, differential codes of conduct for boys or girls or for that matter, men and women. When Rani Laxmibai fought, she became a *mardani* (like a man) because women did not fight, while Indira Gandhi, the former prime minister of India, was often lauded as the "only man" in her cabinet for her strong political overtures. On this light, although most criminal offenders are men, we rarely

question why men, as opposed to women, perpetrate violence. It is acknowledged crime; particularly, violent crime is a domain executed almost exclusively by men because it is socially sanctioned and legitimised as an expression of masculine power. Violence is gendered. All over the world', say Bengiano et al. (2010) 'men try to exercise dominance over women ... to the point of resorting to violence', and Steve Hall (2002) notes that, "the claim that men commit most acts of physical violence is possibly the nearest that criminology has come to producing an indisputable fact." However, contemporary criminologists disagree. Number of questions are raised: is the gender gap stable or variant over time and across space? If there is variance, how may it best be explained? Are the causes of female crime distinct from or similar to those of male crime? Can traditional sociological theories of crime explain female crime and the gender gap in crime? Do gender neutral or gender-specific theories hold the most explanatory promise? The goal of the present study is to advance theory and research by reviewing select women perpetrator narratives; by advancing a gendered paradigm of female offending which builds on existing theory and on the growing body of work on gender.

Simply put, this is what we call gender – a socially, superficially imposed construct as to what boys and girls, or men and women should do or should not do. This essentialised construct of sex as different from the artificially imposed gender made it possible for gender to be theorised as "the cultural or social elaboration of absolute (biological) sexual differences between women and men and importantly, women's supposed inferiority in matters of physical strength and mental agility" – and as such "amenable to change" (McDowell 1999:107). The discourse around gender has been much nuanced at present, that is, sex and gender are not seen as delinked from each other now as was the case earlier. Scholars have argued that as sexed bodies, men and women are made to achieve and maintain a particular state of embodiment. In such a state, sex and gender play onto each other as a legitimised performance, any 'deviation' from this standardised code takes one to queer studies, to issues in the transgender and

transsexual realm. However, the researcher wants to leave aside these very well-conceived, evolved and at the same time contested discourses interconnected with sex and gender and their constructs to return to gender as it is basically understood. Albeit gender is a blanket term, the researcher means to work with gender of women and not men, or any other gender which brings us to the second part which is translation.

The understanding of translation as deeply implicated in power relation and ideology has been acknowledged over the past decades. Among all the possible power tensions and ideological frames that translation is subjected to and that consequently determine the way how a translated text represents the original text, gender imbalance is arguably one of the most insidious. This is because gender relation is pervasive and its naturalisation is usually taken for granted (Eckert 1989: 253, 254). The enquiry of Gender and Translation Studies, which is also prompted by the “second wave” of women’s movement, is part of feminism in general and can be viewed partly as integral of feminist gender and language studies program in specific. And the developing understanding from the reflective model of language to the constitutive model of discourse also means shift in approaches to Gender and Translation Studies.

Earliest discussion of gender and translation was triggered during the “second wave” feminism by the radical literary practices that were conducted to remedy patriarchal language. The general purposes of the feminist writers as well as the feminist translators included emancipating women from patriarchal oppression in language and representing their specificity through a full-scale renovation of language, and to “identify and critique the tangle of concepts which relegates both women and translation to the bottom of the social and literary ladder” (Simon 1996). To achieve these goals, feminist translators and critics explored many directions that were of crucial import to the feminist campaign in the field of translation. Those directions ranged from issues in translation practice, to translation history and criticism, and to new ideas in translation theory. In translation practice, feminist translators performed linguistic

innovation to translate experimental feminist writings, and queried source texts from a feminist perspective to intervene and make changes to them. For translation history and criticism, feminists recovered and made available the creative works of some earlier women writers and woman translators that have been ignored in patriarchy, critiqued and re-translated key cultural works from a feminist perspective (such as the feminist retranslation of the Bible). They also challenged and undermined traditional translation theory by asserting translators' identity and visibility, by destroying the illusion of translation transparency through textual and paratextual means, and by confronting the notion of equivalence through highlighting the processes of re-reading and rewriting.

Yet, despite the undisputed contribution of feminist translation practice and theory, this radical perspective, born in the era when an essentialist focus on gender prevailed, has been, like Gender and Language Studies and after Gender and Language Studies, challenged by the post-structuralist conceptualisations of gender and language in "third wave" feminism. The moments for the gender theories and gender and language theories that underpinned Feminist Translation Studies for the last three decades "have passed" and "are no longer sufficient" (Cameron 1995: 39). New concept of gender instability is "undermin[ing]" the categories and certainties that underlie the feminist translation practice and studies during "second wave" feminism, and "interesting shifts in focus" have happened in the field of Gender and Translation Studies (von Flotow 1999: 284, 285). However, up to now, most publications bringing together gender issues and translation have subscribed to the conventional assumption that femininity and masculinity are essential features of people and have focused on women as a special minority group that is allocated subordinate position in patriarchy. Research, especially empirical ones, from a shifted perspective that focuses on the discursive and contingent aspect of gender have barely been carried out.

Choice of Texts, Objectives of the Dissertation and Research Questions

The researchers' interest in studying the women perpetrators' narratives has both an empirical and academic context. It emerged from a previous academic project where the researcher had examined and analysed genres of crime and criminality with regards to the women espionage literature, both in the Western as well as the Indian milieu. She has been deliberating more on the perpetrator narratives ever since and surmised of incorporating the same for her doctoral dissertation; for the prison documents traverse the turbulent years, but the protagonists live in a world of shadows, where time stands still, the present and the past converge, and the human spirit eternally battles to survive. Going through their words became a humbling experience as the researcher journeyed into a world of ineffable pain she had never known.

Women have been victims of social, cultural, political, religious, as well as economic discrimination and exploitation since time immemorial. This discrimination has affected them in all walks of life across the world. In her book, *The Women's History of the World*, Rosalind Miles observes that traditionalist arguments of masculine supremacy have been remarkably resilient over time. All democratic experiments, all revolutions, all demands for equality have so far stopped short of sexual equality – and women, seen as biologically determined, continue to be denied the human right of full self-determination. One cannot help but notice the effects of centuries of discrimination and exploitation of women in its starkest form. The researcher realised that in many cases, women were being punished for crimes that they had not committed, or crimes that they were forced into, in many ways inevitably, due to the fact that they were women. Their life stories revealed their position as women, the expectations from them, and the ruthless manner in which society dealt with them and coerced them into crime. In many cases, these women were paying the price for the crimes of society.

Through these readings the researcher has formed an informed understanding of the nature of the legal and judiciary systems; the operations of which ignore the social, cultural and economic realities of women's lives. It ends up, many times, punishing the victim herself. Quite

organically then, the research questions arise as to who are these women? What are their crimes, as stated by the police records? What are the circumstances that lead to them being imprisoned? What drove them to crime? What is their condition in jail and what fate awaits them outside? Do jails really help in reforming these so called criminals? Is there a need and scope for reform in our judicial and legal system?

Given that the research focuses on Space, Gender and Translation Studies and Gender and Translation Studies have been shifting from structuralism to post-structuralism, the examination of gender issues in translation means the re-examination of gender as a contextually fluctuating construct and translation as a discourse that is deeply implicated in cross-social and cross-cultural power struggles and ideological conflicts. Adopting the perspective of post-structuralist discursive conceptualizations of gender and language/discourse, the present study aims to explore gender construction and representation in literary and cultural translation through the narratives of the women perpetrators (the case studies will be introduced in detail in the following chapters).

It further attempts to provide answers to the following questions:

How do the translators represent gender construction in the source text in translation?

How does the identity of translator interact with gender identity? That is, to what extent the constraints that translation is subjected to and the issues of fidelity and invisibility may intervene in the construction and representation of gender in the target text?

How can gender construction and representation in the translations by the translators be comprehended in a post-structuralist discursive sense? What are the discourses that shape the way gender is represented and constructed in the literary translations by the translators?

Methodology

The study will be generally framed within post-structuralist theories with regard to Gender and Translation Studies. Theorisation of language and subjectivity from post-structuralist perspective will be introduced first. Key terms of discourse and power which are at the core of the discursive practice to the study of gender and language will be defined then. Since it is Foucault's theory that is incorporated into and exerts significant influence upon the approach, the two crucial concepts of discourse and power will be traced from his theorisation. Following that, as post-structuralism poses major challenge to the essentialist notion of gender, developing understanding of gender from post-structuralist perspective will be introduced: gender is considered to be construction in discourse which is subject to power and other non-linguistic contextual factors. To link individual performance of gender with discourse factors and reveal the power struggle involved, it is felt that a critical perspective upon the discursivity and locality of gender identity is necessary. Therefore, the final part will deal with the specific analytical framework for interpretation of the translations, which promises to be useful in connecting textual elements with layers of contexts.

The present project involves archival research and secondary or documentary research. Since the doctoral dissertation analyses the perpetrator narratives and looks into the women's movement that work at tandem with each other, archival and documentary/secondary based methods have been beneficial in providing access that the researcher might not have to the organizations, individuals and events of that earlier time. The study takes into account both the political prisoner's jail experiences from the time of pre-Independence struggle to the 1960's struggle of the Naxalites to the experiences of the under trial prisoners and the ones who have committed the crime in the contemporary times.

Significance of the Study

The present study positioned against the general backdrop of “third wave” feminism makes contributions to the following relevant fields: the field of Literature and Cultural Studies, wherein the manipulation of culture and ideology is examined; the field of Gender Studies, which examines gender variable in aspects of women perpetrators and society, the field of Gender and Language Studies, which examines the category of gender in the specific aspect of perpetrators’ language and has recently developed a critical perspective; and the field of Translation Studies, wherein the manipulation of literature in a given context is examined.

Within the field of Literature and Cultural Studies, the study makes specific contributions to the field of women’s prison narratives, as it brings linguistic as well as broader socio-cultural and socio-economic aspects together. In focusing on the context of the gender representation in perpetrator narratives, the study provides information on the culture of the women convicts in India.

As for the contributions made to the field of Gender Studies, the study highlights the understanding of the diversity of women’s identity, and stresses the contextual effects on the construction of gender in a specific Indian culture.

The study also contributes to the field of Gender and Language Studies in that it is a different research trajectory as it offers the alternative perspective of translational discourse to examine issues at the interface of gender and language.

Finally, as for the field of Translation Studies, the thesis examines translation as metaphor and as an act of retelling and re-memory and constitutes a shift away from previous Feminist Translation Studies paradigms, pointing towards new areas of research at the interface of gender, ideology, language and translation, and opening up different kind of questions for the field of Gender and Translation Studies as well as for the exploration of the ideological nature of translation. To be more specific, it tries to investigate translator’s gendered practice and the ways translator represents/constructs gender in literary and cultural translation from the

perspective of post-structuralist discursive conceptualization of gender and discourse. It argues that translation as a discourse offers translators' space to perform their gender identities; yet it also exerts constraints upon their gender performance (Butler 1999) so that the interaction between gender and the identity of translator would mean that the performance can never be free.

Organisation of the Thesis

The doctoral thesis is composed of five chapters. Chapter one, 'Preamble' introduces the status quo of Gender and Language Studies where the entanglement of gender issues with language issues is explored, and of Translation Studies in which gender is perceived to be a power-ridden ideological concept that interfaces with and impacts upon Translation Studies. In so doing, it sets forth the major issues that confront contemporary studies at the crossroad of gender, language and translation, and consequently raises questions to which the present study attempts to provide answers. Based on the objectives of the study, its significance is claimed. The chapter also discusses the relevant literature review, research methodology, objectives and significance of the study.

Chapter two, 'Of Space, Prison and Gender' examines the notion of interactional spaces as an analytical tool. It looks into the concept of the triad of space, prison and gender, as the three coherently intertwine to infuse meaning into the nuances of space. The focus on interactional details reiterates the questions of the relationship between the individual and the collective, between structure and agency. The individual-collective relationship is examined in two separate realms, of the prison and neighbourhood and of the public and the private.

The third chapter titled, 'On Narratives' highlights the different life narratives of the women perpetrators. It has been observed the location of the telling of the life story is as significant as the story itself, and in a prison setting, life story is perhaps the most common and familiar trope

through which to communicate thoughts, ideas, events, relationships and interpretations is made feasible in individual lives. The life story is particularly significant as a methodological strategy and as a form of representation that passes through many interpretive layers.

The penultimate chapter, ‘Translation as metaphor and as an act of retelling’ explores the contours of the act of retelling and thereafter revolves around the theory of metaphor. It overviews the theory of translation as metaphor, in both Indian and Western understanding. Thereafter, it looks into the enquiry in its figurative meanings of transcoding and transformation, a topos in feminist discourse used by women writers to evoke the difficulty of breaking out of silence in order to communicate new insights into women’s experiences and their relation to language.

As a conclusion, the final chapter, ‘Observations’ summarizes the major findings of the study, discusses its implications and limitations, and offers suggestions for future studies.

Literature Review

Gender and Translation Studies

It is hardly a coincidence that the period which saw the development of feminist and then gender studies also witnessed a remarkable growth in translation studies. The entry of gender into translation theory has a lot to do with the renewed prestige of translation as “re-writing” and as a bulwark against the unbridled forces of globalization, just as it shows the importance for all the social and human sciences of a critical reframing of gender, identity and subject-positions within language. (Simon 1996: ix)

Over the past half century, and as part of the result of women’s movement in the West, gender issues have developed an increasingly close relation with the issues of language. Patriarchal language that is believed to be one major channel of male dominance has been critiqued and become one of the dynamics of second wave feminism. Over the same period, Translation

Studies have taken a turn towards a growing concern for Cultural Studies. The “cultural turn” implies adding an important dimension where a descriptive approach is emphasized that encourages description of translations as they are and interpretation of the impact of contextual factors. Both Gender Studies and Translation Studies, similarly grounded in the dynamics of a period when language was given strong prominence, are brought into relationship with each other, giving rise to a number of issues, which include, but not limited to: what cultural gender differences are, how these differences are revealed in language, and how these differences can be transferred across languages?

The initial context that the above questions emerge is to be found with the Canadian feminist translation experience (von Flotow 1991: 72). The beginning of feminist translation practice was with the French-language feminist experimental writing in Quebec. The radical feminist writers, seeking to undermine, deconstruct and subvert the conventional everyday language that they perceive as inherently misogynist, produce works that are highly experimental. A method to translate the subversive language experiments, feminist translation is developed out of a desire to promote literary mediation and dialogue between French Quebec and English Canada (Simon 1996: viii). As a direct derivative and response to feminist writing, feminist translation shares the former’s general viewpoint that conventional and prescriptive patriarchal language has to be undone in order for women’s voice to be spread and heard. Yet sited in the field of Translation Studies, feminist approach to translation that has appropriated and adapted many of the techniques and theories that underlie the writing, it translates, challenges the notion of fidelity, transparency and definitive meaning in traditional translation with creative and non-traditional strategies such as supplementation, hijacking and interference, etc. (von Flotow 1991: 74 –79). Motivated by second wave feminism and indebted to deconstruction as well feminist translators are given relative freedom in devising and practicing creative techniques

to texts, making their presence felt and challenging the authors, and thus making changes to some of crucial traditional views of translation.

As second wave feminism gradually gives way to the third wave, the Canadian-origin feminist translation practice and the theories that underlie it are being challenged. While the socially constructed notions of what constitutes social and biological men and women are changing, research on the interaction between gender and translation expands and is directed toward more challenging uncharted areas. According to von Flotow (1999, 2007), two paradigms prevail in current work at the interface of Translation Studies and Gender Studies. The first one holds the conventional assumption that biologically different women and men possess distinctive femininity and masculinity that are socially constructed. The second one develops from the influence of third wave feminism and takes gender as a process and discursive rather than biologically determined and fixed. Translation Studies of the first paradigm tend to subscribe to the basic assumption of second wave feminism that women as an underprivileged group are cast outside of history through patriarchal language. The second paradigm, on the other hand, focuses on the “performative” (Butler 1999) aspect of identity as well as translation.

In addition to the two paradigms of Gender and Translation Studies, there is one more emergent recently. The third group is characteristic of a combination of Feminist Translation Studies and Feminist Linguistics, where researchers attempt to perceive translational gender issues from an angle informed by the theories and practices from the discipline of gender and Language Studies. (Castro 2013, 2009; Ergün 2013) Following Castro, the third kind is called “third wave Feminist Translation Studies”.

Gender-related Theorization of Translation

Feminist translation practice concerning the feminist innovative writings have an even greater impact on the theorization of gender and translation. It has given rise to theoretical and ethical

questions such as whether and how biological sex or gender affiliation influence the translation process, whether deliberate interventionist translation in the name of gender politics is ethically justified, and the even broader question of how traditional gender stereotypes have impacted on the status of translation and in what way perceptions about translation reflect society's gender relations.

Chamberlain's (1988) well-known study of the gendered metaphors of translations across cultures and history underlines the fact that the "sexualization of translation" both reflect and structure the conceptualization of gender relations in a society, and reveals the power play involved in both cross-cultural linguistic transfer and the relations between women and men. Focusing on the close connection between women's oppression in language and culture and the devaluation of translation, she analyses terms frequently adopted in translation criticism. The term "les belles infidèles", for example, demonstrates clearly the denigration of both women and translation. Citing historical discourses, she first demonstrates that the metaphor genders translation by "mimic[ing] the patrilineal kinship system where paternity legitimizes an offspring", that is, how it is historically intertwined with power relations in the family in terms of male control of female sexuality. Thus, the translator becomes the father who seduces the mistress (the author-text) and the translation is unfaithful to the author. Then, she illustrates how translation is depicted as a problem of fidelity to the "mother tongue". The concern is also motivated by the comparison of translation as "the literary equivalent of colonization" (459) when violence against the colonized is comparable both to the violence against captive women and to the intervention to a translated text. Following that, Chamberlain shows that twentieth-century translation theorists such as George Steiner and Serge Gavronsky have exploited the sexual language and mythology to describe translation in terms of Oedipus complex and "erotic possession" (463) and the ignoring women's participation and contribution. After the proceeding discussion, Chamberlain argues that

This survey of the metaphors of translation would suggest 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. (465)

She further argues that “the reason translation is so overcoded, so overregulated, is that it threatens to erase the difference between production and reproduction which is essential to the establishment of power” (466). Finally, based on Derrida’s theory, Chamberlain advocates a feminist theory of translation “where author and translator are seen as working together, both in the cooperative and the subversive sense”(470), meaning the power play between the texts as well as the sexes that is deconstructed and translation practice that goes beyond textual and sexual boundaries.

While Chamberlain’s discussion of the historical and cultural metaphors is significantly influential for feminist approaches to translation theories, Godard’s theory of “woman-handling” (Godard 1990) is more aggressive and action-oriented. There are two major points in her theory. The first one is feminist translators derive the right to woman-handle the text from the source text which underlies subversive actions. Coining the term “transformance”, she defines feminist translation as “the process of constructing meaning in the activity of transformation, a mode of performance” (90). She further formulates her idea as “translation, in this theory of feminist discourse, is production, not reproduction ...” (ibid.) The other important point in her theorization is the deconstruction of the conventional notion of translation equivalence. While pursuit of equivalence in conventional translation produce texts that are acceptable to mainstream criteria, both the source text and the target text must suffer reduction. Such equivalence is questionable for feminist works because what they are aimed to do is to challenge the mainstream writing and reading and highlight the difference. Therefore,

feminist translation should be characteristic of the unconventional, the foreign and the traces of the source text.

Her analysis and critique of the English versions of work by French theorists Luce Irigaray and Hélène Cixous (Godard 1991) materialises her feminist translation theory and constitutes an attack of conventional, mainstream translation of women's work. For Godard, the translation of Irigaray's work is made fit to the dominant canonized ideology, the multiple layers of meaning which carry feminist significance being ignored and reduced. She observed, the translation "use[s] the behaviour patterns and models prominent in the canonized system of the target language with the effect of turning the different into the same" (113). The translation may appear more acceptable to the readers, but does not represent Irigaray's complete ideas and intentions. On the other hand, the translation of Cixous' work, which was produced in cooperation with the author herself, keeps the features of the source text and is written in a strange English language form comparable to that of the French text.

Doing Gender in India

Not only in India but all over the world there has been a close link between feminism and the women's movement, each inspiring and enriching the other. In the Indian context, while the women's movement is a much earlier phenomenon, the term Feminism is a modern one. Feminism comprises a number of social, cultural and political movements, theories and moral philosophies concerned with gender inequalities and equal rights for women. In the pre-Independence era, the women's movement began as a social reform movement in the nineteenth century. At this time, the Western idea of liberty, equality and fraternity was being imbibed by our educated elite through the study of English and the contact with West. This western liberalism was extended to the women's question and was translated into a social reform movement. In the post-Independence period during the first few decades, the major

concern was for overall economic growth. This was immediately followed by another decade, which witnessed an increased concern for equity and poverty alleviation. Gender issues were subsumed in poverty related concerns and there were no such specific programs, which aimed at women. In the post-Independence period, the women's movement has concerned itself with a large number of issues such as dowry, women's work, price rise, land rights, political participation of women, Dalit women and marginalised women's right, growing fundamentalism, women's representation in the media etc. and a large number of Non-Government organizations have taken up this issue. Women's Studies and now Gender Studies is also an off shoot of the long history of women's movement in India. Though a lot needs to be achieved and there are various impediments in making this reality available to a large section of women, the women's movement has brought women's issues centre stage and made them more visible. The volume *Gender and Space: Femininity, Sexualization and the Female Body* by Seemanthini Niranjana, for instance, have been instrumental in comprehending some of the key concepts on theorisations of gender and space. The volume deals centrally with the conjunction of space and gender in practices and discourses of femininity and sexuality. Drawing on fieldwork by resisting a monographic format, it weaves together conceptual and ethnographic narratives in elaborating a theory of gender and space. The chapters include accounts of the domains and activities of women, cultural perceptions and experiences of the female body, exploration of gender and ritual realm as well as suggestions for formulating a ground for female agency within a space-body matrix.

The task at hand is to bring up some theoretical and methodological issues entailed in representing Feminism in India. This decision to problematize the process of narrating has been prompted by the fact that writing in the second decade of the 21st century implies that we take into cognizance some of the developments in the preceding decades that impinge in a very fundamental way on both the practice and theory of feminism. In other words, the researcher

seeks to flag some of the changing features of the contemporary context within which she as an Indian scholar write about feminism. A rich and complex body of feminist writings has emerged over the last forty years which in many ways have become institutionalised within academia as well as within policy making. The rise of multiculturalism and postmodernism in the West since the 1980s gave way not just recognition but celebration of diversity and plurality including that of divergent feminisms. The rise of postcolonial studies, articulated in the writing of non-Western scholars located in the West on one hand and a predilection towards poststructuralist theory on the other and finally the greater visibility of India and Indian scholarship in the recent decades of globalisation. The researcher's central contention is that these developments are not extraneous but constitutive of Indian feminism.

The location of the researcher as a resident Indian is important even in times of globalisation. Not only does she have to engage with the West, but a West with an increasing presence of the non-West and a Western academia, where the 'native' has already spoken. This compounds the matter more, for 'national' contexts do still matter in humanities and social sciences. At another level, many of the issues that at one time appeared to be issues of the non-West are now eminently visible in the West, home to increasing and strident cultural diversity. At one time 'Western-located Indian' feminists decried the fact that Indian feminism was "self-effacing", that Indian women see their personal desires as unnecessary as were engrossed with larger questions such as questions of community identity, democratic citizenship, religious beliefs, workers' rights, cultural distinctions, and rural poverty. The question that Western feminisms would ask and we would echo, "Where amidst this din of larger issues were the women?" (Chaudhuri 2011).

Couple of decades into the 21st century, the terms of the debate seem to have changed entirely in the West. It seems overtly obsessed with questions of cultural identity, of alien cultures and a realisation that choices and selfhoods need not be expressed in the language of the Western

individual woman. In a world politically more intolerant than ever, in a Western academia more multicultural than ever, the histories of non-Western feminisms no longer appear extraneous, beside the point, or even lacking the 'authentic' feminist impulse. Almost lurching to the other extreme, voices of non-Western women are now validated in the West. Alternative modes of agencies are being increasingly imagined.

The early twentieth century saw the rise of many women's organisations. While the concerns of the nineteenth century reform movement left its mark on the women's question, it is important to emphasize that with the intensification of the national movement and the spread of internationalist ideas of socialism and democracy, the women's question could not be contained within the restrictive parameters of one or other reformers. Women's organisations like the All India Women's Conference (AIWC) and women within the national movement insisted on greater political and economic participation. The legacy of women revolutionaries, trade union activists, and nationalists is as much part of the historical legacy that the independent Indian state inherited. This needs reiteration, for the widespread circulation of Partha Chatterjee's nationalist resolution of the women's question in global academia appears to have truly wiped out the story of political action and resistance of Indian woman (Chatterjee, 1990). This is perhaps a good instance of the limits of textual analysis, where the lure of the conceptual binary of the 'inner' and 'outer', the 'spiritual' and 'material', clearly took precedence over the actual struggles of feminist movements.

To conclude, the present study draws theories from both the global and the local, the West and non-West because the boundaries (including academia) are increasingly breaking down and the contexts and concepts are fluid, plural and divergent, just like the feminine subject. Western concepts of the state and citizen hold here as much as anywhere else. What differ are the details that make the stuff of human action and human conceptualisation. The context, within which concepts emerge and the contexts where they travel to, needs enunciation. Its significance in

an increasingly globalised academia cannot be overstated. Endless invocation of ‘voices’ and ‘agency’ will not set free the elusive feminist subject. “Careful historical analysis may offer a better understanding of the many achievements and failings of Indian feminism” (Chaudhuri 2011)

Chapter Two

Of Space, Prison and Gender

Gender and space matrix

Until the 1970s, gender had remained invisible in the analyses of social space and place in the discipline of Literature and as well as Translation Studies. Terms such as “mankind” were widely used, and it was assumed that they implicitly meant ‘everyone’, and ‘included’ women automatically. Even behavioural approaches in human geography started with the premise that communities and social groups were homogeneous in their interactions with the environment. Consequently, any specific and separate reference to ‘women’ was largely unwelcome. It took the efforts of many to contest the misogyny implicit in such terms as ‘mankind’. Conventional researchers (especially geographers) have used the term androcentrism for the longest time. The world has thankfully been challenged widely by a number of researchers since then. Feminist scholars have shown that men and women interact differently with place, and that many of the gender relations are ‘stretched over’ space, that is, they are essentially spatial in nature. The recent contributions have successfully offered new interpretations of place and have redefined space, as well as thrown new insights into men and women, gender roles and gender relations.

To anticipate the discussion, it is suggested that contrary to absolutist or essentialist views which have tended to fix and eternalise traits, space and gender are better approached as sets of relationships between phenomena, groups or persons, negotiated within certain given frames of reference (Niranjana 2001). These relations are neither pre-determined nor programmed, but contingent, changing according to the context and the entities involved. Given these condensed scenarios, it seems all the more important to attend to the tacit assumptions undergirding our discourses about space. Massey (1992) has in an insightful essay argued that across a range of

disciplines, space has been associated repeatedly with stasis, the status quo. This view of space as an unchanging given, incidentally, is not a perception unique to social theory but also characterises the discipline that explicitly addresses space and its object. Here, especially in its positivist incarnation, space has been conceptualised as an autonomous sphere with independent rhythms. Developments within radical geography, of course, have sought to challenge this view by arguing that space is largely a social construct, being constituted through social relations and practices; and indeed, by the 1980s, this formulation was further revised to take into account the other side of the picture, that is, the spatial construction of the social.¹ As Massey characterizes this development, it involved the recognition that “...society is necessarily constructed spatially, and that fact – the spatial organization of society – makes a difference to how it works”. Subsequent writings of radical geographers have built on these ideas, enabling a re-conceptualization of space along more active lines.

It is only in recent years, however, that social theorists have begun to explore this issue seriously, in the process consciously seeking “the reassertion of a critical spatial perspective in contemporary social theory and analysis” (Soja, 1981:1). Often this has involved not a replacement of the temporal with a spatial perspective, but an effort to focus on the relations between the two. Such an elaboration of a spatial perspective has drawn (sometimes critically) on several, often diverse, ideas and strands of thought – the writings of radical geographers, feminists, Foucault’s attempt to link space to the exercise and analysis of power, Lefebvre’s Marxist analysis in urban studies, Giddens’s time – space formula in his structuration theory, and of course structural anthropology’s projection of a synchronic structure versus a diachronic understanding. Heterogeneous as these strands may be, each has, in its own way, facilitated the articulation of a spatial problematic, suggesting that space is not just physical form that may then be linked up with social structure but is very much the stuff of which social life is made.

¹ This was a point also argued by Lefebvre (1991) much earlier in his *The Production of Space*.

Most important of all, they have succeeded in focusing attention on the limitations of dominant representations of space, that is, of space as something abstract, immaterial, non – existent, a void that merely holds real objects. Pushing against an empirical notion of space as the intervening distance between two objects or points, it has today become possible to envisage a more theoretical axis that could foreground the import of spatial ideas on everyday life. It has become possible to deny that society and space are merely related externally; to argue instead for a focus on the embeddedness of life in socio-spatial contexts and locales. More pointedly, this kind of contextualizing and situating of social relations has created the conditions for a displacement of the universalised claims of social science. It has, amongst other things, enabled a perspective on ‘gender (and other social) relations (as) constructed and negotiated spatially, and (as) embedded in the spatial organisation of places’ (Duncan, 1996:4). Indeed, within the discipline of geography itself, this move has also sought to re-politicize geographical concepts like space, place, the local, and so on.

The suggestive nature of these claims notwithstanding, there seem to have been few attempts at systematically relating spatiality and gender.

As an analytic category that is used to draw a line of demarcation from the concept of biological sex, gender is to be comprehended as a social and cultural concept that denotes behaviours. The purpose of differentiating between “sex” and “gender” is to demystify the naturalization of biologically determined gender traits, especially those attributed typically to women. In other words, gender refers to how societies set the behavioural, social and cultural rules for being a man or a woman. That is, gender involves the way society creates, shapes and rewards the notions of femininity and masculinity.² We can even see gender as something we do within specific social constraints, making gender identities fluid over time and space (Bradley 2007).

² Ann Oakley’s influential early work, *Sex, Gender and Society* of 1972. Oakley was among the earliest sociologists to develop ideas about socialisation to explore how gender is learned and femininity and masculinity are socially constructed.

Societies generate their own culturally determined rules for drawing boundaries in the real world, divisions that structure given modes of perception and social interaction. Terming these ‘ground rules’ and ‘social maps’³, it is suggested that there a multiplicity of such markers in our lives – whether it is in the delineation of political arenas, ritual spaces, or even public and private spaces within societies. An attempt is then made to bring out the interaction between space, on the one hand, and social organization, on the other.

Since gender is a social construct, gendered encodings – behavioural norms for women and men – vary over space and time. Today, many women and men do things which were socially not acceptable till recently. Again, these social norms are not the same for all women in every location or context. Moreover, women have differential access to space and place; often, public places such as streets, office buildings and institutional spaces are overtly masculine. In recent years, both popular and academic literature in India has brought out the gendered nature of public spaces/places in India (Niranjana 2001; Grace 2003; Phadke 2007; Desai 2007).

Such spatial overlapping with specific gendered attributes cuts across cultures. Examples abound to indicate the spatially-embedded processes of differentiating between women and men and the ways such spaces selectively allow men to produce and reproduce power and privilege creating gendered spaces. Why this should be so is an intriguing question and the answer lies in the complex interplay of social structures and institutions embedded in locational specificities which significantly inform the place practices of women and men (Spain 1992).

The other much debated binary separation of spaces into ‘public’ and ‘private’ – both as the outcome of ideologies of domesticity for women on the one hand and the reinforcement and reproduction of those ideologies through spatial configuration on the other – which could be challenged when contextually placed. For many poor women in rural India, boundaries between the public and private are often blurred as much of the agricultural work is carried out

³ One early effort that does come to mind is the work edited by Ardener, *Women and Space* (1981).

within home premises and as women take their children along to the fields. Similarly, in some urban locations, a public street essentially dominated by the presence of men in the morning may turn into a semi-private space in snug winter afternoons for women in the neighbourhoods. Framed thus in mutually interactive framework, space and place, it is argued, open up potentially latent sites for critical engagement with gender and patriarchal structures – that is, as to how the gendered realms get enacted, re-enacted, constituted and reconstituted in mediation with specific spatial context.

With this as a backdrop, this study attempts to foreground the ways gender is seen to operate in space/place through an understanding of how the space/place itself is conceived and shaped, as exemplified through the prison narratives of the perpetrators which brings us to the other element of the triad – the prison.

Of prison – seeking a spatial perspective

Prison exemplifies a panoptican⁴ structure. A massive wall with jagged glass edges, not only acts as the symbolic separator of the prison from the rest of society, but also serves as the last, and perhaps the most difficult hurdle in prison escapes. Along the outer walls of most prisons are the watchtowers, visible from the streets, where surveillance (guarding) round the clock is compulsory.

The high walls with jagged edges, the wire meshing on windows, the formidable iron gates with large bolts that go deep into the walls – all of this is indicative of a closed, impenetrable physical structure geared to hold the prisoners in isolation from the rest of the world. The mere physical arrangement discourages the entry of any outside influences within the four walls of

⁴ Jeremy Bentham in 1795 proposed the Panopticon as an all seeing surveillance system for the penitentiary. His design envisioned a cylindrical central tower, from where a guard could see all the prisoners in their cells, which radiated out from the tower, without he being seen. Bentham believed that the knowledge that they were being watched would prevent prisoners from being disobedient. Those in the penitentiary would then internalise the surveillance and be able to act as their own guards.

the prison. The scholarship argues how prisoners make a public space private, and then fight to retain it. It also examines how a space that appears uniformly constraining and completely total, merely by the fact that it holds within it people under lock and key, is transformed into a space with degrees of totality.

Interactional spaces – a tactic as well as an analytical tool

The ideas of impermeability and surveillance, which, theoretically at least, are central to the making of a ‘total institution’, pervade the architectural space of the prison.⁵ Any space within the prison, however, cannot be known merely through its physical description; rather, it is constituted through the practices and the structure of rules associated with it in a particular temporal context. Since the prison is constituted in and through practice, a discussion of the nature of the space runs through this study. The physical contours and substance provide a material context to the ‘interactional spaces’.

During the course of analysing the narratives of the perpetrators, the researcher has debated time and again about the significance of this physical space of the prison in shaping practice, in making and remaking everyday lives and in the impressions this material world creates on its non-material counterparts. The ethnography of everyday life animates the connections between the technologies of surveillance, the prisoners as agents and the institutional context. These connections were further energised with reference to the distinctive ways in which the space of the prison and the space of the neighbourhood have been conceptualized in prisoners’ narratives. The material elements of the two spaces take on rather different meanings for the agents and subsequently for the institutional and organisational configurations of these spaces. ‘Interactional space’ draws attention to a wide range of connections and networks – between prison rules, following them or their infractions; the physical space of the prison and the

⁵ Goffman was the first to use this term, even though before him prisons had been studied as repressive institutions. In his words, total institutions are places of ‘residence and work where a large number of like – situated individuals, cut off from wider society for an appreciable period of time together lead an enclosed, formally administered round of life’ (Goffman 1961:xiii)

personal props which make such infractions possible; the relationships that emerge through these practices and the relationships between the formal and informal aspects of the organization; to name a few. The discussion of everyday prison life further makes explicit these connections and networks of relationships. The spaces have a deep impact on how agency is viewed and constructed, especially in the life stories of the prisoners.

The prisoners' world and actions within the prison are conditioned by various elements both within and outside the prison. The researcher, therefore, alludes to the lives of the prisoners within the prison and outside it. One realm is that of the prison as an organisation, or 'total institution', and the second, that of the family, the neighbourhood and the world outside the prison. With Foucault's notion of discourse (which has been discussed in detail in the following chapter), the researcher explores how the social practices, relations of power and the emotional lives of the subjects concerned constitute knowledge about the prison (Foucault 1969). The diversities, discontinuities and different fragments of the social world of the prison configure the discourse on the prison. According to Foucault, discourse can be an instrument and effect of power as much as it can be a point of resistance and a starting point for an opposing strategy. The researchers' analysis of the world outside the prison is drawn essentially from the prisoners' subjective positions and a recounting from memory and reconstruction of their pre-prison lives. The perpetrators' experiences and their narratives point to multiple realities and multiple subject positions. These representations challenge the idea of a fixed, routine-bound prison life and the certainty of character that has often been attributed to formal organizations. The different and multiple subjectivities bring to the forefront two different kinds of fragmentation for the researcher – organisational life and the partial and disjointed nature of the data the researcher has collected. Therefore, the prison cannot be visualised as a homogenous, uniform whole and the researcher can claim, at best, to have represented and analysed fragments of prison life. It would be unfair to peg a certainty of character to prison

life on the basis of these fragments. Rather, in presenting the multiple realities that prisoners experience and express, the researcher questions such categories as ‘total institution’ or ‘coercive organisation’ used to understand perpetrators. The prison is revealed as an organisation with its uncertainties, contradictions and complex of interactional details.

The focus on interactional details reiterates the questions of the relationship between the individual and the collective, between structure and agency – questions that have, in a sense, framed the discipline since its inception and find place in the writings of classical theorists such as Marx (1904), Durkheim (1970) and Weber (2002).

When an individual’s sense of justice is threatened or denied, s/he attempts to restore the situation to what s/he considers just. The criminal justice machinery too operates within a larger sense of justice and this is juxtaposed on the processes of punishment within the prison. Society punishes in order to bring justice to those who have been wronged, an expression of the Durkheimian conscience collective. But the justice imparted by the criminal law machinery relates also to the individual. The state acts as the formal mechanism that enforces and enacts certain norms of behaviour (Shankardass 2000:18). However, there are moments in individual trajectories when this collective sense of justice does not coincide with the individual sense of justice.⁶ The researcher will show, through the discussion of lives within and outside the prison, how persons charged with crimes define their own sense of justice, leading to conflicting notions of justice and their impact on the institutions that deliver justice. The researcher addresses the question of conflicting ideas of justice first, in the context of the prison, and second, with reference to the neighbourhood. What happens when an individual’s sense of justice, as a prisoner, is antagonistic to the idea of justice that the state upholds in the interest

⁶ A new dimension in criminology – victimology – seeks to achieve real justice in the process of punishment. Focusing on the concerns of the victim after harm has been caused to the person does not end with punishing the offender. Rather, it may involve allowing the victim to participate in the trial, or even making available just compensation for the person. The recognition that punishment of the offender may not be enough to restore a sense of normality for the victim enables notions of individual justice to be addressed at different levels (Iyer 2000:69).

of collective good? How are prisoners' accounts of their actions in the pre-prison phase related to their notions of justice? This issue has been expressed as a dilemma of our times:

This Contradiction between the right to be human and human rights on the one hand, and the punitive deprivation of fundamental freedoms and dignity of the individual as an easy method of defending society against its criminal members, on the other, is the dilemma of our times. (Iyer 2000:51)

The researcher present these two spaces, the prison and the pre-prison neighbourhood through the life stories of prisoners and explore the possibility of conceptualising them as inversions of each other. The prison is theoretically a total, bounded space and the neighbourhood a non-total, free space. How are freedom and constraint experienced in these spaces and how do the constituent elements respond to each other in these spaces?

The researcher's engagement with and reflection of the life stories has gone through a process, one that is charged with methodological and theoretical implications. At the time of gathering these narratives, the researcher was unsure of how to use them in writing about prison lives. After data collection, when she began familiarising herself with the narratives in an attempt to classify and analyse them, she realised that life beyond prison walls was a significant register to depict the life within. On a closer reading, the researcher glimpsed that the prisoners' articulations drew deep connections between life in the prison and in the neighbourhood, apparently sharply disjointed worlds.

In the doctoral thesis, the researcher has tried to work with this interpretation of the narratives to show how the perceptions of everyday realities outside the prison shaped prison lives as well as organizational practice. Yet, she shared an uneasy relationship with these narratives, especially for the way in which they tended to suggest a denial of human agency in the neighbourhood and emphasise the control human and non-human factors exercised in shaping

human lives. Some of the ideas from the actor-network theory further alerted the researcher to the significance of this articulation in the narratives.

The researcher, through the life stories, examines the institution and the lives within it in view of the perceptions and experiences drawn from outside the ambit of its immediate spatio-temporal context. This discussion offers a critique to the understanding of a total institution, especially in Goffman's work, which is based on the immediate face-to-face interaction within the institution. The narratives also enabled the researcher to problematize the notions of agency and power. In the prison narratives, the agency of prisoners is experienced, presented and articulated as a heightened, enhanced agency, and the agency of the same individuals in the pre-prison phases of their lives in the neighbourhood and in the family is articulated as a diminished agency.

A common theme that runs through most writings on prisons is that the prison is a special kind of organisation. Implicit in such a categorization is also the idea of its separation and isolation from all other organisations of social life. This isolation is not merely physical, but is marked in the character of the organisation – in its management of people and functioning (Goffman 18). On the contrary, the researcher wishes to argue that in practices of governance and management, the prison is similar to many other social organisations. This argument is in no way intended to downplay the extent or gravity of the repressive practices within prison; rather, it suggests the pervasive nature of the repressive tactics of governance. Prisoners often see the repression and forms of control over individual lives experienced within the prison as being replicated outside prison walls. Therefore, the physical isolation of the prison from the rest of the society is not as flexible as it is made out to be. In such a context, where the defining characteristics of the prison as an organisation are problematised, how can we begin to think of and understand the prison as an organisation? The researcher uses the notion of 'interactional

spaces' to show that in the prison, issues of control, agency, following and breaking rules come together in a unique way.

Tied to the idea of interactional spaces is a question of method – should a researcher studying an organisation focus on the formal body of rules and regulations, the informal networks that develop between participating members, or the organisation's relationship to its environment? How can one conceptualise, observe and present the unique balance between these aspects of an organisation? In transcending the conventional positioning of the structure of rules and the informal networks in studying an organisation, the researcher seeks to present the balance/imbalance between these aspects. Implicit in this question of method is also a larger theoretical point. It is the researcher's positioning in relation to the organisation that is important in answering the questions undertaken by the research study. The researcher has situated herself in the 'interactional spaces' as a tactic as well as an analytical tool.

The 'interactional spaces' are used to critique the ways in which organisations have been traditionally studied. The researcher argues that while the different elements that constitute the organisation (such as the formal rules, the informal relationships, the operation of power, the hierarchical structure, and its relationship to the environment) are significant in understanding the working of an organisation, studies have generally confined themselves to one or the other element. This leads to a view of the organisation that is skewed in the direction of any one of these elements. The organisation is then portrayed through the perspective of a section of its participating members. Moreover, the connections between the different elements and their impact on the nature of the organisation and its processes are not adequately explored. As the researcher attempts to uncover these dialectics between the various components of the prison as an organisation, the concept of interactional space becomes an important methodological and theoretical tool. The researcher analyses the spaces that offer the possibility of interaction between the formal world of rules and the informal world of their manipulation and

interpretation, between the controller and the controlled, and between the world inside prison walls and the environment outside with regard to the women perpetrators which brings us to the next section of theorising gender.

Theorising Gender

Second wave feminists criticised that the actual physical and mental effects of biological difference between women and men had been exaggerated to the extent that the culturally conditioned traits found in women and men are regarded as biologically determined. The purpose of this exaggeration, as they see, is to maintain and justify the unequal and unjust treatment of women and to create a consciousness in women that they are naturally better suited to certain roles and functions. To propose the notion of gender as a social and cultural construct rather than something homogenous with biology was important for feminists in the 1970s since such an understanding of the differences between women and men being socially and culturally learned, mediated and constructed means that gender suggests opportunities of making resistance and change, both on the individual and the social level. Starting from the vantage point, feminisms in the second wave aimed to undermine patriarchal culture and social structure, to correct the distortion and devaluation of feminine characteristics and reappraise these characteristics, and to integrate the recognition of sex discrimination with claim of justice and equality. With the post-modern concern for identity, claims about global gender differences and the generalisations of local findings based on one group of people to others were increasingly felt to be both lacking and inadequate. Third Wave feminism, which has been developed out of contestation for the fundamental principles of feminist project, reconceptualises the category of women, challenging the concept of a unified identity and endorsing a dynamic gender identity in its plural form (Butler 1999). As Mary Bucholtz (1999) points out, “gender identity is at once more specific than most 1970s feminism realized and more fluid than much 1980s feminism allowed” (Bucholtz 1999: 4). Within the Third Wave

framework, researchers have moved away from a reliance on binary oppositions and global statements about the behaviours of all men and all women, to more detailed and moderated statements about certain groups of women or men in particular circumstances, who reaffirm, negotiate with and challenge the parameters of permissible or socially sanctioned behaviour. Masculinity and femininity are viewed as both contingent and fluid, which results in a potential multiplicity of gender identity for a given individual, meaning that the plural forms of identities, masculinities and femininities, can be used to refer to individuals. Edley (2001) explains the potential multiplicity as follows: subject positions, “location” within a conversation, are the identities made relevant by specific ways of talking, and

because those ways of talking can change both within and between conversations (i.e. as different discourses or interpretative repertoires are employed) then, in some sense at least, so too do the identities of the speakers. (Edley 2001: 210)

Many Third Wave feminist studies draw on/adapt the work of Michel Foucault, particularly his notions of subject, power and discourse, or that of Judith Butler with her notion of performativity, who has been largely regarded as post-structuralist. Chris Weedon (1997) proposes a post-structuralist theoretical framework for feminism, based especially on Foucault’s theory of discourse and power. She argues that instead of assuming the unitary nature of the subject and subjectivity as other types of feminism had done, it is more useful to see gender subjectivity as discursively constituted, the effect of power and in process. Foucault’s work offers feminists the concept of contextualisation of experience and a conscious analysis of its constitution. Thus, for Weedon, what feminist post-structuralism should be concerned with is the historically and socially specific discursive production of conflicting and competing meanings and subjectivities. Such awareness of the uncertainty of gender subjectivity, Weedon argued, is the first step towards challenging the social structure that is loaded against women’s interests.

In *Gender Trouble*, Butler defines gender as “the repeated stylisation of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being” (Butler 1999: 45). “Even when gender seems to congeal into the most reified forms, the ‘congealing’ is itself an insistent and insidious practice, sustained and regulated by various social means.” (ibid) She argues that “the ‘being’ of gender is an effect” of “certain cultural configuration” and that “woman itself is a term in process, a becoming, constructing...an ongoing discursive practice” (ibid).

Because there is neither an “essence” that gender expresses or externalizes nor an objective ideal to which gender aspires, and because gender is not a fact, the various acts of gender create the idea of gender, and without those acts, there would be no gender at all. (ibid: 190)

Therefore, gender is a kind of enforced cultural performance, compelled by compulsory heterosexuality, and rather than some inner core and pre-given essence, the performance of gender produces the illusion of such a core or essence. The gender performance is a “sustained social” kind (ibid: 192) which involves the “ritualized repetition of conventions” (ibid) and which is constrained and “compelled by social sanction and taboo” (Butler 1988: 520). That is, though the term performance might hint a kind of free choice, individuals are actually constrained and limited to the possibilities available to them within certain communities. The interactionality of gender performance also means that gender identity is created and contained within social groups rather than put on like a costume by individuals. Although individuals are sexed as males and females, and that their way of perceiving themselves is affected by it, it is largely through interaction that one begins to sense what sort of man or woman it is possible to be within a particular context. It is largely noted that an individual picks up from the context that will inform them of the approved or favoured ways to perform particular types of gender identities. Admittedly, in reality, there are individuals who will react against the stereotypical expectations of the group. Yet nevertheless, the expectations of others within a community

exert a great impact upon how one may construct oneself in terms of gender identity. In other words, institutional and contextual constraints are always there to determine the type and form of identity and linguistic routines which an individual considers appropriate or possible within an interactional context. For Butler, gender is negotiated by individuals in their performance of their identities. This performativity is a constant process rather than something that could be achieved once and for all. Thus, although individuals cannot freely create themselves, and can only negotiate their gender identity with the styles of language available to them within a specific communicative context, possibility for resistance and change does exist. It is in the course of repetition of the gendered acts that individuals could attempt subversions. “In its very character as performative resides the possibility of contesting its reified status” (Butler 1988: 520).

A focus upon gender behaviours and their interpretations involves theorising gender together with context, discourse and power, which is discussed in the following sections.

Chapter Three

On Narratives: Narrative Renderings of Pre-Prison Lives

Narratives “constitute crucial means of generating, sustaining, mediating and representing conflict at all levels of social organization” (Briggs 1996:3). Narratives, in the sense used here, are the everyday stories we live by and the researcher will use ‘narratives’ and ‘life story’ interchangeably throughout the chapter. “One of the attractions of narrative is that it is a highly transparent and intuitively satisfying concept that can easily be understood by anyone.” (Baker 2012:3) The notion of narrative used in this chapter (and in the scholarship overall) overlaps with Foucault’s ‘discourse’ and to some extent with Barth’s ‘myths’, especially in its emphasis on the normalizing effect of publicly disseminated representations. “But the concept of narrative is much more concrete and accessible, compared with the notion of myth as an element in a second-order semiological system. Also, unlike myth, the notion of narrative is not restricted to public representations but applies equally to individual stories.” (Baker 2012:3)

Discourse and Power

The term discourse is one of the most critical yet elusive concepts from post-structuralist theory. It is critical in the sense that it has become common currency in a variety of disciplines: critical theory, linguistics, philosophy, sociology, social psychology, etc. It is elusive because “it has perhaps the widest range of possible significations of any term in literary and cultural theory, and yet it is often the term within theoretical texts which is least defined” (Mills 1997: 1). While the term enjoys great fluidity in meaning in varied disciplinary contexts and even within a single discipline, it is Michel Foucault’s work which has been most often referred to and crucial to the development of a range of theories that build on the concept “discourse”. It is for this reason that the study focuses on his work. Within post-structuralist theory, the use of the term discourse signals a major break with previous views of language. While it denotes and

entails the linguistic aspect of language, it is more than that simple configuration. Rather than seeing language as simply transparent and reflective, post-structuralists view language as a system with its own determining effect on the way individuals think, express themselves and live consciously. Foucault has defined discourse in this way:

treating it sometimes as the general domain of all statements, sometimes as an individualizable group of statements, and sometimes as a regulated practice that accounts for a number of statements. (Foucault 1972: 80)

This quotation includes the range of meanings that the term discourse has within Foucault's work, yet also captures the complexity around it. The first definition, "the general domain of all statements", means all utterances and texts that have meaning, force and effect within a social context are discourse. The second definition, "an individualizable group of statements", is used to refer to groups of utterances which appear to have inner coherence and a common theme, such as a discourse of femininity, a discourse of environmentalism, etc. The third definition he gives is perhaps the most adopted and discussed: "a regulated practice that accounts for a number of statements". Here, what is stressed is no longer the actual utterances and texts that are produced, but rather the mechanisms which produce particular utterances and texts. Actually, the most effective way to think about discourse is to follow the third definition. Foucault (1972) himself has suggested not to regard discourse as stretches of text, but as "practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak" (49). For Foucault, discourses structure our sense of reality, and we can only perceive the real in such a way as determined by the discursive structures that we have access to in a given culture. The only way we comprehend reality, according to Foucault is through discourse. In the process of categorisation and interpretation of experience and events, we are exclusively informed by the discursive structures available to us, and by conforming to these structures, we in turn make them more solid and normal so that the discourses appear common sense. For Foucault, these

discursive structures are not the inventions of the institutions or powerful groups of people. Rather, he considers that they are the results of the combined forces of institutions and culture, together with the intrinsic structure of discourse (Foucault 1972).

The mechanisms that ensure the circulation of a certain version of reality is the key element that constitutes discourse, and the word is power. Foucault's model of power is revolutionising in that rather than assuming power is a possession so that one can take or seize from someone else, or that power is repressive and about preventing someone from carrying out his/her wishes and limiting people's freedom, or that power relations are determined by economic relations. Foucault suggests that power is a term under which can be summed up the complexity of a range of practices. According to him, power is relation. It is relation in process in that it exists in difference and is dynamic in control, compliance, or lack of control between discourses and the subjects constituted by the discourses. Discourses and counterdiscourses, and contradictory subjectivities are always in constant conflict and seek to transform the status quo. Finally, power relation may take material forms, realised in the practices of state institutions, such as prisons and various kinds of social organizations. These institutions discipline the body, mind and emotions, constituting them according to the needs of certain forms of power, such as class, race and gender. Thus, Foucault portrays power as the major force in all social relations within society. It is something that is local and negotiated with by individuals, while individuals constitute places where power can be enacted or resisted. According to Foucault, discourse is the means of both oppression and resistance. Discourses are the place where power is performed as well as the place where power is challenged, resisted and transformed. As Mills (2003) states, "resistance is 'written in' to the exercise of power" (Mills 2003: 40). Yet resistance will not be possible without individual agents. Though Foucault sees subject as an effect of power and discursively constituted (Foucault 1980: 59), to be effective, discourses require activation through the agency of the same subject which they constitute and govern.

Subjectivity works most efficiently for the established hierarchy of power relations in a society when the subject position, which the individual assumes within a particular discourse, is fully identified by the individual with his/her interests. Where there is a space between the position of subject offered by a discourse and individual interest, a resistance to that subject position is produced. Thus, social power struggle involves heavily the discursive constitution of subjects, both compliant and resistant. Thus, as Weedon puts it, “discourses, located as they are in social institutions and processes, are continually competing with each other for the allegiance of individual agents” (Weedon 1997: 93). Such position means that individuals are not mere objects of language, but the sites of discursive power struggle. Individuals may resist particular subjectivity and produce new versions of meaning from the conflicts and contradictions between existing discourses. To understand that there is more than one discourse and that meaning is plural allows individuals possibility to make choice. It is this understanding and knowledge of the relationship among narratives, discourse, power and subjectivity that informs the conceptualisation of this section.

Narratives and its contexts

Albeit it is only but common to get motivated and to openly wrestle with ways in which the class, sexuality, race, ethnicity or caste background impart, the researcher has positioned herself one as neutral, sans the bias. The narratives have been studied with an objective understanding and in no way the voices have been appropriated. During the researcher’s study of the different life narratives, two methodological and experimental issues have emerged from the life stories that the researcher has collected. One, the location of the telling of the life story is as significant as the story itself, and second, that in a prison setting, life story is perhaps the most common and familiar trope through which to communicate thoughts, ideas, events, relationships and interpretations in individual lives. The life story is particularly significant as

a methodological strategy and as a form of representation that passes through many interpretive layers.

At the time of the researcher's collecting data, (the present project involves archival research and secondary or documentary research. Since the doctoral dissertation looks into the perpetrator narratives and women's movement which works at tandem with each other, archival and documentary/secondary based methods have helped in providing access that the researcher might not have to the organizations, individuals and events of that earlier time) it was not very clear as to how she is going to use these life stories. The researcher had hoped that they would not only reveal more about the prisoner's lives within prison, but that they would also show how prisoners chose to represent their lives. The researcher had imagined that prisoners would focus centrally on the experience of incarceration and its implications for the 'self'. But contrary to her expectations, the life stories were not just centred on lives in incarceration. Rather, many prisoners chose to privilege their reflections on their lives in the pre-prison phase, in the neighbourhood and in the family, as the anchor for understanding prison lives. In the course of analyses, the researcher began to understand the significance of the pre-prison biographies in the making of everyday life and organisational practice within prison.

The manner of telling, the prisoner's focus on pre-prison lives, and their location in the prison presented the notion of life narratives a fictional quality; the prisoner's presentation of the tragic, irreversible and constraining aspects of their lives. The focus on pre-prison lives and their location in the prison presented a strange paradox of analyses, one that this chapter attempts to deal with in representing the exciting, the morbid, the painful and the meaningful in the stories that the prisoners narrated. The telling of a story enabled the distancing of oneself from one's life, even if only momentarily. Many prisoners have voiced the idea that talking about their lives gave them greater clarity regarding their lives and their actions.

The use of life narratives also offered the perpetrators freedom to share only what they wanted to. In an environment that sought to divest the prisoners of all freedom, the presence of a listener (be it Joya Mitra or Shivani or Nandini Oza) was often seen by them as yet another area of forced activity. However, the openness and flexibility built into the methodology of the life story provided a space that was relatively free of the controls either imposed by the institution, or those that were self-imposed. Such controls revolved around issues of behaviour with outsiders, prescriptions regarding what was secret information and what was not, and how to present a certain image of prison life and administration.

Moreover, the spatial-temporal context in which the story is told, the one in which the prisoner lives her life is important in shaping the narrative. “Oral autobiography in all its forms must be partly shaped by its social and cultural context: not only by the intentions of the speaker, but by the customs, wishes, whims and thoughts, which together shape the imagination of the audience” (Chamberlain and Thompson 1998:15). The life story approach as a method of data collection is concerned with the relationship between biography and society, as it makes it possible for the researcher to move along the trajectory of a life that intersects with many histories, social contexts and material worlds. In the context of the prisoners’ narratives mentioned in the thesis, it means the narrative intersects life in the neighbourhood and life in the prison.

It is also to be considered that the narrative is to be seen as a reconstruction for the individual prisoners. Memory plays a critical role in the narratives. Memory is always reworked for the telling of a certain kind of story, and it is no coincidence that there are broad similarities in the way that many prisoners presented their lives to the narrators. The remembered, imagined space of the neighbourhood and the prisoner’s experience of it is presented as the counterpoint to the prison. The narrative, therefore, entails a work of memory. So the prison and the neighbourhood are made real, lived experiences through a certain kind of telling of the story.

The narrative is also a work of forgetting. The silences arising from either a loss of memory or a deliberate exclusion also tell significant stories. The silences are generally around those aspects of people's lives that are perceived as unacceptable or even dangerous for a certain kind of presentation of self.

The narratives that the researcher has chosen has been understood and analysed from different points of reference for better clarity of thought and comprehension. Two different contexts – the lived experience of the prison and the remembered experience of life in the neighbourhood – inflect the analysis of these life stories with issues of connections, continuities and discontinuities between them. As these connections are unravelled, the researchers' analysis moves towards an understanding of the despair, hope, anxieties and certainties of prison life. The life stories that are presented here are of convicted prisoners who spoke of their innocence and identified themselves as 'victims' of circumstances or set-ups, because of which they were sentenced for a crime they had not committed. The project has read the life-stories at their face value. Establishing authenticity of the narratives is beyond the scope of the present project. Rather, the researcher is interested in identifying from the prisoners' narratives the connections between life currents, biographical factors, personal attributes, material worlds, and the relationships between these that led to a direct or indirect involvement in a criminal act, an arrest and a trial. This discussion enables the researcher to problematise the apparently dichotomous categories of the prison and the neighbourhood, and bring to the fore the perceived continuities and discontinuities between life in these two worlds. The material world and the physical space are compelling forces, both in the way that lives turn out and in the way that lives are represented in and through these narratives. The chapter thus sets the ground - from life stories where the victim is the subject of self-representation and signification to the narratives where the prisoner's transition is clearly from being a perpetrator to a victim, one

thing that is common is that life stories in India help us understand and analyse groups that are socially marginalised, and hence normally not heard.

Stories of Women in Prison: Stories where the victim is the subject of self-representation and signification.

According to Homi Bhabha, in the production of the nation as narration there is a split between the continuist, accumulative temporality of the pedagogical, and the repetitious, recursive strategy of the performative. It is through this process of splitting that the conceptual ambivalence of modern society becomes the site of writing the nation. If the nation tries to define the category of prisoners through its sea of regulations, statistics, Government records, legal documents and penal codes, then there must be some ‘intervention’ in the form of counter writing which will articulate an alternative pedagogy. Life stories in India, according to Arnold, help us “understand and analyse groups that are socially marginalised, and hence normally not heard” (Arnold and Blackburn 6). Through reading of Nandini Oza’s *Whither Justice: Stories of Women in Prison*, the researcher will then argue how micro narratives of ‘criminals’ depicted in this book are performatives where the victim is the subject of self-representation and signification.

Whither Justice foregrounds the stories of women convicts in Indian prisons. These women are marginal among marginalised groups for several reasons. They are not only deviant because of their crimes but also socially deviant because of their challenge to traditional criminology where crime is predominantly a male preserve and women are supposed to be submissive. They are defying society’s definition of women’s space. They are imprisoned in the prison of societal customs, norms and once again in material prison of the State. These women are also not the privileged political prisoners but they belong to poor family background. Nandini Oza chooses

“to recount the true lives of women prisoners as fictional stories” (xv). This narrative style is significant for various reasons. These are stories of not only Revli, Daayli, Rehana, Shakuntala, Sita, Budhva or Shabnam’s but also of numerous unknown, voiceless women’s stories behind the prison bars. So fiction is here masquerading facts and this ambivalent narrative technique is itself a challenge to the strict, universal, inflexible legal documents. Stories are fabricated, a mixture of facts and fictions but Government documents which subjectivise these women are always unbending and austere. Storytelling makes possible a psychic or philosophical journey, which may or may not be therapeutic, and the articulation of a whole range of “voices”. Oza’s book is a synthesis of many voices—not a cacophony, but a polyphony through which we hear the unspoken agonies of the silent and invisible others. As Arnold suggests, “[N]early all of them [life narratives in India], in one way or another, demonstrate that Indians present individual lives within a network of other lives and that they define themselves in relation to larger frames of reference, especially those of family, kin, caste, religion, and gender. (19)” Pramod K Nayar following Kay Schafer and Sidonie Smith has argued that life narratives have the potential to affect, activate and aware. The genre can be aligned with other similar narratives in an “affective cosmopolitanism” that maps global atrocity and suffering, thereby offering a truly global literature of human rights and also demand a formation of counter-publics through these narratives.

All the life narratives depicted in Oza’s book are necessarily about their brutal and pitiful experience in prisons. But then the focus shifts towards the life before coming to the prison. Recounting their lives from the beginning then is a kind of alternative writing where they are the subjects of their own lives. They constitute a textual field that disrupts the hegemony of homogeneous and legal representations. For example, in the chapter titled “The Dam Shall not be Built”, Revabai, an Adivasi woman of a village in the submergence area of the Sardar Sarovar Project complains about forced entry into her room, severe beating and rape by

policemen. The Police Report concludes, “[the complaint of rape]...was done maliciously with an intention to discredit and defame the persons named in the F.I.R...[This was done in] sheer desperation by the NBA(i.e. Narmada Bachao Andolan), to create an international awareness against the Government of Gujrat and to put the administration under pressure...[therefore] though a poor adivasi lady, [she] cannot be called a simpleton...The circumstantial evidence does not support the theory of rape or assault because there were as many as eleven police officers/men and others present in two Jeeps near the scene of incident. Therefore three persons out of that indulging in any such act is a far-fetched story...” (Oza 161). The doctor of the government hospital reported, “It is difficult to say if rape has occurred after so many days. She is old and has had many deliveries. Her married life has been ling. Besides that she has also washed her clothes...” (Oza 162). The police inspector and the head constable at the Police Station commented, “You must have seen her photographs in the newspapers, she is a forty-five-year-old woman. Would anyone rape her? It cannot be believed.”(Oza 162). But the reality is completely different where there was no policewoman in times of arrest; he was kept in jail without food, water and denied medical help. It is through her narrative that we recognize a rebelling and counter-voice: “I was kept for one night in the N-police station where I asked the police for medical help, but they said nothing had happened to me. In the afternoon I was taken to B-[jail]. Here, with the excuse of examining me, I was stripped and humiliated. A bangle I was wearing was taken away from me. They tried to remove my anklets, but they did not come off. I was kept in jail for five days. I was given neither food nor water...The government wants me to leave my village and is using cruel methods to scare us. But we are not going to be scared. We are not going to move.”(Oza 146-147). This is the typical story of postcolonial State where forced migration in favour of Industrial project is a regular phenomenon but what is untypical is the ‘speaking back’ against such violation and violence.

All the life narratives in the book are not only personal but steeped in the material and economic condition of poverty, unemployment, violence and domestic abuse, and sexuality. Prison life narratives constitute a “scene of strife ... within the hegemonic struggle over so-called national identity” (Spivak 99). These narratives turn the prison into a significant site for observation and representation of the subaltern classes. In the chapter titled ‘Homeless: Revli’s Story’ we see how poverty forces oneself towards crime. Revli lived happily with her family in the village. But again the water dam being built on the river to supply water to a city drowned her village. Then the involuntary migration to the city and job in informal sector and living in railway platforms forced them towards more poverty and finally to meet the expenses of her son she engaged in smuggling ‘charas’. For the jail authority she is a smuggler, but in her retelling of the whole account of her life she is a victim rather than convict. The story of Shabnam’s life also foregrounds the social context of her imprisonment. Shabnam’s first transgression in life happened when she married a Hindu boy. From the beginning she is then marginal in her own community. In order to save her marriage she joined smuggling in the border of Pakistan. State codes her as a terrorist and expects her to be in prison without voice. But Shabnam is not silent. In the very act of telling her story she said boldly, “I took up this illegal work out of a hopeless situation but the real culprits are the police. They robbed me of thirty [gold] biscuits from the total of forty that I had. Their offence is much bigger than mine. They are the real criminals, and not the poor like us who are driven to such crimes out of need. These policemen are in the wrong more than I. It is they who should be punished first.” (Oza 187). The same brutality of the mighty state came in the chapter “The Real Culprit” where the writer lodged a complaint against a ragged woman pick-pocket with two children only to discover that the police stole the ‘recovered’ purse, while the woman is jailed for three years—with one of her children dead and the other snatched from her to be sent to a remand home. But in the life narratives of these women prisoners we find a kind of resistance. The woman

categorized as a ‘thief’ “actually appeared sanctimonious, accusing us of crime. She was staring at me with contempt. I failed to understand her scornful smile or her cynical gaze” (Oza 6). Shabnam counters the State and its representative by snatching the flag from the minister’s hand. At her trial Shabnam “scream[s] in protest” until she is dragged out (188). According to Pramod K Nayar, “Shabnam’s behaviour in the court—an embodiment of the public sphere and the space of logical, reasonable debate—refigures that space. Her hysterics—affective narratives—significantly alter the nature of public space and constitute an excellent instance of the disruptive role of the affective victim life narrative” (Nayar 8).

Similarly Shakuntala’s story unearths the inefficacy of a postcolonial State where shutting down of factories leave its workers without any future and shatters the dream of the upward moving family. Shakuntala could not tolerate the dire poverty, children thrashed out of English medium school due to non-payment of fees and a frustrated husband. She attempted suicide with her kids. She was rescued and convicted for murdering her kids but prison couldn’t change her. She is physically alive in the Prison Census. But she is expecting release only to die. “The yearning for death alone gave her reason to live”(Oza 81). This yearning for death counters codes of prison which is a correctional home, according to the State.

Again it is not the individual women who are not responsible for their crime, but it is the very patriarchal society which often forces them to take recourse to violence. Women’s prison narratives are then a kind of critique of patriarchy. A woman convict had murdered her second husband who had been sexually molesting her eight-year-old son. Another woman had killed her husband who came home with another woman and tried to evict her and her four children from land that was rightfully hers. Women are here fighting for survival, for their rights and fighting to save their loving children. The chapter of their narratives is then “Not a Man’s World after all”. They are just victims of circumstances. The crimes are here out of social, cultural and economic compulsions. Interestingly the articulations of the excluded are not

always rational or logical but affective comprising hysterics, stunned silences, grief or irrational outbursts. But this affective mode is itself subversive in nature. While representations of the official history tend to be, rational, written, and logocentric, counter-history is oral, rhizomatic, intuitive and emotive, inspired more by individual experience. Women writers show great sensitivity toward subjects left out of official representations and readily create the other “versions” of history. This palimpsestic modality of writing is repositioning women’s role as producers of history. Women writers have been unlayering the palimpsest of the patriarchal. The female body as an object of writing is transformed into the female subject writing its own text(s).

The life story of Mukta is more interesting because of her position in jail. “As a sex worker, she was an outcaste among the convicts. It was as if the inmates, incarcerated and ostracized themselves, finally had a chance to condemn and censure someone else” (Oza 99). Even murderers declared her untouchable and immoral. The jail manual also clearly states, “prostitutes and procuresses” would be secluded from “women who have hitherto lived a respectable life” (Oza 99). This woman was also suffering from contagious diseases. But it is only through her life story we come to know how she was accused of being brothel-owner and pimp. This becomes a critique of patriarchal notion when we further come to know of her new customers who had political links. This whole narrative then critiques the sexual promiscuity of her customers and corrupted political linkages. Buddhva is an under-age and unwed mother who fails to take care of her new-born baby and abandons it. The baby dies and Buddhva is convicted. The court proceedings continue:

The court asked my mother to support her claim of my being underage by submitting my birth certificate. But I had none. In our remote village, when my mother gave birth to me, there were no hospitals, no government offices and therefore no records. There

was no way in which she could prove my age officially and the court did not believe the word of a mother. (Oza 141)

The narrative here functions as a critique of several social structures. First of all, the patriarchal social order where a man seduces her and abandons but the legal procedure was not taken against him. Secondly, As Pramod K Nayar argues that “the legal system that demands such documentation as cannot be produced for the simple reason that the state has not provided primary health care and therefore hospital records”(Nayar 9). It is then the inadequacy and inefficacy of social structures.

M. Edurne Portela in her book *The Poetics of Trauma in Argentine Women's Writing* considers women's prison narratives more powerful because of its intimate connection between the body and the carceral space. For Portela, “writing about imprisonment and torture is [...] writing about the body” (29). Just as the female prison narrative can be said to be about both resistance and reaffirmation, Portela argues that the narrative can also be viewed as a process of erasure and reconstitution. If the traumatized body acquires a new relationship with the world after torture, then the narrative acts as a way to remove the pain inscribed on the body and as an attempt to reconstitute this new body in relation with the world. Women's prison narratives then act in multiple ways: as erasure of the pain, reconstitution and reaffirmation of subjectivity, and resistance of the silence that torture can impose. According to Foucault, in modern disciplinary system, society has depersonalized the body into an object in a network of power and economic relationships. The history of punishment belongs then to the history of the control of the body. This idea of corporal depersonalization is a restatement of the feminist tenet that dispossession of the body is a fact all women have historically endured. Imprisoned women oppressed have suffered double biological subjection once biologically and then by the disciplinary punishment. Female prisoners also resist the effects of imprisonment by creating a quasi-collective set of role relationships like pseudo-kinship ties. For example, Daayli in

Oza's book build a kind of kinship with unlucky children of the jail. The children, another set of marginalized characters who were punished along with their mothers for no crime of theirs are also often equated with the helplessness of their mothers. They have no voice and they are forced to abandon their mothers and moved to remand homes after they complete five years of age. For a convict mother her son is brought up in an all women world where jail acts as a womb figure but will he survive the outside men's world? Prison is then a feminine space and also a subversive space from where convicts can critique the outside patriarchal world which is a more oppressive space.

Prisoners are relentlessly rewritten within the official 'power of writing', from interrogation and the making of a statement, through legislation and the political trial, to the regulations governing imprisonment. Within this process the prisoner's sense of self and world is undermined, pain is made visible and objectified in writing and converted into state power. Oppositional power of writing in the form of autobiographical prison narratives or prison life writing then writes against the official text of writing. It becomes a means of self-empowerment. Words replace life. Memory seeks to replace the loss of subjectivity in prison. In Oza's book we find a spontaneous tone whenever one convict retells her past. Memories create an experience of physical pleasure that erases momentarily the reality of her pained prison body. As David Schalkwyk in his discussion of the Prison Writings of Breyten Breytenbach and Jeremy Cronin comments:

Writing becomes both a mode of survival and a form of guilt-ridden evisceration, a pure emission reminiscent of Barthes's intransitive *écriture*, but without a trace of *jouissance*: "Writing took on its pure shape, since it had no echo, no feedback, no evaluation, and perhaps ultimately no existence" (142). Words constitute a labyrinth every bit as containing as the corridors of the prison; indeed, words replace and obliterate reality: Writing becomes a means, a way of survival. I have to cut up my environment in digestible chunks....But at the same time

I realize that it becomes the exteriorization of my imprisonment. My writing bounces off the walls. The maze of words which become alleys, like sentences, the loops which are close-circuits and present no exit, these themselves constitute the walls of my confinement. I write my own castle and it becomes a frightening discovery.... (137) In this way does writing destroy reality, to replace it.... If it can be written about, it doesn't exist. (195, 216). (Schalkwy 28)

The prisoner discursively constructed as the 'othered' subject with body clad in uniform and marked by a number wiping out her real name loses her subjectivity and it is through writing/telling story that she recuperates her subjectivity. Victim-self becomes the narrative-agent. The prison writing is the body of the condemned brought out of hiding; it is a running habeas corpus brief against state hegemony. If the unnamed woman in the book gives up a life of physical and sexual abuse by her partner by killing him, she dooms herself to the same treatment by the "system." So if legal documents categorize these women as 'criminal', their personal narratives counter-write/ rewrite /retextualize the system as the fountain of crime. Like *The Thousand and One Nights*, in which the protagonist, Sheharazade tells stories to the Sultan in order to stay alive, these women prisoners recount their life stories to counter legal representations.

Moni's Search for a Secure Life

The life story of Moni who was an undertrial prisoner charged with the crime of aiding and abetting the murder of her brother-in-law is gathered from the volume, *Everyday Life in a Prison* by Mahua Bandopadhyay. She described her life leading up to the crime she is being tried for as a struggle to find a "good life". She came from a 'poor family' with four sisters and no brother. She said, "There isn't a big difference between us sisters, and that is why I think my mother had a hard time bringing us up. Also, because my father was the only earning member, life was hard." Having lived in a slum and without "any brother to protect the sisters", they were constantly troubled and bullied by the neighbourhood boys. "Wherever we went, the

boys troubled us. It was hard not to begin thinking about things like boys and love from a very early age. I remember falling in love with a boy from the neighbourhood.”

In retrospection, Moni ofcourse wished she had studied and done something worthwhile with her life. Marriage was the only thing in their head and she says her parents’ “main worry was how to marry off four girls.” She feels in some ways the parents encouraged them to find men for themselves. She explains, “if we were to find husbands for ourselves, there would not be so much pressure with the dowry. They wouldn’t have the headache of organising a big dowry for each of us. They would have to do that if we had arranged marriages.”

The sisters did get married on their own, but unfortunately, none of these marriages brought love, peace, security or money! Domestic abuse and extreme poverty made their lives even more miserable. In the oscillating narrative, she clearly drew a picture of her life as being steeped in what she calls a dirty environment; she was part of it not because she or her family was like them (she refers to the slum mentality, ‘teasing boys’ and ‘nosy neighbours’), but because she had no way out. On the one hand, this ‘no way out’ scenario seems to signify material deprivation and the vicious cycle of poverty. It was easy for the prisoner as well as the researcher/analyst to proffer the argument of material deprivation, scarcity, and a struggle over scarce resources leading to violent solutions to meet basic needs. While this may be true in part, it is no doubt a reductionist argument. To focus on the complexity of the issues involved in understanding an individual’s participation in a criminal act, it is important to reflect on not only the limited opportunity structures, but also the vacillation between different life paths that is characteristic of the life stories of these prisoners. Moni’s presentation of herself and her world clearly vacillates between living in a world of violence on the one hand and resisting the influences of her context on the other. Moni lays bare the uneasiness with which she encounters the fighting, beating, drunkenness and harassment, all of which is so much a part of her

neighbourhood and her life. The researcher suggests, as Moni herself does, that living in a world of violence moulded her responses to her life situations and crises.

Her narrative is simultaneously indicative of the uncertainty of their lives in the family, as well as the fragility of immediate kin relations. Clearly, she does not approve of the way in which the sisters were raised by the parents. She perceives the life path she chose as one that was offered to her through her socialisation in the family. Being in the neighbourhood further concretised those life paths. In retrospect, Moni wonders if she could have led a better life had she learnt some work or not made money for the criterion for marriage. In her narrative, there is also a sense of the overlapping of the physical space of the family and the neighbourhood. This makes it difficult to separate the influences of one from the other. She accepted that her parents were different from the other couples in the neighbourhood, who she heard fighting and abusing regularly. But her parents were not completely untouched by it. However, she learnt only a man could rescue her from this predicament. Neither the family nor the neighbourhood opened up any life path because of the lack of resources within the family, she did not even develop an awareness of other choices. It was only when she faced with the crisis brought on by the murder of her brother-in-law that she began to think differently about her life. In her words:

I have changed since my initial days as a happy bride and a good mother. I know now that unless a woman has her own money, she is nothing. We dreamt of marrying rich men and living happily. That can never happen. I know that now. My parents could have taught me that. But they failed. It is the greed for money, the feeling that money will make everything all right – that has brought me here.

Although Moni spoke without restraint about her life before the criminal act that resulted in incarceration, she took her time to talk about the ‘crime’. Her husband along with her sister’s

husband hatched a conspiracy to “remove” the other brother out of the way so “they could sell their house and make a lot of money.” They planned it together and killed him by gagging and pressing a pillow on his face till he could not breathe anymore. Then they wanted to dispose off the body, so they dug out all the bricks and cement. The entire incident was very “scary” to Moni and she confesses, “I am taken aback to that chaotic day that changed my entire life. But will anyone believe me if I say I did not do anything?”

She accepts that she was part of the process of planning out the murder of her brother-in-law. Yet she maintains her innocence through her uncertainty that the act would be carried out. She clings to her status of accomplice, someone who had no choice seems to run through her narrative, not just in the depiction of the crime she was accused of, but in her entire life generally. Moni’s understanding and presentation of the crime she is charged with reflects a masking of her role in the criminal act. The men in her family (her husband and husband’s sister) decided her role in the act. She did not feel that she had the power to choose. However, the researcher would like to present this idea of a lack of choice or the idea of larger, apparently external currents having a controlling influence on an individual’s life as being pervasive. We see this idea of a lack of any real choices being reflected throughout Moni’s narrative. Growing up in an urban slum, she witnessed violence on an everyday basis. This is revealed not only directly in her description of her life in the neighbourhood, but also through the silence she maintains while talking about her parents’ relationship. The fact that she had to get a man’s support was a crucial learning experience for her, having grown up with only an old father to take care of a family of four sisters. She felt that she had to be protected from all the bad influences of the neighbourhood, but knew that if anything were to really happen, there was no one to protect her. She considers all of these factors that led her to a very early and heightened awareness of her own sexuality. She accepts that she had been on the lookout for a man she could marry from an early age; that, she believed, could save her.

Moni's life story evokes the fragility of family and kin ties. Paradoxically, it also asserts the notion of the family as a stable, reparative space in the face of the crises that individual members confront. Underlying this narrative is her uneasiness and dissatisfaction with the family she is born into, and the one that she chooses and makes as a woman. She perceives her life path as being dictated continuously by the needs of her family. This is evident in her urge to find a man for herself, as she feels that this will ease the burden on her father. After marriage, she prioritised her position as wife and mother, and chose to be with her husband in spite of his vices. Later on, she also became an accomplice in a criminal act in support of her husband. Her imprisonment signifies for her the failure of a family, resulting in its disintegration. It is this failure that moulds for her a vision of what the future would be. She perceives her life after prison in terms of a process of rebuilding the family by effectively essaying her role as a mother.

Transition from Perpetrator to Victimhood

David Schalkwykin in his discussion of the prison writings of Breytenbach and Cronin observes that writing or confessing becomes both a mode of survival and a form of guilt-ridden evisceration, "a pure emission reminiscent of Barthes's intransitive *écriture*, but without a trace of *jouissance*." Writing or confessing becomes a means, a way of survival. Writing destroy reality only to replace it. It is through these confessions that the convicts in Shivani's *Apradhini* transcends from being perpetrators to victims.

Apradhini is a compilation of interviews with women in prison – lifers for the most part. They give voice to the feelings of marginalised women - be the women in prison, itinerant sanyasis, or just non-conformist women who do not have family, status or money to back them. The life narratives portrayed in Shivani's book are necessarily about their brutal and pitiful experience

in prisons. But then the focus shifts towards the life before coming to the prison. Recounting their lives from the beginning then is a kind of alternative writing where they are the subjects of their own lives. They constitute a textual field that disrupts the hegemony of homogenous and legal representations.

For example, in Janaki's story, Janaki is imprisoned for conspiring with her brother in law/lover to brutally murder her husband. The law and society and even her own children condemn her as a cold hearted murderess but Shivani's probing questions reveal that Janaki lived a hellish life with this husband who was much older, abusive and ever displeased. Besides being an alcoholic and an extremely possessive husband, he also indulged in an amorous relationship with his elder sister in law. At length, he even started suspecting his own brother and one day upon seeing "Janaki making tea for his brother very lovingly" threatened to kill them if they were spotted together again. "If I ever catch you in my house again, he told his trembling brother, I'll shoot you on sight!" (39) This only made the lovers defiant and they continued to meet on the sly. "Finally they decided this Othello had to killed" (40) It seemed quite normal for her to seek solace with the younger brother who was, in any case, initially promised as her husband. At one point Shivani asks Janaki if she regrets her complicity in the murder. Janaki responds, "Regret, what have I done?"

The researcher's interest is not in the violence of a particular event and its impact and the processes of recovery, but on the more mundane, often unrecognisable forms of violence in everyday life. Prisoners expressed a violent experience in terms of direct physical force intended to harm a person. However, in presenting their lives they vacillated between the images of 'victim' and 'perpetrator'; the latter very often corresponds to 'something out there', an unknown force that led them onto a path of violence and crime. In tracing out and analysing these vacillations that mark the life stories of prisoners, the researcher points to a violence that is not directly describable; yet it is an experience that violates either the 'body' as a physical

being or the dignity of the person. In this sense, the understanding of violence that the researcher attempts to draw out may well be very personal expressions, defined by the 'self'. Simultaneously, we find commonalities emerging in the way that the violence is talked about, and the shifts between 'victim' and 'perpetrator'. Such experiences and expressions throw light on the nexus between the inexpressible, uneasy world of violence, which is so much a part of the prisoners' lives, and the personal, distinctive responses to specific situations of violence in their everyday lives.

Like Janaki, Chanuli too was a prey of her circumstance. She was ostracized by the entire village when she refused to let go of her mangalsutra (a black beaded chain Indian brides wear after marriage, symbolising an eternal bond between the man and wife) and nose ring after she was declared a widow. Her strong hunch made her believe that her husband is still alive and would surely come back from the Indo China war, inspite of the apparent news of his death. Chanuli's act quite naturally transgressed her from being a loving wife to a "whore" and the other village women including her mother in law turned into human cannons and spewed abuses at her day and night. One day, as soon as Chanuli carried a new sickle and went to the jungle to gather fodder for the cattle, she was followed by a gang of women from the village. They hurled abuses and called her whore. Chanuli confessed, "something snapped inside me when that woman called me a whore. I flung my sickle at her in anger. How was I to know, Didi, that her neck would be severed with that one fling?" (25) Charged of murder, she was sentenced for life.

Shivani comments, "I looked at her wide eyes, - and I tell you that if I were the judge to whom she had said this, I would have freed her there and then. Such clear eyes can only belong to an innocent heart." (25)

The dominant influences in the lives of the prisoners reveal the presence of a world of everyday violence; living in the neighbourhood, the weakening of familial and social controls on the individual, and the closing off of choices and opportunities lead people into this world.

As Leigh Payne argues in her book *Unsettling Accounts* how the perpetrators are an instrument in the totalitarian state regime, Shivani too documents the stories of these women who did not act but were acted upon. They were instigated and compelled to commit crimes of which they did not even imagine. They have been preys in the society's dubious business of branding and defining the roles of gender in spaces. Prisoners were able to reclaim lost agency and control over their lives within prison, whereas in the neighbourhood, they lived a life in the 'criminal line', devoid of agency. It may be argued that the dichotomy between the two is really an 'ideal-type'⁷, and does not find evidence in the dynamics of life in either of these spaces. Lifton (1961:427), writing in totalism, argued that, '...No milieu ever achieves complete totalism, and many relatively moderate environments show some signs of it. Moreover, totalism tends to be recurrent rather than continuous (Goffman has also developed this point in his study of the structure of the self in a total space). As strategies to deal with prison life and normalise it, these representations address two aspects: first, the routinised and controlled everyday life in prison, and second, prisoners' stigmatised status as criminals and/or prisoners.

Shivani seeks these women without men – prisoners, mendicants, viragos, and domestic helps, whose existences are rarely registered as anything other than pitiable ciphers or outright contradictions in more liminal spaces. She successfully avoids the tropes that usually jaundice narratives of subalternity. She seeks them, most of all, in the liminal space of conversation: of what one woman will say to another when no one else is around.

⁷ The researcher refers here to Weber's notion of the ideal type. It is an abstraction that is formed by accentuating the characteristics and elements of the given phenomena, but it is not meant to correspond to all the characteristics of any one particular case (Weber 1968).

And in this hushed space we hear one of the most disturbing narratives – the story of Alakh Mai. Laxmi, later known as Alakh Mai is the protagonist or rather the anti-hero of the short story who was married off at a very early age. Owing to her masculine looks, her mother in law, after seeing her for the first time had exclaimed, “This is not Laxmi, my son – this looks like a Laxman Singh.” (67) Laxmi indicated she and her mother in law became “mortal enemies” from that day on. Her crime is one of the most unique and fictional as it could ever be. Yet it is one of those stories where truth is indeed stranger than fiction. Laxmi’s daily business consisted of all the household chores, including taking care of the buffalo. If Mai ever asked her mother in law if she could visit her mother, “the witch would brand her with hot tongs.” One unfateful day she was burning with high fever and inspite of her request not to ask her to take the buffalo for grazing, she was compelled to carry out all the chores. “No one ever fed her a morsel or gave her even a sip of water.” “It seemed the wretched buffalo had been primed to torture Mai by the old hag: it was so frisky that day that Mai was run off her feet.” Finally, the creature stood grazing at the edge of a ravine that rose in a sheer precipice from the raging waters of the Kali Ganga in the valley. If anyone toppled over, not even a fragment of bone would survive. Mai was really angry that day – angry at her drunkard husband – and decided to take it all out on that buffalo. She gave it one heave – and down it plunged, sailing over the precipice like a blade of glass.

Her mother in law enquired about the buffalo after she reached home weeping. Mai said the buffalo is in the jungle and she followed suit trying to rescue her “precious buffalo”. Mai did the same with her as she had done with the buffalo. After reaching home killing two lives, she was confronted by a fuming Aan Singh, her husband who threatened to kill her with an axe for leaving her mother in the jungle when a leopard was lurking in those wilderness. She asked him to accompany her in search of his mother and gifted her husband the same fate as the other two. She immediately realised her heinous crimes and went about finding solace in spirituality.

Her place was not behind the bars even after committing three murders and she was clearly not confided by the shackles that prison offers. She chose her own punishment and Shivani aptly concludes,

“There is no jail on earth that can shackle a free spirit and no spirit so free that its feet cannot be bound in chains we cannot see.”

Implicit in these narratives is a strong assertion of family ties as being the *raison d'être* for many individual actions. The women perpetrators felt that their lives were dictated by the demands of their husbands, in-laws, influences from the neighbourhood – demands that were either voiced, or those she sensed. Their narratives place the importance of kin relations as providing the key to understanding violent and/or criminal activities. This very line underscores the spirit of the collection on the whole.

Unsentimental yet compassionate and peppered with slightly humorous moments, *Apradhini's* most victorious effect is that it assigns such importance to the vagaries of fate – how arbitrary it is, in the final reckoning, that one is only someone who reads about such lives, and not a person whose life such is.

The centrality and fragility of kin relations, the perception of a lack of choice, the controlling influence of the neighbourhood, the negation and the reassertion of agency are some of the common themes that emerge from these life stories. From the presentation of their lives before committing the crime, it is evident that these prisoners perceived their life chances to be beyond their control. Their social contexts provided them with life paths they would rather not take. Yet, they present their life stories to show how they ended up opting for exactly those paths, either through a lack of knowledge or other options, or because those options were not really feasible. The narratives also indicate the nature of violence as experienced by these prisoners in the prison and the neighbourhood, one a restrictive, total space and the other a relatively free

space. Characteristically, such violence is shrouded in silence. Both the perpetrators and the victims of such violence are often unable to recognise or present such experiences as violent.

Personal biographies are critical in understanding the nature of members' responses to the coercive nature of prison life. These biographies have diluted the coercive, total elements of prison life. Whether as coping strategies or just as presentations of self, these biographies are therefore important in defining the nature of the prison as an organization. As prisoners constructed meaningful worlds through their subversive strategies, reclaimed agency, and articulated their ideas of what the prison was, the form and shape of the prison was being rewritten. It is this rewriting that the researcher has intended to capture as she set out to understand what prison life meant, and appeared to be, to prisoners. Through the narratives of prisoners presented here, it may be said that prisoners attempted to present an extreme image of the prison as having a normalised, everyday character. This muted the abnormal and coercive character of the prison. However, this does not preclude prisoners' experience of the coercive aspect of prison life; rather, it is this experience that led them to construct a normalised image of the prison. A deliberate muting of the prisoners' coercive and abnormal character and an exaggeration of similar characteristics in a relatively free space shows that prisoners did not wish to present the prison as a special kind of coercive institution. Instead, they reflected on the coercive elements of their lives both within and outside the prison. Through such reflection they normalised the prison experience, while at the same time presenting as abnormal the pre-prison experience. The analysis and arguments about the neighbourhood as well as about the state's presence in the social world of the neighbourhood do not claim to represent the reality of the neighbourhood in any holistic or complete sense. Rather, it only represents a fragment of the social milieu of the neighbourhood from the way it has been visualised by the prisoners in their introspection of life in the pre-prison phase.

Chapter Four

Translation as Metaphor and Retelling

“In this all-encompassing climate of disintegration and recombination, translation has become a general metaphor for connection, exchange, transfer and transformation. One might say that translation has become one of the essential metaphors, if not *the* metaphor, of our globalized world.”

Rainer Guldin, *Translation as Metaphor*

“Make up a story... For our sake and yours forget your name in the street; tell us what the world has been to you in the dark places and in the light. Don't tell us what to believe, what to fear. Show us belief's wide skirt and the stitch that unravels fear's caul.”

Toni Morrison, *The Nobel Lecture in Literature*, 1993.

With these two epigraphs in mind, the first which is a commentary on translation as the metaphor of the hour and the second that encourages stories/narratives to come to the fore, the chapter explores Translation as Metaphor and Translation as a Retelling and Re-memory⁸. Here re-memory is not only a kind of socio-historical strategy of reparation to compensate the women and the marginalised women in particular for centuries of pain, injustice, silence and invisibility, but also a narrative way of showing contemporary the future configuration of literary history. In this light, translation as re-memory can also be associated with the notion of “gateway” (Zauberga 2000) in so far as it is a magical preservative tool which allows retrospective manoeuvres to rediscover and convey new legacy to female literature and culture (Larkosh 2011). Thus rather than a straightforward operation performed on words, translating such “talking back” narratives will also stand as a complex inter-linguistic transfer since it

⁸ Re-memory is a term conceptualised by Toni Morrison, in reference to the narrative reconstructions of the African-American experience during and after slavery.

frames deep and problematic relationships among forms of writing, idiomatic uses of language and variants of register that might reveal distinctive narrative markers of class and gender.

On this frame, the researcher's initial assumption is the recognition of the indigenous languages as a site of cultural encounter and ideological struggle. As Baldwin (1979/2003) observes, the argument has nothing to do with language itself but with the role of language as a political means and proof of power. For instance, Shampa Banerjee while translating Joya Mitra's *Hanyaman* from Bengali to English states, "it is impossible to do justice to that name in a language that has so little in common" with her own. The closest she can get to it is "in the process of being destroyed". Language is adopted here as a tool and utilised in various ways to express widely differing cultural experiences which are cross-cultural because they negotiate a gap between 'worlds', a gap in which the simultaneous process of abrogation and appropriation continually strive to define and determine their practice. In particular, the indigenous languages like Bengali, Hindi, Marathi, Telugu and others are representative of the institution of binaries; the languages of both empowerment as well as forbiddance; the language of Sati, child marriage as well as of power and women's movement. The history of this distinction, between indigenous languages and English (the language of all the target texts in this study) can be traced back to the claims of a powerful 'centre' and a multitude of intersecting usages designated as 'peripheries' whose language was shaped by an oppressive discourse of power, (much like the parallels of the patriarchy and the original text as the centre). Yet such peripheral languages such as the ones the source texts are in have been the site of some of the most exciting and innovative literatures of the modern period and this has, at least in part, been the result of the energies uncovered by the political tension between the idea of a normative code (e.g. the mainstream Indian languages) and a variety of regional usages (e.g. regional dialects). In this view, the standard British English (the language used for all the target texts) stands out not only as an antagonistic language, but as a 'contact zone' between liminal cultures as suggested

by Mary Louise Pratt (1992) to define social spaces where disparate cultures meet, clash and grapple with each other, often as highly asymmetrical relations of power. Living in these contact zones is an attempt to invoke the spatial and temporal co-presence of subjects previously separated by geographic and/or historical disjuncture, and whose trajectories now intersect, interact and interlock understandings and practices both at the linguistic and cultural level. Within this perspective, as Zaccaria (200:153,159) remarks, the contact zone can be compared to translation, as both practices perform inter-linguistic and intercultural acts in so far as they embody the urge to dialogue and encounter with the other beyond any restrictive inclusiveness, but living in trans-action and transition. In this light, translating these narratives is a practice of cross-cultural understanding that can never be neutral since it is enmeshed in relations of power (Asad 1986). Indeed, by asserting its opposition to the centre and constantly interrogating the dominance of the standard, indigenous languages establish itself as a contrastive or counter-discourse which is always attacked from the centre by the dismissive terms ‘colloquialism’ or ‘idiom’.

Standardisation often stands out as the most accessible translation strategy, notwithstanding all of the ideological implications and risks it conveys in so much as it is part of an ethnocentric approach. Thus, what the translator can do to ‘soften the loss’ and negotiate the diasporic narratives with the English reader is to discuss such language variations and untranslatability in an explanatory preface. For instance, Sonal Parmar maintains a surprisingly brief translator’s note for the volume, *My Days in Prison* by Urmila Shastri. There are numerous cultural and political references in the original that a reader from a different linguistic and cultural background would not be acquainted with. Terms such as Swaraj and Swadeshi, Quit India movement and the repercussions on the fellow Indians need a detailed understanding for the foreign reader. Indeed, this textual device could help translators to provide us with an extremely interesting and valuable source of information about the time and the literary, linguistic,

historical and political circumstances in which such writings were produced. In the Translator's Note of *Killing Days*, Banerjee states that Mitra's prose brings the past into the present, to the here and now. The Bengali language accommodates that leap forward in time with great felicity. She has attempted to retain the same spirit by mostly staying in the present with the narrative, even though by the time of its first Bengali imprint, much more than a decade had passed since the story began.

Translation as Retelling and the Politics of Testimony

While the works of feminist scholars most often focus on primarily 'women-oriented' projects in relation to questions of gender identity, the scholarship have by now established themselves for many as central, unquestioned and thereby unavoidable points of reference in the discussions of gender in Translation Studies, it could still be argued that other approaches to questions on gender and sexuality beyond the limits of a single primary gender or sexual identity have been circulating at the heart of Translation Studies since its formal academic inception in the early 1970s. Since stories/narratives serve as catalysts or prompts to unlock memories, the researcher's objective is to undertake a kind of archival work and documentary method of research that explores a rich oeuvre of writing by women perpetrators, some under-trial while some sentenced for life (lifers) having committed heinous crimes such as murder but nonetheless are the "other", the marginal among the marginalised; first as a woman and second, as a "criminal". The exploration of the causes behind this systematic exclusion and the retelling of their experiences may help to fill some of the lacunae's in the contemporary literary tradition, thanks to their re-narration and translation into other languages and cultures.

Women's writing is considered singular and anomalous, not universal and representative. And women writers who write about their prison experiences have not benefitted from a self-conscious tradition. While the act of re-memory is itself an act of trauma, it is, however, the

only trope to survive and sustain and in the process embody the act of self-signification. Moreover, the knitting together of the women profiles also show that, despite the fact that most women perpetrator are not political revolutionaries, they found ways to rebel against false statements that were made about their bodies in the very act of writing. They were struggling to define their sexual and cultural identity and to confront the dominant domestic ideologies and literary conventions of womanhood that excluded them from the definition of 'woman'. Thus, they wrote and spoke of their experiences questioning issues of gender identity, female sexuality, racial oppression and male domination, affirming their right to exercise their voices freely.

The different narratives that the researcher engage in this study address questions about what it means to bear witness, or give testimony, to multiform histories and experiences of silence. For many of these narrators, however, the practice of testimony is not only a matter of speaking out against silencing but also entails the task of making space for the affective, emotive, and political dimensions of a voice that cannot speak. In the context of marginalised women's narratives, testimony may involve discovering the words behind certain kinds of inarticulations but crucially also entails finding alternate strategies of tracing and presence-ing the very contours or shapes of their silences (Tagore 04). The researcher have examined the complex and multi-faceted ways in which writing by women perpetrators may be read, collectively and individually, as practices of bearing witness and giving form to such moments of non-discursivity, and the equally diverse modalities of resisting voicelessness and erasure that marginalised women writers as well as other women perpetrators have developed through their storytelling.

In turn, the scholarship aims to facilitate an understanding of these women's stories and writings – and our reading of these texts – as deeply political and ethical undertakings that work in a testimonial capacity to at once document and transform the violent imbrications of

gender, race, class, sexuality, nation, and colonialism in history and in the present. For the most part, the texts included in this study may be viewed as telling tales of various, and often extreme, forms of violence – Minakshi Sen in her work, *Jail Within Jail* narrates the heart wrenching tales of violent torture inflicted on the prison inmates by the jail wardens upon not adhering to their rules “Help, o sister please help! The shriek, excruciating cry in middle of the night startled the inmates who were still not asleep and awakened the ones who were. The sore cry was coming from another ward as if someone desperately was seeking their help. Helpless as they all were, confined to their own jails, it was not difficult to comprehend what the young girl was going through. Later in the day, when Sen met Shobha, the victim she could clearly see the marks of torture. Deep blue imprints of physical torture on her neck, back and hands! (Sen 94) ”– and, yet, these writings also challenge any easy distinctions between ‘extreme’ situations of violence and the systemic or everyday forms of violence that structure the lives of marginalised women. Further, these narratives seek to give due weight to lives, experiences, events, and realities that, otherwise, seem to have “no living word” in the current critical terrain of mainstream literary studies – studies that, on the whole, rely heavily upon the analytic languages of Western liberal traditions. In many ways, literatures by indigenous and marginalised women constitute and offer testimonies to what Lorna Goodison evocatively refers to as “the half not told”. As such, the reading of these narratives requires much more complex, attentive, and more accountable practices of listening and critical engagement. Reading or hearing what these works have to say may also involve a certain process of bearing witness where we, as readers, ask ourselves: What do we notice through our own reading practices and why? What happens when we read perceptively – in a way that is politically and emotively answerable to the processes by which certain kinds of stories are silenced, or rendered invisible and unnoticeable?

Ranging across, and sometimes between the genres of novel, memoir, autobiography, and short stories, the literatures that the researcher examines here are read together as particular forms of testimonial writing. The texts in the thesis explore various somatic and non-linguistic modes of testimony and witnessing for example, in the form of watching, observing, hearing, internalising, or otherwise sensing and embodying the different violence, pain, and desires that are constructed within locales of familial intimacy. Yet, the researcher argues that these fictions also offer ways of critically transforming silence through their linking of isolating and individualising experiences of abuse to larger, systemic, and historical processes of sexual, racial, gendered, classed violence – including the ways in which these are always articulated through each other. These narratives also suggest that practices of ethical and transformative listening are important to which testimonies are heard, and how they are responded to.

These narratives consequently express the importance of memory and remembrance to testimony. Moreover, practices of remembrance and memorialisation are shown to operate in a variety of different capacities: for example, as a mode for the bodily transmission of trauma, as a means of hegemonic social reproduction and instruction, as a form of survival, and as an alternative historical and archival process for women who have been silenced or erased from the official public sphere or within colonial records. As such, these texts argue for an understanding of the remembrances of indigenous and marginalised women as particular forms of testimony, where memory proves to be a key site of testimonial evidence in political and historical reparations, and in movements for healing and justice.

Taken together, this particular range of texts by women perpetrators help to chart an analytic trajectory that engages retelling first as a process of witnessing and accountable listening, then as a form of historical memory, and finally as a mode of resistance and agency. These texts and this trajectory seek to illuminate, then, the multiple ways in which acts of literary testimony can intervene – affectively, ethically, politically, and critically – in situations of personal and

historical violence, trauma, Othering, and collective silencing. If these narratives move us as readers, they also alert us to the myriad forms of mobilisation required for anti-violence activism and theorising, and specifically remind us of the importance of narrative, storytelling, and testimony – including their art and aesthetics – to social justice movements and critique. Yet, if these texts can be considered examples of testimonial writing, and retelling then their expressions of what it entails to experience, observe, remember, act in relation to, speak about, and/or listen to stories of violence, survival, and resistance further move us to reconsider conventional meanings of witnessing, itself.

John Beverley, in his early and influential work on testimony explains that historically in the modern West notions of testimony and bearing witness have always been connected with questions of truth, evidence, and authentication. As a legal expression, a witness is someone who has observed a certain event and who testifies to this observation in a court of law, under an oath, to authenticate a particular fact. In its religious sense, to testify is to pronounce and affirm the truths of a religious faith in a public forum. In more secular terms, the act of witnessing entails declaring, on the basis of personal or ‘eye-witness’ observation, that something is true or real. Beverley, in many ways, uses and links these understandings of witnessing to his description of contemporary Third World texts, noting, however, that such texts emerge out of conditions of subalternity, oppression, and political injustice. For Beverley, testimony becomes the privileged site for documenting and authenticating the struggles of the oppressed. Similarly, in his famous definition of the testimonial genre, George Yúdice describes testimony as “an authentic narrative, told by a witness who is moved to narrate by the urgency of a situation (e.g. war, oppression, revolution),” and claims that, within a testimony, “Truth is summoned in the cause of denouncing a present situation of exploitation and oppressor in exorcising or setting aright official history.” These early scholarly considerations of testimony as a distinct mode of narration were important for later claims of

testimony as a key genre in the development of writing that sought to narrate the realities of Third World movements for liberation and, more broadly, for the representation of marginal subjects typically excluded by the authorised discourses of the West. (Tagore 8)

The situation of narration in testimonio involves as Beverly writes, “an urgency to communicate a problem of repression, poverty, subalternity, imprisonment, struggle for survival, and so on, implicated in the act of narration itself.” Testimonio relates to forms such as autobiography, life writing, memoirs because of the ways in which these types of texts are rooted in personal experience and observation. What is at stake in testimonial writing, is the question of a text’s relation to lived realities such that testimonial writing is not, to begin with, fiction. Rather, it is to be argued that we are meant to experience both the speaker and the situations and events recounted as real. In such forms, there is a direct link assumed between the witness and narrator. Breaching the distinction between public and private, the conventional narrator of testimonial writing is a real person who continues living and acting in a real social history that also continues. The testimonial narrative consequently departs from other more literary forms of narrative because it bears a necessity to place its story in the world: through the narrator’s words and eyes, it offers evidence regarding the truth of a particular historical and social reality.

However, testimonial narratives foreground not just the question of what is real but also the issue of what can be real. It is to be emphasised the idea that testimony does not simply offer a documentation of reality but rather seeks to establish new political realities through the act of the narration. Testimonial writings may help to bring into being certain subjectivities that did not necessarily exist prior to the experience of witnessing. On this account, the testimonial narrative comes to life, or comes to have effect, through the bond that is created between speaker and listener; much like the translation itself. For instance, Revabai in the short memoir “The Dam Shall not be Built” narrates her experiences of agony and trauma of the forced entry

into her room, severe beating and rape by the policemen. But it is through her narrative or retelling that she is speaking back against such violation and violence. The retelling through the translated narrative here constitute a textual field that disrupts the hegemony of homogeneous and legal representations. Through the retelling and re-memory, not just the words, the language but the emotions, the experience, the agony get translated enabling the narrative to get an afterlife.⁹ The discursive practice provides a valuable framework for studying language and gender because it foregrounds the social nature of any discourse, counteracting the tendency of treating experiences as though they occur independently of society and overcoming the sense of naturalness that everyday language may impress us with.

The gendered discourse and translation as mirroring

The perpetrator narratives chosen for the present study are all life stories but that is not all. These are the narratives of a particular time, a time that has passed but whose shadow still hovers over our social system. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak while problematising the possibility of radical social ‘change’ happening by the mere textualising of experiences of the indigenous subject, described the ‘text’ as “an area of discourse ... in which the problem of the discourse of the human sciences is made available” (Spivak:77). Yet, as Spivak warns, what generally happens (but which, however, do not happen in these texts) – is that often the unavailability of solutions to the highlighted ‘problem’ are glossed over or subsumed by universal contours presumed as the “generating, generated, and receiving consciousness of the text” or its discourse. Homi Bhabha, another theorist of indigenous subjectivity adds that the construction of the colonial subject in discourse, and the exercise of colonial power through discourse,

⁹ Walter Benjamin (2000) described translation in terms of a “hidden seed” that would “ripen” to elucidate his notion of the life and “afterlife” (Überleben) of works of art. The notion of afterlife presupposes that both the original and the translation have to be considered something living and that in the process of translation the original undergoes a renewal and a transformation. Thanks to the workings of translation, the original attains its ever renewed plentiful flowering and a potentially everlasting afterlife in succeeding generations.

demands an articulation of forms of difference – racial and sexual. Such an articulation becomes crucial if it is held that the body is always simultaneously (or conflictually) inscribed in the economy of pleasure and desire as well as in the economy of discourse, domination and power. (1994:67) Indeed, what these texts succeed in establishing is the process of gendering as the major societal problem that consistently and deliberately inscribes woman's body for pleasure and desire and reduces her identity to a 'cipher' in the patriarchal discourse of domination and power. As women writers and women translators, these narrators are acutely conscious of the way gender permeates women's lives in India, and that knowledge is reflected in their writing. No attempt is made to gloss such facts by transcendent euphemisms or quick-fix answers. Each of the protagonists cry poignantly in protest and no 'universalising contours' are allowed to mask their suffering or stifle their lament. The desire of these voices here is to sensitize the receptor society to the 'problem' of gender and highlight the need to engage with it and address it seriously through discourse. This underpins the significance of these texts in the literary history of India. These narratives recount the stories of women's search for identity and their struggle for emancipation from the stranglehold of patriarchy but also, through its poignant exploration of the women subject, records the achievement of women's writing claiming its rightful place in the country's literary tradition.

Translation, or the process of 'carrying across' or 'mirroring', can have many strategies to explain a text's movement from one language and culture to another as well as the "perils" involved for the writer and the translator in undertaking such a movement (Tymoczko 1999 19-20). There are also warnings that translating a text 'faithfully' is an impossible task "a utopian task" as Ortega y Gasset (Gasset 1992:93) puts it. The truisms regarding the processes and risks involved in 'rewriting' the 'fixed' source text into the fluidity of the target language are well known and need not be repeated here. It would suffice to say that mediating between languages and cultures is not an easy task and involves profound knowledge of the source

culture and its historical developments. Languages and texts are regarded as socio-cultural messages that represent discourse in the wider sense. In 1990, Susan Bassnett and André Lefevere announced what had been under way for some time – the “cultural turn” in translation studies (Bassnett 1998). In brief, they envisaged that “neither the word, nor the text, but the culture becomes the operational ‘unit’ of translation” (Bassnett 8). What is being transmitted or carried across in the language chosen is another culture involving a whole world of reference that need to be understood empathically by the receptor culture. Hence, both ‘text knowledge’ and ‘world knowledge’ are central in a translator’s work and the translator must choose strategies to evaluate the amount or the kind of knowledge to be shared with the target readers in terms of her/his familiarity with the cultural topics of the text. It is understood that the translator would seek to unveil the linguistic, social, historical and cultural traces of her/his cultural world to be revealed to new readers embedded in different linguistic and cultural webs. Sonal Parmar while translating Urmila Shastri’s *Kaaragaar* from Hindi to English (*My Days in Prison*) deliberately maintains that the translated text is longer than the original one (the original is 71 pages and the translated version is 91). It is descriptive in nature. Shastri while documenting her prison experiences did not need to add explanatory notes about the details of the Quit India Movement because of which she was arrested (Shastri was a political prisoner) or how the jail functioned back in her days. But Parmar needs to maintain that a non-native reader or an audience from a different cultural background might not be aware about the specific details of the freedom struggle in our country or for that matter how many classes existed in the prisons for the convicts, whether the political prisoners were given any extra privilege. The translator must choose a feasible strategy to evaluate the amount of knowledge to be shared with the target readers in terms of her/his familiarity with the cultural topics of the text. Indeed, the painstaking practice of translation confirms that it offers a means for cultural

representation and that the distance separating the source from the target texts is a gap quite challenging to bridge.

Translation as Metaphor

The chapter is divided into two sections; the first part discusses translation as retelling and the second part explores translation as metaphor. This section begins by briefly overviewing the theory of translation as metaphor, in both Western and Indian understanding and thereafter traces the metaphor theory.

An Overview of Translation as Metaphor – both Western and Indian Concepts.

The Western metaphor theory begins with Aristotle and classical rhetoric, passes through semiotics and semantics, and reaches hermeneutics, philosophy, scientific discourse and cognitive linguistics. This progression through the disciplines leads from a restricted to an enlarged understanding of metaphor. At the one end, classical rhetoric defines metaphor as a single word figure of speech, a trope of resemblance operating through displacement. At the other, cognitive linguistics claims that everyday speech, scientific discourse and the very way we think and act are fundamentally metaphorical in nature.

In view of the history of metaphor, it should come as no surprise that metaphor, and metaphor theory for that matter, have not met with great interest in Translation Studies until fairly recently. In a mid-1970s essay about the translatability of metaphors, M.B Dagut (1976) emphasised the fact that although metaphor is a central phenomenon of language it had not received the attention it deserved in Translation Studies. Dagut briefly examined the status of metaphor in some of the more authoritative works of his time. *In Toward a Science of Translating* (1964), Eugene Nida touches only very briefly on metaphor and figurative language, and in *The Theory and Practice of Translation*, written together with Charles A. Taber (1969), there is no mention of metaphor at all. “There is thus an almost grotesque

disproportion between the importance and frequency of ‘metaphor’ in language use and the very minor role allotted to it in translation theory” (Dagut 1976:21).

Interest in metaphor theory in Translation Studies was slow to develop. In the 1990s Nili Mandelblit (1995) still complained about the striking asymmetry between the treatment of metaphors in Translation Studies and the new findings of the cognitive view of metaphor. In an essay written as recently as 2004, Christina Schaffner points to the persistent lack of interest in new theoretical developments in the field of metaphor studies and their possible applicability in the translation of metaphors. In many cases, the argumentation is still based on a traditional understanding of metaphor as a figure of speech, whose main function is the stylistic embellishment of the text. However, there are also exceptions to this general tendency. In the first paragraphs of his historical survey of metaphor in the discourse on translation, Theo Hermans (2004:118) sums up all the major positions of metaphor theory from Black to Lakoff and Johnson.

In his historical overview of metaphors of translation in the Western European tradition from antiquity to modern times, Hermans (1985) focuses on the relationship between imitation and translation as it was developed in classical Rome in connection with the appropriation of Greek culture. Imitation (Morini 2006:55-8) is an ambivalent notion as it implies both submission and transformative recreation. In classical Rome, however, translation was considered a lesser, debased form of imitation. The translator had to submit wilfully to the restrictions imposed on his liberties. This clearly set him apart from the artist. In the course of history, the metaphor served a variety of purposes, but interpretations suggesting inferiority were much more frequent (Hermans 2004:122).

In the light of the Indian context, G.Gopinathan (2006) points out that in ancient India no theory of translation was developed because a clear distinction between writing and translating never existed. Translational practice, furthermore, occurred only between Indian languages.

To highlight the differences between Western and Indian conceptions of “translation”, Harish Trivedi discusses a series of metaphors from contemporary translation activity, emphasizing the fact that, contrary to the English “translation”, most Indian languages possess many different terms that can be used interchangeably. *Rupantar* (change in form) articulates a translation that changes the form, but retains the aesthetic effect of the original text. *Vivartana*, which originally meant whirlpool, suggests the idea of a passage through different stages of existence. It is also a piece of rope that looks like a serpent. Translations are deceptive because they make the original look like something it is not. The difference from the Western view of illusion, however, is that not only the translation but the original itself is also an artifice. The Sanskrit word *anuvad* was used to describe the new practice of translation imported by the colonial powers. Originally, it meant repeating a word after someone, but without carrying any spatial connotation. In the late nineteenth century, the word acquired the new Western meaning of “translation” as a transfer between languages. The modern meaning of *anuvad* is a neologism “invented to cope with the English word ‘translation’, it is, so to say, a translation of ‘translation’” (112-113). A fundamental difference, however, persists. “Translation” is based on a spatial metaphor. Whereas *anuvad*, in the sense of repetition, is fundamentally a temporal metaphor.

In their programmatic introduction to *Decentering Translation Studies: India and Beyond*, Rita Kothari and Judy Wakabayashi mention three major differences between Western and non-Western attitudes towards translation, which have important consequences for the choice of specific metaphors. In non-Western cultures, oral texts were often deemed more important than written ones. Furthermore, due to different epistemological bases, religious texts did not

possess the same sacrality as in the West, where the biblical paradigm helped enforce the duality of original and translation. These two factors were responsible for the alleged fixity and superiority of the original.

The notion of metaphor, the use of specific metaphors for translation and the use of translation as a metaphor can be regarded from a historical point of view. The last of these three aspects is directly linked to the metaphoricity of the English word “translation” itself. The metaphoricity of a word depends on definitions of its predominant literal meaning, that is, its pragmatic use. However, the literal meaning is not a stable entity, but varies in time and space. In this sense, there is no fixed, literal meaning of “translation”, from which to define all other improper or metaphorical uses. The relationship between the literal and the metaphoric meaning of a word constantly shifts under cultural and socio-political pressures. This has a direct bearing on the metaphorical uses of a term at a specific historical and socio-political juncture. The metaphoric field of meaning of a word can widen or narrow according to its literal meaning. There are various domains of metaphor theory such as power domain, gender domain. The next section explores the gender domain of translation metaphor.

Theorising the gender domain of translation metaphor and analyses through the feminist discourse

The gender domain of translation metaphors has been part of the field from the very beginning. However, it has only lately received the critical attention it deserves thanks to feminist perspectives bent on exposing its sexist dimension. The gender duality reproduces and naturalizes other dualities that are active in the field of translation. The male side is associated with the unique, primary, creative, active, dominant position of the author; the female side, on the other hand, with the repeatable, secondary, passive, subservient position of the translator. In this case, it is doubly affected; first as the perpetrators are women deviants and secondly,

they are women “criminals”, further marginalised. The gender metaphor describes the process of translation as a sexual act. George Steiner’s (1998:313f.) translator aggressively invades and penetrates the text to extract and incorporate its meaning and re-establishes the balance between the two sides in an enactment of reciprocity. Gayatri Spivak pleads for love and feminine surrender to the source text (2000:400).

The metaphor of the “belles infidels” originated in France and was based on the idea that translations were either plain and faithful wives or beautiful and treacherous women, but never both at the same time. Resembling women, translation has also been figured literally and metaphorically in secondary terms. The act of translating is seen as something qualitatively divergent from the original act of writing. What Lori Chamberlain argues in her seminal essay, “Gender and the Metaphorics of Translation” is this binary opposition precisely, as it is used to mark the dissimilitude between writing and translating – marking, that is, the first to be original and ‘masculine’ and the latter to be derivative and ‘feminine’. The sexualisation of translation perhaps appears most familiarly in the above adage but the faithful or fidelity issue has time and again been interrogated and subverted as we see in contemporary translation theories; especially in the works of Schleiermacher, whose twin interests in Translation and Hermeneutics have been influential in shaping translation theory in this century. In tandem to this thought Ganesh Devy in “Translation and Literary History: An Indian View” suggests that Indian literary tradition does not valorise originality but pays particular attention rather on “the writer’s capacity to transform, to translate, to restate, to revitalise the original. And in that sense Indian literary traditions are essentially traditions of translation.”

The traditional understanding of translation in the West relies on a dualistic agenda of clear-cut oppositions and stable borders. In the East, translation is based on a fluid continuum of interwoven similarities and differences. The predominance of the spatial metaphor of translation in Western culture endorsed the irreconcilable difference between original and

translation. This restricted view of translation could be counteracted by focusing on Eastern metaphors for translation stressing change and the multiplicity of points of view (e.g. the expanded metaphor of the shadow and the metaphor of time).

Through the lens of Feminist Discourse.

Translation, in its figurative meanings of transcoding and transformation, is a topos in feminist discourse used by women writers to evoke the difficulty of breaking out of silence in order to communicate new insights into women's experiences and their relation to language. The texts chosen for the thesis revolves around women, women criminals/prisoners who are otherwise silenced by the dominant, patriarchal society but it is through the exchange of cultural reality and language that they find their voice back and therefore, their agency.

Confronted with a plurality of discourses, the mixture of levels of language within one national culture or heteroglossia, wherein their language is marginal with respect to the dominant discourse, women writers figure this metaphorically in terms of polyglossia or the copresence of several 'foreign' languages. The women convicts or our subjects speak in extremely simple language, the majority of them in their mother tongues. Simple and uncomplicated sentences translate into lucid understanding of their pre-prison lives and their narratives become reliable; and they themselves trustworthy. Shivani while narrating Chanuli's story in her collection of life narratives, *Apradhini* comments,

"I looked at her wide eyes, - and I tell you that if I were the judge to whom she had said this, I would have freed her there and then. Such clear eyes can only belong to an innocent heart."

(25)

Under the influence of the post-structuralist conceptualisation of language, subjectivity and power, studies at the interface between language and gender undergo a "discourse turn" where the complex and often subtle ways in which gender identities are constructed and contested in

discourses are focused upon. From the discourse perspective, gender is no longer a stable and essential identity of an individual based on heterosexuality. Rather, it is plural and dynamic, the result of negotiations and performance of women and men in particular contexts through interactions. The successful construction and performance of a certain gender identity is also the result of power struggle and negotiation. Women writers experience the conflicts of heteroglossia in a specific way as a deterrent to participation in a national tradition.

Although framed as a transfer from one language to another, feminist discourse involves the transfer of a cultural reality into a new context as an operation in which literary traditions are variously challenged in the encounter of differing modes of textualisation. Feminist discourse is translation in two ways: as notation of ‘gestural’ and other codes from what has been hitherto ‘unheard of’, a muted discourse, and as repetition and consequent displacement of the dominant discourse.

For instance, in Janaki’s narrative, (from *Aphradhini*) Janaki is imprisoned for conspiring with her brother in law/lover to brutally murder her husband. The law and society and even her own children condemn her as a cold hearted murderess but Shivani’s probing questions reveal that Janaki lived a hellish life with this husband who was much older, abusive and ever displeased. Besides being an alcoholic and an extremely possessive husband, he also indulged in an amorous relationship with his elder sister in law. At length, he even started suspecting his own brother and one day upon seeing “Janaki making tea for his brother very lovingly” threatened to kill them if they were spotted together again. “If I ever catch you in my house again, he told his trembling brother, I’ll shoot you on sight!” (39) This only made the lovers defiant and they continued to meet on the sly. “Finally they decided this Othello had to be killed” (40) It seemed quite normal for her to seek solace with the younger brother who was, in any case, initially promised as her husband. At one point Shivani asks Janaki if she regrets her complicity in the murder. Janaki responds, “Regret, what have I done?”

The ‘muted discourse’ is the obvious fact that she remained silent and bore the burden of the torture, both physical and verbal for a long time only to displace the male domain by entering herself into it; by ending the misery she has long suffered, by killing her husband. Another example is of Shabnam from Nandini Oza’s *Withered Justice*. The story of Shabnam’s life also foregrounds the social context of her imprisonment. Shabnam’s first transgression in life happened when she married a Hindu boy. From the beginning she is then marginal in her own community. In order to save her marriage she joined smuggling in the border of Pakistan. State codes her as a terrorist and expects her to be in prison without voice. But Shabnam is not silent. In the very act of telling her story she said boldly, “I took up this illegal work out of a hopeless situation but the real culprits are the police. They robbed me of thirty [gold] biscuits from the total of forty that I had. Their offence is much bigger than mine. They are the real criminals, and not the poor like us who are driven to such crimes out of need. These policemen are in the wrong more than I. It is they who should be punished first.”(Oza 187).

Both set out to ‘destroy the discursive mechanism’ by assuming the feminine role deliberately, in an act of ‘mimicry’, which is to convert a form of subordination into an affirmation and to challenge an order resting on sexual indifference.

As demonstrated by the study, women-identified translators are likely to seek to deconstruct and subvert the conventional image of femininity with aggressive translation strategies such as considerable rewriting of gender biased discourse and paratextual interference. This is to a large extent in line with the conduct of translators of the second wave where feminist translation is defined as characteristic of the defiance of the source text, the adoption of ingenious translation strategies (von Flotow 1991) and the assertion of essential difference from translations by males. On the other hand, however, the study also suggests that the shared situational factors constitute the immediate context which can evoke the production of the same/similar linguistic behaviours on the part of male and female translators. The construction

of gender upon shared ground is likely to be largely unconscious, fulfilled as part of the immediate task of transferring the meaning of a specific text into a world of different language. In the situational process, the immediate power relations involved in the translation trigger and are triggered by the negotiations between the target text and the source text, between the target language and the source language and between the translator's subjectivity and the language by which such subjectivity is constructed. Ideally, the target text is supposed to be a perfect mirror image of the source text, yet actually, because of a conjuncture of factors, including the different subjectivity of the translator from the author's, the different symbolic systems with which meanings are expressed and the distinct cultural contexts, the image is never perfect and frequently far from perfect. Therefore, tension is always generated when the requirement to make the target text equivalent to the source is clashed with the reality of the existence of the distinct subjectivity of another individual, the different construal of the world through another meaning-making system and a different set of beliefs, traditions and political appeals other than what are entailed in the source text. Moreover, the tension is compounded by the impossibility of fixing a universal structure of subjectivity on the part of the translator. S/he has to select and negotiate a discursive position from the forms of subjectivity open to her/him every time s/he is engaged with the symbolic system. In principle, the tension could be resolved by the denial of either party involved in the confrontation. In reality, however, such resolution can never be implemented because of the control from the society at large. The larger context that imposes upon the translation in the specific case of this study is the confrontation between the feminist discourse and patriarchy. Because of the confrontation, it is possible to construct contrastive gender identities from the same resources.

Women everywhere are writing their way into subjective agency, dis/placing themselves. There is a widespread feeling that it has been necessary to invent a new language to discuss what has been taboo. 'Inedit', unwritten, is a recurrent term in Nicole Brossard's writing to describe her

work expressing such ‘unknown’ experiences of women, unknown, that is, within the dominant discourse which has positioned women as non-sense.

In the chapter titled “The Dam Shall not be Built”, (from Oza’s *Whithered Justice*) Revabai, an Adivasi woman of a village in the submergence area of the Sardar Sarovar Project complains about forced entry into her room, severe beating and rape by policemen. The Police Report concludes, “[the complaint of rape]...was done maliciously with an intention to discredit and defame the persons named in the F.I.R...[This was done in] sheer desperation by the NBA (Narmada Bachao Andolan), to create an international awareness against the Government of Gujarat and to put the administration under pressure...[therefore] though a poor adivasi lady, [she] cannot be called a simpleton...The circumstantial evidence does not support the theory of rape or assault because there were as many as eleven police officers/men and others present in two Jeeps near the scene of incident. Therefore three persons out of that indulging in any such act is a far-fetched story...” (Oza 161). The doctor of the government hospital reported, “It is difficult to say if rape has occurred after so many days. She is old and has had many deliveries. Her married life has been ling. Besides that she has also washed her clothes...” (Oza 162). The police inspector and the head constable at the Police Station commented, “You must have seen her photographs in the newspapers, she is a forty-five-year-old woman. Would anyone rape her? It cannot be believed.”(Oza 162). But the reality is completely different where there was no policewoman in times of arrest; she was kept in jail without food, water and denied medical help. It is through her narrative that we recognize a rebelling and counter-voice: “I was kept for one night in the N-police station where I asked the police for medical help, but they said nothing had happened to me. In the afternoon I was taken to B-[jail]. Here, with the excuse of examining me, I was stripped and humiliated. A bangle I was wearing was taken away from me. They tried to remove my anklets, but they did not come off. I was kept in jail for five days. I was given neither food nor water...The government wants me to leave my village and is using

cruel methods to scare us. But we are not going to be scared. We are not going to move.”(Oza 146-147). This is the typical story of postcolonial State where forced migration in favour of Industrial project is a regular phenomenon but what is untypical is the ‘speaking back’ against such violation and violence.

To conclude, women’s discourse is double; it is the echo of the self and the other, a movement into alterity. In the to and fro movement, writing is rupture and plural. Dialogic, the one-within-the-other in the Bakhtinian sense of the polyphonic text, feminist discourse works to subvert the monologism of the dominant discourse. Feminist discourse works upon language, upon the dominant discourse, in a radical interrogation of meaning. ‘[The language work’s] function would thus be to cast phallogocentrism loose from its moorings in order to return the masculine to its own language, leaving open the possibility of a different language. Which means that the masculine would no longer be “everything”. (Godard, 80)

Chapter Five

Observations

The constraints of other identities, such as being a translator, upon gender performance of an individual are reflective of the increasingly larger, layer upon layer of, contexts outside them in which the individual is involved, most often in the form of power struggles. We see from the case study that an individual performing her gender identity is limited to the discourses available to her in a particular institution at a specific period in time. The moving from the more immediate layer of context to the more remote ones, the effect of which does not at all decrease in the course, means the increase of the limiting effect and the compounding conditions and thus the narrowing down of the discursive options. The representation of the gender identity, in the form of foregrounding one's gender or the other in traditional way or creatively, is the result of negotiation between the subjects involved in power struggles. The power struggles limit as well as open up the possible discourses within which possible gender subjectivity can be constructed. The institutional and social identities of an individual are subject to the ideologies of the institution and the society. They can, therefore, exert ideological influence upon the construction of gender identity.

In such a long-established and ideology-ridden institution as translation, the linguistic performance of gender can be more constrained than, say, that involved in the daily communications in domestic or workplace contexts because within these latter contexts, the construction of gender identity is conditioned more to the immediate situational factors than to the ever present institutional constraints. The nature of translation determines that no matter how open the access is to discourses other than the sanctioned and more conventional ones, the individuals conducting the translation are shackled with double symbolic systems and the possible subject positions allowed within and by them. Thus, within the institute of translation,

the relationship between gender and language is intersected with the third factor of translation, complicating the picture to still larger extent. The ideological nature of translation is represented both in its restraining effect upon the linguistic gender performance of the translators and in its function of being a vehicle in reaffirming or resisting the undesirable gender relationship within patriarchy. For studies that concern the interplay between language and the specific human identity of gender, the poststructuralist conceptualizations of subjectivity, language and power as discussed are significant. As Sunderland (2006) suggests, “post-structuralism has provided a major challenge to essentialist notions of gender and has been crucial in the developing understanding of gender” (Sunderland 2006: 27).

By way of conclusion, this study is not intended to be a definitive work; rather it is the beginning of an ongoing work on a rich and powerful tradition of women perpetrator writers who have received little critical attention either individually or collectively. Reclaiming women perpetrators’ writing tradition involves discovering, reinterpreting and in many cases analysing for the first time the works of them, who are often the victim of their circumstances. And it is hoped that reconsidering their narratives in such a way will lead us to a deeper understanding of the challenges and potentials of representation and identity issues that it developed as a site of ideological struggle where art and writing unveiled the burden of gender and class representation. These texts may fill some of the gaps in women perpetrator writing and create a tradition of their own that, with the help of reprints and translations across other cultures and languages, opens up a genealogical pathway to common themes and experiences that unite women perpetrator writings across the generations. When the critical re-narration of such past experiences is not fully recognized as a way to better understand contemporary realities, often amounting to little more than an ideological interference discourse in the form of an empty assimilation of fictional ‘stories’, it becomes clear how translation can also function as an act of betrayal and removal of historical memory (Larkosh 2011).

To consider the works of Nicole Brossard and Daniel Gagnon it is to be observed that “our understanding of translation today as a reality and as an ideal has more to do with discontinuity, friction and multiplicity than it has to do with the creation of new commonalities.” To draw a conclusion in the words of Derrida, translation is governed by a double bind typified by the command, “Do not read me”: the text both requires and forbids its translation. Derrida refers to this double bind of translation as a hymen, the sign of both virginity and consummation of marriage. Thus, in attempting to overthrow the binary oppositions we have seen in other discussions of the problems, Derrida implies that translation is both original and secondary, uncontaminated and transgressed or transgressive. He goes on to argue in *The Ear of the Other*, “translation is writing; that it is not translation only in the sense of transcription. It is a productive writing called forth by the original text”. By arguing the interdependence of writing and translating, Derrida subverts the autonomy and privilege of the original text, binding it to an impossible but necessary contract with the translation and making each other the debtor of the other.

Limitations and suggestions for future studies

The study suffers limitation because of the lack of access to interviews with the translators and publishers, the research did not incorporate first-hand information on the possible conscious positioning of the source and target texts in terms of gender and the motivation for the positioning. Instead, only inferences are made based on accessible resources, albeit indirect and deductive. To address the limitations and explore other possible ways of gender construction in translation and other manners of interaction between gender and translation, future research may be conducted along few dimensions of studies, such as comparisons can be made between the translations of works by different sex authors to see whether the translator’s ways of constructing her/his own gender identity remain unaffected by different authors’ gender performance. Comparison could also be made between the translations and the

non-translated texts by each translator respectively, who are also social individuals involved in other social activities, so as to investigate whether the way the translators contest or confirm their social gender identity changes when the text type and the locality of the communicative activity change.

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Relevant Paper publications and Conference presentations

Conference certificates are enclosed.

Paper Publications:

Chakraborty, Subha. "Countering Punishment: A Study of Nandini Oza's Whither Justice: Stories of Women in Prison", *Journal of Comparative Indian Language and Literature*, University of Calcutta, Volume-V, to be published in early, 2021 (has been accepted for publication)

Letter of acceptance has been enclosed.

Chakraborty, Subha. "Annotated Bibliography of Translation Studies Books published in 2019." *Translation Today*, vol. 14, no.1, 2020, pp. 162-174.

Chakraborty, Subha. "Annotated Bibliography of Translation Studies Books published in 2019." *Translation Today*, vol. 13, no.2, 2019, pp. 209-218.

Conference Paper Presentations

International Conference on Gender Studies. Gender Narratives. "Countering Punishment: A Story of Nandini Oza's Whither Justice: Stories of Women in Prison". Organised by the London Centre for Interdisciplinary Research. On 29th February, 2020 at Birkbeck College, University of London, United Kingdom.

12th International Conference on South Asian Languages and Literatures (ICOSAL-12). "The Poetics of Trauma: Reading Perpetrator Narratives" organised on 7-9 January, 2016 organised by centre for Endangered languages and Mother Tongue Studies, School of Humanities, University of Hyderabad, Central Institute of Indian Languages, Mysore, Central University of Karnataka and The English and Foreign Languages University, Hyderabad.

“Displaced Memories: Victim Life Narratives in Contemporary India”. Centre for Comparative Literature, School of Humanities, University of Hyderabad. Researchers at Work Conference. Organised on 10-12 September, 2014.

Letter of Acceptance

1 message

mpcill Calcutta University <mpcill@caluniv.ac.in>
To: Subha.chakraborty@gmail.com

Tue, Dec 15, 2020 at 5:02 PM

Dear Author,

This is my pleasure to inform you that your article entitled, "Countering Punishment: A Study of Nandini Oza's Whither Justice: Stories of Women in Prison", has been accepted for publication in the Journal of Comparative Indian Language and Literature, University of Calcutta, Volume-V, to be published in early, 2021. I thank you for considering publishing with us.

—
With Regards,
Mrinmoy Pramanick, M.A., M.Phil., Ph.D.
Head and Assistant Professor
Department of Comparative Indian Language and Literature
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International Conference on Gender Studies

“Gender Narratives”

CERTIFICATE

29 February 2020

This is to confirm that **Ms Subha Chakraborty** presented the paper entitled “Countering Punishment: A Story of Nandini Oza’s *Whither Justice: Stories of Women in Prison*” at the International Conference on Gender Studies: “Gender Narratives” organised by the London Centre for Interdisciplinary Research on 29 February 2020 at Birkbeck College, University of London.

Olena Lytovka

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**12th International Conference on South Asian
Languages and Literatures (ICOSAL-12)**

7-9 January 2016

Organizer

Centre for Endangered Languages and Mother Tongue Studies,
School of Humanities, University of Hyderabad

Co-organizers

Central Institute of Indian Languages, Mysore
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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that Mr./Ms./Dr./Prof. _____

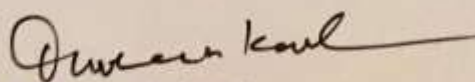
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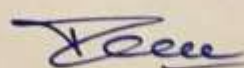
held at the Centre for Endangered Languages and Mother Tongue Studies, School of
Humanities, University of Hyderabad from 7 – 9 January 2016 and presented a paper

titled The Poetics of Trauma: Reading Perpetrator

Narratives



Prof. Omkar Nath Koul



Prof. Panchanan Mohanty

Centre for Comparative Literature | School of Humanities | University of Hyderabad



RAW.CON 2014
 Researchers at Work Conference
National Students' Conference on Literary and Cultural Studies



CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that Ms./Mr. Subha Chakrabarti presented a paper/
 chaired a session titled Displaced Memories: Victim life Narratives in Contemporary India
 participated in the three day National Students' Conference, RAW.CON 2014 held
 from September 10th to 12th, 2014 at the Centre for Comparative Literature,
 University of Hyderabad.

RAW.CON

Mukherjee
 Prof. Tutun Mukherjee
 Head, Centre for Comparative Literature

Abu Saleh *Kalyan*
 Abu Saleh/Kalyan Muhgamuri
 Coordinator, RAW.CON 2014

Translating Punishment: Reading Select Women Perpetrators' Narratives

by Subha Chakraborty

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