

Sachin Ketkar

on

The Adventures of Marathi Travel writings A brief historical overview

Archive of travel literature as a discourse is critical to understanding of cultural and social history as it embodies what Bakhtin (1981) terms as 'chronotope' or "the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature", and also because it reveals the interrelated dynamics of cultural memory, identity and boundary, i.e. what Yuri Lotman (1990) designates as 'historical semiotics' of a particular culture. Analysis of travel literature also helps us to understand the leading *sources* and *mechanisms* of dynamism of a given society as elaborated by the sociologist Anthony Giddens (1990). Travel literature not only reveals how the chronotopes, cultural memories, the questions of identity and the boundaries are constantly being transformed by these sources of the dynamism of modernity, but it also plays a role in the historical processes of social and cultural change. With this theoretical framework, the paper attempts to trace the adventurous journey of Marathi travel literature from 13th century to 21st century by mapping the shifts in the semantics and semiotics of travel as well as travel writing while touching upon the various trends and development in Marathi travel writing in the twentieth and what Giddens calls the 'The Runaway World' of the twenty first century. I will briefly comment upon some of the medieval 'pilgrimage' texts of the Mahanubhava sect like the *Sthanapothi* (mid 14th cent) and *Smritisthala* (early 14th cent) and texts of the Varkari sect like *Tirthavali* (14th cent) attributed to Namdev. I will also touch upon some of the popular travel writings of the nineteenth century like Godse Bhattji Varsaikar's *Mazha Pravas* (1907) and Pandita Ramabai, *The Peoples of the United States* (1889), followed by the twentieth century travel writings like D.B. Mokashi's *Palkhi* (1964), Arun Kolatkar's two long poems *Jejuri* (1977) and *Chirimiri* (2004) and two Dalit travelogues, namely, Annabhau Sathé's *Mazha Russiachya Pravas* (1965) and Laxman Gaikwad's *Chini Matitil Divas* (1998).

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Sachin C. Ketkar is a bilingual writer, translator, editor, blogger and researcher based in Baroda, Gujarat. His most recent book, *Changlyakavitevarchi Statutory Warning: Samkaleen Marathi Kavita, JagatikikarananiBhashantar* (Sept 2016), is a collection of Marathi articles on contemporary Marathi poetry, globalization and translation. His books in English include *Skin, Spam and Other Fake Encounters: Selected Marathi Poems in translation*, (2011), *(Trans) Migrating Words: Refractions on Indian Translation Studies* (2010) and *A Dirge for the Dead Dog and Other Incantations* (2003). His collections of Marathi poetry are *Jarasandhachya Blogvarche Kahi Ansh* (2010) and *Bhintishivaicya Khidkitun Dokavtana*, (2004). He has extensively translated present-day Marathi poetry, most of which is collected in the anthology *Live Update: An Anthology of Recent Marathi Poetry, 2005* edited by him. He won 'Indian Literature Poetry Translation Prize', given by Indian Literature Journal, Sahitya Akademi for translation of modern Gujarati poetry in 2000. He works as Professor in English, Faculty of Arts, The Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda, Vadodara.

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