

[Abstract of talk by Prof. Kosambi]

### **Gained in Translation: Experiences with Women's Marathi prose writings, 1880s-1940s**

Although much is inevitably lost in translation, much more is gained, besides the contribution of translation as the only bridge across linguistic divides. This paper seeks to substantiate some of the expected and unexpected gains by taking a wide sweep of women's Marathi prose writings during the seven pre-Independence decades.

The principal writers discussed here are Pandita Ramabai and Ramabai Ranade, followed by six iconic novelists (who penned other genres as well)—Kashibai Kanitkar, Indirabai Sahasrabuddhe, Vibhavari Shirurkar, Geeta Sane, Shakuntala Paranjpye, and Prema Kantak. Other writers, such as Tarabai Shinde, are also briefly discussed.

The advantage of such a longitudinal perspective is the discovery of some significant trends: the cultural changes reflected in linguistic changes, the gradual strengthening of women's incipient feminist consciousness, the evolution of women's political awareness and participation, individual women's ideological trajectories traced through their changing writing style, and finally women's deployment of both creative and serious writing as a parallel social reform discourse inhering the notion of gender equality which was women's unique contribution. Many of these trends are closely intertwined with the process of translation, because they lead to discoveries which are not enabled only by a careful reading of the source texts involved. The paper prefaces this discussion with an overview of the nineteenth-century discursive practice of translation and goes on to discuss my experience of translating women's texts.