

---

---

## Translation and Indian Literature: Some Reflections

---

M. Asaduddin

### Abstract

*The paper attempts to lay out the role of translation on interhuman space at various times and places in the world in general and in the Indian situation in particular. Renaissances in various parts of the world were a function of translation into those languages. Translation has an undoubted place in the history of ideas and the history of translation is the history of human civilization and (mis) understanding. The paper goes on to talk about the Indian situation in particular, both endotropic (=one Indian language into another) and exotropic (= Indian language into English). It elucidates the originary moments of translation in Indian history and concludes that translation, the impressionable interface that it is of cultural traffic, is a great tool of intercultural synergy.*

The history of translation is the history of human civilization and understanding, and sometimes of misunderstanding. Stories travel from culture to culture, and their transmission through translation takes innumerable forms. The classic case is said to be that of our own *Panchatantra*. In an evocative essay, Amitav Ghosh (1994) has the following to say about *Panchatantra*:

“These stories too have no settings to speak of, except the notion of a forest. Yet the *Panchatantra* is reckoned by some to be second only to the Bible in the extent of its global diffusion. Compiled in India early in the first millennium, it passed into Arabic through a sixth century Persian translation, engendering some of the best known

of middle eastern fables, including parts of the Thousand and One Nights. The stories were handed on to the Slavic languages through Greek, then from Hebrew to Latin, a version in the latter appearing in 1270. Through Latin they passed into German and Italian. ...[T]hese stories left their mark on collections as different as those of La Fontaine and the Grimm brothers, and today they are inseparably part of a global heritage.”<sup>1</sup>

Moments of significant change in the history and civilization of any people can be seen to be characterised by increased activity in the field of translation. The European Renaissance was made possible through the massive translation by Arab Muslims from the work of the Hellenic tradition. In the case of India, though there is no consensus about the originary moment of Indian Renaissance – whether there was an Indian Renaissance at all in the European sense, and if there was one, whether it happened simultaneously in different languages and literatures of India or at different times, there is no disagreement about the fact that there was a kind of general awakening throughout India in the nineteenth century and that was made possible through extensive translation of European and mainly English works in different languages, not only of literature but also of social sciences, philosophy, ethics and morality etc. Translation has a special meaning for the people of north-east India because in some literatures of the north east, the originary moment of literature is the moment of translation too. For example, in the case of Mizo it did not have a script before the European missionaries devised a script to translate evangelical literature into Mizo. Raymond Schwab (1984) in his book, *The Oriental Renaissance*, has shown how a new kind of awareness took place and curiosity about the Orient aroused in the West through the translation of Persian texts from Sadi, Rumi, Omar Khayyam and others on the one hand, and Vedic and Sanskrit texts from India on the other.

In the Indian tradition we have an exalted notion of translators. We do not designate Tulsidas, Krittivas, Pampa or Kamban as ‘translators’ of our great epics but as great poets per se. However, in India, if we leave out the re-telling of the stories of the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* in regional languages, the first significant translations, to my knowledge, took place at the time of Emperor Akbar. In his efforts to promote understanding among religions and promote interfaith dialogue, Akbar sponsored debates among scholars of different religions and encouraged the translation of Sanskrit, Turkish and Arabic texts into Persian by setting up a *Maktabkhana* or translation bureau. Persian translation of Sanskrit texts included *Ramayana*, *Mahabharata*, *Bhagvad-gita*, *Bhagavat Purana*, *Atharva Veda*, *Yoga Vashisht* etc. The translations carried out in this phase can be characterised as a dialogue of civilizations. Prince Dara Shikoh (1615-1659), a profoundly learned scholar himself, not only promoted this trend but made it his life-long mission. His interest in comparative understanding of Hinduism and Islam prompted him to take assistance from the Pandits of Banaras with the translation of fifty *Upanishads* into fluent Persian. It was completed in 1657 and given the title *Sirri-Akbar* or *Sirri Asrar* (The Great Secret). This text was translated into English by Nathaniel Halhead (1751-1830) in the colonial period, and into French and Latin by Anquetil Duperron, the famous translator and scholar of *Zend Avesta*. In the preface to the *Sirri-Akbar* Dara Shikoh explains how, for some time, he was upset by assertions of radical differences between Islam and the religious practices of the Hindus. He began looking for a common truth between Muslims and Hindus. As Muslims have a revealed Book which determines their world view, he was looking for the divine word in the Hindu religion and thus the translation of the *Upanishads* came to his mind. As is evident, the primary pivot of Dara Shikoh’s translation project was synthesis – spiritual, intellectual, social -- which would give us some clue about the choice of text(s) and the strategies employed in the translation. His own book, *Majmua Al-bahrain*, written in 1654-55,

seems to work out in considerable detail the terms of this synthesis, painstakingly exploring equivalences and terminology between the Sufi philosophical system of the Unity of Being (*Wahdatul wajood*) and the *Vedanta* (The Asiatic Society of Kolkata took the initiative to have it translated into English by Mahfuzul Haq in 1929). Dara Shikoh's project required that he must ignore asymmetry and cultural specificity, but there were others who were only too aware of the pitfalls of such projects. An interesting example is provided by Mulla Badayuni who was ordained by Akbar to translate the *Ramayana* into Persian. The mulla, a staunch believer, hated the command of the emperor, but had to carry it out, a task which a contemporary scholar has described as a kind of spiritual punishment to him. Not only was it repugnant to his religious beliefs, he found the task of transposing a polytheistic worldview on a fiercely monotheistic one particularly daunting. The concept of divinity being shared by a host of gods and goddesses is not only unfamiliar in the Islamic worldview, but is a cardinal sin. There were fierce debates among scholars of translation as to whether it was appropriate to translate Allah into Ishwar or Bhagwan, rasool into avtar or yugpurosh, Ram into Raheem, and so on, because in these cases one was not simply translating Arabic into Sanskrit or vice versa but also making statements of equivalence between concepts whose semantic universe was widely divergent and the cultural difference that gave rise to such concepts almost unbridgeable. Faced with the royal command Mulla Badayuni did translate the sacred book all the while hating himself for doing the job. It will make a subject of interesting research as to how he negotiated this dichotomy between his translatorial ethics and the task at hand. This also reminds one of the experiences of Eugene A. Nida, of the American Bible society and a reputed translation scholar, about the difficulty of translating the Biblical concept of trinity in cultures and languages that do not have this concept of Godhood.

The next great moment for translation in India, and specifically in the context of North Indian languages happened during the heyday of British colonialism. It started when Fort William College was established in Calcutta in 1800 and the Scotsman, John Gilchrist became its principal. He, along with his munshis, set themselves the task of putting together in simple Hindustani works in Persian and Sanskrit like *Gulistan*, *Qissa Chahar Darveish*, *Qissa Gul-I-Bakawali*, *Dastan Amir Hamza*, *Singhasan Baattisi*, *Qissa Alif Laila o Laila*. Though this was done ostensibly for the instruction and acculturation of the British officers who came to India to rule the country, the easy accessibility and lucidity of the prose made these works of romances extremely popular, and they were translated and retold in many Indian languages making a deep impact on their literatures. G.N. Devy, as indeed other literary historians in India like Sisir Kumar Das also credits Persian and other Islamic languages with facilitating the rise of indigenous languages. Devy says, “The emergence of *bhasha* literatures coincided with, even if it was not entirely caused by, a succession of Islamic rules in India. The Islamic rulers – Arabs, Turks, Mughals – brought with them new cultural concerns to India, and provided these currents legitimacy through liberal political patronage. The languages – Arabic and Persian, mainly, and Urdu which developed indigenously under their influence – brought new modes of writing poetry and music. The intimate contact with Islamic cultures created for the *bhasha* literatures new possibilities of continuous development” (Devy 1995) These possibilities were realised through translation and adaptation. Two prose romances, *Qissa Chahar Darvesh* and *Qissa Gul Bakawali* were very popular across many Indian languages. In an essay on Bankim Chandra Chatterjee’s emergence as an architect of Bangla prose, Tagore remarks, “...with his emergence the darkness and stagnation that gripped Bangla literature disappeared, and disappeared the legacy of *Vijay Basanta* and *Gul-i-Bakawali*, those escapist romances...” (cited in Mukherjee 2003:27, my translation). The impact of the

literatures of the Middle East was inevitable given the long and sustained Indo-Muslim encounter which is certainly one of the most significant civilisational encounters in history, making possible the emergence of personalities like Ram Mohan Roy, a truly multi-lingual scholar, who wrote with equal felicity in several languages including Arabic and Persian. He wrote his first book in Persian, and its introduction in Arabic. The Persianate literary values and themes suffused Indian literature till the middle of the nineteenth century but it is a matter of speculation as to how lasting that impact was, because it seemed to have disappeared as rapidly. Moreover, apart from institutional sites there were very few individual efforts to translate, absorb and assimilate the literature of the Middle East. Sisir Kumar Das, the historian of Indian literature, compares the Indo-Muslim literary encounter with the Euro-Muslim encounter in Spain, more specifically in Andalusia, and points out that while Perso-Arab intervention in Spain and prolific translation of Arabic works into Spanish had its lasting impact manifested in the provincial poetry and the emergence of the troubadours, no similar impact can be discernible in India. This makes him speculate whether the Indian mind, at that point of time, was less open to translation and assimilation from alien sources. In an essay written in Bangla for the journal *Desh* he writes: “Foreigners had come to India, many of whom had learnt Sanskrit, translated from Sanskrit into their own languages. But Indians had hardly shown any interest in foreign languages or literatures. Translation has taken place from Sanskrit and Pali into Tibetan, Chinese, Arabic and Persian. The Greeks had come to India and ruled in the north-west of India for one hundred and fifty years, and from this confluence the Gandhar art emerged ... but one does not know of any learned Brahmin who learnt Greek or read the poetry of Homer or reflected on the philosophy of Plato. This happened in Indian culture time and again” (Das 1994:34, my translation). He further remarks that even in matters of translation from Sanskrit into Indian languages, people have shown interest in works with a religious intent. Taking the

instance of Bangla literature he points out that though *the Ramayana*, *the Mahabharata* and *Gita* were translated from Sanskrit into Bangla, no one showed much interest in translating say, *Shakuntala*, *Uttar Ram Charita*, *Mudra Rakshas*, *Mrichchakatik*, *Meghdut* or *Kumar Sambhav*.

The greatest impact exerted by any Persian text on the imagination of Indian writers during the colonial period is Omar Khayyam's *Rubaiyyat*, not the original one but the English version mediated by Edward Fitzgerald's translation or 'transcreation', and this happened at the fag end of the colonial period. By the thirties of the twentieth century, it had been translated into most of the Indian languages, creating a stir in poetic circles and giving rise to new ways of writing poetry in some languages. Haribanshrai Bachchan both translated and transcreated it in Hindi. One he called *Khayyam ki Madhushala* and the other simply *Madhushala*. So widespread was the impact of these two versions that they gave rise to a new trend called 'halavad' which can be roughly translated as 'hedonism'. The Marathi translator Madhav Patvardhan who was a Persian scholar and who had initiated ghazal writing in Marathi produced three different Marathi versions of it between 1929 and 1940, which present multiple perceptions of the original. The reception of Omar Khayyam's *Rubaiyyat* in different Indian languages constitutes a unique case for Translation Studies and an analysis of the strategies adopted by different translators in so many Indian languages will help us to make coherent statements about indigenous translation practices. In this context, Borges's seminal essay on the reception of *Alif Laila O Laila* i.e. the *Arabian Nights* in the European world can serve as an example (2004).

As the Orientalists lost to the Anglicists, Persian literature and language lost its salience by the middle of the nineteenth century. The new language of power was English, and with English language a wholly new world opened up to the people of India. Soon

there emerged a section of writers and intellectuals who can truly be said to be “translated men” in the most comprehensive sense of the phrase. Though brought up on traditional Indian literary and cultural values, their mental horizon was formed by literature written in English or translated from English. The lack of openness on the part of Indians to foreign literature that Sisir Kumar Das bemoans with reference to an earlier era does not seem to be valid for this phase of history when Indians took massively to works of English literature, reading them with passion, translating them and adapting them to their purpose. It is important to remember that the phenomenon of colonial modernity that was negotiated in the nineteenth century India and that has changed us irrevocably was possible only through translation. The writers in various Indian languages were invariably reading European and English authors, and translating, if you take the larger view of translation, these into the Indian languages. There were prolific translations from Shakespeare and some lesser known Victorian novelists like G.W.M. Reynolds. The writings of Addison and Steele were very popular in India and the prose tradition as it developed in some Indian languages was indebted to them. The famous Urdu periodical *Avadh Punch* (1887), which facilitated the growth of a kind of sinuous literary prose, used to publish the essays of Addison and Steele regularly. As pointed out before, many Indian writers read and translated these authors and assimilating their style and content, tried to make use of them in the development of their own literatures. The emergence of a genre like the ‘novel’ can be traced to this phenomenon of translation and assimilation. To take some stray examples: In Malayalam, Chandu Menon’s *Indulekha* (1888), commonly regarded as the first novel in that language, was an adaptation of Disraeli’s *Henrieta Temple* (1837); in Urdu, Nazir Ahmad is usually regarded as the first convincing practitioner of the genre and his novels were based on English prototypes, his *Taubatun Nasuh* (1874) being based on Defoe’s *The Family Instructor*; In Bangla, Bankim Chandra Chatterjee was greatly influenced by Walter Scott’s practice of the genre of the ‘historical



novel'. Frequently, works in English (or those translated into English from other European languages) were adapted to the Indian situation and domesticated to an appreciable degree. These translations and adaptations opened a window to world literature for Indian readers. Rabindranath Tagore recalls discovering a "pathetic translation of *Paul et Virginie* (1787)" in the Bengali serial, *Abodhbandhu* (The Common Man's Friend) in 1868-69, over which, "I wept many tears ... what a delightfully refreshing mirage the story conjured up for me on that terraced roof in Calcutta. And oh! The romance that blossomed along the forest paths of that secluded island, between the Bengali boy-reader and little Virginie with the many-coloured kerchief round her head!" (cited in Joshi 2004:312). The colonial administration gave utmost encouragement to the translation of Western texts that would facilitate the process of acculturation. It would be unfair to expect that the translators of that period were sensitive to the aspects of complex cultural negotiations, and such ideas as suggested in statements like "translation as a practice shapes, and takes shape within, the asymmetrical relations of power that operate under colonialism" (Niranjana 1992). In fact, if one takes a close look at the translation of literary texts of that period it will be found that translators were not unduly concerned about loyalty to the original text or they agonized much over a definitive version or edition of a text. Translations -- more specifically, literary translations -- were carried out more or less in the "fluent tradition" as Lawrence Venuti (1995) defines it in the context of the English translation of Latin American texts in North America, where translations often masqueraded as the original. Whatever that be, it can be asserted with reasonable certainty that we are what we are today in the realms of literature and language by virtue of the literary and cultural exchanges and negotiations that took place in the nineteenth century. Priya Joshi, in her essay, "Reading in the Public Eye: The Circulation of Fiction in Indian Libraries", mentioned earlier, studied the reading pattern of the people in the nineteenth century and concluded:

...[T]he Indian world survived and succeeded by translation – not just the literal translation of reams of printed matter but also a symbolic and metaphoric translation in which the Indian world was carried forth from one state to another through the act of reading and interpretation. The encounter with British fiction generally and the melodramatic mode in particular helped Indian readers translate themselves from a socially and politically feudal order to a modern one; from cultural and political subjection to conviction; from consumers to producers of their own national self-image (Joshi 2004:321).

Thus, the project of nation-making was intimately connected to the wide dissemination of works in translation. The concept of the nation as the ‘imagined community’, as Benedict Anderson would have it, if it ever took shape in India, did so at this time through the publication of novels and the translation of novels, not only from English but also from and among Indian languages, and through publication of periodicals and other means of print capitalism.

Right in the middle period of the Indian colonial encounter with the West, in the latter half of the nineteenth century, translation between and among modern Indian literatures began. Translation from Bangla literature formed the staple diet of many readers in different Indian languages. Bankim’s novels, *Anandamath* (1882) in particular, were translated into most of the major Indian languages. B. Venkatachar (b.1845) was well-known for his translation of Bankim’s novels into Kannada. He acquired such a reputation for his craft that his translations are known as “Venkatachar’s novels”. Saratchandra Chattopadhyay almost single-handedly made Bengali fiction the most attractive commodity for translators, publishers and reading public all over India (Das 1995:40). Sarat’s popularity was so phenomenal through several decades of the twentieth century that

Jainendra Kumar thinks his contributions towards the creation and preservation of cultural India are second, perhaps, only to those of Gandhi's. He sums up the role of translation and inter-literary relationship by asking the rhetorical question – “Saratchandra was a writer in Bengali; but where is that Indian language in which he did not become the most popular when he reached it?” (Kumar 1977:51). The enthusiasm for Bengali literature, some might rather call it ‘hegemony’ today, only increased when Tagore was awarded the Nobel prize in 1913, and later, writers from different parts of India gathered at Santiniketan to read Tagore in Bangla, and then, when they returned to their own language habitat, introduced him in their own languages. Tagore indeed strode like a colossus on the Indian literary horizon in the early decades of the twentieth century, but there were lesser writers too who had been freely translated into many regional languages. Dwijendralal Ray's plays which recreated the glories of the Mughal and the Rajput past were also very popular. *Bhishma*, a play based on the Mahabharata hero was translated into Gujarati in 1919, followed by *Mebar Patan* in the following year. At least six of his plays were translated into Gujarati during the independence movement. No less than thirteen plays were translated into Telugu. Translations did take place also from Subramanya Bharati, Premchand and other writers. In fact the first half of the twentieth century may be said to be the golden period of translation within Indian languages. Though the translations were done largely in the fluent tradition and the translators displayed a sureness of touch and a kind of confidence which emanates from sharing, more or less, the same cultural values and the same mythological universe, there is no room for complacency even here. Even if both the source and target texts are Indian language texts a comparison of the original and the translation often reveals asymmetry and a fair amount of cultural ignorance.<sup>2</sup>

\*\*\*

In the post-independence period we find a gradual attenuation of translation within Indian languages. The space that was open to translation between Indian regional literatures gradually shrank and English began to intervene. However, even though the postcolonial moment belonged to translation from Indian languages into English, the translation scene even in English was fairly desultory in the first three decades after independence. Aside from the Akademi, some significant translations during this period were those sponsored by UNESCO Collection of Representative Works. Foremost among them are: Bibhutibhushan Bandopadhyay's Bengali novel *Pather Panchali: Song of the Road* (1968, trs. T.W. Clark and Tarapada Mukherji), known world-wide for its film version by Satyajit Ray; Manik Bandopadhyay's Bengali novel, *The Puppet's Tale* (1968, tr. S.L. Ghosh); Shridhar Pendse's Marathi novel, *Wild Bapu of Garambi* (1968, tr. Ian Raeside); Thakhazi Sivasankara Pillai's Malayalam novel, *Chemmeen: A Novel* (1962, tr. Narayana Menon), Premchand's Hindi novel, *Godan: The Gift of a Cow* (1968, tr. Gordon Roadermal) and Aziz Ahmad's Urdu novel, *The Shore and the Wave* (1971, tr. Ralph Russell). The absence of any dialogue among translators about their craft and the lack of any tradition of documentation of problems encountered by individual translators meant that they worked in a kind of vacuum, depending mainly on their instincts and their own resources. Omission and compression are the two basic strategies adopted by translators in this period, including the well-thought-out translation projects undertaken by the UNESCO. The translators added, deleted and reordered materials, often in an arbitrary fashion, the common plea being that they were trying to make the work more suitable to the target readership.

Fakir Mohan Senapati's Oriya novel, *Chha Mana Atha Guntha* (1902) constitutes a curious case in the history of translation of Indian fiction in English. It had three English versions published between 1967 and 1969 (Das, C.V. Narasimha 1967; Senapati B.M.

& Senapati A.M. 1967; Misra, Nuri 1969), one version differing radically from another in its presentation of the text. The translators of two versions have changed the title and presented their versions as ‘rewritten’ in English, and further, one translator presented it as a Victorian English novel, embellishing it with epigraphs in the form of quotations from English classics at the head of each chapter and including in the body of translation references to English literature which are absent from the original text (for a comparative study of the three translations, see Sherry Simon & Paul St-Pierre 2000:263-288). Further, the translator’s nineteen-page “Introduction” tries to contextualise it in the tradition of the English novel of a certain period, robbing it of all anti-colonial resonance, and illustrating what it means to be translating into the language of power/former colonizer:

I wonder sometimes why I did not choose to call my book “Man of Property” after John Galsworthy. That title would have been quite appropriate – as appropriate, I believe, as the one that *my book* actually bears now. So far as their passionate attachment to property is concerned, what is the difference between Soames Forsyte [sic] (that unhappy husband of Irene) and Ramachandra Mangaraj? I could similarly call my book by the alternative name of “A Book of Rascals” after Thackeray’s “A Book of Snobs” (xiii).

Such a strategy of translation, which is closer to rewriting, raises crucial questions about authorship, loyalty and authenticity. The ‘colonial cringe’ demonstrated by the translator also acts against the very purpose of literary translation, namely, introducing a foreign text and culture to the readers in the target language. One hopeful thing, however, is that, located as we are, at the postcolonial

moment of stringent copyright laws, contemporary translators cannot do whatever they wish with an author's text.

The birth of Penguin Books India in the mid-1980s marked a significant moment in the history of Indian literature in English translation. When it began publishing Indian authors in English translation, mainly fiction, translated fiction attained a kind of visibility it never enjoyed earlier. Among the many success stories of Penguin the most notable are the short stories and novellas of Satyajit Ray from Bengali, beginning with *Adventures of Feluda* (1988), and then running into several other volumes, Bhishm Sahni's novel, *Tamas:Darkness* (1989) from Hindi, *Classic Telugu Short Stories* (1995) edited by Ranga Rao, all of which went on to become bestsellers and have registered steady sales ever since they were published. Penguin's foray into translation and their growing clout actuated others like Rupa & Company (which later tied up with Harper Collins) of Delhi, Seagull Books of Kolkata to expand their corpus in translation. Rupa's three-volume *Stories About the Partition of India* (Alok Bhalla (ed) 1997) which showcased 63 short stories in English translation from 9 Indian languages became an instant bestseller, as it came out bang on the occasion of the completion of fifty years of India's partition, a cataclysmic event that changed the complexion of the Indian sub-continent for ever. Seagull Books, Kolkata has been running a project of translating the entire corpus – including short stories and novels -- of Mahasweta Devi, of which nearly twenty volumes have come out so far.

The most ambitious and systematic project of translating Indian novels into English was launched by Macmillan India Ltd in 1996 in a series called 'Modern Indian Novels in English Translation.' By now, it has published more than 100 novels. These translations are accompanied by an elaborate editorial apparatus – a scholarly introduction by a critic of the original language, a Translator's Note and an elaborate (compensatory) glossing in

footnotes. Some of these novels have already been put on the syllabi of universities in India and abroad.

Translation into English sometimes acts as an instrument of empowerment of the marginalised sections of society – dalits, tribals, women -- giving writers who deal with the struggle of the disenfranchised in society greater visibility, and creating solidarities across the multi-lingual and multi-cultural Indian society. Foremost among such writers in India is, of course, Mahasweta Devi, who has been well-served by her translators in English. But there are others who have been writing with consistency and commitment for several decades, but were not known outside their linguistic borders because of the paucity of translations. When creative fiction about the lives of dalits and untouchables like R.R. Borade's Marathi novel *Fall* was translated by Sudhakar Marathe in 1998 or Bama's Tamil novel *Karukku* was translated by Lakshmi Holmstrom in 2000, or Darshana Trivedi and Rupalee Burke translated and edited the collection, *Tongues of Fire: Dalit Stories in English* (2000), they created considerable awareness about and interest in the lives of these people who have been living on the margins of society for centuries. These novels have now become part of courses on literature of the oppressed in India and abroad. The strand of feminist writing in India has been quite strong through the twentieth century, but this body of writing never attained the kind of primacy it deserved before it was available in English translation. The feminist publishing house, Kali for Women, started in 1984 with the objective "to make available – and visible – the hitherto little known work of women writing in different (Indian) languages" (Menon 1995:16). In particular it showcased a substantial body of works by two Urdu fiction writers – Ismat Chughtai and Qurratulain Hyder. Tahira Naqvi's translation of a selection of Chughtai's stories, *The Quilt and Other Stories* (1990), and a novel, *The Crooked Line* (1995) were immediately picked up by universities in India and abroad for inclusion in their syllabi. Hyder is an outstanding

example of self-translation. She has herself rendered most of her novels and short stories into English, and her own English ‘transcreation’ of her novel, *River of Fire* (1998) prompted T(imes) L(iterary) S(upplesment) to place her ‘alongside her exact contemporaries, Milan Kundera and Gabriel Garcia Marquez, as one of the world’s major authors’. Stree, the feminist press from Kolkata, has published volumes such as *Cast Me Out If You Will: Stories and Memoirs* (1998) from Malayalam, a collection of Jyotirmoyi Devi’s stories from Bengali, *The Impermanence of Lies* (1998), and *The Stream Within: Short Stories by Contemporary Bengali Women* (1999), all of which deal with women’s spirited struggle with patriarchy. One remarkable feminist project edited by Susie Tharu and K. Lalitha was the two-volume anthology, *Women Writing in India* (1993), which showcased women’s writing, a substantial part of which is fiction, from 600 B.C. to the present. This project is also noteworthy as it had a specific translation policy, which is clear from the following:

We have tried ... in the translations (not always successfully) to strain against ... reductive and stereotypical homogenization ... we preferred translations that did not domesticate the work either into a pan-Indian or into a “universalist” mode, but demanded of the reader too a translation of herself into another socio-historical ethics. We have taken pains ... to preserve the regional grain of the work ... (ibid: xxxii)

Currently we are going through a boom in translation – mainly translation of Indian language literatures into English. Even though it is regrettable that literary translation within Indian languages has not shown any such resurgence, it should not make us apprehensive of translation of Indian literatures into English. As a link language, English has an important role to play and translation



into English can certainly foster the growth of a holistic view of Indian literature. It would also help dispel the impression one frequently encounters while travelling abroad that Indian literature is what gets written in English. However, we must be clear in our minds about the objectives of the translations that are being done, as they would determine our choice of the authors and texts that merit translation.

## NOTES

1. The impact of the Indian story telling tradition and *Panchatantra* has been discussed eloquently by Amitav Ghosh. According to him, "Nothing that India has given the world outside is more important than its stories. Indeed, so pervasive is the influence of the Indian story that one particular collection, *The Panchatantra* ('The Five Chapters') is reckoned by some to be second only to the Bible in the extent of its global diffusion."
2. I have dealt with this in considerable detail in my essay, "Tagore's *Gora* in Urdu Translation and the Questions of Authority, Legitimacy and Authenticity", *Viswabharati Quarterly, Santiniketan*, Vol. 10, No. 1, April-June, 2001.

## REFERENCES

- Antarjanam, Lalitambika 1998 **Cast Me Out If You Will: Stories and Memoir** (tr) Gita Krishnakutty.
- Banerji, Chitrita (tr) 1988 **The Adventures of Feluda** New Delhi : Penguin Books.

- Bhalla, Alok (ed) 1997 **Stories About the Partition of India** New Delhi: Harper Collins.
- Borges, Jorge Luis 2004 'The Translators of the One Thousand and One Nights' in **The Translation Studies Reader** Lawrence Venuti (ed) New York and London: Routledge.
- Das, C.V. Narasimha (tr) 1967 **The Stubble Under the Cloven Hoof** Cuttack: Sahitya Samsad
- Das, Sisir Kumar 1994 'Iran Tomar joto Bulbul' in **Desh** Vol. 61 No 9 Kolkata.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 1995 **A History of Indian Literature 1911-1956** New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi.
- Devy, G.N. 1995 **After Amnesia: Tradition and Change in Indian Literary Criticism** Hyderabad: Orient Longman.
- Devi, Jyotirmoyee 1998 **The Impermanence of Lies: Stories of Jyotirmoyee Devi** Kolkata: Stree.
- Ghosh, Amitav 1994 'The Indian Story: Notes on Some Preliminaries' in **Civil Lines**.
- Hyder, Qurratulain 1998 **River of Fire** New Delhi: Women unlimited.
- Joshi, Priya 2004 'Reading in the Public Eye: The Circulation of Fiction in Indian Libraries, C. 1835-1901' in **India's Literary History: Essays on the Nineteenth Century**, Stuart Blackburn and Vasudha Dalmia (eds) New Delhi: Permanent Black.
- Kumar, Jainendra 1977 "Sarat Chandra Chatterjee and Hindi Literature" in **The Golden Book of Sarat Chandra** Manik Bandopadhyay (ed) Calcutta: Allied Publishers.
- Menon, Ritu 1995 'A Publisher's Viewpoint' 5,1 in **Indian Review of Books**.

- Misra, Nuri (tr) 1969 **A Plot of Land** Cuttack: Cuttack Student's Store.
- Mukherjee, Meenakshi 2003 **Upanyasey Ateet: Itihas o Kalpaitihas** Kolkata: Thema.
- Naqvi, Tahira (tr) 1990 **The Quilt and Other Stories** New Delhi: Kali for Women.
- \_\_\_\_\_ (tr) 1995 **The Crooked Line** New Delhi: Kali for Women.
- Niranjana, T. 1992 **Siting Translation: History, Post structuralism and the Colonial Context** Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press.
- Venuti, Lawrence 1995 **The Translator's Invisibility: A History of Translation** London: Routledge.
- Rao, Ranga (ed) 1995 **Classic Telugu Short Stories** New Delhi: Penguin Books.
- Sahni, Bhishm (author & tr) 1989 **Tamas: Darkness** New Delhi: Penguin Books.
- Schwab, Raymond 1984 **The Oriental Renaissance: Europe's Discovery of India and the East (1680-1880)** (tr) Gene Patterson-Black and Victor Reinking. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Senapati B.M. & Senapati A.M. (trs) 1967 **Six Acres and a Half** New Delhi: Publication Division of Ministry of Broadcasting and Information.
- Tharu, Susie and Lalita K. (eds) 1993 **Women Writing in India, vols. I & II.** New Delhi: Oxford University Press

