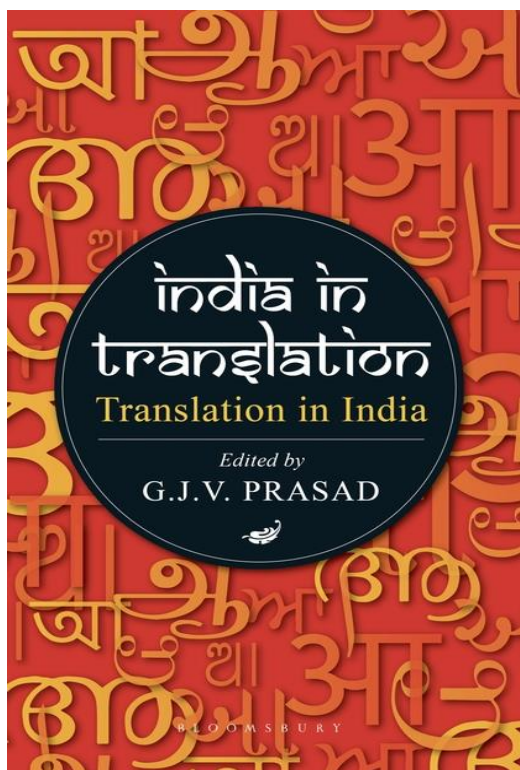


GJV Prasad, ed. *India in Translation, Translation in India*. New Delhi: Bloomsbury Academic, 2019. 325 pp. ISBN 13:978-9388414197.



The book *India in Translation, Translation in India*, edited by GJV Prasad, is a collection of 18 essays that examine the cultural, literary and social impact of translation in pre-colonial, colonial and postcolonial India. The book adds new dimensions to the perspective of translation in India by bringing together diverse languages and varied contexts.

It is now widely accepted that translation always involves politics. Since we live in a hierarchical world, it is imperative that these power structures will come into play when different cultures and languages converge, collide and coalesce. In multilingual India where language is so passionately related to one's identity, translation can never be an innocent activity. The very name, India, as Prasad points out in the Introduction, is quite complex. India is the land by the river Indus (though much of it runs through what is now Pakistan), but it is also known as Bharat and Hindustan. Each of these names has a politics of its own. Prasad goes on to suggest that the Constitution itself acknowledges the politics and the process of translation involved with the framing of the concept of the nation

when it states, "... India, that is Bharat, shall be a Union of States" (xii). This complexity seems to be both the strength and weakness of India as a nation and it is manifested in the practice of translation too. This book takes us through an interesting journey of discovery, revelation and reiteration of some crucial aspects of translation in India, rendering more clarity to the idea of India.

The first essay by Sachin Ketkar deals with the earliest Marathi commentary of the Bhagavat Gita, the *Dnyaneshwari* written by Dnyaneswar. Ketkar situates the translation in the context of the Bhakti movement, which has now come to be seen as ambivalent in its resistance to Brahmanism. *Dnyaneshwari*, however, is an interesting work because of the negotiation it brings in with Sanskrit language bringing out the possibilities of Marathi and infusing youth to Sanskrit but without running the language down. He also delves into the politics of the sects of the time to emphasise the necessity to understand the nuances of a translated text and its importance in a literary polysystem.

Another interesting essay related to the theme of "bhakti" is about the translation of a Veda that did not exist. Tara Menon writes about the *Ezourvedam* that championed the cause of monotheism and, therefore, celebrated by Voltaire. The text was later found to be a desperate attempt by the Jesuits "to translate Christianity into a Hindu idiom" (71). In an essay on the English translation of Kashiramadasa's Medieval Bengali *Mahabharata*, Soham Pain delves into the politics of the hierarchy of languages. As he points out, the English translation is twice removed from the Sanskrit text, and the unequal power relations between the coloniser and the colonised further complicates the process. Another essay by Lav Kanoi sheds light on the colonial Bengali translation of *Aenid* by Henry Sargent who was a student of Fort William College. The context of the translation, its republication and its implications make for an interesting and informative read. Kanoi tops it up with a short analysis of Okakura's *The Book of Tea*, an anti-colonial text which Kanoi himself translated into Hindi. In an elaborate essay Hiren J. Patel reflects on the political and social critique present in the Gujarati translation of Aristophanes' *Wealth*, pointing towards the contribution of translations towards evolving an anticolonial stand.

The contributions of Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar and Rabindranath Tagore are appraised in two different essays. Gargi Bhattacharya shows how Vidyasagar's English translation of his two Bengali texts under the title "Marriage of Hindu Widows," championed the cause of Hindu widow remarriage and became crucial in garnering the support of the British rulers and the liberal Hindus. In an essay delving into Tagore's translation of *One Hundred Poems of Kabir*, Amitendu Bhattacharya refutes the criticism that Tagore was playing up to the Orientalists through his translations presenting India as a mystic land. Rather, he emphasises that Tagore had found a connection in Kabir, whose poems presented an opportunity to further his vision of secularism and internationalism.

There are two essays in the book that talk about how Indian texts travelled across the world. Priyada Shridhar Padhye through a comparative lens looks at the *Panchatantra* and the *Grimm Tales*, while Subhandu Mund substantiates how some ancient Indian tales have travelled all over the globe. Mund underscores the idea that translations play a crucial part in India's cultural history and reminds us that one should not restrict translation in India just as a colonial project. In her article, Runjhun Verma analyses the politics of language hierarchy and representation through an exploration of an anthology of Indian literature in French translation. In another essay on French literature in India, Nupun Nutan provides a survey of French fiction that have been translated into Hindi, dwelling on the different reasons for these translations.

Another set of essays relates to translating Gramsci, Kafka, Beckett and Faiz Ahmed Faiz. These are interesting essays since they bring together various languages which one would believe are far removed from one another and, therefore, difficult to translate from one to the other. Fatima Rizvi examines English translations of Faiz Ahmed Faiz by various hands and comes to the conclusion that however imperfect the translations may be, they only indicate the complexity and popularity of Faiz. Huzaifa Omair Siddiqi puts forth a remarkable idea in the essay "The Kafkaesque in Urdu" which deals with Naiyer Masud's Urdu translations of Kafka. He argues that both Kafka and Masud had the desire to find meaning in the Voice, which as theorised by Agamben is suspended between a "no-longer" and "not yet." Kafka explored the Voice through his writings, and Masud found this scope in his translations. In a somewhat contradictory essay, Samudranil Gupta examines how Beckett's self translations are about highlighting the meaninglessness of words. Shinjini Basu in her essay on Bengali translation of Gramsci reflects on the contradictory urges present in translating Gramsci in the 1990s when Communism had declined all over the world, but Gramsci remained relevant.

The book also contains essays that deal with the role of translation as an empowering activity. Someshwar Sati talks about his experience of organising a workshop on the theme of translation and disability and highlights how translation can be an enabling activity not just disrupting dominant narratives around disability but also retrieving texts from other marginalised discourses. Regiane Corrade Oliveira Ramos calls attention to the immediate need to translate more texts dealing with transgender experiences while Amrapali Saha talks about the importance of understanding hybridity as a crucial aspect of translation in her essay on the much popular English translation of the Kannada novel, *Gbachar Gbochar*.

Thus, the book offers a variety of themes and contexts and sheds light on the versatility and vitality of translation activity in India. Is this all there is to translation in India? Is this a wholesome picture of India in translation? Of course not. In fact, India many times refuses to be contained in such frameworks. But it

is through these parts that a near complete picture would emerge. That is exactly what the book points towards, that any attempt to define India will be incomplete without an understanding of how negotiations happen between cultures and concepts, and how these negotiations have intervened, manipulated, infused, appropriated, empowered and shaped India's cultural and social history. The book, therefore, is a significant addition to the field of translation studies in India.

Sanju Thomas
Ambedkar University Delhi, India
Email: sanju@aud.ac.in