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Résumé de l'article

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TRANS-CREATING INDIA(S): THE NATION IN ENGLISH TRANSLATION

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Résumé

Une remise en question du concept de nation appliqué à l'Inde sert de base à une étude sur le rôle de l'anglais comme langue d'écriture ou de traduction de la littérature indienne dans la formation de l'identité nationale. La traduction de textes indiens soulève des questions sur l'inéquité de pouvoir entre les langues et le traitement des différences culturelles.

Abstract

Questioning the concept of the nation and specifically of "India," the authors examine the role of English and of anthologies of Indian writing in English or translated into English in the construction of national identity. Translation of Indian texts raises questions regarding unequal power relationship between languages and the treatment of cultural difference.

Theory has far outstripped reality insofar as the notion of nation is concerned — we now seem to be inventing the spaces we inhabit! Facetious as that may sound it is true that in theory the nation is a construct, is imagined, and has to be constantly, interrogated, deconstructed, and subverted. It is true that in theory the nationalist ideology pays little regard to regional ("sub-national") aspirations, to religious divisions, to linguistic identifications. But it is also true that in theory as much as in practice the movement is not towards the erasure of boundaries, not towards true globalization, where peoples can move around freely, where all cultural/political determinants have been thrown into space. Europe, a part of Europe, may be partially, haltingly moving towards not globalization but an incompletely imagined larger nation, but it carries with it all the seeds — no, the woods — of regionalism, of "sub" nationalisms. But are these resistances to European union equivalent or even parallel to resistances to India? In fact, what are the resistances to India? And how do these resistances impinge on, influence critics/editors who for various reasons would still like to present a collective Indian face to the World. Mention must be made here of Sujit Mukherjee's proposition in the preface of his book *Translation as Discovery* (1994 : viii) that translation into English offers "the widest area of discovery [...] [t]he discovery [...] that there may be, like Indian music or painting or sculpture, an Indian literature after all." This proposition/statement raises crucial questions of the primacy of English perceived as a link language in India, providing it a common platform much like our other colonial legacies, the Railways, cricket and civil services. It also enables the construct of the nation itself, apparently possible only through a neutral language like English. The author of course goes on to advocate translation into all Indian languages. But for reasons economic or otherwise English remains the main target language for translation. How do you then anthologize an India you recognize as a hegemonic construct, a disabling fiction? And in English (translation)?

Thereby hangs many a tale. Many of the theorists and academic practitioners of this newly parenthesized "Indian" come from the perennially suspiciously looked upon (in India) English writing/teaching community — a community whose India, parenthesized

or otherwise, was always seen by others to exist on a surrealistic plane, but a plane which gave them very real power and privilege. Their, or should I say our, India parenthesized, discovered to be a construct, doesn't alter the hierarchical nature of reality one bit, doesn't lower our plane of existence a whit. In other words we are aware that the rest of the country, including a great many in the non-English academy, think of it as only a marginal if inordinately powerful Punch and Judy show, at the outskirts of their *desi mela* (country fair). So if some of us announce that our India is a perfidious construct, they would agree but only to the extent that their India is never in question. But how can that be? How can their India(s) even exist? Any nationalisation is a hegemonic project, and English is the language of hegemony in India, a "natural" corollary to the British rule of an "India" made up of various states. India is a post-colonial construct, so how can there be Indias not expressed in English? Conversely does India come into being only in English and English translation, in a juxtaposition of texts from different regions?[1] In other words do we, so aware of the "tenuousness" of our India, ever manage to confront or break free from the notion of the nation? We suggest that not only do the anthologists find it impossible to escape the notion of the nation while questioning their own construct, but that ultimately through elisions and evasions they never actually discard their own earlier premises, their own nation.

But is the India of post-theory anthologies merely a taxonomical shorthand, an unfortunate nomenclatural necessity? Or is it merely a reflection of/on the realities of the marketplace? If "India" sells, then what matter that it be a fiction, especially in anthologies of fiction and poetry? Or is it that they who question also feel the emotional need for what they question? So that while seemingly discarding a range of vocabulary, they quite often slip in and back into pre-theoretical discourse? And is it this need which often forces the English-wallahs to postulate that other Indias, non-English Indias, exist? The very need that forces them through logic to postulate non-Sanskrit, non-elite Indias — Indias which derive nothing from their elitist counterparts? This is the motivation that underlies the theoretical premises of G.N. Devy's influential book *After Amnesia* (Devy 1992). If English is suspect, so is Sanskrit and hence we must resurrect what he calls *Bhasha* (literally "language") traditions, traditions he claims Indians have forgotten. It is a similar suspicion of non-regionally rooted, power-centred languages (read English, Sanskrit, and perhaps add Persian) that rules the majority of the selections in another influential book, Susie Tharu and K. Lalita's *Women Writing in India* (vols. I & II). But Tharu and Lalita do include some writing in English from the 19th and early 20th century, though not any written after 1947, when India became independent.

You may escape Brahmanical Sanskrit but how do you escape English? By now it must be clear that we are arguing that this is an extremely difficult terrain that "Indian" anthologists traverse. We are referring to those who are aware of and agree with, even if grudgingly, the notion that the nation, "India," is a construct, and a disreputable enterprise. We suggest that their positions are quite slippery and they are in a constant struggle to maintain their balance, mediating between the centre they inhabit and the peripheries they would like to co-opt. Plagued by selfdoubt but impelled to act they play a different game of let's get back to square one and call it a different name!

Lakshmi Holmström, the distinguished translator and editor, states these tensions, these dilemmas very clearly in her introduction to *The Inner Courtyard*. She states that one of the editorial intentions was to question the notion of a 'mainstream' of women's writing in India (Holmström 1991 : xiv). The assumption here is that there *is* an acknowledged mainstream of women's writing in India, presumably belonging to the same plane as an elitist elisionist India. This view of India as a construct that elides differences is quite *de rigueur* now. Holmström's immediately previous sentence strengthens this view

of her enterprise — in fact she questions the "mainstream" as her defence for including "authors from within India and outside it," for representing "those who write in regional languages as well as those who write in English..." The obvious intention of bringing in the notion of a diaspora is to dissolve post-colonial boundaries, to alter the notion of "India" by altering "the entire notion of what an 'Indian' story is" (Holström 1991 : xiv).

But what is this 'Indian' story, what is this 'India' that has been altered? If you look for a clue in this introduction, for there is only a clue, it is in the admission that "many important names have been left out." If we were to make a quick list of "important" women writers in English, women writers whose stories would certainly have been included in anthologies innocent of Holmström's political intentions, we would come up with the following names: Attia Hosain, Anita Desai, and Shashi Deshpande. All three are represented in this anthology along with Shama Futehally, Vishwapriya L. Iyengar, Padma Hejmadi, Rukshana Ahmad, Anjana Appachano, and Suniti Namjoshi, all of whom write in English. To put this in focus, exactly 50% of the 18 stories in this volume were written originally in English. And if any important names have been left out it must be from among those of writers who write in other Indian languages. It is their localised versions of India which are perhaps in question. As Holmström (1991 : xiv) puts it she has included so many stories written in English "because English, although used mainly by the middle classes in India, also crosses regional boundaries and addresses a larger audience."

Thus there is very real doubt about the nature of the 'India' that is being questioned and both the motivations and the execution of this construct of a new 'India' seem unclear and doubtful; the very nature of this project is fraught with difficulty. If you are anthologizing in English, the temptation to use as many original English pieces as possible is overwhelming because of the impossibility of "finding good translations within a short time" (Holmström 1991 : xiv). The question that is not addressed here is that of the availability of translations itself — what is translated into English from various Indian languages and why? Conversely what is not and why not? How much do the answers to these questions have to do with the position of English itself? And what influence, what effect does English have on the "national" nature of any such project? (All this assuming that the editorial competence extends to informed knowledge, or access to literatures in various Indian languages.)

All Indian anthologies thus will have to address the question of translation practices and, of translatability. Tharu and Lalita address this in their competent and forthright fashion in the common preface to their two volumes. They recognize "that there are always relationships of power involved when one work is represented for another in translation," and that when an Indian language is translated into English it entails the representation of "a regional culture for a more powerful national or 'Indian' one" and that when this is made available outside India, it involves "representing a national culture for a still more powerful international culture — which is today... a Western one" (Tharu and Lalita 1991 : xxii; 1995 : xx). Thus there is the ever present danger to this project — of homogenisation, of a text appearing in and becoming part of the host culture reminiscent of the universalist ways in which classical texts were received in earlier "unaware" eras. This would and does seem "reductive and... stereotypical" to Tharu and Lalita (among others) who hence preferred "translations that did not domesticate the work either into pan-Indian or into a 'universalist' mode" (Tharu and Lalita 1991 : xxii in I).

But this insistence on maintaining differences, this insistence on the reader making an effort "to translate herself into a different sociohistorical ethos" (Tharu and Lalita 1991 : xxii) does lead to the problematic area of cultural difference and the assumptions that editors can make about their readers. How much do you think your readers will know? How much do you know about your readers? In any case you will have to give up some

translations as a bad job because the cultural distance between English and Indian languages is such that you will be unable to preserve the difference and yet be intelligible. Tharu and Lalita give two such instances — the work of Krishna Sobti, a leading Hindi writer, and Balamani Amma, "a major Malayalam writer in the 1940s and the 1950s." They dropped the first because she writes in a dialect and uses an earthy, lewd diction. Standard English they felt could not cope with this. The latter could not be included because "her work presupposes an ethos [...] difficult to recreate (Tharu and Lalita 1991 : xxiii) in a short space. Hence almost automatically there are Indians you have to leave out, however radical be your project.

Holmström (1991 : xxvii) also points out that the reader has to constantly make an effort "to respond sensitively" to the details in the stories, details which express the various nuances of everyday life in the particular part of India, in the particular ethos of the story. But she too admits that however well done the translation is there are many markers that are impossible to convey in English. She takes as an example the Tamil representations of 'she' which "can be indicated in two ways, 'this' she and 'that' she *ival, aval*." Holmström explains that the "difference between the two pronouns is more than simply spatial distance: it can suggest social or psychological distance too..." (Holmström 1991 : xxvi). She then lists other things translation cannot accomplish — the tyranny of culture is such that erasure of boundaries is an impossibility, you can only discover newer ones.

This was/is interestingly problematized and tackled in the introductory note to *Katha Prize Stories* (Vol. I) by Rimli Bhattacharya, who titles the note "Translating Differences." She too highlights "the 'homogenising' force of a single, dominant master language" in a volume aimed at presenting "the heterogeneous character of contemporary India" (Bhattacharya and Dharmarajan 1991 : 12). Between these two poles she says "lies the almost invisible criss-cross of translation." The problem is "that the more successful the crossing over, the less visible the bridges, those precarious webs of translation" (Bhattacharya and Dharmarajan 1991 : 12). Translation ought to be visible in this project, which means that not only will words from various Indian languages be retained but the differences in forms and usage of certain pan-Indian words will be retained and hence underlined. In her words, "*Kumkum* would appear in a story whose source language belongs to the Indo-Aryan group, while stories translated from a Dravidian language would have *kumkumam* or *kumkuma*. By the same token, no regional language word has been substituted where the author has chosen to use the English-*vermilion*..." (Bhattacharya and Dharmarajan 1991 : 12). But, she goes on to say that there was "a conscious attempt to avoid using Indian words as 'local colour' but to use them frequently and unobtrusively, as they actually *are* used by most of us" (Bhattacharya and Dharmarajan 1991 : 15). English strikes again, magically erasing differences — suddenly 'most of us' use the same Indian words in English!

This problematic nature of English, the fact that many of us Indians involved in such projects occupy positions inside as well as outside the language, makes any translation practice that intends to mark the differences between various regions fraught with difficulties and contradictions. Tharu and Lalita bring this out when they discuss their attempt at transliterating Indian language words into the Roman script. They "began by developing a system of transliteration that was subtle enough to capture regional differences without becoming so elaborate that it would alienate an ordinary reader" (Tharu and Lalita 1991 : I, xxiii). The 'attempt' was to let the translation "retain the mark of the original language," each Indian language having sounds other languages do not have. They had to abandon this attempt because "the page looked like one in an Orientalist or anthropological text" (Tharu and Lalita 1991 : xxiii). They didn't want to be identified with the opposition. But what did this lead to? To the discovery that very many Indian-

language words "appeared in common English and American dictionaries and therefore had conventional spellings" (Tharu and Lalita 1991 : xxiii). So they finally decided to "keep the use of Indian-language words that did not appear in the *Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary* to a minimum" (emphasis added) (Tharu and Lalita 1991 : xxiii). They recognize that they may have gained in reader-friendliness but they had lost "the variety of the regional languages" (Tharu and Lalita 1991 : xxiv). English had struck again, defeating one of the editorial intentions.

The cultural locations of the editors / translators also determine the nature of the "India" they represent. Harish Trivedi in a footnote to his widely read and need we say contested article on "Theorizing the Nation" states "that through their editorial practice of fairly consistently misspelling North Indian names and titles in a manner symptomatic of South Indian aspirations, the two Southern editors have here illustrated and enacted another kind of nominal fissure and fracture in the Indian nation" (emphasis added) (Trivedi 1994 : 44). Indians from different parts of the country will continue to quarrel about the pronunciation of different words they feel common to them but in the case of English, they'll quarrel over the spellings as well (take the case of Bengali proper names in English for instance). And yet this quarrel takes place in a recognized and accepted common cultural ground, for otherwise it wouldn't take place at all. In other words, it is because there is an accepted and acceptable notion of India that the quarrel and its representation can take place. Trivedi reiterates this when he discusses Tharu and Lalita's statement that the *Discovery of India* (1946) by Nehru is "the best known of foundational fiction of the Indian nation" (Tharu and Lalita 1995 : 51). They state this while problematizing and questioning the nation. Trivedi counters that the two volumes of *Women Writing in India* present writing "from over two and a half thousand years and eleven different languages" (Trivedi 1994 : 33) which is held together obviously by the India in the title. This India's 'foundational fiction' could never have been a book published in 1946...

In other words parenthesized India is only the same India read differently. As Rajeshwari Sunder Rajan remarks, Tharu and Lalita are on extremely difficult and self contradictory terrain when they want to invest their texts with latent resistance, a resistance that lies in the texts, not the reading. This is a problematic claim because many of the "instances of women's writings [placed before us by Tharu and Lalita] [...] have been offered by traditional literary historians as works operating *within* formal conventions, and in terms of closure and resolution..." (Sunder Rajan 1993 : 3).

In other words the new Indias are dependent on reading very often against the grain, or on leaving well-known names out, and finally have to be read as such by diverse readers — many of whom may read conventionally, especially because the translation strategies employed by these projects do not radically alter or pluralize the received and accepted India in any significant manner. India has always been a linguistically and culturally rich geo-political area, and there has always been an acceptance of this pluralism. Hence the new translation projects can be easily received / read in terms of earlier assumptions and notions of the nation. After all *Another India* received its name from "a casual encounter in Delhi" (Ezekiel and Mukherjee 1990 : 15) with V.S. Naipaul who suggested its name. And Naipaul's other India is suspiciously like the feudal / elitist India.

Note

1. For example collections of texts from a single state or region always have titles which refer to the state or region and never have the word 'India' in them. Take for instance *Southern Harvest* edited by Githa Hariharan, which has stories from the four South Indian States, and *Inner Spaces: New Writings by Women from Kerala* edited by K. M. George, J. James, B. Shankara Narayanan and R. Mahadevan.

Dating back to the 1st or 2nd century A.D., it is our oldest extant anthology of verse. The text was first edited by the German scholar Albrecht Weber in 1881,[2] and subsequently translated into Marathi, Hindi, Persian, Tamil and Bangla. The first English translation appeared only about twenty-five years ago.[3] And now, by some unusual coincidence, two more English translations have recently been published within a year of each other.[4] This event has not yet attracted the notice it should have, not only because of the coincidence, but more on account of the positions held and the tactics employed by these two new and modern translators.

To deal, first, with the original, *Gathasaptashati* is a serial arrangement of seven (hence *sapta*) collections of verse, each containing one hundred (hence *shati*) poems consisting of two lines (here called *gatha*) composed in Maharashtri Prakrit, a literary language of ancient India. The text was compiled sometime in the 2nd century A.D. by a Satavahana chief or king named Hala, who was himself a poet and contributed 44 poems of his own to the collection. As with many of our older texts, this too may have undergone a certain measure of addition and subtraction until it settled in the early 6th century to represent the work of four hundred poets. Known down the ages also as *Gahokosa* and *Sattasai*, this compilation has been classified as a *kosha-grantha* or 'anthological treatise'. The poems are quite independent of each other. The subject of earthly love predominates, but numerous other subjects are touched upon, offering numerous glimpses of the life and culture of a region which probably tallies with southwestern Andhra Pradesh of our own time.

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The two recent translations under discussion here are selective renderings and do not present the entire text (even though the translators are much younger persons than Professor Basak). The American poet and academic David Ray's *Not Far from the River* was probably published a few months earlier, but it is not easily available in India and unlikely to be so unless a local reprint appears.[6] Subtitled "Poems from the Gatha Saptashati," it presents 336 poems altogether. A short (4 pages) and largely autobiographical introduction is the only other reading matter in a slim paperback volume (84 pages) wherein the English versions are presented without any apology or annotation. Those who know of David Ray's engagement with India from the special issue of *New Letters* (1982) devoted to contemporary Indian writing[7] will recall that neither he nor his co-editor Amritjit Singh allowed much to mediate between a translation and its reader.

Later by a year and longer by eight pages, *The Absent Traveller* contains verses selected and translated by the Indo-Anglian poet and English teacher Arvind Krishna Mehrotra. It offers 207 *gathas* in English, each placed below the Prakrit original, reproduced in Devanagari. Each poem carries a number which relates it to a *gatha* in the German edition of 1881. The numbers are also used for identification in the "Notes to the Poems" appended by Mehrotra towards the end of the book; at the beginning he had given us a "Translator's Note." In between the translated text and the end-notes appears a 10-page "Afterword" by the American scholar Martha Ann Selby, who has provided here a general introduction to the Prakrit literary tradition, relating it with examples to the traditions of Sanskrit and Tamil poetry. At the very end of this 92-page book in hardcover, the translator has given a two-page list of references, which includes some odd titles like Graham Greene's *A Burnt-Out Case* or *The Letters of Gustave Flaubert* or *The Notebooks of Leonardo da Vinci*. One explanation I needed but did not find was how as many as 47 verses are numbered

between 701 and 987 even though the original text is a *sapta-shati*. Presumably, by following the German edition, Mehrotra had more than seven hundred poems to choose from.

As this cursory description may have suggested, these two selective translations of the same text have very little in common. On second thought, I found that one shared act both translators have perpetrated is the seemingly oedipal dismissal of the earlier translation by Rahagovinda Basak. David Ray found it "unappealing in the extreme. The vocabulary was archaic, with frequent use of words like 'horripilations', and I saw nothing poetic in these cribs."(7) At the same time, he admits by indirection that he had no access to the original except through Professor Basak's rendering. Arvind Mekrotra mentions, in passing, "Hindi and English trots, several dictionaries, and a patient tutor" (ix) without identifying any of these. The Asia Society publication does not appear in Mehrotra's list of references, yet I find it difficult to believe he is unaware of Professor Basak's effort. Since by his own admission Mehrotra could not have read the poems in Sanskrit or German or Marathi — while by his own inadmission he obscures the identity of the Hindi or English sources — I have to conclude he is not telling us all. Perhaps that is one of the strategies of translation, namely, that previous translations of a particular text have to be disowned in order to find place for a new translation.[8]

However, I get the impression that Mehrotra was bothered by a nagging anxiety about his credentials for undertaking this job. He sounded far more confident when he translated from the Hindi of Doodnath Singh, Dhoomil and Muktibodh for the Penguin anthology, *New Writing in India*.[9] I ascribe this confidence to the fact that Hindi was Mehrotra's first language until, perhaps, he began attending a so-called "English-medium" school in post-British India. Whereas here, after a number of rather tangential comments about the *Gatha* collection in his translator's note, he has garnished the notes on individual poems with not always called-for scholarly desiderata. As further reinforcement, he has added the ballast of an afterword by a foreign scholar. If he (or was it his publisher?) felt that the work badly needed a scholarly afterword, are there no scholars of Prakrit literature left in Ilahabad or Varanasi or Mumbai or Chennai (these being the cities which were known in colonised India as Allahabad, Benares, Bombay and Madras respectively).[10]

I expect it was his publisher rather than he who incorporated that 'good chit' from another famous translator in the blurb which appears on the front flap of the dust-jacket: "Commenting on the translations, A. K. Ramanujan observed: 'They read beautifully. The translations are witty, terse, spare, memorable. At last the *Gathasaptashati* has found a translator.'" I remain curious to know whether Ramanujan only said this or put it down somewhere in writing. The book provides no answer beyond the translator's acknowledgement to Ramanujan "for going over the manuscript, pencil in hand."

While on the subject of blurbs, I must concede that David Ray's publisher is not less supportive of his translator. Reproduced on the back-cover of *Not Far from the River* is an eulogy by one David Ignatow (it is not clear whether it is from a review or a preview), who has somehow persuaded himself that this translation is literally an act of discovery. Thus: "The manuscript, a total of 700 verses, had been lying mute in one of India's modern librairies, until David Ray etc. etc." Ray himself makes no such claim, stating that he was introduced to the original ("an unimpressive looking book with a brown grocery sack dust jacket") by friends in Jaipur, and accepted the commission to render it into modern English, or, rather, 'modern American'. The tone of his account of how he came to undertake this translation is very much like that of a foreign expert who has been called in to examine and solve some knotty native problem. He sets about solving it with the air of somebody who need not remain involved with it afterwards.

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between 701 and 987 even though the original text is a *sapta-shati*. Presumably, by following the German edition, Mehrotra had more than seven hundred poems to choose from.

As this cursory description may have suggested, these two selective translations of the same text have very little in common. On second thought, I found that one shared act both translators have perpetrated is the seemingly oedipal dismissal of the earlier translation by Rahagovinda Basak. David Ray found it "unappealing in the extreme. The vocabulary was archaic, with frequent use of words like 'horripilations', and I saw nothing poetic in these cribs."(7) At the same time, he admits by indirection that he had no access to the original except through Professor Basak's rendering. Arvind Mekrotra mentions, in passing, "Hindi and English trots, several dictionaries, and a patient tutor" (ix) without identifying any of these. The Asia Society publication does not appear in Mehrotra's list of references, yet I find it difficult to believe he is unaware of Professor Basak's effort. Since by his own admission Mehrotra could not have read the poems in Sanskrit or German or Marathi — while by his own inadmission he obscures the identity of the Hindi or English sources — I have to conclude he is not telling us all. Perhaps that is one of the strategies of translation, namely, that previous translations of a particular text have to be disowned in order to find place for a new translation.[8]

However, I get the impression that Mehrotra was bothered by a nagging anxiety about his credentials for undertaking this job. He sounded far more confident when he translated from the Hindi of Doodnath Singh, Dhoomil and Muktibodh for the Penguin anthology, *New Writing in India*.[9] I ascribe this confidence to the fact that Hindi was Mehrotra's first language until, perhaps, he began attending a so-called "English-medium" school in post-British India. Whereas here, after a number of rather tangential comments about the *Gatha* collection in his translator's note, he has garnished the notes on individual poems with not always called-for scholarly desiderata. As further reinforcement, he has added the ballast of an afterword by a foreign scholar. If he (or was it his publisher?) felt that the work badly needed a scholarly afterword, are there no scholars of Prakrit literature left in Ilahabad or Varanasi or Mumbai or Chennai (these being the cities which were known in colonised India as Allahabad, Benares, Bombay and Madras respectively).[10]

I expect it was his publisher rather than he who incorporated that 'good chit' from another famous translator in the blurb which appears on the front flap of the dust-jacket: "Commenting on the translations, A. K. Ramanujan observed: 'They read beautifully. The translations are witty, terse, spare, memorable. At last the *Gathasaptashati* has found a translator.'" I remain curious to know whether Ramanujan only said this or put it down somewhere in writing. The book provides no answer beyond the translator's acknowledgement to Ramanujan "for going over the manuscript, pencil in hand."

While on the subject of blurbs, I must concede that David Ray's publisher is not less supportive of his translator. Reproduced on the back-cover of *Not Far from the River* is an eulogy by one David Ignatow (it is not clear whether it is from a review or a preview), who has somehow persuaded himself that this translation is literally an act of discovery. Thus: "The manuscript, a total of 700 verses, had been lying mute in one of India's modern librairies, until David Ray etc. etc." Ray himself makes no such claim, stating that he was introduced to the original ("an unimpressive looking book with a brown grocery sack dust jacket") by friends in Jaipur, and accepted the commission to render it into modern English, or, rather, 'modern American'. The tone of his account of how he came to undertake this translation is very much like that of a foreign expert who has been called in to examine and solve some knotty native problem. He sets about solving it with the air of somebody who need not remain involved with it afterwards.

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