

International Seminar on Premchand in Translation, Nov. 28-30, 2012

UGC SAP-DRS, Department of English & Outreach, Jamia Millia Islamia

Advisory Board

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Keynote: Vasudha Dalmia, University of California at Berkeley

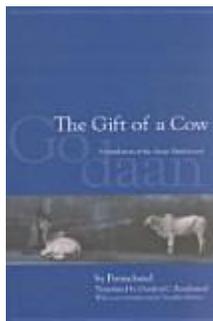


Ever since St. Jerome has translated Bible into Latin, discussion on translation has covered the entire gamut of the elegiac, the solemn and the admonitory. Rarely, if ever, translation critics and theorists have tried to see what Adam Thirlwell, in a recent review in *The New York Times*, has called the “joyful side of translation.” Yet, translation has provided joyful moments to readers and reviewers down the ages. Translation from and into Indian literatures is no exception.

Translation from Indian language literatures has been gaining ground since the last decade of the twentieth century, and by now, it has gathered considerable momentum.

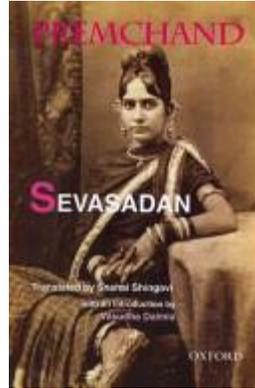
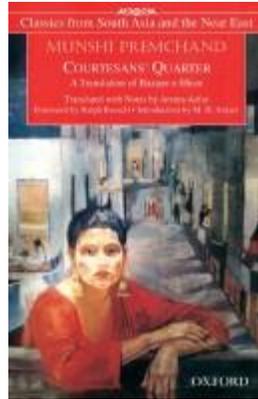
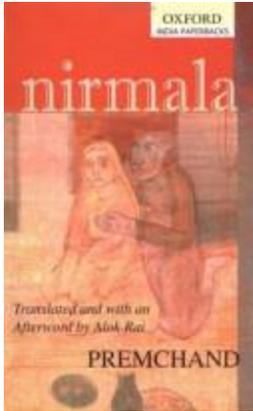
Though Indian language authors are yet to be served by translators and publishers in the way their peers like Marquez, Kundera, Eco, Murakami or Pamuk have been served,

one certainly finds nascent efforts towards that direction. More translations are being done and published, more translations are being read than ever before, more translations are being duly recognized through award and prizes. The seminar we are going to hold is to see how Premchand, arguably, the father of Urdu-Hindi fiction, has been served by his translators in different languages, nationally and internationally. Further, though we are more or less aware of the translations of Premchand’s works into English, we are not aware of translations of his works in other Indian or world languages. The seminar will be an effort to gather and consolidate data and knowledge in that area too.



To begin with, English translation efforts of Premchand's works were rather desultory and lacked any clear direction. Short stories were the first to be translated into English, and they made occasional appearances in journals like *Thought*, *Hindi Review*, *Mahfil* and *Indian literature*. The first collection of stories to appear in English was compiled by Gurdial Malik in 1946 with the title *Short Stories of Premchand*¹. The quality of translation was rather indifferent, even insipid. However, the eleven stories (which included such well-known pieces as "The Shroud", "The Story of Two Bulls") published in the volume became the first window for the English-knowing readers to have some idea of Premchand as a writer of short fiction. The first collection that made some impact was by David Rubin, *The World of Premchand*, published in the UNESCO Asian fiction series. Not only was it the most comprehensive compilation of stories till then but also it was the first collection to be published outside India and translated by a native speaker of English. This collection, along with the publication *Godan* in Gordon C. Roadarmel's translation in the earlier year gave Premchand much deserved international visibility and he began to find place in university courses of study, even if the courses were as varied as Sociology, Anthropology, Culture Studies and Indology.

Among the other translators of Premchand who have volumes of short stories to their credit are Nandini Nopany and P. Lal, Madan Gopal, Rakshanda Jalil, Madan Gupta and P.C. Gupta. Taken together, these volumes present a significant segment of Premchand's short fiction, even though some of the stories figure in all the volumes. What is, however, lacking in these volumes is a clear policy, stated or implied. The stories are presented neither chronologically nor thematically. The translators hardly talk about their principle/s of selection, the objective/s behind the translation, and most significantly, they do not engage with the process of translation with any rigour. If a reader picks up any of these volumes at random, it might give him a very lopsided idea of the kind and calibre of writer Premchand was and his range. In terms of quality, innovativeness and seriousness of engagement, Nandini Nopany and P. Lal certainly score the best. Apart from David Rubin, if anyone can be singled out as translating a substantial number of Premchand's short stories competently, the credit must go to this translator duo. They remain loyal to the original text not in any facile or servile way, but bring their full translatorial resources to produce a version that would present the totality of the experience of reading a Premchand story. To that extent, they reorder sentences, paragraphs, change expressions here and there which, according to them, help capture the vision of the writer projected through a particular story. One may fault them on their strategy, but there is no doubt about the seriousness of their engagement and clarity of their approach to the original.



Among the novels the first one to be translated was *Godan*, by Jai Ratan and P. Lal, and by Gordon C Roadermal. The two sets of translators followed different strategies – if Ratan and Lal worked with the surefooted knowledge of the native speakers of the original, and reordered the text at many places, Roadermal, being an outsider, had a reverential attitude towards the original and tried to retain the unevenness and quiriness of the original, resisting the temptation to homogenise. The two translations of *Nirmala*, the first one by Christopher King and the second one by Alok Rai and the two translations of *Sevasadan* (or, *Bazaa-e Husn*) by Snehal Shingavi and Amina Azfar, respectively, show multiple takes on the original text. Moreover, the recent trend of scholarly translation with an elaborate editorial apparatus, has added a new dimension to the whole endeavour. The “Afterword” appended to the translation of *Nirmala* by Alok Rai, and the introduction by Vasudha Dalmia to the new OUP edition of *Godan*, and *Sevasadan*, provide scholarly contexts in which the translation have to be studied. We would like to see how the deployment of such a scholarly apparatus and paratextual material help in the anonization of the author in the receiving culture and language. We would also like to take a look at the reviews of the translated texts to see how reviewers have perceived the translated versions.

It is obvious that this CFP has been written keeping the English translations of Premchand’s works in mind. We will welcome presentations dealing with Premchand translations in other languages too, and the issues arising thereof.

The seminar will have plenaries, individual presentations as well as panels

Papers/ panels may be presented in English, Hindi and Urdu

The registration fee for participants, which will cover stay in the university guest house, meals and the conference kit, is as follows:

Domestic: ₹ 2000.00
International: \$ 200.00

Travel expenses may be borne by the participants. However, we have a limited provision for rail/ air fare for participants, and waiver of registration fee, which will be decided considering the quality of the paper presented.

Last date for abstracts: September 30, 2012

Abstracts/ papers may be sent to: asad0468@gmail.com

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