

## Introduction

Paul St-Pierre

---

Volume 42, Number 2, juin 1997

Lexicologie et terminologie II (1) et Traduction et post-colonialisme  
en Inde

Translation and Postcolonialism: India (2)

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/017921ar>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7202/017921ar>

[See table of contents](#)

---

### Publisher(s)

Les Presses de l'Université de Montréal

### ISSN

0026-0452 (print)

1492-1421 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

---

### Cite this document

St-Pierre, P. (1997). Introduction. *Meta*, 42(2), 392–394.

<https://doi.org/10.7202/017921ar>

---

**DEUXIÈME PARTIE**

**TRADUCTION ET  
POST-COLONIALISME  
EN INDE**

**TRANSLATION AND  
POSTCOLONIALISM: INDIA**

**SOUS LA DIRECTION DE  
PAUL ST-PIERRE**

*Université de Montréal*

---

# INTRODUCTION

PAUL ST-PIERRE  
*Université de Montréal, Canada*

This special issue of *Meta* takes as its subject translation in the post-colonial setting of India, a theme which is of particular interest to translation studies in that it leads to the exploration, from different viewpoints, of the problematics of translation and power. This is so not only because India was once a colony, with strong ties still — at the very least through language — to the former imperial power, but also because the effects of colonization, and of resistance to it, can be felt in the multilingual and multicultural nature of the modern Indian state. What role has translation to play in a country with eighteen officially-recognized languages, and a nineteenth, English, whose unofficial status belies its importance? What role has translation to play in a long-standing, and — despite colonization — autonomous, literary and cultural tradition? These are the questions which the different articles collected here attempt to deal with.

The specific nature of the Indian context is underscored by a number of the authors, in particular by G. N. Devy, who shows the centrality of the role translation has played in India, due in large part to a desire to include rather than to marginalize parallel traditions. We catch a glimpse here of the existence of another paradigm for translation and translation studies than what exists in the West, where translation is almost always considered to be solely of secondary and minor importance. As Harish Trivedi points out in his contribution, translation was to play an important role in India by defining a new space, working against the hegemony of the colonial presence by opening out onto other literatures. Through translations Indian readers were given access to cultures other than that of Britain. The relation to, and the subversion of, imperial power brought about through translation is also the theme of the essay by J. Nayak and H. Mohapatra, which deals with the rewriting in Oriya — one of the official languages of India — of Charles Dickens' *A Tale of Two Cities*. The content of the novel is changed, the authors demonstrate, replaced with a radical anticolonial and nationalist content. The article by Paul St-Pierre also looks at the relations between cultures brought about through translation. An examination of four versions of Fakir Mohan Senapati's *Chha Mana Atha Guntha* (Six Acres and Thirty-Two Decimals), India's first social-realist novel, shows how the treatment of culture-specific references can vary in translation and the functions such differences in treatment can have, in particular for the readers of translations of Indian texts into English. India is very much a multilingual society, and, as Indra Nath Choudhuri emphasizes, the copresence of a multitude of languages — those which have received official recognition, but also the hundreds and even thousands which have not, but which nevertheless are spoken within the country — renders translation absolutely necessary and gives it a role which is quite specific to Indian society. India is a country where translation is constantly taking place. Shantha Ramakrishna shows that, in such a context, translation has a positive role to play, fostering the development of multilingualism and multiculturalism, encouraging the exchange between the different Indian languages, and lessening the importance accorded English. Another aspect to this role is the forging and reinforcing of national identity beyond the linguistic differences which characterize the nation. N. Kamala and

G. J. V. Prasad, through their analysis of published anthologies of translated Indian writing, examine the nature of the image of India presented to readers, as well as the problematic nature of such a portrayal in English, the language of hegemony. Through the comparison of two translations of an anthology of ancient Indian poetry, Sujit Mukherjee examines the nature of the appropriative act which takes place through translation. Finally, Sherry Simon, taking a more general view, looks at the relation between translation and cultural studies, and in particular the way in which translation as it is practised and conceptualized is affected by the shifting definitions of culture and cultural identity. A detailed presentation of the position of Gayatri Spivak in this connection serves to demonstrate the way the terms of cultural exchange are reworked through translation.

Certain themes recur in the contributions presented here: the problematic nature of translation into English, the multilingual character of Indian society, the role translation can play in subverting — or confirming — established hierarchies, the specificity of the Indian context. Taken together such themes help to define what is particular to translation in India; at the same time, they demonstrate the interest and importance the examination of different contexts of translation can have for the development of translation studies, since such examination invariably introduces new approaches and points of view or, at the very least, leads to the modification of pre-existing ways of thinking about translation.