A traditional brass lamp has several wicks jutting out to be lit. The more numerous the wicks, the brighter the light. The lamp is the same, the oil is the same but it is the wicks that determine the brightness of the light. The lights from the various wicks merge imperceptibly and produce a brightness which is the totality of many lights. Just as many wicks produce one light, India's many languages produce one literature.

K.M. George (1984, x)

While K.M. George's analogy between the brass lamp and literature provides an undoubtedly poetic conceptualization of Indian literature, it begs a central question. If each wick produces light of equal brightness, why is it that over the course of time, one wick in particular has tended to attract greater attention than all the others combined? Why has Indian writing in English gained a more prominent status than Indian literature in the various regional languages? Why don't Indian writers writing in regional languages enjoy the same level of international prestige and fame as those who write in English?1

The following comment from Gowri Ramnarayan addresses a pivotal issue that has preoccupied Indian literary studies for the past few decades:
In a national quiz for university students, Vaikom Mohammed Bashir, doyen of Malayalam writing, was identified as a leader of the Muslim League. That is not however surprising. To an educated Indian, Indian literature is confined to writings in his or her own region and language; more often it means Indian writing in English. He knows R.K. Narayan, Salman Rushdie and Vikram Seth. But ask him about Adiga, Akilon or Jibanada Das and you may get blank stares.

The facts speak for themselves. The regional writer remains invisible on the national scene. The media largely ignore him or her unless he or she gets involved in politics or embroiled in controversy. Awards from apex literary bodies are no more than news flashes of the day and writings in Indian languages hardly cross state borders. (1996, 73)

Ramnarayan addresses the common misconception that the only “serious” literature emerging from India comes from the “Indo-Anglian” tradition.2 Even in India, scholars face the problem of knowing how to promote an understanding of Indian literature written in the various regional languages of India.3 Thus, although Ramnarayan accurately identifies a crucial problem in the field of Indian literary studies, the basic premise of her argument is not entirely correct. While she rightly asserts that little is known about Indian-language writers, she incorrectly attributes the phenomenon to a lack of regional literatures in translation. In fact, regional-language literatures have been translated into English for decades, as the statistical account of the volume of literary works translated into English from the various regional languages shows.

Jatindra Mohanty’s bibliography is a comprehensive study of regional-language literatures (excluding Sanskrit, Prakrit and other ancient languages) in the form of anthologies, biographies and autobiographies, chronicles, criticisms, diaries, dramas, essays, hymns, letters, memoirs, novels, poetry, sayings, songs, stories and tales and travelogues. Although Mohanty does not define the exact temporal span covered by the bibliography, he states that “attention has not been confined only to recent times, but has frequently gone back to the rich past of Indian literature” (1984, xi). His study covers early works such as Tirukkural, Adi Grantha, Silappadikaram, through pre-twentieth-century writings by Tulsidas, Vidyapati, Kabir and Ghalib, up to works published in 1984. The bibliography provides approximate figures for the volume of regional-language literature translated into English. For ease of comparison, I have collated these statistics in Table 1 below.

These figures suggest that the level of translation activity is not as high as one would hope (or expect), but they show that translation from Indian regional languages into English is, and has been for many years,
steadily taking place in India. Not surprisingly, a greater volume of translated works is from languages such as Bengali, Hindi and Tamil, which have a large corpus of native speakers; whereas the volume of translation from the comparatively “minor” literary languages, such as Maithili and Konkani, is markedly smaller. What is surprising is that until 1986, “major” literary languages that have well-established literary traditions on the subcontinent, such as Urdu and Kannada, appeared infrequently in translation. In this context, Ramnarayan’s statement that the regional-language writer remains invisible on the national scene is partially true. Her conclusions illumine an issue that directly pertains to the state of literary affairs in India today. Despite the “abundance” of literature translated from regional languages, why is knowledge of Indian writers centred on those of the Indo-Anglian tradition?

In this paper I will explore some of the problems that have characterized Indian literature for a significant portion of modern Indian literary history. Why is it difficult for knowledge of Indian writers to transcend state boundaries despite the fact that translation is taking place? To address this question, I will examine how both ideological concerns, pertaining to the choice of a “representative” target or link language, and concrete issues inform the current practice of translation in India.

In order to integrate the various regional literatures into the larger framework of Indian literature, the existence of institutions or forums that promote literary exchange acquires a definite urgency. Certain forums in
India aim specifically to facilitate the interchange of regional literatures. Mohanty notes that despite resistance to accepting the unity of Indian literature, “institutions like Sahitya Akademi and the Central Institute of Languages are ... helping in this process of unification of consciousness” (1984, vii). This suggests that both of these institutions are trying to help eliminate barriers between regional-language literatures by creating a space for scholars in the various regional literatures to assemble and share ideas and knowledge.

Sahitya Akademi, a major governing literary body in India, publishes Indian Literature, a bimonthly journal, which is intended to promote the idea that the various regional literatures can be considered as a comprehensive whole under the rubric “Indian literature.” But this “ideal” of a unified Indian literature is undercut in reality by Indian Literature’s tendency to group the literatures along regional lines: each volume is devoted a specific region. Table 2 below is a diachronic survey of the titles of some recent volumes of Indian Literature.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Volume</th>
<th>Date of Publication</th>
<th>Focus of Volume</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>153</td>
<td>Jan.-Feb. 1993</td>
<td>Accent on Hindi Poetry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>154</td>
<td>Mar.-Apr. 1993</td>
<td>Accent on Hindi Fiction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>155</td>
<td>May-June 1993</td>
<td>Accent on Malayalam Fiction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>159</td>
<td>Jan.-Feb. 1994</td>
<td>Gujarati Dalit Literature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>161</td>
<td>May-June 1994</td>
<td>Tamil Writing Today</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>163</td>
<td>Sept.-Oct. 1994</td>
<td>8 Malayalam Poets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>164</td>
<td>Nov.-Dec. 1994</td>
<td>25 Indian Poets in English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>165</td>
<td>Jan.-Feb. 1995</td>
<td>5 Bengali Short Stories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>166</td>
<td>Mar.-Apr. 1995</td>
<td>Telugu Writing Today</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>167</td>
<td>May-June 1995</td>
<td>10 Bengali Poets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>168</td>
<td>July-Aug. 1995</td>
<td>Kannada Short Story Today</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>170</td>
<td>Nov.-Dec. 1995</td>
<td>Urdu Writing Today</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>172</td>
<td>Mar.-Apr. 1996</td>
<td>Accent on Oriya Writing Today</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>173</td>
<td>May-June 1996</td>
<td>Accent on Gujarati Writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>174</td>
<td>July-Aug. 1996</td>
<td>Accent on Gujarati Short Story</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>175</td>
<td>Sept.-Oct. 1996</td>
<td>Accent on Women Writing in English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>176</td>
<td>Nov.-Dec. 1996</td>
<td>Accent on Marathi Short Story</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>177</td>
<td>Jan.-Feb. 1997</td>
<td>Accent on Assamese Poetry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>178</td>
<td>Mar.-Apr. 1997</td>
<td>Accent on Kashmiri Fiction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>179</td>
<td>May-June 1997</td>
<td>Accent on Manipuri Poetry</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Thus, while *Indian Literature* attempts to integrate Indian literary pursuits, the result is the exact opposite, for by placing the different regional-language literatures in separate volumes, it effectively separates them and highlights their differences. This segregation of the regional-language literatures contributes to the impression that there is a logical separation between them, that they cannot be put together in a comparative national framework, and thereby compartmentalizes the various regional literatures.

One of the main obstacles preventing the scholar of Indian literature from conceptualizing Indian literature as a unified whole is language. Faced with a corpus of at least seventeen state languages, each possessing its own distinctive literary tradition, how can scholars, who, if Indian, are not likely to be versed in more than five regional languages (if that many), let alone their literatures, study Indian regional literatures comparatively? While *Indian Literature*, intended to be the forum for Indian regional-language literatures, has sought to solve this problem by publishing in English—all the articles, essays and case studies in *Indian Literature* are in English—this poses additional problems. In some cases, citations from a text will appear in the source (regional) language only, but in most cases, citations are accompanied by an English translation for readers who do not know the particular regional language. This practice reinforces the idea that a “link language” is needed to ensure communication across the nation. The link language in this instance is English.

Undoubtedly, this is where translation becomes an important issue. Some propose that all regional literatures should be studied in translation. But, this gives rise to another problem: the choice of a suitable target language. Although the main focus of literary scholarship traditionally centres on translation from regional languages into English, this issue has been hotly contested. On the one hand, there are those who believe the link language in India should be English, and on the other hand, there are those who argue in favour of Hindi. The Hindi/English target-language debate carries serious ideological implications. If English is the chosen target language, one must keep in mind the historical, social and political circumstances that enabled English to “take root” in India. But the question that arises is, Why is there the need for a link language in India? Should Indians blindly attempt to integrate regional-language literatures from the various states of India merely because the former colonial regime decided that all the states should be integrated into one nation called “India”? In the name of promoting a more integrated study of literature that transcends state boundaries, should Indians use English as the link language to “unite” the literary efforts of a “nation” that has only existed as a single national unit for fifty years, thereby engaging in an act of double-hegemony?
As *Indian Literature* demonstrates, translation is the key to studying Indian literature as a comprehensive whole since it is simply impossible for anyone to know every regional language of India. Thus, without overtly stating it, Sahitya Akademi favours the use of English as the link language for furthering knowledge of the various regional-language literatures in India. This particular problem is not restricted to India. As Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o notes, observing on the role of indigenous and colonial languages used in African literature:

> English, like French and Portuguese, was assumed to be the natural language of literary and even political mediation between African people in the same nation and between nations in Africa and other continents. In some instances these European languages were seen as having a capacity to unite African peoples against divisive tendencies inherent in the multiplicity of African languages within the same geographical state. (1986, 6)

The question of whether to translate "native" or "regional" languages into English (or French or Portuguese) acquires a marked urgency in postcolonial spaces and times. Historically, and even today, many nations—including India, Kenya and Nigeria—face the problem of fostering a national identity in a multilingual state. The advancement of literary studies in these nations therefore often centres on agreeing on a suitable link language. In India, the question requires advancing one step beyond merely finding a literary voice that represents the experiences and history of the Indian populace. It literally translates into a language that will enable writers, scholars, critics and the ordinary Indian reader access to the various regional-language literatures. They rely on translations to compare and make connections between the different language-literatures.

In contrast to *Indian Literature*’s policy of using English as a link language, V.K. Gokak in his seminal work *The Concept of Indian Literature* proposes that Hindi is the most appropriate link language into which to translate Indian regional literatures. The use of Hindi may overcome some of the ideological obstacles (as suggested by Ngũgĩ’s statement) of using English as the link language in India. Gokak argues:

> [T]he fact that the entire people in the area from Madhya Pradesh to Himachal Pradesh speak Hindi (or dialects of it), apart from the Punjab and East India, gives Hindi a tremendous advantage even as a regional and national language. Its resources are far greater for the purposes of translation and the production of scientific and technical literature than those of any other Indian language. (1978, 16)

This statement implies that Hindi is a more appropriate link language than English because it has historical and geographical roots in India. Gokak
suggests that the choice of link language for Indian regional literatures should be based on linguistic similarities, and Hindi is the modern language closest to other Indian languages (17). In addition, the themes and images in the regional literatures will translate “better” into Hindi than English, because many of the meanings in the source languages also exist in Hindi (unlike English), thereby rendering it a better target or link language (17). Other arguments in favour of Hindi as a link language in India allude to the fact that Hindi is not only a national language of India, but as the language of the “Bollywood#8 films, which have a huge national following, it is virtually the “second” language of the general population in urban (and some rural) areas throughout India. As Aijaz Ahmad observes, “Hindi now commands far greater space in the electronic media and popular culture (clearly in the North but, through cinema and television, in the South as well)” (1992, 76).

Gokak’s view encouraging the use of Hindi sounds reasonable in theory, but there are practical obstacles to his proposal. Although Hindi has the advantage of being a language rooted in India, and of being structurally and thematically close to Indian regional languages, it is somewhat naïve to suggest that everyone, including regional-language writers, will readily welcome the use of Hindi as the link language into which their writings will be translated. In fact, the very cultural proximity of Hindi to the other national or regional languages gives rise to problems. Hindi is presently (and has been for much of the last two decades) under attack from various non-Hindi-speaking states (particularly the South Indian states Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Kerala, which use Kannada, Tamil, Telugu and Malayalam), which strongly oppose the looming threat of cultural hegemony posed by Hindi.

Moreover, various arms of India’s central government have also played their part in this particular debate about the role of Hindi on the subcontinent. In 1997, for example, a government-proposed project sparked an uproar, in the form of resistance to Hindi, among South Asian scholars in the United States. An article in India Abroad (May 9, 1997) addressed the controversy surrounding the “Indian Council of Cultural Relations’ desire to compile [and publish] a directory of Hindi professors, scholars and writers living overseas ... in Hindi” (22). The project, conceived to mark India’s fiftieth anniversary of independence, was intended to facilitate communication among South Asian scholars worldwide. However, it was perceived as emblematic of the “linguistic chauvinism” of the central government; the complaint being that the government of India was covertly stating that “one language group, namely Hindi, is more equal than the others” (22). In defence, a spokesperson for the government asserted that Hindi “has a very special status as the official national language of the country,” and that such
an attitude was “quite damaging to the very notion that India is a nation concerned for the united operation of its linguistic, cultural and literary groups” (22). Indeed, it is political pressure from the central government to make Hindi the primary language in India (as opposed to recognizing both English and Hindi as official languages), and the cultural hegemony of Hindi as the language of popular culture, that have fostered a strong anti-Hindi sentiment among speakers of other languages.

Discussing the complex web that entangles the relationship between the various regional languages, Sisir Kumar Das noted that not only do Kashmiri speakers feel that Urdu has usurped the place of their language, but that “Bengali hegemony was a constant irritant in Orissa and Assam, Konkani felt humiliated and desperate as it was denied all possibilities of development, [and] Telugu speakers also had strong feelings about the domination of Tamil” (1995, 39). In the Indian context, using Hindi in lieu of English as the link language poses practical and ideological problems for the literary arena, precisely because Hindi “threatens” to usurp the “strength” of the regional languages. While some people may simply not be able to read literature in Hindi, others may resist reading regional literature in Hindi translation because they consider it a threat to the other regional languages, including their own. On the other side of the floor are people like G.N. Devy, who suggests that English is the language most suitable for linking the various Indian literatures because, unlike Hindi, “ILET \textsuperscript{10} has the advantage of being able to circulate internationally by virtue of its being in English, as well as the cultural ‘merit’ of being fully representative of the country and culture of its origin” (1993, 119). Though English is not native to India, it is the lingua franca most considerably widespread among middle- and upper-class Indians, who are likely to be the target audience for literature in general, and Indian regional literature in particular. In addition, English is preferred by many because it is not perceived as a direct threat to the regional languages. In Devy’s framework, translation is more than a mere force to dismantle state borders in India; it is also a way to augment the readership of Indian regional-language literatures worldwide. This advantage is afforded exclusively to English translations, for a Hindi translation is certainly not likely to unlock the door to the international literary market as easily as its English counterpart.

How do current translation practices figure in this matrix? K. Ayyappa Paniker, who writes and translates various literary works in Malayalam, observed that translation in India does not usually take place directly between regional languages. Rather, he explains, “English serves as the main link for inter-Indian literary translations, as well as for Indian-non Indian translation” (1994, 136).\textsuperscript{11} The translation process can therefore be schematized as follows:
RL1 —> ENGLISH —> RL2

where RL1 is the source regional language;
and RL2 is the target regional language.

This model poses an interesting challenge to the use of any Indian regional Indian language as a target language, precisely because it still has to be filtered through English. The role of English as a “filter” language between regional languages certainly explains why English is more typically the target language for literary translations, since it must be the first target language of any RL1 to RL2 translation. Therefore, on a practical level, translation into Hindi will not necessarily eliminate the presence and role of English, but rather emphasize the need for English as a neutral filter.

Although demand for regional-language literature is high in India, literature in English is in even higher demand because it is accessible to readers across the country and overseas. This alone makes translation of regional literatures into English necessary. As Devy observes:

There has been an emergence of a substantial class of Indians who speak an Indian language but cannot read it well. English has been the socially privileging language in India for over a century; and the importance of English in trade and technology makes it the most attractive choice as the medium of school education. Invariably therefore, the children sent to these schools need to be given Indian myths, epics and literatures in English translation. Translation has come to be the bridge between literature of the past and present generation. It has also become the bridge between the new writings in Indian languages and the new readership that is gradually losing these languages. (1993, 117)

Moreover, the “efficacy of the English language in the dissemination of information about Indian literature at a professional level,” the use of English as an instrument of mediation that has “brought Indian literatures closer mainly through translations, creating a store-house of information about different language-literatures” (Das 1995, 59) and the fact that English is the accepted language of critical enquiry worldwide reinforce the importance of English for scholarly pursuits. The choice of a target language in which to translate Indian regional literatures therefore is not and has not been entirely based on ideals. On the contrary, practical concerns, such as the nature of the critical field and scholarship, the requirements of the educational system, trade, industry, access to foreign markets and the desire to preserve the regional languages in the various states, work together to determine the link language between regional literatures.

But even in the unlikely scenario that a consensus could be reached vis-à-vis the choice of a link language, the current status of ILET¹² within
academic circles poses an additional challenge. At present, regional literatures in translation are uncommon in university syllabi, not because none exists or because no translation activity is taking place, but rather primarily because translated works have traditionally not been accorded a high status. Devy (1993, 3) suggests that this is merely in line with the hierarchical structure of literary studies in India:

A number of critics have endeavoured to establish a hierarchy in terms of artistic range and abundance in literatures written in English. The descending order of terms in this hierarchy is:

(i) British literature;
(ii) American literature;
(iii) Anglo-Irish literature;
(iv) Australian literature;
(v) Canadian literature;
(vi) other writings in English, such as Caribbean, African, Indian.

The basic structural principle behind this argument is usually that mono-lingual cultures rank higher than multi-lingual cultures.13

Given the low position of Indo-Anglian writing on this hierarchical scale, it is even more difficult for ILET to establish itself as “serious” literature worthy of study in academic circles, for the very reason that it is rung below Indo-Anglian writing—a literature that already lies at the bottom of the hierarchy. ILET lacks the “cultural power” (Even-Zohar 1990, 66) needed to make it prestigious, for in India, regional literatures in translation simply do not possess the level of prestige and cult power of British or American literature. This prejudice toward translated literature within academia means that these works are generally not included in college syllabi. And herein lies the paradox: scholars are unwilling to study/teach translated literature because of its low status, but it is their very reluctance to teach/promote the study of translated literature that makes it difficult for this work to enter the literary canon, and thereby gravitate upward to higher rungs on the hierarchical scale.

While it is easy to blame academia for creating this problem, one should also keep in mind that syllabus content in India is restricted by the availability and affordability of books. The low status of translated works has meant that publishing houses, uncertain of the saleability of these works, have been hesitant to undertake systematic translation projects, until recently. Among the large publishing houses in India, Jaico, Dialogue, India Book House, Pearl, Sterling, Vikas, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, M.C. Sarkar and Co., and Rupa have sporadically published translations. The Calcutta Writers Workshop and United Writers (based in Calcutta) have published the most translations to date, which may be one reason why more translations of Bengali literature have been published than other regional-language
It is worth noting that eighty-three of the works translated from Bengali were written by Rabindranath Tagore, who had also translated many of them into English himself. This particular detail sheds light on an important issue: regional literatures are often translated because of a supported interest in the source literature in question. According to Mohanty’s bibliography, eight pieces of Konkani literature—all written by R. Pandit—have been translated and published by Thomas Gay. Since no other Konkani writer has been translated into English, one might suppose that Gay has a personal interest in Pandit’s work. Certain university presses, such as Punjab University Press and the University of Trivandrum Press, have their own regional-language publications and also publish translations from Punjabi and Malayalam, respectively. But these tend to be sporadic. By far, the majority of translated works are published by small independent presses that never systematically publish translations from any specific regional language into English. Traditionally, translated literature, when available, is expensive and, more often than not, reprints are not issued: once the last copy is sold, the book disappears from bookstore shelves “forever,” rendering it difficult for educators to include these works in their syllabi, even if they genuinely want to study them.14

Hence, market forces have adversely affected the availability of translated literary works on the Indian market. However, this situation has undergone rapid changes over the last few years. Ramnarayan notes:

> It is only in the last six to seven years that literary organisations, publishers and academics have taken translations seriously. This year [1996], a translation programme of some significance and magnitude (55 books in 11 languages) has been launched by Macmillan as a literary exercise as well as an educational project. (1996, 73)

This is the first time that a comprehensive translation project covering so many languages has been launched by a private agency. In the past, it was Sahitya Akademi, in affiliation with the national government, which undertook most of the translation of regional literatures, which, as Ramnarayan remarked, was of “uneven quality and poorly distributed” (1996, 73). Although Macmillan India has published only eleven novels15 thus far, it is promising to think that four times this number remain to be published.16 Macmillan’s outlay in this venture bears witness to the vital role that economic and financial forces play in the translation process. Considering the prominent Indo-Anglian writers, we would have to admit that their literary fame is not exclusively derived from the literary merits of their respective works. The financial backing and support, as well as the strategic marketing of their work by large international publishing houses such as Penguin, Pantheon, Oxford, Chicago and Viking, have given these writers prominent visibility on the world scene.
While it is true that the Macmillan translation project was launched for educational and literary purposes, it is also true that Macmillan was only willing to get involved if sufficient sponsors could be found (Ramnarayan 1996, 73). And in fact, it was a large private contribution "to the tune of Rs 14 lakhs [1.4 million rupees, or approximately US$47,000] from the M.R.A.R. Education Trust (that) enabled this project to be launched" (74). The project was inspired by a desire to make the classics in regional languages available to wider audiences both in India and abroad. In addition to publishing translations of previously untranslated work, Macmillan is also helping to establish a clientele for existing regional-language literatures in translation. R. Narayanaswami, director of sales for Macmillan, stated that college libraries and university syllabi are the primary targets, as these are the main institutions that can help to create and maintain a following for these works. This is a particularly important move in view of the fact that, in the past, translated works remained obscure partly because of their relative absence from college syllabi. By targeting this market, Macmillan is focussing on a crucial element that will surely enable regional literatures in translation to become a visible and ultimately integral part of the Indian literary establishment.

Traditionally, economic concerns have played an important part in maintaining the obscurity of literary works in translation. Literature in translation was undertaken sporadically by commercial publishers such as major international publishers, including Allen and Unwin, Longman, Viking, Penguin, Heinemann, Doubleday and Macmillan, and often in conjunction with projects established by international organizations such as UNESCO. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, Scottish Mission Industries functioned as the main translating body in India, focussing on theological texts. Foreign university presses, such as Oxford, Chicago, California, Harvard and Indiana, have also published translations of Indian literature. But, as previously mentioned, the bulk of the translations was undertaken by Sahitya Akademi, United Writers, Calcutta Writers Workshop and smaller Indian publishing houses. These smaller presses do not have the financial resources to launch wide-scale publishing campaigns and promote sales of translated works on potential markets.

Prior to the ambitious Macmillan translation project, the cost of literature in general tended to be fairly high, thereby reducing the viability and visibility of the works. In fact, this had a sort of domino effect: the high prices hindered consumption, which led publishing houses not to reprint translated works, which augmented the relative "obscurity" of the works and the writers both on the literary market and in academic arenas. However, the price of the Macmillan novels is relatively low: ranging from Rs 45 to Rs 140. Ramnarayan remarked that these prices would certainly
make them affordable to "serious middle-class readers." In the past (and even today) the high prices of literary works have made them less attainable, and thus limited their circulation. The affordability of the Macmillan novels becomes evident when compared to the sale price of some prominent Indo-Anglian fiction that occupy an important position within the Indian literary system (see Table 3 below). It is not surprising therefore that the Macmillan editions have generated higher sales, overall, of regional-language literatures in translation.19

Table 3
Prices of Selected Works of Indo-Anglian Literature (1998)20

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Publisher</th>
<th>Price (Rs)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The God of Small Things</td>
<td>Arundhati Roy</td>
<td>India Ink</td>
<td>395</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Fine Balance</td>
<td>Rohinton Mistry</td>
<td>Faber and Faber</td>
<td>604</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Moor's Last Sigh</td>
<td>Salman Rushdie</td>
<td>Vintage</td>
<td>225</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Revised Kama Sutra</td>
<td>Richard Crasta</td>
<td>Penguin</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beach Boy</td>
<td>Ardushir Vakil</td>
<td>Penguin</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Inscrutable Americans</td>
<td>Anurag Mathur</td>
<td>Rupa</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Macmillan Novels (Translations)</td>
<td>Various regional</td>
<td>Macmillan</td>
<td>45-140</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In a country that has several regional languages, translation is the only way to bridge the ever-widening chasm between each of the distinctive literary traditions, and to keep the various regional-language literatures from fading into obscurity. Of course, in this context, it would be ideal if regional literature could attract the same following as Indo-Anglian literature in the original language, without being translated. But this is not really possible in a multilingual society such as India. It would also be ideal if a readership for regional literatures in their original languages could be created without recourse to a link language, be it English or Hindi. But reality suggests that translation is an absolute necessity. And the dictates of the educational system, trade, technology, the nature of the translation process and, perhaps the most important factor, the investment and financial support of multinational publishing houses, necessitate the use of English. English is the language that has clout in the modern world, and perhaps it is better to work with that fact, rather than against it. As Mukherjee writes:
English has made it possible for an Indian text to be read or "discovered" in translation more widely than it could be in any other language earlier. Hence, though English may not be the most suitable language for translating Indian literary texts, it offers the widest area of discovery through and in translation. (1981, x)

Thus, isolated projects to translate regional-language literatures will not effect wide-scale changes or help to better the status of translated literature in the long term, even if they produce startling results in the short term. What is perhaps needed is a systematic regional literature translation policy.

On the threshold of the new millennium, what changes are in store for the future of regional Indian literature? Macmillan's large-scale translation project, Sahitya Akademi's more active role in the literary translation process and Ravi Dayal's publication of Nirmal Verma's and K. Shivaram Karanth's work in translation are a few examples of steps in the right direction (Rai 1998, 80). In the long term, merely publishing translations of classics and writers who are well-established in their particular regional literary canon will not suffice. Rather, sustained efforts to translate new works by emerging young writers on the regional literary scene need to be undertaken by several organizations and publishing houses in order to effect long-term changes in the status of translated works in India. Das reminds us that publishers who began to wield greater power in the twentieth century have used that power to contribute "significantly towards the popularization of classics, the growth of readership, the widening of the market for modern literature and also towards the financial stability of young writers" (1995, 27).

Writers and translators must therefore begin to forge closer links with publishing houses in the next century, taking advantage of their financial resources and power to keep regional-language literature strong. In addition, established writers and critics of regional-language literature need to work closely with new writers, perhaps by facilitating the translation of their works, so as to sustain a tradition of regional literature in translation. The international diffusion of U.R. Anantha Murthy's works was certainly aided by the fact that it was the well-known A.K. Ramanujan who had translated his novel *Samskara* into English. Likewise, Sadat Hasan Manto, a well-known figure in Urdu literature, is certainly likely to attract even more attention among non-Urdu readers (particularly outside the Indian context) in the near future, since his work has been included in *Mirrorwork*, Salman Rushdie's anthology of Indian writing. Thus, by taking lesser-known writers under their wing, established writers can potentially effect significant and positive changes in the status of regional-language literature in translation—a move that stands to be beneficial both to themselves and to the new writers.
Governing literary bodies, such as Sahitya Akademi, are also in a position to effect considerable changes by remaining committed to publishing regional literatures in translation. Already, by providing incentives to translators, such as the Translation Prize, Sahitya Akademi has helped to make translation a more prestigious activity in India. Moreover, with figures such as U.R. Anantha Murthy—a well-known regional-language writer who vociferously addresses the merits of reading regional-language literature in public forums—at the helm of Sahitya Akademi, the status of regional literary works is certainly likely to improve considerably. In the long term, such moves will not only help to enrich Indian literature, but will encourage and reward literary production in the regional languages. An impetus to translate regional literatures will not silence the voice of regional-language writers, but rather, translation through a link language will enable the reading public not versed in the various regional languages to hear and appreciate, and therefore give strength to, the many voices of regional-language literature in India.

Notes

1. See “Commonwealth Literature Does Not Exist” in Rushdie (1991) for details on the history, nuances and problematics of this particular issue. The discussion on p. 69 is particularly relevant to my argument.

2. “Indo-Anglian literature,” which refers to literature written in English by Indian authors, has had an interesting, and at times controversial, history. See “An Essay in Definition” in Mukherjee (1981).

3. The idea that “Indian literature” can be used to describe all of the literatures produced in the various languages of India, as well as in English, has been debated at length by many scholars. In the preface to Comparative Indian Literature (1984), K.M. George, for example, asks the question, “How can fifteen or more languages produce one literature?” See this preface for further comments on this particular question. Jatindra Mohanty’s (1984) preface to Indian Literature in English Translation also provides a useful bibliography of other works that address this question.

4. According to the UNESCO publication Index Translationum, an additional twenty-five translations were published in 1985 and 1986, including seven from Bengali, seven from Hindi, three from Tamil, two from Oriya, one each from Gujarati, Kannada, Malayalam, Punjabi and Telugu and one in several languages.

5. For an excellent discussion of the role of a link language in India, see “A Link Literature for India” in Mukherjee (1981).

6. See George (1984), ix–xi, for further discussion of this point.

7. Published in 1978, this work provides a history of and a paradigm for the study of Indian literature. Though dated, it nevertheless enables one to historically contextualize the debate regarding a “suitable” language to link regional literatures in India.

8. The popular name for the Indian film industry, based in Mumbai.
10. The acronym for “Indian literature in English translation.”
11. See Das (1995), 54-60, for his discussion on European-Indian literary interactions for a more exhaustive treatment of this subject.
12. A distinction must be made between Indian literature written in English, which Mukherjee calls “Indo-Anglian literature,” and Indian literature in English translation (ILET), which Mukherjee (1981), 3-4, calls “Indo-English literature.”
13. Devy does not place each literature on a separate line. I have done this to emphasize the hierarchy at work in this framework.
14. I wish to thank Professor S.K. Aithal, professor of English at the Indian Institute of Technology in Kanpur, for providing me with this information.
15. See N. Kamala’s paper in this volume for the titles of these novels.
16. I should emphasize that for the purposes of this paper, I am not directly addressing the quality of the translations per se. I am more interested in statistics and the volume of work translated in India.
18. Approximately US$1.30 to US$4. Currency conversions are not always good indicators; comparisons based on purchasing power within a given society are usually more appropriate: the Indian publications India Today and Frontline (comparable to Time or Newsweek), cost approximately Rs 15, that is, US$0.50.
19. According to Ramnarayan, Macmillan reportedly sold the first 3,000 copies immediately, and long-term sales, reprints and a world market are anticipated.
20. These figures were obtained from Crossword Bookstore, Mumbai and Athree Book Centre, Mangalore, in January 1998.

Works Cited


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