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Premchand in the German Language: Paratexts and Translations[*]

In the first part of this paper I will give a brief overview of existing translations of Premchand's works into German, also mentioning the institutional and literary context of any given translation. The basic questions coming up time and again in the discourse on literary translation are the need of glossaries or glosses in the translated text, the right amount of local color to be maintained in the translation and a matching register of languages. These will be addressed in the second part using examples from existing translations. The third part will be devoted to an analysis of selected passages from translations by different translators which will serve as the basis for a discussion of translation techniques. Finally I will discuss questions of possible target audiences and respective marketing strategies.

Before turning to the topic of translation, let me briefly mention literature about Premchand in German. The earliest text dealing with him probably was an article by Peter Gaeffke titled "Die Stellung der Indischen Christen im Urteil der Hindu nach der Darstellung Premcands" (The Position of Indian Christians as Presented by Premchand, 1962), followed by his "Zum Menschenbild in den Erzählungen Premcands" (On the Image of Man in Premchand's Stories, 1966b). His essay on Hindi novels of the first half of the twentieth century (*Hindiromane in der ersten Hälfte des zwanzigsten Jahrhunderts*, 1966a), which includes passages on *Sevāsadan, Premāshram, Rangbhūmi* and *Kāyākalp*, appeared in the same year.

A doctoral dissertation in English using Premchand's fiction as source material for tracing the image of Hinduism in his writing was submitted to the German University of Münster (Schreiner 1972). It contained some

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interesting points on the relation between literature and religion, the fictional and factual world, etc., but it probably did not at all contribute to the propagation of Premchand's works in German-speaking countries.

Gaeffke again devoted some pages to Premchand in his *Hindi Literature in the Twentieth Century* which was published in Germany in 1978. Here he first mentioned Premchand in the context of Gandhi's influence on Hindi literature, judging that his early short stories "were of no literary value, but breathed the spirit of nationalism" (37), and then dealt with the novels *Sevāsadan, Premāshram, Karmabẖūmi* and *Rangbẖūmi* (38–41) and with *Gōdān* (52–53). All of the aforementioned works were addressed to an academic audience and apparently were read only by the small circle of scholars in the field.

While not published in German, the work of the German scholar Siegfried A. Schulz on Premchand is nevertheless of some interest here because he discussed German translations. His first article on Premchand dealt with *Gōdān* (1972). This was followed by a talk organized by the Indian Council for Cultural Relations in New Delhi in 1981 titled "Premchand: A Western Appraisal," which also was clearly not meant for consumption in Germany and was not translated into German. In this talk he mentioned that Premchand had received very little attention in the German media. Only one German language newspaper, the Swiss *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, had published an article on the occasion of Premchand's birth centenary (20–21). In the first part of his talk he concentrated on discussing *Gōdān* with special emphasis on the social and political concerns of the novel and its historical as well as literary background. On the other hand, he was very well aware that only a close reading of the text would result in "valid data in regard to literary criteria" (25). He also clearly advocated a comparative approach and stressed the influence of Dickens, which he saw as very prominent in *Gōdān*. His more elaborate comparative study of *Gōdān* and Dickens' *Hard Times* (1972) had also been published in English only and had probably not been noticed even in German academia.

The Urdu version of one of Premchand's stories (Hindi: "Dō Bailōñ kī Katẖā"; Urdu: "Dō Bail") was included in the *Chrestomathie der Urdu-Prosa des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts* (Reader of Urdu Prose from the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries, 1965 and 1977) with a short introduction and a glossary, but no translation.

German Translations of Premchand

The following account cannot claim to be exhaustive. It includes only

those works which I could trace while working on the subject. It is quite possible that further translations of short stories appeared in literary journals but are not listed in library catalogs.

As far as I could determine, Premchand was translated into German for the first time in 1958, not from the original Hindi (or Urdu, for that matter) but from English. It was a collection of his short stories, published under the title *Eine Handvoll Weizen* (A Handful of Wheat) by the East German publisher Aufbau Verlag Berlin, based on an English collection of the same name published in 1955 by the People's Publishing House, New Delhi. The volume includes the following stories:

Hindi Title	English Title	German Title
"Savā Sēr Gēhūñ"	A Handful of Wheat	Eine Handvoll Weizen
"Shatranj kē Khilāṛī"	The Chess Players	Die Schachspieler
"Kajākī"	Kazaki	Kasaki
"Ḍikrī ke Rūpaye"	The Decree	Das Urteil
"Baṛē Ghar kī Bēṭī"	Daughter of a Noble Family	Die Tochter aus vornehmer Familie
"Samar Yātrā"	The Battle March	Der große Marsch
"Īdgāh"	Idgah	Das Idgach
"Sujan Bhagat"	Sujan the Devout	Sujan der Fromme
"Namak kā Darogā"	The Salt Inspector	Der Salzinspektor
"Īshvarīya Nyāy"	Heavenly Justice	Göttliche Gerechtigkeit
"Panč Parameshvar"	The Village Judge	Der Dorfrichter
"Pūs kī Rāt"	A Winter Night	Eine Winternacht
"Kaphan/Kafan"	The Shroud	Das Leichentuch
"Ṭhākur kā Kuāñ"	The Thakur's Well	Der Brunnen des Thakur

It is obvious that the translations of the titles very closely follow the English version. It needs to be mentioned, however, that one short story from the English collection ("Forgiveness"; Hindi: "Kshamā") was not included in the German volume. Unless the story was added only to the second edition of the English collection (1962), which I have before me, there might have been some ideological reasons for not including it in the German volume as the story presented a very negative image of Muslim rule in Spain and could thus be understood to instigate or further prejudice against a religious community.

The translation of "Kafan" was republished in the anthology of Indian short stories *Der Tigerkönig* (The Tiger King) in 1966. Another short story, "Das Kind" (The Child; Hindi: "Bālak") was translated by W. A. Oerley from Madan Gupta's English version and published in the anthology *Der sprechende Pflug* (The Talking Plough) in 1962. In the same year, *Der*

Brunnen des Thakur (The Thakur's Well), another anthology with stories by Premchand and others, was published at Leipzig. Unfortunately I have not been able to get hold of this book.

These two collections were followed—with a considerable gap—by two translations directly from Hindi, which are the only translations so far of novels by Premchand into German: *Nirmala*, translated by Margot Gatzlaff, published by Verlag Volk und Welt, Berlin, in 1976; and *Gōdān*, translated by Irene Zahra, published by Manesse Verlag, Zürich, in 1979.

The only German translations from Urdu versions of Premchand stories that I have before me were published after a gap of several years in 1989 by Ursula Rothen-Dubs in her reader *Allahs indischer Garten: Ein Lesebuch der Urdu-Literatur* (Allah's Indian Garden: A Reader of Urdu Literature). The stories are "Zwei Ochsen" ("Dō Bail") and "Die Schachspieler" ("Shatranj kī Bāzī").

A collection of stories translated from Hindi by Konrad Meisig was also published in 1989 and had the "Chess Players" as its title story. Here we have the only case of three different German versions of one story, albeit based on Hindi/English in the first case, on Urdu in the second and on Hindi in the third. These three translations can thus offer a very good textual basis for a comparative study on the translation praxis. The contents of this second short story collection in German are as follows:

Hindi Title	German Title
"Shatranj kē Khilāṛī"	Die Schachspieler
"Mōṭar kē Čhīṇṭē"	Autospritzer
"Ṭhākur kā Kuāñ"	Thâkurs Brunnen
"Pūs kī Rāt"	Eine Nacht im Januar
"Savā sēr Gēhūñ"	Eineinviertel Kilo Weizen
"Nashā"	Der Rausch
"Yah Bhī Nashā, Vah Bhī Nashā"	Rausch Bleibt Rausch
"Kafan"	Das Leichentuch
"Ātmārām"	Goldschmied und Papagei
"Jādū"	Die Bezauberung
"Manovritti"	Das Naturell einer Hure
"Julūs"	Die Demonstration
"Mōṭērām Jī Shāstrī"	Moterâm Jî Shâstrî
"Dō Bailōñ kī Kathā"	Die Geschichte von den beiden Ochsen

As you will notice, five stories were already contained in the first German collection and these are among Premchand's masterpieces, which could not be excluded from any representative collection. Meisig was aware of the earlier German translations and also consulted a number of

English translations, but it is obvious from his renderings of the texts that he tried to arrive at his own version.

Last in the series of translations from Premchand is "Autospritzer" (A Car Splashing; Hindi: "Mōṭar kē Čhīṅṭē"), based on an English translation of 1969. This story was included in the anthology of Indian short stories titled *Zwischen den Welten* (Between the Worlds), edited by Cornelia Zetzsche and published on the occasion of India being designated the main guest at the Frankfurt Book Fair in 2006. Strangely enough, the translation from the original Hindi prepared by Konrad Meisig was not used for this anthology—I am not sure whether the editor of the publication was even aware of Meisig's translation. Here again a comparison of the two translations may yield interesting results.

While looking at the choice of texts and the paratext it is important to keep the circumstances of the publication in mind. In this context I will briefly deal with only one publication: the short story collection *Eine Handvoll Weizen* (A Handful of Wheat) whose details were given above. It seems quite obvious that the choice of the English collection published by the People's Publishing House (PPH) was the first, or even only, choice for the East German (GDR) publisher because of the close ideological affinity of the Indian publisher with the Soviet bloc. It is possible that financial concerns also played a big part in the decision. The GDR was always short of foreign exchange. Hence buying the rights from any other publisher might have proved too costly. But apart from such extra-literary considerations, the texts chosen for the PPH collection were representative enough, the quality of P. C. Gupta's translations was up to the mark, and there were not too many other English translations around at the time. The translation obviously fitted well into the wider project of furthering ties with nonaligned Third World countries and of publicizing literature of social criticism which was close to the mode of socialist realism prescribed for authors in the Soviet bloc in the late 1950s.

Apart from these ideological considerations common readers in the socialist countries were eager to read about life in parts of the world to which they usually had no access. In the GDR, the publishing house Volk und Welt (The People and the World) in Berlin specialized in translations from foreign languages, but translated books were published by many other publishing houses as well. Translated literature from all languages, European as well as non-European, sold very well. First editions were often sold out within a couple of days. Books were usually subsidized and thus affordable for everybody. Publication and hence also translation choices were thus not necessarily based on commercial considerations. It needs to be stressed that until the reunification of Germany a wide range

of Indian authors had been published in the GDR, among them many who did not subscribe to any formula of social realism.

Paratexts

In his comment on the German translation of *Gōdān* Schulz remarked: "It also lacks a solid introductory essay which, as I will discuss a little later, is an absolute desideratum" (1981, 21). At the end of his talk he explained in detail what he expected an introduction to achieve:

> The only thing people like this speaker can do is to write better introductions to Premchand's narratives and try to interpret his work in a manner that would alert and enlighten the Western reader in regard to apparent inconsistencies as perceived by him, inconsistencies which have their origin in the widely divergent traditions and cultures of India and the West.
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> (*ibid.*, 42)

Apart from the problematic lumping together of "the West" as if this would by a homogenous entity, Schulz was wrong with regard to the *Gōdān* translation which is followed by an essay ("Nachwort," postscript), a brief note on the translation and a glossary. His advocacy of explicatory paratext as necessary explicatory material to translations from Indian languages was preaching to the converted. None of the translations published previously to his talk or later went without postscripts or introductions and glossaries. It is noteworthy, however, that many of these essays follow the translated text instead of preceding it as an introduction does. In a way they are thus less obtrusive. The reader is invited to first of all turn to the text, and may also read the postscript and consult the glossary only if he or she feels the need to do so. The two anthologies containing stories by different authors, however, have introductions preceding the translations.

On a panel discussing Hindi literature during a conference in Lisbon in July 2012, a participant strongly condemned the practice of adding explanatory notes, introductions or glossaries to literary translations. He expressed the conviction that a literary text has to be trusted to stand on its own feet. This may very well hold true for texts from similar cultural backgrounds, but what about cultural translations between not so similar realms? When the reader of the translation is to be left alone with the text, any allusions to the source culture which are alien to the target culture will largely go unnoticed thus narrowing or limiting the realization of the text. The reader will probably fill in the gaps in the text and visualize images evoked by the text according to his/her own cultural background. To a

certain degree this is unavoidable and also desirable, but if the source language/culture is completely obliterated, the reader will miss a chance to expand his/her own knowledge of the world, of the human situation in other parts of the world, will not delve into the unfamiliar. The delicate balance between the familiar and unfamiliar that a literary translation may achieve will be tilted too much towards the familiar. Hence the decision for or against a paratext should be made for any individual text in accordance with its cultural content. The translation of a short story about modern urban middle-class life may go very well without additional explanations, whereas *Gōdān* is a different matter altogether. Here, as in the field of literature in general, one should not resort to prescriptions of any kind. And as Nirmaljeet Oberoi beautifully puts it, by providing a detailed piece of cultural information "… what we lose in grace we may gain in communication" (2007, 56).

André Lefevere advocated paratext exactly to overcome imperialist appropriation:

> When we no longer translate Chinese T'ang poetry "as if" it were Imagist blank verse, which it manifestly is not, we shall be able to begin to understand T'ang poetry on its own terms. This means, however, that we shall have to tell the readers of our translations what T'ang poetry is really like, by means of introductions, the detailed analysis of selected texts, and such. We shall, therefore, have to learn to skip the leap we often call "of the imagination" but which could be much more aptly called "of imperialism."
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> (1999, 78)

He then added that this blame could not be laid on Western cultures only —similar practices could be observed in Chinese translations as well (*ibid*.), and probably in all cultures of the world.

In keeping with this practice, none of the books we deal with here was considered to stand on its own without this additional material. The explanatory or introductory texts usually include some information on the literary tradition, the historical, cultural and social context of the texts, biographical notes on Premchand and a more or less detailed evaluation of his work. Some also refer to the language situation with regard to Hindi and Urdu.

In *Gōdān*, the postscript (*Nachwort*) was written by Annemarie Etter, a scholar of English and Sanskrit with an intimate knowledge of India. The postscript of *Nirmala* was written by its translator, a renowned scholar of Hindi, and that of the story collection *Eine Handvoll Weizen* by Bianca Schorr, a scholar who specialized in modern Indian history. Schorr's outlook was more sociopolitical than literary and she laid more stress on the political and ideological function of literature than on its aesthetic aspects.

Her general remarks on modern Indian literature as predominantly didactic, which in her view the audience obviously demands and appreciates (1958, 200), reveal a strong influence of the "Progressive" concept of literature and also demonstrate that she was not aware of the diversity of the literary landscape of India. Margot Gatzlaff, the translator of *Nirmala*, wrote a quite detailed "afterword" outlining Premchand's life and works and their ideology but did not at all mention the process or method of translation.

Different postscripts thus also reflect the context of publication. All books published in the GDR devote much space to Premchand's progressive leanings and to the social situation depicted in his works. They are thus in keeping with the general political atmosphere, with the meta-narrative of enlightenment, emancipation and social progress, and the centrality of class struggles. Annemarie Etter's postscript to the *Gōdān* translation briefly outlines the emergence of modern Hindi and describes Premchand's life and literary career in more detail than the earlier texts. She then goes on to provide the historical and political background to the novel, sums up the main story line and presents a critical evaluation of the novel. Interestingly, her assessment of the social situation and the future outlook for India's peasantry is more pessimistic (1979, 716) than the assessment of Bianca Schorr, who in 1958 expressed rather high hopes for social uplift and successful leftist politics in India (208).

Konrad Meisig's postscript is the shortest. After a brief outline of Premchand's life and literary activities, and the topics and ideological content/background of his works, Meisig stresses the great and lasting influence Premchand has had on Hindi literature—a fact the other writers did not pay much attention to. Problematic is Meisig's statement that Urdu was the language of Indian Muslims (1989, 136), and he also does not bother to mention that Premchand's influence on Urdu fiction was as prominent as it was on Hindi fiction. It should perhaps be mentioned that Meisig's volume appeared from a publishing house that specialized in scholarly publications.

The most recent anthology of Indian short stories in German translation opens with an introduction by Cornelia Zetzsche, who has not studied Indian languages and thus approaches Indian literatures through English. Her lack of cultural knowledge is revealed in statements such as the one in which she calls ghazals and the Urdu language an "*Erfindung muslimischer Eroberer*" (invention of Muslim conquerors, 2006, 17). She, nevertheless, strongly advocates translations from Indian languages and presents a very modern outlook which consciously avoids "exoticizing" India and its literatures. Against this background it cannot be understood why she did not use any of the available direct translations from Indian languages for

the anthology.

Words common to most glossaries are names of food items, garments and plants, religious terms, terms of address, place names, Indian institutions such as *pančāyat* and more abstract terms such as *dḫarma*, etc., as well as objects of everyday use which have no counterparts in Germany. The most inaccurate glossary is the one accompanying the anthology *Der sprechende Pflug*. Some of the glosses are wrong, some too unspecific to add to a better understanding of the text, e.g., when "*dupaṭṭa*" is explained /translated as "*ein Kleidungsstück*" (a piece of garment) (Oerley 1962, 425).

In addition to a glossary, *Nirmala* also contains footnotes explaining social customs such as dowry, purdah, etc. The glossary of *Zwischen den Welten* contains fewer mistakes and has more detailed explanations, but the few mistakes to be found here are very annoying, such as placing the Chandni Chowk in New Delhi (Zetzsche 2006, 697) or translating "*Pitaji*" as "respected Pita" (*ibid.*, 708) without explaining what *pitā* means!

Despite their occasional flaws, glossaries nevertheless build bridges for understanding some of the underlying concepts, images, values, etc. of the words used in the texts. Without such aids the German reader would not be able to construct images in his mind of the items he comes across in a story or to grasp at least some of the connotations of expressions taken from another language.

An interesting case of a different kind of cultural translation is the Urdu short stories of Munir D. Ahmad who lives in Germany. Most of his stories deal with life in Germany and are populated overwhelmingly by German characters. Instead of adding explanatory notes, the author chose to give explanations of German phenomena in the literary text itself, whereby the text as a whole turns into a means of conveying cultural information. These interventions, however, sometimes prove to be a burden on the texture of the story thus reducing interest in the characters and the action, thereby reducing the story's readability. The practice of including explanatory notes in the literary text itself is usually not adopted in the translations under discussion here.

The Translations

The four important translators from Hindi and Urdu have an academic background. They are well-versed in the respective Indian language(s) and possess the required cultural knowledge. In contrast to them, Marianne Grycz-Liebgen who translated the short stories from English into German was a professional translator of European languages without

any expertise in Indian culture.

Translation, of course, is an endless process, as endless as the potential of a literary text. Any work can be translated all over again with ever new results. "Intention and interpretation lead to different texts in different situations. Each step means selection and a closing and (re)opening of probabilities from both sides. But the sides never meet" (Vermeer 2006, 52). Translation, as is the case with all communication, thus results in a "reduction of complexity" (Luhmann qtd. in *ibid.*, 64), and in translation we have a doubled case of communication, or, as Vermeer calls it, a two-step process (*ibid.*, 67) with the translator as the site of the change between two (or even more, in the case of English as the medium) systems. The stimulation achieved by the resulting translation again contains its own complexities which are different from the complexities of the source.

The translator is influenced in his choices by his or her own idiosyncrasies as well as by the more general cultural and literary environment he or she works in, by the (imagined) expectations of the target audience, the publisher, literary critics, colleagues, etc. Hence different translations of a given text may yield fascinating results with regard to the choices made by the translator. Such a thorough, word-by-word analysis of the complete texts, however, cannot be attempted in the present paper. Here the focus will be on a few selected cultural items or concepts and some obvious flaws in translation.

Among the translators, it is interesting to note that only Irene Zahra commented upon her translation of *Gōdān* and explained why she deemed it necessary to have a short glossary added to the text. Moreover, she admitted to having "corrected" the text where it seemed to contain errors and inconsistencies due to the ill health and early death of the author, who was not able to correct or copy edit the manuscript (1979, 718). This practice might look highly questionable, but probably enhanced the readability of the resulting German text. Basil Hatim remarked with regard to translations from Arabic, which he demonstrated as a highly explicative language: "… is there any point in impressing these differences on, say, some Europeans whose languages do not usually opt for this degree of explicitness?" (1997, xv). A very good case in point would be the very elaborate, precise descriptions of action in Hindi/Urdu with the help of conjunctive participles, compound verbs, participle constructions, etc. These usually have to be simplified in German because the German language simply does not possess the linguistic arsenal for such a minute dissection of an action. In some cases, prefixes added to a verb or adverb may fulfill a similar function, but very often a complex construction in Hindi/Urdu will have to be replaced by a simple verb form in German.

In a brief note preceding the text of the novel, Irene Zahra also explained the cultural and religious meaning of *gōdān*, which to my mind provided a good opening or point of departure for the reading.

Comparing Three Translations of "The Chess Players"

This comparison is, of course, complicated by the fact that the three translations are based on different source texts: The first on Hindi via English, the second on a Hindi version, and the third on an Urdu version. Nevertheless, different strategies can perhaps be delineated. The main focus here will be on the readability of the translations, naturally with a view also to check their "correctness," by which I mean the correspondence with the atmosphere and overall sense of the original. It is not my intention here to point out minor misunderstandings and mistakes which may occur in any translation.

Ursula Rothen-Dubs was well aware of the intricacies of translation. For her prose translations she chose a reader-oriented approach trying to make the resulting text as enjoyable, colorful and often also witty as possible. Thus, her translation is much more vivid than that of Marianne Grysz-Liebgen, and almost never too literal. At the same time, however, her rendering of cultural items is closer to the original as it is based on an actual knowledge of the realities of life in South Asia. Marianne Grycz-Liebgen, in contrast, tends to adapt cultural expressions to items known to a German reader. Thus, for example, in her version *surma* turns into "*Wimperntusche*" (mascara) and *missī* into "*Farben für die Zähne*" (color for the teeth) (see Premchand 1958, 15). In both cases these are faithful translations of the English version (Premchand 1962, 9). Rothen-Dubs gives more literal translations ("*Augenschwärze*" and "*Gaumenfärbepulver*," respectively; 1989, 235). The latter two words are perhaps her own creations —German does not have words for these items. Meisig uses the same word for *surma* as Rothen-Dubs, but describes *missī* as "*Pulver zum Schwarz-färben der Zähne*" (powder to blacken the teeth) (see Premchand 1989, 1). The original Urdu/Hindi words or German equivalents do not appear in their glossaries. This leads me to the question: Which translation works better for a German reader without knowledge of the Subcontinent? Do the unfamiliar words used by Rothen-Dubs or Meisig succeed in evoking an image of the item in question? Is it perhaps more appropriate to use words and create images of similar or related items which are known to the common reader? For a well-informed reader, of course, Rothen-Dub's accuracy is more enjoyable because he or she can make the link to the

object concerned with all its connotations and associations. The same is not possible for anyone without this cultural knowledge. *Missī* poses an additional problem. Beautiful teeth should be white—a concept that is common to many cultures. The function of *missī* as a beautifier would thus require further explanation in addition to just naming or describing the item. Such an explanation, however, is nowhere to be found within the story, nor is it in standard dictionaries.

Marianne Grycz-Liebgen's translation as a whole captures the tone and atmosphere of the story, but it occasionally deviates quite substantially from the original. Many of these deviations are based on mistakes in the English version. Thus, her translation of "*Haẓrat Ḥusain*" as "Prophet(en) Hussain" (1958, 18) follows the English "Prophet Hussain" (1962, 12). The word "prophet" does not, of course, occur in the Hindi and Urdu versions, which have *Hazrat Husen* (Hindi: Premchand 1996, vol. 13, 107) and the phrase *shahīd-e Karbalā* (Urdu: Premchand 2003, 128) instead. Again the word "prophet" is used wrongly as a translation of "*valī*" in the English (1962, 12) and German (1989, 19) versions. This is a serious mistake, given the cultural and religious implications. A German translator with cultural knowledge of the Subcontinent, and particularly of Muslim concepts, could have corrected the inaccuracies of the English translation.

Another considerable shift in meaning appears when the begum goes as far as the threshold of the sitting room but hesitates to enter—her deeply ingrained sense of modesty does not allow her to face a male stranger. This fact does not become really clear in the German translation, which says "*durfte aber nicht weitergehen*" (was, however, not allowed to proceed further). The subtle nuance that she has interiorized this inhibition is lost in Grycz-Liebgen's translation (1958, 12). Rothen-Dub's translation (1989, 239) clearly brings out this fact and hence is more appropriate.

Meisig is the only translator who used diacritical marks for long vowels. He also provides some information on the pronunciation of Indian names, which seems necessary because he follows the English spelling, but strangely enough he does not explain his diacritical mark for vowel length. In all other translations there are no diacritics. Indian names are written in a "Germanized" form to facilitate pronunciation approximating the original, such as "Dschunija" instead of "Juniya." This is in line with German publishers' guidelines. Diacritics are generally understood to obstruct the reading of the text and to look too academic.

Comparing Two Translations of "Motar ke Chhinte"

Even a first glance reveals that in many instances Meisig's translation is more colloquial and better catches the ironic tone of the original. On the other hand, some formulations read better in the indirect translation, but there are a few factual mistakes in the translation from English, such as "*Feldweg*" (dirt track; Zetzsche 2006, 121) instead of "*Gasse*" (lane) for the Hindi *galī* (see Premchand 1996, vol. 15, 470). A more serious flaw is the omission of the "Sahib's" identity in the translation from English. The Hindi text does not leave any doubt about the fact that the gentleman in the car is a colonial officer. The ironic phrase "*sāhib bahādur*" already suggests as much, and his a-grammatical Hindi provides the final clue. Hence Meisig clearly identifies him as a colonial officer in his translation (see Premchand 1989, 17). His wife is marked as British by the denomination "*mēm sahib*," which both translators retain, but the explanation of "Memsahib" as "*Anrede*" (form of address) in the glossary to *Zwischen den Welten* (Zetzsche 2006, 705) does not clarify anything for the uninformed reader.

A problem faced by both translators and solved by neither of them is the very "English" Hindi spoken by the officer. In the translations he speaks correct standard German. Would it have been more to the point to have him speak broken German? I am not sure—it really is a difficult decision.

The Translations of *Nirmala* and *Godan*

Of the three translators we are concerned with here, Margot Gatzlaff's approach appears the most text-oriented, which occasionally hurts the aesthetic quality of the end result. Thus, for instance, she translated some idiomatic expressions too literally. A case in point is "*dūr sē salām karnā*" (see Premchand 1976, 12) which in its literal translation sounds odd and does not make much sense for a German reader. A better translation would have been "… *kann mir gestohlen bleiben*." At other places, however, she has tried her best to translate the text into idiomatic German.

Schulz referred to Zahra's translation of *Gōdān* in his talk and also mentioned his own which however, I was not able to trace. He claims to have lived in close contact with the novel for about three years, but perhaps it was never published. Here is his comment on the published translation: "Last year, the Manesse Verlag in Zürich published a German *Gōdān* translation by Irene Zahra which, when compared to my own, shows a few divergencies and 'venial' errors" (1981, 21). In a later passage

he takes up the problem of translating dharma/dharam which according to him appears about one hundred times in *Gōdān*: "A Western reader will want to know the exact meaning and definition of the term, so that he can safely deal with it whenever it occurs" (*ibid*., 36). Schulz had probably overlooked the short explanation of the term Dharma in the glossary (see Premchand 1979, 719 entry 19) and the more detailed information on the Dharma system within the postscript (*ibid*., 713–14). To my mind this explication provides a good basis for an understanding of the use of the word in Premchand's novel. The translator preferred to retain the original word throughout the text instead of using a translation which would at best restrict and at worst misrepresent the concept.

The Translation of "Balak"

This story is an example of a lot of information and nuance being lost along the way. Some reduction of the original text occurred already in the English translation, and some more inaccuracies and omissions were added during the translation from English into German. Thus, the German text reads very matter-of-factly, laconic even, while in the original we find many asides, many statements are clearly marked as the first-person-narrator's opinion, assumption or impression, all of which is left out in the translation. Thus, when the changed expression on Gangū's face is meticulously described by the narrator in the first scene in which the reader encounters him (Premchand 1996, vol. 15, 181), this detailed impression is completely omitted. The translated text is thus watered down and becomes more one-dimensional than the original. There also are some changes in the sequence of the sentences in the English version, by which the translator probably wanted to improve on the story, but these changes are not for the better. The narrator's emotional reactions are cut short, and the final paragraph is bereft of some of its most poignant sentences in which the narrator accuses himself of mean-heartedness. The blame for most of these blunders has to be put on the English translation, but more damage was also added by the German translator.

Reception of the Translations

The second edition of *Gōdān* which was published by Manesse in 2006 got a good response in important print media such as *Die Zeit* and *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* and was commended by some outstanding German

writers and critics. Here are some of the voices:

> **Günter Grass**, "This novel is a wonderful book."

> **Dorothea Dieckmann** (*Die Zeit*), "Reading *Gōdān* means diving into the legendary and still existing contrast between poor and rich, the countryside and the city, need and double standards, tradition and cynicism, a repressive family system and liberty brought forth by luxury. Pin-sharp portraits of low caste peasants, Brahmin village elders, opportunist intellectuals and corrupt landlords are embedded in an elaborate ensemble of exemplary episodes."

> **Martin Zähringer** (*Neue Zürcher Zeitung)*, "Premchand develops a fascinating precision in the description of social structures, religious patterns, economic procedures and most of all of the complicated, but closely knit fabric of feudal dependency. […] In his political analysis Premchand is at par with contemporaries such as Maxim Gorki or Martin Anderson Nexö. […] He is still worth reading."

> **Matthias Koeffler** (*Buchmarkt*), "The Indian classic about the hardships of peasant life thwarts every multicultural happiness."[1]

It is, however, hard to assess how far this critical acclaim was reflected in book sales. Amazon.de reported only one copy left in its stock on 27 September 2012, but then we do not know how many copies they had ordered in the first place. It also needs to be mentioned that the first edition was financially supported by a Swiss foundation—otherwise the publication would probably not have been commercially viable. Since the translation already existed, costs were naturally much lower for the recent second edition. German translations from Hindi and Urdu are widely used in university courses on the respective literary traditions, but initially they were of course not intended for so limited a readership. Obviously the intended target audience was the wider reading public. That only a small section of this audience could be reached is due to the kind of publishing houses involved in most of these endeavors. Barring perhaps the Swiss publishing house Manesse Verlag, none of them belongs to the inner circle of powerful and rich publishers, hence they were not able to invest heavily in the marketing of their books and they did not (and do not) have access to the big book selling chains on the high streets of cities or in big shopping malls. No reader will stumble upon any of these books on display in a shop window or on a bargain counter. As a result one has to know about

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[1]My translation. For the originals in German, see (http://www.amazon.de/Go dan-oder-Das-Opfer-roman/dp/371752108X/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1348737295&sr =8-1; retrieved 27 Sept. 2012).

these books to try and locate them.

Conclusion

As is to be expected, translation is always conditioned by the respective context. The examples have clearly demonstrated how formulations in the target language, and even more obviously the paratexts, were influenced by the time at which the text was translated, the format or mode of publication, and the sociopolitical circumstances.

The fact that none of the translations discussed in this paper stand on their own, all are supported by paratexts, points to the need that was felt for cultural translation beyond the literary text itself.

The choice of texts for translation is quite representative. Premchand's most famous short stories and *Gōdān*, the novel widely understood to be his best, are available in German translation, albeit perhaps mostly unnoticed by the general reading public.

The above analysis indicates that an intimate knowledge of the Subcontinent is vital for arriving at appropriate translations. Translations through English need not necessarily be inferior to those from the original languages if the English translations they are based on do not deviate too much from the text and if the German translations are edited or proofread by a person with the cultural competence required for an accurate and at the same time intelligible representation of the original. Without such a counter-check the result may contain a number of serious misrepresentations. On the other hand, judging from my own experience, it is essential to have the draft read by a person without a knowledge of the Subcontinent when a translation is produced by a South Asianist because only such an "uninformed" person will be able to point out where the text is unintelligible for a general reader and where the language of the translation is too close to the original, making it sound awkward or clumsy in German. Ideally, thus, a translation project should always involve at least two persons, one specialized in the source language and culture and the other one a mother-tongue speaker of the target language without knowledge of the source language.

There also is an astonishing imbalance in the ratio between translations from Hindi and those from Urdu. The strikingly small number of translations from Urdu can perhaps only be explained by the predominance of scholars dealing with Hindi as compared to those working on Urdu. It is also possible that Hindi texts were more easily available—and in better editions.

Another noteworthy fact is the still limited number of translations from Premchand's voluminous oeuvre, given his high status in the canon of Hindi and Urdu prose writing, compared to the number of translations of later Hindi writers (Nirmal Varma, Yashpal, Mohan Rakesh, Uday Prakash, to name only the most prominent ones). Do his works not appeal to the modern publisher/critic/reader? Have they lost their cultural and social meaning? The recent republication of the *Gōdān* translation and its critical acclaim would suggest otherwise, but generally mainstream publishers are more interested in contemporary writing of a less overtly social-realist and occasionally idealist nature. The small independent publishing house Draupadi in Heidelberg, which specializes in translations from Indian languages, does favor critical literature, but also has its main focus on contemporary writing. Hence we perhaps cannot expect much to be done in the near future as far as translating Premchand into German is concerned. As far as the existing translations are concerned, only *Gōdān* is still available in the recent edition. The older publications other than *Gōdān* have been out of print for a long time, and there is no chance of them getting republished. *Nirmala, Der Tigerkönig* and *Eine Handvoll Weizen* can be found in internet portals offering secondhand books, but *Die Schach-spieler* seems to be unavailable even there.

Unfortunately, in Germany the choice with mainstream publishers often is to have a translation from the English version or none at all. Publishers tend to rely on the selection of authors who have been successful in the English-language market instead of making their own risky and more costly choices. Thus, suggestions for translations from Indian languages usually originate with specialists of these languages in academia, not with publishers. As far as I can see, aggressive marketing is essential for the success of any book in the marketplace. During the last two decades much hype was created when marketing English-language novels by Indian or Non-Resident Indian (NRI) authors, but similar efforts have never been seen for any Indian novel translated from a language other than English. ❑

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