

THE READERS OF *El Quijote* from Europe to India

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Abstract: This study brings together a lot of scattered information and data about the journey of *El Quijote* since its publication, through its resurgence owing to its French, English and German translations and thereof its foray into the Indian literary system through its English translations and several translations into Indian languages. This research is the first step towards the study of the modern novel in India from the very genesis of the genre of the modern novel. Also it serves as an excellent start point for research into the history of translation practice of modern India.

Index Terms – *EL Quijote*, translation, reception, modern novel

Introduction

El Quijote of Cervantes is a much translated classic belonging to the Golden Age period in Spanish literature. It was written by Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra and was published in 1605. An apocryphal sequel by Avellaneda followed in 1614 and then Cervantes wrote a sequel of his own in 1615. Cervantes' *Quijote* was immensely appreciated and much read in his times in Spain. The novel still continues to interest readers and critics alike the world over.

The novel *El Ingenioso Hidalgo Don Quijote De La Mancha*, talks about the adventures of a small landlord Don Alonso Quijano from an insignificant place in the La Mancha province of South of Spain. He is very fond of reading stories of knight errantry, called "novelas de caballería" in Spain. He gets so obsessed with the idea that he convinces a small farmer Sancho Panza with promises of gaining big estates and titles to accompany him as his squire on his missions of knight errantry. He names himself "Don Quijote", his horse "Rocinante" and decides to dedicate all his adventures to his imaginary sweetheart, lady "Dulcinea del Toboso" in the fashion of the books of knight errantry.

The popularity of *El Quijote* diminished with time. Being a satire on current societal situations its humour must have lost its referential sheen with passage of time and changing realities. But another important reason attributed to its loss of popularity in Spain was that its model was not replicated. As mentioned, in its initial days to encash upon its immense popularity there was an apocryphal sequel and as an attempt at jealous reclamation Cervantes wrote his own sequel. But gradually its popularity diminished with no imitative works following its example. Among other things what can be called as a serious reason would be the predominant conception of Quijote "como figura ridícula, extravagante y estafalaria, lo que favorece un tratamiento limitado y acartonado del tipo quijotesco, en vez de la perspectiva más compleja, equilibrada entre la ironía y la simpatía".¹ (a ridiculous, extravagant and grotesque figure who deserves a limited and caricatured quixotic treatment in place of a more complex perspective of balance between irony and sympathy)²

Cervantes and the Quijote

"procurad ... que leyendo vuestra historia, el melancólico se mueve a risa, el risueño la acreciente, el simple no se enfade, el discreto se admire de la invención..."³

Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra wrote these lines in the prologue to the first book of *El Ingenioso Hidalgo Don Quijote de la Mancha* and, as was in vogue in those times, he gave a short figuratively humble presentation of his intention for writing the story, the characters, and methods and so on.

Most remarkable is the respect he shows towards his reader. Cervantes addresses the reader in the singular- "desocupado lector"⁴, knowing very well that most of the readings would be in groups as not only did everyone not know how to read very well but also because there wouldn't be many print versions in circulation as the technology was still in its nascent stage.⁵ This personalised exclusive treatment given to the reader, a gesture one would attribute to a crafty salesman, makes sure the reader is at once all attention.

Cervantes with one blow not only claims his reader in this way but also sets him free right at the outset by calling him "desocupado", which in English might imply "relaxed"⁶. The reader of his *EL Quijote* has not only been made very important and exclusive but has also been communicated that this reading requires him to be in the mood to relax and unwind. Now a public reading of a text would have its own distinct set of rules as it is an act in public where hierarchy, public conduct, codes of accepted and unacceptable behaviour, competition, and other things come into play. This means that a listener at a public reading

¹ Close, Anthony p. 38

² My translation

³ Prologue to the first book of *EL Quijote* page 19 edition of Rico, Francisco.

(try ...while reading his story that the melancholic should laugh, the happy should rejoice, the simple minded shouldn't be offended and the discreet(wise) should appreciate the inventiveness)

⁴ Prologue opening words

⁵ "la España del *EL Quijote*". Ortiz, Antonio Dominguez. Edición del Instituto Cervantes, dirigida por Rico Francisco.

⁶ "idle" as translated into English first by Smollett 1755.

cannot be relaxed. So when Cervantes preconditions the reader of his *EL Quijote* to be “desocupado” he does in a way revolutionize reading by imploring his reader, in the singular, to feel free (of peer pressure) while enjoying the book in hand.

Cervantes wrote an entremes, “el retablo de las maravillas” which has been often compared with the famous childrens story about “the emperor’s new clothes”. But here we refer to it in the context of the “desocupado lector”. The story is about a twosome who comes to a village claiming to have a magical puppet show which could be seen only by intelligent people. They recover the fees and set up the “retablo” (the puppet theatre) which, as it does not exist at all, is not seen by anyone, but is claimed to be seen by all. Therefore while individually all are “disillusioned”, as a group they play at being witness to it. It was this kind of fraud readership-viewership that Cervantes did not want to cultivate for his *EL Quijote*.

“...tienes tu alma en tu cuerpo y tu libre albedrío...”⁷ Cervantes could not have stressed on the value of free readership more. He does not give directions and does not affix rules to how *El Quijote* has to be read. He reminds the reader that he has his own soul and own freedom with the book. Everyone is welcome to read *El Quijote* the way they may please and their basic nature and education may not be an obstruction to their enjoyment of the book.

“try ...while reading his story that the melancholic should laugh, the happy should rejoice, the simple minded shouldn’t be offended and the discreet(wise) should appreciate the inventiveness”

Cervantes proposed a method of reading that was not the norm in his times. But the magic is not in the wisdom of the proposal but in the execution of the proposal through his “rare invention”⁸. As Anthony Close observes, “de modo implícito, don Quijote, creyendo ser en verdad el protagonista de una aventura caballeresca, se comporta como un lector que leyera mentalmente una página de su obra predilecta, confundiendo lo imaginado con lo real”⁹.(implicitly, don Quijote, believing that he is in fact the protagonist of a knightly adventure, behaves like a reader who is mentally reading a page of his work to be, confusing the imaginary with the real)¹⁰

Don Quijote and Sancho Panza are both readers of the book of knightly adventures that Don Quijote is also writing. Don Quijote is at the same time the writer, the protagonist and the reader. Sancho Panza meanwhile is a character and its reader. Cervantes is the writer at large and we are its readers at large. By presenting multiple layers of reality some of which are made to coincide and some collide while others remain mutually exclusive Cervantes makes a case for his proposal about the ideal reader for his newest creation.

Like Close others have also observed that Don Quijote confuses the imaginary with the real and vice versa. He barges into a puppet show and destroys the theatre and the puppets believing them to be real and hence calling into action his duty as knight errant to set things right.¹¹ Most of his adventures are misadventures as his foe is almost always most unlikely in the form of the windmills, a herd of cattle, the captives and the others.

We can observe however that Cervantes’ proposal is beyond demarking the real and the imaginary. Don Quijote does not comply with the tenets of a good reader as set down by the ancient Greeks. He does not maintain the “aesthetic distance”¹² that is necessary to experience catharsis. But as a reader he fails on all the counts that Cervantes proposes.

He is certainly not “desocupado” while enjoying his own fiction. He is under a lot of duress as what he expects to happen does not happen. He has a set of ideas about a novel of knight errantry and the fiction he is witnessing does not comply with it. Or it could even be that whatever the book may be he expects it to behave like a novel of knight errantry.

“...no quiero suplicarte, letor carísimo, que perdones o disimules las faltas que en este mi hijo vieras, que ni eres su pariente ni su amigo...”.(I dont want to request you dear reader that you should pardon or overlook the faults that this son of mine has, after all you are neither his relative nor friend)¹³. Don *EL Quijote* the reader on the contrary does not accept the protagonist for who he is and is intent on reading someone else into him all the time. He cannot accept the personality that has been presented in the work of fiction.

“...tienes tu libre albedrío...”(you have your free space)¹⁴ says Cervantes to his reader. But Don Quijote is not ready to accept Sancho’s freedom as a reader so that he may enjoy the fiction being witnessed by both together, in his own way. “debajo de mi manto, al rey mato”(under my blanket I can even kill the king)¹⁵ Cervantes cannot make it more explicit that as a reader sancho has all the right that Don *EL Quijote* has to read and understand the work of fiction as he pleases. For Cervantes every reader is supreme and one reading cannot be better than another or one aesthetic experience cannot be better than another, some preconditions being that the reading should be free from social obligations and rules of behaviour.

READERS OF *El Quijote*

Azorín once said that “*EL Quijote* ni fue estimado ni comprendido por los contemporáneos de Cervantes”¹⁶. (El Quijote was neither appreciated nor understood by the contemporaries of Cervantes)¹⁷The fact is that it was considered with a certain ambiguity by the well known writers and critics of his times. Baltasar Gracian, the writer of the famous *Criticón*, prohibits the

⁷ Prologo page 12

⁸ Blasco, Javier calls Cervantes the Rare Inventor in *Cervantes: raro inventor*, Mexico, Universidad de Guanajuato, 1998

⁹ Close, Anthony. *La Concepción romántic del EL Quijote*, critica, 1978.

¹⁰ My translation

¹¹ Master peters playhouse *Don Quijote* book 2 CH 26-27

¹² Pant Preeti. “The Natyashastra and the Quijote on the understanding of fiction”, in *Quixotic Encounters*, Shipra Publications, Delhi, 2006, page38

¹³ My translation

¹⁴ My translation

¹⁵ My translation

¹⁶ “Cervantes y sus Coetáneos”, *Clásicos y modernos*, Renacimiento, Madrid, 1913, p.145

¹⁷ My translation

reading of *El Quijote* by wise men along with other symptoms of juvenile frivolity.¹⁸ The *El Quijote* was presented by Cervantes as a book that would “llevar al melancólico a risas” and its intent was always to make people happy and to make them laugh. But in its time comic fiction was charged as being frivolous and even morally dangerous. Therefore not only was *El Quijote* not included in literary studies of the age but was in fact denounced and discouraged as a poor and dangerous form of literature. Also it was not understood as a new form of writing a new genre but one that destroyed a pre-existing genre, that of the novelas de caballería. In fact if asked which genre *El Quijote* itself belonged to would in Spain at that time elicit a straight answer that it was a novella de caballería.

This much said we can understand that *El Quijote* was not a critically acclaimed book. It challenged the canons of good literature that were in vogue in renaissance Spain where classical values were encouraged in literature. But the fact remains that it was an immensely popular book that was widely read and enjoyed by all sections of society for what it was intended to be, “a comic-burlesque epic in prose”¹⁹.

Ted Riley observes, “hay escritores, hay críticos y hay escritores –críticos. Cervantes fue uno de estos últimos. No escribió ningún tratado o discurso sobre la poesía...ningún arte poético en verso...su obra literaria embebe un sustancioso compendio de teoría y crítica literaria: se encuentra en los diálogos entre los personajes y en las observaciones del narrador, sobre todo en *El Quijote*...”²⁰. (there are writers and there are critics and there are writer critics. Cervantes was one of the latter. He did not write any treatise or discourse on poetry...no poetic art in verse...his literary work imbibes a substantial compendium of literary theory and criticism: which is found in the dialogues between characters and in the observations of the narrator, above all in *El Quijote*...) ²¹

El Quijote is not only a caricature of the novelas de caballería, but also a very stinging critique of a lot of philosophers, theologians, writers and administrators of his time. The satire is not only in spirit but also in name. The names used are parodied versions of real names and people and most of the stories refer to real happenings or habitual happenings of his time. Therefore for the readers to rise above the obvious was not an option. They had to enjoy what had been presented to them laced with crisp humour and ingenuity. The comic element of *El Quijote* was dense enough to last a century or two in Spain.

The Foreign Readers of *El Quijote*

The popularity of *El Quijote* diminished with time. Being a satire on current societal situations its humour must have lost its referential sheen with passage of time and changing realities. But another important reason attributed to its loss of popularity in Spain was that its model was not replicated. In its initial days to encash upon its immense popularity there was an apocryphal sequel and as an attempt at jealous reclamation Cervantes wrote his own sequel. But gradually its importance on the popularity scene diminished with no imitative works following its example. Among other things what can be called as a serious reason would be the predominant conception of don Quijote “como figura ridícula, extravagante y estrafalaria, lo que favorece un tratamiento limitado y acartonado del tipo quijotesco, en vez de la perspectiva más compleja, equilibrada entre la ironía y la simpatía”.²²(a ridiculous, extravagant and grotesque figure who deserves a limited and caricatured quijoteque treatment in place of a more complex perspective of balance between irony and sympathy)²³

But *El Quijote* was far from being written off. As Close observes, “la lección que Cervantes dio a la posteridad fue la viabilidad potencial de una fórmula fecunda.”²⁴ (the lesson that Cervantes taught posterity was the viability of a fertile formula)²⁵ The very values for which Cervantes was criticised and his “nueva Comedia” was written off by his contemporaries like Luzán, Góngora, lope and Calderón and which he had defended in his prologue to the first *Quijote* already, came to be the dominant values in the literary scene in the 18th century France, England and Germany. While *El Quijote* in Spain was no longer being circulated, publishing activity of the same in France but more so in England became heightened with the turn of the century.

In France this was the period of “bon goût” or good taste and literary academicism. Writer philosophers like René Rapin, Huet and Saint-Évremond discovered that *El Quijote*, contrary to what the neo-classicists in Spain found it deficient for, complied with Aristotelian principles so much so that they were able to redefine and refine the definition of the “roman”. Roman was a name that existed in French and in German but not in Spanish and the Spaniards had to flounder to categorise the new comedy which did not fit into any of the formally nor informally existing genres in Spain. Évremond in fact asserted that this book was capable of showing us “un bon goût sur toutes choses”(good taste in everything).

But it was the enthusiasm of the English that actually revived the book even in Spain. Not only was there fervent translation activity but also imitative literary works established the importance of *El Quijote* in English literature. But what is most intriguing is that their enthusiasm was not restricted to discovering don *EL Quijote* in their own context but extended to recommissioning its publication in the original Spanish. Lord Carteret, an English aristocrat not only sponsored its London publication in Spanish but also got Gregorio Mayans and Siscar, the royal Spanish librarian, to write an introduction to this volume. This work came to be the most well documented, methodical and authentic study on Cervantes and his ouvres. This first critical edition became an instant hit and was translated immediately into English and French.

Towards the end of the 18th century *El Quijote* had found itself back into the favours of the Spanish literati. There were several detailed annotated critical volumes of publications and repeat editions of the work mentionable among them the one by the Royal

¹⁸ Cited by Close, Anthony from *Criticón* II,1, Evaristo Correa Calderon, vol 3, Espasa Calpe, Madrid, 1971, II, P.36

¹⁹ Close Anthony. *La concepción romántica del Quijote*, Crítica, Barcelona, 2005 p. 53

²⁰ Edición de instituto Cervantes dirigida por Rico. Riley, E.C.. “Cervantes : Teoría Literaria”

²¹ My translation

²² Close, Anthony p. 38

²³ My translation

²⁴ C,A p. 54

²⁵ My translation

Academy of Spanish of 1780 accompanied by “Analises del *Quijote*” by Vicente de los Rios. Also worthy of admiration is the edition by John Bowle, a parish priest of Idmiston, England who brought out six scholarly volumes after lifelong research and this without visiting Spain even once.

In England where most of the significant advances in the interpretation of the work were happening there was an obvious synchrony between literary theory and criticism about the work as well as the English novel writing of the period. The founder of the English comic novel, Henry Fielding, in his novel *Joseph Andrews*, expresses his debt to Cervantes’ *EL Quijote* and qualifies his novel to be “a comic-epic poem in prose” same as *El Quijote* (and as described by Cervantes himself). Voltaire, d’Alembert, Diderot, Fielding, Smollett, Hogarth, doctor Johnson, Goethe (Wilhelm Meister 1794), Jane Austen (Northanger Abbey).

The English reader of the period was very biased towards an aesthetics of laughter and satire. This was a time when a finer balance was being worked between the burlesque and the comic in literature. *El Quijote* became fundamental in establishing the comic as a benign pleasant and civilized option as opposed to the non verisimilar monstrous juxtapositioning of the burlesque.

It was a time when “se cultivaban y ridiculizaban a un tiempo el entusiasmo y la sensibilidad, *El Quijote* se prestaba fácilmente a ser interpretado como la caricatura última y universal de esas disposiciones anímicas”²⁶ (at the same time excitement and sensibility were being cultivated and ridiculed, *El Quijote* offered itself easily to interpretations as the ultimate caricature of these animated dispositions). The Germans brought in a fresh perspective to the reading of *El Quijote*. Their point of intrigue was the finely balanced combination of exaltation and irony that took the aesthetic experience to a transcendental level.

The German romantics of the 19th century did not express their ideas on Cervantes in formal texts of criticism but instead most reference to Cervantes or *El Quijote* or its readings thereof in French or English could be often seen in their conferences on history of European literature and treatise on Aesthetics in general. The predominant thought was that art was the biological product of concrete cultural conditions and peculiarities of a period and a nation. Hence for them an idea of Universal poetry and interconnecting relations leading to the one supreme idea was the ultimate.

What interested the Germans the most in the their reading of *El Quijote* were the immense possibilities that it offered for developing the genre of the roman or the modern novel. The ideas of alternating between aesthetic excitement and irony to bring out the spectrum of human emotions amidst the representation of a whole life and its corresponding age made *El Quijote* an important reading and vice versa.

The German translation of Tiek and Goethe’s novels like *Wilhelm Meister* and *Werther* marked German literature and Philosophy. In fact the translation by Tiek coincided with the German philosophical inquiries on the coincidences between the “dynamic creativity”²⁷ in nature and poetry by humans (art, philosophy and religion).

The preoccupation of German thought with the romantic conception that “art was a form of sublime and disinterested play that is the only solace in a life of utilitarian pursuits” was not a sudden appearance on the philosophical literary scene. Sir William Jones’ grammar of the Sanskrit language had opened a whole new world of enquiry for German thinkers hungering for “more paths to lead to the one”. The Schlegel brothers also honoured as the fathers of German romanticism, became the first professors of the Sanskrit language in Germany and the pioneers of studies in indology. Others to take up this line of enquiry in Germany were Schelling, Tiek, Jean Paul Richter and Goethe himself.

El Quijote In India

Sir William Jones (1746-1794) was an anglo-Welsh philologist who was appointed judge at the Supreme Court of Judicature at Fort William in Bengal. He was a polyglot and a scholar in grammar of several languages especially Sanskrit and Persian. He is better known in India as the founder of the Asiatic society. He set up the first school of translation in India to translate works from Indian languages and Persian. In his biography by Gallard Cannon, *The Life and Mind of Oriental Jones: Sir William Jones the father of Modern Linguistics*, we find the first mention of *El Quijote* being in India. Sir William Jones was convinced that all knowledge was to be ultimately found in India and therefore the direction of his studies was always to translate Indian works into English and not the reverse. Therefore we know that his library did have a copy of *El Quijote* but as the biographer observes...it must have served as tea time light reading.

Rise Of The Novel In India

But to his credit there is more than his ownership of the English translation of *El EL Quijote*. The policy of the East India Company in those days was to acquaint themselves better with the culture and language of the people they were ruling. Therefore under the direction of Sir William Jones the first school of translation was set up in Fort William Calcutta. The onus was of course on translating Indian works specially from Sanskrit and Persian into English. Whereby Jones came to propose his theory on Indo-European family of languages and became in a way the first modern linguist.

It was discovered that the genre of the “dastan” in Persian was quite similar to the chivalric genre, which in its stead had in a way metamorphed into the modern novel during this period in England. *El Quijote* having been the motor of change in Europe. In this indirect way we realise that the “dastan” came into favour owing to the interest of the English in the novel. Urdu had become the language of the north Indian literate class. As it was written in the Persian script, Persian literature was much available to the interested reader.

At the same time in Bengal a silent literary revolution was underway even before Bengal was to become the hub of anti establishment activity. The new emergent Bengali middle class was English educated and with personalities like William Jones around there was heated literary activity. The genre of the novel made its debut in Bengali.

²⁶ Close, Anthony, p. 35

²⁷ Close, Anthony. *La Concepción Romántica del Quijote*, Critica, Barcelona, 2005 p. 60-62.

The romantic conception of art as a form of divine play. Possibly a result of the influence of vedic literature on the German understanding of the divine.

The emergence of the genre of the modern novel in India was a direct result of the exposure to English reading by this new English educated ready to travel abroad middle class. *El Quijote* was the spirit behind it.

Fasana-e-azad (1880)

Pt. Ratan Nath Sharsar, was a Kashmiri by origin but well versed in Persian and Urdu like was the trend among the educated class those days, Persian having been the court language for long. He became the editor of the *Avadh Akbar* and published a series of interconnected stories in his newspaper by the title *Fasana -e -azad*. These appeared over a very prolonged period of time and were immensely successful among readers of Urdu. But it was only in 1880 that these were combined and published in the form of a book. Therefore the controversy regarding the claims that if it was or not the first modern novel in Urdu. Some later historians claim that Nazir Ahmeds *Miral-ul-arus* published in 1869 was the first Urdu modern novel. About *Fasaana -e- azad* a well know literary critic of the time sir Abdul Quadir has to say the following-

“the basic theme of the story is based on a “don Quixote”, the famous novel of the Spanish writer Cervantes. The hero of the novel to whom the name of Azad is given is a chivalrous knight errant, shaped after Don Quixote. Khoji the faithful attendant of Azad is an indianized model of Sancho Panza who accompanied Don Quixote on his adventures. We are told by Chakbast (Pt. Brij Narain Chakbast) that the idea of producing in Urdu a story on the lines of Don Quixote was suggested to Sarshar by his friend Pt. Tir Bhawan Nath who was himself a literary man by the nom-de-plume Hijr. This suggestion was accepted by Sarshar. The names of Azad and Khoji have become household words in every part of India where Urdu is read.”

In 1894 was published the Urdu translation of *El Quijote* by the name of *Khudai Fauzdaar*, loosely translated into English as (knight by holy decree or simply knight errant although Prof S.P.Ganguly has translated it as God Soldier). Riding on the success of his *Fasaana* he attempted the translation. But it is not know from which English translation it was attempted. It had measurable success as he was a writer of great merit.

Not much is known about Sharsar except what his contemporaries wrote about him especially Chakbast. Also much of his earlier work is not traceable. These two books though are available in print and digitalised versions. The *Fasaana -e- Azad* owed its success to the skill of the writer. Sir Abdul Quadir observes, “The hero and his attendant were both unusual personalities but the art of the writer has clothed them with reality so that the reader of the book regards them as living” p. 3. The Urdu writer who is also a claimant to the honour of being the first Urdu novelist, Suroor in an appreciation note sent to Sharsar and cited by Chakbast complements the writer, “You have used numerous idioms with great effect” (appreciation note sent by Suroor to pt. Ratan Nath as cited by Chakbast) in the book *Famous Urdu Poets* by Sir Abdul Quadir (1872-1950)

The *Fasaana* was later translated by Munshi Premchand the most celebrated novelist of hindi literature as *Azad Katha*.

But even more fascinating is the journey of the novel in Hindi. The genre of the dastan was much read before Sarshars *Fasaana* appeared. The *Fasaana e ajaib* by Mirza Rajab Ali Baig Suroor was a typical book of knight errantry full of fantastical and magical elements. This trend was done away with in the *Fasaana -e -azad*. Thereafter literature in Urdu only became more referential and real. But this was the time when the colonial powers were playing foul with the Indian intelligentsia. They by turns favoured muslims and Hindus to create a chasm deep enough between the people so that no serious threat to their supremacy could emerge. The Hindu educated class decided to do away with writing the language called Urdu, in Persian and instead do so in the Devanagiri Script used for Sanskrit.

Babu Devki Nandan Khatri did honours to this proposal by writing the first best seller in Hindi. *Chandrakanta Santati* in 1888. The book was also serialised and later compiled into a novel. It belongs to the detective sub genre although some would like to label it a fantasy of the likes of the dastan. But thanks to the grounding of the prose writing that Sarshar had already made trendy, the *Chandrakanta* tried to reason every flight of fantasy with traditional Indian science.

El Quijote was translated into Hindi much later in 1964 by Pt. Chavinath Pandey. This translation was published by the Sahitya Akademi and has all the 52 chapters of the first volume and had reeditions in '71 and '83 with a number of reprints. It was done from the English translation. In 2005 the only translation from the original Spanish was published by Dr. Vibha Maurya an accomplished hispanist from University of Delhi. This Hindi translation has been complimented with the only translation of the second part of *El Quijote* in 2015 by the same translator. It is an academic work with detailed analysis, footnotes and references.

El Quijote In Bengali

Bipin behari Chakraborty brought out the first Bengali translation of *El Quijote* in 1887. It was called *Adbut Digvijay*. Thereafter there were numerous attempts at translating *El Quijote* from English into Bengali. Almost all of these translations were either abridged versions or select translations. Dr. Kavita Punjabi observes that *El Quijote*, inspite of having had so many translations never caught the fancy of the Bengali reader. She points out that this could have been because the basic plot of *El Quijote* is a satire on chivalry whereas the dominant sentiment in Bengal at that time was of heightened passions of independence from colonial rule. The two were mutually contradictory and therefore the translations in an otherwise gluttonous Bengali readership did not do well.²⁸

There could be other reasons attributed to the relative coldness with which *El Quijote* was received in Bengali but even then it is noteworthy that not one but several attempts were made by different aficionados to translate *El Quijote*. The latest being one by Tarun Ghatak who claims to have done the translation from the original Spanish.

The other interesting aspect is that the genre of the novel first appeared in India in Bengali. *Durgeshnandini* (1965) by Bankim Chandra Chatterjee is upheld by many as the first modern novel in India. Although another Bengali novel *Karuna o phulmonir bibaran* (1952) predates it. But *Durgeshnandini* is not a Quijotesque book. It is a historical fiction of love, romance and vengeance.

El Quijote in Marathi and the Marathi novel

²⁸ Punjabi, Kavita. “The Non Reception of Don Quijote in 19th century Bengal”, in Ed. Ganguly, S.P. *Quijotic encounters*, Shipra Publications, Delhi, 2006

The first translation of *El Quijote* into Marathi appears to be *Don Quixote* by D.N. Shikhare and published by Sahitya Ani Mandal in 1896. This detail has been found on the digital library of India website where a photo of the cover page of the book has been uploaded. Although till recently experts were of the view that *El Quijote* in Marathi was first translated in 1925. It was an abridged version by Krishnaji Narayan Athlyi, Phankade Tarvar Bahadar published by Vishvanath Ganaesh Ani Madali²⁹. Later in 1944 in a collection called Paschatya Wangmay Parichay (Introduction to Western Literature) published by Keshav Bhikaji Dhavale, an abridged form by Shikhare of *El Quijote* as Don Quixote was also included. "The purpose of the collection was to introduce young readers to good literature".³⁰ But more interesting than the translations is an apocryphal *El Quijote* by GA Kulkarni, Yatrik (the pilgrim)³¹. The story has been loosely translated into English and included in the article by Dengele on the Marathi reception of *El Quijote*.

***El Quijote* in other Indian languages**

El Quijote has been translated to several other Indian languages like Oriya, Gujrati, Assamese, Tamil, Kanada, Malyalam and maybe others. Ganguly has managed to get together information on the several of these translations, their dates of publication, publisher and length of translation³². He observes that most translational activity happened between 1952 and 1964. But unfortunately some of these translations are untraceable. Most of them are abridged versions or select translations and many are extremely short versions. But on the other hand there are some of them like the Marathi and Oriya short versions are easily available for a very less price at book stores while the Malyalam, Hindi and Kannada translations are available online³³.

The Sahitya Akademi and Translations Of *El Quijote*

The Sahitya Akademi of India has played an important role in the publication of complete and annotated translations of *El Quijote* into Indian languages. The first translation to be published by the Akademi was the Hindi translation by PT. Chavinath Pandey. The second translation was the Gujrati translation which was based on the Hindi translation by Pandey and was interestingly titled *Don Quijote* as the original Spanish name was. This translation was commissioned by the UNESCO. The third translation where the Akademi came into play was the 2005 translation into Malyalam by Fr. Thomas Nadakkal, published by Carmel International Publishing House. This translation was awarded the Kerala Sahitya Akademi Award for translation in 2007.

Existing Studies On The Reception Of *El Quijote* In India: Cervantism In India

Cervantes was first introduced in India in the English language probably by Sir William Jones. But Cervantism or studies on Cervantes and his works has happened only recently. Most English readers and companions to English literature include the name of Cervantes or his iconic book *El Quijote* with fleeting reference to its influence on English literature during the period of romanticism. Most readers of English literature are aware of Cervantes and *El Quijote* but may not have read the book. In most of the reputed departments of English and comparative literature in India be it Punjab University Chandigarh, University of Delhi (in the masters program it forms a part of the course on European comedy), Stella Maris college, University of Madras, Jadhavpur University, Bengal, Presidency college Kolkata, Calicut University Kozhikode and most others, *El Quijote* is not a part of the current curriculum.

An excerpt of *El Quijote* formed a part of the Spanish reader in Jesus and Mary College, University of Delhi for some time. In the Centre for Spanish, Portuguese and Latin American Studies at the Jawaharlal Nehru University *El Quijote* is included in suggested reading in the course on golden age literature but there is no specific course on the matter. In other Universities and colleges where Spanish is taught the absence of *El Quijote* is palpable.

Most of the English books prescribed by the standard boards of school education in India CBSE, ICSE, IB, Tamil Nadu Board, UP Board do not have excerpts from *El Quijote* in their English or other language readers.

In 2005 to commemorate 500 years of the publication of *El Quijote* an international conference was organised by the CPILAS JNU and then later by the University of Delhi, Department of Germanic and Romance Studies followed by another international conference by the CSPILAS JNU in 2013 on the *Exemplary Novels of Cervantes*. In 2006 the first detailed academic work on the reception of *El Quijote* in India was released, "*Quixotic Encounters: Indian Response to the Knight From Spain*" edited by Shyama Prasad Ganguly, Published by Shipra Publications, New Delhi. This book had research articles and personal experiences of eminent academicians of Punjabi, Bengali, Marathi, Sanskrit, Kashmiri, Hindi, Tamil and Gujrati literatures. It was a pioneering work on the reception of *El Quijote* in India and opened up several lines of enquiry in a field hitherto unexplored. What became apparent was that although *El Quijote* did not form a part of the Indian education curricula there were zealous readers of *El Quijote* and passionate translators in many languages of the country.

Prof. Ganguly has continued in his exploration of *El Quijote* in India but specifically in Bengali. He has traced several of the translations that were initially made and has written several articles and research papers on the same in English, Spanish and Bengali.³⁴

Conclusion

The *Quijote* is a "rare invention" as Ted Riley had remarked and the description has been aptly used for the book and its creator several times ever since. It is open to all kinds of readings and its own creator has so willed it to be. But a text is never the exclusive domain of the creator. It has to leave the nest and brave the wild world of readership where there are critics, admirers

²⁹ Ganguly, SP. *El Quijote in India: Some Cultural Considerations*, p. 59

³⁰ Dengele, Rajendra. Marathi Literatures' Response to Cervantes' Don Quixote. *Quixotic Encounters*. P. 82

³¹ Deshpande, DV. GAenchya Katha: Ek Anwayarta, Mauj, Mumbai, 1990, p. 60-70. As cited by Dengele in *Quixotic encounters*

³² Ganguly. *Quixotic encounters*. p 59 and 68

³³ Pillai, MP Chandrashekar. Don Quixote (abridged Malyalam Edition). DC Books. 2010 This book has not been included by Ganguly in his list as it was published at a later date.

³⁴

and discontent readers. Depending on the time place and corresponding reality its readers and critics approached it differently. In Spain while the sarcasm corresponded to the social reality it was the predominant approach to appreciating the novel. When the sarcasm lost its sheen there were other traits of the *Quijote* that took over the interest of the reader. In France while it helped raise the bar of humour in England it propelled the very engines of romanticism. In India, where the sarcasm was still relevant it again dominated the reception as in case of the Urdu translation and adaptation. In most of the complete translations the literary approach of contemporary European literature holds sway over the motives of the translator. Meanwhile its popularity as childrens literature in most of the abridged versions again brings to light the comic and humour element of the narrative.

There is therefore no one way of approaching the *Quijote*. A study of the reception of the *Quijote* brings forth the ultimate philosophical truth about the making of meaning. There is no one meaning. There can be no right way of reading the *Quijote*. What is relevant to a reader is what catches his attention. The magic lies in the perfect narrative. Cervantes wished that his creation should appeal to all manner of readers and so be it. The book has not only survived centuries but also has shown itself open to all kinds of readings and approaches. It is a beautifully balanced dish of many techniques of creation, history of literature, theories of literature and philosophy.

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