

## Translated Worlds: Passages, Journeys, and Returns<sup>1</sup>

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### I Passages

Our introduction takes its title from Chelva Kanaganayakam's unpublished essay, "Passages, Journeys, and Returns: A Poetics for South Asian Travel Writing," that was presented first as a talk at the University of Delhi in 2007. In it, Chelva makes an interesting move that only a scholar with his special expertise could; he argues:

In general terms, it has been maintained that the genre of travel writing belongs largely to the West, although the notion of a journey is equally prevalent elsewhere. ... Certainly literary histories in India do not often draw attention to this genre, and while there is considerable evidence to the constant movement with India and to neighbouring lands, the genre itself has not flourished. At the same time, it is possible to see in the creative literature constant references to travel, both literal and mythical. The two epics—the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana*—are themselves about travel and about exile. To shift for a moment to literary history in Tamil, there is evidence, even in the earliest Cankam poetry (circa 1 – 3 CE), of the need to move to other landscapes, and the anguish associated with such movements ... (3)

For those aware of Chelva's erudition, the three-pronged move he makes in this passage—from western/ized modes of travel writing whose impact can be seen on postcolonial diasporic writing, to older modes of travel tales such as those found in the two great Hindu epics, to the ways in which travel as a concept animates a different body of ancient writing, Tamil Cankam poetry—directs us to the temporal and spatial sweeps that mark the best of Chelva's writings. As a Professor of postcolonial literatures at the University of Toronto, Chelva shaped his pedagogy around the courses he taught in world Anglophone literatures: survey courses in postcolonial studies, and at the graduate levels, where there was more latitude, specialized courses in South Asian studies, Sri Lankan literature, and the interrelationship of myth and literature in postcolonial writings, among others. What made Chelva's course offerings distinctive was the manner in which students were introduced to new and old texts in complex ways, and to a panoply of names, exciting and unfamiliar: Rienzi Crusz (Canadian/Sri Lankan Burgher), Zulfikar Ghose (Canadian/Pakistani), Suniti Namjoshi (Canadian/Indian), Manil Suri (American/Indian), Ernest Macintyre (Sri Lankan), R. Cheran (Canadian/Sri Lankan), and A. Sivanandan (Sri Lankan/British), among many others. In these courses,

students were also reintroduced in novel ways to canonical writers such as R.K. Narayan, Mulk Raj Anand, Salman Rushdie, Anita Desai, and Attia Hossein, to name a few. “Postcolonialism” courses often end up taking a sampler approach in Western academic settings but Chelva’s syllabi produced inventive and creative interrelationships between the canonical and the new, enabling his students to forge a nuanced understanding of South Asian literatures. This kind of pedagogy both enabled and was, in its own turn, impelled by his wide-ranging scholarship and his deep interest in classical traditions of the narrative and the poetic.

Chelva’s first book, *Structures of Negation: The Writings of Zulfikar Ghose*, emerged from his doctoral work at the University of British Columbia (1981–85) and was published by the University of Toronto Press in 1993. More monographs followed in subsequent years: *Configurations of Exile: South Asian Writers and their World* (TSAR, 1995), *Dark Antonyms and Paradise: The Poetry of Riezi Crusz* (TSAR, 1997), *Counterrealism and Indo-Anglian Fiction* (Wilfrid Laurier UP, 2002), and *Nedunalvada: A Collection of Essays in Tamil* (Kalachuvadu, 2010). In these years, Chelva also edited several books, which included the much-acclaimed *Lutesong and Lament: Tamil Writing from Sri Lanka* (TSAR, 2001), *Moveable Margins: The Shifting Spaces of Canadian Literature* (TSAR, 2005), and *Arbiters of a National Imaginary: Essays on Sri Lanka* (International Centre for Ethnic Studies, Colombo, 2008), *Uprooting the Pumpkin Selections from Sri Lankan Tamil Literature, 1950-2012* (Oxford University Press, forthcoming), among others. At the time of his death, Chelva was working on an ambitious project, *A Literary History of South Asian Writing*, contracted with Cambridge University Press, and one can only hope that the manuscript will some day soon be published. Numerous articles in various national and international peer-reviewed journals as well as several conference papers, plenary and keynote addresses delivered at international universities and seminars reflected and cemented Chelva’s place in South Asian studies as a leading thinker of the field. His Directorship of the Centre for South Asian Studies at the Munk Centre of the University of Toronto also allowed Chelva to strengthen the University’s ties with other agencies and institutes for the promotion of South Asian literatures and arts.

As a scholar in postcolonial studies, Chelva constantly tested the limits of the field: through the exploration of such concepts as counter-realism, the pastoral, and utopia, Chelva’s work examined those numerous ways in which the field itself battles the paradoxes that emerge from colonial legacy, Eurocentric theorizing, and global diversity. The many disjunctions between a life in Colombo and one in Toronto provided Chelva with an abiding interest in the rural as a category of thought. Such ex-centric foci actualized much of his postcolonial work where he could, with lucidity and vision, claim, as he did in his book *Counterrealism*, that a literary history of the Indian subcontinent based on form—rather than content—could create useful and rewarding connections between more established models of

realism that were tied strongly to anticolonial politics and the newer examples of experimental writing that emerged in the post-1947 period. To claim two distinctive traditions, Chelva argues, “is not to endorse that writers always belonged to one or the other, or that these were mutually exclusive...” (15). By drawing on West Indian critic Wilson Harris’ idea of “novels of consolidation”, Chelva suggests that the paradoxes between realism and experimentalism, English and vernacular writers, and “ancient” and “modern” are what make the literary mode so dynamic, immediate, and relevant. Chelva reminds us that no understanding of subcontinental literary history would be complete without a nuanced examination of the multiple sources from which Indian and other literatures *have* drawn from Western literatures in general. In all his work, Chelva insisted on the uniqueness and indigeneity of the Indo-Anglian tradition (choosing a deliberately older way of referring to Indian writing in English) but his critical interest remained in seeing those interlocking moments of contact within and without, through which one could explore such concepts as syncretism, synthesis, and multiplicity.

For postcolonial studies, Chelva’s research, over many decades, provided crucial readings of Sri Lankan literatures that served as correctives to the general bias in the field in favour of Anglophone and Indian literatures. Although Chelva wrote widely on Indian literatures, his contributions on Sri Lankan writings helped create within Canada a platform for Sri Lankan literature in general and Tamil literary traditions in particular. As a translator of Tamil poetry, Chelva showed great facility with vernacular traditions in the subcontinent, making him a truly versatile interdisciplinary scholar—and this, long before multidisciplinary or interdisciplinarity became rewarding official projects in Canadian academia.

The strong presence of the Sri Lankan diaspora in Canada, especially during the turbulent years of the rise of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in Sri Lanka and the increasingly violent war of attrition with the Government of Sri Lanka, remains an important social context to understand the value of Chelva’s translations of Tamil poetry (both ancient and modern) and his Directorship of the Centre for South Asian Studies (CSAS) in Toronto. In an obituary published in November 2014 in *The Island*, the Sri Lankan national daily, Anupama Mohan describes Chelva’s work in the first decade of this century, when the offensive against the LTTE was at its peak in Sri Lanka and Tamil diasporas across the world were being mobilized in overt and covert ways to support the cause back home, as exemplifying the best in the tradition of the *parrhesiastes*. It is an insight that is underscored by the kind of work Chelva did between 1995 and 2005 where, through his translations of Tamil poetry, as well as the many scholarly and extra-mural projects that he supported as Director of CSAS, he showed his commitment to dialogue and understanding. He was a founding member in 2001 of the Tamil Literary Garden, a non-profit organization committed to the promotion of studies and literary activities in Tamil, both nationally and internationally, and a founding member in 2006 of the annual Toronto Tamil Studies Conference at

the University of Toronto, now the largest conference of its kind in North America. Under his aegis, the University of Toronto awarded the Acharya Sushil Kumar International Peace Prize in 2006 to Dr. A.T. Ariyaratne, the Sinhalese founder and president of the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement in Sri Lanka, and in his felicitation ceremony, Chelva, with a political courage rare for the time, took the opportunity to state publicly his commitment to scholarship sans boundaries and his firm opposition to narrowly imagined nationalisms.

As we write this introductory section, we are struck by the unspoken consonances between Chelva's research and the tightrope walking he often had to do as a Sri Lankan Tamil Canadian public intellectual and academic in Toronto. When Michael Ondaatje's *Anil's Ghost* was published in 2000, it quickly climbed to the top of the literary charts in Canada, but in Sri Lanka, as well as among some Sri Lankan-Canadian academics and critics, the reception was far more muted. As the novel picked up various awards in mainstream Canada, a groundswell of opposition emerged and provided the context for one of Chelva's sharpest pieces of criticism: "In Defence of *Anil's Ghost*" published in *ARIEL* in 2006. As he does in his essay/talk "Passages," which we publish for the first time in this issue of *Postcolonial Text*, Chelva provides a magisterial survey of the stakes involved in the reception of *Anil's Ghost* and then goes on to convey what the divergent critical receptions of praise and criticism tell us about "critical practice, readership, and the literary marketplace" (6). While contextualizing the novel's differing appraisals in the West and the East (heuristically speaking, as it were), Chelva argues: "[c]ritical practice might well occupy oppositional stances, but the text itself demonstrates the need for a productive middle ground. *Anil's Ghost* enacts a realization that the personal, the political, and the social are intertwined in ways that problematize clear ethnic, religious, or ideological categories" (16).

In pursuing this objective, Chelva's essay uses *Anil's Ghost* to construct an orbital field centering on terms crucial to postcolonial and cultural studies in general: referentiality, authenticity, accuracy, Orientalism, essentialism, literariness, and realism. The essay's title is borrowed, of course, from English poets Philip Sidney and Percy Bysshe Shelley, whose own "defences" provide Chelva with a comparatist project of criticism across time and culture: between reading and interpretive practices in the West and the East; between readerly expectations of the novel; between the novel *qua* Fredric Jameson's social allegory and as aesthetic product; between politics and art; and between the constructions of political engagement and writerly distance. Citing critics who have seen the novel, differently and mutually exclusively, as pro-Sinhalese, pro-Tamil, and pro-nothing, Chelva's essay focuses instead on the ways in which the novel's framing and play with different narratorial voices posit certain "shadow texts" that "the author chooses not to write" (15). The sensitivity to the ways in which the text contradicts Ondaatje's political project of representing contemporary Sri Lanka becomes in Chelva's reading a rewarding process for understanding how as readers

and critics, we must be wary of reducing texts to purely ideological (by-)products. He argues that

[a] culturally and politically sensitive reading fills the gaps, identifies connections that are made or deliberately suppressed, but in no way ignores the artifice of the novel. It is possible to look for and celebrate books that offer a strong and unequivocal message. And if we look hard enough we are likely to find one whose subjective position coincides with our own. But such texts do not test the limits of language, they do not reveal the struggle of the author to embellish the everyday with invention, they do not challenge the critic to question his or her own biases, and often, they do not endure. Responsible critics play a crucial role in positioning texts, for only they would know where realism ends and artifice begins. The critic's task, then, is to distinguish between realism and artifice in order to elucidate their functions rather than conflate them. (19)

In a quip quite characteristic of Chelva's laconic humour, he writes:

For the critic who brings to the novel a complex historical consciousness, the challenge is to grant the text its autonomy, to appraise the novel within the terms it sets out for itself rather than from a position that reflects the critic's own subjective stance. Surely, the postcolonial critic should not wish to colonize the postcolonial novel. (20)

The essay shifts the very ground of divergent critical receptions by reflecting on the processes that make such receptions possible and by reasserting the autonomy of the literary text and the mechanisms by means of which Ondaatje tackles the traditional opposition between political engagement and aesthetic transformation. This is a theme that is central to a range of postcolonial works that have emerged in the last five decades, which have, in numerous formal and textual ways, contended that westernism has passed for far too long as humanism. The ideological aporias that cleave the postcolonial critic from the postcolonial text are themselves reactions to that complex history of pressures and counterpressures that colonialism has exacted upon large swathes of humanity across the world. Chelva ends his essay on Ondaatje's novel by recalling Edward Said's words on a humanism that can be "cathartic." Said writes: "humanism is the only, and I would go so far as to say, the final resistance we have against the inhuman practices and injustices that disfigure human history" (23). It is a position that Chelva endorsed all his life, through his scholarship, mentorship, and creative endeavours. His is a voice we shall all profoundly miss.

## II Journeys

Having worked closely with Chelva and learned from him over the years, we know that his guiding voice and gentle presence remain with us. *Translated Worlds: History, Diaspora, South Asia* thus invokes the title of Chelva's last book *In Our Translated World: Contemporary Global Tamil Poetry* (TSAR, 2013), which in turn invokes the famous German poet, Rainer Maria Rilke, who in his *Duino Elegies* writes: "we're not comfortably at home/in our translated world" (*In Our*

*Translated World* 15). By framing this special issue through the multiple layers of intertextuality that actualize “translation” as praxis, we hope to emphasize translation itself as a form of theorizing cultures and historical processes. Considering translation as a “mode of encountering the other” (Ahmed 147) necessitates distancing ourselves from the notion of the originary to begin with, because even the relatively ‘untranslated,’ ‘untranslatable’ or ‘original’ may act as translation, given the cultural context within which it is used. As Chelva wrote in his essay “Pedagogy and Postcolonial Literature” more than a decade ago, any literature taught in a classroom can be said to be translated in that “the classroom is a site of translation”: of different cultures, ideologies, and worldviews (731).

This special issue pays heed to Chelva’s pedagogical directive and places emphasis on the sociality, politics, aesthetics, and ethics of living and learning in translation. It brings together a wide array of scholarly and creative work across genres, including drama, poetry, and novels, and across geographic locales, ranging from Sri Lanka, India, Pakistan, Trinidad, and Canada to diasporic South and Southeast Asia. It showcases the work of established and emerging scholars, many of whom share a personal connection to Chelva.

The first part of *Translated Worlds: History, Diaspora, South Asia* is organized around the trope of “journeys”—spatial, temporal, and ideological. It includes scholarly contributions on South Asian travel writing and on the politics and aesthetics of translations through which other histories, pasts, and forgotten stories travel within and beyond South Asia. In recognition of Chelva’s seminal role as a translator of Tamil poetry into English, this section also includes an interview with Chelva, Cheran’s reflections on translating cultures and histories, and English translations of Tamil poems.

It is a great privilege to begin this tribute issue by bringing into circulation Chelva’s “Passages, Journeys and Returns: A Poetics for South Asian Travel Writing”—the text of a plenary address that Chelva delivered at an international conference on travel literature and India at the University of Delhi in 2007. Offering compelling connections between western/ized modes of travel writing, postcolonial diasporic writing, and ancient texts such as the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* as well as Tamil Cankam poetry, this essay on travel writing allows Chelva to bring to the fore his interest in the novel, in Tamil literary culture, and in South Asia and its diaspora. Chelva draws attention to a corpus of “broad and unwieldy” writing from and about India and South Asia that form the corpus of travel literature about South Asia: those who migrated centuries ago from India to, say, Sri Lanka; those who left during British rule for various parts of the world, including the Caribbean; post-1960s migrants to Britain and North America, those migrants who returned (such as Vikram Seth), and those like R.K. Narayan who did not leave India but travelled to other places. With his familiar erudition and conversational style of writing, pointing to the dominance of English-language texts, Chelva calls for critical engagement with writings in languages other than English. In the same vein, he makes a case for looking beyond

diasporic novels to view individual testimonies and press statements, among other texts, as part of the living archive of travel writings.

In the essay that follows, Clara Joseph responds to Chelva's urging to take into account vernacular writings on travel. "In the Face of a Translation: Power, Pedagogy, and Transformation" introduces readers to the first travelogue of India, *The Varthamanappusthakam*—a little-known Christian text written in the Malayalam language. Joseph argues that this text, by presenting a little known story of colonialism—the history of a community of Indian Christians who precede the era of European colonization and put into words their resentment of their treatment at the hands of European Christians—troubles the dominant scholarly tradition in English of seeing colonialism as a Christianizing mission, which has worked to suppress or exclude narratives of Eastern Christianity, what Joseph characterizes as "a native religion of a minority community." Drawing upon Emmanuel Levinas in particular, Joseph examines the transformative and regenerative power of including translations like *The Varthamanappusthakam*, which are *not* like the text of the Self in the educational curriculum of the West. Inspired by Chelva's writings, she argues that *The Varthamanappusthakam* can become an invitation, as a culturally different text, "to look up to the face of the other".

In "Notes on a Postcolonial Sri Lankan Tamil Diasporic Aesthetic: Reading Cheran Rudhramoorthy's Poetry", Vasugi Kailasam explores the place of aesthetic form in postcolonial literature and examines the impact of migration on the formation of modern, postcolonial Tamil subjectivities through a close reading of poems by Sri Lankan Canadian Tamil poet R. Cheran. She grounds her analysis in two of Cheran's recently translated poetry collections, *The Second Sunrise* (trans. Lakshmi Holmstrom and Sascha Ebeling, 2012) and *You Will Not Turn Away* (trans. Chelva Kanaganayakam, 2012). Kailasam argues that Cheran's later poetry, shaped by his Canadian diasporic experience, allows for the emergence of a new Tamil poetic grammar and aesthetic form. One aspect of this grammar is the migrant, poetic aesthetic that repositions the landscapes of Canada and Sri Lanka and thereby unsettles the creation of togetherness or community as a necessary prerequisite of the diasporic experience. The other is Cheran's extension and re-imagination of an available Tamil literary heritage that signals to the idea of the postnational through aesthetic form, offering a vocabulary of reconciliation for war-torn Sri Lanka.

The final section of the first issue, "On Translating," ends with Aparna Halpé's 2011 interview with Chelva on his myriad translation projects and a poet's reflection on the translator's emotional labor in translating difficult histories, memories, and experiences. In "Whither Translation?" we see that Chelva's "real concern that Sri Lankan Tamil literature ... be known to non-Tamil readers both within the country and outside" resulted in his first translation project, and others soon followed. As Chelva talks about the urgency of bilingual translation into Tamil or Sinhala rather than into English (which, he reminds us, has been the dominant mode), we see his keen awareness

of the specificity of the Sri Lankan socio-political context and his belief that literature can play an important role in mediating reconciliation in post-war Sri Lanka. This interview is placed in conjunction with acclaimed Sri Lankan-Canadian Tamil poet R. Cheran's reflection "On Death, Exile and Translatability." Placing the interview alongside Cheran's compelling reflections on writing poems of traumatic pasts, violence, loss, and grief and the effects on his close friend, collaborator, and translator, Chelva Kanaganayakam, makes this cluster particularly poignant. Cheran ruminates on the difficulties of a poet seeking to give form to atrocity, to describe unimaginable violence and counter accepted states of normalized terror. Cheran's struggle is replicated in the work of the translator who seeks to bring into circulation "difficult" histories and memories. Is translation also an act of "catharsis" as the translator attempts "to live through the experience of that poet"? How does trauma travel to the translator, and, perhaps, to the empathetic reader? How do we, as readers, accept this difficult "gift", this trying inheritance, and live as if other lives *also* matter? (Simon 1-9).

In a tribute to Chelva's abiding interest in poetry, the creative section that completes this first issue comprises three poems that illuminate how poetry mediates the translation of cultures and histories in terms of travel across temporalities and spaces. It begins with Geetha Sukumaran's English translation of Tamil poet P. Ahilan's poems. Sukumaran offers us two poems from *Elegies* representing the intersections of the personal and the collective trauma of war: "A Mother's Words" and "Him and Her." Pireeni Sundaralingam's poem "Times Two," which follows, is based on reports on Sri Lanka from *The New York Times* and *The London Times*. The poem chillingly juxtaposes the lives of refugees in camps against those of vacationers in contemporary Sri Lanka, alerting us to the ongoing effects of war on the island's populations and landscapes. In the final poem, "From Here to There," Alpana Sharma offers us multiple images of bodies moving from one place to another carrying with them their memories. Evoking the voyage on the "kala pani" (literally, black water) and the Hindu taboo, so dominant in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, against losing one's religion when one travelled overseas, the poet wonders about contemporary travel as we fly on planes looking down at "specks of land and sea" while crossing national borders. But, once borders have been crossed, "here" becomes "there"—an originary site endlessly reworked by memory and nostalgia, and a resting place for ancestral ashes.

### III Returns

The scholarly and creative texts collected in the second issue of *Translated Worlds* reflect Chelva's geographical focus on South and Southeast Asia in his scholarship, as well as his wide-ranging research and teaching interests in postcolonial studies, diasporic writings, and aesthetics. The scholarly essays in this issue return to an analysis of



familiar issues around British colonialism and postcolonial writing and to critical historical events and their aftermath. Such a turn to old issues also produces new and provocative insights on postcolonial fiction and drama. As scholars engage with myriad colonial legacies, important reflections on living and learning in translation emerge as the lived reality in the present.

Nisha Eswaran's "A Shared Burden: Reading Chaos and/as Utopia in Amitav Ghosh's *Sea of Poppies*" considers the possibility that collectivity across racial, national, caste, and religious difference is a viable mode of resistance to and within the colonial encounter. Through an analysis of Amitav Ghosh's historical novel, Eswaran traces how the formation of a collectivity across differences—of experiences, identities, and histories—has the potential to offer an alternative to a contemporary anticolonial politics rooted in identity politics and characterized by rigid notions of difference between the Self and the Other. Bringing antiracist and postcolonial scholarship into conversation with queer theory—José Muñoz's conceptualization of "utopia" and Jack Halberstam's theorization of "the wild"—Eswaran reads the *Ibis* as a "wild" space wherein the once incommunicable and untranslatable traumatic and violent experiences of individual passengers become the "shared burden" of all (Ghosh 299), causing it to emerge, then, as a site of meaningful political collectivity in the struggle for a better world.

Kaustav Bakshi's essay "*Funny Boy* and the Pleasure of Breaking Rules: Bending Genre and Gender in 'The Best School of All'" focuses exclusively on "The Best School of All," which is the fifth of the six stories that constitute Shyam Selvadurai's critically acclaimed novel *Funny Boy*. Situating "The Best School of All" in the tradition of the generic British school story, Bakshi demonstrates how Selvadurai engages in genre-bending by interpolating the predominantly masculinist genre of the British school story in a queer narrative. Bakshi delineates in careful detail how the story confronts the colonial system of values, including compulsory heterosexuality, which is perpetuated through the ideological itineraries of educational institutions and the ethnocentric nationalisms of the postcolonial nation. Selvadurai's "translating" or remaking of the English school story in "The Best School," according to Bakshi, invests the genre with a disruptive potential unknown to its original form.

In "Lamenting a Lost Cultural Imaginary: Lahore and Amritsar in Manju Kapur's *Difficult Daughters*" Rajender Kaur examines how Manju Kapur's award-winning novel renders the psycho-geography of the Punjab anchored by the twin cities of Amritsar and Lahore that once constituted the heart of a vibrant syncretic Punjabi cultural identity. While Lahore has continued to flourish as the provincial capital of Punjab in Pakistan, Amritsar, situated thirty miles away and traumatically severed from Lahore by the Partition of India in 1947, seems to have dwindled into a second-tier city, its importance overshadowed by the declaration of Chandigarh as capital city of a now much-truncated Punjab. In the context of its pre-colonial grandeur, colonial remaking, and post-independence status as border

city, Kaur reads in the novel's nostalgic representation of Lahore as a cosmopolitan literary city as opposed to Amritsar, cloistered with the weight of custom and tradition, a lament for a composite Punjabi culture that was ruptured irreparably by Partition. By focusing on a female subjectivity fractured by the contradictions of gender and modernity, Kaur demonstrates with poignancy how the Partition did not merely sunder families and communities, but also marked whole cities and the experiential trajectories of their evolution.

Critiquing the Indian novel in English as the privileged genre for analysis within postcolonial literary studies, Nandi Bhatia points to the marginalization of Indian English drama in critical debates about the place of English in Indian literatures in her essay "Provincializing English, Globalizing Indian English Drama." Bhatia notes that Indian English drama is considered unsuitable for the dramatic representation of local and regional issues, and that it is rarely translated into indigenous languages. Yet it is the English language that facilitates this drama's international mobility and presence, as in the case of Mahesh Dattani's plays, which have enjoyed critical acclaim abroad because they were written in English. Bhatia examines this contradiction by referencing Dattani's play *Seven Steps Around the Fire*, the first full-length play about *hijras* (recognized under the category of "third gender" through a Supreme Court of India ruling in 2014). She reflects on the ability of the play to facilitate a global dialogue about socially marginalized groups such as the *hijra*, as opposed to the play's performance in India where the English language limits the play to a middle-class English-speaking audience.

The final essay "The Trinidadian *deewani*: Longing and Belonging in Peggy Mohan's *Jahajin*" circles back to Chelva's plenary address "Passages, Journeys, and Returns" that begins this special issue, where Chelva asks us to "adopt a comparative mode that jettisons the artificial boundaries of languages." Framing her reading of *Jahajin* around poems of Kedarnath Singh, a noted Hindi poet who belongs to the Eastern Uttar Pradesh-Bihar belt from where most indentured labourers made their journeys to the sugar estates in Trinidad, Nivedita Misra's essay foregrounds a South-South global relation as opposed to the dominant East-West paradigm. Misra demonstrates how both Singh's poems and Mohan's novel link the loss of memories to the loss of the Bhojpuri language. Intriguingly, the narrator of the story is a translator, whose doctoral project involves recording the trials and tribulations of the earlier generations of indentured women in Bhojpuri to produce a history of indenture, and this research gets her a travel grant to visit India for the first time. Translation emerges in Misra's reading as a mode of engaging the past, present, and future. The narrator's lively reading of the Saranga kheesa and translation of the tale of Saranga from Bhojpuri into English provides the living connection to India.

The creative section of this issue comprises a poem, two short stories, and an excerpt from a novel. It showcases the work of some new and emerging creative artists. Anupama Mohan's short story "*Murgh-e-qibla numa* (The Weather Cock)" charts the painful rite by

which childhood transforms into worldliness in the life of a young Indian boy who misses his loving father, a migrant working in faraway Bombay. In his poem, award-winning writer Siddhartha Gigoo presents us with “The Tourist,” about a girl returning from the land of her birth, where she goes as a tourist, to the place where she lives in exile, carrying with her “A tattered bag,/ full of stories and songs” woven by her ancestors. Petamber Persaud’s “Indenture” provides us with a glimpse of his in-progress novel *Overtures*. Set in 1838, a volatile period in the history of the colony when enslaved Africans were freed and Indians indentured from India came to fill the need for a labour force, this historical fiction is the first attempt to portray the immediate post-Emancipation-cum-Arrival days. It delineates relations between Africans and Indians in Guyana by conveying the nuances of sensing the other’s presence and remembering faraway lands. Souvankham Thammavongsa’s “Chick-a Chee” is a story about translation and the ways in which it can fail us. It portrays with tender humour how North American Halloween rituals are transformed by immigrant families in ways that point to the limits of translation as a cultural act.

We hope that the scholarly and creative pieces carefully curated in this double issue will animate conversations in the fields of translation studies, postcolonial studies, Tamil poetry, South Asian and Southeast Asian literatures, and South Asian diaspora. Chelva’s lifelong interest in the potentialities of the literary over and above the circumscriptions of the ideological provides the *anima* for this issue, where we have tried to create the kinds of intersections and consonances that come alive when we bring diversities into dialogue. At the same time, we make a call, as Chelva did through his undying love of narrative and the poetic, for the need, in these trying times, to re-awaken our enchantment with literature and the other arts.

## Notes

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