

***A Beginner's Guide to Translation* by Santosh Alex, New Delhi: Authors press, ASIN: B08QZ563YD, 2020, Price- INR 295/ \$25, pages-102.**

Reviewed by Anand K,  
Assistant Professor (English)  
Rajagiri College of Social Sciences, Kerala.  
Email: [anand@rajagiri.edu](mailto:anand@rajagiri.edu)

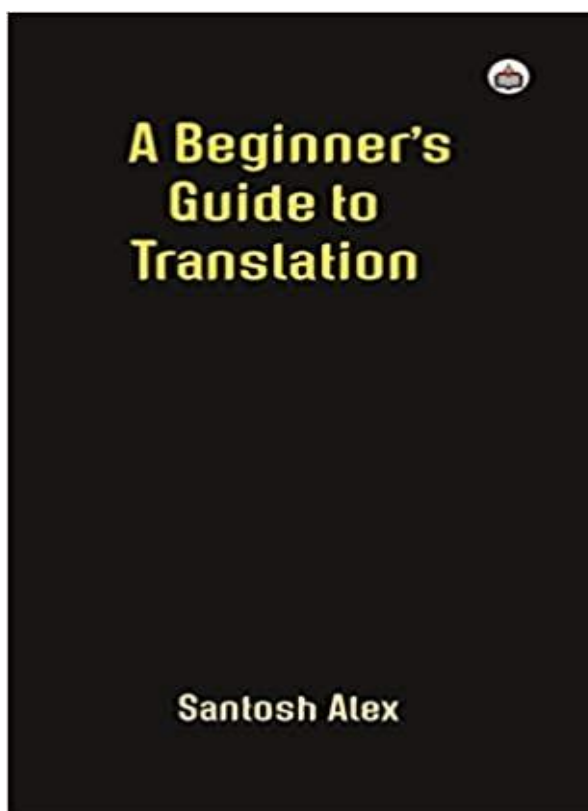
'A Beginner's Guide to Translation' by Dr. Santosh Alex, as the name suggests, is an elementary guide for those who are interested in the art of translation. Published by the Authors Press, the book deals with the A-to-Zs of translation in a simple and lucid manner. The book is 100 pages long and is moderately priced at INR 295/ \$25.

Dr. Santosh Alex is a stalwart in the domain of translation; he has translated about 125 writers from various languages (prose as well as poetry) over the last three decades, including Vylopalli, Vaikkom Muhammed Basheer, Jayanta Mahapatra, K. Sivareddy, Kedar Mishra, Kutti Revathi and so on. He has

received the International Vitruvio Award, Italy, the National Translation Award (Dwivageesh Puraskar), VOW Translation award, Thalassery Raghavan Master poetry award etc. for his contributions to the fields of poetry as well as translation.

Hence, *A Beginner's Guide to Translation* was eagerly awaited and its pre-booking sales shot up beyond expectations. Dr. Santosh brings in his three decades of experience in the translation industry to bring forth a wholistic guide covering the major areas of translation.

The book is a perfect guide for novices of translation. It introduces us to various definitions of translation, its process(es), types, terms used in translation etc. Dr. Santosh gives us a concise history of translation in India and discusses a set of Indian theoreticians of aesthetics and



translation. The book also throws light into comparative literature and the process of cultural transfer in translation. He brings in his experience as he writes about ‘bad translation’ and the ‘responsibilities of a translator’. His experience turns Gold as we read the chapters on ‘Live translation’ and the possibilities of ‘translation as a career’. To this galore of musings on translation has been added a conversation by Smitha Mukherjee (an eminent translator) with Dr. Santosh Alex, affixed at the root of the book, which turns out to be a must-read for all aspiring translators/writers.

The book is extremely pluralistic in nature. For example, we are introduced to various definitions of translation, ranging from Catford to Derrida, so that we can understand and gauge different ‘perspectives’ on translation. Dr. Santosh sticks to facts and doesn’t take any sides even while dealing with tricky topics like cultural translation and bad translation. Rather, he takes a few instances from Hindi to English and Malayalam to English to make us understand the same.

His interview, attached at the end of the book, helps us have further deep insights into the exposure and struggles he underwent as a translator over the past three decades. He briefly tells us about his maturing days, exposure to multilingualism, his exposure to translation and so on. He also explains how he gets translation projects, how profitable translation is as a profession and also about the need to keep writing.

Another highlight of the book is the list of references attached at the end of every chapter. The list ranges from W. Benjamin’s “The Task of the Translator”, written in 1923, to T.H. Barrett’s, *Translation and Transmission of Buddhist texts*, Published in 2019. This makes the text at once rooted in its beginnings as well as extremely ‘updated’, catering to the age. The list of references could thus also serve for ‘further readings’ for the enthusiasts.

‘A Beginners guide’ is not his first academic attempt at translation. His book on translation studies (in Hindi) titled *Prakriya Evam Vyavahriktha* was included in the syllabus of Sanskrit University, Kalady, Pondicherry University, and Cochin University. Most of the books on translation (Literary Translation by Chantal Wright, *Translation and Paratexts*: Kathryn Batchelor (Published by Routledge), Benjamin’s *A History of Modern Translation Knowledge* etc. to name a few) are highly priced between a range of close to Rs.3000 to Rs.10000, thereby making it impossible for a commoner to have access to the concepts and theories and possibilities of translation. ‘A Beginners guide’ is in fact his attempt to democratize and popularize translation.

Dr. Santosh, in his interview, remarks that:

“If there were no translation, then Gorky, Tolstoy, Dante etc. who moved readers profoundly down the ages, would have remained confined to their language communities.”

I am sure that ‘A beginners Guide’ will enable many aspirant translators to continue helping several such legends break free from the shackles of their language communities!