

## 5. *Upanikhat-i Garbha*: A Mughal Translation into Persian of a Small Sanskrit Treatise on Embryology

**Abstract.** In the year 1067 AH (1656–1657 CE), the Mughal prince Dārā Shukoh commissioned the translation of fifty-two Upanishads into Persian. The resulting anthology, *Sirr-i Akbar* (The Great Secret), contains a tiny embryology treatise entitled *Garbha Upaniṣad* (Upanishad of the Embryo). This paper analyzes the translation choices operating between the two languages (Sanskrit and Persian) and argues that they reveal the prince’s religious agenda—demonstrating the compatibility between Advaita Vedānta—his understanding of Hinduism, and his own Sufi faith.

**Keywords.** Translation studies, Embryology, Hinduism, Sufism, Mughal Empire.

The most famous representative of Indian medicine, the *Caraka Saṃhitā*, was first translated into Persian and then into Arabic.<sup>1</sup> The great scholar Al-Bīrūnī (973–1048 CE), quotes it in his *Book on the Verification of the Treatises on India, Rational or Not* (*Kitāb fī taḥqīq mā lil-Hind min maqūlah maqbūlah fī al-'aql aw marqūlah*).<sup>2</sup> From the ninth century onwards, other Indian works on medicine reached Arab physicians, for instance the *Suśruta Saṃhitā*.<sup>3</sup>

In the other direction, Greek (*yūnānī*) medicine had largely been disseminated in India thanks to the treatises of the great Perso-Arabic compilers, foremost amongst which was Avicenna (Abū ‘Alī al-Ḥusayn ibn ‘Abd Allāh ibn Sīnā, ~ 980–1037 CE) and his monumental *Canon of Medicine* (*Kitāb al-qānūn fī al-ṭibb*). This work written in Arabic gained great prestige not only in India but also Europe. It is mostly a compilation of the knowledge of Avicenna’s time, inherited from Hellenic physicians, first and foremost Galen (Κλαύδιος Γαληνός, ~ 129–216 CE).<sup>4</sup> Among other subjects, the first book of the *Canon* deals with the forming of the embryo.

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1 Ullmann (1978), pp. 19–20.

2 Bīrūnī (1914), p. 159.

3 Ullmann (1978), pp. 19–20.

4 Ullmann (1978), pp. 10–11; Pormann (2007), pp. 12–15.

Embryology was a common topic broached by Arabic and Persian medical works.<sup>5</sup> One such case is a treatise by the Iranian scholar Manṣūr ibn Ilyās (fourteenth to fifteenth century CE), the *Anatomy of the Human Body* (*Tashrīḥ-i badan-i insān*). In the Islamic world, this work written in Persian is the oldest existing treatise containing illustrations of the entire human body.<sup>6</sup> As such, it might well have circulated in India in the seventeenth-century Mughal Empire.

In this chapter, I present a Sanskrit embryology treatise, the tiny *Garbha Upaniṣad* (*Upanishad of the Embryo*). In spite of it claiming the status of an Upanishad, a genre of emblematic works flourishing during the first millennium BC, it belongs to the collection of non-Vedic Upanishads, considered as late compositions.<sup>7</sup> As many other ‘minor’ Upanishads, the *Garbha Upaniṣad* is most often associated with the *Atharva Veda* with which it only shares its dubious origin.<sup>8</sup> Nevertheless, its last sentence claims a certain Pippalāda as its author,<sup>9</sup> which tends to relate it to the Atharva-vedic tradition.<sup>10</sup> Above all, as for its content, it remains at the junction of several currents: Sāṃkhyayoga, Ayurveda, and Vedānta (an umbrella term covering the exegetic traditions based on the Upanishad). The main subject of concern of the *Garbha Upaniṣad* is not medicine and cannot be compared to Caraka’s and Suśruta’s great Ayurvedic compendia. In the same way, the Persian translation I present here cannot be considered as descending from the great Perso-Arabic tradition of medicine.

## The Prince of Translators

Much has been written on Muḥammad Dārā Shukoh (1615–1659), and justifiably so. This Mughal prince was every inch a novel character. He was the eldest and preferred son of Emperor Shāh Jahān<sup>11</sup> and is often depicted as the ideal sage-prince discussing with ascetics<sup>12</sup> and translating the Upanishads with Sanskrit scholars to bring together Islam and Hinduism. He was defeated in June 1658<sup>13</sup>

5 Pormann (2007), pp. 59–61.

6 Ziaee (2014), p. 49.

7 Winternitz (2008), pp. 1.223–1.224.

8 Winternitz (2008), pp. 1.224–1.225. The *Muktika Upaniṣad* includes it in its 108 Upanishad list, but links it to the Black *Yajurveda* (*Muktika Upaniṣad* 1.2.3).

9 *Garbha Upaniṣad* 5: *paippalādaṃ mokṣāśāstraṃ parisamāptaṃ paippalādaṃ mokṣāśāstraṃ parisamāptaṃ iti*.

10 This *Atharva Veda*-related mythic author is recalled in various texts throughout Brahmanical tradition, viz. *Praśna Upaniṣad* 1.1, *Matsya Purāṇa* 72.1, *Skanda Purāṇa*, *Reva Khāṇḍa* 42, etc.

11 Chaudhuri (1954), vol. 1, part 1, p. 1; Faruqui (2014), p. 30.

12 Gandhi (2014), pp. 65–66.

13 Rizvi (1978), p. 2.123.

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after a war of succession with his younger brother Aurangzeb. Accused of heresy and apostasy, he was sentenced to death in 1659.<sup>14</sup>

Two years before his tragic death, at the end of 1656,<sup>15</sup> Dārā Shukoh, who had already written five works on Sufism,<sup>16</sup> gathered Hindu scholars and ascetics for an ambitious enterprise: translating the *Garbha Upaniṣad*<sup>17</sup> into Persian. In the summer of 1657<sup>18</sup>—only six months later—they completed translating fifty-two<sup>19</sup> of them under one title: *Sirr-i Akbar*, or *The Great Secret*.<sup>20</sup> Here is Dārā Shukoh's testimony of this undertaking, according to the preface of the text:

And as at this period the city of Benares, which is the centre of the sciences of its community, was in certain relations with this seeker of the Truth (that is, Dārā Shukoh) he assembled together the *paṇḍitas* and the *saṃnyāsins*, who were the most learned of their time and proficient (in the *Veda* and) in the *Upaniṣad*, he himself being free from all materialistic motives, translated their essential parts of monotheism (*khulāṣa-yi tauḥīd*), which are the *Upaniṣad*, that is the secrets to be concealed (*asrār-i poshīdanī*), and the end of purport of all the saints of God, in the year 1067 A.H. (i.e. 1656–57 CE); and then every difficulty and every sublime topic which he had desired or thought and had looked for and not found, he obtained from these essences of the most ancient books (*az īn khulāṣa-yi kitāb-i qadīm*), and without doubt or suspicion, these books are first of all heavenly books (*kitāb-i samāwī*) in point of time, and the source and the fountain-head of the ocean of Unity (*sar-chashma-yi taḥqīq wa baḥr-i tauḥīd*), in conformity with the holy *Qur'ān* and even a commentary thereon (*muwāfiq-i Qur'ān-i majīd bal-ki tafsīr-i ān*). (trans. Hasrat (1982), pp. 266–267)<sup>21</sup>

Aside from the precise time and place of the translation of the *Sirr-i Akbar*, Dārā Shukoh gives us important information concerning his perception of the Upaniṣads. According to him, they are holy—or, at least—heavenly (*samāwī*), they are

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14 Faruqui (2014), p. 31.

15 Ibid., p. 30.

16 *Safīnat al-Auliya'* (1640), *Sakīnat al-Auliya'* (1643), *Risālat-i Haqq-numā* (1647), *Hasanāt al-Ārifīn* (1653), *Tarīqat al-Haqīqat* (n.d.)—Cf. Shukoh (1957), pp. 194–256; Shukoh (1962), pp. 6–7; Hasrat (1982), p. xxi.

17 Or, more precisely, in Dārā Shukoh's words: the (one) Upaniṣad (Indo-Persian: *Upanikhat*), which seems to be considered by him to be a single work.

18 Faruqui (2014), p. 30, 'in the first week of July 1657.'

19 In fact, fifty to fifty-two, depending on the manuscript of the *Sirr-i Akbar* (Hasrat (1982), pp. 269–273).

20 The title of this anthology, *Sirr-i Akbar*, is not the whim of its sponsor but rather a common synonym of the Sanskrit word '*upaniṣad*' being *rahasya* 'secret' (Winternitz (2008), pp. 1.225–1.226), which is precisely the meaning of Arabo-Persian *sirr* (plural: *asrār*).

21 Amended with the terms between parentheses; German translation of the same excerpt: Shukoh (1962), p. 16; Anquetil-Duperron's Latin translation: Shukoh (1801), vol. 1, p. 5. Persian source: Shukoh (1957), p. v, lines 11–17.

the source of the belief in the unity of God (*tauḥīd*), they agree with the Qur'an and may even serve as its commentary (*tafsīr*).

Our aim here is not to trace the prince's religious and philosophical influences<sup>22</sup> but to note the translation techniques of his team and highlight the choices of his pandits<sup>23</sup> when dealing with a Brahmanical text related to sexuality, physiology, mind, soul, soteriology, reincarnation, and polytheism.<sup>24</sup>

## The five elements

Right after the *tauḥīd* claim, the *Upanikhat-i Garbha* lists the five elements constituting the body:

This body is composed of five things (*chīz*), and stays into the five things, and there are six things that keep it. It is attached to six threads (*resmān*), seven *dhātu* (i. e. seven drops<sup>25</sup>) are in it, as well as three humours (*khālī*), two reproductive organs, and four means of subsistence (*khayurāk*)—these things take place in every living being—and the five things of which it is composed, these five are earth (*khāk*), water (*āb*), fire (*ātiṣh*), wind (*bād*) and *bhūtākāśa*. (trans. Shukoh (1957), p. 432, lines 2–10)

For comparison, here is a translation of the Sanskrit source text of this passage:<sup>26</sup>

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22 For this, see Roma Chauduri's critical and comparative study of *Samudrasaṅgama*, the Sanskrit version of Dārā Shukoh *Majma' al-Baḥrayn* (Shukoh 1943); Erhard Göbel-Groß' preface to his thesis on the *Sirr-i Akbar* (Shukoh (1962), pp. 5–12); Saiyid Athar Abbas Rizvi's chapter on the Qādiriyya Sufi order (Rizvi (1978), vol. 2, pp. 54–150); Bikrama Jit Hasrat's study on the life and works of Dārā Shukoh (Hasrat 1982); Mahfuz-ul-Haq's introduction to the *Majma' al-Baḥrayn* (Shukoh (1982), pp. 1–34); and two recent articles on the subject published by Oxford University Press (India): Faruqi (2014) and Gandhi (2014).

23 On the authorship of the *Sirr-i Akbar*, see D'Onofrio (2010), pp. 536–541.

24 The text I have used for this chapter was established by Tara Chand and Mohammad Reza Jalali Naini in Tehran in 1957 CE (1336 SH) and re-edited in 1978 CE (1356 SH): Shukoh (1957), pp. 432–436. The precise text studied here bears the title *Upanikhat-i Garbha* and, between square brackets: *az Atharban-Bed*, i. e. a Persian transcription of the Sanskrit [*Atharvavedagatā*] *Garbha upaniṣat* (Upanishad of the Embryo [related to the Atharva Veda]).

25 The Arabic word *nufṣa* is used here, which means 'drop' or 'sperm.' I will come back to this word later.

26 It is not possible to know exactly if the *Garbha Upaniṣad* used by the pandit working for Dārā Shukoh corresponds to the one I use in this paper (Kapani (1976), pp. 7–8); nevertheless, it seems to be very close to today's printed editions.

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The body consists of five elements (*pañcātma*), it stays in the five, has six seats (*ṣaḍāśraya*), is made of the union of six properties (*ṣaḍguṇayogayukta*), has seven constituents, three [types of] excreta, two sources (*dviyoni*) and four kinds of nutriments (*caturvidhāhāramaya*). Whence is it consisting of five elements—earth (*ṛṥthivī*), water (*ap*), fire (*tejas*), wind (*vāyu*) and space (*ākāśa*)?<sup>27</sup>

The Sanskrit text reproduces here the vocabulary used by Sāṃkhya<sup>28</sup> and by Caraka in his Ayurvedic treatise<sup>29</sup>—*ṛṥthivī* ‘earth,’ *ap* ‘water’ and so on, are the five gross elements (*mahābhūta*)<sup>30</sup> linked to their subtle counterparts (*tanmātra*), that is, the objects of perception.<sup>31</sup> Interestingly, one may already identify five different translation strategies at work in this single paragraph. If I use the nomenclature defined by Vladimir Ivir:<sup>32</sup>

TABLE 5.1 Translation procedures.

Procedure	Source (Sanskrit)	Target (Persian)
Borrowing	<i>dhātu</i>	<i>dhāt</i>
Definition	<i>dviyoni</i>	<i>dū jā-yi paidāyish</i>
Literal Translation	<i>caturvidhāhāramaya</i> <i>śarīra, ṛṥthivī, ap, etc.</i>	<i>chahār khayurāk dārad</i> <i>badan, khāk, āb, etc.</i>
Substitution	<i>pañcātma</i>	<i>panj chīz</i>
Addition	—	<i>īn chīzhā dar badan-i hama-yi</i> <i>jān-dārān ast</i>

Source: Author.

27 *pañcātmaṃ pañcasu vartamānaṃ ṣaḍāśrayaṃ ṣaḍguṇayogayuktam/taṃ saptadhātum trimalaṃ dviyonim caturvidhāhāramayaṃ śarīraṃ bhavati/pañcātmakam iti kasmāt ṛṥthivy āpas tejo vāyur ākāśam ity asmin pañcātmake śarīre.* (Kapani (1976), p. 8, lines 1–3)

28 Cf. Gauḍapāda’s commentary on *Sāṃkhyakārikā* 38 (Īśvarakṛṣṇa and Gauḍapāda (1972), p. 141).

29 *Carakasamhitā* 4.4.6.

30 For example, Gauḍapāda *ad* Īśvarakṛṣṇa’s *Sāṃkhyakārikā* 38 (Īśvarakṛṣṇa and Gauḍapāda (1837), vol. 2, pp. 30–31).

31 That is: *śabda, sparśa, rūpa, rasa, and gandha*.

32 Ivir (1987), pp. 35–46. The seven procedures enumerated by Ivir are: 1. borrowing (or importation), 2. definition, 3. literal translation, 4. substitution, 5. lexical creation, 6. omission, 7. addition.

Two of Ivir's procedures are not used here—lexical creation and omission.<sup>33</sup> On the other hand, the translation resorts to some combined procedures.<sup>34</sup>

TABLE 5.2 Combined translation procedures.

Procedure	Source (Sanskrit)	Target (Persian)
Borrowing and Definition	<i>dhātu</i>	<i>dhāt ya 'nī haft nuṭṭā</i>
Definition and Addition	<i>ākāśa</i>	<i>bhūtākās</i>

Source: Author.

With *bhūtākās*, the translation team takes the original Sanskrit word (*ākāśa*) and expands it with its category: *bhūta* (as mentioned before, *mahābhūta* qualifies the 'gross elements,' and *bhūta* is a simpler equivalent). It is close to the orthography he uses in his last work, the *Majma' al-Baḥrayn (The Mingling of the Two Oceans)*, in which he defines the Sāṃkhya concept of *ākāśa*, that is 'space, void,' sometimes also translated as 'ether.'

I have shown here only a few examples of the strategies employed by the translation team to restore in a pragmatic manner the Sanskrit source of the *Garbha Upaniṣad*.

## The impregnation process

After the enumeration of the five elements constituting the body (*in badan az panj chīz tarkīb yāfta ast*), six flavours (Sanskrit *rasa* ≈ Arabic *ṭa'm*),<sup>35</sup> seven sounds (Sanskrit *śabda* ≈ Persian *āhang*)<sup>36</sup> and seven colours,<sup>37</sup> the text explains the production of sperm and the impregnation process. In Sanskrit:

33 But they are used in other places of the *Upanikhat-i Garbha*, as I have shown previously with Dārā Shukoh's 'monotheistic' argument.

34 Ivir (1987), p. 37: 'combinations of procedures rather than single procedures are required for optimum transmission of cultural information (e.g., borrowing-and-definition, borrowing-and-substitution, lexical creation-and-definition, etc.).'

35 Kapani (1976), p. 8, lines 9–10 ≈ Shukoh (1957), p. 432, line 21, to p. 433 line 1.

36 Kapani (1976), p. 8, lines 10–11 ≈ Shukoh (1957), p. 433, line 3.

37 *śuklo raktah kṛṣṇo dhūmrah pīṭah kapilāḥ pāṇḍara iti* ≈ Shukoh (1957), p. 433, lines 4–5: *haft rang ki dar miyān-i badan ast: safed wa surkh wa siyāh wa sabz wa gul-gūn wa zard wa sandalī*. (Kapani (1976), p. 8, lines 11–12)

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Why is [the body] made of seven constitutive elements (*dhātu*)?—When Devadatta's objects that are material, etc., are born, the chyle (*rasa*) [is produced] with one another, from cool and moist quality (*saumyagunatva*); from chyle [is made] the blood (*śonita*), from blood the flesh (*māmsa*), from flesh the fat (*medas*), from fat the tendons (*snāyu*), from the tendons the bones (*asthi*), from the bones the marrow (*majjā*), from the marrow the sperm (*śukra*); from the combination of sperm and blood proceeds the embryo (*garbha*). In the heart (*hṛd*) he settles (*vyavasthāṃ nayati*), in the heart [stays] the inner fire (*antarāgni*). Where the fire stays, [one finds] the bile (*pitta*)<sup>38</sup>; where the bile stays is the wind (*vāyu*), from the wind [comes] the heart in the manner of the Lord of creatures (*prājāpatyāt kramāt*).<sup>39</sup>

In *Sirr-i Akbar* Persian, this passage is slightly different:

It is acknowledged from these seven colours that there are seven lymphs (*nuṭfa*) in the body. By eating food, *rasa* is produced, viz. chyle (*kailūs*), and from *rasa* is generated the blood (*khun*), from blood comes the flesh (*gosht*), from flesh comes the fat (*charbī*), from fat come the tendons (*pay*), from the tendons come the bones (*ustukhwān*), from the bones comes the marrow (*maghz*), from marrow comes the sperm element (*aṣl-i nuṭfa*). When the rest of blood of menstruation of the woman after purification stays in the womb, the sperm (*nuṭfa*) of the man mixes with it, and from the fire of desire (*ātish-i shahwat*) and the fire of bile (*ṣafīrā*), thanks to effervescence (*parrān-i bād*), both of them form an emulsion (*josh*), with which results pregnancy (*haml*).<sup>40</sup>

The Persian translation leaves Devadatta (a name the Sanskrit commentaries traditionally use in their examples) but explains the link between the seven colours and the seven constituents of the body. It also passes the fire and the humours of the heart in silence, and the allusion to Prajāpati, the Lord of creatures, is omitted.

At the beginning of this excerpt, the Sanskrit *dhātu* 'constitutive element' refers to the seven 'ingredients' of the body (chyle, blood, flesh, and the like),<sup>41</sup> as mentioned in Ayurvedic medicine;<sup>42</sup> but an eighth one is listed here: *snāyu* 'liga-

38 Phlegm (*kapha* or *śleṣman*), wind (*vāta* or *vāyu*) and bile (*pitta*) are the three humours which alterations (*doṣa*) are sources of diseases.

39 Sanskrit source: Kapani (1976), p. 8, lines 12–15.

40 Persian source: Shukoh (1957), p. 433, lines 5–10.

41 Chyle (*rasa*), blood (*śonita* = *rakta*), flesh (*māmsa*), fat (*medas*), bone (*asthi*), marrow (*majjā*), semen (*śukra*), to which are added here (Kapani (1976), p. 8, line 14) the ligaments (*snāyu*). These ligaments are not translated in Persian (Shukoh (1957), p. 433, line 7) and simply replaced by *pīh* 'fat.'

42 For example, *Carakasamhitā* 3.17.63–72. Gauḍapāda's commentary (*bhāṣya*) on the verse 39 of *Sāmkhya Kārikā* gives a list of six components of the embryo; these are identical to the *Garbha Upaniṣad* list, including tendons (*snāyu*), but omitting chyle and fat (text and trans.: Īśvarakṛṣṇa and Gauḍapāda (1972), pp. 143–144; Wilson's trans.: Īśvarakṛṣṇa and Gauḍapāda (1837), pp. 123–124).

ments,' which does not belong to the usual list. The translation team meticulously retains it. Here, the Tehran edition<sup>43</sup> seems to reproduce a copyist's misspelling, using *pīh* 'grease' instead of *pay* 'tendon' which is the correct translation of the Sanskrit *snāyu*.

The word *dhātu* referring to these seven 'constitutive elements' is translated with the Arabic *nuṭfa* 'drop; lymph; sperm' which does not cover the Sanskrit meaning. Nevertheless, *nuṭfa* is used once again a few lines further, this time to render very closely the Sanskrit *śukra* 'sperm.' Other words could have been used to translate *śukra*, like the Arabic *minan*, the word used by Avicenna and Maṅṣūr ibn Ilyās in their treatises. This word would have been particularly adapted to the context, but here, *nuṭfa* is preferred, and most likely because it is often used in the Qur'an, as in this example: 'Can man not see that We created him from a drop of fluid (*nuṭfa*)?'<sup>44</sup>

This word, *nuṭfa*, occurs twelve times in the Qur'an,<sup>45</sup> each occurrence claiming that God created man from a drop of semen (*min nuṭfatin*). As I will show below, in the context of foetal development, it is not the only Qur'anic loanword used in *Sirr-i Akbar* translation. I must point out here that unlike the *Garbha Upaniṣad*, *Sāṃkhya*, and *Ayurveda*, which explain impregnation through the union of sperm and blood,<sup>46</sup> the Qur'an conceives humans to be created like Adam—from dust (*turāb*), clay (*tīn*), or dry clay (*ṣaṣāl*):<sup>47</sup>

We created man from an essence of clay (*tīn*),  
then We placed him as a drop of fluid (*nuṭfa*) in a safe place. (Qur'an 23.12–13; trans. Haleem (2004), p. 215; my additions in parentheses)

## The foetal development

Compared to the much detailed depiction of embryo development in *Caraka Saṃhitā* 4.4, the same described in the *Garbha Upaniṣad* is quite straightforward:

After a sexual union at the right time (*rtukāle*), after one night, there is [an embryo in the form of] gelatine (*kalala*); after seven nights, there is a bubble (*budbuda*); in half a month, there is a lump (*piṇḍa*). In one month, it becomes firm (*kaṭhina*), and in two months, a head is forming. In three months, the region of the feet appears, then during the fourth month, the regions of

43 Shukoh (1957), p. 433, line 7.

44 Qur'an 36.77. Trans. Haleem (2004), p. 284. My additions in parentheses.

45 Qur'an 16.4, 18.37, 22.5, 23.13, 23.14, 35.11, 36.77, 40.67, 53.46, 75.37, 76.2, 80.19 (Cf. Badawī et Haleem (2008), p. 946).

46 Cf. Gauḍapāda's *bhāṣya* on *Sāṃkhya Kārikā* 39 and 43, *Caraka Saṃhitā* 4.4.7.

47 McAuliffe (2001), pp. 1.230–1.231.

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the ankles (*gulpha*), the abdomen (*jaṭhara*) and the hip (*kaṭi*). During the fifth month, the back (*pr̥ṣṭha*) and the spine (*vamśa*) take form. In the sixth month the mouth, nose, eyes and ears develop. During the seventh month, it becomes endowed with an individual self (*jīva*). In the eighth month, it is provided with all attributes (*lakṣaṇa*).<sup>48</sup>

The Persian version gives us further clues to the translation choices of Dārā Shukoh's team:

In this world, the way to find the Creator (*Āfrīdgār*) is the following: in eight *pahar*, which would be a day and a night, this sperm (*nuṭfa*) and blood (*khūn*) emulsion together, thicken and become a clinging form (*'alaqa*); in seven more days and nights, they emulsify like bubbles (*habāb*) and grow. Fifteen days and nights later, it becomes a soft bit of flesh (*gosht-pāra-yi narm*), and in one month, that bit of flesh becomes solid. In the second month, this bit of flesh gets a head; in the third month, hands and feet are produced; in the fourth month, the fingers and the toes, the belly and the waist, and the other limbs (*a 'zā,* plural of *'uzw*) form, and with agitation of the *prāṇa*, it starts moving. In the fifth month, the bones of the back (*ustukhwān-i pushht*) become firm and strong, the sense organs (*maḥallhā-yi ḥawāss*) are completed. In the seventh month, knowledge (*shu 'ūr*) forms; and in the eighth month, his limbs and strength are completed.<sup>49</sup>

In this passage, the translators borrow words from outside of the ordinary Persian register, be they Hindustani, Sanskrit, or Arabic. Where the Sanskrit text speaks of 'one night' (*ekarātra*), the translators clarify and develop the expression while using 'eight *pahar*' (that is, twenty-four hours), a Hindustani expression<sup>50</sup> that would not be understood outside of the Indian cultural milieu. This could be the reason why they then add: 'which would be a day and a night' (*ki shabāna-roz bāshad*).

Another addition is made in the context of the fourth month of foetal development, this time of Sanskrit origin: 'with agitation of the *prāṇa*, it starts moving' (*ba jumbish-i prān dar ḥarakat mī-āyad*). This expression is in square brackets in the Tehran edition, indicating here that this sentence is missing in some manuscripts. The concept of *prāṇa* refers to Indian physiology. The following is an example of its use in Ayurvedic context: 'Living creatures are endowed with strength, complexion, happiness and longevity due to pure blood. Blood plays a vital role in the sustenance of *élan vital* (*prāṇa*).'<sup>51</sup>

48 Sanskrit source: Kapani (1976), p. 8, lines 16–22.

49 Persian source: Shukoh (1957), p. 433, lines 11–18.

50 Hindustani word related to Prakrit *paharo* and Sanskrit *prahara* (Platts (1884), p. 285, col. 1) and corresponding to an eighth of a day, i. e. three hours.

51 *Caraka Saṃhitā* 3.24.4. Trans. Agniveśa (1976), p. 1.403. To the original extract I have added the acute accent to the French *élan* and the Sanskrit *prāṇa* in parentheses. Cf. Agniveśa (2011), p. 416.

This *élan vital* may be what is suggested by the word *prāṇa* in the *Sirr-i Akbar* translation, thus explaining why the foetus starts moving. But in the Upanishadic context, *prāṇa* also means ‘life organ,’<sup>52</sup> which makes Dārā Shukoh’s addition more understandable.

The vocabulary used in Sanskrit to describe the two first stages of embryonic growth (*kalala*, *budbuda*) is similar to Sāṃkhya vocabulary,<sup>53</sup> and in the Puranas,<sup>54</sup> the third, a ‘lump’ (*piṇḍa*), is used in *Caraka Saṃhitā*,<sup>55</sup> but the Puranas prefer an ‘egg of flesh’ (*peśyaṇḍa*), which the translation team seems to follow when using a ‘soft bit of flesh’ (*gosht-pāra-yi narm*), instead of translating *piṇḍa* by a Persian direct equivalent like *gulūla* or even *kofta*.

Concerning the first stage of embryonic development, ‘gelatine’ (*kalala*), the translators once again use a Qur’anic—and enigmatic—word, ‘clinging form’ (*‘alaqa*).<sup>56</sup> This specific term seems to refer to a portion of the *Sūrat al-Ḥajj* (Qur’an 22.5), which mentions foetal development:

People, [remember,] if you doubt the Resurrection, that We created you from dust (*turāb*), then a drop of fluid (*nuṭfa*), then a clinging form (*‘alaqa*), then a lump of flesh (*muzgha*), both shaped and unshaped: We mean to make Our power clear to you. Whatever We choose We cause to remain in the womb (*arḥām*) for an appointed time, then We bring you forth as infants (*tiḥf*) and then you grow and reach maturity. Some die young and some are left to live on to such an age that they forget all they once knew. You sometimes see the earth lifeless, yet when We send down water it stirs and swells and produces every kind of joyous growth: this is because God is the Truth; He brings the dead back to life; He has power over everything. (trans. Haleem (2004), p. 209; my additions in parentheses)

In the *Sūrat al-Ḥajj*, the embryonic stages are dust (*turāb* ≈ *ṭīn*), sperm (*nuṭfa*), a ‘clinging form’ (*‘alaqa*), and a lump of flesh (*muzgha*).<sup>57</sup> In the context of the translation of the preceding passage concerning impregnation, I have already shown the use of clay and sperm in the Qur’an. Now, again, to translate another Sanskrit medical term, *kalala*, the translation team draws from this same source, using the Arabic *‘alaqa*:

52 Sharma (2007), p. 191.

53 Cf. Gauḍapāda’s *Bhāṣya* on *Sāṃkhya Kārikā* 43 (Īśvarakṛṣṇa and Gauḍapāda (1837), pp. 139–140; Īśvarakṛṣṇa and Gauḍapāda (1972), pp. 152–154).

54 *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa* 11.2, *Garuḍa Purāṇa Sāroddhāra* 6.6 = *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* 3.31.2.

55 *Caraka Saṃhitā* 4.4.10.

56 Cf. Lane (1968), vol. 5, p. 419, col. 3.

57 McAuliffe (2001), vol. 1, p. 230, col. 2.

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In Qur'ān 23:12-4 reference is made to fetal development and growth . . . Prior to fertilization, sperm bind to the zona pellucida or outer covering of the ovum. Following such lines of interpretation, 'alāqa could be a reference to this, i.e. to sperm 'clinging' to the ovum. However, 'alāqa is also interpreted by some exegetes as 'blood clot' and taken to refer to 'something that clings' to the uterus.<sup>58</sup>

Parallel to the subtle Qur'anic equivalents translating the specific Sanskrit words dealing with embryology, the translators substitute 'knowledge' (Arabic *shu'ūr*)<sup>59</sup> for what I have translated as 'individual self' (Sanskrit *jīva*).<sup>60</sup> This latter is a difficult term endowed with numerous meanings, the first one being 'life,' as it comes from the verbal root  $\sqrt{jīv}$ . It also means, especially in Advaita Vedanta, the 'individual self' or 'empirical ego,'<sup>61</sup> where it can also be equated with the 'soul' (*ātman*).<sup>62</sup> This ambiguity of the word *jīva* may have induced the translators to prefer using a theologically neutral 'knowledge' (*shu'ūr*) to 'soul'—Arabic *nafs* or *rūḥ*—which would have been appropriate, but potentially controversial regarding the precise time of its appearance in the human body.<sup>63</sup>

### The foetus' monologue

After a few lines dealing with the conditions to the development of males, females, and hermaphrodites,<sup>64</sup> and another listing technical subdivisions and elements composing the living being plus the sacred syllable om,<sup>65</sup> the *Garbha Upaniṣad* offers an interesting monologue by the foetus before birth, a passage rife with potential translation traps:

Then, during the ninth month, [the baby] is endowed with all attributes and means of knowledge. It remembers its previous life (*pūrvajāti*) and knows whether a behaviour (*karman*) is good or bad: 'I have already seen thousands of wombs (*yonī*), eaten different foods, sucked many breasts. I was born and then died, there was birth again and again. For the sake of the others, my behaviour was good or bad, and because of it, I burn alone

58 McAuliffe (2001), vol. 1, p. 231, col. 1.

59 Shukoh (1957), p. 433, line 17.

60 Kapani (1976), p. 8, line 21.

61 Deutsch and Buitenen (1971), pp. 75, 80, 104, 118, 120, 182, 247, 262, 284, 292, 304–306; Narain (2003), pp. 233, 245; Sharma (2007), p. 191.

62 Deutsch and Buitenen (1971), pp. 234–235, 310.

63 Dārā Shukoh nevertheless comes back to *jīvātma* and glosses it by *rūḥ* (soul) a few lines later; Shukoh (1957), p. 434, line 7.

64 Kapani (1976), p. 8, lines 22–24 ≈ Shukoh (1957), from p. 433, line 18 to p. 434, line 2.

65 Kapani (1976), p. 8, lines 25–27 ≈ Shukoh (1957), p. 434, lines 2–9.

(*ekākī tena dahye 'ham*)—the ones who took benefit of it are gone. Alas! Sunk in an ocean of pain (*duḥkhodadhi*), I don't see any remedy (*pratikriyā*) . . . If I free myself from the womb (*yadi yonyāḥ pramucye 'ham*), I will take refuge in the Great Lord (Maheśvara) [Śiva]—the one who puts misfortune to an end, the one who frees from the fruit [of the deeds]. If I free myself from the womb, I will take refuge in [Viṣṇu] Nārāyaṇa—the one who puts misfortune to an end, the one who frees from the fruit [of the deeds]. If I free myself from the womb, I will practice Sāṃkhyayoga—which puts misfortune to an end, which frees from the fruit [of the deeds]. If I free myself from the womb, I will study the eternal Brahman!'<sup>66</sup> Then, having reached the entrance of the womb (*yonidvāra*), it is oppressed by a very painful process (*yantra*); as soon as it is born, a Viṣṇu-wind (*vaiṣṇavo vāyuh*) touches it and, consequently, it forgets its [previous] births and deaths, and does not know whether a behaviour (*karman*) is good or bad.<sup>66</sup>

The main subjects broached in this single passage are important ones: reincarnation, karma, samsara, polytheism, Sāṃkhya, and Vedanta. Let us see how the translation team deals with them:

In the ninth month, as [the baby] has become complete, it remembers the whole decline (*jamī'-i tanazzulāt*) and the course of the times (*sair-i adwār*) that it spent under [the form of varied] races (*'anāṣir*), minerals (*jamādāt*) and plants (*nabātāt*), and it understands [what was his] good and bad behaviour (*'amal*).

It notices: 'I've made a long journey, I travelled in [different] epochs and in different manners, I drowned in the ocean of existential suffering (*daryā-yi gham-i wujūd*). If I go out of the belly of my mother, I'll devote myself to the Truth (*Ḥaqq*), or I'll dedicate myself to the knowledge of Truth (*ma'rifat-i Ḥaqq*), which purify from the good and bad behaviour and affords salvation (*rastagārī*). This very path I will follow, which leads to the Essence (*Zāt*) of the whole world—that Essence is the Emperor (*Pādishāh*) of all and the Master (*Sāhib*) of everything.' With these resolutions, ready to exit, it goes out of the belly, and while going out of this peculiar door, it suffers because of the narrowness of the way; because at that moment he cries, it forgets those resolutions. After the exit, the wind of the world (*bād-i duniyā*), which is the wind of *avidyā*, that is foolishness and ignorance (*jahl-u nādānī*), as soon as it reaches it, everything that it remembered—which would be the *praṇava*, that is the great name of God, the quest of God and other things that were remembered—all of them disappear. Again, that is why it depends on the behaviour and the way one comes to good or bad.<sup>67</sup>

66 Sanskrit source: Kapani (1976), p. 8, line 27 to p. 9, line 13.

67 Persian source: Shukoh (1957), p. 434, lines 9–20.

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To cope with all these Brahminical concepts, Dārā Shukoh's team uses all seven of Ivir's translation procedures.<sup>68</sup> The translators define samsara as 'the whole decline and the course of the times that it spent under [the form of varied] races, minerals and plants' instead of the literal 'previous life,' but they use a precise equivalent of karma with an Arabic word '*amal*. They gloss the Sanskrit compound *duḥkḥodadhi* 'ocean of pain,' which poetically evokes samsara, with *daryā-yi gham-i wujūd* 'ocean of existential suffering.'

Then follow the successive resolutions the foetus will follow once it leaves the womb—resolutions that must have been a challenging task to translate under Muslim governance. Śiva, Viṣṇu, Brahman, and Sāṃkhya are evoked, thus referring to polytheism and philosophical concepts unacceptable to the Muslim faith. The translation team shows here subtle diplomatic skills. It substitutes the epithets of Śiva and Viṣṇu with *Ḥaqq* 'Truth' and *Zāt* 'Essence,' both epithets of Allah. *Zāt* is then defined by *Pādishāh* and *Ṣāhib*, which are both possible translations for *Mahā -īśvara* 'Great Lord.' Sāṃkhyayoga and the Vedantic Brahman are omitted, and the problematic 'Viṣṇu-wind' (*vaiṣṇavo vāyuh*) erasing the foetus' memories is replaced by two expressions, one a creation, the other a borrowing: 'the wind of the world, which is the wind of *avidyā*.' The 'wind of the world' (*bād-i dunyā*) does not echo any peculiar Persian metaphor. As for *avidyā*, it is a key concept in Advaita Vedānta,<sup>69</sup> and the translators need to gloss it with 'foolishness and ignorance' (*jahl-u nādānī*).<sup>70</sup>

In this way, the 'wind of *avidyā*' erases the memory of the newborn child. The translators demonstrate their skill here by opting for a much more diplomatic solution. Instead of abruptly replacing Viṣṇu with Allah, they oust the Hindu god and replace him by an Advaitic concept that could not be easily challenged by Brahmins. Then they use another Vedāntic concept, *praṇava*, another name of the sacred syllable om, which they gloss as 'the great name of God, the quest of God and other things that were remembered.'<sup>71</sup> This concept is absent from this portion of the original Sanskrit version in which what the child knew before his birth amnesia is described.

68 Cf. Ivir (1987).

69 Cf. Deutsch and Buitenen (1971); Narain (2003), pp. 98–107, 203–211 and *passim*; Sharma (2007), pp. 167–183, 221–226.

70 Anquetil-Duperron translated the Persian *ba'd az bar-āmadan bād-i dunyā ki bād-i awidyā ast ya'nī jahl-u nādānī . . .* with: 'Post à τῶ exire, cum *aoudia*, quòd ventus *aoudia* est; id est, insipientia et non scientia est . . .' (Shukoh (1801), vol. 2, pp. 236–237).

71 *nām-i buzurg-i Khudā wa talab-i Khudā wa dīgar chīzhā ki mazkūr shud.* (Shukoh (1957), p. 434, lines 18–19)

## Conclusion

The *Garbha Upaniṣad* does not end with the birth of the child. It continues with reflections on the components of the body, namely the three ‘fires’ (Sanskrit *agni*, Persian *ātish*) that dwell in the body: the fire of knowledge, the fire of vision, and the fire of digestion.<sup>72</sup> The text links these fires with the sacrificial ones as they are mentioned in a major Upanishad, the *Chāṇḍogya*, which links together fire, offerings, and embryonic conception.<sup>73</sup> I will not go into detail here on these technical questions but rather summarise what may be concluded from the close observation of the translation methods of Dārā Shukoh’s team.

Dārā Shukoh’s team employed all the theoretical translation strategies that a modern scholar might use. The pandits mastered the Sāmkhya and Ayurvedic vocabulary and drew on these sources to extrapolate the original text. On the one hand, they concealed the marks of polytheism and skilfully replaced them by epithets of Allah. On the other hand, they enriched the text with Advaitic terms compatible with Dārā Shukoh’s plan to display Brahminical monotheism when necessary.

As I have shown with a few examples, the translation choices of Dārā Shukoh’s team were very diplomatic ones. It would have been a delicate matter for them to mention Śiva and Viṣṇu; thus they chose to write *Ḥaqq* and *Zāt*.<sup>74</sup> It could have been difficult for Brahmins to see Viṣṇu disappearing as the agent of oblivion during birth; thus they replaced the Hindu god with a strong Advaitic concept, *avidyā*. In this matter, we could say today that this team was at least very professional, avoiding Islamic admonitions on the one hand and Brahmanical disapprobation on the other. In the same manner, the team did not openly refute karmic retribution nor samsara, literally translating the former and glossing the latter, without explaining these concepts or revealing any oriented opinion. Dārā Shukoh had already made his vision explicit in the *Majma’ al-Baḥrayn*,<sup>75</sup> the treatise he wrote a year before the *Sirr-i Akbar*.<sup>76</sup>

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72 Kapani (1976), p. 9, lines 11–12: *śarīram iti kasmāt / agnayo hy atra śriyante jñānāgnir darśanāgniḥ koṣṭhāgnir iti* ≈ Shukoh (1957), p. 435, lines 1–2: *in badan-rā ki sharīr mī-gūyand barā-yi ān ast ki sih ātish dar badan mī-bāshad: yak-i ātish-i gyān ki nūr-i ma’rifat bāshad, duwum ātish-i bīnā’ī ki nūr-i chashm bāshad, siwum ātash-i mi’da*. In Ayurvedic medicine, the bilious humour (*pitta*) is divided into five fires (*agni*); the three mentioned here belong to that list (Renou and Filliozat (1947), vol. 2, p. 153, § 1652).

73 *Chāṇḍogya Upaniṣad* 5.7–9 (= Ācārya (1948), p. 61)—Cf. Kapani (1976), p. 18, n. 36.

74 On this peculiar point, see Dārā Shukoh’s writings on the names of God in his *Majma’ al-Baḥrayn*, Shukoh (1982), pp. 98–99.

75 *Majma’ al-Baḥrayn*, chap. 18–20 (Shukoh (1982), pp. 105–113).

76 Faruqui (2014), pp. 40–42.

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Some scholars have brilliantly detailed Dārā Shukoh's intellectual journey.<sup>77</sup> However, the aim here was not to retell their conclusions<sup>78</sup> but to summarize some of the translation techniques of the team working for him.

Thus, the very subtle work done for the *Sirr-i Akbar* reveals the prince's beliefs concerning the 'Indian monotheists' and Muslims:

*paribhāṣābhedātiriktaṃ kam api bhedaṃ svarūpāvāptau nāpaśyam* (*Samudrasaṅgama* (preface), Chaudhuri (1954), 1.1, line 16)

≈ *juz ikhtilāf-i lafẓī dar dar-yāft wa shinākht-i Haqq tafāwut-ī nadīd* (*Majma' al-Baḥrayn* (preface), Shukoh (1982), p. 80, lines 11–12)

I/he did not see any difference, except verbal, in the way they sought the Truth.

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77 Among them: Chand (1943); Husain (2002); D'Onofrio (2010); Ganeri (2012); Faruqui (2014); and Gandhi (2014).

78 As did in his time Erhard Göbel-Groß (Shukoh 1962).

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