

TRANSLATING RELATIVITY

A NOTE ON THE HISTORIC SAHA-BOSE 1920 ENGLISH TRANSLATION

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The preliminary works about the Special Theory of Relativity started around 1890s and matured by 1910 through the works of Lorentz, Poincaré, Einstein, Minkowski and others. Einstein formalized the General Theory of Relativity by 1916 and it got an observational evidence by 1919. Though during the second decade of the 20th century Relativity was a widely discussed topic in Physics, the teachers and researchers in the non-German speaking countries were finding it difficult to decode as most of the publications were in German. The breakthrough came in 1920 when two young Indian physicists Meghnad Saha and Satyendranath Bose, who earned global fame subsequently for their contributions to physics, translated four epoch making papers of Einstein and Minkowski with Einstein's permission, as the first ever such effort in the world. It was brought out as a book by Calcutta University in 1920. Subsequently other translations of relativity papers in English were published by Methuen (UK), Princeton University Press (USA) and others. Translations appeared in other European languages too. However, despite limited circulations outside India and despite having certain shortcomings, the Saha-Bose translation of 1920 remains the historical first and has found an immortal place in the history of science. This article is a tribute to these genius scientists of India on completion of a century since their pioneering work.
