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Translating minoritized cultures

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Translating Minoritized Cultures: Issues of Caste, Class and Gender

Arun Mukherjee, Alok Mukherjee and Barbara Godard

Titles are signposts and ours introduces some of the key issues we will be addressing. Translating is a verbal form signalling an action or intervention involving movement not only between languages but also between contexts and cultures.

Minoritized, unlike minority, emphasizes the process of *minoritizing* and insists that the relative prestige of languages and cultures and the conditions of their contact are constituted in social relations of ruling in both national and international arenas. The way translation participates in both producing and overcoming hierarchies is what we want to examine in some recent translations we have done. Cultures, the third word in our title, underscores how translators work not just with languages but with the often divergent values produced by languages in different socio-cultural contexts. With the so-called “cultural turn” in translation studies, translators have come to be perceived as mediators working in the contact zone to shape cultures. Depending on their translation practice, they may introduce the radically new and previously unthought into a culture or work to shore up established values. A shift in conceptualizing the translator’s activity has occurred away from a word-for-word or a sense-for-sense translation paradigm—two contending models for translation practice as far back as the fourth century C.E. when Jerome, the patron saint of translators, wrote a letter in defence of his translation practices in rendering the bible into Latin. He had been accused of not being literally faithful to the number of words in a sentence or the number of syllables in a sequence but had instead translated the sense or meaning of the Greek or Hebrew text. Debates between advocates of literal and figurative translation have persisted in different forms through the centuries. In the last decade or so, there has been an equally radical shift in translation theory away from a focus on both the letter and the spirit of a text to look instead at the socio-cultural context as the site in which meaning is made and to take into account the pertinent elements of this context in specific translation practices. Central to the differences between contexts are vectors of power, in the case of the texts we have translated which are by members of subaltern or marginalized groups, hierarchies of privilege organized around caste, class and gender.

Language is like the skin of culture—the surface where inside touches outside and a self encounters an other. Indeed, language is the very site where such cultural interaction takes place within diverse logics of relations and different vectors of power, whether these work either to incorporate the other into the selfsame or to open the self to radical alterity. Some of the stakes in the translations we have been working with are apparent in the short passages from them which we are going to read to give you a sense of the issues entailed and the challenges we have faced as translators. Then we will have a discussion on some of those issues, followed by questions from the audience.

The text I shall read is *Intimate Journal* by Nicole Brossard which was recently published. The section I shall read, however, was translated by me twenty years ago for an engagement calendar that Adele Wiseman was putting together with excerpts from works by Canadian women writers. Shortly after I translated this section, I had the opportunity to read with Nicole Brossard. On that occasion we read the English version first and the French version second, inverting the conventional relationship between writer and translator, between source and target texts. Brossard's text invites such a blurring of the borders between "original" and "translation" in view of the complex play between self and other it enacts. Such tensions are heightened by the centre/margin implications of translating the fictive diary of a lesbian writer.

This section of the journal raises questions about the incommensurability of languages and of the drift of translation. In particular, it is the affective force of language, rather than its rational or communicative functions, which Brossard emphasizes:

I devoted the whole day to reading the English translation of *L'Amèr* whose final draft Barbara Godard has just sent me. Exhausting work it is to read a text of one's own in translation. Tiring, because to the mental operations one performs in writing the text is added the process I shall call unveiling. Because what one chooses to hide in a text must now be exposed. Where criticism, for example, can only presume, dream or imagine a meaning, translation seeks to ascertain. In this process of corroboration, I must confront what I have consciously and scrupulously hidden from myself. To be translated is to be interrogated not only in what one believes oneself to be but in one's way of thinking in a language, and of being thought by the same language. It means I have to question myself about the other I might be if I thought in English, Italian, or some other language. What law, what ethics, what landscape, what picture would then come to mind? And who would I be in each of these languages? What would femininity have reserved for me in Italian? What relation would I have had to my body if I had had to think it in English? How would the word kimono, if it had been part of my everyday life, have modified my way of seducing and working? The question raised in translation, as in writing, is that of selection. Which signifier to favour, to choose, in order to enliven on the surface the multiple signifieds that agitate invisibly at work in the depth of consciousness? Formally is how I must compensate, so the energy that nourishes my thought does not turn against me, so that language itself does not turn against the woman I am. (*Intimate Journal* 37-38)

While issues of gender pose ethical concerns for the writer and translator of Brossard's journal, matters of class and caste raise questions of power and privilege at the heart of the works of Dalit writers which challenge translators especially when rewriting texts into English, the language of globalized imperialism. Moreover, as literatures of resistance, these texts oppose the conventions of Indian literatures which have either ignored the Dalit or portrayed them in a discourse of pity, as victims needing saviours. The aesthetic outlined in *Towards an Aesthetic of Dalit Literature: Histories, Controversies and Considerations* presents a new approach to this literature in its forthright address to the powerful castes whom the author, Sharankumar Limbale, holds responsible for the impoverishment and humiliation of the Dalit. In his discourse of revolt, Limbale seeks to transform their consciousness and bring an end to injustice. However, he places his high-caste translator, Alok Mukherjee, as a collaborator in the English version, in the paradoxical position of the minoritized other, working to attack the very standards that have enabled him to rewrite the text into the language of power. Limbale has engaged strategically in this translation into what becomes for him the language of global access, making the translator a co-writer of the text in a process of self-education and social transformation.

Similarly, Arun Mukherjee is implicated as both accused and advocate in the struggle for social justice in her translation of *Joothan: A Dalit's Life*. Omprakash Valmiki has broken new ground in his autobiography in which he tells stories about the life of the Chuhra caste at the bottom rung of Indian society, hitherto unrepresented in literature by high-caste writers, and recounts his struggle to overcome physical and mental exploitation through education as advocated by B.R. Ambedkar, the leading Dalit intellectual. Although written in Hindi, Valmiki's autobiography uses the sociolect of the Dalit to describe the degradation of their daily activities. Consequently, in addition to the challenges of translating into the language of power, heightened in this case by the publication of the translation in both Delhi and New York, *Joothan* poses a problem for the translator in rendering the socially marked differences between the levels of Hindi in English where the Dalit words have no equivalent. Again, it is less the communicative function of language which is at stake in these translations than the politics of language. Both translations have had a significant impact not only in transforming the field of Indian literature, as evidenced in the granting of the New India Foundation Best Book Award (2004) to *Joothan* and the reviews and seminars discussing *Towards an Aesthetic of Dalit Literature*, but also in reorienting the parameters of postcolonial literary studies which had previously focused exclusively on works by high-caste Indian writers.

In different ways, all our translations get under the skin of language in what are deeply moving autobiographies inciting reflexive and interventionist translations.

Arun Mukherjee: The book that I have translated, Hindi Dalit writer Omprakash Valmiki's autobiography, is entitled *Joothan* in its original Hindi edition. In English, it was changed to *Joothan: A Dalit's Life*, so that prospective book buyers across India could get a quick sense of the book's contents and the Dalit identity of its author (the surname Valmiki denotes the author's low caste, "untouchable" status in the Hindi speaking North but not necessarily across the country as a whole). However, while neither of the two "Indian" words posed a barrier to the Indian book buyers, that is not the case for the North American readership. While the Indian publisher, where the book has been published as a paperback, did not need to worry about the comprehensibility of either "Joothan" or "Dalit," both of the words would erect a barrier for the North American reader. The word "untouchable" has had a global currency for at least two centuries now, yet Dalit is still unfamiliar in the Western world despite the fact that the "untouchables" decided to define themselves as "Dalits" more than fifty years ago. This shift in self-identity from the pejorative and humiliating, externally imposed word, "untouchable," to a self-chosen identity cannot be captured by a literal translation. Literally, the word Dalit means crushed, or ground down. It has been normally used to describe the process of grinding grains and lentils. In its striking metaphoric use, it declares to the world that the people calling themselves Dalit know that they are oppressed, and, also, who their oppressors are. In this regard, the decision taken by the Columbia University Press to use the title *Joothan: An Untouchable's Life* on the dust jacket is instructive. Although I was not consulted about this, I assume they did it because they felt that Americans know enough about "untouchables" to be attracted to an "untouchable" writer's book. Certainly, two unknown, "foreign" words in the title would not have helped book sales.

My first task as a translator was to inform the readers about the history of the Dalit struggle which led to the change in nomenclature. Analogically, it is a struggle similar to that waged by African and Aboriginal North Americans. My second, and even more difficult task was to explain the word "joothan" and its anchoring in the Hindu religious codes about purity and pollution. Part of my work, then, has been cultural explanation: neither "joothan" nor "Dalit" has an English equivalent and as I could not think of any appropriate substitution for them, I decided to use the original, untranslated/untranslatable words in the title and explain them in the "Introduction." Let me now read you a passage from the text and hope that the meaning of the word will gradually unfold to you, not only its broader cultural meaning, but its deeply personal meaning to the Dalit author:

During weddings, when the guests and the *baratis*, those who had accompanied the bridegroom as members of his party, were eating their meals, the Chuhra's would sit outside with huge baskets. After the bridegroom's party had eaten, the dirty *pattals*, or leaf plates, were put in the Chuhra's baskets, which they took home to save the *joothan* that was sticking to them. The little remnants of *pooris*, puffed bread; bits of sweetmeats; and a little bit of

vegetable were enough to make them happy. They ate the *joothan* with a lot of relish. . . .

We dried in the sun the pieces of *pooris* that we collected from the leaf plates. We would spread a cloth on a *charpai*, a rope-string cot, to dry them. Often, I would be placed on guard duty because the drying *pooris* attracted crows, hens, and dogs. Even a moment's lapse and the *pooris* would vanish. Hence one would have to sit near the cot with a stick in hand.

The dried up *pooris* were useful during the hard days of the rainy season. We would soak them in water and then boil them. The boiled *pooris* were delicious with finely ground red chilli pepper and salt. . . .

When I think about all those things today, thorns begin to prick my heart. What sort of a life was that? After working hard day and night, the price of our sweat was just *joothan*. And yet no one had any grudges. Or shame. Or repentance. (*Joothan* 10-11)

Alok Mukherjee: I have translated a non-fictional work by Sharankumar Limbale, who is a very well-known Dalit writer from Maharashtra. In English, it is called *Towards an Aesthetic of Dalit Literature: Histories, Controversies and Considerations* and is translated from Marathi. I should say that the original Marathi was somewhat different. It was simply called *Dalit Sahityache Saundaryashastra* which meant "The Aesthetics of Dalit Literature." So there is a discussion to be had about the change of the title itself. But the title is not the only thing that changed. The book itself changed in the translation process. One of the things Barbara read from Nicole Brossard is that reading someone's translation is a process of unveiling for the author of the original text. In this book, that unveiling happens by way of an interview that I had with the author and we agreed to put the interview in the book and that changed the book also.

I want to read a short section, where Limbale describes the revolutionary and liberatory nature of his conception of Dalit literature as well as of the centrality of the human being in it:

Are human beings only beauty-mad? Do they only want pleasure? The answer to both questions is no, because hundreds of thousands of people appear to be passionate about freedom, love, justice and equality. They have sacrificed themselves for these ideals. This implies that for them social values are at least as dear to their lives as, if not dearer than, values of art. Equality, freedom, justice and love are the basic sentiments of people and society. They are many times more important than pleasure and beauty.

There has never been a revolution in the world for the sake of pleasure and beauty. Many governments have been overturned for equality, freedom and justice. This is history. The literature that glorifies pleasure gives central place to the pleasure-seeking aesthete. The literature that promotes equality, freedom and justice is revolutionary, and it emphasizes the centrality of the human being and society. If pleasure-giving literature arouses joy and sympathy in people, revolutionary literature awakens consciousness of self-respect. (*Towards* 119)

BG: As you can hear, these are strong words. All three of these texts might be considered interventionist. As literature of commitment, they participate in transformational movements, but movements that are rooted in a particular place and time. Arun and Alok, what are the implications of

translating the texts of Dalit writers of India for a very different audience here in Toronto today? How do considerations of the objectives of the socio-political movement affect your selection of the text to translate?

Arun: If a Dalit writer is an activist, I would say that the translator is also an activist. My journey to the point of becoming a translator of *Joothan* is the journey of coming into consciousness about the unjust social order and my place in it. Once I became very aware of questions about voice and agency, which are also very important in Canada, particularly in terms of First Nations literature, I became very uncomfortable teaching “postcolonial” writers from South Asia because they are high caste and high class writers which are being read as the marginalised or subalterns. In fact, neither Rohinton Mistry nor Arundhati Roy is a subaltern, but that is how they are being framed in the courses on Postcolonial and Diaspora literatures in the West. I was deeply influenced by the appropriation of voice debate, and I wanted to find out, after Mistry and Roy’s texts became best sellers, whether there was another Dalit representation, whether there was self-representation that I could compare these writers’ texts to. That’s how I reached the work of my writer, Omprakash Valmiki. I wouldn’t have found it as it isn’t something easily available or much talked about, but something I had to actively look for. Once I got *Joothan* in my hand, I could not put it down. As I have said in my “Foreward”: “*Joothan* had a visceral effect on me because in writing his life story of being born in the Chuhra caste and growing up in Barla in Northern India, Valmiki spoke of the realities and contradictions of my society that thick walls of denial had shut out” (x).

Basically, I grew up in a small town in India, which was very similar to the town Valmiki describes. Again, in my “Foreword,” I said:

[*Joothan*] brought to surface, as a scalpel penetrating deep into the flesh, the details of my childhood and adolescence in a small town in northern India where casteism and untouchability were “normal,” [Columbia changed the word “normal” to “accepted.” I had normal in quotation marks.] where untouchables cleaned our latrines and carried the excrement away on their heads. When they asked for water, it was poured into their cupped hands, from a distance. No untouchables studied with me in my school or later at college.
(ix)

So, ultimately, it wasn’t so much “the objectives of the socio-political movement” as such but the book’s profound impact on me that made me want to translate it. For the first time, I was reading a book that attacked the “normalcy” of untouchability in my society and as I had experienced it in my childhood and adolescence.

BG: Alok, how did you come to translate your text?

Alok: Well, for some of the same reasons Arun talked about. I guess we were all grappling with the whole notion of literature and especially

literature from South Asia and how it was being framed in a certain way under the rubric of postcolonialism. I certainly was very troubled by the exclusions and the presentation of writing from South Asia only in the context of a colonizer/colonized framework when we knew there were other more pressing issues that the continent faced right now. One of them obviously was the issue of caste. I had become aware of Dalit literature. A major question in my mind was how we approach and read these literatures. When I came across a piece from Limbale's book in a Hindi journal, I was quite taken by it. I should say it was during a course I was doing at York University. I read that piece and translated it. I liked it so much because I thought it provided a different way of thinking about this literature. I sent the translation back to the journal, which had published the Hindi version. They sent it to Limbale and he got in touch with me and we met. The idea of translating the whole work developed from there. As I talked to Limbale more about it, we both felt that the text also needed to be contextualized. Here was an interventionist text that was turning the notion of aesthetics in India on its head. Yet, we were both concerned that unless we put it in a kind of theoretical and critical context, its meaning may be lost to an outer audience.

There are different kinds of interventions that have happened with the text, starting with the translation itself. Limbale was concerned about people not being familiar with the language, with the concepts, with the history that he was trying to deal with. He needed more than a "literal" translator to communicate all of that and put that in a frame. I am still grappling with the whole process of what we did with the original book and, of course, the interview, which was not in the original book, but which, again, unveils or tries to pin down some of the things he said. So, there is a series of interventions through which this book comes to a reader of the English version. And then, of course, there is the publisher, which we will come to later, but I didn't have as horrendous experiences as Arun did with Columbia.

BG: There are two things that arise from what you were both saying. One is that in the discussion of the Dalit aesthetic, there is a great deal made of the fact that one of the preferred genres of literature is that of autobiography, a kind of testimonial about the life and experience of someone marginalized or otherwise oppressed. However, because in the section Arun read, the writing is concerned to expose the continual degradation against which the writers and their compatriots struggle, the subject matter of these texts is often deeply disturbing. Alok, I was really interested to notice the framing of your text in the newspaper image you displayed where the picture of the author is accompanied in large letters by the "lofty image of grief."

Alok: Which is a phrase from Limbale's book . . .

BG: Which they use as the headline to highlight the affective dimensions of the situation of oppression. As translators, you are engaged with these testimonials, as you both outlined, in ambiguous ways. You stand accused in some aspects of your normal way of life and even of trying to intervene in the process of social change through translation from your position of relative privilege. Members of the Literary Translators' Association of Canada were talking last week in Montreal about the impact on the translator of working with difficult material of varying sorts—the example was a book about the genocide in Rwanda—material that is profoundly emotionally disturbing for the reader/translator. I wondered what kind of impact the “lofty grief” had on you? How did you negotiate your relation to it? How are the marks of that negotiation visible in some of your choices of material or ways of translating certain passages? Did you find you were turning away from certain things and had trouble grappling with the impact of the exposure of the depth of degradation depicted?

Arun: As people have commented in India, a lot of the material in Dalit literature and in *Joothan* in particular, is very unfamiliar subject matter for many people. This subject matter never appears in high caste Hindu literature, which is what people in Canada read as postcolonial literature. Yes, there is a lot of the material in this text that I had never experienced personally. For example, no Hindi literary text by a high caste writer describes what Dalits have to do when an animal dies in the village. This caste specific job is an integral part of rural India's economic and social life, and yet, the high caste written literatures across India have never thematised it. Their portrayals of rural life are mostly in the form of pastoral nostalgia that the urban writer remembers as a lost paradise. Valmiki, on the other hand, focuses on the gritty materiality of this wretched job that is performed under duress and without payment. It is the Dalits' duty to remove the carcass as soon as possible. Valmiki has a long, painful sequence in the narrative where the child narrator is summoned from the school as his father is not home, and the mother cannot afford to lose the money that can be made by selling the hide. Valmiki goes with his uncle and together they cut up the animal. They have to be careful of the vultures. Valmiki is very small physically, and yet his uncle doesn't care. He demands that Valmiki also skin the hide. The narrator is totally aghast. He has never done it before because his parents wanted him to go to school and not be part of this profession. Nonetheless, his uncle could care less and makes the child Valmiki carry the heavy hide on his head. Valmiki describes the blood from the hide soaking his body and his clothes and his embarrassment as they pass by his school with great anger and vividness: “The wounds from the torment that I suffered with Uncle on that hot afternoon are still fresh on my skin” (41).

Valmiki has to walk two miles with the hide on his head. Once the hide is brought home, they salt it, and cure it over the next several days. And finally they take it to the city to sell it for 25 rupees. Because the hide is impure, no Hindu rickshaw-puller would take them. So it is a Muslim

tonga driver who would take Valmiki to the bone market. Now such experiences have never been inscribed in Indian literature. The smell of the bone market, the skinning and curing of hides, the way animals are disposed of in the village, you will never find such topics discussed in high caste literature.

If I may give an anecdote here which is very telling about culture and about how impossible it is to translate through cultures, the Columbia editor sent an email to me and to the Indian publisher asking why Valmiki says that this work is unpaid because he did make 25 rupees by selling that hide. We were totally shocked by this response. We asked Valmiki to respond to this query. He replied that the labour of moving the animal was not paid for, that if he had made something out of another's garbage, that was not payment. I would think this point is crystal clear, but to an American's mind, it is not.

Alok: You have posed some very important questions. I'd like to answer them by first reading portions of the book where Limbale talks about what Dalit literature is. Then, I'll try to explain what my challenge was as a high caste, privileged translator.

Dalit literature is precisely that literature which artistically portrays the sorrows, tribulations, slavery, degradation, ridicule and poverty endured by Dalits. This image is but a lofty image of grief.

Every human being must find liberty, honour, security, and freedom from intimidation by the powerful elements of society. These values are now being articulated in a particular kind of literature—its name being Dalit literature. Recognizing the centrality of the human being, this literature is thoroughly saturated with humanity's joys and sorrows. It regards human beings as supreme, and leads them towards total revolution. (30)

Limbale then talks about Dalit literature as a literature of “rejection and revolt”:

‘Rejection’ and ‘revolt’ in Dalit literature have been birthed from the womb of Dalits’ pain. They are directed against an inhuman system that was imposed on them. Just as the anguish expressed in Dalit literature is in the nature of a collective social voice, similarly, the rejection and revolt are social and collective. (31)

In terms of your question regarding the Dalit writers’ preference for the autobiographical form, then, Limbale is quite clear: the experience that Dalit writing narrates is not that of just one individual but a collective experience that is embodied in one individual. This was, shall I say, one of the challenges I had to grapple with as a privileged translator brought up on the bourgeois autobiography about domestic disappointments, lost love and the protagonist’s coming into consciousness and so on. The “rejection” that Limbale talks about, is not only thematic, it is also formal. The Dalit writer’s “revolt” against society is also a revolt against that society’s valorized literary forms. As a translator, I had to understand that,

and disabuse myself, as it were, of the received notions of what constituted proper literature.

That was the first challenge. Another challenge was to deal with my own complicity as a high caste Hindu male with an advanced English education in the social order that Limbale wants Dalit writing to reject. As a beneficiary of the social order which Limbale wishes to “reject,” how do I translate faithfully without letting my feelings, my emotions, indeed, my selfhood interfere and, thus, knowingly or unknowingly distort what he is saying? In other words, translation had to be a highly self-conscious activity on my part. Let me quote Limbale so you can understand what I am saying:

This rejection is aimed at the unequal order which has exploited Dalits. Its form is double-edged—rejecting the unequal order, and demanding equality, liberty, fraternity and justice. To use a legal concept, the rejection in Dalit literature constitutes a ‘just remedy’.

Revolt is the stage that follows anguish and rejection. ‘I am human, I must receive all the rights of a human being’—such is the consciousness that gives birth to this revolt. Born from unrestrained anguish, this explosive rejection and piercing revolt is like a flood with its aggressive character and an insolent, rebellious attitude. (31)

The “unequal order” from which Limbale seeks a “just remedy” is one that has benefited someone like me; it has given me certain entitlements. So, when he talks about the “aggressive character” and the “insolent, rebellious attitude” of Dalit literature, I am, in a deep sense, implicated. The “just remedy” involves not only the gaining of “equality, liberty, fraternity and justice” by Dalits, but also the giving up of privileges, of the “norms,” as it were, that I had taken for granted—not just social, economic and political norms, but cultural, aesthetic, literary and linguistic as well. As translator, then, I was required to develop a certain humility, an acceptance of my complicity—not defensiveness, mind you—in approaching the text.

And this was especially important vis-à-vis the question of language, and at two levels at least. The first related to how I approached the language of the text. It had a particular texture, and certain structural, syntactical, logical and philological particularities, which were not necessarily consistent with the norms of language and expression to which I was accustomed due to my class, caste and training. There would have been a great temptation to “normalize” Limbale’s way of expressing himself, that is to say, make it more like the language of the sophisticated theorist. By no means am I saying that Limbale’s ideas were not sophisticated, but that he had chosen a particular way of expressing them in order to foreground his subject position and his politics. I had to become conscious of his strategy, and to immerse myself in it, in a sense, to get out of my skin.

At another level, then, but related to the first, was Limbale’s view of the proper language of Dalit literature. He says:

The reality of Dalit literature is distinct and so is the language of this reality. It is the uncouth-impolite language of Dalits. It is the spoken language of Dalits. This language does not recognize cultivated gestures and grammar. . . .

For their writing, Dalit writers have used the language of the quarters rather than the standard language. Standard language has a class. Dalit writers have rejected the class of this standard language. Cultured people in society consider standard language to be the proper language for writing. Dalit writers have rejected this validation of standard language by the cultured classes, because it is arrogant. To Dalit writers, the language of the basti [that is, settlement] seems more familiar than standard language. In fact, standard language does not include all the words of Dalit dialects. Besides, the ability to voice one's experience in one's mother tongue gives greater sharpness to the expression. (33-34)

So, it is a different kind and a different way of writing. It rejects the theoretical and aesthetic writing coming from the high caste segment of society, which tends to use a generalized, universalist language—and prescribes it as the norm. As you can see from the pieces I have just read, a writer like Limbale is very direct and to the point of courting offence on the part of the non-Dalit, particularly the high caste reader. My challenge was to try and not lose the sharpness, the energy and the power of the writing. For that, I had to understand the politics of language that Limbale is referring to, not just understand but honour it. At the same time, I had to make sure that I did not succumb to some kind of “broken” or “dirty” English to render his text. This is not uncommon; numerous high caste, liberal-minded Indian writers have used such language to portray Dalit characters.

Often in the translating process, we went back and forth, discussing particular words, expressions and syntactical choices. There were places where our editor tried to soften the choice of words. After all, she had to keep in mind the target audience for the English version. No doubt, she was caught in a paradoxical situation: how to present a potentially offensive text in a way that would not offend! So, we had to have three-cornered discussions to make sure the text did not lose that vigour with which Limbale was addressing the issues. This was part of the negotiation that went on.

I am sorry to have gone on, but, then, you did ask some very crucial questions!

BG: This is something that happens in many cases of translation, the so-called ennobling effect: the texts one reads in translation are often more correct or use a more formal or polite level of discourse than the original text because translators and editors have trouble dealing with some of the raw truths that are exposed in the translations and they air-brush them. But you have started to talk about what is the next series of questions. What is there about language that it is seen as so important in the aesthetics or in the social movement of Dalits where it seems to have an identificatory function? The importance not only of naming but of self-naming has been addressed by both the authors you have translated. In fact, the two words

from the titles, “Dalit” and “Joothan,” are both very significant in the respective texts and come trailing a history as a marked category or, in the case of “Dalit,” as a strategic invention. In your translations, you have chosen to keep those original terms, a kind of “foreignizing” gesture in rendering them into English, but you have also, in the case of Alok, provided a glossary along with the translation. Again, these are choices that editors do not always allow translators to make—at least in the anglo-american world—since they aim to make the books accessible to the anglophone reader. They prefer to publish books that read as though they were written in English in the first place, texts which are “transparent” because translation is presented as unproblematic. How did you come to make those choices? What other kinds of negotiations did you have about the choice with the various parties—authors, editors, publishers, etc.—with whom you were in dialogue?

Alok: As you have said, I may already have anticipated some of these questions. I have referred to the temptation to “normalize” the text, that is, translate it in what Limbale calls “standard language,” versus the political importance of retaining its “foreignness.” In this regard, one of the considerations between Limbale and me related to deciding which words were to be translated. Arun talked earlier about words being untranslatable, words like “joothan.” There was a politics involved in deciding which terms we did not want to render into English but use in their original—not because they were literally untranslatable but because their full meaning, the meaning that came from the context of their usage, could not be conveyed through literal translation. But the decision to retain these words in their original meant that there would be some words that needed to be explained. I was maintaining a list of items that I thought needed to be explained, and Limbale was doing the same thing. Our editor, too, had come up with her list.

Limbale and I sat down together after we got the final version of the manuscript from the publisher to decide whether we wanted to provide a glossary, which items we wanted included, and what our explanations should be. We were engaged in a collaborative process where we actually sat physically together and worked with the original text and the translation. Our first decision on whether or not to provide a glossary, was, obviously, a political decision. Limbale had written the book originally in Marathi for a regional circulation, but now he felt that a work like this was worthy of, and indeed, needed a wider circulation. However, in allowing it to be translated for that reason, he was concerned that it not lose its specificity and cultural context, nor did he want it to remain an inaccessible cultural curiosity! So, we agreed that while certain expressions, allusions, references, etc. would not be translated, we would explain them in a glossary to aid the unfamiliar reader. Just to underline the significance of this decision, I should tell you that these unfamiliar readers were not only non-Indian but Indian as well. As I reported to Limbale, a very well-known, senior Indian academic had emphasized to

me the need for a glossary because, as she had explained, there were many aspects of Marathi Dalit life, history, culture and language that were as unfamiliar to other Indians as they might be to people outside India.

We took each item from our three lists and had quite lengthy conversations to decide which items to include in the glossary, who might not know what, and so on. For instance: Would all readers know the reference to the “Southborough Commission”? Is *basti* translatable? As a matter of fact, sometimes these discussions went beyond the issue of a glossary. For example, our editor and I had a very interesting, and, in fact, very important exchange on the subject of nomenclature. The pre-eminent leader of the Dalit movement in India is Dr. Ambedkar. Dalits will never refer to him simply as Ambedkar. He is always referred to as Baba Saheb Ambedkar or Dr. Ambedkar, and those are the ways in which Limbale addresses him throughout the book. However, there is an asymmetry because when he refers to Mahatma Gandhi, it is only as Gandhi, and not Mahatma Gandhi. This is not accidental or a careless slip-up. The impoliteness is quite intended because a large section of Dalits holds Gandhi responsible for political betrayal and for denigrating its revered leader, Dr. Ambedkar. This view of Gandhi is clearly not in keeping with the high regard accorded to him by non-Dalit Indians. Our editor tried to domesticate this asymmetry by suggesting that in the English text we change Limbale’s practice and refer to Ambedkar as Baba Saheb only once and not repeatedly. As someone who had been accustomed to addressing Gandhi as Mahatma Gandhi, as that had been the normal practice in the society I came from, the suggestion was tempting as it would have made the implied disparagement of Gandhi less visible. However, had I succumbed to it, I would have imposed on the text my caste privilege. So, difficult as it was, I insisted that Limbale’s practice with nomenclature will be maintained in the translation.

As it turned out, we needed to work through the text line by line. We needed to make sure that the book offended those that it needed to offend!

Arun: There is a glossary provided in the Columbia edition but there is none in the Indian edition. Columbia added a lot of footnotes, totally unnecessary, I think. Basically, they seem to think that the reader is a total fool. I tried to argue with them on the basis of my experience as a teacher of Postcolonial literatures. I explained to them that my students can guess a word’s meaning from its context, and that not every word has to be explained. Every time I look at the Columbia edition, I feel very unhappy at the result. I’ll give you an example: the editor wanted to change the word “peon” to “gopherboy” as according to her no one knows that word in America. Although the editor did not change it due to my loud protest, I notice that after the word “peon,” she has inserted “office helper” in square brackets. Stuff like that throughout the text bothers me a lot. There is also what Himani Bannerji would call the process of “otherization.” In the Indian edition, they have kept the kinship terms like Mama, Chacha and Tau. In the Columbia edition, Mama has been changed to “my

mother's brother" and Chacha to "my father's brother." I think that is very sad because it suggests that kinship relations and kinship based modes of address do not matter.

BG: What you are talking about here is how one of the processes of publication resulted in a practice of "domesticating" and normalizing into American practices key terms with a complex grounding in a very different cultural context and set of social relations that have no parallel in the target language.

Arun: But if I may intervene, it is not normalization. If it had been, then they would have just used "my uncle." That would have been better and more attractive than saying "my mother's brother."

BG: Or a perceived normalization in a pedagogic impulse leading to these strange dislocations. What you have been emphasizing is the fact you are dealing with the vocabulary of a particular caste, what in the case of Limbale's text, is a regional language, Marathi, but nonetheless one of the official languages of India. What has happened in the translating, then, is a movement into English, which is not only a widely spoken language in India by a particular class but is, moreover, the language of global capital. The kinds of hierarchies of power entailed in this linguistic and cultural transfer are extremely complex. Translation from and into a hegemonic language (infraduction/supraduction) engages different relations of power. Also, implicated in the act of translation are long histories of translating texts from South Asia into English, a whole Orientalist tradition of archaizing and exoticizing translations as well as challenges to this tradition. I wondered if you might talk a bit more explicitly about the relations between the function of English in India and the English of the North American world in which the translated text is now circulating. What kinds of contradictions are there in the relationships between translator, author and text when you are trying to translate for two audiences? What effect does a translation have when, done for one audience, it is then adapted and transformed for a very different audience?

Arun: When I translated the text, I didn't think of the North American audience. I was thinking of an Indian audience, and so I used Indian English. It was only later that the Indian publisher was able to sell the rights to Columbia, where unbeknownst to me, the text went through another editing process. But talking about the place of English in India, I would say that it is a very interesting and contradictory thing. I was very pleasantly surprised when my translation of *Joothan* from Hindi into English led to a Tamil translation of *Joothan* from my English translation. So there is not as much to and fro between Indian languages and English becomes the language of mediation. The Tamil version of *Joothan* is already out. A segment has been translated into Malayalam and published in a major Malayalam magazine. These translations have been a very

interesting revelation to me. Different kinds of readers are reading the text now, and that became very obvious to me when we did a book launch at the University of Delhi. There were more than 200 people there; many among them were young Indians who don't know Hindi, and it was a great thing for them to have access to this text in English. I continue to get emails from different parts of the world, from Dalit readers, from speakers of Telugu, speakers of Punjabi, who have read the text in English. A journalist in England read it and went on to make a two part series on Dalits for the CBC's *Ideas*.

Alok: I guess the questions about contradictions that a translator faces when a text is meant for two audiences, or when a translation, done for one audience, is adapted and transformed for a quite different audience, are most directly relevant for Arun. But the question as to who in the mind of a Dalit writer is the intended reader of a Dalit text was an important question for Limbale and me as well, given his definition of what is Dalit literature. Again, I would first like to read something from Limbale:

By Dalit literature, I mean writing about Dalits by Dalit writers with a Dalit consciousness. The form of Dalit literature is inherent in its Dalitness, and its purpose is obvious: to inform Dalit society of its slavery, and narrate its pain and suffering to upper caste Hindus. (19)

As you can see, from the very beginning, Limbale had two audiences in mind, and believed that the same text could have two different transformative purposes. Given India's polyglot nature and the role that English plays as a "link" language of culture and power, his decision to have the text translated in English was very much a strategic decision. Nevertheless, in the process of unveiling that took place when I interviewed him, I pursued the question of audiences at some length.

When asked who he was trying to reach through his writing, Limbale chose to respond in terms of power to bring about change. He said:

[I]t is not as if the Dalit movement is exclusively for Dalit society. Dalit questions are linked to the caste system. Until the caste system is annihilated, our problems will not be eradicated. These questions will not be resolved only because Dalits have agitated, got organized in the early 1960s, and embraced transformative thought. The answer to these questions is in the hands and hearts of the whole savarna [that is, high caste] society. This will not be a matter of weapons. We do not believe in violence, we adhere to non-violence. Our war is a war of ideas. Dalit literature seeks to transform savarna society, to bring about change in the heart and mind of the savarna individual. Dalit literature will have two dimensions. One will be to familiarize Dalits with their past, to explain to them that they are enslaved, to show them that they are human beings and it is their duty and their right to fight for the rights of a human being. The other dimension of Dalit literature will involve working on the hearts and minds of savarna society in order to persuade them about the rights and entitlements of Dalits, to make them see that these are human beings and have been suppressed, and convince them that they must change. (125)

It is clear from Limbale's reference to "working on the hearts and minds of savarna society" that he sees Dalit writing within a context of hegemonic contestation. This becomes even more evident from his answer to my follow-up question as to whether the same writing was appropriate for both a Dalit audience and a non-Dalit audience:

Yes it is. When Dalit readers read my autobiography, *Akkarmashi*, which has been translated into several Indian languages, they write from all over India to praise me: 'You have confronted us with the degrading life that we have led. Yes, you have made us realize that we must get united to fight.' On the other hand, when savarna readers read this book, they write to me, 'Limbaleji, we feel ashamed that our ancestors have committed such excesses on your society. We feel that this is very shameful.' It is very good that such feelings and sentiments are produced in the savarna reader. It generates a guilty conscience in the savarna reader; and not only guilt, but also a conviction that the injustices and excesses that have been committed against Dalits must not continue. So the same book can generate these different responses. (125-126)

So, choosing to have this book translated into English was to pursue that objective by getting it circulated as widely as possible. I hope you can see the paradoxical nature of this translation. Limbale does not simply want to reach a wider audience. He wants to reach those whom he holds responsible for the condition in which Dalits find themselves. He wants to offend them and educate them. He wants to make them feel guilty and win them over in a war of ideas, because they have the power to right the wrong that their ancestors have perpetrated in the name of religion and that they continue to benefit from. It is an ambitious project, the more so because he engages in this endeavour in "the uncouth-impolite language" of rejection and revolt.

And the situation is further complicated by his decision to choose English as the medium of translation. But, then, as I have said before, it was a strategic decision, I believe. English in India today is not the colonizer's language recalling a colonial past, but the language of power, culture and global access—emblematic of the ultimate in privilege. It is officially constructed both as a "link language" within the country and as a "window" on, or a "pipeline" to, the rest of the world. It is the language through which aesthetic and cultural standards are mediated. I would suggest that to choose this language to offend, educate and engage society, to present a mirror, as it were, is both audacious and pragmatic.

BG: All three of these books have translator's prefaces, and *Towards an Aesthetic of Dalit Literature* also has an interview with the author appended to the end. In the one review of my translation of *Intimate Journal* which has appeared to date, it is the preface which has been criticized. Prefaces or other signs of explicit intervention or interference in a text that draw attention to the process of language transfer are often considered problematic by North American reviewers and editors who embrace a translation ideal of immediacy and fluency over linguistic density and disruption. Yet in recent years in translation circles much has

been made of the “visibility” of the translator and the preface as the site of the inscription of the translator, the site where one may most readily discern the translator-function creating cultural value. Prefaces are the hinges where are negotiated the changing relations of address between the author’s and the translator’s audiences. Through prefaces, as well as neologisms, footnotes, endnotes, glossaries, and other devices, the translator’s processes of selection and decision making are exposed. This self-reflexivity about the work of cultural mediation flies in the face of a certain immediacy of contact with the contents of the text which is positively valued in North American culture. Many critics view such prefaces negatively because, on the one hand, the text should be able to stand on its own, on the other, the preface emphasizes the pedagogical over the performative functions of the translated text, that is, to return to the venerable dictums of Samuel Johnson, to highlight instruction over pleasure as aesthetic effects. The performative element of the text should, it is felt, move us in and of itself rather than through preaching to the reader. What made you decide to write a preface to your translations? Is problematizing the translation by drawing attention to it necessary for interventionist texts? Or, what are the politics of prefaces in cross-cultural transactions?

Arun: Well, I guess if some people have criticized the prefaces, it suggests to me that they are invested in this whole universalistic idea, that a good text stands for itself. I would say that by writing the “Foreword” and the “Introduction,” although we may not have gotten rid of the idea of universality, we have certainly problematized it. Every text does need interpretation, and contextualization, but the North American reviewers and critics object to it because the texts of their culture, or rather the white Anglo Saxon texts, are transparent to them. They then apply an ethnocentric universalistic standard and demand that *all* texts be transparent to them. As for the pleasure seekers, whosoever they are, Dalit writers have expressly stated that giving pleasure is not their primary, or even secondary aim. When Limbale talks about Dalit literature as “the lofty image of grief,” I believe he makes a revolutionary statement about literature and our bourgeois expectations. I agree with Limbale that there are millions of readers who are passionate about creating a just society and read literature not just for a *frisson* but for the transformation of consciousness. I am often struck by how often I come across metaphors of delectation when I read reviews of literary texts in North America. While I am not saying that we should not read books for sheer pleasure or entertainment, and I do that all the time, we should not demand that pleasure be the ultimate test of a book’s merit.

But I would go further and question the whole definition of pleasure as it is implied by these metaphors of savouring and tasting. In fact, reading *Joothan* gives me a lot of pleasure. You get the pleasure by thinking, “Wow, somebody has said it! This shit has been exposed. It is about time.” The anger and the satire and the mockery in these texts, I

think, are all pleasure producing because you feel happy at the fact that things are no longer being pushed under the rug, that the truth about the smothering and unjust social system is being exposed. I'm sure feminist texts have a similar effect on women readers who identify as feminists. The Dalit readers who write to Limbale or to Valmiki tell them that they loved the book because for the first time they saw themselves reflected in a book. So, these Dalit readers felt pleasure at being represented. I guess those who are in denial about the evils of the social system won't feel pleased.

There are lots of readers in India who have squirmed at reading these texts and who have also found them aesthetically lacking. Obviously, they are high caste readers who use the criteria of pleasure, formal perfection and objectivity. T. S. Eliot's idea of the "objective correlative" is still very popular among Indian critics. They also accuse these Dalit texts of being untruthful. As I point out in my "Introduction," some of these eminent critics have accused Dalit writers of seeking affirmative action in the sphere of literature, which, according to them, is entirely based on merit. It would seem, then, that Dalit texts are not universally pleasing.

Alok: Before I respond to the question about the "Translator's Introduction" and the commentary, I would like to talk about the issue of pleasure that both Arun and Barbara have referred to. Barbara has cited Samuel Johnson to call attention to the supposed dichotomy between instruction and pleasure. Limbale problematizes the concepts of pleasure and beauty as aesthetic values because, in his view, they are hegemonic concepts implicated in class and caste:

[O]ne must recognize that beauty related experiences are object-specific, person-specific, and situation-specific—there cannot be a general concept of beauty. . . . If pleasure is the basis of aesthetics for Marathi savarna literature, pain or suffering is the basis of the aesthetics of Dalit literature. Will readers be distressed or angered or will they be pleased by reading the pain and revolt expressed in Dalit literature? It is a literature that is intended to make readers restless or angry. How can the aestheticism in discussions of beauty be reconciled with the 'Dalit consciousness' in Dalit literature? . . . This is why it is important for Dalit critics to change the imaginary of beauty. In every age, the imaginary of beauty is linked to prevailing ideas. At one time, for example, kings and emperors used to be the subject of literature. But today, the life lived in huts and cottages situated outside the boundary of the village has become the subject of literature. It has become necessary to transform the imaginary of beauty because it is not possible to investigate the creation of Dalit literature and its commitment to revolt and rejection within the framework of traditional aesthetics. (115)

Limbale's reference here is to both, the brahminical Sanskrit aesthetics which regards the evocation of pleasant and noble feelings and sentiments—*rasa*—as the highest purpose of literature, as well as the Western aesthetics which valorizes the cathartic effect of literature. Both are presented as having universal relevance. And it is this claim to universality that Limbale interrogates:

Dalit literature is not pleasure-giving literature. Consequently, the aesthetics of Dalit literature cannot be based on the principles of an aestheticist literature that privileges pleasure derived from beauty. This is why there is a felt need for a separate Dalit aesthetics. (116)

So, there is a different perspective on the whole question of pleasure that Limbale brings out.

Now, turning to the question about the prefatory apparatus undermining the performative role of the text, let me say that writing the “Translator’s Introduction” and the commentary was something that I was very hesitant about. From my point of view, it was important that Limbale’s voice came first; even the physical positioning of different pieces was a concern. But as I began to talk to Limbale about it, his feeling was that politically and strategically, his text needed to be contextualized and put within a certain framework. I was not just the translator for him, but a collaborator in creating another text that would be based on the Marathi original. It was his insistence as much as anything else that caused the prefatory material to go in the front. I was saying to him, “you should write something yourself to go in the front, and if you insist, then my commentary can go in the back.” But he said that wouldn’t do because strategically, this is how this book will achieve a better circulation, that is to say, with my prefatory material. So, there is a kind of paradox here in that it is his ideas, concepts, analysis, that I wished to put forward through this translation, and here I am, a high caste translator, framing these for him. But I view it as an intended paradox, one in which both of us are complicit, whereby the Dalit writer uses the subject and authority position of a high caste, English educated translator working in a Western academic environment to achieve legitimation and reception for his text. I understood that Limbale’s insistence that I should write the prefatory material was based on a realistic appraisal of the casteist, classist and linguistic hurdles he would face in trying to reach an English-educated audience. The only consolation I have is that whatever I wrote, every word of it, went to him and we talked about it. Not only that, if you see the names of Dalit writers and critics who are mentioned in the acknowledgement, you will realize that Limbale took the preparation of the commentary one step further, turning it into a community process. He circulated drafts of the commentary among other eminent Dalit writers and they commented on it. So, it became a collaborative process. It has my name on it but it comes from a political process of discussion.

BG: I am sure that members of the audience have some questions to ask before we close with reading more extended sections from these books in translation. Does anybody have a question?

Audience: Which language did you use when discussing the translation of these texts? Since you translated two non-English speakers, who aren’t

able to understand what you are writing, I wonder if the writers also spoke English?

Arun: I have translated a few short stories and other things before, but no I don't translate extensively or intensively so I haven't looked for people who are non-English speakers whose voices I would want to understand. But I am very committed now to translating more Dalit literature. That is what I am doing right now. I am translating another Dalit book and so yes, I would continue to translate Dalit literature.

As to the second part of your question, Valmiki can read English quite well although he is not comfortable speaking it. He read the final draft before it went to the publisher. He made certain changes, not very extensive in terms of my style or comments but particular word choices. There were two words that he wanted changed back to the original Hindi words as the English translation just didn't work. Otherwise, he was very happy with the translation and the "Introduction." In fact, he had a friend translate my Introduction into Hindi and published it in a magazine named *Teesra Paksh* (the third perspective) that he edits.

Alok: I guess it is about the same for me. I have translated a couple of other Dalit stories from Hindi. Limbale, like Valmiki, can read English somewhat but he cannot speak in English. We would have interesting conversations on choices of words. He would say, "why have you used this word? It doesn't sound right." And then I would have to explain the word to him. Sometimes when some academic jargon slipped in, he would say, "Never heard that word before." For him, it was important for the text to be written in a language that all readers could understand. So, it was instructive for me too to have those exchanges with him.

If you read the commentary and then you read the translation, you will see the difference in the two registers. As for translating other writers who don't speak English, as Arun said, I think we have been in conversation with a community of Dalit writers and there is enough translation to do right there.

Audience: Thank you Barbara, Arun and Alok for very stimulating readings and discussion. My question is that since the theory of resistance literature lies in its politics, I would be interested in knowing how you would react to two areas in which this text would be received. One is when it is going to be taught in the Indian university which still, sadly enough, is caste ridden because we have a lot of students who come in under the so-called "SC/ST" category and yet there are no courses as such which teach Dalit or Adivasi literature. In fact, I am very grateful that you have translated these texts because now teachers have something to teach in university English departments or Comparative Literature departments. So, how would you react to this whole tension around a classroom where your text is being taught, and all these differences, both social and economic, that are part of the classroom dynamic?

Second, since the act of translation for you is a political one, it is an act of activism. The fact that this is especially intended for readers, for a literate audience and an audience who knows English, yet Arun has said that it has been translated for Indian audiences from English, in what way then do you see the transformative potential of the kind of work that you are doing for the vast majority of people who cannot access these texts because they cannot read?

Arun: These are two very different questions, one about the universities and the other about those who cannot read. To attack the first one, I think I wrote one section of my introduction very conscious of the words that were spoken by a very influential Indian academic who said at a conference that the problem with Dalit texts is that they are all the same; after you have read one text, they all begin to sound the same. They are not teachable, he said. So, one section of my translation is subtitled, “Joothan as a Dalit literary text,” and I tried to do a literary analysis to say that there is a literary quality to it and you can teach it.

As far as the dynamics of this caste-ridden hierarchical university classroom is concerned, we face the same realities in Canada where I teach First Nations literature or minority Canadian literature. The classroom is a very conflicted space. There is a lot of anger, targeted sometimes at the teacher. Some students will say, “This class is not really looking at literature or literary aspects of the text, but it is looking at racism and there is no such thing as racism.” I have tried to articulate that experience of teaching those kinds of things in Canada in a piece that I have written recently and it has just come out in a volume called *Homework: Postcolonialism, Pedagogy & Canadian Literature*. It is not easy teaching Dalit or minority Canadian texts, and there is no formula for pre-empting the difficulties. It is about living, and the classroom always remains a volcano that can erupt at any moment.

The second question of how you can reach those who cannot read—obviously, this translation is not for those who cannot read. That question is always asked of Dalit writers. They are constantly being asked about what is the point of writing their books as the majority in their community cannot read. Both Limbale and Valmiki respond to that question. They get letters from lots of Dalit readers, not just from cities but also from villages. Valmiki also talks in the text about something that can be roughly translated as “story-telling” sessions where he and other writers go and read their stories to a Dalit audience. So, that is how they are reaching people who cannot read.

Alok: Even when these texts are taught in their original language—I know that Limbale’s works are taught in Marathi in the universities of Maharashtra—even then there are all kinds of unpredictable reactions based on who the teachers are. So, it is to be expected that something similar would happen, at least in some of the classrooms. Two months ago in Kerala, there was a seminar on the teaching of Dalit literature and this

book was one of the books that were discussed. The report that I got reminded me of all the kinds of reactions that Arun was talking about related to the denial that we encounter here. And we have been talking about how you deal with it. On the other hand, the other interesting part is that those who want to teach more of these kinds of materials are also picking up, now that these texts are becoming available. Yesterday, I got a message from a professor from Hyderabad who is herself Dalit, that she is writing a whole lesson plan on this text for an M.A. course at one of the universities in India. So, there are two sides, which is to be expected.

Audience: It seems to me that your two experiences with publishers have been different. It seems to me that Columbia has been a big, bad guy in this situation. I wanted to know a little more about that story in terms of a transnational politics of publishing. What happens with editorial control in the process? It seems as though you have translated with the author and had quite a bit of discussion together, but then control is taken out of your hands. Does that have anything to do with copyright, the kind of dealings between publishing houses from India to Columbia? What is at stake with the issue of control? Alok seems to have had a very good experience in his relations with author and editor.

Alok: My editor was very respectful of Limbale's voice and my translation practice in general. When I did not like some of the editorial changes and pointed out to her the change in meaning they caused, she accommodated me. So, my relationship with the editor was very congenial and we remain good friends.

Arun: Well, the preparation of the Indian text was a very pleasant experience. My editor, who is also the publisher, and I worked very closely together and had an excellent relationship. But when it came to Columbia, the editor they appointed had absolutely no knowledge of India. The kind of interpolations and verbal and syntactic changes that she has made in the text without even consulting me have given me a lot of pain.

Audience: And they have the power to do it by contract?

Arun: No, but what does one do after the fact? If I were to challenge them, they can then suppress the book. I would feel ethically very uncomfortable then because Valmiki certainly wants the glory of being published abroad. That's what would happen if I made too much noise about what they have done with the text. I take comfort from the fact that someone I respect very much, who is a writer himself, told me: "Don't worry about these little blemishes. The book is still effective."

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