Caste in a Casteless Language? :
A translation view of Dalit literature in India

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My paper examines the role of English in shaping, framing and disseminating Dalit discourses in India. How a hegemonic language (which creates its own hierarchies) with no memory of caste of the kind that inhabits other Indian languages, appear suitable for translation of Dalit literature? Or is it? What are the means and strategies by which English helps form a vocabulary of human rights and inequality? As a translator and also as one interested in the many roles of English and the cultural economy and linguistic politics surrounding English, I am interested in the archive of Dalit literature in English. What is the nature of this translation, how does this translation (anuvaad) extend or address the imbalances of expression through casteism (manuvaad)? Who are the chief actors, producers, and readers, and what is the role and power of editors in 'creating' a particular archive of Dalitness in India? The paper builds partially upon a previous publication (2007), but also addresses the dynamic nature of questions that have emerged in the last few years.