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Translation, Activism and Dissent in Contemporary Protest Movements in India

Taking a cue from Mona Baker's call to bring translation as a central practice in the political arena if networks of solidarity "are to become more effective and reflect the values of horizontality, non – hierarchy, and pluralism that inform contemporary protest movements" this paper maps out the space of translation within the political economy of contemporary protest movements in India. The paper sees translation as a range of modalities and types of interactions that make visible and audible the voice of the other as intimately linked and enmeshed with the voice of/for the self. I explore instances of multilingual translations in contemporary protest movements in India as acts of affiliation and activism, nurturing networks of solidarity "across and along side communities of difference", as conversation, and as "integral elements of the revolutionary project". Such 'public' translations are constantly negotiating to reflect, to challenge and to transcend boundaries of space, time, and language. The paper further explores how translation not only acts as conversation, but also shapes the very spaces of protests, in the process translating the streets through its interaction with bodies gathered in these public demonstrations as a basis for political action and political collectives.