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The Mahabharata (1989 Film): Peter Brook's Intercultural Translation

The *Mahabharata* is the world's longest epic poem; it is an "itihasa," a "history" of the Bharata dynasty of northern India. In his adaptation for stage and film, the British director Peter Brook universalized this ancient Indian epic as a story of all humanity with an international cast. The appropriation raised indignant criticism from the Indian scholar Rustom Bharucha, "Brook has taken one of our most significant texts and decontextualised it from its history in order to sell it to audiences in the West." This paper examines Brook's intercultural translation based on Lawrence Venuti's concept of successful translation as deviating "from domestic norms to signal the foreignness of the foreign text and create a readership that is more open to linguistic and cultural differences." The paper also tries to uncover what has been left out of the film that would have enabled the foreign audience to better understand Hindu culture and investigates whether there is a third space created for cultural negotiation in the hybridized cultural translation.