Observations and Conclusions: A Summary

In our thesis “Translating gender politics: A practical translation and an analysis of Suchitra Bhattacharya’s *Udo Megh*” we have translated the Bengali novel into English and titled it as *The Stray Cloud* and discussed various linguistic issues in it as well as the gender problems which is at the core of the whole novel.

With a novel like *Udo Megh* it is interesting to talk about translation not just in terms of language, but also in terms of the translation between reality and fiction. The brutality faced by Shewli is any real life incident around us and Deya, extending her help to the hapless girl can be identified with any noble spirit amongst us. Even after finishing the novel we are glued to the gruesome reality of our society as the writer blatantly points at it and leaves a lingering impact on us. Such effect is inevitable when art draws from life. It is Suchitra Bhattacharya who could easily negotiate the tricky passage from reality to fiction without diluting the seriousness of the novel. The language as used by the characters is used as emphasis in an assertion of truth, a truth that reveals the unequal status of women. And the characters become the mouthpiece of revealing the face of the truth.

There were problems at different levels in terms of kinship terms, cultural items, honorifics, pun, onomatopoeic sounds, some unusual expressions and multi word expressions. In discussing the broad category of multiword expressions we have looked at the problems of translating echo word construction, reduplicated terms, collocations, idiomatic expressions, compound words, expressive etc. And in every case we have substantiated our points by citing examples from the text. Bengali and English have a wide cultural gap which in case of translation poses lot of problems for any translator.
The task of translation becomes tougher when one deals with Suchitra Bhattacharya as her use of language and experiment in style makes her writing very challenging to deal with. Finding equivalents often leads a translator to nowhere. And when so many Indian terms like *guru, chutney* or *masala* are assimilated in English vocabulary the translator at times find it very tricky to look for any English equivalent. It was tough for us to transfer always the humorous element, the witty remarks, and the metaphorical usage of *Udo Megh* into English. English fails to capture those cultural idiosyncrasies. We had to gloss many words because there were so many culturally loaded terms which needed explanation. We preferred to retain many of the original Bengali words in our English translation so that the target readers do not miss the flavor of the original.

We have also discussed the writing style of Suchitra Bhattacharya. Her world is not a world of fantasy. Her writing merges with the real word. We have talked about her minute observation of things which renders fine detailing to her style. And this detailing helps film directors to transform her novels into cinemas. Her frequent use of English words in *Udo Megh* captures an urban setting and also focuses on the fact that the colonizers’ language is no more restricted to academics and has become a part and parcel of modern way of living. Her use of Hindi words also reveals the impact of the national language on our mother tongue. The borrowing of words may not be as much as English but it has managed a place of its own though slowly. In metropolitan cities such inclination of bringing in Hindi words is much compared to the small states as industrialization and urbanization opens the gate of many linguistic communities coming together.

Suchitra Bhattacharya is a writer who loves to experiment with style and form. She does a marvelous job in bringing out a perfect blend of humor and serious philosophical thoughts. She brings in lots of intertextual references in *Udo Megh* from Sukumar Ray’s poems to provide humorous effect to the novel. The book is quite a page turner. One will be hooked till the end with its easy flow.
We have discussed the cognitive approach to metaphors and its relevance to translation which we have illustrated with examples from novel *Udo Megh*. We intended to show how translation serves as a means to generate and create new metaphorical expressions in the target language. Language is the indicator of the conceptual system and an evidence for what the system is like. Establishing the conceptualization on which a particular metaphorical expression is based is relevant for translation. Translatability is no longer the question of just an individual metaphorical expression as identified in the source text, but is linked to the conceptual system in the source and target culture. Certain universal experiences share underlying conceptual structure despite the absence of relevant linguistic expressions in every culture. Basing on such shared conceptual mapping it is possible to generate new metaphors in the target language. To discuss the problems of translating metaphors into English in the light of cognitive linguistics we have focused mainly on the arguments proposed by Lakoff and Johnson. Our discussions make the fact very clear that metaphorical thought is very relevant to an understanding of culture and society. In discussing the universality and diversity of metaphorical thought, cognitive approach gives us a better understanding.

We have focused on the social issues discussed in *Udo Megh* and from the language used in the novel we have tried to show how in the existing social system language is gendered and often used to silence and marginalize women. In the patriarchal set up man monopolizes language. Language becomes the mirror of gender discrimination. Hers should be the language of the shy and the submissive. And he is born with the right of using language without any restriction as such and where there is hardly any space of valorizing or praising women. Any attempt to cross this borderline is unexpected from a woman and such intrusion labels her as unruly and a man has every right to tame her. We have picked up many expressions like ‘nasto’, ‘meyechel’, ‘sati sabitri’ etc. from the text to substantiate our arguments.

The writer has incorporated many such words through her characters’ conversations to draw attention to the fact that the image of a woman is built up by such terms. From the beginning of a girl child’s birth the process of her becoming a woman is
initiated and language plays an important role in that. She grows up with the lesson to use a particular language befitting the male society and at the same time it is the language of the patriarchal society which projects her state of being positively or negatively.

The issue of Shewli is at the centre of the whole story and her forced prostitution has many things to talk about the so called civilized society. The last two sections of the novel are highly important where we find multiple voices in favor or against prostitution. We have brought forth those important issues to get a clear picture of the gender biased society.

In the novel we can place Deya and Shewli at two extreme ends — Shewli, a poor, uneducated girl from slums and Deya, a modern educated working woman. But a parallel can easily be drawn irrespective of their status and class and that is the fierce and painful gender struggle within the traditional society. Deya’s knowledge and empowerment might have made her more rational, aware or vocal yet she is a victim of the patriarchal system. The culmination of their love affair to marriage gave her great satisfaction but could she rebel when she had to run the family according to Soumya’s likings or dislikings? Why could not she stop Soumya whenever he needed to satiate his physical needs even when she did not like it? The reason might be the age old tradition of our society which teaches a girl from the beginning of her life that she should obey some rules. She is the home maker and it is her responsibility to do whatever she can do to sustain her marriage. She must endure pain silently for the sake of their marriage keep going. Deya loved Soumya and though his stubbornness and unrelenting attitude hurt her sometime she never thought of leaving him till Shewli came in their life and revealed the rottenness of their marriage which apparently looked simply perfect.

On the other hand stands Shewli, who is a victim of the brutal face of male oppression. The incident of rape not only violates her body and but also wound her soul. Udo Megh points fingers to those intellectuals who can talk like reformers while munching snacks or with a peg of wine but they close all doors for a girl like Shewli when it comes to help the distressed girl. The novel unmasks the faces of those hypocrites
who pretend to show sympathy but hate a victim of rape and have deep abhorrence for prostitution.

Shewli’s body is only a symbol of sexuality. Her chastity once lost makes her doubly marginalized in the male dominated society. Only she is blamed for the plunder. The actual culprit of it escapes the responsibility of answering.

When Deya takes the bold step to shelter Shewli in her house instead of appreciation she at every step is tried to be convinced that one should not make her hands dirty by voluntarily touching the filth. And to bring the filth of outside road to home is more foolish. And unfortunately women also become a part of the system. Hence in the society there are many like Deya’s mother, Ritam’s mother or Laxmi who too fail to sympathize with Shewli like their male counterparts. And we see how Deya’s noble gesture proved to be instrumental in ruining the couple’s relationship.

The love of Soumya disappeared the moment he saw Deya’s strong determination to keep the girl in their house. Everything was fine till Deya fulfilled all the duties of woman and took care of his every need before her own and lived according to his wish. But how could he digest his failure in curbing Deya’s determination? He measured Deya’s love for Soumya by her utter submissiveness to whatever he demanded. The relationship would have worked if Deya listened to him like a good wife and drove Shewli out from her house. By being inhuman she could have lived up to Soumya’s expectations. But it is at this point that Deya was steady. She could not compromise her inner self, her values to save her relationship. Soumya took Deya as his possession and to stay with him she had to do everything according to his terms and conditions. Deya is seen compromising all through and she even had to suppress her desire of being a mother as Soumya had deadlines to meet. Soumya has been ungenerous in denying her values, her beliefs. He tickled himself with the notion that his wife was also a typical obedient wife. He thought that Deya’s step of bringing Shewli to their house was a sudden flash of doing something good which would vanish in no time. But Soumya gets agitated when he finds Deya so strong to stick to her noble cause. How could Deya assert herself so positively? His ego was hurt. And Deya was not interested to stay with him any longer.
She did not want to live with a person who had no respect for her values and ideologies. Such a self obsessed person can never be a soul mate.

The novel ends in such a fashion that it leaves many questions in the readers mind like what happened to Shewli after she left Deya’s home or could Deya find her ever or did Deya break her marriage? But readers always crave for a narrative closure. But she does not do so. Perhaps she wanted her readers think deeply about the whole thing even after they are done with the novel. The problems dealt in the novel are not that type that one can simply finish the novel and can go for a good sleep. Her novel must have the after effect; it should prick the conscience of the readers. The novel has the potential to make the readers think what they can do to change this crudity. Suchitra Bhattacharya did not intend her readers to revolt against men, but to revolt against inhumanity. She wants an inversion in the present order of things.
REFERENCES


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