Preface

Opening Remarks


It may be noted that though several works (other than *Udo Megh*) of Suchitra Bhattacharya have been translated into various Indian languages, no analysis of her writing has been done so far. We acknowledge the fact that there is no end to the level of perfection of translating something. And hence we are aware that there may remain shortcomings in our translation, especially with regard to the metaphorical expressions and source language-specific expressions that may result in too literal a translation. Our translation may need to be re-worked to acquire finesse but we have attempted to bring forth discussions which are not only relevant to the translation of the selected novel but also any such literary work.

A Brief Note on Literary Translation

A literary translation is the translation of literature such as novels, poems, plays and poems, biographies, short stories, songs etc. This has been in existence since biblical times. Literary translation opens up the door of the rich world literature and works as a bridge to explore different cultures reflected through different languages. The repertoires of other languages come just to our hand and translation appears to be the noblest of all and we feel indebted to the translator who translate the stalwart texts and make us
overcome the language barriers have a glimpse of different cultures. The American translation theorist Lawrence Venuti defines translation as “a process by which the chain of signifiers that constitutes the source-language text is replaced by a chain of signifiers in the target language which the translator provides on the strength of an interpretation” (Venuti 1995: 17). For Venuti, the aim of translation is:

“To bring back a cultural other as the same, the recognizable, even the familiar; and this aim always risks a wholesale domestication of the foreign text, often in highly self conscious projects, where translation serves an appropriation of foreign cultures for domestic agendas, cultural, economic, and political.” (Venuti 1995: 18)

There are different types of translation like administrative translation where administrative texts are taken into account, commercial translation or business translation which covers any sort of document used in the business world such as correspondence, company accounts, tender documents, reports, etc, economic translation where documents relating to the field of economics are translated, computer translation in which translations are carried out of software materials, medical translation which cover anything from the medical field from the packaging of medicine, to manuals for medical equipment, to medical books and the list continues. But the translation of literary works is considered by many as one of the highest forms of translation because it is more than simply translating a text. A literary translator must be capable of also translating feelings, cultural nuances, humor and other subtle elements of a piece of work.

This is a challenging field where apt transfer of the cultural values of the source language to the target language is required. And hence the word problematic gets easily attached to the area of literary translation. Newmark (1998: 94) remarks that culture is "the way of life and its manifestations that are peculiar to a community that uses a particular language as its means of expression”. The translator’s in-depth knowledge of the social, historical and cultural context of the source text for accurate semantic translation becomes crucial. Because when a literary translator takes up the project of translation he knows that he is not just translating a text but translating emotions, cultural nuances, humor and other subtle elements of a literary piece and to capture those original
feelings of the source text in appropriate language in his translation is not at all an easy task. Newmark (1998: 201) writes that literary language must remain aesthetically pleasing in translation and there should be a constant tension between the informative and the aesthetic function of language. The more serious the text, morally and aesthetically, the more accurately and economically it should be translated, reflecting the thought, style, emphasis, and as far as possible, particularly in poetry, the rhythm and sound of original. He also states:

“Particular care has to be taken to bring out the connotations of polysemous words and expressions, and to preserve repeated words, which are often keywords. There is sometimes a case for adapting cultural metaphors and for transforming fictional proper names so that their meaning is translated and their source language morphology retained.” (Newmark 1998: 103)

When an author creates a literary piece he or she has some abstract images in his or her mind. These images are shaped in the paper through language. If we closely notice the matter we can call it translation too where the inner abstract images of the author are transferred into a text through language. A translator can never read the mental process of the original author in creating his text. Every language is interwoven with a particular culture. And translation simply fails to transfer those idiosyncrasies of a language, culturally deep rooted. Thus even if one easily gets equivalents he or she may fail to get the feel of the original text.

In spite of all the shortcomings literary translation has always remained a ceaseless interesting process which entices people to delve in this act though their creative effort often faces harsh criticism from the linguists, literary scholars or comapatativists. There is hardly any set of universal theories which can be always applicable to sort out different problems of literary translation. But a translator who is creative hardly bothers about theories or set rules but indulges himself in the act of translation for the sake of art itself. He knows it very well that a particular language is
anchored in a specific culture and he applies various strategies in translating a text and makes it available to the target readers and enriches the treasure of knowledge.

Nida (1964:53-5) lists four basic factors which make communication possible and, therefore, make possible the translation of a message from one language and culture to another. These are:
1) The similarity of mental processes of all people
2) Similarity of somatic reactions (similar physical responses to emotional stimulus),
3) The range of common cultural experience, and
4) The capacity for adjustment to the behavioral patterns of others.

In our attempt of translating Suchitra Bhattacharya’s *Udo Megh* into English we have understood this very clearly that word to word translation is impossible and simply takes the reader far away from the original text. It happens because English language is twice removed from the cultural implications of the Bengali culture, if we consider Indians other than Bengalis as once removed. To transfer the source text into the receptive language we needed to restructure or reconstitute at times to get the desired effect so that there is less loss of meaning and the target readers do not miss the flavor of the original. And we wished the readers realize that there are no equivalents for many phases and expressions of Bengali in English. It may appear an act of violence as we had to recreate, paraphrase or introduce something new in the translation to reach the meaning of the original. But this is not something deliberate but something which was done because of the restraint of the target language and the wide cultural gap between Bengali and English. We feel that those who attack a translated literary text because of any adaptation or any change done and brings in the question of ethics also consider the position of the translator whose hands are tied because of the cultural distance between the two languages.

In connection with our translation of *Udo Megh* by Suchitra Bhattacharya, a novel dealing with different dimensions of gender problems we can not but mention Gayatri Chakaravorty Spivak who in her ‘The Politics of Translation'(1998:95-118) considers translation as an important strategy in pursuing the larger feminist agenda of achieving
women's `solidarity'. She believes that ‘the task of the feminist translator is to consider language as a clue to the working of gendered agency.' In our dissertation we tried to elaborately discuss how language is gendered basing on our translation of *Udo Megh*. Throughout the world women’s experiences, their journey and struggle in the patriarchal system are more or less same. Women in different cultures may express their problems and sufferings in different languages. Translation can give access to a larger number of feminists working in various languages and cultures and reading these texts can help readers to be identified with the universal gender related problems throughout the world. Translation for Spivak is no mere quest for verbal equivalents but an act of understanding the other as well as the self. She advises that a translator must ‘surrender’ to the ‘linguistic rhetoricity of the original text’, as translation is the most intimate act of reading. It is an act of submission to the rhetorical dimension of the text.

**Organization of the Thesis**

The dissertation is organized into five chapters excluding observations and conclusions and appendix containing the entire Source Language text. The chapters are as follows:

In chapter one, we offer an overview of the SL text and its author: a short note on Suchitra Bhattacharya’s position in modern Bengali literature, her main concerns, her writing career, a brief summary of *Udo Megh* followed by an account of her writing style.

The second chapter contains the entire text of the English translation of Suchitra Bhattacharya’s novel *Udo Megh*. We have entitled the novel in English as *The Stray Cloud*.

Chapter 3 discusses the social issues raised in the novel and also describes how language is gendered in the prevailing social set up by picking up several examples from the source text.
Chapter 4 offers a definition of metaphor, its various classifications and its cultural implications from the perspective of Cognitive Linguistics. It also discusses the problems of translating metaphors drawing examples from the text under study.

Finally, chapter 5 deals with specific problems of translation involving semantic, cultural and grammatical phenomena such as Idioms, Proverbs, Collocation, Reduplication, Onomatopoeia, Echo words, Kinship terms and so on.