CHAPTER ONE

The Source Text and Its Author: An Overview

1.1 About the Author

Suchitra Bhattacharya is one of the important Bengali writers of recent times. She was born on January 10, 1950 in Bhagalpur on January 10, Bihar. One important thing that needs to be mentioned here is that the Bhagalpur group of writers has made a very significant contribution to Bengali literature. The Bhagalpur group of writers consists of those who were settled in Bhagalpur, Muzaffarpur and other parts of Bihar. This group can also be identified as the followers of Saratchandra Chatterjee who himself spent some years in Bhagalpur. To this group belonged some eminent writers like Surendranath Ganguli, Anurupa Devi, Nirupama Devi and others. Manikchandra Bhattacharya also belonged to this school. Banaphool literally meaning ‘the wild flower’ in Bengali is the pen name of the Bengali author, playwright and poet, Balai Chand Mukhopadhyay (1899–1979). He was born in Purnia, Bihar and holds a remarkable position in Bengali literature. And the name of our selected author Suchitra Bhattacharya can also be included in the list because of her Bhagalpur connections. Among all the above mentioned names she with her exceptional writing has created a unique place in modern Bengali literature. With keen interest in writing from a very young age, she graduated from Calcutta University. Though after marriage she took break from writing, she came up with her short stories in the late seventies and novels in the mid eighties. She was in the public service sector which she left in 2004 to devote full attention to her writing. Some of her most popular novels include Kacher Dewal (Glass Wall), Gabhir Asukh (Serious Illness), Ami Raikishori (I am Raikishori), Hemonter Pakhi (Bird of the Dewy
Season), *Palabar Path Nei* (No Way to Escape), *Rangin Prithibi* (Colorful World), *Parabas* (Foreign Land), *Aleek such* (Imaginary Happiness), *Dahan* (The Burning) etc. She has received many prestigious awards like Bhuban Mohini Medal from Calcutta University, Tarashankar award from Kolkata, Sharat Puroskar from Bhagalpur, Bharat Nirman award, Nanjanagudu Thirumalamba National award from Banglore, the Katha award from Delhi, Sahitya Setu award, Sailajananda Smriti Puroskar etc. She is a perceptive observer of the changing milieu and her writing closely examines the contemporary Bengali middle class. Crisis in human relationship and changing values of the present era along with degeneration of the moral fiber of the society in the backdrop of globalization and consumerism are well dealt in her writing. Her fiction dwells upon the dilemmas and conflicts of contemporary urban middle class women who seek to question social norms and evils. Her engrossing power of story telling, her control over language and her capability to bring forth every shade of human emotion make her one of the best writers of today.

### 1.2 *Udo Megh*: A Brief Summary

*Udo Megh,* is a story about Deya, a modern, urban, married working woman who in justifying her noble step of sheltering a girl in distress, called Sheweli, faces a lot of problems not only from the society but also from her home and puts her marriage in stake but sticks to what she thinks to be right. She works as a journalist and is married to Soumya, a software engineer. In course of her work she happens to interview Shewli, a girl from the slums, who eloped with a man and was consequently sold in the red-light area of Mumbai. She tried to draw notice of the society to the fact how every year many girls are abducted and are forced to prostitution. Though she covered the story in her newspaper, *Nabaprabhat,* without mentioning the girl’s name, the circumstances led the girl’s mother to commit suicide to avoid the society’s harsh and unbearable attitude towards them.
After the death of the girl’s mother, Deya felt responsible to some extent for such a situation. Hence she took the bold step of sheltering the girl in her house. This creates tension between Deya and Soumya which worsens with Shewli not leaving the house. Though Deya believed that everything would be fine with the course of time the situation worsens on the day of her wedding anniversary.

During the part thrown by Deya the guests got indulged in discussion regarding prostitution on being introduced to Shewli. Instead of being sympathetic to the girl’s plight it turned out that she was a food of gossip for them, who were more interested to talk about prostitution as a profession, its legal acceptance, the society’s view point etc. After the guests left, the tension between the couple heightened with a heated exchange of words leading Shewli to leave the house. Deya locked herself in her room being unable to take this anymore. Shewli left the house at that day itself as she thought she was responsible for the happening.

The next day Deya searched the poor girl at every possible place but couldn’t trace her anywhere. On Deya’s returning home Soumya expressed his regret for the previous night’s scuffle. But Deya explicitly let Soumya know her intention of not continuing her relation with him. It makes Soumya angry and he asks her to leave the house. But Deya with a firm voice asked him why a woman always has to leave her home and did not pay heed to the shouting of Soumya. When the novel ends we find Deya standing on the balcony alone. The writer doesn’t draw an explicit end to the story. This is something unique to Suchitra Bhattacharya’s writing that she leaves a room for her readers to interpret in their own way and thus even if the story is over the hangover remains.

In a personal correspondence (2008) with the writer we wanted to know the justification behind choosing the title of the novel as *Udo Megh*. To answer it she writes that in the stable and tranquil life of Deya amd Soumya, Shewli appeared suddenly like
that piece condensed cloud which stays for a short time and passes away but casts shadow on the ground below for time being. Shewli’s presence was unexpected in Deya’s home and her sudden emergence made the clear and calm sky of the couple’s life dark. The short and sudden blow of Shewli’s existence in their life forced them to face the crude reality of life and made Deya realize that the base of an institution like marriage is not that well founded and can sustain only at the cost of mutual compromises. A sudden blow of practicality can shatter it easily.

A text is not a text by itself or for itself. It is the individual comprehension process of each recipient that makes a text, a text. As a consequence there might be one source text but there would be multiple interpretations to that particular text. In the realm of translation each recipient tries to give the equivalence the way he or she interprets the source text. So which version of the source text we are looking for? However, we should take a prospective look towards the scope of the target text than focusing only upon the source text in search of criteria for assessing the quality of translation. In our dissertation we are more concerned with the scope for meaningful linguistic issues rather than just pointing at the words for which we did not get equivalents.

1.3 Suchitra Bhattacharya’s Style of Writing

Famous Italian film director, Federico Fellini (1920 -1993) once said, "What's important is the way we say it. Art is all about craftsmanship. Others can interpret craftsmanship as style if they wish. Style is what unites memory or recollection, ideology, sentiment, nostalgia, presentiment, to the way we express all that. It's not what we say but how we say it that matters."

A style is reflective of the writer’s personality or voice. Suchitra Bhattacharya’s ability to create an attitude toward the subject, characters, or events in the story is very appreciable. She prefers herself to be called a womanist than a feminist and her dealing of
subject matters in her novels proves to be apt behind her such preference. She seems to be expert in catching all the inner turmoil of a woman who with her undaunted spirit faces all the storms in a patriarchal society and yet stands high. Her writing is a reflection of her gamut of experiences which can come only through keen observation of what is exactly happening around us and its impact on human lives. And to jot down what one sees, feels or believes is not an easy job. Not everyone is gifted with the craft of writing so effectively. When we read *Udo Megh* we can easily understand how she uses her language to create a specific mood, attitude or tone. Her judicious use of expressions, dialogues, her portraying of characters, the touch of humor, everything add to make her style worthy to be noticed and her style is befitting to each situation.

1.3.1 Sketching Characters

Her novel *Udo Megh* is one of her best works ever. The concept of the novel, its organization, characterization and serious dealing of the topic are enough to hold a tight grip over her readers. The novel has the tension to finish it at one go but at the same time not monotonous. It’s enjoyable and also deals with serious issues of exploitation of women, their pain, power struggle and the different dimensions of women’s struggle in the modern times. One thing that the readers can not fail to notice is the way the story develops. The author does not pop up often to give valuable judgment rather she allows her characters speak their minds and it is through her characters that Bhattacharya shows the different layers of human understanding of different situations and how they react to them. In fact her characters represent all shades of human existence like courage, honesty, jealousy, selfishness, indifference and so on and so forth. Her characters, Deya, Soumya, Ritam or Sharabani acts nowhere dumb. At times they are strong and at times weak. By showing a perfect blend of strength and weakness in themselves Suchitra Bhattacharya succeeded to create characters who really proved to be human and thus helped her readers to relate to them.
1.3.2 Cinematic Quality

Cinema has always been an extraordinary form of art in the late twentieth century. Today’s life has become so mechanical and hectic that people hardly find time to immerse in a literary work especially if it has a fat volume. On the contrary films, which combine several arts into one whole, are readily accessible to people from different strata of the society. To appreciate a good work of literature one needs some basic education and understanding. On the other hand to watch a movie, to identify the characters or to relate to the experiences of those characters literacy never becomes an impediment. Of course the viewer has to know the language in which the movie is made. Thus the viewership of cinema is much wider than the readership of literature. Cinema, an eclectic art form, has borrowed generously from various art forms like music, poetry, painting and architecture. Celluloid adaptation from literature has always been attempted by various film makers from time to time. But this is not an easy task as the film maker faces the challenge of making his film as powerful and appealing as it is in its printed form. But there are certain pieces of literary works which when made into films are highly appreciated and touch the viewers’ mind as the book does. This factor is not prominent in every literary work. Suchitra Bhattacharya’s novels are film-friendly. Her novel Dahan was made into film by Rituparno Ghosh. The novel depicts the trauma of a young wife who is physically molested by a group of rowdies right in front of her husband. The book shows how society always blames the woman in such circumstances and how a female school teacher comes forward to help the victim whereas her own family deserts her. It was an award-winning film and was highly appreciated. And now another movie which is scheduled to hit the screens soon is actress-turned-producer Indrani Haldar’s Udo Megh, based on Suchitra Bhattacharya’s novel by the same name. What makes Suchitra’s novel so appropriate to be made into films? Her writing though fiction draws characters from real life situations. The incidents she depicts never seem to be unusual or imaginary. It seems it can be a story of any urban middle class educated man or woman. The joy or pain the characters go through is easy to relate as the readers feel as if their life has been portrayed by the writer. Her books when made into cinemas bring words to life through visuals, sound, music, dialogue and acting. It becomes more appealing. But at the same
time it provides the readers the scope to accept the challenge thrown by the film maker in terms of watching the movie, compare it with the original novel, criticize it, question it and so on and so forth.

1.3.3 Role of Nature in Echoing Human Emotions

Another interesting thing, which is worthy of attention, is that nature has a very effective role to play in all the stories. Suchitra makes nature to play its own role like her living characters. Personification of nature is another device that Bhattacharya applies in her stories. Natural elements are invested with the qualities of a living being. Personification, as a figure of speech may be an artistic device with the prose writers or the poets but it is deeply rooted in the human habit and comes out in any mood of excitement or exaltation. It seems as if nature takes in human action either by sympathy or by antipathy.

The day when Ritam quit the job and was returning home it was a very hot noon. There was unbearable scorching heat of the sun and no one was there on the road. The dogs were dozing in some shade. To him the ground appeared swaying like a mirage. Though he liked lonely summer noon the loneliness clouded his pain. He felt as if his heart was heavy. Having quit the job he knew how his family members would react to his state of a free bird again. It was as if the untold pain of not being sympathized by others, the pain of not getting rewarded for his writing and the pain of always forced to do what he never liked. The loneliness of the summer noon reflected his suppressed pain of isolation in the crowd of his near and dear ones.

From the window of his bedroom Ritam was listening to the small singing bird in the garden at the back of his house. The sound was very strange. He tried to find it but could not. On quitting his job Ritam was determined to devote all his time to writing. His mind was busy in sketching the plot of his story. But it was vague. It was as if like the
bird in the garden, the plot of his story was too playing the game of hide and seek in the forest of his mind.

Deya once visited her father’s home to see the poor health of her grandmother. After spending quite sometime her mother went on asking many questions regarding Shewli’s matter. She insisted her daughter not to get involved in the matter anymore as it could put her life in danger. The more Deya tried to convince her mother she was getting more rigid. She advised Deya not to go to the slums as she believed that Shewli was a girl of loose character and nothing good could be done for such a girl. Deya was hurt by her mother’s irrational arguments. While returning home the darkness was approaching. The color of the sky was getting faded. There was no wind and it was quite suffocating. The nature seemed to reflect the pain and suffocating state of Deya’s mind. It was as if the darkness outside was Deya’s state of confusion which hindered her vision to do what next. She felt choked as no one tried to understand her.

Deya brought Shewli to her own house after the girl’s mother committed suicide. Words of praises were written in her paper for her noble gesture. But Deya could not be happy. She was extensively searching home for destitutes to send back Shewli. But she could not manage. On the other hand she was informed by Laxmi that an unknown guy was seen in front of his flat. Deya’s friends were apprehensive that any man of the kidnapping gang might attack her house. She was frightened by all these. In such a state even if someone praised her it tasted bitter to her. While coming out of the office the sky’s face looked heavy. It was monsoon and often there was monotonous and tiring heavy downpour. The wind was not blowing and the weather was sultry. The clouds in the sky advanced the approach of darkness before evening. The bright streetlights appeared to be very pale to her. The nature here reflects her anxiety and fear of some unseen danger. It seems that the nature equates with the restlessness and the tumultuous sea of confusion in her mind.
1.3.4 Detailing

While reading *Udo Megh* what will definitely strike the reader is Suchitra Bhattacharya’s expertise in detailed description of a place, an event or a person. This is very unique of her style. We have already discussed that there is a special cinematic quality of her novels. And detailing is one such technique which helps a person to get the visual effect of what is in print. The writer often seems to go deep in detailing and seems to draw a picture through her words.

One fine example would be the fine description of the very old building which was turned to a newspaper office of *Nabaprabhat*. She wrote about its green roof made of wood, notched green sun-shed and how the different sections of the newspaper office were arranged on both sides of the inner verandah. Its windows, staircase, ceiling everything emanated a strange smell of the Victorian period. The way Suchitra writes it seems the readers can simply imagine the building in front of their eyes.

One can notice the description of Deya’s bathroom which had a glass-rack, beautiful basin, attractive towel-rod and telephone shower. There was fixed an oval rot iron framed mirror over the head of the basin.

As Deya visited the slum where Shewli stayed, a detailed description of that place is given. The houses looked like pigeonholes. The brick built houses had roofs made of tiles. Few houses had TV antennas over the roofs. Dirty and torn curtains were hanging at the doors of many houses. Pitchers were lined up at the corporation tap and the place emitted a foul odour. Such a description is enough even for a person who has never been to a slum to understand the topography slums.

The writer gives minute descriptions Shrabaní’s body. She wrote that even after the delivery of her baby there was not even an ounce of fat accumulated in her body. Her eyes or nose was not very sharp but her toned figure made her attractive. She had fair complexion which turned to light copper color after sun burn. With such a description one can visualize a character.
A very detailed picture is given of how Deya embellished herself on her wedding anniversary. Suchitra wrote that Deya was wearing a blue Baluchari saree. The battle of Kurukshetra was embroidered finely on the border and the aanchal of the saree. She had a nice facial. Her hair was nicely arranged a garland of jasmine was wrapped around the bun. She had bindi on forehead and eyes were finely drawn, reddish blush on her cheeks and her lips were colored. Her neck, fingers and ears were decorated with pearl jewellery. She looked like a beautiful swan. Such detailing helps the reader to get an idea of Deya’s taste and personality.

The writer describes Shewli’s dressing on the occasion of Deya’s wedding anniversary. She wore a bright salwar kameez in the combination of red and yellow. She had silver colored bindi on her forehead, sparkling clips on hair, hanging earrings on her ears, glass bangles in her hands and a necklace of pearl-shaped beads. She put the lipstick on her lips and pink nail polish on her nails. Such a description is quite suggestive to indicate her class and her upbringing. Deya brought those things for Shewli keeping in mind her taste.

The writer does not stop only by showing Laxmi busy in cooking delicious dishes. But she gives the details of the items she prepared like the oil of hilsa fish, a curry with the bones of hilsa and puishaak, hilsa in mustard sauce and hog-plum chutney. Such detailing helps the reader to get a glimpse of the Bengali kitchen, very integral to Bengali culture.

The writer clarifies things in such a way that the reader does not misinterpret anything. She makes comparisons to clarify ideas. Her concrete detailing is powerful enough to convince her readers that they fully inhabit the character’s world. Her wonderful detailing helps the readers to understand perfectly how a character talks, the things they like or dislike, the way they see the world and so on. Her words build up a space in such a way that the reader completely believes in it and like a clear picture it is placed in front of their eyes. Thus we can say that Suchitra Bhattacharya knows how to make her characters fully realized on the page.
1.3.5 Element of Humor

Humor has a place in every day life. It is a part of our conversations, our entertainment even our personalities. Humor is used to lighten the mood, relate to others, to deal with stress and pain. Without it life would have become dull and monotonous. Medical science indicates that laughter is really medicinal. It keeps our mind healthy. Hence there is no wonder that many writers have attempted to add touch of humor in their writings.

_Udo Megh_ deals with the harsh reality of prostitution and society’s indifferent attitude towards the victims. Placing the issue of prostitution at centre Suchitra finely depicts the journey of modern women confronting the male dominance to protect her self-respect, values and ideologies. But reading the novel does not make the reader over burdened with its serious issue of concern. Suchitra Bhattacharya brings in variety in her style in a single canvas of the story to avoid monotony. Even in dealing with such gender sensitive issues she adds elements of humor and handles it with care. The touch of humor doesn’t interrupt the flow of the novel but at times reduces the tension. The author at times seems to be serious and at times humorous. And the humor is brought in through the characters of the novel who with their clever banter and irony surprise the readers. The author is a close observer of human nature and the laughter element comes out of her sheer understanding of human thought and provides lightness to the readers.

The author portraits Ritam’s character in a way, that it adds a touch of levity to the story, without making him appear like a buffoon. He is very strong and sensitive who has the rare quality to laugh even in facing the bleak realities of life. Ritam is always taken for good for nothing and scolded by his family members because of his carelessness but his presence is a delightful diversion that readers look forward to and such a playful character with high spirits naturally paves way to many humorous scenes to lighten the tone of even the darkest of storylines. He can crack jokes even at serious
situations. Ritam is seen engaged in light-hearted romance with his wife Shrabani or caressing his daughter which provide some comic relief and at the same time make him seem likeable and human.

Ritam is not a minor character in the story but many hilarious situations are created by him. He is jovial and knows the trick of being happy even in odd situations. In the novel we see that he constantly keeps on quitting his jobs as they do not fit in his professional ethics. For this he is quite often scolded by his family members. But he does not take them to heart. Or he might have learnt the art of smiling as a weapon to defend the harsh comments from others. When one day he suddenly came back home quitting his job he was highly scolded by his mother who was pretty unhappy with Ritam’s lack of sense of responsibility towards his family. She said, “Tor ki lajjasaram kichui nei re? Bie korechis, akta bachha hoye geche…”

English: “Are you shameless? You are married and have a baby too…”

One can not stop laughing to the answer Ritam instantly produces in such a situation which might have hurt the male ego in others. He said, “Aschorjo, bie kara ki lajjar kaaj? Bie to manush i kare. Tumio korechile. Aar bie korle bachha hay eo to jana katha. Unless husband wife er akjon is found to be unfit to produce a child.”

English: “I am really surprised. Is getting married a shameful act? Only human beings get married. You did too. And everybody knows that after marriage one gets a baby, unless one among the husband and the wife is found to be unfit to produce a child.”

He makes fun of how his mother cries and heaves sighs. He was quite sure that such dialogues his mother could remember because of her routine watch of Bengali TV serials in the afternoon.

Ritam’s brother-in-law, Ambarda once arranged a business for Ritam. It was all about selling various snacks. But how a creative person like Ritam could continue with that for long? He was rebuked by her elder sister, Runu for quitting the business. But
Ritam brushes away all her comments saying that “O business ta ektu risky hoye jeto re. Peter baro ta beje jeto. Chanachur aloo bhaja kato khaoa jay, tui i bal?”

**English**: “The business would have been risky. It must have upset the stomach of people. How much mixture and potato chips can one consume, tell me?”

Once Runu planned for a trip to Rajasthan for the whole family and expected Ritam to accompany them as she thought that it would be quite risky for the three ladies to go to a new place without a male. To such an anxiety of Runu, Ritam passed such a comment which simply dilutes the seriousness of the situation. He said, “Kintu tor haater kache to aar akta purush chiloi…”

—*Ke?*
—*Gudum…*
—*Ami ki dakater hath theke bachabo? No chance…sarbosyo kede nileo ami tu sabdo ti korbo na, lengti pore doudbo. Barang Shrabani jodi ektu smile tile dey dakatra galteo pare.*

**English**: “But you have a male next to your hand.”

“Who?”

“Gudum…”

“Do you want me to save you from dacoits? No chance. I won’t utter a single sound even if they rob you of everything. I’ll simply run in a ragged. Instead if Shrabani smiles a little at them there is a fair chance that the dacoits’ hearts may melt.”

On one occasion Ritam and Deya waited for a taxi. Deya was worried as it was tough to get a taxi at office hours. But Ritam was pretty cool and did not leave the chance of passing a funny comment and said, “Sundari meyera mone mone chailei taxi darie jay. Chokh buje akta halde-kalo ke dhyan kar…kunti jebhabr suryake dekechilo….”


**English:** “If a beautiful girl wishes something in her mind the taxi will definitely stop. Closing your eyes meditate for a yellow and black taxi…the way Kunti called Surya…” Suchitra Bhattacharya here refers to the famous episode of the *Mahabharata* where Kunti chants Surya’s name with the desire to have a son.

Deya once enquired about the well being of Ritam’s family members to which he replied, “*Tuski barche, Shrabani komche, ma aki ache.*”

**English:** “Tuski is growing, Shrabani is shrinking and *ma* is in the same state.”

Can anyone think of such a quick funny reply other than Ritam? He can cause churning out of laughter from the pit of one’s stomach with his instant unusual comments.

Ritam never called Deya’s husband by his name, Soumya. Soumya was a computer engineer by profession. Hence Ritam always referred to Soumya by calling him computer as if he was a machine and not a human. It is as if the writer assigns the task of making the readers laugh to Ritam. No one could simply predict how he was going to create an air of laughter out of a trivial matter.

One day when Deya told him that she was watching Titanic, he instantly utters a sentence in East Bengal dialect clarifying the theme of the movie. He said, “*O bajray kyajra*”.

**English:** “O the hanky panky around the yacht”.

Ritam was an expert in such strange and funny naming. He named the movie, *Jurasic Park*, with an East Bengal expression, “*Khaise dyno aaise*”

**English:** “Oh the devil dyno is back”.

Such use of East Bengal dialect is very familiar in many Bengali movies too which are introduced to bring in comic effect. Here the author also does the same thing. Suchitra Bhattacharya amuses her readers by Ritam’s sense of humor and presence of mind.
Another interesting thing to notice in *Udo Megh* is that she brings in lots of intertextual references and that too from Sukumar Ray’s writings, to meet the purpose of adding humorous effect in the novel. Sukumar Ray (1887-1923) was a Bengali poet, story writer and playwright focusing on the genre of humor. He has always been compared to the celebrated English author, Lewis Carroll. His *Abol Tabol*, which can literally be translated as ‘gibberish’ or "weird and random", is a collection of Bengali children’s poems and rhymes which was first published on 1st September 1923. It consists of 43 named and 7 unnamed short rhymes, all considered to be in the genre of literary nonsense. *Abol Tabol* introduces us to strange people, places and animals that knock us out of our strapping reality. His collection had several characters which became legendary in Bengali literature and culture. Some characters even have found idiomatic usage in the language the characters named *KumRopotash, Hnuko Mukho Hyangla* and *RamgoruRer chana*, have found their permanent place in Bengali lives. When we see a very fat man we compare him with *Kumropotash*. Again when we come across people with grave and serious face we tend to compare them with *RamgoruRer chana*, and anglophiles, who greatly admires or favors England and things English are described as *Tnyasgoru*. Every child of Bengal grows up reading these nonsense verses of Sukumar Ray. In poems like *RamgaruRer Chana* Ray laughs at those who are scared to laugh. Such serious intellectuals were most probably found in Bengal in those days. In his poem, ‘*Hnuko Mukho Hyangla’* Ray wrote *Hnuko Mukho Hyangla/ BaRi taar banglea* which means the native of all *hunkomukho hyanglas* was Bengal. With this particular term he referred to those people who with serious and gloomy face could spend the whole day even in thinking about a trick to kill flies.

Suchitra Bhattachrya brings in these typical idiomatic expressions from Bengali literary archive for rib tickling laughter of her readers. Ashesh Dattagupta, the co-editor of *Nabaprabhat*, where Deya worked, was called by various names like *Ramgarur, Gomratharrium, Ragu dada*, Mr. Constipation and *Hunkomukho*. She must have used these terms without giving it a second thought as she knows that any Bengali can relate to these contextual references. However, the term ‘*gomratherium’* is taken from Sukumar
Ray’s *Heshoram Hushiyarer Diary* ("The Diary Of Heshoram Hushiar"). It is a spoof on the genre because the writer is poking fun at the tendency of the scientists to name things, and that too in long-winded Latin words. He seems to be playing around the fact that names are arbitrarily assigned to things by humans for their own convenience, and the name of a thing may somehow be intrinsically connected to its nature. So the first creature that Heshoram meets in the course of his journey through the *Bandakush* Mountains is a “gomratharium”. *Gomra* in Bengali means someone of irritable temperament, a creature that always keeps a long miserable face and an extremely cross expression. The term itself sounds like a disease.

The other two expressions, *Ragu dada* and Mr. Constipation are the author’s own creations. A hot headed person can be called *Ragu dada*. With such a name Mr. Constipation we instantly can imagine the face of a person who suffers from the pain of constipation. Everybody in the office of *Nabaprabhat* thinks that Mr. Ashesh Dattagupta will smile at least on the last day of his service.

Another such intertextual reference is ‘*chilo rumaal hoye geche beraal*” which is taken from Sukumar Ray’s novella *Ha-Ja-Ba-Ra-La* (Topsy-Turvy, 1928). It has a similarity to *Alice in Wonderland* in plot organization and the ending. The story starts with a boy suddenly waking up from sleep and finding that the handkerchief he placed just beside him before sleeping has turned into a cat. He starts talking to the cat and starts the ensuing fantasy adventure and meets with many wildly funny characters.

In describing the newspaper office of *Nabaprabhat*, which is an old two storied building of Victorian period Suchitra Bhattacharya alludes to *Ha-Ja-Ba-Ra-La’s* famous line “*chilo rumaal hoye geche beraal*

**English:** It was a handkerchief but turned to a cat.

The principal of the college where Shrabani worked was sarcastically called Mahaprabhu by his colleagues. His name was Nimai Chakraborty and his native place was Nabadwip. Bhattacharya here brings in a historical character Chaitanya Mahaprabhu who was a Hindu saint and social reformer of 16th century. He was a notable proponent for the Vaishnava school of Bhakti yoga and was also called Nimai in his early life.
Bhattacharya sometimes creates laughter in her selection of names. For example, the name of Deya’s cousin was Chini. The Bengali word chini means sugar. Even the names of Chini’s kids are very funny. They were Gaja and Nimki. Gaja is a popular sweet of Bengal while nimki refers to a snack.

Another device that Suchitra Bhattacharya uses for humorous effect in her novel is the use of pun. Pun is an expression that achieves emphasis or humor by contriving an ambiguity, two distinct meanings being suggested either by the same word (polysemy) or by two similar sounding words (homophone). There is a scene in section 4 the novel where Ritam talks with his friend Tamonash regarding a celebration of party as Tamonash’s story was published. The conversation goes like this.

─ Tui to abaar jalpathe cholis na!
─ To ki? Ak aadh din pansi baoa jetei pare. Whisky, vodka, rum jaa khusi.
─ Ami kintu sattwik manush. Rum Bhakto.
─ Rum i khaoas taahole. Rum name amar i ba kiser apotti?

These lines were translated as,

“But you don’t prefer the water way, I suppose!”

“So what? Once in a while it’s okay to row the boat. Whisky, vodka, rum whatever you like.”

“But I am a simple and chaste man, worshipper of rum”

“Then go for rum. Why should I object in the name of rum.”

Here the word rum has the pun. In Bengali script both Ram and rum are written in the same way. But the readers familiar to the Indian epic, Ramayana can easily trace the word play. In translation I have used the term ‘rum’ as I thought that reading the phrase ‘worshipper of rum’ the readers can easily get the sense intended by the author.

There is another scene in section 15 of the novel where we see the wedding anniversary celebration at Deya’s home. One guest Bacchu is married to Chini. Now Chini in Bengal means sugar. Here the husband is a patient of blood sugar. When in the party he made a wish to eat rasagolla instead of ice cream his wife Chini yelled at him
and scolds him for such a demand when his blood sugar level is two hundred and fifty. And Bacchu very funnily answered to that and said, “Sugar ki amar aaj theke? Bier par thekei to amar Chini r rog dhoreche.”

We have translated it as:

“How have I suddenly caught blood sugar today? Right after my marriage I caught the chini rog.”

We retained the word chini in the second sentence as we have already translated chini as sugar in the first sentence and thought that most of the Indian readers are familiar with the word chini. But it may be unknown to people from the Dravidiaan language group. I think chini rog can easily strike the readers’ mind and one may instantly be reminded of diabetes. Bachhu here intends to say that he is facing problem not only in tackling his chini rog or blood sugar but his wife, Chini also causes lot of trouble to him. However, I explained the term chini rog in the glossary at the end of the novel. Total replacement of the word chini by sugar would have contained no humor in it as there would have no riddle of pun.

Shuchitra’s fine blend of humor with seriousness shows that a character does not have to be a comedian to add touch humor in the story. Even a couple of scenes that make readers laugh or at least smile in amusement will add dimension to the story. She keeps humor in harmony with the tone of her novel. Most importantly she knows that timing is everything. And one can see how skillfully she adds humor to the right places. She indicates that there is no harm in lightening up a little. Even if the book is serious, the characters do not always have to be.
1.3.6 Conversational Style

While reading *Udo Megh* the reader cannot overlook the fact that the storyline is built up through ample series of conversations amongst the characters. The conversations show their mood, temperament and also reflect their mental make up. Only factual details may spoil the taste of the stories. Perhaps that is why she has followed the device of conversation as one of her predominant styles. But the reader will not miss the writer’s own voice as a story-teller where she intervenes in between the story.

These conversations resemble any of our real life conversations. For Suchitra Bhattacharya it is important to be able to relate to the reader in an informal manner, without losing credibility. The interactions amongst the characters are very spontaneous. The reader will get the feel as if he or she is a part of that conversation and thus can identify with the characters. The writer skillfully involves the readers in her novel. The conversations are built up with very simple but apt words. They involve personal accounts, talk about a character’s own experiences. The writer draws all the characters as good conversationalists as we find them using various figures of speech in their conversations like simile, metaphor, hyperbole, idiomatic expressions and so on and so forth. And all the conversations are clearly connected to bring forth the gender issues, the main concern of the author. Even the climax of the novel is built up through strong arguments among many characters. The characters become the mouthpiece of the society’s stance towards the problem of prostitution and each character speaks up to reflect different attitudes of people in the society. In a factual description one is not allowed to write sentence fragments. But real conversations break this rule. Even a single word can be very effective. We notice all these things in Suchitra Bhattacharya’s style. There is a sentence uttered by Futku, the son of Deya’s brother in section 5. The little child was playing with the spectacle of his grandfather. When Deya enquired about it he replied, “*Thilo to ....Amaal kaache*”. If he were grown up he might have pronounced the sentence distinctly as “*Chilo to...Amaar kaache.*”

We translated this as: “It was there with me”, he replied indistinctly.
We can see how Suchitra pays attention to each character and captures the tone and delivery of a dialogue. Even a baby’s utterance is clear in the representation of this sentence. All these show how Suchitra Bhattacharya deals with a serious issue in the novel where informal conversations of the various characters proves not to be a hindrance but a powerful tool to involve readers more deeply in her story.

1.3.7 Frequent use of English Expressions

From the very first page of the novel, *Udo Megh*, the readers would notice ample English words and sentences. Reading any of Suchitra Bhattacharya’s writing can give a clear-cut idea of her intended readership, a class which is educated, modern and ready to accept positive changes in every aspect. Thus a text when composed in an urban setting is obvious to show some traits which distinguish it from the other genres of writing in the matter of choosing the subject matter, the way of handling it, portraying the characters and also the style of the brain behind it.

It is interesting to notice that Suchitra has written the novel in such a fashion which allows her educated characters to speak in the ‘elite’ language in different situations like office, with peer group, in serious discussions, in informal get together and so on and so forth. Now the question which peeps in the mind is whether she did it intentionally or it was something very casual. One can sit for a while to find out some possibilities which might have worked in the writer’s mind behind using English words and sentences in her Bengali novel. But considering the first fact to have worked in this case opens avenues for a critical discussion. The readers know Suchitra Bhattacharya as a modern Bengali writer and modernization as an abstract term gets shape not only in the deployment of theme but also in the way she uses her language. In spite of writing in her
mother tongue she doesn’t put a wall around it to cease the scope of coping it with the present day situation. Rather she is generous in using many common English words to ooze through. Bhatacharya is very much aware of the fact that English is no more considered strictly an academic language. Rather the percolation of English in our present life style is note worthy. She knows the language of the modern generation. A language is considered modern if it is able to serve as an effective vehicle of communication, both spoken and written, for all spheres of activity that characterize a modern society.

If modernization is a social process the language must undergo the process and equip itself with the functional tools of communication. Every language, in its outward manifestations, crystallizes the specific world view of its speakers. Language witnesses the change in the thought patterns of its users more than any other medium of expression or communication. Hence a change in the cultural and social patterns inevitably brings about changes in the language organization. According to R.H. Robins (1985), “A Language (is a) symbol system .....based on pure or arbitrary convention.....infinitely extendable and modifiable according to the changing needs and conditions of the speakers.” (As cited in Syal & Jindal, 2008). Language should not lag behind in coping with the contemporary needs for linguistic expression. Linguistic creativity can be achieved only if freedom is given to those who use their mother tongue to express their feelings and thoughts without being confined to the linguistic patterns. There has emerged a dependency upon the English language for the modern ideas especially in the educated people. Suchitra doesn’t follow a stereotype or a common mechanism in employing English words frequently in her novel. Hence the way she writes can readily be acceptable to the educated readers. Her use of English words in the text doesn’t alienate it from her readers, but it proves to be their language.

Today in the language scenario of the world English has acquired an unprecedented sociological and ideological dimension. The language has permeated in our daily life in such a way one can’t avoid it especially in the cities. It has continued to be an important part of the communication matrix of urban India. One can notice the striking proliferation of English especially its vocabulary seeping through the upper sect
of the society to the middle class and further down to the grassroots level. Today the generation empowered with the English language paved the way in coining a new term ‘English caste’ in the already caste-ridden society. In bilingual India today code-switching between most of the Indian languages and English has become very common. Millions of urban Indians who are proficient both in their mother tongue and English are using English words and phrases even while conversing in their mother tongue. And it is claimed that they do it unintentionally and it comes to them spontaneously. In most of the cities it has become the communicative norm.

Code switching between one’s mother tongue and English has become a characteristic feature of the metropolitan bourgeois which is reflected not only in their conversation but also finds its way in the regional literature. The noteworthy thing in the modern Bengali language is the enormous influence of English in vocabulary and in some cases idioms and expressions. When a writer like Suchitra Bhattacharya brings lots of English words, phrases or sentences in her text it paves the path to an unending debate whether a regional writer is right or wrong in doing so. Here a question arises who decides right or wrong. The ultimate motif of a writer is to reach his or her readers and for this she can take resort to any means unless and until it disturbs the aesthetic quality of the art and at the same time reflects his or her creativity. Sapir (1921) observed long ago, “the complete vocabulary of a language may indeed be looked upon as a complete inventory of all the ideas, interests, and occupations that take up the attention of a community…” (As cited in Moore 2009). But at the same time a writer should be aware that only for the sake of drawing attention of the society he or she can not write something which reflects an outlook, parochial and irrational. In fact in our opinion when a writer brings some change in the traditional way of writing it ultimately helps a particular linguistic community because in doing so the expressive power of a given language is widened and modernization of a society demands for certain changes in both the spoken and written language.
There is another fact which we have to keep in mind. Like the speakers of any other Indian language the young generation of Bengali speakers are not at all well acquainted with the rich treasure of Bangla. Words like ghurnibatya (cyclone), apaanayon (smuggling), protyapti (reversion), anugnapatro (licence), odhibritti (bonus), tattwik (theoretical) may appear alien to the English educated Bengali youth. Rather for them the English equivalents are easier to register even when they talk or write in Bengali. It is very hard to find Bengali equivalents for words like pizza, burger, noodles, pudding, ice cream etc. which show a direct impact of English culture on India. Hence in spite of explaining these words in Bengali it is easy to use the English words as they are. One should not be mistaken that it is the case only with the food items. But the impact is well evident and no Indian is found to object to it.

When we read Udo Megh we find that the flow of the story is not at all disturbed by the writer’s frequent usage of English. Rather such usage makes the novel more acceptable to the modern readers. Bhattacharya is much aware with the present trend and she chooses her own way to satisfy her target readers. Her pivotal character Deya is an educated woman who works in a newspaper office. Her English knowing friends, colleagues or husband not only use English language but also flaunt such status. We find Suchitra’s characters using English words very often. We have cited here some Bengali terms whose English equivalents are easier to use and the Bengali words for them though not completely forgotten have become restricted only to those who have a very sound knowledge about Bengali language. The interesting thing to notice here is that Suchitra uses many English words whose Bengali equivalents are also quite popular and frequently used in everyday life for example, ‘polygamist’ (bohugaami), ‘guts’ (saahos), ‘normal’ (saabhaabik), ‘exact’ (sathik), ‘story’ (galpo), ‘colour’ (rang), ‘business’ (byabsaa), ‘duty’ (kartobyo), ‘situation’ (poristhiti), ‘agreement’ (chukti), ‘dress’ (poshaak), ‘vagabond’ (bhaboghure), ‘collection’ (sangkolan), ‘culprit’ (aporaadhi), ‘straight’ (sojaasuji), ‘night’ (raatri), ‘gang’ (dal), ‘advantage’ (subidha), ‘environment’ (poribesh), ‘result’ (falaafal), ‘happy’ (sukhi), ‘fixed’ (sthir), ‘family’ (poribaar), ‘conscience’ (bibek), ‘headstrong’ (uddhoto), ‘investigation’ (tadonto) ‘illegal’ (beaaini), ‘topic’ (bishoy), ‘discussion’ (alochanaa), ‘sentence’ (baakyo), ‘present’ (upohaar),
believe in second hand’, ‘They shall have to be virgin’, ‘Let’s enjoy life, sweetie’, ‘But I have to meet someone’, ‘I don’t care’, ‘No earthly force can change my schedule’, ‘It’s matter of willforce’, ‘She has devil’s luck’, ‘I know’, ‘I bet’, ‘I am sorry’, ‘I’m fed up’, ‘You were his fiancé, I presume’, ‘Is it?’ ‘Behave yourself’, ‘I shall face the music’, ‘Can you imagine?’, ‘What do you mean?’, ‘May be he earns less than you’, ‘It’s only seven fifteen, man’, ‘But I have to meet someone’, ‘Twenty years is a hell of a time’, ‘Mind it’, ‘Somebody is waiting for you’, ‘Face the truth’, ‘I was not in my senses’, ‘How dare you?’, ‘They know nothing of Bengal, not even of Ravi Thakur’, ‘Don’t bore us, papa’, ‘Face the truth’, ‘This is too much of expectation’, ‘Sex is never a work. It’s an act’.

Again the text brings forth some typical English use by the modern educated people which are mostly in fashion in the metropolitan cities. This shows how casually the youth uses English today without little care for other’s understandability. Such uses may appear to the old people who may not be aware of the so called e-mail language. These are typical abbreviations or precisely can be termed shortening of a word which does not follow any rule as such. Suchitra’s characters who are placed in Kolkata are found to be using such words for example ‘cali’ (original word, caliber), ‘enthu’ (original word enthusiasm).

We have already discussed how the English language seeps through the upper class to the middle and then to the lower class. There are many such instances in the text which adds to this statement. Laxmi who is an illiterate maid servant in Deya’s house makes attempts of using English on many occasions though with phonological modification or to say correctly with phonological distortion and it happens because of her ignorance about the language. In this case her use of English proves as a class marker. Laxmi uses words like chilim (distortion from the word ‘slim’), felat (distortion from the word ‘flat’). Laxmi’s son-in-law wrongly uses the word returnmen to mean retirement.

A writer when attempts to throw out the foreign words from his or her writing and insists on finding indigenous substitutes from the language limits the scope of reaching all his readers. But Suchitra Bhattacharya knows it very well that language is
intimately related to the perception of the outer world and the sensitivity of the inner thinking of the speech community. It is reflexive of the social and cultural roles assigned to it by the history of the society. Modernization is a social process and as the society advances its language should also keep pace with the progress and help the society in acquiring ‘communication efficiency’. In Udo Megh the language used by her characters which is a combination of Bengali and English show the current trend and how English words are assimilated in our day to day life. It also shows the inclination of the modern generation of using English often beyond the academic boundary. The code mixing used by Suchitra Bhattacharya clearly points out that there is an inter-relationship between language and culture and her handling of the language in the text shows how our native culture is influenced by the global tongue which can no more be termed as the language of the White rather brought some sort of linguistic empowerment to the speakers of the Indian languages.

At this point we would like to draw attention to a very interesting thing that the writer who has made abundant use of English words suddenly seems to use some tough Bengali words which make us pause for a while and think why this word is here. A very common word appears to be very uncommon because of such application. For example, we can take the word ‘kanthalenguti’. Very few of the present generation of Bengalis are familiar with this Bengali word. A simple word ‘tie’ becomes very complicated with such usage. She uses phrase like ‘anshik somoyer adhyapak’. When she incessantly uses uncountable English words what would have worked in her mind behind not using the simple phrase ‘part time lecturer’ for the above expression. Can we also consider this as one of her stylistic device?
1.3.8 Use of Hindi Words

The constitution of India (Article 343) recognizes Hindi as the official language of India. Hindi is also the main language in many states of India such as Haryana, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Uttaranchal, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Chhatisgarh etc. As a national language, Hindi is used in our country as a link language or a language of wider communication. Hindi has been consolidating its position as India's national language and no one can deny the fact that Doordarshan and many other Hindi TV channels have extensively contributed to the spread Hindi throughout India. In India, known for multilingualism, Hindi may not be very popular down south compared to the north. But there is change in this scenario. In today’s age of rapid urbanization each metropolis attracts numerous linguistic communities. Hence it makes linguistic and cultural assimilation possible. Hindi, thus in a certain limited sense, has become common man’s language.

Contacts between two languages often raise interesting linguistic aspects. The change may be slow but over a period of a time it takes a different shape altogether. Because of code-switching the language boundaries get blurred. The bilingual speakers feel a lexical gap on many occasions and tend to switch to the other. Such mixed codes are more acceptable to the young generation than the old generation or to those who really believe in correctness of language. And such usages are common in informal situations like offices, public places, malls etc. And the users of such mixed codes hardly bother for the grammatical constraints. Today’s youth uses many Hindi words in their verbal repertoire without hesitation. It is very much acceptable to them but obviously such inclinations are avoided while writing. Generally the assimilation of Hindi words in one’s mother tongue happens while speaking and that too with the friend circle, in parties and in other informal situations. The movie magazines and the page 3 gossips are also the domains of such usage. Words like bindaas, jhakkas, and mast are very frequently used these days by youth. One can not keep a blind eye on the media’s impact on the mass regarding this and people do not hesitate to use Hindi words in between their language for the identity of a fashionable and well informed individual. At times it becomes one’s
style marker. Now if one is asked about the correctness or acceptability of such usage one may become judgmental and his reply may be no but the fact remains that today’s youth seems to be proficient in bringing in many Hindi words while conversing and they often do it unconsciously. It is a fashionable trend. They want to convey their emotions and feelings when they talk and they take resort to any means. Mixing up of the official language with English or with one’s mother tongue is a good evidence of this. The city-bred modern youth take such code-mixing as ‘cool’ and effortless. Such experimentations are like a linguistic laboratory where new constructions or coining of words are done. It is not that such attempts always get acceptance from the society but there are possibilities too when such usage becomes very common and frequent.

This novel of Suchitra Bhattacharya is written in the urban setting of Kolkata. Her text incorporates many Hindi words other than the English words. She might have been conscious in using such words as she is aware how the young generation of India especially in the metropolitan cities. People may not write in such a mixed language but while conversing, they hardly care. Thus we find that in Udo Megh her characters bring in many Hindi words when they converse. It may be a stylistic device on the part of the author but it also shows how the writer is a keen observant of a change in the language use which is a mirror of the society. Here are some of the Hindi words and sentence which one comes across in the text: baalbachha (children), galti (fault), khuda (God), dil (Heart), harami (scoundrel), talab (summon), chachi (aunt), dhoka (betray), wada (promise), ziddi (arrogant), napasand (disliking), kursi (chair), nanga (naked), badia (great), khatta (sour), saaf (clear), andar (inside), dupatta (kind of scarf used by women in India with salwar kameez), sehensa (king), kitabi (bookish), yaar (friend), fokat (without any charge), latelatif (latecomer) and bilkul sahi baat (rightly said). The influence of Hindi may be less than that of English on the Indian languages but its impact can not be under estimated.