Dimensions of Translation

After the introductory note on translation and issues related to it, this chapter aims at discovering and discussing Krishna Sobti’s novels in the light of various dimensions of translation. These dimensions include various approaches and theories and the resultant complexities related to the otherwise, seemingly transparent process of translation. What is the role of translation in the literary field? In which category should translation be placed? Is it a mere transference of meaning from the source language to the target language or creative writing? What are the limitations of translation? Up to what extent, can a translator evoke the same response in the reader as the original? How does translation appear as a manifestation of power? These are certain issues that have perennially affected; and continue to affect translation studies. Since the present research focuses on literature in translation, it becomes imperative to know as to how these issues manifest themselves in a translated work. Beneath the apparent, transparent act of translation, these nuances are inextricably woven in the very fabric of the act of translation; making it a complex affair. Over the years, Translation Studies has emerged as an independent discipline and there has been a spur of activity in this field. New theories and perspectives are coming up. The reader has come to acquire all importance; in almost equal proportions with the author, or perhaps greater. The issue of culture is another important facet to be taken care of. But before that, however, let us place the practice of translation in its traditional mould to see how it has been approached in different times and climes.

The traditional essentialist approach to literature, which Andre Lefevere calls ‘the corpus’ approach (173), is based on the Romantic notion of literature which sees the author as a quasi-divine ‘creator’ who possesses ‘genius’. He is believed to be the origin of the creation that is original, unique, organic, transcendental and hence sacred. Going by this assumption, translation automatically becomes a mere copy of the unique entity and thus by definition is secondary to the original process of ‘creation’. As such, the translator who is not the origin of the work of art, does not possess ‘genius’, and therefore, is considered merely “a drudge, a proletariat, and a shudra in the literary Varna system” (Ketkar 1).
Translator thus has traditionally been referred to as a traitor – a falsifier of the original. If we go by Plato’s dictum that poetry is doubly removed from reality, a translation, by inference, becomes triply removed from reality. Similarly, the very institution of translation has been looked down upon as is clear from the cynicism of tone in the following line: “Translation is like a woman; if beautiful, it cannot be faithful and if faithful, it cannot be beautiful” (Anon as quoted by Das 1).

This cynical yet interesting observation brings us to one of the major issues in translation – fidelity versus freedom: whether the translator should keep closeness to the original showing faithfulness to the original work or he/she has the right to exercise some amount of freedom to convey the sense in the target language? Should he follow the original in letter or in spirit? This perpetual dilemma a translator is faced with – whether to go for a word-for-word translation or to adopt the sense-for-sense model – is best reflected in the following words of Marcus Tullius Cicero, the Italian philosopher of First century BC:

If I render word for word, the result will sound uncouth and if compelled by necessity I alter anything in the order of wording, I shall seem to have departed from the function of a translator. (as quoted by Susan Bassnett, Translation 43)

Famous English poet and translator John Dryden tries to address and resolve the dilemma by describing translation as the judicious blending of these two modes of phrasing i.e. metaphrase and paraphrase, while selecting, in the target language, equivalents for the expressions used in the source language. He says:

When [words] appear . . . literally graceful, it were an injury to the author that they should be changed. But since... what is beautiful in one [language] is often barbarous, nay sometimes nonsense, in another, it would be unreasonable to limit a translator to the narrow compass of his author's words: 'tis enough if he chooses out some expression which does not vitiate the sense. (as quoted by Kasparek 83)
This opinion is further supported by later theorists like Ezra Pound and Edward Fitzgerald who believe in freedom in translation. It is obvious that they prefer a live sparrow over a stuffed eagle. However, there are other theorists like Vladimir Nabokov who claim that “the clumsiest of literal translation is a thousand times more useful than the prettiest of paraphrase” (71). In this way, the debate over which model should be followed to translate a text from one language to another has continued since ages and is still on.

The traditional approach emphasizes that a translator must have a good knowledge of both the languages and their cultures to accomplish his/her job of translation to the satisfaction of one and all. While translating a text from one linguistic and cultural environment to another, the translator has to undergo three stages—the receptive phase, the code-switching phase and the productive phase. In the receptive phase, he/she competently understands the text the source language; finds suitable equivalent expressions in the target language in the code-switching phase; and then goes on to produce a new text within the norms of the target language. The successful completion of all these phases of the translation process would determine the quality of translation.

There have been three major theoretical frameworks in the study of translation. The first framework adheres to the word for word method while translating a text from the source language to the target language. This method is also known as the complete equivalence model in which the translator maintains close fidelity to the original text; not moving away in the least from the constructs of the original text. In this method, even the phrasal and syntactic structures are retained in the target language. However, this approach has serious limitations as the text that emerges in the target language is almost unreadable, sometimes even laughable, because the target language may not follow the same grammatical rules and word-order as those of the source language. This kind of superficial transference often ends up producing literal, but non-sensical translations like “My head is eating circles” of the Hindi sentence “Mera sir chakkar kha raha hai.”
The second model could be called the Paraphrase Method as against the Metaphrase Method described above. Some theorists believe that the translator should primarily focus not on the word but the meaning. In other words, conveying the sense becomes more important than observing close adherence to the words. In this method, the translator frequently rephrases and restructures the original text to convey to the reader in the target language the basic sense of a passage. Thus, he/she follows the sense for sense model rather than word for word. This kind of paraphrasing is reader friendly, no doubt, but the translator here performs the role of an interpreter rather than a translator.

The third method which appears to be more rationale and practical is that of dynamic equivalence – the in-between theory of translation propagated by Eugene A. Nida to translate the Bible. In fact, this approach has always been favoured by translators around the world for its balanced view of the practice of translation. The aim of the translator here is neither to produce a word-for-word translation nor a paraphrase but the closest equivalence to the meaning of the original text and yet having some sort of freedom to effect minor lexical and syntactic re-ordering to suit “the specificities of the target language” (Bhaduri XXVI).

Whether translation is done word-for-word or sense-for-sense, these models seem to adopt the strategies of domestication i.e. making the text reader friendly in the target language. The emphasis is more or less on bringing the author home rather than sending the reader abroad. Eugene A. Nida emerges as the representative of the strategy of domestication in putting forth his method of dynamic equivalence.

This approach though seems to be more balanced than the earlier two, what is debatable is whether rendering words into equivalents can bring out the idea held in the original. In spite of genuine and sincere the attempts of the translator(s), the fact that words have cultural associations and that cultural assumptions vary from the source to the target language raises doubts about the very act of translation. It is exactly in this context that Simi Malhotra’s reservations on translation must be understood: “Translation is impossible. How can discourses in diverse languages with
diverse socio-cultural universes of their own, be mutually transferable in seamless perfection?” (197)

The twentieth century, particularly its later half, has witnessed vital changes in the realm of translation among many other fields. One of such discernible changes is the approach towards translation. From the linguistic theory of the sixties, polysystem theory and the cultural theory have come to dominate the field of translation. Ideas propagated by theorists like Ferdinand de Saussure, Noam Chomsky, Roland Barthes, Claud Levi Strauss, Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault on the role of language have also helped in approaching translation from a new perspective. A literary text is now increasingly being recognised as a cultural artefact and thus its relation to the other social systems is being seen as integral. In a world where the author’s version is no longer the only valid version of the text and more emphasis is being put on the reader-reception; the reader has now been rendered co-authorship of a text. Therefore, the translator also now finds an opportunity to exercise his freedom while translating a work taking liberty from the author’s version to create a new text. Deconstructionists like Derrida challenge the monopoly of the omniscient author by saying that the original work in fact is also a work of translation of thoughts and ideas and hence there is no vital difference between the original and the translation. This is in fact where Derrida’s theory of translation becomes a pioneering force. He refuses to consider the source text as original because it is an elaboration of an idea, of a meaning, in other words, it is in itself a translation. The logical consequences of Derrida’s argument about the status of translation is to do away with the dichotomy between original and translation, and thereby put an end to the view that relegates translation to a secondary position.

J.C Catford is one of the major contributors to the theory of translation in the twentieth century. In his *A Linguistic Theory of Translation* (1965), he defines translation as the replacement of the source language text material by equivalent target language material: “Translation may be defined as the replacement of textual material in one language (SL) by equivalent material in another language” (20). The linguistic touch in the definition of translation itself shows that Catford considers translation as a branch of comparative linguistics since translation deals with relation
between languages. To him, “translation is an operation performed on languages: a process of substituting a text in one language for a text in another. Clearly, then, any theory of translation must draw upon a theory of language—a general linguistic theory” (vii). He distinguishes between the phenomena of ‘total translation’ and ‘restricted translation’. According to him, the former is the replacement of source language phonology and graphology by non-equivalent target language phonology and graphology while the latter is the replacement of source language text material by equivalent target language material.

Catford’s theory of translation is a theory of meaning. Like Etienne Dolet – the French humanist of the sixteenth century – he also gives importance to meaning and spirit in translation. He considers meaning as a property of language which can be understood only in the linguistic and cultural environment of a particular language. In other words, a source language text has a source language meaning; similarly a target language text will engender target language meaning. Catford also points out the difference between translation and transference. In translation, the source language meaning is substituted by target language meanings but in transference the implantation of source language meaning into target language text takes place. There are two translation shifts Catford talks about – level shifts and category shifts. Shifts from one linguistic level to the other, like from Grammar to lexis and from lexis to Grammar are called level shifts. Category shifts, on the other hand, include structural shifts, class shifts and unit shifts.

On the question of translatability, Catford does not believe in absolutism. He says that source language texts are not absolutely translatable or absolutely untranslatable, but just more or less translatable. He also discusses about two types of untranslatability i.e. linguistic and cultural. Lack of formal correspondence between the source language and the target language leads to linguistic untranslatability. It can occur due to a particularly restricted range of meaning of an item. Similarly, cultural untranslatability occurs when a situational feature relevant for the source language text is absent from the culture of the target language text. In spite of his extensive deliberations on the theory of translation, Catford, however, fails to consider such
factors as the social and cultural background of the translator, his aim in translating etc.

Eugene A. Nida, another significant theorist, differentiates between two types of equivalences: formal and dynamic (or functional) as basic translation orientations. Formal equivalence focuses attention on the message itself, in both form and content. It is a means of providing some insight into the lexical, grammatical or structural form of a source text, which is similar to literal translation. Functional equivalence, however, is based on the principle of equivalent effect, i.e. the relationship between receiver and message should aim at being the same as that between the original receivers and the message in the source language. Nida defines two extremes of functional equivalence. In its minimal definition, dynamic equivalence should be able to enable the readers of a translated text to comprehend it to the point that they can conceive of how the original readers of the text must have understood and appreciated it. The maximal, ideal definition, on the other hand, carries the readers further to a stage where they can understand and appreciate the translated text in essentially the same manner as the original readers did.

Nida is of the opinion that translating is basically not a process of matching surface forms by rules of transference but a more complex procedure involving analysis, transfer and restructuring. In the stage of analysis, the surface structure is analysed in terms of the grammatical relationships, meanings of words and combination of words. The second stage ensures the transfer of analysed material to the mind of the translator from source language to receptor language while in the third stage, the transferred material is restructured in order to make the final message fully acceptable in the receptor language. This is how he puts it:

It is both scientifically and practically more efficient (1) to reduce the source text to its structurally simplest and most semantically evident kernels, (2) to transfer the meaning from source language to receptor language on a structurally simple level, and (3) to generate the stylistically and semantically equivalent expression in the receptor language. (Science 68)
After the three stages have been completed, the translation has to be tested focusing the attention upon the amount of dynamic equivalence i.e. how the receptor reacts to it. A good translation also becomes lengthier than the original because whatever is implicit in the source language is made explicit with more details in the translation. In this way, his model, though looks complicated, is a near complete approach.

Nida maintains that subjectivity cannot be avoided in translation because the translator becomes a part of the cultural context in which he lives and he cannot help being subjective at times. He also discusses two types of equivalences – formal and dynamic. The first focuses its attention on the message, while the other is oriented towards the receptor-response. The major focus of Nida’s theory is the receptor and his reaction. Pointing towards the shift in focus in recent times, he maintains that while earlier the focus was on the form of the message, the new focus is on the response of the receptor.

The essence of Peter Newmark’s contribution to the field of theorizing translation remains his detailed treatment of Semantic versus Communicative translation which makes the theory relevant for translating a variety of literature, thus widening its range. The semantic translation focuses primarily upon the semantic content of the source text and the communicative translation focuses upon the comprehension and response of receptors. Newmark also talks about three levels of translation. They are referential, textual and subjective levels. They are like the tubes of a jointed telescope with which the translator observes the three functions of language in varying degrees. In translating a literary text, the translation language is ‘expressive’ and level is ‘subjective’. In translating a non-literary text, the language is ‘informative’ and the level is ‘referential’. Further, Newmark expounds two basic processes of translation i.e. comprehension and formulation. The process of comprehension is used while interpretation and formulation is related to recreation. According to Newmark, the translator has to function smoothly between these processes.
Further, in the post-1980 period, translation has been given a position equal to that of the original by such critics and translators as Lambert, Walter Benjamin, Jacques Derrida, Helena Cixous etc. From the polysystem theory of the 1970s, translation studies have come a long way to ‘Cannibalistic’ theory which radically alters one’s views on translation. Cannibalism, here, should be understood in the sense of a liberating form and freeing the translation from the original but not as another form of possessing the original. As Edwin Gentzler has rightly put it:

Cannibalism is to be understood not in the Western sense, i.e. that of capturing, dismembering, mutilating, and devouring, but in a sense which shows respect, i.e. as a symbolic act of taking back out of love, of absorbing the virtues of body through a transfusion of blood. Translating is seen as an empowering act, a nourishing act, an act of affirming play that is very close to the Benjamin/Derrida position, which sees translation as a life-force that ensures a literary text’s survival. (192)

Gayatri Chakaravorty Spivak, in her well wrought article, “The Politics of Translation” conceives of translation as an important strategy in pursuing the larger feminist agenda of achieving women’s ‘solidarity’. She thus adds another contemporary dimension i.e. the feminist perspective to the theory and practice of translation. The task of the feminist translator, according to Spivak, is to consider language as a clue to the working of gendered agency. Translation can give access to a larger number of feminists working in various languages and cultures. In this way, translation becomes a tool in the hands of the feminists to spread awareness among women to resist and consequently subvert the existing power structures in favour of a more balanced gendered order. Spivak, however, holds that a translator (primarily a feminist) must surrender to the text, as translation is the most intimate act of reading. It is an act of submission to the rhetorical dimension of the text. This act for Spivak is more of an erotic act than ethical. She also advises that one’s first obligation in understanding solidarity is to learn other women’s mother tongue rather than consider solidarity as an ‘a priori’ given. Spivak shows genuine concern for the illiterate
women of the Third World and the first task of the feminists is to learn their language rather than impose someone’s conception of solidarity and feminism on them:

There are countless languages in which women all over the world have grown up and been female or feminist, and yet the languages we keep learning by rote are the powerful European ones, sometimes the powerful Asian ones, least often the chief African ones. (192)

Translation for Spivak is no mere quest for verbal equivalents but an act of understanding the other as well as the self. For her, it also has a political dimension, as it is a strategy that can be consciously employed. She uses the feminine metaphors of submission, intimacy, and understanding for theorizing about translation. Thus, theorizing about translation itself receives a feminist slant.

The feminists have also challenged the view of translation as betrayal of the original. Lori Chamberlain draws the attention of scholars to the sexualization of this terminology: “For ‘les belles infideles,’ fidelity is defined as an implicit contract between translation as woman and original as man, father, author etc. However, the infamous double standard operates here as it might have been the traditional marriage; the unfaithful wife/translation is publicly tried for crimes the husband/original is by law incapable of committing” (455-56). This contract, in short, makes it impossible for the original to be guilty of infidelity. Such an attitude betrays real anxiety about the problem of paternity and translation; it mimics the matrilineal kinship system where paternity—not maternity—legitimizes an offspring.

Chamberlain’s emphasis on cultural complicity between fidelity in translation and marriage finds support from feminist translation scholars such as Susan Bassnett, Barbara Johnson, Barbara Godard, Sherry Simon and others. Traditional notion of fidelity and beauty implicit in translation is seen to be closely associated with patriarchal establishment that exploits women. Barbara Godard, another feminist translation scholar who makes a connection between feminist translation work and postmodernist translation theory aptly remarks:
As feminist theory has been concerned to show, difference is a key factor in cognitive processes and in critical praxis. The feminist translator affirming her critical difference, her delight in interminable rereading and rewriting flaunts the signs of her manipulation of the text. Woman handling the text in translation would involve the replacement of the modest, self-effacing translator. (as quoted by Susan Bassnett, *Literature* 157)

This position is in contrast to Spivak’s position of intimate surrender to the rhetoric of the original. Godard’s translator is far more assertive of the gender difference and aggressively woman handles the original text.

H.C. Trivedi says that the translator should look for not merely verbal equivalents but also for cultural equivalents, if there are any. It would help him/her to decide the strategies he or she has to use. This brings us to the question of the strategies of Domestication and Foreignization—the two terms popularised by Lawrence Venuti—that a translator can adopt. Literal and liberal translations are techniques to tackle the linguistic form and they are two ways to transcode language. Similarly, Catford’s approach to translation is also, more or less, linguistic in nature. Domestication and foreignization, on the other hand, are concerned with the two cultures, the former meaning replacing the source culture with the target culture and the latter preserving the differences of the source culture. A foreignizing translation aims primarily to reproduce as much as possible, the ‘foreign elements’ in the original, including the foreign cultural features, the foreign formal features, and the author’s unusual writing techniques. Nida is regarded as the representative of those who favour domesticating translation whereas Lawrence Venuti can be regarded as the spokesman for those who favour foreignizing translation.

As has been pointed out earlier also, Nida highlights the importance of the element of culture in the process of translation when he points out that “for truly successful translation, biculturalism is even more important than bilingualism, since words only have meanings in terms of the cultures in which they function” (*Language*}
Cultural gaps between the source language and the target language have always turned to be a hard nut for translators to crack.

A staunch advocate of foreignization, Venuti believes that there is violence residing in the very purpose and activity of domestication. He holds that the phenomenon of domestication involves an ethnocentric reduction of the foreign text to cultural values of the target language. This entails translating in a transparent, fluent, invisible style in order to minimize the foreignness of the text for the readers of the target language. Venuti proposes the strategy of resistant translation i.e. foreignization against the tradition of smooth translation. He argues that foreignization entails choosing a foreign text and developing a translation method along lines which are excluded by dominant cultural values in the target language (242).

Foreignization produces something that cannot be confused with either the source language text or a text written originally in the target language. Venuti considers the foreignizing method to be “an ethnodeviant pressure on [target-language culture] values to register the linguistic and cultural difference of the foreign text” (20), sending the reader abroad. It is highly desirable, he says, “in an effort to restrain the ethnocentric violence of translation” (as quoted by Jeremy 147). In other words, the foreignizing method can restrain the violently domesticating cultural values of the English-language world. Foreignization, thus, is a non-fluent or estranging translation style designed to make visible the presence of the translator by highlighting the foreign identity of the ST and protecting it from the ideological dominance of the target culture. According to Venuti, domestication and foreignization are heuristic concepts rather than binary opposites. They may change meaning across time and location. What does not change, however, is that domestication and foreignization deal with the question of how much it rather signals the differences of that text.

So the act of translation is intimately related to the question of cultural identity, difference and similarity. It cannot be taken as so simple an activity as it involves lots of issues. The concept being dynamic undergoes changes over the years. The cultural
associations of the words and the variation of cultural assumptions from one language to another cannot be so simple and transparent. Das also confirms this when he says that “translation is not only a linguistic activity but a cultural act” (Das 24). Insightful perspectives of theorists like Andre Lefevere, Gideon Toury, Itamar Evan-Zohar, and Theo Hermans have also contributed significantly to the contemporary theorization of translation.

Translation then is no longer a problem of merely finding verbal equivalents but also of interpreting a text encoded in one semiotic system with the help of another. The notion of ‘intertextuality’ as formulated by the semiotician Julia Kristeva is extremely significant in this regard. She points out that any signifying system or practice already consists of other modes of cultural signification. This observation could well be the point of departure into postcolonial reflections on translation too. Showing how translation is a culturally bound act, Sherry Simon says:

_all translation practice and theory is based on a theory of culture – on the relation between self and other, identity and difference. That is to say: implicit to the act of translation are a set of assumptions about the ways in which linguistic forms carry cultural meanings._ (204)

The postcolonial outlook to translation vis-à-vis construction of identity opens on two fronts. On the one hand, there is the Orientatist construction of the colonized by the colonizer through a translation of the former’s texts into the latter’s language, rendering the colonial subject transparent, fully comprehensible, docile and consensual to subject transparent, fully comprehensible, docile and consensual to colonial rule. Andre Lefevere says, “In short, Western cultures ‘translated’ (and ‘translate’) non-Western cultures into Western categories to be able to come to an understanding of them and, therefore, to come to terms with them” (“Other” 77). The nexus of power and patronage in the field of translation becomes obvious by their ideological promotion of knowledge and culture. For instance, when they talk about Edward Fitzgerald’s ‘improvement’ of the work by Omar Khayyam, or the censorship of ‘bad’ language, the politics behind translation becomes easily discernible. On the
other hand, however, there is the possibility of an appropriation of the Western colonizers’ language by the natives, and through a reverse process, either by using it as a link language to give form to the otherwise amorphous multilingual identities that comprise their nation, or by ‘writing back’ to the colonizers, translation can become the tool of resistant subversive practice.

In short, while it is imperative to read translation from the perspective of power, or conversely to read how power – whether affirmative or critical – is translated, this can be done only if one investigates some of the traditional premises of translation, and replaces the belief in the universal capacity of translation to render one language into another, by virtue of the sheer capacity of a ‘good’ translator, with a view of the complexities and differences that make good translation immensely difficult, if not unattainable.

Translation, in its subversively resistant and critical role, can be used paradoxically to circumvent censorship and break through the shackles of consensual subjugation. Translation can play a significant role in voicing the plight of marginalized group thus posing a serious challenge to the prevailing power structure. Translation has been used by the powerful to perpetrate its hold on those who do not have power. Translation theory in the West, during the colonial times, emphasized translations of foreign language texts into the mother tongue. The target culture was perceived as the self and the foreign culture was recognized as the other. Thus the purpose of translation was to translate the other to the colonizer to enable him to understand in a better way and thus consolidate his hold on the bizarre, alien colonized on the colonized. To quote Edward Said: “The specialist does the immediate translation of mere Oriental matter into useful Substance: the Oriental becomes, for example, a subject race, an example of an ‘Oriental’ mentality, all for the enhancement of the ‘authority’ at home” (44). Similarly, the European scholars translated Sanskrit texts in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in order to understand the Orient better which was under their control. The ultimate purpose behind indulging in such translations was only to expose native cultures and finally to annihilate them using repressive colonial measures. To Ania Loomba, a post-colonial critic, this relationship between translation and the colonizer is “a crucial point for
colonial attempts to classify, record, represent and process non-European societies...[and] make them more manageable, comprehensible for imperial consumption” (101).

However, the relationship has never been so simple and unidirectional. On the other hand, it is much more complicated, two-way web of power play. If translation became a tool in the hand of colonial powers to destroy native cultures of their colonies, it served as a powerful medium for the natives to organize themselves and improve their language and culture. Thus, playing a repressive role in the hands of the powerful, translation became constitutive of those power relations too.

This duality of relationship between power and translation can be better explained in the Indian context. During the post-colonial period, there is a marked shift in emphasis in the practice of translation in India. If during the colonial period, English texts and authors were frequently, and even randomly, translated into Indian languages, in the post-colonial period, Bhasha texts (texts in regional languages) are being translated into English. In its queer, duplicitous relationship with power, translation renders the colonizer’s means of rendering the colonized transparent and governable into a post-colonial means of nationalist assertion. Moreover, translation becomes now as the most potent tool for the colonized to reorganize themselves and resist, ironically and interestingly in the language of the colonizer himself. “The translatorial construction of a ‘national’ literary identity, for post-colonial India, primarily happens through English—the colonizer’s language” (Malhotra 200).

Harish Trivedi analyses the postcolonial situation in translation and politics involved in it argues that “colonial and postcolonial is a diachronic marker, and it is at the same time an act of ideological or political faith” (77). Translation is often governed by SL-TL power relationship as is evident from Fitzgerald’s translation on the one hand and Tagore’s translations of his own writings on the other. For translating Indian literatures into international languages the only international language used is English, and Trivedi holds that “the English language has thus become the clearing house for various Indian literatures in India,” and “the biggest dream cherished by nearly all writers in Indian languages […] is that one day they
will be translated into English and will burst upon the international scene in a blaze of global glory” (84) In this way, getting translated into English involves numerous implications of power.

Krishna Sobti is one of the first few Hindi authors to be translated in English. Up to now, five of her novels have been translated in English. *Zindaginama*, her magnum opus, is in the pipeline for quite some time now, thus showing how novels like it – which are so firmly rooted into the cultural milieu – are practically untranslatable. Katha, being a reputed translation house, however, has not given up the project. In fact, the translators have done a reasonably decent job in capturing the essence of Sobti’s original works and carrying it over to the English translations as well at both linguistic and cultural levels. Maintaining close fidelity to the original, the translators of various novels have taken freedom from it to suit the specificities of the target language i.e. English. To borrow expressions from Nida, the translators have undertaken all the three stages of the process of translation i.e. analysis, transfer and restructuring and this endeavour on their part has brought about the desired result as well. Their efforts have successfully projected Krishna Sobti on the global level as now the veteran Hindi author is being looked at with a renewed interest and approach by the English scholars and critics. Katha is also bringing out a book of critical essays on various aspects of Sobti’s creative art by eminent English scholars and critics of India. All this has been possible because of Sobti’s exposure to the English literary circles.

*The Heart Has Its Reasons* is a specimen of a good translation brought out by Katha. In its original Hindi version, the novel is heavily coloured with refined Urdu which flows spontaneously from the characters of Dilli of pre-independence era. Even in English, the narrative captures the fluid intricacies, the well-wrought turns of phrase, the distinguished Hindi of 1920s Dilli. Sobti uses as her canvas the human heart. Its shimmering shades and unfathomable depths are captured through social interfaces, layered dialogues and dynamic characters who evolve into new beings with the passage of time. The dialogues are especially distinctive and each English which appears to be bizarre in the first instance, optimally captures a characteristic Hindi expression without appearing out of context. Therefore, Sobti’s authorial
authority engages her English reader almost in same proportions as it does those of original Hindi. In this way, Nida’s concept of functional equivalence is realized upto a great extent. Each individual voice intersects on the fabric of the whole. We marvel at the engaging web she weaves, shimmering with poetry through discord, illuminating us historically and culturally through crosscurrents.

And yet, Krishna Sobti is difficult to translate because of her highly individual style of writing. The expressions she is habitual of using to bring the reader home on a particular point, are culture specific and therefore, very hard to replicate in another language. This is primarily because of the enormity of the cultural space Sobti creates in her novels. The language is heavily tinged with local, day-to-day expressions which have meaning in a particular cultural environment and thus are next to impossible to be reproduced in the target language. Zindaginama, in particular, is very difficult to translate as it has such expressions in abundance.

If we proceed to analyse the translated works of Krishna Sobti in the light of the various nuances of translation discussed in the chapter, we find that her works they present a healthy blending of the two strategies of domestication and foreignization. The first impression that comes to our mind is that the English translations have been done keeping in mind the Indian readers only. As such, the translators have worked with an assumption that the readers have beforehand knowledge of common Hindi expressions in all their linguistic and cultural connotations; and they have retained them as such. In the novel Listen Girl! one comes across such words as Ladki, dhoop, puja room, odhni, chai, lok-parlok etc. without any explanatory notes. Similarly, in To Hell With You Mitro, local words like bahu, jeth, manjhli, devrani are used spontaneously. The way Mitro sarcastically describes Phoola’s illness to Guljarilal would have been incomplete in the English version without keeping the Hindi expression “phadak”. This is how Mitro puts it: “Good lord! Her heart’s leaping sky high – phadak, phadak!” (25). Another expression worth mentioning in this regard is “thoo” – the Hindi word to denote utter contempt. Balo, Mitro’s mother uses this expression for self-condemnation towards the end of the novel as she comes to realize the essential worthlessness of her life outside family. Other culture specific expressions like these have been retained so
that the cultural effect created by Sobti is not marred in the least. However, the strategy of domestication has been used here and there as a supportive measure. The translators have omitted some source language expressions to avoid unnecessary confusion to the readers of the target language.

Going by Catford’s deliberations on cultural and linguistic untranslatability, one finds that the translated versions of Sobti’s novels also face handicaps on both these accounts. In Sobti’s context, this problem is further aggravated as the author uses in abundance culture specific terminology. In the following lines from *Surajmukhi Andhere Ke*, the author simply converts the mundane, physical into something sacred and ethereal by lending it a mythological touch. The physical union of Ratti and Diwakar thus ceases to be something purely physical and the lovers become the deities striving the nectar of life: “Dheemi ho gayi aanch ki lau me dooba kamra koi pooja sthal ho. Ek vedika par sath-sath lete ve dono devgana ho. Devta. Apne-apne tan me chhipe stroton se jinhe amrit ki boonde pani ho. Bhagirathi kheench lani ho” (120).

This feeling of sacredness is, though captured in the English version, the cultural gaps are still there. The word ‘amrit’ has cultural connotations and as such, evokes a specific response in the reader in the source language – something which cannot be carried over to the target language. This gap is overtly perceptible in the English translation of the lines: “Steeped in the glow of the fading dire, the room seemed ethereal. And the two of them, two deities on an altar. Questing the potion of life from wellsprings hidden deep” (SD 96).

This one expression “Bhagirathi kheench lani ho” is meaningful in a specific cultural context. The reader can relate to the emotions only if he has some beforehand knowledge of the legend of river Bhagirathi. Clearly, culture specific terms like ‘Bhagirathi’ have to be retained as such in the translated version because simply doing away with the expression would not help. The way out in this situation is to retain the expression as in the original and explain it for the understanding of the reader. In fact, Sobti’s fictional world is replete with such expressions as are meaningful in a cultural context only. The myths, legends and anecdotes have cultural
identities and as such, the translator has to take extra care while re-creating the impact of the original in the target language. In the novel Ai Ladki!, Ammu frequently quotes from the Indian scriptures and the world of legends. At one place, she refers to the *Baikunth Dhaam* which certainly will remain a puzzle for a non-Indian reader who has no beforehand knowledge of the place. In *Zindaginama* too, Vadde Lala tells the villagers a story involving many mythical characters. A beforehand reading of these references is a must which the author in the source language has assumed on his own but the translator cannot; leading to the problem.

Similarly, in *Mitro Marjani*, the unabashed Mitro refers to a place named “kaala pani” while retorting against her oppressive husband: “*Maa ji, bete ki chinta me tan na sukhao, iski karni aap hi ise kaale paanion bhijwayegi*” (12). This expression, in English translation *To Hell With You Mitro* has become thus: “Maaji, don’t brood so over your son. His own deeds will fling him across the black seas.” (11)

The term “kaala pani” may be translated as “black waters”. But the associated meaning with it in the culture specific environment of India is untranslatable. During the British regime, Kaala Pani always evoked the hardest of punishment in the form of imprisonment in the Cellular Jail at the Andemans. The expression thus denotes severe punishment which the literal translation can never express.

H. C. Trivedi’s observation becomes relevant here that while translating from an Indian language into English, one is faced with two main problems: first one has to deal with concepts which require an understanding of Indian culture and secondly, one has to arrive at target language meaning equivalents of references to certain objects in the source language which includes features absent from target language culture (3). As far as the second problem is concerned, the English translations of Sobti’s works do not face it overtly because primarily they have been brought out keeping in mind the English literary circles of India only.

Another feature which is somewhat untranslatable is the intense element of poetry in Sobti’s works. Though Sobti writes fiction, she renders it a deft poetic touch. This poetry is difficult if not impossible to replicate in the target language.
Even if it is translated, its music, rhythm is lost and with that goes the overall effect that resonates so naturally in the original text.

In the novel *Daar Se Bichhudi*, Sobti gives a vivid description of the *vain* – mourning of women for their dear ones killed in the war – which despite the intense tragic element, creates a wonderful effect due to its musicality:

*Saat Samundron paar gora ladne aaya…
Hai...hai...gora ladne aaya.
Chhin gaye maa ke laal, gora ladne aaya...
Hai...hai...gora ladne aaya. (89)*

The English translation of this piece of writing is practically impossible as once again, the lamenting one’s dear ones is culture specific. Though the English translator has tried to maintain the original rhyme, she somehow fails to create the same effect. This is how it goes in English:

*The white man crossed seven seas to fight …
Hai, hai, the gora came to fight …
Sons of mothers snatched away …
Shame on him, the gora came to fight … (MD 105)*

Similarly, in *The Heart Has Its Reasons*, we come across similar kind of problem when Badru and Masooma visit the haveli for the first time on the occasion of Rajjo’s birthday and recite “Reech Ka Bachcha.”

This poetic touch is so peculiar to Sobti and flows spontaneously from her poetic heart. *Zindaginama* in particular is marked by a distinctive poetic environment. Be it a happy occasion of someone’s marriage, or sending curses on the *soutan* or the everyday gatherings – men and women alike sing themselves to the occasion. The dramatic scene capturing the fight between Goma and Bholi, the two wives of the village shopkeeper, Rabyan’s recitation of Bulleshah and Waris Shah, the songs of Molu Mirasi and Babo Mirasan etc. are splendid when understood in the cultural context of the locale of the novel and cannot be ‘carried over’ in the target language.
so easily. To quote one example, When Shera recites Bulleshah, the reader feels transported into an altogether different world:

Na main Arabi
Na main Lahori
Na Main Hindi
Shahar Nagori
Na main Hindu
Turk Pishori
Na main rahnda
Vichch nadoun
Bulla keeh jane
Main Kaun! (ZN 251-52)

The element of poetry, apart from such quotes from the celebrated poets like Bulle Shah and Waris Shah, surfaces in Sobti’s description of Ratti-Diwakar union also. In fact, the author is known for her poetic prose. The onomatopoeic effect of the Hindi words in the following lines of Surajmukhi Andhere Ke is simply magical:
“Ratti ne tadapkar odhan ughad diya ki aanch ka phool lohit kund me ja tira. Chhal…chhal…dolit! Hillolit!” (121)

Now the question is: can this kind of expression which is so rich in a culture specific imagery and symbolism be translated at all? This question reminds one at once of Simi Malhotra’s observation who expresses her reservations about the translation saying that discourses have their own socio-cultural universes and as such, a seamless translation from one language to another is impossible.

It is pertinent to point out that Sobti’s language is heavily tinged with local, indigenous expressions, some of which have now become obsolete. As such, to find equivalents to those expressions is a Herculean task; a big challenge for the translator. “Sargi vela”, “trikaal vela”, “aakkhyan”, “daachi”, “rookh”, “shahni”, “gaachh” – are some such expressions which appear and reappear in Sobti’s fictional world making it specific in time, space and culture. Such expression though could be replaced with
their English synonyms, the effect they create is immense and cannot be carried over through the synonymous expressions in the target language.

Another aspect of the limitations of the translated works gets reflected in the titles. Two of the titles of the five translated works are somewhat different from the original titles. The first title is “Memory’s Daughter” for the Hindi title “Daar Se Bichudi.” The Hindi title creates an image of a tiny sparrow left behind of its group. Scared of danger lurking in all corners, it flaps her wings vigorously to be home. Another image that comes to the reader’s mind after reading the Hindi title is that of a fawn that in a group of alike creatures is playful, full of life, safe. However, when it lags behind and finds itself all alone, the thought of some predators lurking around numbs its senses and it runs around to get back to safety. Pasho’s life story is no different from that of a sparrow of a fawn. Throughout the novel, she is in search of a shelter, a safe place once she crosses the threshold of her maternal uncles’ house. Destiny keeps her tossing from one household to another and Pasho tries to assume that she has found a home. Ironically however, after every bit of respite, there are bigger dangers she finds herself faced with.

In the English translation, the title “Memory’s Daughter” however fails to capture this aspect of Pasho’s character. The translator has given prominence to another, not-so-prominent feature of Pasho’s personality i.e. her fondness for romantic thoughts. Amidst miserable living conditions, Pasho either dreams of a comfortable future or remains obsessed with her past memories when she was comfortable. No doubt, this feature in Pasho helps her pass through various odds, it somehow fails to capture Pasho’s getting separated from her ‘daar.’

Thus the translator has shifted the focus from one key aspect of Pasho’s personality, to another one which is insignificant when compared to the original. Another way of putting it would be that the translator has not been able to do justice with the implications that the author wanted to suggest through the title in her original Hindi work.

Another title that has been used innovatively is “The Heart Has Its Reasons” for the Hindi “Dilo-Danish.” The title shows a clear impact of Urdu and the word
‘Danish’ needs an explanation. ‘Danish’ literally means wisdom, the sense of distinguishing between good and bad; right and wrong. Using this definition as the lighthouse, it can be inferred that the title refers to the wisdom of the heart as against that of mind. The English title uses the word ‘reasons’; neither wisdom of the heart nor reason but the plural form thus opening the title to a new interpretation.

Once again, it points to the fact that if the translator is not careful, he/she can mar the original intentions of the author. Every author uses the title of his/her work as a key or index to the major themes or characters that he has taken up in the work and the translator sometimes because of carelessness and sometimes by superimposing his own interpretation can bring about an undesirable or inapt meaning or emphasis, thereby changing the whole focus of the title.

All the discussion taken up in terms of theories of translation, points to one important factor i.e. the role of power structures in matters of translation. We have already taken up various theories of translation projecting the view that all translation work is a pointer towards hegemonization—political, cultural, religious and more often economic. As we delve into these theories, we realize that traditionally speaking, translation has been a tool in the hands of power seekers/colonizers in their various manifestations. However, with the inevitable demise of colonialism, new equations of power have emerged. It is also true that colonialism has resurrected itself in new avtaars and now losing its natural aggression, it has acquired subtler shapes wherein it appears in acceptable forms of hegemonization. The rules of power have undergone change and they are now more sophisticated and camouflaged in a veneer of sophistication wherein the work translated seems to gain through its projectile into the global village where it gets recognition in terms of name, fame and monitory games.

In this sense, there is a seeming reversal of role. However, a closer scrutiny ascertains the fact that the power structures used in the processes of colonialism are operative in terms of octopus-like stranglehold which the victimizing agencies apply on the victim. This point could be illustrated in relation to the English translations of Sobti’s celebrated works which have been brought out by a reputed publishing house,
Katha. Apart from the mega project taken up by Katha that has undertaken to translate all novels by Sobti, her novel, *Surajmukhi Andhere Ke* (1972) was translated in English by a lesser known publisher, Vikas as *Blossoms in Darkness* (1979). The equations of power manifest here also as this translation, in spite of its sterling quality and nearness to the original, could not get much attention and readership whereas the English translation of the same novel as *Sunflowers of the Dark* which came much later in 2008 was well received in the literary galleries. Was it only because of the influence that second publisher could generate or some other subtle power play? It can be perceived in the light of the original Hindi lines quoted below in italicised roman script followed by the two translations:


“The room became an altar. And the two deities lay there warmed by the glowing embers of the worship-fire. Each strained to discover the purest in the other as if together they had to pull out the Bhagirathi” (BD 78-79).

“Steeped in the glow of the fading fire, the room seemed ethereal. And the two of them, two deities on an altar. Questing the potion of life from wellsprings hidden deep” (SD 96).

Clearly, the first translation has been closer to the original text in evoking the same response in the English readers as those of the Hindi readers. The first translator has retained the key word, “Bhagirathi” as such in her translation which being a meaningful term in a specific cultural ethos, has to be kept intact. This feature, though has been observed by the translators at Katha as well, somehow is missing in this particular instance.

Cultural constructs cannot be translated in the absolute sense; nor can a translator capture the linguistic nuances of a creative writer in their essence. A writer like Krishna Sobti who does not look at things in a matter of fact manner but
endeavours to make a poetic interpretation of the characters and situations, dilemmas and conflicts of this confusing/confused world and obviously any translator who is to capture the essence of the poetic touch, fails, if not entirely, at least partially and as such, in spite of the most genuine efforts of the translator, his knowledge of cultural matrices backed by his knowledge of source and target languages, he/she may not be able to create the whole creative experience in a manner which can be called satisfying.

In spite of all this, it may be observed that a partial/half satisfying attempt is always better than no attempt at all. Therefore, despite the insufficiencies and inadequacies faced by the translator to find suitable equivalents in the target language, he/she works out a reasonably good text. Though much is lost in translation, the gain is always more than the loss. Translation from the source language to the target language is thus an interesting and beneficial literary endeavour. It is essentially a process “of being ‘carried over’ and its success depends on how far an SL text is adequately ‘carried over’ to the TL text—semantically, culturally and linguistically” (Das 158). When translation fails to ‘carry over,’ transliteration and transcreation come to the rescue of a translator and help him/her tide over the problem. Further, translation is creative and intuitive and hence, literature in translation has an independent status beyond the categorizations of source and target languages. The strategy of foreignization as propagated by Venuti becomes important here which helps the translator to create something new beyond the limitations of source and target languages. The translator in this way is a co-creator who creates something new and not merely someone who renders a source language text into a target language text. Whether the results of translation are satisfactory or otherwise, depends upon the competence in matters of culture, language and imagination. Despite some limitations, the translated novels of Krishna Sobti arouse almost the same response as the original Hindi texts and the translators have done a reasonably commendable job.