Chapter – 1

INTRODUCTION

Needless to say that translation is a human bound reflection. It is basically connected with the human thought activities. In the meantime, translation is a human language based phenomenon. Human being’s relation with translation doesn’t emerge overnight; rather it goes three thousand years back. Its roots extend to the early civilizations of human kind such as Greeks, Romans, Indians, Persians and the Arabs. Since man needs to share his interests, businesses, ideas, experiences and cultural norms with people who are culturally different from him, translation was the only way to bridge those differences. The mission of translation through its long divergent history as well as with human history has not changed, yet, it becomes more sophisticated and more specialized instead, particularly in our new era. The translation contribution to human’s advancement and progress is great. Millions of source books, journals, periodicals in different human knowledge specializations are understood and perceived via translation. Millions and millions of text books are translated into hundreds of living languages. Different cultures for different nations disclosed themselves and became under intensive studies through translation. Different religions for different communities are subjected to interpretations and analysis due to translation. The massive flow of international trade and businesses around the globe can not be met unless the flow of translation. The recent technological revolution our modern man experiencing today is owing to a highly advanced
communication and a rapid translation progress. The question 'What is translation?' appears to most of us as easy as any other simple question needs short and definite answer. But actually the answer to such a question is rather complex, particularly if we understand that the concept of translation is still a matter of argument among the translation scholars themselves. In its wide context, translation is the process of transferring information from one language to another language, but instead of sailing through general definitions in order to know what translation is, let us confine ourselves to some technical references regarding the meaning of translation. Oxford Companion to English Language (1992) defines translation as "the restatement of exchanging information between different language communities."\(^1\) For Collier's Encyclopedia (1960) translation is "the art of converting written or spoken communication from one language into another language."\(^2\) For the Dictionary of Language and Linguistics, translation is the "process or the result of converting information from one language or language variety into another."\(^3\) Actually, translation is not as easy as someone might think. Susan Bassnett (1980) thinks that translation involves more than replacement of lexical and grammatical items between languages as can be seen in the translation of idioms and metaphors, the process may involve discarding the basic linguistic elements of the SL text in order to achieve Popovic's goal of 'expressive' between the SL and the TL texts.\(^4\) According to Toury [cited in Gentzler], translations have no "fixed identity because they are always subjected to different socio-literary contextual factors, so they have to be seen as having multiple identities, dependent upon
the forces of history and semiotic we called “culture”.\(^5\) Like Toury, Nair too, in his article “Semantic Equivalences in Translation: A Case Study of Malayalam” puts stress on culture in translation as “the activity of translation between two languages is essential transferring one culture into another through verbal means.”\(^6\) Catford sees translation as “an operation performed on languages, a process of substituting text in one language for text in another language.”\(^7\) Translation, according to Nastoga (1996) is “a process which is completed when the translator feels she/he has accounted for lexical, idiomatic, and syntactic means of expressions in the target [receptor] language (TL).\(^8\) Wills views translation as “a text oriented event”. Based on that, translation is “a procedure which leads from a written SLT to an optionally equivalent TLT and requires the syntactic, semantic, stylistic and text pragmatic comprehension by the translator of the original text.”\(^9\)

Practically however, and despite having followed restricted translation rules during the translation process, vital translation errors committed by translators are unavoidable. Such errors are not easily detected in the translated text unless a close reading and a contrastive analysis is established between the lines of both source texts and their translations. Basically, errors or mistakes which might have been committed by translators come not only via linguistic bound nature, rather, they might stem from cultural bound background. And in order to lessen the translator’s mistakes and the translation message be more intelligible, translators must be armed with the necessary knowledge of both cultures of the SL and TL, otherwise the whole work might be destroyed and go beyond its intended direction. And to make
this point more clear, let us borrow Dr. Fahd A. Salameh's remarks. Salameh writes:

Novels that impregnated with cultural references, historical, political, Folkloric and religious allusions pose a serious challenge to a translator, particularly when these references and allusions are the sole property of a national language and culture. Such elements form an insurmountable obstacle in the path of transference from one culture to another. These elements in my view, require from a translator not only a full command of the SL and the TL, but an encyclopedic knowledge of different literary, historical, political and social traditions and customs relating to both cultures, so as to convey the message of the original text to the new one. The result of such an inefficient translation as seen by the same writer is

...causing permutations that either distort the original text, its ideas and views, or transform the whole work into a totally new version that lacks the flavor and distinctive properties of the original, alienating it from its own culture and presenting it to its new audience in a kind of "with-it translation..."

Salameh indicates a significant point translators should emphasize on when translating literary works. He says,

in the absence of a translator's introduction to a translated work, it becomes difficult to determine the objective of work, and the interpretation adopted by the translator in his/her approach to the original text—what features are significant and what others could be missed.
Regarding the present research project and in order to explore the degree of the translation strengths and weaknesses, the present research scholar’s aim is to analyze some selected Yemeni translated literary works rendered from Arabic (SLT) into English (TLT). And to achieve such a goal, the researcher will be guided by the following specific objectives:

- Finding out the degree of translatability and untranslatability between SLT and TLT.
- Finding out the type of the translation methods translators followed to fulfill their intended translation goals.
- Finding out whether the translators were competent enough to deal with social and cultural aspects in translation.
- Finding out the type of translation methods translators utilized to deal with such cultural elements.
- Exploring the degree of both weaknesses and strengths of the translation process.

And to reach the above stated objectives, the researcher will follow the contrastive analysis method which might be summing up in the following points:

- Go through thorough notable translation literature for noted translation scholars and experts.
- Go through the intended translation text.
• Read it thoroughly and carefully, comparing the translated text with the original version.

• Spot any irrelevant element linking to linguistics, stylistic or culture emerges within the target context.

• Comments on a particular discovered problem will be provided.

• Alternatives for the spotted element will be given supporting with reasons.

It is worth noting here that the following translated textbooks chosen for analysis are selected according to the following criteria:

• Their significant place in the Yemeni literature.

• Almost the first Yemeni literary works translated to different international languages, English is among them.

• Translators are non Yemeni nationals.

• The selected works represent variety of literary genres.

1- **The Hostage** is a novel with a theme centers around an innocent Yemeni child taken away from his family and kept in a jail as a hostage for his father’s disobedience to the ruler. The novel draws a special attention to the social and political problems Yemeni people experienced during the rule of the Imam’s era in the 1940s of the last century. The novel was written by Zayd Mutee Dammaj and translated by May Jayyusi and Christopher Tingley.
2- **They Die Strangers** is another impressive and humanitarian novel. Its theme is about those 'unfortunates' who were forced to leave their homeland owing to stern political and economic circumstances. The novel was written by Mohammad Ahmad Abdul-wali and translated by Abubaker Bagader and Deborah Akers.

3- **The Book of Sana'a:** This collection of poems contains fifty six translated poems, all devoted to the Old Sana’a, the capital of Yemen, where the poet spent most of his early days. It was written by a well celebrated Yemeni poet, critic and literary figure, Professor Abdulaziz Al-maqalih and was translated by Bob Holman and Sam Liebhaber.

4- **Social Issues in Popular Yemeni Culture** is originally based on a Sana’ani Radio series programme broadcasting by Radio Sana’a since 1988. The Arabic-colloquial based episodes were written by Abdurahman Mutahar and translated by the British academic and linguistic researcher Dr. Janet C. E. Watson, from Dorgam University, who translated, edited and annotated a set of fifty well selected contemporary Yemeni anecdotes.

5- **The Land Salma** is a short story written by Mohammed Abdu-wali and translated by Abubaker Bagader and Deborah Akers. Its themes revolve around the forced marriage and emigration in Yemen.
NOTES


11. Ibid., p.32.

12. Ibid., p.33.