THE POLITICS OF TRANSLATION ESSAY ANALYSIS

A significant statement on *The Politics of Translation* comes from Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak who considers translation as an important approach in pursuing the larger feminist agenda of achieving women's `solidarity'.

The seminal essay, *The Politics of Translation* brings together feminist, postcolonialist and poststructuralist approaches. Through various examples she highlights the tensions between different approaches and calls for surrender of self by the translator to the text. As translation itself is a reading, and one of the best way to get around the confines of own’s identity is to work with someone else’s title. She further relates this act with a language that belongs to many others, “this after all is one of the seductions of translating”. She further explains that the task of the feminist translator is to consider language as a clue to the working of gendered agency.

As a translator Spivak is fully aware of the challenges one faces while translating, therefore, she understands why one tends to play safe by siding with logic over rhetorical inferences, but she explains that in doing so, one loses vital clues hidden in the source text. To decipher these metaphors which get lost in between source to translated text, she calls for development of love and affinity to the text by the translators. Thus, the task of the translator is to facilitate this love between the original and its shadow, a love that permits faying, holds the agency of the translator and the demands of her imagined or audience at bay.

Spivak is concerned with the politics of translation from a non-European woman’s text, as too often the translator fails to engage with, or care insufficiently for the rhetoricity of the original. While trying to portrait something meaningful translator ends up creating menace of a space outside language. This is most eerily staged (and challenged) in the effort to communicate with other intelligent possible being in space. (Absolute alterity or otherness is thus differed-deferred into another self who resemble us, however minimally, and with whom we can communicate.

Based on the ideas proposed by post-structuralists like Derrida, Spivak wants to deconstruct the preconceived thought processes that she sums up in terms of three-tiered notion of language: rhetoric, logic, silence, she proposes a different kind of effort for translation in terms of synonym, syntax and local colour. She justifies Derrida when he points out the difficulties between French and English, and agrees to speak in English—"I must speak in a language that is not my own because that will be more just"—I want to claim the right to the same dignified complaint for a woman's text in Arabic or Vietnamese”. 
Perhaps, this idea helps her to challenge the English language dominated feminists movements which through law of majority not only silences the minority language feminists within western world but the same concept is imposed upon in other poor countries of Asia or Arab world. “In the act of wholesale translation into English there can be a betrayal of the democratic ideal into the law of the strongest”.

Spivak speaks out against Western feminists who expect feminist writing from outside Europe to be translated into the language of power, English. Such translation, in Spivak's view, is often expressed in 'translationese', which eliminates the identity of politically less powerful individuals and cultures. She suggests that feminists from the hegemonic countries should show real solidarity with women in postcolonial contexts by learning the language in which those women speak and write.

She also says that one's first responsibility in understanding solidarity is to learn other women's mother tongue rather than consider solidarity as an ‘a priori’ given. Spivak also shows a kind of anxiety for the ‘Third World' illiterate women and the first task of the feminists is to learn their language rather than impose someone's notion of solidarity and feminism on them. "There are countless languages in which women all over the world have grown up learning and have been female or feminist, and still the languages we keep learning the most are the powerful European ones, sometimes the powerful Asian ones, least often the chief African ones.

Translation for Spivak is an act of understanding the other as well as the self. For her it has a political dimension, as it is a strategy that can be consciously employed. She uses the feminine adjectives like submission, intimacy and understanding for theorizing translation. Thus theorizing translation itself receives a feminist slant.

In Spivak's opinion, the 'politics of translation' currently gives prominence to English and the other 'hegemonic' languages of the ex-colonizers. Translations into these languages from Bengali too often fail to translate the difference of the Bengali view because the translator, albeit with good intentions, over-assimilates it to make it accessible to the Western readers.

Spivak's work is indicative of how cultural studies, and especially post-colonialism, has over the past decade focused on issues of translation, the transnational and colonization and translation has been manipulated to disseminate an ideologically motivated image of postcolonial countries.

Thus we notice that Spivak has dismantled the pre-conceived notion of feminisms as well as thoughts revolving around post-colonial literature and society through English. Her approach appears to be quite harsh for the feminist writers but certainly it helps feminist writers to understand the rhetoric of language and culture, and women of post-colonial countries will be able to speak more freely and share their
inner problems in a more open way if they learn their language. This will also increase historical, social-cultural, ideological and political understanding of the society about which the western feminists have been showing solidarity from outer periphery through hegemonic English psyche.

Spivak is supported in parallel by feminist theorists who have spoken against male-driven depiction of translations and of women. Such orientations have been linked to colonial thought processes where colony is considered as translational copy whose suppressed identity has been overwritten by the colonizer. Translation's role in disseminating such ideological images has led Bassnett and Trivedi (1999: 5) to refer to the 'shameful history of translation'.