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**The Translator's Dilemma: Balancing Fidelity, Creativity, and Cultural Context in Translating Titles of Selected Kashmiri Short Stories into English**

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**Dr. Irshad Ahmad Parray**

Assistant Professor ©

Department of English Language and Literature

Islamic University of Science and Technology, Awantipora, Kashmir

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**Abstract**

Translation can be understood as a negotiation of meaning between two texts and their respective cultures, extending beyond cultural, historical, and translator-mediated decision-making processes. In this regard, a translator functions first as a reader and then as a mediator between languages. A comprehensive understanding of the source text (ST) is therefore crucial for producing an effective and meaningful translation. The translator's role becomes particularly complex when negotiating meaning across linguistic and cultural boundaries, as differences at these levels often complicate the translation process. This paper aims to examine selected titles of Kashmiri short stories translated into English, with particular reference to their lexical, cultural, and contextual nuances. Specifically, it investigates the appropriateness of the translated titles and identifies potential instances of mistranslation, if any. The analysis of these titles is undertaken in light of various translation theories and approaches, in order to illuminate the translator's decision-making process during the translation of literary titles.

**Keywords:** Cultural negotiation, Decision Making, Meaningful Translation, Mistranslation**Introduction**

Translation is a process of negotiation between two languages and their respective cultures. This negotiation extends beyond the literal meanings of words and sentences to encompass the literary, metaphorical, and contextual dimensions of the source text, including culturally embedded expressions, idioms, and figurative devices. Achieving equivalence at multiple levels of meaning thus becomes a central concern. Nevertheless, translation remains an inherently creative and challenging endeavor, requiring considerable skill, sensitivity, and effort on the part of the translator. In this context, Azurda aptly underscores both the