

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

William Radice (1951--) who emerged as a Tagore translator in the mid-1980s with his *Selected Poems* (1985) of Rabindranath Tagore has carved out a prominent niche for himself among the contemporary Tagore translators. What distinguishes his translations from those of his predecessors is his ‘imaginative and intuitive’ approach to Tagore translation (Radice 139) coupled with some innovative translation devices that he employs to reincarnate Tagore’s works in the receptor language. Radice seems to have been indebted to his mother Betty Radice, whose classical scholarship and editorship (1964-1985) of the Penguin Classics series brought him into contact with the world of literary translation. In “Betty Radice: A Memoir” Margaret Wynn quotes Radice as recounting the lesson he learnt from his mother “[... ] translation is not just a matter of handling words and meanings; [and] it requires deep imaginative insight into the person whose works one is translating” (Radice and Reynolds 38). As he grew up in an atmosphere of literary translation at home, he had developed an almost instinctive fondness for it from an impressionable period of his life. But translation is such an arduous and problematic task that it requires tireless endeavour and dedicated effort for a translator to re-enact the creative process of a writer from the Source Language Text to the Target Language Text ( hereafter SLT and TLT ). This was why his mother reminded him of the trials and tribulations of a translator in a letter written to him in 1974: “I don’t want you to be under any delusions about translating being more creative than critical writing --- in the sense that nothing in my experience involves so much drudgery, minute application, exasperation at being *tied to another’s thought processes*. *Great self-discipline is needed if one is to be a faithful interpreter* and not fall into the temptation of “improving” one’s original (emphasis added) (Ibid 29). This letter could not deter him from undertaking the act of translating; on the contrary, it ignited in him the desire to traverse the arduous path of literary translation. Consequently, he had undertaken the translation of Tagore poems since the late 1970s. But he had kept his mother in the dark about his translation efforts only to

give her a pleasant surprise by bringing out a book of Tagore translations. Unfortunately, his mother had died a few months before the appearance of his *Selected Poems of Rabindranath Tagore* (1985) from the Penguin. While translating Tagore poems Radice emulated many of the strategies and techniques of translation that were being followed by the translators of the Penguin Classic series under his mother's editorship. He brought about some basic changes in the nature and concept of Tagore translation in keeping with the ideals and principles of Penguin Classic series. The changes include, among others, a scholarly introduction, imaginative rendering of the original, explanatory notes to each poem and a glossary of unknown and culture-specific words. Radice, thus, played an active role for the 'Penguinification of Tagore' [to use Trevor .J. Saunders's term from his essay "Penguinification of Plato" in *The Translator's Art* edited by Radice and Reynolds] to enhance his credibility and reception in the West as one of the great creative writers of the world. With this "Penguinification of Tagore" he tried to revive interest in him in the Western world that had turned its back on him since the late 1920s.

According to Radice, the translation of 'a poet as complex and as lyrical' as Rabindranath ought to have a sound intellectual and scholarly foundation, however imaginative and creative it might be. "I do believe", he says in "Confessions of a Poet-Translator" (2003) "that the translation of a poet as complex and distinguished as Tagore needs to be *scholarly*, however literary and creative it may also be" (emphasis added) (Radice138). One of the important contributions that Radice made to Tagore translations is the addition of an intellectual and 'scholarly' background to enable the foreign readers to locate Tagore in his proper 'context'. The pre-Radice Tagore translations, with the exception of Amiya Chakravarty's *A Tagore Reader* had been marked by the conspicuous absence of this 'scholarly' and intellectual background. Even the one volume *Collected Poems and Plays* of Rabindranath Tagore (1936) published by Macmillan & Co. (hereafter *CPPRT* ) provides no such background information about Tagore and his translations. The pre-Radice Tagore translations were concerned more with the mere rendering of the Source Text ( hereafter ST) than with providing any 'textual notes' or 'explanatory prefaces' that characterize the modern translations. Radice is the first among the contemporary Tagore translators to have initiated the art of accurate rendering of the original with preface, introduction, afterwards, notes,

glossaries and indices. The celebrated Indian poet-translator A.K. Ramanujan (1929-1993) adopts a similar method for translating Anantha Murthy's *Samskara* (1976). He claims that the Notes and Afterward to his translation of Anantha Murthy's *Samaskara* (1976) are a part of the effort 'to translate a non-native reader into a native one' ( Holmstrom 6). Radice's notes and glossary are likewise an attempt--- as is the introduction --- to equip the non-native readers with a native-like insight and understanding about the original text. It is only in the aftermath of Radice's *Selected Poems* (1985) of Rabindranath Tagore that Sisir Kumar Das brought out a three volume edition *The English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore* from Sahitya Akademi with long introductions, detailed notes and numerous annotations (hereafter *EWRT*). Radice is therefore the first translator who revolutionized Tagore translations with an 'imaginative and intuitive' approach together with a scholarly background of his works. Commenting on Radice's contributions to Tagore translations Ananda Lal says : " For the first time, a sensible introduction to Tagore, notes to each poem explaining difficulties in meaning, and a glossary brought standard international editorial procedure to a Tagore translation"( Lal 35). Radice therefore emerged as a pioneer of a new kind of Tagore translation and elevated it to an international height breaking down its linguistic and cultural insularity.

In his essay "Translating Tagore" (2003) Radice frankly confesses how he became a Tagore translator: "I must confess that I have always found it difficult to read Tagore's own translations objectively. I have never liked them, and as soon as I had learnt enough Bengali to compare them with the originals I was impelled, as a translator , by a deep sense of the injustice that Tagore had done to himself" (Radice 216). Distressed by this 'deep sense of injustice' that Tagore had done to his originals, Radice takes upon himself the most challenging task of translating his works faithfully in order to make him 'credible' as a great poet in the Western world. He draws our attention to the following shortcomings from which translations of his works done by Tagore himself suffer : (1) they lack 'context and information', (2) they fail to represent 'the range and variety' of his original works, (3) they give no impression of his 'technical virtuosity' and (4) they fail to convey his 'poetic talent'( *Ibid.* 230). What Radice here seems to emphasize is that Tagore's translations of his own poems fail to represent the true qualities of his poetic greatness as well as his 'range and

variety'. In his lecture on "Tagore's Poetic Greatness", delivered in Ahmedabad in 2003, Radice dwells on those factors that go to make a poet great: "To be a great poet you need to write great poems, and that requires a number of purely literary gifts and qualities, some of which are quite technical"(Radice 5). According to him, a translator needs to convey these literary qualities and technical aspects of Tagore's poems in order to make the translation new and 'credible'. Further, Tagore himself attached great importance to craftsmanship which is an indispensable quality for the evaluation of a great poet. In this connection Radice says, "As a poet myself, craftsmanship is immensely important to me too, for I believe *no poet or artist, in the long run, will be credible unless he or she possesses it*" (emphasis added) (Ibid 6). The credibility of a great poet or artist, therefore, depends largely on this quality of craftsmanship. Radice then goes on to describe the traits of craftsmanship that make a poet great as well as credible: "[...] these elements working together in concert --- verse-form, rhythm, structure, language, feeling, imagery, moral depth, wit---embody that power of poetic mind that makes a great poet, distinguishes him from the second-rate. It was that quality of mind that I felt was lacking in earlier translations of Tagore, including his own, and which I was so anxious to capture" (Ibid 7). While translating the poems of Tagore for his *Selected Poems* (1985), Radice's main objective was to convey the true qualities of Tagore's poetic greatness that remained unrepresented in his own translations or in translations done by others. In "The Challenge of Translating Tagore"<sup>(2012)</sup> Radice tells us what he really wanted to achieve in his Tagore translation: "When I started working on my *Selected Poems* of Tagore for Penguin books, it quickly became clear to me that the book would have to be *far more than a translation*. If I was to give a *new and credible impression of Tagore's range and power as a poet*, I would have to select poems from *the whole span of his output*, I would have to *annotate them carefully*, and I would have to write *an extensive Introduction*. The wind in my sails would have to be carefully and meticulously *directed and controlled by scholarly effort*" (emphasis added).(Chakraborty 457). The above extract seems to elucidate the intuitive 'translation project' that Radice mentions, for the first time, in his essay "Confessions of a Poet-Translator"<sup>(2003)</sup>. According to this project, his Tagore translations would be something more than a traditional rendering giving 'a new and credible impression of Tagore's range and power' as a poet of versatile genius. Having selected poems for his selection from 'the whole span of his output' he would have to write an

elaborate Introduction and to provide detailed annotations for them. Like the translators of the Penguin Classic series, he seems to have felt the inner need of directing and controlling his translations by an intellectual and 'scholarly effort'. With the passage of time he tried to give a concrete shape to this intuitive 'project' by bringing out books of Tagore translations one after another. In "An Interview with *Boier Desh*" (October-December 2009) Radice tells us how the rendering of Tagore's "Agaman" gives him the intimation of his arrival in an 'untrodden continent'. The objective of the 'translation project', as conceived by him, is to explore this 'untrodden continent' of Tagore's creative world and to enhance his importance and 'credibility' as a great poet. The 'project' of exploring this 'untrodden continent' begins with his rendering of *Selected Poems* (1985) of Tagore, continues through *Selected Short Stories* (1991), *The Post Office* (1996), *Particles, Jottings, Sparks* (2000), *The Post Office* and *Card Country* (2008) published by Visva-Bharati in a single volume and leads up to the translation of *Gitanjali* (2011) coinciding with his 150<sup>th</sup> birth anniversary. The imaginative rendering of Tagore's works together with the innovative translation devices initiated for the first time in *Selected Poems* have been maintained by Radice in his subsequent books of Tagore translations. According to Radice, the first three books of Tagore translations --- *Selected Poems*, *Selected Short Stories* and *Particles, Jottings, Sparks*--- which form a 'trilogy' of sorts have "a three part structure : Introduction, Translation, Appendices / Notes followed by a glossary of Indian or Bengali words" (Radice133). This 'three part structure' seems to have summed up the rest of Tagore translations done by Radice, with a few minor exceptions. An exponent of creative translation, Radice brings to bear in his Tagore translations the creative and imaginative elements with a 'scholarly' and intellectual effort giving it a distinction of its own.

Another remarkable aspect of Radice's Tagore translation is his well-considered strategy to render Tagore's poetry into poetry --- a strategy that stands in sharp contrast to the poet's decision to translate his poetry into prose. In this respect, Radice may have been influenced by his mother Betty Radice who, as the editor of Penguin Classics, advocated the translation of poetry into poetry in a marked departure from E. V. Rieu's principle of translating poetry into prose. Regarding the verse translation of Tagore's poems Radice says, "I never considered anything other than a verse translation of his poems; for all the agonies and

compromises that verse translation imposes, no prose translation could begin to approach Tagore” (Radice 36). What Radice seems to imply here is that the ‘elusive’ nature of his poems can only be captured through a verse translation. In his long creative career as a writer Tagore made his distinguishing mark as ‘a perpetual innovator, constantly creating new forms and styles in his poetry’. The infinite range of verse forms and structural devices that form an integral part of his poems presented a formidable challenge for Radice to rehabilitate them in the Target Language (hereafter TL). The questions that perturbed him constantly are: “How to do justice to the verse form? To Tagore’s incredible range of metres and rhyme schemes, his effortless technical virtuosity?” (Ibid 231) The translation of his brief poems made him virtually stupefied by the incredible technical range that Tagore had at his disposal. Of the 198 poems comprising the posthumous *Sphulinga* not even two poems are written in the same verse form. In order to do justice to his genius a translator of Tagore ought to represent his incredible range of verse-forms, metres and structural devices because much of the meaning and power of his poetry, Radice believes, derives from its forms. Very few translators before him did ever try to represent both the content and the form of Tagore’s poetry in English translation. Even Tagore himself did not attempt to convey them in his own translations of his poetry simply because he preferred prose translation of his poems to their poetic rendering. The infinitely varied verse forms used by Tagore in his poems in different phases of his poetic career demand a corresponding technical virtuosity and ‘inventiveness’ from the translator to represent them in translation.

Dissatisfied with the existing Tagore translations Pierre Fallon s.j. looked forward to the advent of a new translator who would bring about a transformation in Tagore translation with ‘textual notes or explanatory prefaces’ to revive international interest in his poetry (Fallon<sup>320</sup>). Buddhadev Bose, almost prophetically, talked of the re-emergence of Tagore in the international field as and when a Bengali-knowing British or American translator -- someone like a Roy Campbell or a Michael Hamburger -- who would come forward to translate Tagore for the English-speaking readers ( Bose130-131). Radice seems to be the long-awaited Tagore translator who had been translating Tagore since the late seventies to represent, in a credible way, the ‘poetic talent’ and ‘technical virtuosity’ of Rabindranath highlighting ‘the range and variety’ of his creative works (Radice230). He was aware of

Tagore's 'iconic status in Bengali literature that was not reflected in the translations of his works done by himself or others. Speaking of the aim of his Tagore translation Radice says, "My aim in translating Tagore in a new and fresh way ... is gradually to make him internationally credible and interesting as a writer, not just a sage" (Ibid77). This attempt to free Tagore from the 'politics of translation' to which he was once subjected is directed to a fresh literary appreciation. It was Radice who perhaps for the first time made a bold attempt to turn the course of Tagore appreciation in the West by translating anew his non-mystic, classical and humanistic poems.

A poet-translator, Radice combines in him the dual career of a poet and a translator and his rendering of Tagore poems is essentially a 'creative' endeavour as his writing of poetry is. Though he is at heart a poet, he has so far achieved more success and recognition as a translator than as a poet. Commenting on Radice's 'hyphenated identity' as a Poet-Translator Chandanashis Laha observes that his 'dual vocation' as poet and translator can well be seen as a case of 'perfect' creative 'symbiosis'(Laha xi). He is a fine translator only because he is first of all a fine poet. According to Dryden, "To be a thorough translator he [one] must be a thorough poet" otherwise one cannot translate poetry (Roy 102). It is Radice's poetic sensibility which enables him to capture and re-create the poetic beauty and elusive charms of Tagore's poetry and to interpret it in English as imaginatively as possible. In other words, his poems and translations are the two facets of the same creative power. In his "Confessions of a Poet-Translator"<sup>(2003)</sup> Radice tells us that his translations and books of original poems proceed from the same intuition and groping process of creativity (Radice135). According to Renato Poggiolio, a translator should combine in himself humility and pride to perform his job successfully: "His two greatest virtues or assets are *the reverence he feels toward the author or work he translates, and the sense of his own integrity as an interpreter*, which is based on both *modesty and self-respect*" (emphasis added) (Brower 145). As a translator of Tagore, Radice also combines in himself the 'reverence' for Tagore's versatile genius and the deep insight into his works as an interpreter. These twin 'virtues' make him one of the finest Tagore translators of the present times.

Radice's Tagore translations have evoked from the beginning a warm and enthusiastic response from the reviewers as well as critics at home and abroad. The few critical comments that have been made, from time to time, by translators, critics and reviewers on his role and contribution as a Tagore translator are worth mentioning here. In a review article on his *Selected Poems* (1985) of Tagore in *Chaturanga* (December 1985) Jyoti Bhattacharya commends the 'scholarly dedication and sincere efforts' of this young British translator for the fresh reception of Tagore in the Western world (Bhattacharya 200-208). In the introduction to *I Won't Let You Go: Selected Poems* (1992) of Rabindranath Tagore Ketaki Kushari Dyson eulogistically refers to Radice as follows: "The first serious literary translator from Bengal to emerge in Britain is William Radice whose translations of selected poems from Tagore appeared in 1985, and of his stories in 1991, both from Penguin" (Dyson 36). Subsequently, in her Bengali article 'Inrejte Rabindrakabita --- Sampratik Bitarka' published in Bengali weekly *Desh* (4 May 1996) she describes Radice as "a remarkable pioneer in Tagore translation" (my translation) (Ghosh 48). "Although Radice's translation is sometimes handicapped by his ignorance of certain delicate nuances of the Bengali language, especially in the context of intimate household expressions", Subhas Sarkar discovers in Radice "a commendable honesty and fidelity to the original" (Chatterjee 114). Welcoming Radice's 'meticulous translations' Shymasree Lal, in her review article in *The Statesman*, spoke highly of his 'dedication and scholarship' as a Tagore translator (December 8 1995). In *Rabindranath Tagore: The Myriad-Minded Man* (1995) Krishna Dutta and Andrew Robinson made only a passing reference to Radice as 'the British translator, who in the 1980s gave some of Tagore's poetry a new lease of life in English' (Dutta and Robinson 12). In the introduction to the first-ever translation of *The Gitanjali* (1998) from the Bengali original Joe Winter is all praise for Radice's novel approach to Tagore translation in *Selected Poems*, "It is for its approach that I recommend it; and the Notes at the end of the Volume are scholarly and clear" (Winter 11). Reviewing Radice's *Selected Poems* (1985) of Rabindranath Tagore Jyotirmoy Dutta calls him 'one of the bright luminaries in Tagore translation' (my translation) but at the same time criticizes him for his failure to capture the poetic beauty of the original in certain cases (*Desh* 2 May 1998). Cathleen Raine, in her review of *Particles, Jottings, Sparks* (2000) has spoken of how Radice has projected Tagore's stature as a multi-faceted writer in the West: "He himself (Rabindranath) was aware that his own translations

were inadequate, as have been several others by Indians, and not until Dr. Radice's impeccable and loving translations have we been able to discern Tagore's stature" (Autumn 2002). According to Kaiser Haq, "He [Radice] is unquestionably the finest translator of Tagore into English to date" (Haq 1 Chapman99, Edinburgh 2001). In a letter to the Editor of *Desh* (2 December 2004) Sukanta Chaudhuri sums up Radice's contributions as a Tagore translator very succinctly: "As a Tagore translator, Radice's role is undisputed in projecting Rabindranath before the international readership through new translations of his works" (my translation).

It may therefore be said (from Chapter 1) that Radice played a very prominent role for the fresh reception of Tagore in the Western world through new translation of his works underlining his versatile creative power. But his translations have not yet been taken up for an in-depth study to assess his achievement as a Tagore translator. The objective of the present study is to locate Radice in the history of Tagore translations and to evaluate his translations in the light of translation theories. In Chapter 11 a review of the history of Tagore translations has been made to ascertain Radice's position in it. In Chapter III an overview of the history of translation theories has been made to show how interpretation down the ages has accompanied translation theories. The succeeding chapters (Chapter IV to VIII) of the present study have been devoted to the evaluation of Radice's translations from an interpretative point of view. Three Chapters (IV – VI) have been allotted to the examination of Radice's translations of Rabindranath's poetry (poems, brief poems and 'song-poems') and one chapter each to his short stories and drama. Chapter IX sums up Radice's contribution to Tagore translations highlighting the role played by him in the creation of what Harish Trivedi calls a 'third Tagore' (Radice 76). The concluding chapter is followed by an alphabetical arrangement of the bilingual works of authors cited in the present study.