Chapter – 1
Introduction

Chapter – 1

Introduction

Literature has always been one of the very significant areas of attention for a nation-in-the-making. A country with an imperial domination takes literature as a crucial base in the act of heralding of its own identity. Identity formation or rather justifying an independent framework of nationhood becomes central to the effort towards Independence. In a chronological Marxist format, a country attains Independence through certain stages of development. After a long colonial subjugation, a particular class of society which is the 'intelligentsia' or the 'elite' of the native territory understand, 'feel' and realize the ongoing domination of the colonial power. They then instigate an awareness campaign, a revolution through different media such as speeches, meetings and so on which then leads to a mass consciousness of the imperial rule over the native land. In such a practical step-by-step development of a country towards its Independence, the power-game swings to and fro the 'repressive' and the 'generative' mechanisms between the colonizer and the colonized. Literature features in a much later stage of this nation's journey from colonial domination to the 'nation-formation'. A 'nation in the making' works with values such as Literature, Culture, Language(s) and so on. Exploration takes place. Identification takes place. 'Voicing' takes place. Activities such as these become the central concern for the nation in and for foregrounding the identity-markers long resting in the nation's credit.

The question one can pose is that why is there a need to 'voice' the nationhood, i.e. the existing value systems of the nation. Hence comes the question or concern for 'representation'. Driven by this urge to 'represent' itself—in its totality—at a 'beyond-the-nation' frontier, the Indian nation realizes the importance of having a Literature 'of its own' which would showcase the culture (cultures?) of India with all its specificities and diversities. Thus came into being Indian Literature in English. English is emphasized here because it provided a window to the world for India, a fact which is important in the present case especially because it is English which has taken a center stage in the Indian Literature in Translation. Alluding Caliban's speech in Shakespeare's *The Tempest,* Sujit Mukherjee humourously says :

> As latter-day Calibans we were taught English (by the colonizer) and our profit on it has been that we learnt how to translate into English (Mukherjee, 2004 : 37).

It is not that the English language or the literature written in English were defining factors behind the existence of Indian Literature. In India, Literature was being written in regional languages well through India's Independence and even much before. Most importantly, it is these regional literatures or *Bhasha* Literatures that gave a definite identity to Indian Literature.

Indian Literature in English Translation, thus, was the result of two significant intellectual movements. First, the imperial policy of the colonizers to start a massive translation movement wherein Indian classical and other canonical texts were to be translated into English:

> It would be pertinent to mention the crucial role played by Lord Wellesley and his college of Fort William, Sir William Jones and his Bengal Asiatic Society, and H.T. Colebrook and his Royal Asiatic Society. Their efforts were directed towards creating centers of power whose relevance lay in disseminating new constructs of knowledge. Some outstanding Orientalists like William Jones, John Gilchrist, J.T. Platts, and Duncan Forbes, therefore, chose to translate texts from Persian and Sanskrit for the English readership. ... These translations were especially undertaken for the British who, at that point in time, had succeeded in establishing colonial rule over India and needed to reinforce their position by making efforts to appreciate the life and letters of the land (Rahman and Ansari, 2007 :19).

And secondly, the rise of *Bhasha* Literatures coupled with the urge felt by the Indian literary firmament of showcasing these literatures to the world. The major way was to translate them into English.

Post-Independence India witnessed an immense growth of literary transactions :

> Young academics, established writers, and translators pushed the translational activities into the limelight. It must be emphasized that their efforts were uncoordinated and did not form part of a conscious agenda. Some formidable names that come to mind in this regard are A.K. Ramanujan, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak,

> William Radice, Ralph Russell, Qurratulain Hyder, Agyeya, C.M. Naim, Mohammad Umar Memon, Girish Karnad, Dilip Chitre, R. Parthasarthy, and Arvind Krishna Mehrotra. This list in itself is a random enumeration but it confirms how the enterprise of translation got a boost when creative writers, critics and academics chose to translate, and thereby evolve and re-present, a poetics that voiced the typical postcolonial concerns of their time (ibid : 20).

Translation is no doubt, a form, in fact an important form of literary transaction. Here, transaction takes place between two languages at the first place. Linguistically, the activity of translation functions with structures of two languages. Besides, translation is also a site of cultural transaction. The emergence of the 'cultural turn', historically speaking, marks a very significant contribution in the field of translation. Now translation is no longer considered as a purely linguistic activity. It is rather seen as a literary process through which culture traits travel from one place to another. A Literature gets enriched through translation and a particular literary genre or author gets 'voiced' in a wider arena.

Cultural representation is perhaps one of the most important functions of translation. A literary text is deeply rooted in a particular culture, a community or communities at times, and a peculiar set of values existing at a particular set-up. Translation, in other words, can be called an activity of cultural transfer, an activity through which a culture with all its specificities—social, political, economic, geographical and so on—is transferred to an altogether new platform. The text in question acts as an expression of the source culture—the language it speaks, the

food-habits it cherishes, the socio-political values it has been living with, and also the myths and folklores existing in it. In totality, a translation is an exchange between two communities, living with two distinct cultural value systems of their own and speaking in two (or more) languages.

As far as the Indian context is concerned, translating from *Bhasha* literatures into English has a lot to do with the issue of multilingualism and of course, multiculturalism. India is a multilingual country with more than two thousand dialects and eight hundred distinct languages out of which twenty seven are official languages. All these linguistic communities do have their own cultural set ups. Texts from different Indian languages depict different cultural sites. The (cultural) world of Tagore's *Gora* or Sarat Chandra Chatterjee's *Devdas* differs from those of say, Qurratulain Hyder's *Aag Ka Darya* or Premchand's *Godan*. In such a situation, it is extremely important that texts from different regional literatures get translated into a language which is first known to readers beyond the source language, and second an inter-national language. Translating Indian *Bhasha* literary texts into English in this perspective, means enabling the source text to go much beyond its source readership.

Notwithstanding all such positive outlooks, Indian Literature in English Translation poses some crucial questions as well. And the most important and notable of them is perhaps that of language. It is argued that English being the imperial language cannot or does not qualify to be the appropriate target language. Besides, why do we need to adhere to the stylistic aspects of the English language while translating Indian literary texts, as many translators tend to do so?

Consequently, there have been views that why can't we translate Indian literary texts into an English which is different from the English English? Why can't we come up with an English which particularly expresses *our* kind of realities and so on? Why can't we avoid consciously our falling back to the typical English idioms and other linguistic modes of expression, and translate into some sort of an English which retains the spontaneity of our source language(s), which is at times termed as 'Hinglish'? These are some of the very crucial questions that Indian Literature in English Translation poses.

Canonical writers from different Indian Literary traditions have been widely translated into English. Writers such as Munshi Premchand, Rabindranath Tagore, Ismat Chughtai and so on have successfully been represented onto a bigger platform through translations of their works. Tagore, though a celebrity in Bengal, was an obscure figure outside the Bangla speaking area in India and almost unknown in the West till the publication of *Song Offerings,* his own translation of *Gitanjali* into English, by The India Society, London in 1912. At that time Tagore was fifty one years old and his place in the history of Bangla literature was firmly assured. A pioneer in various genre of literature, Tagore already produced more than twenty books of verse, nearly a dozen plays, a considerable number of essays and short stories and seven novels. It was through translation, Tagore, the inborn genius, was recognized by the west and the 1913 Nobel Prize in literature was awarded to him for his *Song Offerings*, which marks his transition from being a Bangla writer to a world literary figure.

Rabindranath Tagore was born on May 7, 1861 to a Bengali family of religious, social and literary renown. The atmosphere of his home was charged with the live currents of cultural impulse, absorbent as well as creative. His father Maharshi Debendranath Tagore's fascination for the sayings of *Upanishadas*, outlook of worshipful universe, strong adherence to the fundamentals of Indian thought and culture, and enthusiasm for constructive nationalism made his home a centre for renaissance thinking. This gave the family a distinctiveness which was manifest in all their activities. Everybody knew that Tagores were different. Their outlook was Indian and not simply Bengali. If we look at the name of their literary journal we see that it was *Bharati* (Indian Muse) as against *Bangadarshan* (Bengali Review) of Bankimchandra Chatterjee.

Tagore had his first taste of literature from his caretakers and from some elderly members of the family retinue. They would read aloud the poems of Krittivasa and Kashirama and would recite alliterative verses from Dasharathi Ray's poetry or they would sing lines from songs of Madhu Kan. The next such literary impression was made by the recital of Kalidash's *Meghadutam* by his eldest brother Dijendranath. The music of Kalidasha's verses enthralled him. Before he was a teen-ager, Tagore had finished most of the readable books in Bangla, including the novels of Bankimchandra Chatterjee and the Vaishnava lyric poems of Chandidasa and Bidyapati which had just been published. Of the contemporary Bangla poetry, young Tagore had admiration for his eldest brother Dijendranath's *Swapna Prayan* and Biharilal Chakraborty's *Sarada Mangal*. Tagore was a great admirer of Biharilal and the credit goes to him for the

recognition of Biharilal's poetry. Nevertheless, his own writings do not show any trace of Biharilal's influence. On the other hand, Dijendranath's influence went deep and lay submerged for more than half a century.

Tagore had his first real outing away from Calcutta when, at the age of twelve, he was taken by his father on a long tour up to the Himalayan Punjab. As a result the Himalayas appear repeatedly in his poems which are mainly romantic narratives of love. Tagore's second elder brother, Satyendranath took him to Ahmedabad and then sent him to London in 1878. His brief attendance at the lectures of Prof. Henry Morley in the University College, London, stimulated him. When he was still in England his poetry began to echo a personal note, the true ring of lyric poetry. After his return home the personal note became insistent. In *Sandhya Sangit* (1882) Tagore emerged as a poet. The subject matter voiced only the frustrations and frettings of the young poet for himself. But this dismal phase of emotional gloom did pass of in his next book of poems *Probhati Sangit* (1883). The life around now appeared to him bathed in the glory of sunshine. In the next book of poems *Chobbi O Gan* (1884) blazing moon tide of passionate expression emerged. The poems of *Kadi O Komol* (1886), *Manoshi* (1890), *Sonar Tori* (1893), *Chitra* (1896), *Chaitali* (1896), *Kanika* (1899), *Kalpana* (1900), *Kahini* (1900), *Katha* (1900), *Naivedya* (1901), *Kheya* (1906), *Gitanjali* (1910), *Gitimalya* (1914), and *Balaka* (1916) clearly show the striking contrast in theme, mood and action. In these books of poem the poet is a traveler and he is not alone. The whole universe appears to be moving with him and there is no destination to him. The path leads to no where in particular, or rather it leads him to anywhere. The poet feels that the path is the way to universal destiny, and man is immortal through his mortality:

> Tagore was a very well-read man and he had keen interest in everything human having a permanent value. He could indeed say with Terence : *Homo sum humani nihil a me alienum puto* (I am a man, nothing human can be alien to me). But he is never exotic, and pedantry in any form was against his grain. Tagore's poetry is as much Bengali poetry as Indian, and much of it as much Indian as universal, because he has gone to the deepest where the stream of eternal life runs, the ultimate source of creation and continuation of life in every form. Tagore's poetry is universal not only in the sense that the essence of all true poetry is universal but also in the sense that his notation is universal from the Indian point of stance (Sen, 1992 : 249).

In some poems Tagore expressed his homage to women which delineate the various facets of women's mood and charm appearing in the different types of girlhood. Some of his poems carry his tribute to plants – big and small, known and unknown, which as typifying life irrepressible and triumphant, had always been a source of sustenance and inspiration to him. Some poems, novels, dramas and short stories comprise some of the most harassed years in the life of the poet. He had to pass a period of heavy mental stress and storm. His second daughter died in 1903 soon after the death of his wife in 1902 and his youngest son followed in 1907. The school at Santiniketan was also costing him dearly. Moreover, the *Swadeshi Movement* of Bengal had drawn him temporarily out of his nook and he was doing his utmost to channelize the nationalistic enthusiasm into a constructive course

planned by him in his several essays and in his novels *Gora, Ghore Baire* and *Char Adhyay*. Some poems at the last phase of his life express the mood neither pessimistic nor joyous. It is a mood of placidity. Retrospection and reminiscence remain dominant. Here the poet speaks of the day when he shall not be here and says that the life that was in him will continue for ever and his happiness will persist in all that is good, sweet and simple in man and in nature. So, the central theme of Tagore's philosophy of art, as Abu Sayeed Ayyub puts it, "emerges as the notion that art is a bridge across the chasm which normally separates the individual from the world around" (Ayyub, 1961 : 81).

As Sukumar Sen in his *History of Bengali Literature* writes about Rabindranath Tagore :

> The quest of the poet's soul was like a continuous game of hide and seek, idle fancy and ceaseless endeavor incubation and fight, contemplation and realization. The metaphor of the alternating season is a favourite device in Tagore's poetry; for him it symbolizes the universe that pulsates in alternating appearance and disappearance, the nature that pulsates in night and day and throbs between life and death, and his own destiny swinging between known and the unknown, hanging between the realized and the unrealized, oscillating between the real and the unreal. He speaks in a song : "... There is, alas, no peace for me anywhere in the world, and my lyre sings when I am disturbed. The flame of my life-consuming songs shall rise for ever" (Sen, 1992 : 249).

Tagore always felt an irresistible urge for going out, far and near and traveled all over the world. He produced poetry in every land, wherever he went, but he always liked to come back home, a tiny settlement at Santiniketan. Tagore was a quiet thinker at most times but he was capable to take quick decision and prompt action when needed. Of his power of organization and long-term planning Visva-Bharati and Sriniketan are standing evidence.

Tagore wrote his first play *Valmiki Prativa* in 1881, the theme of which is based on the story of the robber Ratnakara, who became Valmiki, 'the first poet of the world'. The next play *Kal Mrigaya*, written in 1882 is of the same type. The story of the play is connected with accidental killing of the son of the sage Sindhu. The tragic note of the play glimpses of Tagore's view of life. *Raja O Rani* (1889) is one of the best tragic dramas that had yet been written in Bangla language. *Visarjan* (1890), one of the best plays of Tagore, is a typical tragedy. The theme of the play is taken from the history of Tipperah in the seventeenth century. The last and perhaps the most difficult of Tagore's symbolic play *Raktakarabi* (1926) points out that the salvation of mankind is to be sought in a life where knowledge and power help in a simplicity of existence that is harmonious with nature, both animate and inanimate.

Tagore is the creator of the true short story in Bangla language and he has yet been remained one of the best. His short stories are concerned with ordinary men and women from the humble walks of life. In a *Sonar Tari* poem Tagore tells us :

> I feel the urge of writing stories, one after another, in my own way, on humble lives and their small miseries, on matters of small consequences, really simple and plain, like a few drops of tears from the thousands of forgotten memories flowing down to oblivion ..... All that is neglected and rejected, all this un-purposeful display of life, I would for a moment gather for me and with it I would create a shower of all that is forgotten, in a rainy night of the life ("Varsayapan", translation, Sen, 1992 : 282).

As a writer of essay Tagore is distinguished from the very beginning. His essays whatever may be their subject matter, belong more to creative art than to the critical analysis. As an interpreter of the soul of India through the ages Tagore has no rival. His essays on nursery verse and folk poetry are really brilliant. On modern literature, Tagore still remains one of the best critics. His religious essays are no less valuable as literature. Their sublime tone and deep earnestness make them universally acceptable. His essays cover a wide variety of subject matter like literary appreciation and criticism, social problems and political dilemma, religion and philosophy, music and grammar, travel and autobiography and wit and humour. Throughout his life Tagore wrote innumerable letters and almost all of them are full of literary grace and most of them are rich in thoughtful content. His pen raised letter writing to the status of a literary genre. As a creator of beauty Tagore is unique in many fields of literary and artistic forms, and he is without a second in his creation of musical forms, tunes and melodies.

As in philosophy so in art Tagore uses the metaphor of *Sima-Asim* (boundary-boundless) to indicate how the two complement each other. Sisir Kumar Das rightly says :

> The joy of attaining the infinite within the finite is one of the recurring themes of Rabindranath's creative writings and philosophical thought (Das, 2001 : 15).

In *The Religion of Man*, Tagore writes that art is the response of the creative human soul to the call of the real. Here he refers to a verse in the *Atharva* Veda where the world has been described as the poem of God, D*evasya kavyam*. The ancients used to call the poet *Prajapati*, creator and his creation of another world, though fictional is based on the fundamental rules of nature. The basic purpose of both God's creation and poet's creation is *anand* (joy). Both joy and beauty are guiding concepts in Rabindranath's idea of art. Beauty in art, as Tagore sees it, is based on more profound principles and it includes the unpleasant, the ugly, the painful, and the distorted as well as what is conventionally considered lovely. Here Tagore is in agreement with the theory of *rasa* that the ultimate delight of literature is produced through the transformation of the *bhavas* (the mundane emotions) into *rasa* or aesthetic joy.

Tagore is rooted to the soil of his land. He drank deeper the delicate music of the Vaishnava poets, emotional tracery of Kalidasa and mysticisms of *Upanishadas*. He is the most Indian as well as the most universal. He was always open to receive from every quarter and from every source --- from English poetry to Bangla nursery rhymes, from the most elaborate classical symphony to the

simplest rustic tune. But whatever he received he made his own. Jawaharlal Nehru rightly says :

> ... the name of Rabindranath Tagore is almost synonymous with the high achievement of Bengali literature. People of my generation grew up under the influence of his tremendous personality and were consciously or unconsciously moulded by it. Here was a man like an ancient Rishi of India, deeply versed in our old wisdom and, at the same time, dealing with present day problems and looking at the future. He wrote in Bengali but the scope of his mind could not be confined to any part of India. It was essentially Indian and, at the same, embraced all humanity (Nehru, 1979 : vii).

Tagore's first reaction on hearing of the Nobel Prize was a plaintive cry that he would never have any peace again. And he was right. The Calcutta University bestowed an honorary doctorate degree on him, and Knighthood followed in 1915. In 1916 he left on a lecture tour of Japan. From Japan he went to America, where he delivered a series of lectures condemning western nationalism and British rule in India. With the Nobel Prize a new responsibility came to Tagore to represent India to the world, very much like that of Keshabchandra Sen and Swami Vivekananda before him. This made Tagore's engagement with English language almost permanent.

The vast treasury of Tagore's writing in Bangla includes more than twenty plays, fourteen novels, some eighty-five short stories and a large number of poems, songs and letters. Most of his Bangla works have appeared in English translations

and some of them have multiple English versions. A historical survey of the translation of Tagore's Bangla writings into English has uncovered two broad categories: translations done by the author himself and translations done by different translators. The first category of translation began around 1890, reached its peak in 1912 and continued till the end of Tagore's life. The second category also began almost as early as the first category and it is very much alive even today. Quite a few scholars, from Edward Thompson to William Radice have engaged their hands in translating Tagore into English. In all probability, the field of Tagore translation will continue to grow as long as people will feel the necessity of their engagement with Tagore and his writings.

The history of Tagore translation in English began as early as around 1890 when Tagore himself translated his poem *Nisphol Kamana*. However, this is a solitary example without any follow up. It is only in the beginning of the twentieth century, Tagore gave some thought to translate his Bangla writings into English at the persuation of his scientist friend Jagadish Chabdra Bose, who being an ardent admirer of Tagore, wrote to him from London, towards the end of 1900, "I will not allow you to remain in obscurity in the countryside" (Das, 1994 : 12). Bose himself translated three stories of Tagore but could not publish them. Around this time a few more admirers of Tagore showed their keenness to present Tagore to a larger audience outside Bengal. Bipin Chandra Pal translated four stories of Tagore and Pramathlal Sen also translated a few poems. But these attempts were not sustained for long. Between the years 1909 and 1912 we see the sudden emergence of Tagore translators like Roby Dutt, Ajit Kumar Chakraborty, Ananda K.

Coomarswamy and Sister Nivedita. Between December 1909 and June 1912 at least fifteen stories and nine poems of Tagore appeared in *The Modern Review*, the most welknown journal of Calcutta of the time. What is more significant, a group of young Bengali scholars, then in England joined the exercise of projecting Tagore to the readers outside Bengal.

The most remarkable event in the history of Tagore translation in English is his friendship with William Rothestein, which changed Tagore's career altogether. In January 1911 Rothenstein came to Calcutta, mainly at the invitation of Abanindranath and Gojendranath, and visited the ancestral house of the Tagores, where he met Rabindranath for the first time. After his return to London, Rothenstein wrote to Tagore :

> It has been for me a real privilege and joy to have had the advantage of meeting you ..... I shall be grateful for any translation of poems and stories which may appear in any time (Quoted in, Das, 1994 : 13).

About that time Rothenstein met two great admirers of Tagore living in London, Pramathalal Sen and Brajendranath Seal, and developed a great impression about the original writings of Tagore. Rothenstein, after reading a Tagore story from *The Modern Review*, inquired about his other writings. It encouraged Pramathalal Sen to request Tagore to send some of his poems which had already been translated into English by Ajit Chakraborti. Tagore responded favourably and asked Chakraborti to send them with necessary critical comments. As the demand for Tagore translation grew, Tagore gave serious thought to the translation of his

Bangla writings. Two main factors contributed to the emergence of Tagore as his own translator. One, the pressure from his admirers for more translations of his writings; and two, his growing unhappiness with the translations of his writings done by others.

A very important circumstance that led Tagore to be the most reputed is his sudden illness for which he postponed his scheduled third visit to England on 19 March 1912. He went to Shelaidah to take rest and there he started translating the poems of his *Gitanjali*. In a letter to his niece, Indira Devi, Tagore wrote :

> I had not the energy to sit down and write anything new. So, I took up the poems of *Gitanjali* and set myself to translate them one by one. You may wonder why such a crazy ambition should possess one in such a weak state of health. But believe me, I did not undertake this task in a spirit of reckless bravado. I simply felt an urge to recapture through the medium of another language the feelings and sentiments which had created such a feast of joy within me in the days gone by (Devi, 1959 : 03).

After recovery from illness Tagore visited London in June 1912 with the manuscripts of his own translation of *Gitanjali* poems. The excitement and joy with which Tagore began translating his own Bangla poems in the quiet surroundings of rural Bengal, continued throughout his long voyage. After Tagore's arrival in London Rothenstein took every care to introduce to his friends and to the British public in a befitting manner. On the evening of 7 July 1913 Rothenstein arranged a meeting of some of his friends which included May

Sinclair, Ernest Rhys, Henry Nevinson, Charles Travelyan, W.B. Yeats and Fox Strangway at his Hampstead house where Yeats read out some of the poems in his beautiful voice. Yeats, deeply moved by these poems, recorded his impressions later in the "Introduction" he wrote for *Gitanjali* :

> I have carried the manuscript of these translations about with me for days, reading it in the railway trains, or on the top of omnibuses and in restaurants, and I have often had to close it lest some stranger would see how much it moved me (Yeats, 1994 : 39).

Within a few weeks Tagore became the centre of attraction of the most powerful literary elite in England. The crowning success of his new career, however, came a few months later, on 13 November 1913, when he became the first Asian winner of Nobel Prize for literature. With this crowning glory, Tagore became a centre of attraction as world poet among the men of letters of both the East and the West and consequently the demand for Tagore translation grew and grew. The success of English *Gitanjali* emboldened Tagore and convinced him of the judiciousness of his decision to translate his own poems and so he also translated ten of his plays and a few short stories. But the increasing demand for more translations of his Bangla writings obliged him to share the burden of translations with others. So his novels, short stories and other writings were translated by persons chosen by him.

Tagore's first collection of short stories in English translation entitled *Glimpses of Bengal Life* consisting of thirteen short stories, translated by Rajani Ranjan Sen, was published by G.A. Naleson and Co, Madras, probably in June or July 1913, a few months before the announcement of the Nobel Prize. Although

translation of the short stories of Tagore had began to appear from 1902 onwards, Rajani Ranjan Sen was the first to think of putting them together in a book. He asked for Tagore's permission around 1909 and while the book came out after nearly four years he thanked Tagore, 'for his gracious permission to translate and publish his short stories'. Despite its limitations, the book played a positive role in projection of Tagore before the Western readership. Soon after Tagore became an international celebrity, he tried to keep proper supervision of the English translation of his Bangla writings by different translators. But his supervision often reflects hesitation and indecision :

> The translation of some of his stories published by Indian journals were read by Sturge Moore and Rothenstein, both of whom expressed unhappiness about their quality. About (Rajani Ranjan) Sen's work (translation of Tagore's short stories) Rothenstein commented, 'translation of your stories those recently published are too monstrously ill done for words' (Das, 1996 : 12).

Rothenstein and Earnest Rhys criticized the quality of translation of Tagore stories made not only by Rajani Ranjan Sen but also by others published in *New India*, edited by Bipin Chandra Pal and in *The Modern Review*, edited by Ramananda Chatterjee. Such observations and criticisms from sympathetic friends and admirers made Tagore conscious about the limitations of the translations of his stories that had already appeared in print and induced him to become extremely careful about the translation rights and he decided to keep a close watch on the translation of his works by others.

Tagore tried to block Sen's book but Sen proceeded on the basis of the permission taken from Tagore in 1909. On the one hand, Tagore failed to stop Sen and his publisher from bringing out the second edition of his translated stories and on the other hand, Macmillan did not take any initiative till 1916 to bring out an authoritative edition of his stories. It was only towards the end of 1915 or the beginning of 1916 Macmillan took the decision of publishing a collection of Tagore short stories in English translation. But this decision was not a planned one. It was just a bewildering response to the rumour that an American publisher was about to market a collection of Tagore's stories. So, Macmillan requested Tagore to prepare a collection of short stories immediately. Though Tagore was hardly in a position to cope with that emergency, he responded to the request of his publishers without much thought. By this time he was annoyed with Rajani Ranjan Sen, as mentioned earlier, and he was also not satisfied with the other translators around him. Moreover, Tagore realized that he was not the right person to translate his own stories. The only person he could depend upon was his nephew Surendranath Tagore, who was the most competent among all the translators Tagore knew. But tagore was not sure whether to ask Surendranath to make new translation of his stories or to revise the translations already in existence. He could not even decide whether to depend on Surendranath alone or to take the help of other translators. His indecisiveness was mainly caused by the conflicting advice coming from the rivals among his admirers. The relationship between Tagore and his English friend and well wisher Edward Thompson was embittered partly because of this. Tagore's uneven relation with Thompson started in 1913. Thompson was too willing to help Tagore but it appears that the relationship was fraught with misunderstanding.

Tagore politely refused Thompson's help in editing the manuscript of some of his poems. E.P. Thompson writes, about the relationship between his father Edward Thompson and Tagore, in his significantly entitled *Alien Homage* :

> For the next eight years (from 1913) Thompson was alternately discouraged and encouraged to turn his hand to translating the stories (Thompson E.P. 1993 : 16).

When Macmillan wanted Tagore stories in English translation without delay, Tagore remembered Thompson with a request to revise some of the stories translated by Surendranath Tagore. Thompson, as he was always ready to help Tagore, revised and compiled promptly and sincerely. But surprisingly the collection, *The Hungry Stones and other stories* was published by Macmillan in 1916 without mentioning the names of the translators, including Edward Thompson. Anticipating the same situation, Thompson wrote to Tagore who assured him of publishing the names of translators, before the publication of *Mashi and other stories* (1918). But this collection of stories also came out without the names of the translators. The story of publication of these collections of short stories was complicated as much by the desperate hurry on the part of Macmillan as by Tagore's own indecisiveness and the intervention of C.F. Andrews, whose attitude towards Thompson was far from congenial :

> According to the Thompson, Tagore asked Macmillan to make their own selection and to put the volume into the hands of their reader, who found that the stories needed thorough revision. 'This being so', Thompson quotes from a letter to him from Macmillan,

> 'We do not feel that it would be desirable to insert the names of the translators, much of whose work has had to be drastically altered. If the author approves, a short preface might mention the names of those who have assisted him, but this we shall leave to his judgment' (Das, 1996 : 18).

C.F. Andrews did not know Bangla and so the charges made by him was disliked by Thompson, who criticized the attempt of C.F. Andrews 'to Westernize the stories and make them feeble copies of Kipling' (ibid : 18). Such unfortunate and confused situation of the English translation of Tagore's Bangla writings by the persons selected by him continued. In 1920, Thompson translated 'Megh O Raudra' (Cloud and Sun) and sent a part of it to Tagore who found it competent and sent it to Macmillan with a suggestion to include the story in the next collection of his short stories. But Macmillan did not accept the conditions insisted upon by Thompson as he refused to part with the manuscript. However, Thompson's translation of 'Megh O Raudra' ultimately found its place in the collection of Tagore's short stories entitled *Broken Ties and other stories* which was published by Macmillan in 1925. The story 'Cloud and Sun' was translated again many years later by Indira Devi Chaudhurani which was first published in *The Visva-Bharati Quarterly* (November 1950 – January 1951).

The corpus of Tagore's prose writing is extremely large and varied. The fifteen volume collection of the Bangla works of Tagore entitled *Rabindra Rachanabali* published by the Government of West Bengal, devoted five volumes, each running into nine hundred pages, to his prose writings. But not much of

Tagore's other prose works, except a few novels, was translated into English during his life time. The history of translations of the novels of Tagore done under his supervision, also clearly reflects the hesitations and indecisions that became the regulating factors in the translation history of his short stories. Tagore personally did not translate any of his novels, though translations of some of his novels like *Gora, Ghore Baire, Chaturanga* etc. published earlier by Macmillan and now by Rupa and Co., Wisdom Tree etc. showing no names of translator, often mislead the readers to take them as Tagore's own translation or even as the original English writings of Tagore.

The first novel that Tagore wanted to be translated into English was *Chokher Bali.* In response to Ramananda Chatterjee's request to translate the novel into English, Tagore wrote :

> It is very difficult for me to translate *Chokher Bali* into English. It will take an enormously long time. Anderson is an admirer of the novel, he translated one part of it very competently for the review of the book. I think if requested he will agree to do it. I can go through the draft of his translation myself; that will reduce the possible errors .... (Das, 1996 : 19).

Tagore himself took the initiative and sent a copy of the Bangla novel to Anderson. But again he suggested Surendranath Tagore as one possible translator. Ramananda Chatterjee preferred the Bengaliman to the Englishman and successfully persuaded Surendranath Tagore to translate the novel *Chokher Bali.* This translation was serialized in the journal *The Modern Review* in 1914 under the

title *Eye Sore*. But it never appeared as book either because of Tagore's disapproval or because of the publisher's disinterestedness. The first English translation of Tagore's novel to be published by Macmillan was *Ghore Baire*. It was translated by Surendranath Tagore under the title *The Home And The World* in 1919. This was followed by *The Wreck* (1921), a translation of the Bangla novel *Naukadubi*. The next novel translated into English was *Gora* by W.W. Pearson, which was published, with corrections and modifications from many hands, by Macmillan in 1924. Pearson's Bangla was extremely limited. It is difficult to understand what prompted Tagore to assign the work to him. However, Tagore was not happy with Pearson's translation of *Gora*. On October 10, 1934, he wrote to Edward Thompson :

> I feel very much relieved to know you have kindly consented to revise my *Gora* to make it more adaptable for the English market (Quoted in, Das, 1996 : 20).

But Tagore could never see any revised edition or any other English version of his *Gora*.

The novel *Chaturanga* was translated into English and published in *The Modern Review* in four installments from February to May 1922 with the sub-title *A Story in Four Chapters*. It is difficult to locate the identity of the translator of this version. The same version of *Chaturanga* was later published by Macmillan in London in the year 1925 under the collection of stories titled *Broken Ties and other stories*. The other stories included in this volume are "In the Night" (Nishithey), "The Fugitive Gold" (Swarnamriga), "The Editor" (Sampadak),

"Giribala" (Manbhanjan), The Lost Jewels" (Manihara) and a poem "Emancipation" (Parishodh). *Broken Ties* selection was again reprinted without any change in 1964 by Visva-Bharati under the title *Boundless Sky* without giving any clue about the identity of the translator of *Broken Ties*. Surprisingly, Rupa and Co, New Delhi, published the same *Broken Ties* as a separate book in 2007 with a new information printed in the last cover page : "He (Tagore) translated it from *Chaturanga*, 1916, jointly with W.W. Pearson." But this information about the identity of the translator of *Broken Ties* has no historical basis. Perhaps it is done as a part of marketing strategy.

After completing the writing of his last novel *Char Adhyay* in 1934, Tagore hesitated to publish it fearing that the novel might be banned for its criticism of the ideology and activities of the political revolutionary groups of the time. He wanted its English version to be translated first in the west. But while Surendranath Tagore, as desired by Rabindranath, was engaged in the translation of this novel, surprisingly Tagore asked Amiya Chakraborty to translate the novel. Chakraborty, then studying at Oxford, happily took the assignment and started working enthusiastically on the hand written copy of the original Bangla manuscript. After producing four drafts, he completed the translation and by December 1934 the final typing of the translated version was in good progress. Suddenly on 11 December 1934, Rabindranath Tagore writes to Amiya Chakraborty :

> In the meantime, I have decided to publish the book (i.e. the Bengali original). Let me see what happens. But don't you slacken

> your pace of translation. If it is banned here, it will be published there (Translation, Das, 1996 : 20).

Again on 6 January 1935, Tagore writes to Chakraborty :

> I have got *Char Adhyay* (in Bangla) published. I don't think the authorities have any valid reason to ban it now. If they do give trouble, that would be sheer stupidity. I see no reason to guard myself against stupidity. And now that the original has got published, there is no reason to have translated (Translation, Mukherjee, 2004 : 108).

In another letter on March 7, 1935, Tagore writes asking Chakraborty not to send the copy of the translation to him for his correction but to publish it straightway. But he also adds, "don't publish it if you don't feel it is necessary" (Tagore, 1986 : 149). However, Chakraborty sent the manuscript to Tagore, whose response to it was very blunt and unkind and consequently the fate of this version could never see the face of publication. It is fortunate that the version is still found in the Rabindra Bhavan archives at Santiniketan. As Sujit Mukherjee says :

> The enormity of the injustice done to Amiya Chakraborty on this matter, remains as inexplicable as it is unforgivable (Mukherjee, 2004 : 108).

After nine years of Tagore's death Surendranath's version of *Char Adhyay* under the title *Four Chapters* was published by Visva-Bharati probably in 1950. The story of the publication of this version is again a complicated one. Rabindranath had spent the summer of 1937 at Almora as the house guest of a

Bengali scientist Bashishwar Sen and his American wife Gertrude Emerson Sen, who had for many years represented *The Asia Magazine* in India. Hearing the situation of the English translation of *Char Adhyay*, Mrs. Sen negotiated its publication in *The Asia Magazine.* At that time Tagore's only son Rothindranath was handling such matters and so he wrote to Mrs. Sen on 15 August 1936 :

> He (father) read thoroughly the translation done by Mr. (Amiya) Chakraborty and felt that the book deserved to be translated by himself. So, assisted by my cousin Mr. Surendranath Tagore, who has great experience in translating father's works, he set himself to the task. The work was completed .... (Translation, Mukherjee, 2004 : 108)

The manuscript was sent to Mrs. Sen. On 2 September 1936, she wrote back to Rabindranath Tagore that the translation misses something in many passages and the wording in it is also not satisfactory. She made a number of changes and offered to send the manuscript back to Rabindranath for his approval of the changes made by her. In response to this, on 5 September 1936, Tagore sent a telegram to her : "Edit as freely as you desire. Need not send here." (ibid : 109). This is the version of *Char Adhyay* which appeared in the Asia Magazine and in due course published by Visva-Bharati, without mentioning the date of publication. By all probability it came out in 1950.

Krishna Kripalini, the then teacher of English at Santiniketan, started translating the novel *Shesher Kabita* in 1935. On 14 October 1935, Tagore wrote to Ramananda Chatterjee :

> He (Kripalini) has done (translated) a bit of the first part of *Shesher Kabita*, I think it is good (Tagore, 1986 : 181).

Chatterjee also wrote that he had himself translated the poems that were part of the narrative of the novel. The progress of the translation was slow mainly because, as Tagore himself realized, the text was too difficult to be handled easily by some one whose Bengali was insufficient. He even suggested the possibility of his nephew Surendranath undertaking it and hoped that Kripalini would not disagree. (Ibid : 226). However, probably Surendranath disagreed and Kripalini completed the translation and the book was published by New India Publishing Company, London, in the year 1946 under the title *Farewell My Friend.* Krishna Kripalini also translated three more novels of Tagore – *Dui Bon* under the title *Two Sisters*, first published in *Hindustan Standard* Puja Special in 1943 and later as a book by Visva Bharati in 1945; *Malancha* under the title *The Garden*, published by Jaico Publishing House, Bombay in 1956; and *Chokher Bali* under the title *Binodini*, published by Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi in 1959.

The novels that saw their English translations during the living period of Tagore are thus *Chokher Bali, Gora, Ghore Baire, Naukadubi, Chaturanga and Char Adhyay.* The most effective and legitimate criticism of any translation of a text is in fact a fresh translation. And this exercise began only after the death of Tagore and has practically become more effective after 31 December 2001, when the Central Government freed the copyright of Tagore publication from the clutch of Visva-Bharati. Sujit Mukherjee, a modern translator of Tagore, rightly observes :

> In fact, the time has come – or came long ago – for fresh translations, not only in English, of whatever of Rabindranath that has been translated earlier, also of whatever that has not. He is simultaneously one of our comfortingly great as well as perpetually modern writers of literature, and he can withstand any amount of translation into any language of the world (Mukherjee, 1992 : viii).

Conscious of the shortcomings of the other two categories of Tagore translations : translations done by Tagore himself and translations done by other translators under the supervision of Tagore, this new category of Tagore translation, free from intervention by Tagore and his associates, introduced a new phase in the history of the reception of Tagore.

By now at least twelve out of the fourteen Bangla novels of Tagore have been translated into English and some of them have multiple English versions. The five novels that have been selected for the present study are *Chokher Bali*, (1903), *Gora* (1909), *Chaturanga* (1915), *Ghore Baire* (1916) and *Shesher Kabita* (1929). And the reason for selection of these five novels lies in their fate of having multiple English versions. *Chokher Bali* has at least four versions available in the market : Krishna Kripalini's version, published by Sahitya Akademi, New Dellhi, under the title of *Binodini* in 1959; Sreejata Guha's version, published by Penguin Books India, New Delhi, under the title *A Grain of Sand : Chokher Bali* in 2003; Radha Chakravarty's version published by Srishti Publishers and Distributors, New Delhi, under the original title in 2003; Sukhenda Ray's version, published by Rupa and Co., New Delhi, under the original title in 2004. *Gora* has three English

versions : W.W. Pearson's version, published by Macmillan in 1924; E.F. Dodd's abridged version published by Macmillan in 1964; and Sujit Mukherjee's version published by Sahitya Akedemi, New Delhi in 1997. *Chaturanga* has three versions : Macmillan's version published under the title *Broken Ties* in 1925; Ashok Mitra's version, published by Sahitya Akademi under the title *Chauranga (Quartet)*; and Kaiser Haq's version, published by Heinemann Educational Publisher's Asian writers series under the title *Quartet (Chaturanga)* in 1993. *Ghore Baire* has three versions : Surendranath Tagore's version, published by Macmillan under the title *The Home And the World* in 1919, Nivedita Sen's version, published by Shrishti Publishers and Distributors, New Delhi, under the title *The Home and the World : Ghore Baire* in 1998; and Sreejata Guha's version published by Penguin Books, New Delhi, under the title *Home and the World* in 2005. The novel *Shesher kabita* has also two English versions : Krishna Kripalini's version published by New India Publishing Company, London, under the title *Farewell My Friend* in 1946; and Radha Chakravarty's version, published by Shristi Publishers and Distributors, New Delhi, under the title *Farewell Song* in 2005.

The present research is based on a proposal for a comparative study of the different English versions of five selected novels of Tagore. It explores the differences existing in different versions of a text in theoretical approach and cultural negotiation. The study has focused attention to the theoretical concern involved in the process of translation as a whole and Tagore translation in particular. It has also thrown light on the life, art and philosophy of Tagore, the ideology and cultural hinterland reflected in the five selected novels and their

representation in the translated versions. Though the research has made a historical survey of Tagore's Bangla writings translated into English with particular importance to the selected novels, the focus is on the development of Translation Studies as an important theoretical approach and how it can be engaged in the comparative analysis of the different versions of the five selected novels. The study has made an attempt to reveal the fact that the history of Tagore novels, like that of every great work of art, tell us about their antecedents, the contemporary realizations and their potentially eternal 'afterlife'. The purpose of making a comparative study of different versions of five selected novels is to assess the transformation and renewal that the original texts have undergone in their journey of being represented in English. As Walter Benjamin says :

> ... a translation issues from the original – not so much from its life as from its afterlife. For a translation comes later than the original, and since the important works of world literature never find their chosen translators at the time of their origin, their translation marks their stage of continued life (Benjamin, Walter, 2006 : 16)

Works Cited :

Ayyub, Abu Sayeed. 1961. "The Aesthetic Philosophy of Tagore", in *Rabindranath Tagore : A Centenary Volume*. New Delhi : Sahitya Akademi.

Benjamin, Walter. 2002. "The Task of the Translator", in Lawrence Venuti (ed.) *The Translation Studies Reader*. London : Routledge.

Das, Sisir Kumar. 2001. "Introduction", in Sisir Kumar Das and Sukanta Chaudhuri (eds.) *Rabindranath Tagore : Selected Writings on Literature and Language*. New Delhi : Oxford University Press.

Devi, Indira. 1959. "Genesis of English *Gitanjali*", in *Indian Literature* Vol. II, Oct. 1958 to March 1959. New Delhi : Sahitya Akademi.

Mukherjee, Sujit. 1992. "Translator's Note" in *Three Companions,* Delhi : Disha Books, Orient Longman.

---------- 2004. *Translation as Recovery,* New Delhi : Pencraft International.

Nehru, Jawaharlal. 1979 (1960) "Foreword", in Sukumar Sen, *History of Bengali Literature*. New Delhi : Sahitya Akademi.

Sen, Sukumar. 1979 (1960). *History of Bengali Literature*. New Delhi : Sahitya Akademi.

Rahman, Anisur and Ansari, Ameena Kazi. 2007. "Introduction", in Anisur Rahman and Ameena Kazi Ansari (eds.) *Translation / Representation.* New Delhi : Creative Books.

Tagore, Rabindranath. 1986. *Chitipatra* Vol. 12. Kalikata : Visva Bharati.

Thompson, E.P. 1993. *Alien Homage : Edward Thompson and Rabindranath Tagore.* New Delhi : Oxford University Press.

Yeats, W.B. 1994. "Introduction" to *Song Offerings,* in Sisir Kumar Das (ed.) *The English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore* Volume one. New Delhi : Sahitya Akademi.