

Ghosh Mridula*Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.),**Senior Lecturer at the Department of International Relations**National University of "Kyiv-Mohyla Academy",**Head of the Tagore Center**East European Development Institute**Kyiv, Ukraine***STUDY AND RECEPTION OF RABINDRANATH TAGORE'S
CREATIONS IN UKRAINE: TRANSLATIONS
OF VIKTOR BATYUK**

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Interest in the study of Indian literature and philosophy was stimulated by Rabindranath Tagore's winning of the Nobel Prize for literature in 1913 and since then study of Tagore's works has a special place in Indology or India studies. In Ukraine, reception of Tagore is an age-old, deep phenomenon, although under researched and deserves more analysis. For over a hundred years, the Ukrainian literati honored Tagore, read and translated him. This paper aims to focus on one prominent name among them, diplomat and poet Victor Batyuk (15 March 1939 – 2 December 1996) and how his translations of Tagore contributed to the study of Indian literature and Tagoreana in particular, from the linguistic, socio-political as well as intellectual and scientific points of view. Victor Batyuk was a professional diplomat, working in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Ukrainian SSR. Combining his professional obligations as a state official, together with his creative passion for translation of Tagore, he is, by far the most prominent translator and researcher of Tagore, after Pavlo Ritter, going by the knowledge of Bengali and translations from the original. Deep academic knowledge of Bengali, the language in which Tagore wrote most of his works, characterizes them both [1].

Batyuk studied under the tutorship of the Bengali and Sanskrit expert, a revered Tagore scholar, based in Moscow, Alexander Gnatyuk-Danilchuk. Concluding the preface of his first translations of Tagore's poetry, Batyuk thanked his teacher that he was blessed to have him as tutor, who inspired "a student from the land of Taras Shevchenko, to engage in Tagoreana" [1, 24]. This also demonstrates that he imbibed the culture of "Guru-Shishya-Parampara" (connection for transfer of knowledge from the teacher to the student), where respect goes first to the teacher.

His poetry translations are unique and reproduce the music and rhythm of Tagore's Bengali original. To compare, there have been translations of the same poems or creations by other authors, poets, but Batyuk's deep academic knowledge of the Bengali language, as well as grasp of poetic rhythm by Tagore is notable. One of Tagore's first translators into Ukrainian Yuri Siryi (pseudonym of Yuri Tyshchenko), translated the beginning four lines of the poem "Who are you, who reads my poem curiously after a hundred years from now?" of Tagore's Gardener, written in 1893, and shortened it as follows: "Хто ти, читальнику, що прочитаєш пісні мої по ста літах?" [3, 91]. Siryi's translations done as early as 1914 faced criticism from none less than Lyudmila Staryts'ka-Chernyakhiv's'ka that they were not up to the mark [3, 175]. After half a century, Batyuk's translation of the same verse reproduced the rhythm and meters of the poetry closest to the original:

Через сто літ віднині (у 1993 р.)
В далекім дні, через сто літ однині,
Хто ти, читачу, загадковий,
Що взяв у руки ці вірші старовинні
В незнанім дні, через сто літ однині? [2, 286].

Batyuk can be compared to have possessed the knowledge of world renowned Tagore scholars such as Martin Kampchen of Germany or William Radice of Great Britain, while he took the pain of taking a diplomatic profession and practiced translation as his passion. Radice and Kampchen are dedicated Tagore scholars and Indologists working in the field of academia.

Batyuk had a tragic end of his life in 1996 and many of his works were published posthumously. Yet, knowledge of English and French as well as international exposure as a diplomat allowed him significant degree of open communication, so that his creations were not tampered by the system censorship. Raised in the spirit of the 1960's and then working during perestroika in the 1980's, Batyuk always translated from the original. During the years of perestroika and glasnost, Batyuk translated Tagore's Letters from Russia exclusively from the Bengali original [5] and pointed at several passages missing (censored) in the Russian version translated by M. Kafitina, published in 1956 (the year of 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, formally announcing Khrushchev's thaw and destalinization) [4].

Batyuk's reflections of Tagore are deep in scholarship and intellectualism, he recognizes the place of Tagore in the Indian subcontinent, and in the heart of each Indian and Bangladeshi national and also compares him with Taras Shevchenko's meaning for Ukrainians [1, 5]. True, he emphasizes the anti-colonial and anti-imperialist image of Tagore, promoted by the USSR, he eulogizes Tagore's positive impressions of visiting Russia, but at the same time, he underscores the humanist Tagore, who fought against the internal Indian superstitious systems of caste and religious orthodoxy [1, 14].

In the 1940's, members of the Marxist Cultural movement of the 1940's Bengal, applying Marxian methodology [6, 108], expressed their ideological criticism of many works of Tagore as having class-bias and bourgeois, and Bimalchandra Ghosh, a prominent poet of that movement, opined, that in the poem "Shahjahan", Tagore praises the Emperor, ignoring the lives of hundreds of workers, whose hands built the wondrous piece of architecture. Citing the criticism as untenable, Batyuk cites other poems of Tagore, such as "People at work", "Universal harmony", which celebrate the working people and express the opposite [1, 22]. Batyuk cautions about the danger of interpreting Tagore from a definite political standpoint, with a very subtle and nuanced reference to the official Soviet approach to Tagore.

In 1987, the year of the Festival of India in the USSR, the famous journal of Ukraine for foreign literature called "Vsesvit" published several issues with Batyuk's translation of Tagore's works such as the dance drama Shyama, many poems and the novel "Ghare baire" [9]. This period of great activity and looser state control in modeling the reception of Tagore allowed freedom of expression till the full independence of Ukraine in 1991.

The valuable contribution of Batyuk lies in the fact that he not only translated the texts, but accompanied them with his commentaries, which introduced the reader to the world of Tagore. Batyuk was very well versed in the socio-political ideas of Tagore. In an introduction to his translation of the famous essay of Tagore, "Nationalism", he wrote a short note, entitled: "What is the sense or significance of building a nation state" [9], where he accurately points out the nuances of the term "nation", as used by Tagore in his essay and reiterated that Tagore wrote the essay in English. This was published posthumously, and it is seen that he, as the first Ambassador of Ukraine to the UN had to set the ground for acceptance of Ukraine by the international community. The translation was done in 1991, prior to his taking office as Ambassador to the UN. He explained that the word "nation" was used by Tagore to signify politically and economically cohesive identity of people, and at the same time shows the negative sides of chauvinism and imperialism, which was demonstrated by the colonizers.

Overall, Batyuk could fathom the essence of life affirming spirit and the immortality of the soul in Tagore's works. He analyzed and connected these thoughts with both ancient Indian philosophy as well as works of Ukrainian poets. He recalls the Upanishads that tell us: Life is omniscient and omnipresent, as well as the words of Lesya Ukrayinka, who wrote, "I have in my heart that does not die" ("Я маю у серці те, що не вмирає") or that of young Pavlo Tychyna, when he wrote, "And I don't understand how shall I die: my life is immortal" ("І як я вмру – не розумію: життя моє – одвічне") [1, 20]. Thus, the contribution of Victor Batyuk in the study and reception of Rabindranath Tagore's works is immense and invaluable. His interpretations and translations

of Tagore draw a very clear niche, which is different from the official Soviet line as well as from the East European approach, which cannot be matched till today. Unfortunately, due to the fact that neither Ukraine, nor the name of Victor Batyuk is mentioned in the world Tagore heritage book, a publication made with inputs from across the globe on the 100 years of the Nobel prize by Tagore (2013), considerable work and efforts are to be made to mainstream the study and reception of Tagore in Ukraine to the world.

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