



Rabindranath Tagore: A Great Indian Writer

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Rabindranath Tagore was a poet, writer, playwright, composer, philosopher, social reformer and painter. He reshaped Bengali literature and music as well as Indian art with Contextual Modernism in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Author of the "profoundly sensitive, fresh and beautiful" poetry of Gitanjali, he became in 1913 the first non-European and the first lyricist to win the Nobel Prize in Literature. Tagore's poetic songs were viewed as spiritual and mercurial; however, his "elegant prose and magical poetry" remain largely unknown outside Bengal.

Rabindranath Tagore, who composed the National Anthem of India and won the Nobel Prize for Literature, was a multitalented personality in every sense. He was a Bengali poet, Brahmo Samaj philosopher, visual artist, playwright, novelist, painter and a composer. He was also a cultural reformer who modified Bengali art by rebuffing the strictures that confined it within the sphere of classical Indian forms. Though he was a polymath, his literary works alone are enough to place him in the elite list of all-time greats. Even today, Rabindranath Tagore is often remembered for his poetic songs, which are both spiritual and mercurial. He was one of those great minds, ahead of his time, and that is exactly why his meeting with Albert Einstein is considered as a clash between science and spirituality. Tagore was keen in spreading his ideologies to the rest of the world and hence embarked on a world tour, lecturing in countries like Japan and the United States. Soon, his works were admired by people of various countries and he eventually became the first non-European to win a Nobel Prize. Apart from Jana Gana Mana (the National Anthem of India), his composition 'Amar Shonar Bangla' was adopted as the National Anthem of Bangladesh and the National Anthem of Sri Lanka was inspired by one of his works.

Tagore wrote poetry as an eight-year-old. At the age of sixteen, he released his first substantial poems under the pseudonym Bhānusiṃha. As a humanist, universalist, internationalist, and ardent anti-nationalist he denounced the British Raj and advocated independence from Britain. As an exponent of the Bengal Renaissance, he advanced a vast canon that comprised paintings, sketches and doodles, hundreds of texts, and some two thousand songs.



Tagore is known mostly for his poetry. He wrote novels, essays, short stories, travelogues, dramas, and thousands of songs. His works are frequently noted for their rhythmic, optimistic, and lyrical nature. Such stories mostly borrow from the lives of common people. Tagore's non-fiction grappled with history, linguistics, and spirituality. He wrote autobiographies. His travelogues, essays, and lectures were compiled into several volumes, including *Europe Jatir Patro* (Letters from Europe) and *Manusher Dharmo* (The Religion of Man). His brief chat with Einstein, "Note on the Nature of Reality", is included as an appendix to the latter. On the occasion of Tagore's 150th birthday, an anthology of the total body of his works is currently being published in Bengali in chronological order. This includes all versions of each work and fills about eighty volumes.[101] In 2011, Harvard University Press collaborated with Visva-Bharati University to publish *The Essential Tagore*, the largest anthology of Tagore's works available in English; it was edited by Fakrul Alam and Radha Chakravathy and marks the 150th anniversary of Tagore's birth.

By nature Rabindranath was a poet of susceptible mind and a humanist in particular. His rural experience covering the distress of the 'have-nots' moved his inside and he was a changed man. He decided to work for betterment of the poor folks. This is in fact contrary to his class character.

He thought and thought and finally drew-up a project-plan for rural development and village reconstruction based on socio-economic and cultural upliftment of the poor villagers. In one word, his mission was to change the life pattern of the exploited rural people. His intellectual aim was to make these people conscious of their situation. His first experiment of rural development started at 'Shilaidaha' with modernized cultivation system (1900).

The system consists of deep-ploughing, use of good quality seeds and fertilizers. Apart from paddy cultivation, he inspired the peasants to take up maize cultivation. He even imported quality maize seeds from America for the local peasants. The result was positive.

But for some reason or other he had to change the working site from 'Shilaidaha' to 'Kaligram Pargana' (Rajshahi), another estate of Tagore family. Its 'sadar katchari' was at Patisar. The inhabitants of this locality were mostly Muslims. But they participated in Tagore's development work with great interest.

He was a poet of an era when such social evils as caste, class and untouchability dominated the society. He fought it out through his works. A dialogue in *Chadalika*, 'Jo



Manav Tum, Wahi Manav Mai...,’ talks against casteism,” said theatre actor Swastika Chakraborty who has rendered ‘Chandalika’ and ‘Chitrangada’ into Hindi. A novelist and author Padmashree Ramesh Chandra Shah said, “Tagore was a genius and universal poet.

Here the poet started his rural development work with renewed interest. The project covered 600 poor villages. The basic working principle he adopted is cooperative system where ‘panchayeti mandala pratha’ was the dominant feature. It was neither imposed from above nor absolutely controlled by the zamindar-poet himself. Its fruitful feature was the free participation of the peasant members. Tagore was pleased to see interest of the participating peasants.

The translations of Rabindranath's poetry available in English are hardly representative of his total work. Gitanjali, on which his reputation in the West is largely based, shows nothing of the humor, for example, or intellectual rigor of which he was capable. Rabindranath's published work is largely, though not completely, contained in 26 substantial volumes.

It is sometimes said that Rabindranath was the last of the great traditional Indian poets. It is true that despite his independence of mind he looked for his inspiration to the past, to nature, and that his theme is man's relation to these and to God; he was never consumed with the complexities of psychology, as many poets who followed him in Bengal have been. He may have achieved his great and lasting popularity just because he was a poet of hope. Toward the end of his life he was stricken with horror by the Nazi march through Europe and Japan's ravages in China.

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