

INTERNATIONAL TAGORE CONFERENCE

Halle (Saale), Germany

August 2-3, 2012

Rabindranath Tagore in the Mirror of Our Times

(With Special Focus on Europe's Interaction with Tagore and Tagore's Interaction with Europe)

The South Asia Department of the Oriental Institute ([Südasiens-Seminar des Orientalischen Instituts](#)) of the Martin Luther University Halle-Wittenberg ([Martin-Luther-Universität Halle Wittenberg](#)), in collaboration with the [Indian Embassy in Berlin](#), hosted and organised this conference devoted to Rabindranath Tagore (Rabīndranāth Thākur) sponsored by the [Indian Council for Cultural Relations](#), bringing together six scholars each from India, Germany and neighbouring European countries. The academic coordination, by Professors Shyama Prasad Ganguly of the Jawaharlal Nehru University (New Delhi) and Rahul Peter Das of the Martin Luther University, was at the same time a visible manifestation of the successful partnership between these two universities existing since 2003.

Tagore's multifaceted creative genius as a composer, thinker and painter, and his ideas on nationalism, universalism, education, rural reconstruction and identity have been widely discussed over the years, more especially during the multitude of conferences, seminars, lectures and cultural meets held during 2011, his sesquicentennial anniversary year. Many of these have focused on his modernity and the relevance which he continues to enjoy even while creatively moving between the binaries of the intellectual and the sublime, the utopic and the pragmatic, in various fields. We have also been enriched by insights into his thoughts on the relation between the individual and the collective based on his understanding of history, philosophy, science, spirituality, the creative process and human responsibility. We have learnt that the sources of influence on him were varied, his visits to various countries and interaction with a large number of intellectuals and artists significant.

It seemed time to take stock of how, in such assessments, issues of his universality have been posed and dealt with, and what new dimensions have come to the fore that may ensure his palpable visibility in the concerns of our times. Why, for instance, does his poetry continue to exercise such resounding presence in many minds despite the vicissitudes it suffered? How do the Tagorean tenets of humanism connect with post-colonial or post-structural concerns? Has our image of Tagore changed in consonance with the contemporary cultural and literary perspectives? What do we today expect him to represent? Can he really be considered as that iconic figure of an exemplary reconciled universal which some identify in him, and can he, then, address that goal even while being quintessentially Indian, particularly Bengali?

While the Conference as a sort of culmination engaged with some of the concerns above in the light of Tagore's impact, reception and image in India and abroad, it focused especially on his interactions with Europe, and, given the predominance of studies already devoted to English speaking Europe, in particular Continental Europe. How did this see, react to and also deploy Tagore — the man, the works, and the ideas —, as well as how, reciprocally, did Tagore see, react to, and deploy Europe — in his persona, works and ideas? Is there a specificity of that reception or interaction? Has it evolved over the decades registering its interaction with the Tagorean presence/absence elsewhere? How can it be related to the issues raised in the previous paragraph?

— [Programme schedule with group photo of the participants](#)

— [Abstracta orationum](#)

— [Vitae oratorum](#)