

【発表】 " RabindranathTagore and Japan : From Bengali Art Renaissance to Criticism of Japanese Nationalism'."

Asia after Tagore, the Legacy of Rabindranath Tagore: A Two-Day International Seminar organized by the Friends of the Kern Institute (VVIK),
University of Leiden, the Netherlands, September 23-24, 2011.

Asia after Tagore the Legacy of Rabindranath Tagore

International Tagore Seminar and Cultural Programme



Organisation: Vereniging
Vrienden van het Instituut Kern
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www.instituutkern.nl

23-24 September 2011
Lipsius Building, Leiden University

Asia after Tagore: the legacy of Rabindranath Tagore

For a privileged Bengali grown up with the works of Rabindranath Tagore, sharing the same language and the broad cultural background as that of the school dropout whose 150th birth anniversary is being celebrated all over the world, it may not be difficult to appreciate the legacy Tagore left behind. Whether it is in the young sovereign state of Bangladesh, or in West Bengal, India, many of us, even if we never wrote a line of poetry, got acquainted with our mother-tongue with the simple, rhythmic lines *Alo hoy, gelo bhoy / chari dik, jhikimik* (Day breaks, fear gone / all over, it glistens). There is no genre of literature that Tagore did not try his hand at and most Bengalis, even if they have not read him, know by heart at least a few of the more than two thousand songs he composed. *Rabindrasangit* or songs of Tagore are an indispensable part of most cultural programmes in the Bengali speaking region.

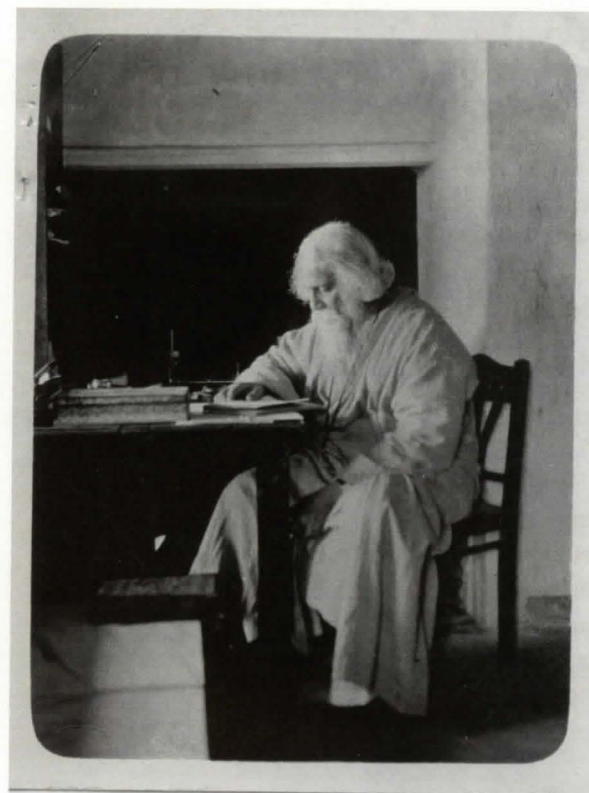
Tagore's warnings against fundamentalism and narrow nationalism had already taken him out of the bounds of the region and put him on the national stage. But the entire world came to know his name after he won the Nobel Prize for literature for his *Gitanjali* in 1913. In the recognition from the West he saw an opportunity to draw world attention to India which – with her age-old philosophy of unity among diversity – was now suffering under colonial rule.

In an age of nationalism, Tagore, a humanist with a firm foothold in his own cultural background, aspired towards universal humanity. After being awarded the Nobel Prize he felt it his responsibility to bring the message of India to the world. Tagore was invited to many countries where he gave lectures and had conversations with famous artists, financiers, intellectuals, politicians and scientists.

The message Tagore carried was predominantly that of universal spirituality binding humanity together across national and religious boundaries as well as an uncompromising denouncement of narrow nationalism, "the orgy of evil" manifested in the aggressive policy of the West, a policy that inexorably led to World War I.

For him Asia stood for an ancient civilization united through bonds that tied countries from India through Burma to Japan through the close ties of Buddhism on the one hand and the Indo-Iranians on the other. A believer in different forms of knowledge and different truths for different peoples, he expressed his revulsion against the standard western educational system that churned out university graduates. Science and technological advancement alone could not ensure cultural progress. On the contrary, the scramble for empire had resulted in a crisis of modern civilization. For Tagore, the answer lay in Asia. Asian countries had to shake off the dust of humiliation set by the arrogant, hypocritical and oppressive colonial rule and wake up to the call of the time and look to their inner soul. He was voicing this call.

Even now we see that humanity is still burdened with the issues that worried Tagore. Anti-democratic forces increasingly show their teeth and the multiple forms of mass media supply us with reports on oppressive forms of nationalism, trans-national militancy, lack of basic respect, extreme rightist politics and ethnic conflict. Search for identity still distinguishes between the "self" and the "other", and decolonization has not led to



Photograph made by the Dutch musicologist Arnold Bake in Shantiniketan. VVIK Collection, UB Leiden.

Shigemi Inaga will focus on Tagore's encounter with Japan and Nira Wickramasinghe will take a fresh look at Sri Lankan nationalism in view of Tagore's critique of narrow patriotism.

The **cultural programmes** on both the days are a bonus, showing that the appreciation of Tagore's poetry and music is not limited to Bengalis. In one of his poems Tagore wrote: 'Let me thus be known: / I am one of you, / nothing more – / remember me like this' (Porichoy, Shenjuti). Participation by performing artists from the larger South Asian diaspora with a good dose of Belgian and Dutch variation is a demonstration of the poet's wish: they have made Tagore their own.

Bhaswati Bhattacharya

Programme brochure compiled by Ellen M. Raven

Cover design by Savita de Backer

Friday 23 September, 2011

12:00—15.00 h Opportunity to view Tagore-related materials from Leiden special collections, compiled by Dr. Dory Heilijgers
speakers visit between 14.00 and 14.40 h
Venue: *Special Collections room, University Library, Witte Singel 27, Leiden*

13:30—14:45 h Registration (Lipsius building, corridor, Cleveringaplaats 1, Leiden)
Speakers please complete registration before 13:50 h
Academic programme
(**Venue:** *Lipsius building, Room 5, Cleveringaplaats 1, Leiden*)

15.00–15.15 h Opening by Prof. dr. Maghiel van Crevel
(director, Leiden Institute for Area Studies)
Welcome by Dr. Ellen M. Raven
(Chair, Friends of the Kern Institute)
Introduction by Dr. Bhaswati Bhattacharya
(Center for Modern Indian Studies, Gottingen (BRD) and International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam, The Netherlands)

15:15—16:00 h Keynote address by Dr. William Radice, (SOAS, London, UK)
Master of Empathy: Probing the Genius of Rabindranath Tagore

16:00—16.10 h Discussion

16:15—17.00 h Prof. dr. Rokus de Groot (Universiteit van Amsterdam, The Netherlands)
Musical Transformations of Tagore's Work: How did Dutch Composers Approach his Poetry and Melodies?

17.00—17.30 h Coffee and tea break (**Venue:** *Lipsius building, corridor*)

17.30—18.30 h **Cultural programme**
(**Venue:** *Lipsius building, Room 11, Cleveringaplaats 1, Leiden*)

18:30—20.00 h Drinks, reception (**Venue:** *Faculty Club, Rapenburg 73, Leiden*)

20:30 h Dinner for invitees

William Radice

Master of Empathy: Probing the Genius of Rabindranath Tagore

The genius of Rabindranath Tagore is frequently invoked and praised, but attempts to define his unique qualities as a poet and writer are rare. After briefly mentioning the qualities that other recent lectures by William Radice have explored, such as clarity, rationality, depth of feeling, virtuosity, far-sightedness and adaptability, the lecture will consider in detail the depth of feeling that derives from Tagore's power of empathy: his ability to enter into the lives and feelings of other people, whether young, old, male, female, rich or poor. Examples will be taken from his stories, novels and plays as well as his poetry, showing that empathy is a quality that connects up Tagore's genius as a poet with his mastery of other genres.



William Radice (*1951) has pursued a double career as a poet and as a scholar and translator of Bengali. Well known for his translations of the poems and stories of Tagore, he has also published nine books of his own poems. He was a lecturer in Bengali at SOAS, University of London from 1988 to 2011, and from 1999 to 2002 was Head of the Departments of South and South East Asia. His literary work in recent years has

included opera libretti, and his many books include *Myths and Legends of India*, *Teach Yourself Bengali* and *A Hundred Letters from England*. In November 2010 Penguin India published *The Poem of the Killing of Meghnad*, his translation of Michael Madhusudan Dutt's *Meghnadbadh kabya*. In May 2011 they published his new translation of Tagore's *Gitanjali*. He has lectured widely in Europe, North America and South Asia, and has been given prizes and honours in both India and Bangladesh. More information at www.williamradice.com.

Rokus de Groot

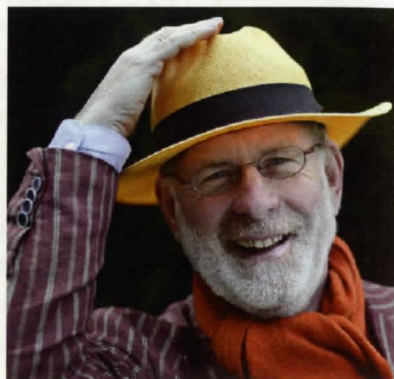
Musical Transformations of Tagore's Work: How did Dutch Composers Approach his Poetry and Melodies?

Tagore's poetry, plays and melodies have inspired many composers in Europe and the Americas to create musical settings in the form of songs, theatre pieces and even symphonic poems. While doing so, they made their own interpretations, transforming the original content according to their own interests. I will discuss some cases of such trans-

formations, analysing Tagore songs by Dutch composers. Also a general account of the reception of Tagore in Holland will be given.

Rokus de Groot (*1947 Aalst, The Netherlands), musicologist and composer, conducts research on music of the 20th and 21st centuries, especially in the field of aesthetics and techniques of composition, and in the field of the interaction between different cultural traditions, particularly in the perspective of present-day (re)conceptualisations of past and present religious and spiritual traditions in relation to music. He also has published on Edward Said and polyphony/counterpoint, in the musical sense, as a metaphor and as an intellectual mode.

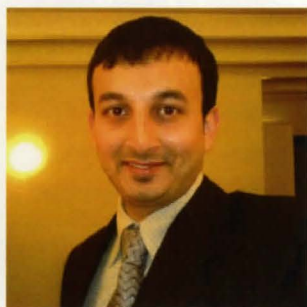
Photo: Henk Thomas



Cultural programme (23.9)

(*Venue: Lipsius building, Room 11, Cleveringaplaats 1, Leiden*)
17.30—18.30 h

Poetry recitation



Mr. Nilanjan Mukherjee and others recite selected poems of Tagore in Bengali and English

- sesh lekha : prothom diner surjo / First Day's Sun
- Poem 30: I came out alone on my way to my tryst
- *Gitanjali*, Poem 81: On many an idle day have I grieved over lost time
- Tagoreweb Verse 88: The World today is wild with the delirium of hatred

Mrs. Pauline de Koning recites three poems of Tagore in Dutch translation:

Naivedya (Offergave) [thema Oost en West]

64

In bloed bevlekte wolken gaat de zon
Van deze eeuw ten onder; angstaanjagend
Klinkt heden op het feest van grof geweld
De kranke melodie van dood door vele wapens.
Meedogenloos serpent van de beschaving richt
Opeens zich op, de huif gekromd, giftanden
Gevuld met scherp venijn.

Eigenbelang

Voert oorlog, aangevuurd door brute hebzucht.
De barbarij gekleed in keurigheid
Rijst uit haar modderbed omhoog en doet
De wereld schudden op haar grondvesten.
Het harde onrecht noemt zich schaamteloos
De liefde tot de natie, overspoelt
Gerechtigheid met golven van geweld.
Een meute dichters blaft dreigende zangen
Vol roof, op het crematieveld.

Rogshayyay (Ziekbed) [thema verbonden met de natuur]

27

Open de deur;
Geef de blauwe hemel alle ruimte;

De geur van bloemen trekt mij, laat die geur mijn kamer binnen;

Laat het jonge zonlicht

Door de aderen in mijn lichaam stromen;

Laat steeds opnieuw de ritselende bladeren

Mijn dankbaarheid verkondigen dat ik nog leef;

Zoals de ochtend

Zijn lichtsluier over velden met jong gras uitspreidt,

Zo moge hij met morgenlicht mijn hart bekleden.

Laat ik in de hemel, in de wind

De woordenloze spraak van alle liefde horen

Die ik in mijn leven heb ontvangen;

Ik baad mij in haar heilig water.

De waarheid van mijn lange leven is een sieraad

Hangend rond de hals van dit blauw uitspansel.

13

Bij de nieuwe geboorte

Van het zijn,

Vroeg de zon van de eerste dag –

Wie ben jij?

Maar kreeg geen antwoord.

De jaren gingen voorbij,

En de zon van de laatste dag,

Neigend naar de kust

Van de zee in het westen,

Vroeg in de zwijgende schemering –

Wie ben jij?

Maar kreeg geen antwoord.

The Wandering Minstrels – *Barsha o Sharat*

Text: Bhaswati Bhattacharya, Satarupa Bose Roy and
Victor van Bijlert

Narration: Nilanjan Mukherjee

Vocalists: Prajna Bhattacharya, Subhadeep Bhattacharya

Dance: Mohor Bhattacharya, Satarupa Bose Roy,
Kirti Matabadal, Trishla Sinha

Tabla: Akash Dey

Rabindranath Tagore was inspired by different traditions. His works are an amalgam of Upanishadic, classical Sanskrit *kavya*, western romantic, and the home-grown Bengali mendicant *baul* tradition. In the beauty of nature Tagore saw the beauty of God. The richness of nature to him was a manifestation of the presence of the divine spirit in all creations, and human interaction with nature remained a concern for Rabindranath from a very early age. In his own words, "from the earliest years I enjoyed a simple and intimate communion with nature. Each of the coconut trees in our garden had for me a distinct personality... On opening my eyes every morning the blithely awakening world used to call me to join it like a playmate; the perfervid noon-day sky would spirit me away from the work-a-day world ...into the recesses of its hermit cell; and the darkness of night would open the door to its phantom paths and take me over....past all possibilities and impossibilities right into its wonderland."

Like the ancient poet Kalidasa who composed an ode to the seasons in *Ritusamhara*, Tagore composed numerous verses on the seasons. Rabindranath's poems on nature perhaps outnumber those of any other poet in any other language. Tagore's songs are often deeply infused with the special festivities, flavours, hues, moods and sounds associated with the six seasons. Set to music based on the classical Indian *ragas*, these songs symbolise the season they announce. Whether it is the mendicant monsoon constantly playing the rhythmical pitter-patter on its instrument of rain, or the wandering clouds gathering at the courtyard of the *Shravana* sky, or the harvesting month of *Poush* calling one and all to the field to share with it the joy of harvesting the ripe paddy, or the young, strayed traveller in the form of spring who arrives swaying the ends of his colourful dress all over the forest at the end of the deadly winter – the seasonal songs of Tagore embody the message of the changing and cyclic order of the seasons and the close association between man, nature and the divine.

In this programme today we are going to present a few of Tagore's songs on monsoon (*barsha*) and autumn (*sharat*) – the second and third seasons in the Indian seasonal cycle that comprises six seasons, viz. summer, monsoon, autumn, fall, winter and spring. The scorching heat that reigns over the arid, tropical areas of the earth during the two months

of summer, the first season in the cycle, makes the earth long for rains. The hot and humid summer day cries out along with the human being "my eyes are thirsty, my entire chest is aching with thirst; my life is in distress due to severe heat." When the much awaited southwest monsoon wind brings the rains, not only is the rain-starved earth overjoyed; it also brings hope of life to the agrarian society: it is time to sow the life saving paddy. Tagore's compositions on monsoon, his favourite season are voluminous and many evenings can be filled with such songs alone. Yet we shall present a couple of songs on autumn too in order to present the changing appearance and mood of nature with the change of season.

The first song describes the serenity of nature after the arrival of monsoon and the relief that it brings to the earth parched by the intense summer heat.



Subhadeep Bhattacharya, Prajna Bhattacharya and Sharmili Mitra

"The overcast sky resembles the shadows of a mass of thick blue collyrium. The goddess of the forest is trembling with joy. The crickets, her anklets, can be heard. The music of the raindrops follows the metre of the rumbling clouds. The *kadamba* forest is permeated by a heavy fragrance of joy. The hot earth afflicted by thirst has received a message through the nectar-like rains from the world of Indra. The hard rock-like soil has begun to melt and everywhere the young green saplings have raised the victory-banners of life; the shackles of the prisoner are broken."

Song: nil onjon ghono punjochhayay

"The incessant rains continue into the depth of the nights. As the loud rumblings of thunders lighten the ends of the sky, the night bursts out in shivers. The message from the beloved strikes in secret at the recesses of the heart, and taxes the heart's endurance. The forest is beside itself in the constant heavy downpour. The rain pours in thick showers, the thunders rumble at intervals loud and loud. The mind goes away across the far off unending moor. The quietude of the night is broken by the constant rumbling of the clouds and the lightening tearing away the heart of the black firmament. The pouring sound of the rain breaks the inner tranquillity." The memories of the beloved silence the poet's singing by richly raining joy on him.

Song: shraboner gogoner gay

Both in the classical Sanskrit and in the medieval Vaishnava padabali tradition, monsoon separates the lovers Radha and Krishna. Stormy winds coupled with incessant rains make the pathways dangerous. Yet in the darkest of the night the tunes of Krishna's flute carry a message for Radha which she cannot ignore. In his late teens Tagore wrote a few poems in the padabali tradition of the medieval Vaishnava poets Vidyapati and Chandidas under the pseudonym Bhanusimha (Ravi+Indra). The following song depicting Radha anxiously preparing herself for meeting Krishna on a rainy night is from this collection.

"The *Shravana* sky is overcast with clouds and the night is dark. My dear friend, tell me how, feeble woman that I am, I shall walk down to the grove? Crazy gusts of wind make the *Jamuna* roar; thunder and lightning are striking frequently making my body quiver. There is a constant pitter-patter of the downpour from the clouds, trees are uprooted. Tell me, my dear friend, why the cruel Krishna is playing the name of Radha so sadly on his flute at this inauspicious hour? Please dress me up with the pearl necklace; put the tiara on my forehead; wind the *champaka* garland around my knee-long hair." "Do not go to that young lad at this depth of night, dear woman; the thunder is rumbling frequently, and you will find it extremely scary, listen to your slave Bhanu."

Song: shaonogogone ghoroghonoghot

The show of the monsoon continues for two months.

"The dark grey clouds, droning sound, thrumming sound, swaying branches and the lightening across the horizon remind us of the *tandava* dance, the dance of destruction. The sound of the thunder resembles that coming from Shiva's *damaru* rumbling deep within the heart, the towering rainclouds are frowning. The forests are shivering from end to end. Which guest has stepped into the dream of meeting to rock the swing of a restless heart? The night resounding with the pattering of heavy rain is frightened by the thunderclaps. The *malati* trees are shaking with doleful noise of the branches. The frightened woods are filled with the sound of crickets."

Song: hridoye mondrilo domoru guru guru...

After this continuous spell of cloudburst comes the season of autumn...

'the curtain of the dark clouds disappears and under the clear transparent of the blue sky the seat is prepared for the leisurely month *Aswin*. The fresh dewy green outside reflects softly the molten gold of the autumn sunshine. At the edge of dawn the morning star is opening its eyes. It sends a call to the *shephali* flowers to join the party. For whom is it lighting the lamp? On whose forehead does it put the beauty spot? Whose welcome is the star singing? The sky filled with joy; the dewy autumn morning is calling everyone.'

Song: dekho dekho shukotara ankhi mele chay....

The change of seasons was for the poet not a change in the external manifestations of nature only – each represented a phase, an insight into life which Rabindranath grasped intuitively. Writing at a later age, Tagore saw a close association between the rainy season and his childhood while autumn reigned supreme during his youth:

“The great difference that I see between the rainy season of my childhood and the autumn of my youth is that in the former it is outer nature which closely hemmed me in keeping me entertained with its numerous troupe, its variegated make-up, its medley of music; while the festivity which goes on in the shining light of autumn is in man himself. The play of clouds and sunshine is left in the background, while the murmurs of joy and sorrow occupy the mind. It is our gaze which gives to the blue of the autumn sky its wistful tinge and human yearning which gives poignancy to the breath of its breezes.”

The mesmerised poet gazes as the gentle pleasant wind fills the spotless white sails of a boat.

“While the boat brings rare treasures from some distant coast the heart longs to drift away. It wants to leave behind all striving and acquiring on this shore. O helmsman, who are you? Whose wealth of laughter and of sorrow so intensely overwhelms me? To what music will this instrument be tuned today, what incantations will be sung?”

Song: omolo dhobolo pale legeche

Autumn is a season of festivals; for the people living away from home for work, it is time for home-coming. With bouquets of *kash*, garlands of *shiuli*, crown of white lotus and paddy blossoms the nature welcomes the goddess of autumn. The season bejewelled with white clouds replenishes darkness with an all pervading light... light of hope, of merriment, of dreams and of life. The poet joins the goddess of the woods, *shephali* flower, the nightingale, and the *vina* in welcoming the goddess:

“You who enthrals me with your beauty, have come. The end of your dress of light and shadow covers all the woods, the nightingale gazes at your face, what hopes does he entertain!” He asks her to unveil her face to mankind: ‘remove with both your hands that little veil of clouds. Conch-shells are being blown at every door of the goddess of the woods for you. The song that welcomes you awakens in all the *vina*-strings of heaven. Where do I hear those golden anklets? Perhaps within my heart, where all emotions, every work, you’ve drowned in sweetness that would melt the hardest rock – you who enthrals me with your beauty!”

Song: amar noyono bhulano ele

Our last song this evening, although on autumn, pertains to the cycle of life and death revolving round the wings of time. The lustre and the brilliance of hope and joy symbolising autumn reflect, however, only one aspect of nature. Nature’s revenge can bring in decay and destruction. The pleasant dewy sunlight of the early autumn mornings makes

place for the cold wind announcing that winter, when nature has to lay bare all her jewellery, is not very far. The poet writes with a premonition:

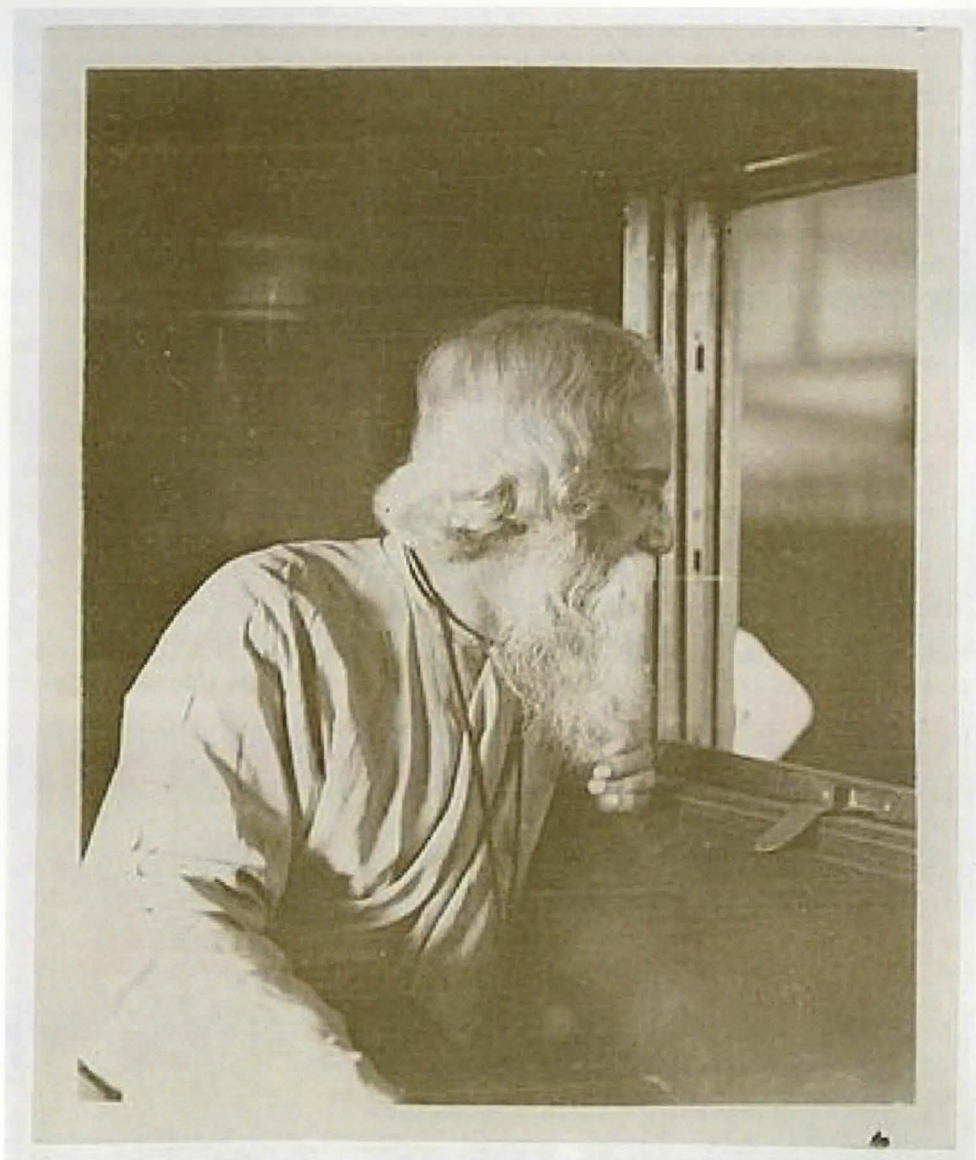
“whom do you lure with your enchanting beauty? I know that death is dancing, dancing at your feet! What flash of light is dancing in the autumnal sunlight? You with your wild hair brought thunderstorms. A gust of wind is coming – the ripe paddy feels fear, the full rice-fields tremble.’ The seer sees the omen and is anxious: ‘I know today your worship will end with a loud lament at the shore of the ocean of all tears.”

Song: tomar mohono rupe

Sources: Apurva Biswas *Riturange Rabindra Kavyamanas*, Kolkata: Dey’s Publishing, 1996; Amrit Sen, “Nature in Tagore’s poetry”; Rabindranath Tagore, *Gitabitan*; -, *Jibansmriti*

Photograph made by the Dutch musicologist Arnold Bake in Shantiniketan. VVIK Collection, UB Leiden.





Rabindranath Tagore in a train, Surabaya (Java).

Photograph courtesy KITLV collection, Leiden, no. 17.455.

Photos of Tagore's journey to Bali and Java

A selection of about 30 original photos of the KITLV collection which show Tagore himself, his company and the people he met in Bali and Java, are displayed in the demonstration room of the Special Collections department of the University Library. Other materials on display refer to the connection between Tagore and Frederik van Eeden (ca. 1913) and Tagore's visit to The Netherlands in 1920.

On 21 August 1927, Rabindranath Tagore landed in Batavia, where he was given a hearty welcome. This marked the start of his tour around Bali and Java which would last till 30 September, when he embarked again in Batavia. Tagore was invited to make this journey by a cultural society named the Kunstkring (Batavia) and the Java Institute, while the Dutch colonial government agreed, but kept in the background. On this tour Tagore was guided by a select company consisting of Suniti Kumar Chatterji (a linguist), the Dutchman Arnold Bake and his wife, an architect and an artist.

Tagore himself has written his memories which were published in Bengali and English (1927-1929). Chatterji too wrote a travel report in Bengali (1940) which was reprinted in a more extensive form in 1964. On the basis of these sources a reconstruction of the trip was made by a.o. A. Das Gupta (2002). For obvious reasons, the available Dutch documents were left aside.

Arnold and Corrie Bake, who stayed at Shantiniketan since 1925, were invited by Tagore to come along with him on this tour. After all, the Bake's spoke Dutch, the then official language of Java, and the couple was sent ahead by a month to arrange the details of the program. During the tour Arnold Bake made more than 300 photos, or rather "snap-shots" as he himself called them. These pictures were donated in 1989 to the Royal Netherlands Institute of Southeast Asian and Caribbean Studies (KITLV).

Dory Heilijgers

September 2011

Saturday 24 September, 2011

09:30—10:00 h Welcome with coffee/tea (*Venue* : Lipsius building, restaurant)

Tagore on Asia

Venue (for all academic sessions): Lipsius Building, Room 5

10:00—10:45 h Prof. dr. Imtiaz Ahmed (Dhaka University, Bangladesh)
Contemporarizing Tagore: Tapan Sinha's Kabuliwallah

10:45—11:15 h Coffee/tea break (*Venue* : Lipsius building, corridor)

11:15—12:00 h Prof. dr. Shigemi Inaga (International Research Center for Japanese Studies, Kyoto, Japan)
Rabindranath Tagore and Japan: around Hara Sankei, Yashiro Yukio & Yone Noguchi

12:15—13:45 h Lunch (for invitees and registered diners; lunch voucher required)
(*Venue* : Lipsius building, restaurant)

13:45—14:30 h Prof. dr. Nira Wickramasinghe (LIAS, Leiden Univ., The Netherlands)
Reading Tagore on Nationalism: Towards a Critique of Sri Lanka's New Patriotism

Tagore on Indian Society

14:30—15:15 h Prof. dr. Ananda Lal (Jadavpur University, Kolkata, India)
Contemporary Relevance of Tagorean Drama

15:15—15:45 h Coffee/tea break (*Venue* : Lipsius building, corridor)

15:45—16:30 h Dr. Victor van Bijlert (Free University, Amsterdam, The Netherlands)
Restating the Message of Buddha for Modern India: Tagore on Buddhism and its European Interpreters

16:30—17:00 h Discussion and summary

17:00—17:30h Drinks (*Venue*: Lipsius building, restaurant)

17:30—19:00 h **Cultural programme** (see page 20)
(*Venue*: Lipsius building, Room 11, Cleveringaplaats 1, Leiden)

19.30—21.30 h Dinner for invitees (others are welcome to join on their own behalf; please inform the organizers)

Imtiaz Ahmed

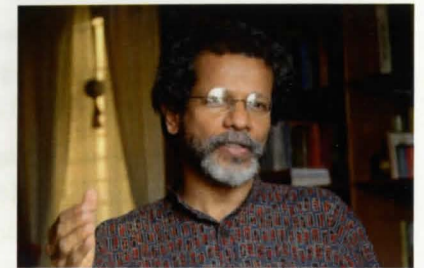
Contemporarizing Tagore: Tapan Sinha's Kabuliwallah

Following the terrible news of the killing of Surya-narayan, the 41-year old Indian engineer, at the hands of the Taliban, a person in the name of Bhamini posted the following blog on 30 April 2006:

We Indians have an innate, traditional distrust of Pakistan. But Afghanistan had always been this roomy-hearted, honour-bound Pathan who coaxed his way into little Mini's heart by telling her beguiling stories while tempting her with delicious dry-fruits from Kabul in Rabindranath Tagore's '*Kabuliwallah*'. The *Kabuliwallah* is dead. Long live the cowardly barbarian Taliban.

Reading the blog I could not help thinking as to what had prompted Rabindranath Tagore to write such a story in 1916 and depict the Afghans in the manner that he did, and no less inquisitively, what had prompted Tapan Sinha to film the story and place it before the general masses some 40 years later in 1956? The two periods were markedly different – colonial and post-colonial - yet one seems to have blended with the other. What were the circumstances that led Sinha to retell Tagore's *Kabuliwallah*, although I am certain that Bhamini would dismiss the Poet as well as the Film-maker as outdated unable to comprehend the things to come? But could that be the case? The paper will examine this in detail.

Imtiaz Ahmed is Professor of International Relations at the University of Dhaka. His areas of interest include international relationships, South Asian politics and political theory.



Shigemi Inaga

Rabindranath Tagore and Japan: around Hara Sankei, Yashiro Yukio & Yone Noguchi

The paper presents a brief overview of the poet's encounter with Japan. On the subject many studies have been conducted in Japan, but few of these are known outside Japan. The presentation firstly aims at communicating these outcomes to non-Japanese scholars. Tagore's first stay in Japan will be highlighted in connection with the Bengali Renaissance in Art. Tagore's later visit to Japan will also be treated in



contrast to the first stay. If time allows, a critical account on the Tagore-Noguchi controversies will also be discussed, based on recent discoveries of new first-hand materials and taking into account some critical interpretations proposed in recent scholarship.

Shigemi Inaga is professor at the International Research Center for Japanese Studies, Kyoto as well as at the Graduate University for Advanced Studies, Hayama. He focuses his scholarly interest on intercultural relations between Japan and the outside world, studying historical figures who contributed to the mutual exchanges between the East and the West.

Nira Wickramasinghe



Reading Tagore on Nationalism: Towards a Critique of Sri Lanka's New Patriotism

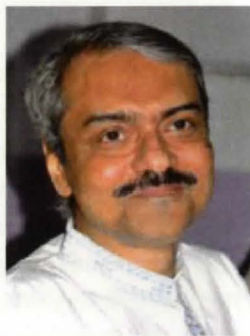
Can Tagore's thought on patriotism and nationalism distilled from his novels and essays be usefully invoked to understand the present predicament of Sri Lanka's post civil war patriotic state, a state torn between a desire to be modern and a fear of losing control of its citizens in an increasingly globalised world? This paper will first briefly consider Tagore's visits to Lanka stressing the way he eluded touching upon purely political issues; it will then discuss Tagore's critique of patriotism relating it to Sri Lanka's own reincarnation as a patriotic state after it crushed the Tamil rebellion in the North and East in 2009; and finally will briefly reflect on the relevance of Tagore's ideas on patriotism and the nation in a wider political theory perspective.

Nira Wickramasinghe is a historian for modern South Asia. Her primary interests are identity politics, everyday life under colonialism and the relationship between state and society in modern South Asia. She holds the chair for Modern South Asian Studies at Leiden University.

Ananda Lal

Contemporary Relevance of Tagorean Drama

The general perception that Tagore wrote dense symbolical plays has frightened Western theatre workers from attempting them and critics from appreciating them. True, he did not compose much realistic drama, but he is not any more difficult to follow than, say, Strindberg. Besides, the opening-up of post-



modern performance has given contemporary directors enough approaches and techniques to interpret Tagore. This paper looks at the Tagore plays that remain highly relevant to audiences in the West today.

Ananda Lal specializes in Tagore, theatre and translation, but also teaches dramatic literature and popular music. His books include *Rabindranath Tagore: Three Plays* (1987, 2nd ed. 2001) and *The Oxford Companion to Indian Theatre* (2004). He has compiled Tagore's own recordings on CD, entitled *The Voice of Rabindranath Tagore* (1997). He directs university theatre productions and now heads Writers Workshop, the pioneering publisher of Indian writing in English.

Victor van Bijlert

Restating the message of Buddha for modern India: Tagore on Buddhism and its European interpreters.

As a member of the Hindu reform movement of the Brahmo Samaj, Tagore professed a liberal, non-sectarian, monotheistic religion based on the *Upanishads*. However, these ancient Hindu texts were not Tagore's only sources of inspiration. Already at an early age Tagore had discovered in ancient Buddhist traditions moral values that he found nowhere else. To Tagore, Buddha was the most prominent Indian moral teacher, not in the least because his message had spread all over Asia.

In order to raise the moral consciousness of his Indian contemporaries Tagore wove Buddhist themes into some of his symbolist plays, in narrative poems and in many lectures both in Bengali and in English. Tagore regarded the message of the Buddha as a religion of moral consciousness and love. But over the years that he familiarized himself more and more with the scriptural sources of Buddhism, Tagore became aware of what he regarded as the one-sidedness of the way in which mostly European scholars on Buddhism presented the Buddha's message on the basis of texts only. Although not a Buddhist scholar, Tagore was keenly aware of what it takes to spread a spiritual message like Buddhism and that to many countries outside the Indian '*Kulturkreis*'. This paper will show what Tagore regarded as the core message of Buddhism and how in his critique of western scholarship on Buddhism he foreshadows present-day postcolonial and anti-orientalist debates on western buddhological scholarship.

Victor van Bijlert (*1955) studied Indology at Leiden with PhD in 1987 on Buddhist philosophy. Is involved since the 1980s in interreligious dialogue between Hinduism and Christianity in the Netherlands and India. Translated philosophical texts from Sans-



krit into English and Tagore's poetry and plays from Bengali into Dutch. Taught Indian history and culture at Leiden University, and Indian values at the IIM Calcutta. Presently lecturer for Indian religions at the Free University Amsterdam.



Cultural programme (24.9)

Songs by Tagore—a musical performance

Three musicians (a singer, a violonist and a guitarist) from the **Music School of Braine l'Alleud, Brussels**, will play two songs written and composed by Tagore. The words of the two songs will be translations into French. The performance has been made possible by the director, Mr. Thierry de Macq.

The title of the two songs (in Bengali, English and French) :

- 'tomar holo shuru', Your life has begun – A l'aube de ta vie.
- 'din guli guli mor shonar', The shadow birds – Oiseaux fantômes

The performing musicians are: Thomas Vanin, guitar (teacher), Céline Daoust, violin (student) and Ysabelle Rase, singing (student).

Kathak dance performance 'Children of Tagore'

Mrs. Sharmini Tharmaratnam dances a special Kathak dance performance in honor of Rabindranath Tagore. She will perform traditional Tagore songs; two items recorded, some possibly performed live with a singer.

- Tarana on the love of Radha and Krishna
- poem *The River*
- Rhythmic item of Tabla
- poem *The clouds*
- poem *The paper boats*
- poem *Baby's way*



Sharmini Tharmaratnam, who graduated from the Academy of Arts in Conceptual Art, Groningen, Holland, is a Sri Lankan-Dutch dancer who studied Kathak, a classical Indian dance form, in New Delhi. She specialized in the Jaipur Gharana (style) under the guidance of Pandit Rajendra Gangani. 17 years ago, she started to perform with Indian dance styles, also internationally. She shifted from Flamenco-Bharata natyam fusions towards the Kathak-Flamenco shows and her Kathak solos, and nowadays yoga and contemporary dance techniques are introduced in her artistic line of work.



De Vereniging van Vrienden van het Instituut Kern

De Vereniging Vrienden van het Instituut Kern (VVIK) bevordert de studies van Zuid-Azië, speciaal India, en Tibet. Ze doet dit door het organiseren van lezingen en excursies, het verstrekken van subsidies voor bijvoorbeeld studiereizen, het ondersteunen van de zorg voor haar bibliotheekcollecties, en het uitgeven van een *Nieuwsbrief* en andere publicaties. Ze werkt nauw samen met de opleiding Zuid- en Zuidoost-Azië Studies van de Universiteit Leiden.

De VVIK werd, onder voorzitterschap van **Prof. J.Ph. Vogel**, in 1924 opgericht. Een van haar hoofddoelen was het stichten van een instituut voor de bestudering van de kunstgeschiedenis en archeologie van Zuid- en Zuidoost-Azië aan de (Rijks)Universiteit Leiden. Dit Instituut werd vernoemd naar **Hendrik Kern** — de eerste hoogleraar voor het Sanskrit in Leiden — en opende de deuren op 4 april 1925.

In de loop van de 20ste eeuw ontwikkelde het Instituut Kern zich tot een instelling voor India en Tibet studies in de breedste zin. Dit hing direct samen met de steeds nauwere samenwerking met de Universiteit Leiden. Deze samenwerking resulteerde in 1960 in een overeenkomst, waarbij de vereniging het beheer van haar collecties aan de universiteit overdroeg. Hoewel binnen de Universiteit Leiden in de tachtiger jaren alle instituten als bestuursseenheid zijn opgeheven, is het Instituut Kern in naam blijven bestaan. Momenteel is dit instituut het nationale expertisecentrum voor Zuid-Azië en de Himalaya, meer in het bijzonder India en Pakistan, Tibet en Nepal, Bangladesh en Bhutan, Sri Lanka en de Malediven.

De VVIK bleef naast de opleiding, en onafhankelijk daarvan, bestaan. Op dit moment telt ze circa 120 leden, zowel binnen als buiten universitaire kring. Deze voelen zich verbonden door hun betrokkenheid bij de India en Tibet studies.

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We are also thankful to the dancers, singers, musicians and reciters, who brought their creativity to honor the great poet.

The help of the students of the Tagore Special Assistants (TSA)-team and VVIK members was also essential for organizing the event.

The board of the VVIK,

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