

## Rabindranath Tagore

Rabindranath Thakur FRAS anglicised as Rabindranath Tagore (7 May 1861 – 7 August 1941) was an Indian Bengali polymath who worked as a poet, writer, playwright, composer, philosopher, social reformer, and painter of the Bengal Renaissance. He reshaped Bengali literature and music as well as Indian art with Contextual Modernism in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, he is the author of the "profoundly sensitive, fresh and beautiful" poetry of Gitanjali. In 1913, Tagore became the first non-European to win a Nobel Prize in any category, and also the first lyricist to win the Nobel Prize in Literature. Tagore's poetic songs were viewed as spiritual and mercurial; where his elegant prose and magical poetry were widely popular in the Indian subcontinent. He was a fellow of the Royal Asiatic Society. Referred to as "the Bard of Bengal", Tagore was known by the sobriquets Gurudev, Kobiguru, and Biswokobi.

A Bengali Brahmin from Calcutta with ancestral gentry roots in Burdwan district and Jessore, Tagore wrote poetry as an eight-year-old. At the age of sixteen, he released his first substantial poems under the pseudonym Bhānusiṃha ("Sun Lion"), which were seized upon by literary authorities as long-lost classics. By 1877 he graduated to his first short stories and dramas, published under his real name. As a humanist, universalist, internationalist, and ardent critic of nationalism, 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; his legacy also endures in his founding of Visva-Bharati University.

Tagore modernized Bengali art by spurning rigid classical forms and resisting linguistic strictures. His novels, stories, songs, dance dramas, and essays spoke to topics political and personal. Gitanjali (Song Offerings), Gora (Fair-Faced), and Ghare-Baire (The Home and the World) are his best-known works, and his verse, short stories, and novels were acclaimed - or panned—for their lyricism, colloquialism, naturalism, and unnatural contemplation. His compositions were chosen by two nations as national anthems: India's "Jana Gana Mana" and Bangladesh's "Amar Shonar Bangla". The Sri Lankan national anthem was also inspired by his work. His song "Banglar Mati Banglar Jol" has been adopted as the state anthem of West Bengal.

Known mostly for his poetry, Tagore wrote novels, essays, short stories, travelogues, dramas, and thousands of songs. Of Tagore's prose, his short stories are perhaps the most highly regarded; he is indeed credited with originating the Bengali-language version of the genre. 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 Jatrir Patro* (*Letters from Europe*) and *Manusher Dhormo* (*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 (titled *Kalanukromik Rabindra Rachanabali*) 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. 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.