

Editorial

In a conversation with Romain Rolland Rabindranath Tagore had once commented:

It is curious to note how India furnished probably the first internationally minded man of the nineteenth century. I mean Rammohun Roy; he had a passion for truth ... He realised that a bond of spiritual unity links the whole of mankind and that it is the purpose of religion to reach down to the fundamental unity of human relationship, of human efforts and achievements.

The words seem apt for Tagore himself—visionary thinker, creative genius and one of the makers of the modern consciousness, as we evaluate him on the occasion of his 150th birth anniversary in our online journal *Rupkatha*.

Tagore's thought and poetry had been fascinated with the issue of the border; national, social and cultural, that had separated human beings from each other. Against this, he had set categories of reason, love and aesthetics that could successfully bypass the rigidities of segregation. Alert to the inhumanity of colonial practices in India, Tagore had nevertheless been vigilant about indigenous practices that foiled India's bid for modernity—problems of religious intolerance, caste and dogma. Many of these problems continue to haunt us even today and it becomes imperative to return to Tagore's writings to analyse these problems and find a way out.

Could Tagore have envisaged the technological turn that would open up the virtual world to a borderless, seamless zone of knowledge, where there could be a free exchange of ideas? After all he had been a cosmopolitan thinker, one whose university sought to create a space that could give free play to a dialogue between cultures. Alert to the misuse of technology, he had nevertheless glimpsed a possibility of science to mitigate human suffering and offer a world where the domain of knowledge was free and equal. Tagore's international space had been a celebration of the human—ethical, free and democratic. How relevant are these ideas in the context of the praxis of globalization? It is probably apt that we go online in a journal of free access to test these ideas out.

The ecological crisis that threatens to overwhelm mankind is an issue that had been close to Tagore's consciousness; he had advocated a closer and interdependent relationship with the ecosystem rather than evaluating it purely as a resource for human beings. His educational ideals had brought together various possibilities where the international, the social, the traditional and the ecological could be united within an overarching spirit of joy and aesthetics. For Tagore, human existence was a testament to the joyous and creative spirit within the universe and every single detail of life was touched with his creative genius. Tagore moved effortlessly across genres and the various art forms, creating a

creative output that never ceases to amaze us in terms of its aesthetic genius and the density of its ideas.

The present volume seeks to locate Tagore's multifaceted genius within contemporary contexts. It offers new translations of Tagore and analysis of his encounters with various personalities, explores his ideas on nation, society, gender and aesthetics. The lists of contributors include individuals from all across the globe and various disciplines. The book reviews alert readers to recent research and publications on Tagore.

The overwhelming response to this issue remains a testament to the popularity of Tagore's ideas and works. We remain grateful to contributors and reviewers who have made this issue possible. Within its modest resources, *Rupkatha* has aspired to create a space where knowledge is free and mutually exchanged. We do hope that the debates and issues that are raised in this volume will contribute to the renewed analysis of the ideas of a creative genius who inspires our aspirations.

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