

Tagore Jayanti
Lund International Tagore Choir
7 May 2023

REMARKS
Ambassador Tanmaya Lal

Namaskar everyone,

Lars Eklund

My friend and colleague Ambassador of Bangladesh Mr. Mehdi Hassan

Professor Wessler

Distinguished academics

Ladies & Gentlemen

I would like to thank the Lund International Tagore Choir for organizing today's programme and concert in memory of Rabindranath Tagore and for inviting me to join.

It is indeed very special to celebrate Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore's enduring legacy, his multitalented personality and numerous accomplishments on his birth anniversary here in Sweden, where he became the first Asian to be awarded the Nobel Prize in 1913 and received the global recognition that he deserved.

Tagore visited Sweden after the First World War in 1921, delivering his Nobel lecture in Stockholm and then traveling to Uppsala, where he received a rousing reception.

Sixty years later, in 1973 Sweden issued a special postage stamp commemorating Tagore's Nobel Prize. A hundred years after the award of Nobel Prize, a bust of Tagore was installed in Uppsala University ten years ago in 2013 to commemorate his legacy and link with Sweden.

Rabindranath Tagore remains an inspirational figure and an international icon.

His compositions are celebrated every day across the world, and especially in India and Bangladesh not the least through their national anthems which are his compositions.

Tagore was a sensitive, versatile and a prolific poet, author and an artist.

He was also a great philosopher, reformer, and thinker.

He lived in interesting times both for India and for the entire world.

Many parts of the world were facing conflicts. Political change was sweeping Europe and Asia. Europe was also in flux economically, socially and economically. There was a huge upheaval going on.

Large parts of the world, including India, were not independent and were under subjugation by European colonial powers. They were witnessing reform and freedom struggles.

India had already begun to stir.

Social reform and national freedom struggle had commenced. A literary revolution had also begun.

Tagore was born just years after the first war of independence of 1857.

He was born in an illustrious and affluent family in Bengal.

His father was a leader of the rationalist religious reform movement the Brahmo Samaj. Rabindranath from an early stage, absorbed multiple influences and cultural traditions.

Tagore drew inspiration from Indian classical & folk music heritage, and the works of devotional poets. His writings have allusions to the Upanishads, Buddhism, the songs of Baul folksingers and many other elements.

Tagore was influenced by his times and also made an impact on leading thinkers and common people alike.

Tagore was a humanist and a universalist.

He laid great emphasis on individual freedom in terms of self-empowerment. His stories were about individual choice in specific settings and circumstances. Especially of women. He also believed that individual freedom and expression were drivers of social change.

One of the stalwarts of his time, he interacted with other prominent Indian leaders as the freedom struggle went ahead. Their ideas and vision did not always match, but mutual respect did.

Tagore did not live to see independent India. He was born only a few years after what is considered the first War of independence of 1857. He passed away only six years before India became an independent nation in 1947.

However, two of his compositions became inspirations to be adopted as national anthems when India and later Bangladesh became independent.

Rabindranath Tagore travelled the world and engaged with iconic figures across countries and fields such as political leaders, philosophers, reformers, scientists, and poets.

For instance, Albert Einstein and George Bernard Shaw, and Gandhi within India among many others.

He remains an international icon.

This is a special year for India and Sweden Sambandh as we celebrate 75 years of our diplomatic relations. Our ties, as for instance symbolized by Rabindranath Tagore go much further back.

It is wonderful to know about the Lund International Tagore Choir that was founded more than a decade ago and to know that it draws artistes from both Sweden and South Asia.

Once again may I thank you for this invitation and complement you for putting together this programme.

I regret that I am not in a position to travel to Lund today but look forward to joining you in person in near future.

My compliments and best wishes to all of you.

Thank You.