

DEOMEL, Visva-Bharati **Call for Papers**: Rabindranath Tagore and Cosmopolitanism

The Department of English and Other Modern European Languages (DEOMEL), Visva-Bharati, feels privileged to announce an International Conference on 'Rabindranath Tagore and Cosmopolitanism,' to be organized in Santiniketan during 27-28 February 2017 under the UGC DRS SAP Phase II Scheme awarded to the Department to facilitate research on 'Rabindranath Tagore: East West Confluence.'

Cosmopolitanism, with reference to Diogenes of Sinope in ancient Greece, posits the individual as a citizen of the world [*kosmopolites*], and implies that the whole world represents a single community. Issues of citizenship, patriotism and allegiance to a particular country notwithstanding, cosmopolitanism suggests a range of political, moral and cultural values that culminate in notions of world peace/cooperation and universal human rights. From long before Kant to Martha Nussbaum and beyond, cosmopolitanism has been variously and critically explored. It has been criticized for claiming to love everyone and thereby loving no one, by Rousseau. Travel is considered necessary by many cosmopolitans but critics have tried to decry it for fostering a restless and rootless existence. Paradoxically, Capitalism, and then, globalization, on the one hand, and Marxism with its vision of a universal classless society, on the other, have provided ideas akin to a universal citizenship, though in very different ways. Yet, the feasibility, possibility and even desirability of cosmopolitanism have been questioned repeatedly, especially in the name of nationalism. However, cultural cosmopolitanism continues to encourage diversity and seeks to transcend obligations based solely on ethnic identity or nationality. In India, the Upanishads declared the lofty ideal of 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam' (usually translated from Sanskrit as 'the world is one family') and the Indian Parliament literally enshrines it.

Rabindranath Tagore (1861- 1941) celebrated, in his life and work, a whole range of sources, travel across continents, experiences and experiments, and became our 'world poet.' In *Rabindranath Tagore: A Biography*, Krishna Kripalani named a chapter "A World Citizen" to describe his life since 1913, not merely for being "world-famous" but for the friendships he garnered worldwide, along with a broadening of humanist sympathies, as "Tagore made the world's destiny his own and felt deeply the agony if there was suffering or injustice in any part of the world" (p.267). In Tagore's elucidation of *sahitya* as emerging from *sahit* ('to be with'), and choice of "Yatra Visvam Bhavatyekanidam" ('Where the whole world makes a home in a single nest') as the motto of Visva-Bharati, his life's work emerges as an unusual interplay of centrifugal and centripetal forces.

The proposed Conference intends to focus on the nuances of 'Tagore and Cosmopolitanism' in as many ways as possible.

Remembering the century-old (yet perpetually pertinent) publication of Tagore's *Nationalism*, a single session of the Conference will be dedicated to the subject.

This 'Call for Papers' is for any scholar intending to submit an abstract of 350 words on either 'Tagore and Cosmopolitanism' or 'Tagore and *Nationalism*' within 13 February 2017 by email to Debarati Bandyopadhyay [abdebarati@gmail.com] along with a brief bio-note and contact details. Only selected paper presenters will be informed by email.

Debarati Bandyopadhyay

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प्रधान / Head
अंग्रेजी और अन्य आधुनिक यूरोपीय भाषा विभाग
Department of English & Other Modern European Languages
विश्वभारती, सान्तिनिकेतन / Visva-Bharati, Santiniketan

Co-ordinator
DRS (SAP)
Department of English & Other
Modern European Languages
Visva-Bharati, Santiniketan

प्रधान / Principal
भाषा भवन / Bhasha-Bhavana
विश्वभारती / Visva-Bharati
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