

## Rabindranath Tagore

**Born** May 7 1861  
**Died** August 7 1941

**Biography** Rabindranath Tagore was a world-famous writer and thinker, a painter and an educationalist, who introduced new forms of literature into Indian literature. He was also the first non-European to receive Nobel Prize for Literature and is the only Indian to have received it. Tagore was born into an illustrious Calcutta family of cultural and religious reformers. He was sent to England for a year of studies and returned to Calcutta, where he published his first books of poetry in the 1880s. At the age of 30, he became the manager of his family's estate in rural east Bengal, where he stayed for 10 years, absorbing the life of the countryside and its people, which made a profound impact on him. His next project was to establish an experimental school called Shantiniketan, which combined the best of western thinking and Indian values. He suffered the loss of his wife and two children in the early years of the twentieth century. He received the Nobel Prize in 1913, after which he undertook long lecture tours of India, Europe and America. He was awarded a knighthood in 1915 but returned it in 1919 in response to the massacre of innocent protestors in Amritsar. During the last decades of his long life, Tagore turned to painting and spiritualism, although he continued to write essays, drama, fiction and poetry. His final years were spent in physical pain, and he was in a coma for more than a year. Tagore was a cross-over figure in Indian literature and culture, a deeply traditional and religious man who nevertheless pioneered modern ways of writing, thinking and living. Although his novels remain the least respected of his prodigious literary output, perhaps of their somewhat rambling plots and lack of tension, they are moving portraits of individuals caught up in the dramatic political and social causes of the 1920s and 1930s.

**Achievements** Tagore received the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1913 and was given a knighthood by King George V in 1915. Perhaps his greatest achievement was the experimental school at Shantiniketan, which is now a major university. He also wrote the words and the music for a song (Jana mana) that became the national anthem and is sung every morning by children all across India.

### Works (a list of his major works)

#### Poetry

*Bhānusimha Thākurer Paḍāvalī* (*Songs of Bhānusimha Thākurer*)  
*Sonar Tari* (*The Golden Boat*)  
*Gitanjali* (*Song Offerings*)  
*Gitimalya* (*Wreath of Songs*)  
*Balaka* (*The Flight of Cranes*)

#### Dramas

*Valmiki-Pratibha* (*The Genius of Valmiki*)  
*Visarjan* (*The Sacrifice*)  
*Raja* (*The King of the Dark Chamber*)  
*Dak Ghar* (*The Post Office*)  
*Achalayatan* (*The Immovable*)  
*Muktadhara* (*The Waterfall*)  
*Raktakaravi* (*Red Oleanders*)

#### Novels

*Nastanirh* (*The Broken Nest*)  
*Gora* (*Fair-Faced*)  
*Ghare Baire* (*The Home and the World*)  
*Yogayog* (*Crosscurrents*)

