



# Rabindranath Tagore

## Why in News?

The Prime Minister on 9<sup>th</sup> May, 2022 paid tribute to Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore on his birth anniversary.

- According to the Bengali calendar, the Tagore Jayanti falls on the 25<sup>th</sup> day of the Boishakh month.



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### Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941)

- First Indian and first non-European to achieve the **Nobel Prize in Literature in 1913** for his exceptional work, **Gitanjali**. Responsible for modernising **Bengali prose and poetry**.
- Gave the **national anthems of India and Bangladesh**: the **Jana Gana Mana** and the **Amar Shonar Bangla**.
- “**Jana Gana Mana**” was **translated by him from Bengali to English in February 1919** at Madanapalle in the District of Chittoor (Andhra Pradesh).
- In 1915, he was **awarded the knighthood** by British King George V which he later **renounced in 1919**, to protest against the Jallianwalla Bagh massacre.
- He is said to have given Mahatma Gandhi the title of Mahatma.
- Established the **Vishwa-Bharati University** in 1921.
- Spoke at the **World Parliament for Religions** in the years 1929 and 1937.

*“You can’t cross the sea merely by standing and staring at the sea.”*



## What do we know about Rabindranath Tagore?

- **Birth:**
  - He was born in **Calcutta on 7<sup>th</sup> May 1861**.
- **About:**
  - He was also referred to as **‘Gurudev’, ‘Kabiguru’, and ‘Biswakabi’**.
  - He is regarded as the outstanding creative artist of modern India and hailed by W.B Yeats, Rabindranath Tagore was a **Bengali poet, novelist, and painter**, who was highly influential in introducing Indian culture to the west.
  - He was an exceptional **literary figure and a renowned polymath** who singlehandedly reshaped the region's literature and music.
  - He was a **good friend of Mahatma Gandhi** and is said to have **given him the title of Mahatma**.
  - He had always stressed that **unity in diversity** is the only possible way for India’s national integration.
  - He had spoken at the **World Parliament for Religions in the years 1929 and 1937**.
- **Contributions:**
  - He is said to have **composed over 2000 songs** and his songs and music are called **‘Rabindra Sangeet’** with its own distinct lyrical and fluid style.
  - He is responsible for modernising Bengali prose and poetry. His notable works include **Gitanjali, Ghare-Baire, Gora, Manasi, Balaka, Sonar Tori**, He is also remembered for his song **‘Ekla Chalo Re’**.

- He published his first poems aged 16 under the pen-name '**Bhanusimha**'.
- He not only gave the **national anthems for two countries, India and Bangladesh**, but also **inspired a Ceylonese student of his, to pen and compose the national anthem of Sri Lanka**.
- Besides all his literary achievements he was also a philosopher and educationist who in **1921 established the Vishwa-Bharati University**, a university that challenged conventional education.
- **Awards:**
  - In **1913** he was awarded the [Nobel Prize in Literature](#) for his work on Gitanjali.
    - He was the **first non-European** to receive the Nobel Prize.
  - In 1915 he was awarded **knighthood** by the British King George V. In 1919, following the [Jallianwalla Bagh massacre](#), he renounced his Knighthood.
- **Death:**
  - He died on **7th August 1941 in Calcutta**.
- **Quotes by him:**
  - "You can't cross the sea merely by standing and staring at the sea."
  - "Don't limit the child to your own learning, for he was born in another time."
  - "If I can't make it through one door, I'll go through another door- or I'll make a door. Something terrific will come no matter how dark the present."
  - "Facts are many, but the truth is one".

## UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Questions

**Q. With reference to Madanapalle of Andhra Pradesh, which one of the following statements is correct?**

- (a) Pingali Venkayya designed the tricolour Indian National Flag here.
- (b) Pattabhi Sitaramaiah led the Quit India Movement of Andhra region from here.
- (c) Rabindranath Tagore translated the National Anthem from Bengali to English here.
- (d) Madame Blavatsky and Colonel Olcott set up headquarters of Theosophical Society first here.

**Ans: (c)**

- The original song 'Jana Gana Mana' (National Anthem) was written in Bengali, but in a Sanskritized dialect known as Sadhu Bhasha.
- The idea of translating the song from Bengali to English came to Rabindranath Tagore while he was visiting the Besant Theosophical College on the invitation of Irish poet James H. Cousins. He penned down the English translation during his stay at Madanapalle, a small town in the Chittoor district of Andhra Pradesh.
- Jana Gana Mana was officially proclaimed as India's National Anthem by the Constituent Assembly of India on 24th January 24, 1950.
- **Therefore, option (c) is the correct answer.**

[Source:PIB](#)