INTRODUCTION

The Centennial of Tagore’s birthday (1861–1961) spans an epic of great change, of new developments in the relationships between different civilizations and cultures. In spite of two major wars and many grievous disturbances, it bears witness to an increasing understanding and growth in the broad field of human ideas. Tagore’s own writings as a poet, traveler, diarist, short story writer, novelist, and a commentator on international affairs came out of the ferment of the modern age while they helped to shape the course of literature in Asia and the West and deepened its resources.

Tagore’s creative power, and the impact of his spiritual personality, however, had been dimly assessed outside Bengal and India. Primarily this is owing to the linguistic barrier, but one of the major reasons is that his writings, even in Bengali, and especially in English translations, were not brought into focus by any clear arrangement of materials or by the careful editing needed for an expression of his many-sided genius in a single frame of reference.

This anthology is intended to offer a fairly comprehensive view of Tagore’s contribution to our times—actually it transcends any temporal standards—even though the scientific writings, intricate discussions on language and poetics, and other aspects of his thought intimately associated with local lore and color could not be represented. We remember also that no literary compilation can deal with him as a composer who blended classical Indian melodies with original modes, or as a painter whose lines and colors defy the craftsmanship of words. His great center of education and culture, Visva-
Bharati, has to be visited in order that its unique offerings to an international world can be appraised. And yet the editor has attempted, through his knowledge of Tagore, stretching over several decades, to provide glimpses of these and other essential features of his creative expression in Tagore's own words. Having traveled with him in many parts of the world, and thus had the opportunity to study the richness of his mind, the editor has a special responsibility which this edition of Tagore's writings seeks in some measure to fulfill. This volume is not a collection of Tagore's writings, nor does it attempt to be a bibliography; rather it is a selection, and the process followed in culling from the abundance of Tagore's genius a manageable amount of significant material has simply been a careful weighing on the tenuous scales of rich quality and available space.

Where Tagore made his own translations into English the material has sometimes been cut and selected, but otherwise left inviolate; where others' translations have been included, certain changes have been made for reasons of orthography, meaning, and accuracy. Some of the colloquial phrases and epigrams or puns which are not translatable have been omitted. Fidelity to the accuracy and strength of the original text has been the guiding principle.

Except for a few cases where topical considerations were more important, the material in each section has been arranged chronologically. Special procedures peculiar to an individual section have been noted in the introduction to it. American spelling has been maintained throughout, and authorial spelling of place names has been retained.

The individual introductions include relevant information concerning the context in which the original material was written, brief discussions of the contents of the section, and facts concerning translations and publication. Further clarification of names and events and emendations of the texts are provided in the notes at the back of the book. Bengali words whose meanings are not self-evident in the text of the material have been defined in the glossary.

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Where the mind is without fear
and the head is held high,
where knowledge is free;
where the world has not been broken
up into fragments by narrow domestic
walls;
where words come out from the
depth of truth;
whereJacob Striving
stretches its arms towards
perfection;
where the clear stream of reason
has not lost its way into the
drear
desert sand of dead habit;
where the mind is led forward
by thee into ever-widening
thought and action—
into that heaven of freedom,
my Father,
let my country awake.

Sentinikoton

Rabindranath Tagore