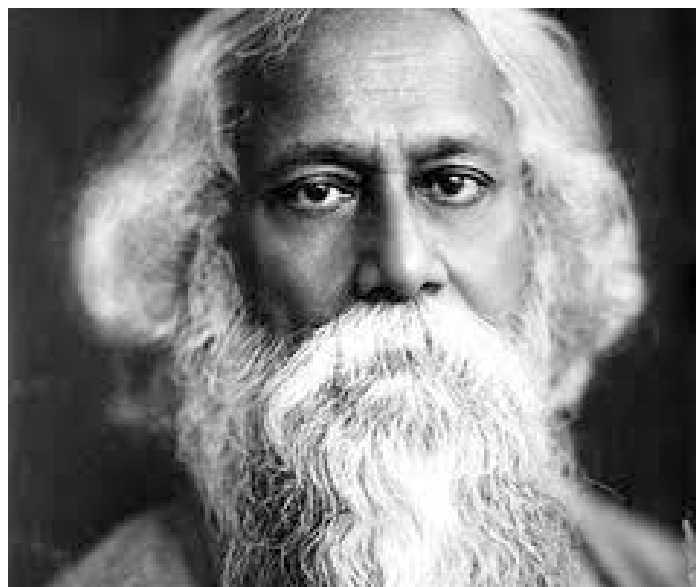




Storylines and Songscares: Celebrating Tagore's short stories



Wednesday 16 February 2011, 6.30pm
Sheikh Zayed Theatre

Presented by BAITHANK UK and supported by The Nehru Centre, Orbit Property Management Ltd, HT & Co Drinks Ltd, Hoesh International Ltd and Alan and Linda Westall.



The Nehru Centre



STORYLINES AND SONGSCAPES Ideator and Translator Note: **Sangeeta Datta**

Rabindranath Tagore introduced short stories as a literary genre in Bengali literature. Most of these were written or drawn from his experiences when he was sent to supervise the Tagore family estates in rural East Bengal (now Bangladesh). He spent many months in a house boat on the river Padma and visited villages, met the village folk, saw the beauty of the land and riverscape, heard the songs of the baul and the boatman and loved the changing colours of the season. The modernity of the form offers slice of life narratives in which a myriad complex locations, settings, characters and complex, unresolved relationships shine like little crystals. The short span of the stories offer an image or emotion forcefully to the reader which resonates deeply for a long time after the reading experience. The stories, anthologized in *Galpaguccha*, claim a place in world literature besides the classics of Chekov, Maupassant and O'Henry.

Who can forget the little orphan girl Ratan in *Postoffice*? Or the tomboy Mrinalini who transforms into a passionate woman in *Samapti*? How moving is the unlikely friendship between Mini and the migrant Afghan from Kabul? Or Mrinal who steps out of her husband's home, never to return? Tagore's fictional world is populated with memorable characters, fleeting meetings and partings, irony and dramatic turns. They bring laughter and tears, offer deep insights into human nature and the philosophy behind Life.

I have selected four stories from my English translations which will be read this evening. *Postoffice*, *The End (Samapti)*, *Kabuliwala* and *Streer Patra (The Wife's Letter)*. All these stories have been freely adapted into films by Satyajit Ray, Tapan Sinha, Bimal Roy and Purnendu Patree. I have made a more recent adaptation in a short film on *The Wife's Letter*. The theatrical and cinematic scope of the stories is apparent as is the lyrical link with Tagore's poems and songs.

In my translations I have been true to the original stories, struggled against some Bengali expressions and idioms which are untranslatable, retained some original words and terms which is part of the translation process.

The purpose of this project is to offer to a larger audience the beauty of Tagore's stories, to celebrate the art of story telling and live reading, to capture the appropriate moods through songs and illustrate the filmmakers' approach through film excerpts. I hope the audience will enjoy the connections between the spoken word, song and visual image- engaging all our senses as we do when we read the short story.

I am deeply grateful to LSE Literary Festival for opening with a tribute to Tagore, to Dr. Mukulika Banerjee for proposing this project and to Louise Gaskell for being such a wonderful co-ordinator. My thanks to all the artistes of the evening and I am particularly pleased that LSE faculty members are involved in this production. Storylines and Songscapes has been produced in India on a large scale. I am indeed very pleased to present the London edition this evening.

Readings in English

Postmaster by Charlie Henniker

Samapti (The Conclusion) by Mukulika Banerjee

Kabuliwalah by Anshuman Biswas

The Wife's Letter (Streer Patra) dance-film by Sangeeta Datta
featuring Prarthana Purkayastha

Songs

Sangeeta Datta, Sahana Bajpaie, Rishi Banerjee

Dance

Prarthana Purkayastha

Musicians

Soumik Datta Sarod

Tirthankar Roy Esraj

Alex Housego Flute

Sujit Mukherjee Tabla

Film Excerpts

Teen Kanya (dir. Satyajit Ray)

Kabuliwalah (dir. Tapan Sinha)

Streer Patra (dir. Purnendu Patree)

The Wife's Letter (dir. Sangeeta Datta)

This is event forms part of
LSE Space for Thought Literary Festival 2011: Crossing Borders
taking place from Wednesday 16- Saturday 19 February

www.lse.ac.uk/spaceforthought