Rabindranath Tagore was born on May 7th, 1861 in Jorasanko in Kolkata. His voluminous corpus of written works—fiction, essays, poetry, plays, critical commentaries, songs—is well known to specialists of literature, politics, music, art, and history. He is the only person whose songs are the national anthems of two countries, India and Bangladesh, respectively. Translated into many languages, Tagore’s works received much adulation and criticism during his lifetime and after across India and abroad. Tagore is also a critical figure in the history of education in South Asia. His University, Visva-Bharati, was exemplary in forging new directions in humanistic learning and instruction. During his lifetime, Tagore traveled widely in Europe, Central and East Asia, Latin America, and North America. Many readers reviled Tagore as being too romantic, or as a quiet and sane Oriental. Yet, his rejection of knighthood conferred upon him by the British after the Jallianwala Bagh massacre and his voluminous writings on nationalism stand out as emphatic statements of anti-colonialism. An anti-colonial nationalist or a strident critic of a violent hyper nationalism; an extraordinary spokesperson for an “Asian” civilization or a cosmopolitan thinker whose works were rooted in a unique reading of India’s classical past—is it possible to slot Rabindranath Tagore into any of these categories? The Many Worlds of Rabindranath Tagore, a two-day conference at the University of Chicago brings together leading scholars from around the world to discuss the different aspects of this extraordinary writer’s life and works.
THURSDAY, OCTOBER 27, 2011

9.00 AM - 9.30 AM
Welcome address:
David A. Greene, Executive Vice-President of the
University of Chicago
Opening remarks:
Mukta Datta Tomar, Consul-General of India in
Chicago

9.30 AM - 10.45 AM
Inaugural lecture
introduced by Wendy Doniger:
Martha Nussbaum,
‘Tagore’s Religion of Humanity’

Tea break

11.00 AM - 1:00 PM
Chair: Muzaffar Alam
Kunal Chakrabarti
‘History in the Proper Sense of the Term’: Rabindranath
Tagore on the Representations of India’s past

Udaya Kumar
‘Conditions of Reception:
Rabindranath Tagore in Kerala’

Lunch

2.00 PM - 4.00 PM
Chair: Gary Tubb
France Bhattacharya
‘Rabindranath Tagore and his French Friends:
Early Enthusiasm and Late Misunderstandings’

Yin Xi’nan
‘Tagore’s Multifarious Receptions in
Modern Chinese Literary Circles’

Tea break

4.20 PM - 5.50 PM
Keynote address introduced by Dipesh Chakrabarty
Anisuzzaman
‘Tagore and Bengali Muslims’

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 28, 2011

9.00 AM - 11.00 AM
Chair: Thibaut d’Hubert
Leonard Lewisohn
‘Rabindranath Tagore’s Syncretistic Philosophy and
the Persian Sufi Tradition’

William Radice
‘Tagore and Christianity’

Tea break

11.15 AM - 12.45 PM
Chair: James Chandler
Supriya Chaudhuri
‘Not at Home: Gender, Space and Desire in Tagore’

Lars-Christian Koch
‘Rabindra Sangit: The Songs of Rabindranath
Tagore, its Cultural Shaping and International
Encounters’

Lunch

2.00 PM - 4.00 PM
Introduced by Philip Gossett
James Conlon
Lecture Demonstration (Fulton Hall)
‘A Lyric Symphony: Tagore and Zemlinsky’

Reception