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 Jallianwalabagh 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: Ulrike Stark
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

Udaya Kumar
Department of English Arts Faculty University of Delhi

Leonard Lewisohn
Senior Lecturer Iran Heritage Foundation Fellow in Persian and Sufi Literature University of Exeter

Martha Nussbaum
Ernst Freund Distinguished Service Professor of Law and Ethics The Law School University of Chicago

William Radice
School of Oriental and African Studies University of London

Yin Xi’nan
Associate Professor, Institute of South Asian Studies Sichuan University