

**PRESS INFORMATION BUREAU
GOVERNMENT OF INDIA**

**TEXT OF THE SPEECH OF THE UNION FINANCE
MINISTER SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE DELIVERED AT
TAGORE CELEBRATION EVENT AT ASIATIC SOCIETY
IN KOLKATA TODAY**

New Delhi: February 04, 2012

Following is the text of the Speech of Shri Pranab Mukherjee, Union Finance Minister at the Tagore Celebration event at the Asiatic Society, Kolkata today :

I am really happy to be among you today to release the ‘Fascimile Edition of the English Manuscript of Gitanjali’ and also a book entitled ‘Nameless Recognition: The Impact of Rabindranath Tagore on Other Indian Literatures’.

These are the two of the several initiatives taken by the National Committees on the celebrations of the 150th Birth Anniversary of two of the greatest sons of the State Rabindranath Tagore and Swami Vivekananda. As you know, the National Committees for both celebrations are headed by the Prime Minister of India and I have been entrusted the task of chairing the National Implementation Committee, which actually executes the different projects including the ones that I have just mentioned.

Before I come to the main part of our function, I thought it appropriate to mention to you that we have had a very commendable success in Chicago, very recently on the 28th of January this year. 119 years after Swami Vivekananda delivered his famous ‘Chicago Address’, we have been able to install a ‘Memorial Plaque’ bearing of his image with his stirring opening words “Sisters and Brothers of America”, at the very spot from where he delivered his Address.

There have been several attempts over the last century or more to commemorate Swami Vivekananda’s outstanding introduction of the ancient civilization of India before the assembly of world’s great religious leaders, as this event marks a veritable land-mark. There have been several problems that I would not like to get into now, as we have finally succeeded in installing this memorial plaque, on behalf of the National Committee and the National Implementation Committee, as well as on behalf of all of you. This is indeed, a very significant achievement. Now when an Indian or any other person interested in Swamiji, visits the Art Institute of Chicago, he would not have any difficulty in locating the spot where the historical event took place.

We have also introduced a permanent Swami Vivekananda Chair at the world-famous Chicago University, which as informed has produced several Nobel Laureates. A very eminent international scholar will be selected through, for two years at a time, a consultative process, to grace this Chair and to espouse the secular values for which Swamiji stood. And, this Swami Vivekananda Chair would be there for hundreds of years, when none of us are around. What

more befitting tribute could we give, to ensure that Swamiji's spirit lives on for ever !

Among the commendable ideas that we were given by experts, for the Tagore celebrations was to publish some of his iconic works in unique ways. The Ministry of Culture, therefore, put in all its efforts to locate the original Diary or Notebook in which Rabindranath Tagore had translated his poems from Bengali to English as part of the 'corpus' that would be published in 1912 as 'Gitanjali'. Today, I have the honour to release this Special Edition of Gitanjali – the first draft manuscript which will be a keepsake and cherished by all Tagore admirers and experts.

The original work was a part of the Rothenstein Collection that is now preserved in the Houghton Library of Harvard University in the United States. It is inscribed by Sir William Rothenstein, as "Original Manuscript, which the poet brought me from India on his visit to us at Oak Hill Park". I commend the Secretary (Culture), Shri Jawhar Sircar for locating it in the Houghton Library at Harvard and for procuring the exact copies of the entire diary with the help of the Harvard authorities and Prof. Sugata Bose. Harvard University has permitted us to make replicas, the first of which I shall release today, but their copy-right does not permit us to sell them. It is indeed very sentimental to have a 'look and feel' of the diary in which Rabindranath Tagore made his English translations in his own hand. Tagore was awarded the Nobel Prize in 1913 for this masterpiece and became the first Indian and the first representative of the 'third world' to be given this honour. Rothenstein's diary has an invaluable place in this momentous event.

I commend the Raja Rammohun Roy Library Foundation, for publishing this 'Special Edition' of the manuscript of 'Gitanjali', on behalf of the Ministry of Culture and the NIC. I also thank all the eminent personalities who have advised us and the publisher for keeping it as close to the original, as is technically feasible. A limited number of copies are being presented to eminent persons today, and very soon, we shall make arrangements for distributing this special edition of 'Gitanjali'.

The second book that I will release is entitled 'Nameless Recognition: The Impact of Rabindranath Tagore on Other Indian Literatures'. This publication, brought out by the National Library, on behalf of the Ministry of Culture, is edited by Prof. Swapan Chakravarty, its Director General. The National Library had convened a National Conference on 'The Impact of Rabindranath Tagore on Other Indian Literatures' on January 20 & 21, 2011. Prof. Sabyasachi Bhattacharya, distinguished historian and Tagore scholar, inaugurated the deliberations and Dr. Sumatheendra Raghavendra Nadig, Poet, translator and former Chairperson of the National Book Trust, delivered the keynote address. Nearly all major languages of India were represented at the Conference. This volume brings together the papers presented at the seminar.

The National Library has also embarked upon a project of preparing a printed bibliography of Tagore holdings in English and other Indian languages in the library. The copy is already in press and the book should be released soon. From June 6 to 17, 2011, National Library organized an exhibition entitled 'Tagoreana' in the National Library that put on view rare manuscripts of

Rabindranath Tagore in the library's collection. A list of such manuscripts will be included in the publication.

On the many projects taken up by the Ministry of Culture of Government of India is the “*Rabindra Nattayan Project*”, a collaborative effort of playwriting between India and Bangladesh. It deserves special mention, as it is a major attempt to dramatize the works based on his short stories, novels, poems and other material. It is a part of the Indo-Bangla joint celebrations that we have launched and is a genuine participatory project. I must congratulate the Ministry of Culture, the National Library, the Raja Rammohan Roy Library Foundation and other agencies for taking so much effort to make Tagore celebrations such a grand success.

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