Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941) was the youngest son of Debendranath Tagore, a leader of the Brahmo Samaj, which was a new religious sect in nineteenth-century Bengal and which attempted a revival of the ultimate monistic basis of Hinduism as laid down in the Upanishads.

Rabindranath Tagore was born on 7th May 1861, in the Joransanko village of Calcutta (presently Kolkata). His genius enriched whatever it touched, like the sun after which he was named (Rabi in Bengali derived from Sanskrit ravi, means Sun), he shed light and warmth on his age, vitalized the mental and moral soul of his land, revealed unknown horizons of thought and spanned the arch that divided the East from the West.

Tagore was the fourteenth child in a family of fifteen, but he grew up as the youngest member in the household, because his younger sibling died early. He lost his mother, Sarada Devi, in adolescence, and his father travelled frequently to distant places, including the Himalayas, on various spiritual quests and other places and could not spare much time to look after his brilliant Child. Meanwhile Tagore was mostly confined to the family compound. He was forbidden to leave it for any purpose other than going to school. Tagore grew up under the supervision of servants or “servocracy”. In his Reminiscences, he humorously recollects how these servants were negligent and oppressive; to avoid their responsibility. They would often put the boy at a spot in the servant’s quarter, draw a chalk line around him, and warn him with a solemn face and uplifted finger of the perils of transgressing the “Circles”. In this way Tagore spent his early days of his childhood in fear and agony. According to psychologists Tagore’s child art may be a reflection of his own infancy days.

Rabindranath Tagore’s school career was brief (1868-74), uneventful and haphazard. He had to change school four times at least. He received his
early education first from tutors. He did not react favorably to set lessons. The generally unruly conduct of his name did not appear in the list of candidates promoted to the next higher class of St. Xavier’s School, and he was withdrawn from school. At University College, London, he was sent to study law but returned after a year, without finishing his studies, because he could not cope with the English weather, or bear to live away for long from the sights and sounds of Bengal, his native place.

In England Tagore started to compose the poem ('Bhagna Haridaj'), with a broken heart. He started writing at the age of eight, and engaged himself with such a young age that by the time he was eighteen he had written 7,000 lines / verses. Tagore’s literary awakening came from reading the old Bengali poets, Chandidas and Vidyapati. He also got his inspiration from the early Vaishnava religious literature. When he was twelve or thirteen, he reveled in the beauty of this early Bengali poetry and, with his precocity of youth, imitated their style and published some poems under the name of “Bhanu Sinha”.

In 1883, Tagore married Mrinalini Devi Raichaudhuri, with whom he had two sons and three daughters. Towards the ends of 1890, returning from England, he was entrusted by his father with the management of the extensive family estates in the Rajshai district with his headquarters at Shailads. By the end of the century, Rabindranath Tagore was preoccupied more and more with the fundamental of the Indian problems and his growing conviction that these were tied up with the prevailing faulty system of education. Instead of sending his own children to the existing school - where it might become possible to link up learning and living in an atmosphere of freedom in the midst of nature- in a community where teachers would be Gurus and pupils discipline in the traditional Upanishad sense. He held up these ideas in the poems of Naivedya and followed them up by founding a school in the Asrama built by his father at Santiniketan near Bolpur and bequeathed by him to a public trust in 1901.
Between 1893 and 1900 he wrote seven volumes of poetry, including, its Sonar Tari (the Golden Boat), 1894.

This was highly productive period in Tagore’s life and earned him rather misleading epitaph “The Bengali Shelly”. Tagore was the first Indian to bring an element of psychological realism to his novels. If he had been nothing more than a poet and writer, the quality and out put of his contribution to his people’s language and literature would still entitle him to be remembered as one of the world’s truly great immortals and great literary figures. But he was something much more. He was artist in life. His personal life was as clean and noble as his verse is simple and beautiful. He lived as he wrote, not for pleasure or profit but out of joy, not as brilliant egoist but as a dedicated spirit. He was fully conscious that his genius was a gift from the Divine, and it should be used in the service to humanity.

In 1901 Tagore founded a school outside Calcutta, under the title: "Visva Bharti", which was dedicated to emerging Western and Indian philosophy and education. It became a University in 1921. This is because he was a pioneer in the field of education. For the last forty years of his life he preferred to be a schoolmaster in humble and calm rural surroundings, even after he had achieved fame such as no Indian had known before. He was the first in India to think out for himself in practice. His formulated certain important principles of education which are now common in the places of education and theory. Tagore’s reputation as a writer was established in the United States and in England after the publication of Gintanjali, which in under songs offerings, about Divine and human life. He also composed wonderful songs based on nature, child and women. Politically active in India, Tagore was a supporter of Gandhi and tradition of peace and non-violence, but warned of the dangers nationalistic thoughts. Between the years 1961 and 1934 he traveled widely. From his journey to Japan in 1961 he produced articles and books. In 1927 he toured in South East Asia from Japan, which first was serialized in Vichitra, was issued as a book Jalri, in 1929. His Majesty, Raza
Shah Phalavi, invited Tagore to Iran in 1932. On his journeys and lecture tours, Tagore attempted to spread the ideal of Uniting East and West.

Rabindranath Tagore was one of the liberals who turned to the support of child marriage, on a nationalist wave to reclaim Hindu tradition. Tagore refused to receive the Nobel Prize. Today this experience would be more common that people fell proud to have it. He was one of the great minds of India who gave expressions to the soul in the Sub-continent, which was under turmoil and hopeless situations. He composed the National Anthem of our country. Two years later he was awarded the knighthood, but he surrendered it in 1919 as a protest against the Massacre of Amritsar, where British troops killed 400 Indian demonstrators. In 1940, the Oxford University arranged a special ceremony in Santiniketan to honor Tagore with the title, Doctorate of literature, but he did not accept that. So he was no doubt primarily a poet, but he was also an actor, educationist, cultural reformer, philosopher, novelist, short-story writer, and a critic of life politics, art and literature. His last visit to lecture was at Sri Lanka in the year 1941. Tagore's health had seriously deteriorated, and he passed away on 7th August, 1941. But his beauty, creative genius and excellence are still alive in his works and deep inside the soul of people. Not only Indian do love and admire Tagore, he remained an inspiring figure for all citizens of the globe. His art and thought as well other creative efforts are equally relevant for the twenty-first century human world.
Chronology:

- 1861- Rabindranath Tagore born May 7 at Joransanko, Calcutta; fourteenth child (8th son) of Debendranath Tagore and Sarada Devi.
- 1866- Begins learning Bengali alphabet.
- 1868- Admitted to Oriental Seminary, then to Normal School.
- 1869- First attempt at versification.
- 1871- Admitted to Bengal Akademi; begins truancy from school.
- 1872- First acquaintance with rural Bengal.
- 1873- First visit to Santiniketan; tours North India; spends three months with his father in Himalayas; returns to Bengal Akademi, which he leaves at end of year.
- 1875- First public appearance, reciting patriotic poem at Hindu Mela (Fair); first poem Published; leaves St. Xavier’s School at end of year.
- 1876- Publishes first literary criticism; first visit to Shelaidaha.
- 1877- First stage appearance in comedy based on Moliere’s *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*, by brother Jyotirindranath; contributes poems, including *Bhamisingherpadavali* (Songs of Bhanusingha), to journal *Bhârati*, founded by brother Dwijiendranath.
- 1878- Studies English with brother Satyendranath in Ahemedabad; compose first musical setting for his own poems; goes to England with Satyendranath; attends school at Brighton.
- 1879- Admitted to University College, London, and studies English literature under Henery Morley; contribute *Europe Prabasir patra* (Letters of a Traveler in Europe) to *Bhârati*; begins first verse drama.
- 1880- Returns to India (February) without completing studies.
- Composes first devotional Songs; first musical play, *Valmiki-Pratibha* (The Genius of Balmiki) in which he has title role; first polemical writing on England’s opium trade in China; fist public lecture; sails for England but turns back at Madras.
- 1882- Publishes *Sandhya Sangit* (Evening Songs).
Introduction

- 1883- Publishes *Prabhat Sangit* (Morning Songs); marries Mrinalini Devi, of Jessore.
- 1884- Writes first prose drama, *Nālini*.
- 1885- Publishes rabichchaya (Sunlight and Shade) fist song collection.
- 1888- Publishes *Samalochanā* (Discussion) first collection of his essays in literary criticism.
- 1889- Writes *Rājā o Rāni* (King and Queen), first five-act drama.
- 1890- Takes charge of Tagore estates in East Bengal; second visit to England (August – November).
- 1891- First short stories Published; launches monthly, *Sādhanā*.
- 1894- Becomes editor of *Sādhanā*; publishes *Sonār Tori* (The Golden Boat).
- 1897- Tries in vain to have Bengal Provincial Conference conducted in Bengal; returns to Calcutta.
- 1898- Becomes editor of *Bhārati*.
- 1900- Publishes *Kshanikā*.
- 1901- Revives the monthly, *Bāngadarshan*, which he edits until 1906; moves family from Shelaidaha to Santiniketan and opens school there publishes *Naibedya*.
- 1910- Publishes *Bengal Gitanjali* in London. William Rothenstein initiates organization of India Society, then leaves for India.
- 1911- Rothenstein visit Calcutta, meets Rabindranath through artist nephews Abanindranath and Gaganendranath.
- 1914- C.F.Andrew joins Santiniketan staff.
- 1915- Gandhi arrives from South Africa, goes to Santiniketan; Rabindranath is knighted.
- 1916- Publishes *Bālakā*.
- 1918- On December 22, lays foundation-stone for *Visva-Bharti* University at Santiniketan.
- 1920- Lectures in England, American and on Continent to raise funds for *Visva-Bharti*; American reception disappointing.
- 1922- Initiates *Sriniketan*, rural reconstruction center, with Leonard Elmhirst as Director; resumes friendship with Rothenstein; lectures in Ceylon.
• 1930- Begins painting as hobby and pursues it with increasing seriousness; goes to Oxford to deliver Hibbert Lectures, postponed from 1928, Published as *The Religion of Man* (1931); has exhibitions of paintings in Germany and England; visits Russia and the Continent (September.) leaves October. 3 for the United.States.

• 1931- Returns to India via England; *The Golden Book of Tagore* complied as birthday tribute.

• 1938- Publishes *Prântik* (The Borderland).

• 1940- On August 7, honorary Oxford degree Doctor of Letters in *Absentia*; publishes *Rogasajyāy* (From the Sickbed) and *Ārogya*.

• 1941- Publishes *Janmadine* (On the Birthday); death on August 7, at Jorasanko, Calcutta.