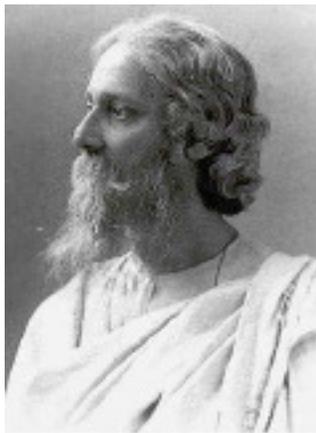


creative artist of the modern Indian subcontinent. From Bengal, Tagore wrote poetry as an eight-year-old. At age sixteen, under the pseudonym Bhānusiṃha (“Sun Lion”), he released his first substantial collection of poems, which were seized upon by literary authorities as long-lost classics. By 1877 he graduated to his first short stories and dramas, published under his real name. As a humanist, Universalist internationalist, and strident nationalist, he denounced the British Raj and advocated independence from Britain. As an exponent of the Bengal Renaissance, he advanced a vast canon that comprised paintings, sketches and doodles, hundreds of texts, and some two thousand songs; his legacy endures also in the institution he founded.



Rabindranath Tagore

Here are two passages from Tagore’s poetry collection, *The Gardenener* (from www.poetryfoundation.org).

I Asked of Destiny

Rabindranath Tagore

I asked of Destiny, “Tell me who with relentless hand pushes me on?”

Destiny told me to look behind.

I turned and saw my own self behind pushing forward the self in front.

Keep Me Fully Glad

Rabindranath Tagore

Keep me fully glad with nothing. Only take my hand in your hand.

In the gloom of the deepening night take up my heart and play with it as you list. Bind me close to you with nothing.

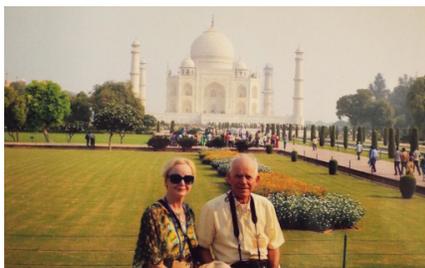
I will spread myself out at your feet and lie still. Under this clouded sky I will meet silence with silence. I will become one with the night clasping the earth in my breast.

Make my life glad with nothing.

The rains sweep the sky from end to end. Jasmines in the wet untamable wind revel in their own perfume. The cloud-hidden stars thrill in secret. Let me fill to the full my heart with nothing but my own depth of joy.

Taj Mahal: The House of Love

After our stay in Kolkata, we flew to New Delhi International Airport and began our tour of northern India by bus. We drove for four hours through the narrow, congested road dotted with dangerous potholes and arrived in Agra to visit India’s most famous marble



mausoleum, the Taj Mahal. The city of Agra became a significant place when Shah Akbar, the powerful Mughal ruler (1542-1605), built a large military base known as the Red Fort and made the city a political center for his kingdom, which included the entire Indian sub-continent. More than a century later his grandson, the Mughal emperor Shah Jahan, distraught by the premature death of his most beloved wife, Mumtaz Mahal, commissioned the construction of a white marble mausoleum on the bank of the Yamuna River several kilometers from the Red Fort.



The Taj Mahal complex is believed to have been completed in its entirety in 1653 at a cost estimated at the time to be around 32 million Indian rupees, which in 2015 would be valued at approximately \$827 million. The construction project employed about 20,000 artisans under the guidance of a board of architects, including a few from Persia. The glowing domed marble tomb is part of an integrated complex consisting of gardens and two red-sandstone mosques surrounded by a red sandstone wall on three sides. The Taj Mahal is regarded by many as the best example of Mughal architecture and is widely recognized as “the jewel of Muslim art in India.” It is one of the world’s most celebrated structures and a symbol of India’s rich history. Designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1983, the Taj Mahal attracts some three million visitors a year.

Ranthambore National Park

India’s Ranthambore National Park is best known for its large tiger population. One of the largest national parks in northern India with an area of 392 square km, Ranthambore is located approximately 110 km northeast of Kota and 160 km southeast of Jaipur, which has the nearest airport. As tourism and the populations of neighboring villages have increased, so has the number of fatal human-tiger interactions, including poaching. To address this problem, the Indian government started Project Tiger in 1973, allotting an area of 60 square miles in the park as a tiger sanctuary which was later expanded to become what is now the Ranthambore National Park.

In 2005, 26 tigers were living in the park, a number significantly lower than the reserve’s recorded tiger population in 1982, which stood at 44. According to non-government sources, there were 34 adult tigers in Ranthambore in 2008, and more than fourteen cubs, an increase resulting in large measure from sustained efforts by forest officials to curb poaching. Villagers in the region were given incentives to stay out of the park, and surveillance cameras were also fitted across the reserve. The Indian government committed \$150 million for these efforts, which succeeded in making Ranthambore eligible to participate in the Sariska Tiger Reserve relocation program. The first aerial relocation of a male tiger (Dara) from Ranthambore to Sariska was done on 28 June 2008 by Wing Commander Vimal Raj, using a MI-17

