

The lecture series:



**Transnational
Dialogues:
Bridging Continents
Towards a Global Vision**

Organizers: University of Graz, Department
of American Studies & Scottish Centre of
Tagore Studies, Edinburgh

invites all to the inaugural lecture:

“Beyond nationalist frames”:

**Tagore’s ideas of a world habitat of
knowledges in Visva-Bharati**

Swati Ganguly

Professor of English (Visva-Bharati University)

Chair: Stefan L. Brandt (University of Graz)

Moderator: Saptarshi Mallick (University of Graz)

Wednesday, May 8. 5:30-7:00 p.m.

Online via uniMEET:

<https://unimeet.uni-graz.at/b/bra-tjo-0xp-118>





Swati Ganguly is Professor of English at Visva-Bharati. Her interests include Rabindranath Tagore and his times, European Renaissance, feminist studies, translation and theatre. She has attended several international conferences and published in reputed journals like the Economic and Political Weekly, several international journals published from US university press and contributed to articles in anthologies published from Routledge London & New York.

Swati received the Charles Wallace Fellowship for Translation Studies in 1996 at the University of East Anglia, Norwich. Soon after she co-edited and translated a *The Stream Within* anthology of Bengali women's short fiction (1947-1997) which was published by Stree (1999). She has edited two anthologies of essays on Rabindranath Tagore: *Rabindranath Tagore and the Nation: Essays in Politics, Society and Culture* (Punascha, 2011) and *Towards Tagore* (Visva-Bharati, 2014).

She received the New India Foundation Fellowship (2011) for writing a history of the university set up by Rabindranath Tagore. This work, titled *Tagore's University: A History of Visva-Bharati (1921-1961)*, is published by Permanent Black (2022) in collaboration with New India Foundation and Ashoka University. It has won the Year's Best Book award by Anandabazar.online group.

ABSTRACT: The seeds of the idea Visva-Bharati can be traced to Rabindranath's response to a global crisis caused by World War I. Invited, in 1916, to give a series of paid lectures in America, Rabindranath articulated his grave moral concerns about nationalism as a menace to human condition; these were later published as *Nationalism* (1917). A visionary who believed in seeking a solution to the crisis, Rabindranath wrote to his son Rathindranath from Los Angeles, about his intention of creating a future world habitat for all creed and race in Santiniketan (which meant the abode of peace). This desire later matured as Visva-Bharati which translates as World-Learning.

This talk traces the development of the idea of Visva-Bharati as an enterprise "beyond nationalist frames" at a time when anti-colonial nationalism was reaching its peak. Going against the current, Rabindranath stressed the need for international cooperation of minds, of cultures and knowledges. It also looks at how Visva-Bharati was not conceived of as a university but as a society which could accommodate linked but autonomous centres for oriental studies, fine arts and performing arts as well as rural reconstruction.