



Ministry of Culture
Government of India



In its Centenary Year
and on the occasion of the
150th Birth Anniversary celebrations of Abanindranath Tagore

Victoria Memorial Hall

presents
an illustrated lecture

The Nation and its Art *'Why we cannot 'nationalize' Abanindranath's philosophy of art*

by

Arindam Chakrabarti

Professor of Philosophy, University of Hawaii

Chair

Tapati Guha-Thakurta

Friday, 5 August 2022, 6.00 pm

Victoria Memorial Hall
Conference Hall, New Library Building
1 Queen's Way, Kolkata 700 071

Admission on first-come basis till hall fills up
Entry through East Gate (opp. St Paul's Cathedral);
standard Covid protocols to be followed; no entry and parking of vehicles inside the VMH campus

In spite of being routinely cited, along with Sister Nivedita and Ananda Coomaraswamy, as a founder-practitioner of nationalist Hindu/Buddhist/ Indian art, Abanindranath Tagore was vehemently opposed to the idea of 'National Art'. In his scintillatingly original Calcutta University series of 29 Bagishwari lectures (delivered during 1921-29) he argues, conceptually, historically, as well as with an avalanche of powerful metaphors, against the very coherence of the notion of national art. This lecture would attempt a timely analysis of his repudiation of this popular triumphalist idea of 'the nation' as the source of any art practice or a distinctive (Indian or Italian, Hindu or Islamic) aesthetic. The breath of nation or nationalism cannot make the flower of art blossom, remarks Abanindranath. Side by side with his Bharat Mata, we shall look at his Arabian Nights series and Death of Shahjahan, as well as pay attention to his exuberantly playful forays into children's literature where we come across dialogues like:

Servants and Masters would stay segregated no more!

Then what?

Everyone will be master: so it says in printed letters in America, you know!

