



Empire, Nationalism and the Postcolonial World: Rabindranath Tagore's Writings on History, Politics and Society

Michael Collins

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By presenting a new interpretation of Rabindranath Tagore's English language writings, this book places the work of India's greatest Nobel Prize winner and cultural icon in the context of imperial history and thereby bridges the gap between Tagore studies and imperial/postcolonial historiography.

Using detailed archival research, the book charts the origins of Tagore's ideas in Indian religious traditions and discusses the impact of early Indian nationalism on Tagore's thinking. It offers a new interpretation of Tagore's complex debates with Gandhi about the colonial encounter, Tagore's provocative analysis of the impact of British imperialism in India and his questioning of nationalism as a pathway to authentic postcolonial freedom. The book also demonstrates how the man and his ideas were received and interpreted in Britain during his lifetime and how they have been sometimes misrepresented by nationalist historians and postcolonial theorists after Tagore's death.

An alternative interpretation based on an intellectual history approach, this book places Tagore's sense of agency, his ideas and intentions within a broader historical framework. Offering an exciting critique of postcolonial theory from a historical perspective, it is a timely contribution in the wake of the 150th anniversary of Tagore's birth in 2011.

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