



PRESENTS

# The Post Office

by Rabindranath Tagore

## Study Guide

Prepared by Lauren Brotman



A jewel of 20<sup>th</sup> century theatre, by the poet laureate of India and one of the great artists of the world!

In celebration of Tagore's 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary and part of 2011:

The YEAR of INDIA in CANADA

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Running May 10<sup>th</sup> – June 4<sup>th</sup> 2011, Pleiades Theatre presents one of India's most celebrated, engaging works. ***The Post Office*** is an opportunity for students and teachers to discover a great Indian classic.

## ***Student Matinees:***

May 12<sup>th</sup>, May 13<sup>th</sup>, May 17<sup>th</sup>, May 19<sup>th</sup> at 11:00am. *Show runs approx 70 minutes.*

There will be talk back sessions after each of student matinee performance. Contact **Lauren Brotman** at Pleiades Theatre at **416.203.1227** or by email at **[outreach@pleiadestheatre.org](mailto:outreach@pleiadestheatre.org)**

*Pleiades Theatre would like to acknowledge the support of the Ontario Arts Council, the Toronto Arts Council, the Canada Council and the Ontario Trillium Foundation.*

## **'The Post Office' in a Nutshell:**

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- A child is dying (age 10)
- His very traditional and rigid doctor has forbidden him from going outside
- The boy (Amal) lives across the street from the King's Post Office and dreams of receiving a letter from the King
- The shiny new post office has a bright yellow flag waving from the roof
- He is visited daily by a range of local characters who are touched by the boy's keen interest in experiencing life including the monotony of work life
- He sits at the window all day dreaming of one day experiencing the world for himself

## **More on the Play:**

---

***The Post Office*** is one of the world's most enduring and enchanting works, reflecting the profound wisdom and humanity of its author, Rabindranath Tagore. Using the grave illness of a young boy as his inspiration, Tagore embarks on a spiritual journey that strips away life's many encumbrances to take us to those places of timeless and universal truth. Written in Bengali in 1911, this jewel of a play is practically unknown in Canada. Poetic and deeply moving, far-reaching and universal in scope, this story is ideally suited for serious adults and curious children. Tagore (1861 – 1941) is still considered the Poet Laureate of India and in 1913, he was the first non-European to be awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature. This play offers a glimpse into Tagore's enormous understanding of the human spirit.

## **The Production:**

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In the tradition of Indian theatre, ***The Post Office*** will incorporate dance and music along with the spoken word. Our diverse cast and our modern reading of the play will make it both Indian and universal. Our production, in May 2011, of Tagore's ***The Post Office***, promises to be a wonderful moment in Canadian theatre and one of great pride for all Indo-Canadians. ***The Post Office*** will be part of the Indian Government's 2011 Canada-wide celebration of Indian arts and culture. This first-ever event of its kind will highlight the growing bonds between India and Canada. As always, culture is one of the finest ways for countries to share their creative energies, to get to know one another and to market themselves to the world. Pleiades Theatre is very proud to be among the few Canadian companies to be engaged in this important occasion.

### **Did you know that 2010 is the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of The Post Office?**

## **QUOTES BY TAGORE**

---

The butterfly counts not months but moments,  
and has time enough.

~

A mind all logic is like a knife all blade.  
It makes the hand bleed that uses it.

~

Life is given to us,  
we earn it by giving it.

~

Life, like a child, laughs,  
shaking its rattle of death as it runs.

~

Age considers; youth ventures.

~

Bigotry tries to keep truth safe in its hand with a grip that kills it.

~

Do not say, 'It is morning,' and dismiss it with a name of yesterday. See it for the first time as a newborn child  
that has no name.

~

Facts are many, but the truth is one.

~

Faith is the bird that feels the light when the dawn is still dark.

~

He who is too busy doing good finds no time to be good.

~

I have become my own version of an optimist. If I can't make it through one door, I'll go through another door - or  
I'll make a door. Something terrific will come no matter how dark the present.

~

If you shut the door to all errors, truth will be shut out.

~

Let us not pray to be sheltered from dangers but to be fearless when facing them.

~

Life is given to us, we earn it by giving it.

~

Love does not claim possession, but gives freedom.

~

The highest education is that which does not merely give us information but makes our life in  
harmony with all existence.

~

We live in the world when we love it.

~

You can't cross the sea merely by standing and staring at the water.

## The Playwright:

**Rabindranath Tagore** is widely considered to be India's greatest playwright. He is highly revered by millions of people all across the sub-continent and, of course, by many recent immigrants to Canada. His work, however, is practically unknown to mainstream Canadian audiences.



Photo courtesy of Sir John Betjeman

Rabindranath Tagore was born in Calcutta, India into a wealthy Brahmin family in 1861. After a brief stay in England (1878) to attempt to study law, he returned to India, and instead pursued a career as a writer, playwright, songwriter, poet, philosopher and educator. During the first 51 years of his life he achieved some success in the Calcutta area of India where he was born and raised with his many stories, songs and plays. His short stories were published monthly in a friend's magazine and he even played the lead role in a few of the public performances of his plays. Otherwise, he was little known outside of the Calcutta area, and not known at all outside of India.

This all suddenly changed in 1912. He then returned to England for the first time since his failed attempt at law school as a teenager. Now a man of 51, he was accompanied by his son. On the way over to England he began translating, for the first time, his latest selections of poems, *Gitanjali*, into English. Almost all of his work prior to that time had been written in his native tongue of Bengali. He decided to do this just to have something to do, with no expectation at all that his first time translation efforts would be any good. He made the handwritten translations in a little notebook he carried around with him and worked on during the long sea voyage from India. Upon arrival, his son left his father's brief case with this notebook in the London subway. Fortunately, an honest person turned in the briefcase and it was recovered the next day. Tagore's one friend in England, a famous artist he had met in India, Rothenstein, learned of the translation, and asked to see it. Reluctantly, with much persuasion, Tagore let him have

the notebook. The painter could not believe his eyes. The poems were incredible. He called his friend, W.B. Yeats, and finally talked Yeats into looking at the hand scrawled notebook.

Yeats was enthralled. He later wrote the introduction to Gitanjali when it was published in September 1912 in a limited edition by the India Society in London. Thereafter, both the poetry and the man were an instant sensation, first in London literary circles, and soon thereafter in the entire world. His spiritual presence was awesome. His words evoked great beauty. Nobody had ever read anything like it. A glimpse of the mysticism and sentimental beauty of Indian culture were revealed to the West for the first time. Less than a year later, in 1913, Rabindranath received the Nobel Prize for literature. He was the first non-westerner to be so honored. Overnight he was famous and began world lecture tours promoting inter-cultural harmony and understanding. In 1915 he was knighted by the British King George V. When not traveling he remained at his family home outside of Calcutta, where he remained very active as a literary, spiritual and social-political force.

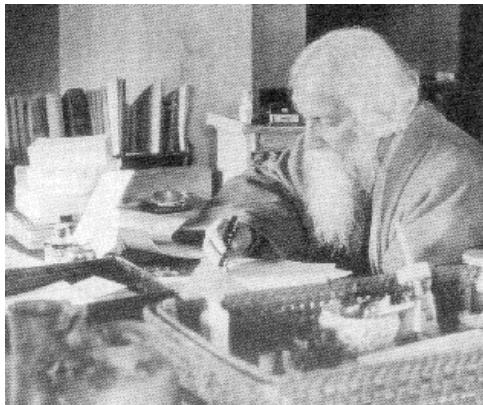
In 1919, following the Amritsar massacre of 400 Indian demonstrators by British troops, Sir Tagore renounced his Knighthood. Although a good friend of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, most of the time Tagore stayed out of politics. He was opposed to nationalism and militarism as a matter of principle, and instead promoted spiritual values and the creation of a new world culture founded in multi-culturalism, diversity and tolerance. He served as a spiritual and creative beacon to his countrymen, and indeed, the whole world. He used the funds from his writing and lecturing to expand upon the school he had founded in 1901 now known as Visva Bharati . The alternative to the poor system of education imposed by the British, combined the best of traditional Hindu education with Western ideals. Tagore's multi-cultural educational efforts were an inspiration to many, including his friend, Count Hermann Keyserling of Estonia. Count Keyserling founded his own school in 1920 patterned upon Tagore's school, and the ancient universities which existed in Northern India under Buddhist rule over 2,000 years ago under the name School of Wisdom. Rabindranath Tagore led the opening program of the School of Wisdom in 1920, and participated in several of its programs thereafter.

## Traditional Arts and Methods of India:



## More on Tagore:

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Rabindranath Tagore's creative output tells you a lot about this renaissance man. The variety, quality and quantity are unbelievable. As a writer, Tagore primarily worked in Bengali, but after his success with Gitanjali, he translated many of his other works into English. He wrote over one thousand poems; eight volumes of short stories; almost two dozen plays and play-lets; eight novels; and many books and essays on philosophy, religion, education and social topics. Aside from words and drama, his other great love was music, Bengali style. He composed more than two thousand songs, both the music and lyrics. Two of them became the national anthems of India and Bangladesh. In 1929 he even began painting. Many of his paintings can be found in museums today, especially in India, where he is considered the greatest literary figure of India of all times.

Tagore was not only a creative genius, he was a great man and friend to many. For instance, he was also a good friend from childhood to the great Indian Physicist, Bose. He was educated and quite knowledgeable of Western culture, especially Western poetry and Science. This made him a remarkable person, one of the first of our planet to combine East and West, and ancient and modern knowledge. Tagore had a good grasp of modern - post-Newtonian - physics, and was well able to hold his own in a debate with Einstein in 1930 on the newly emerging principles of quantum mechanics and chaos. His meetings and tape recorded conversations with his contemporaries such Albert Einstein and H.G. Wells, stand as cultural landmarks, and show the brilliance of this great man. Although Tagore is a superb representative of his country - India - the man who wrote its national anthem - his life and works go far beyond his country. He is truly a man of the whole Earth, a product of the best of both traditional Indian, and modern Western cultures. The School of Wisdom is proud to have him as part of its heritage. He exemplifies the ideals important to us of Goodness, Meaningful Work, and World Culture.

## Images:

ଶ୍ରୀମଦ୍

ଏହି ଲେଖନାଟିଲି କୁଳ ପଦ୍ମନାଭ ମିଶର ଜାଗାରେ ।  
ବାହୁଦା ମାନୁଷ କହାଲେ ତିନ୍ଦୁ ଲିଙ୍ଗ ଦୋଷକର୍ତ୍ତା  
ଲୋକରେ ପରିଦ୍ୱାରା ଧୂ ଉପରେଇ । ଆବଶ୍ୟକ କୁଳାଳ  
ଓ ଅକ୍ଷୟମେଳିତ ଗାନ୍ଧି ଲୋକରେ । ଯାହିଁ କହି କି ଏହି  
ଦୂରାଳୀ ଲେଖନାଟିଲି କଥା କହିଲା । ଏହି ଅକ୍ଷୟମେଳିତ  
ଶାରୀର ପକ୍ଷିଙ୍କ ପରିଚାରକ । ଆବଶ୍ୟକ  
କହନ ପାଇଥାର କଥା, ପରିଚାରକ ପାଇଥାର ପରିଚାରକ  
କଥା । ଧୂକର ପକ୍ଷିଙ୍କ ଲୋକରେ କହିଲା କହିଲା କହିଲା  
ଏହି ଅକ୍ଷୟମେଳିତ କଥା କହିଲା କହିଲା କହିଲା  
କହିଲା କହିଲା । ଏହି ଅକ୍ଷୟମେଳିତ ପରିଚାରକ  
କହିଲା କହିଲା ।

ଶ୍ରୀରାଧାରାମାନନ୍ଦ

The lines in the following pages had  
their origin in China and Japan where  
the author was asked for his writings  
on fans or pieces of silk.

Rabindranath Tagore

Nov. 7. 1926  
Balatőfűr, Hungary.

ଶ୍ରୀମଦ୍

ଶ୍ରୀମଦ୍ ପାଇଥାର କହିଲା  
କିମ୍ବା ପ୍ରାଣୀର କହିଲା,  
କୁଳ ପାଇଥାର ନିମ୍ନିମ୍ନ  
କହିଲା ପାଇଥାର କହିଲା ॥

ଶ୍ରୀମଦ୍

My fancies are fireflies  
Specks of living light—  
twinkling in the dark.

ଶ୍ରୀମଦ୍

ଶ୍ରୀମଦ୍ ପାଇଥାର କହିଲା  
କିମ୍ବା ପାଇଥାର କହିଲା,  
କାଳିତା ଚାଲିବ ଦେଖୁ ପାଇ ତାହା  
କାଳିତା ଚାଲିବ କୁଳ ॥

ଶ୍ରୀମଦ୍

The same voice murmurs  
in these desultory lines  
which is born in wayside passies  
letting hasty glances pass by.  
ଶ୍ରୀମଦ୍ ପାଇଥାର କହିଲା;  
କାଳିତା ଚାଲିବ କୁଳ;  
କାଳିତା ଚାଲିବ କୁଳ;  
କାଳିତା ଚାଲିବ କୁଳ ॥

ଶ୍ରୀମଦ୍

The butterfly does not count years  
but moments  
and therefore has enough time.

Original Handwriting of Tagore

## **Did You Know:**

- Rabindranath Tagore was instrumental in the conception and formation of modern India. He never saw it come to pass though because he died in 1941, six years before the British finally released the sub-continent from their colonial grip.
- Tagore was a close colleague of Ghandi, to whom he gave the sobriquet “Mahatma,” meaning “great soul,” while Ghandi dubbed Tagore, “The Great Sentinel,” out of his abiding respect for Tagore’s unwavering commitment to open-mindedness, inclusiveness and diversity in the envisioning of the India that was soon to be born. Significant differences arose between these two great leaders over such issues as nationalism, sectarianism and education because Tagore refused to endorse the first two and he was resolutely devoted to the enrichment of the latter. He envisaged an international culture, a welcoming and expansive mindset for all Indians and most of all, a tolerance for the many religious and cultural differences that are the hallmark of the country to this day.
- In 1913, Tagore became the first non-Westerner to receive the Nobel Prize for literature. This brought him to the fore in Western intellectual and cultural circles for several years although much of the interest that grew up around him was based more on Europe’s love for the exoticism of the east than on the facts of what the man actually wrote and thought. By the mid 1930’s he had fallen out of favour in the courts and salons of the west and since his death in 1941, he has become all but unknown in Europe and North America.
- Tagore had his own worldwide odyssey that took him around the world! Between 1912 and 1934, he visited England, America, South America, China, Japan, Italy, Switzerland, Austria, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Germany (where he met Einstein in 1926), Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria, Greece, Egypt, Canada, Viet Nam, Russia, Ceylon, in addition to travelling all over India countless times. And many of these countries he visited numerous times in his life.
- Tagore himself was a rambunctious and undisciplined student, being bounced from one school after another until finally being tutored at home; as an adult, along with his father and friends, he founded Santiniketan on the family estate outside Calcutta. The school is built upon the principles of an all-inclusive education that uses the arts, philosophy and science to create fully rounded, creative human beings. At Santiniketan, the students still learn dance, drama, music, Plato, Aristotle, Hume, Indian, Chinese and European literature, in addition to math and physics.

## **POEMS BY TAGORE**

---

Asks the Possible of the Impossible,  
"Where is your dwelling-place?"  
"In the dreams of the Impotent,"  
comes the answer

~

Man's abiding happiness is not in getting anything  
but in giving himself up to what is greater than himself,  
to ideas which are larger than his individual life,  
the idea of his country,  
of humanity,  
of God.

~

Man is immortal; therefore he must die endlessly.  
For life is a creative idea;  
it can only find itself in changing forms.

~

I slept and dreamt that life was joy.  
I awoke and saw that life was service.  
I acted and behold,  
service was  
joy.

~

He who wants to do good knocks at the gate;  
he who loves finds the gate open.

~

I am well.  
I hope you keep well too.  
Write to me in the address in the sky.  
Send me your garland of flowers.  
Outside of me and in me,  
You will always be a part of me.

~

I have spent my days stringing and unstringing my instrument  
while the song I came to sing  
remains unsung.

~

The newer people,  
of this modern age,  
are more eager to amass than  
to realize.

~

## **Tagore and ‘The Post Office’:**

---

Tagore wrote ***The Post Office*** (*Dak Ghar*) in 1911, after having lost his son, daughter, wife and father to disease, all within a few years. One night, lying in his roof garden and looking at a starlit sky, he was inspired to write this magnificent play about the “death” of a child, Amal, which is in fact the boy’s liberation, and the beginning of a great voyage toward the Outside. Through the child’s demise, Tagore expresses his conviction that the full meaning of life can only be grasped in death. Yet he does this with such a light, elegant and poetic touch that ***The Post Office*** has found its way into the hearts of audiences everywhere and in many different languages. Worth citing are two examples that demonstrate the impact this delicate piece has had on people in moments of extreme need: in 1940, the evening before the Nazis entered Paris, André Gide’s French translation was read over the radio, so it was heard by almost the entire nation; in 1942, in the Warsaw ghetto, the Polish version of ***The Post Office*** was the last play performed at the orphanage of the great Jewish educator, Junusz Korczak. Asked why he chose this, Korczak responded “eventually we have to accept with serenity the angel of death.” Within a month, he and the children were taken away to the gas chambers. But these examples should not suggest that the play is heavy or depressing; on the contrary it is a beautifully inspired look at the way in which we live on in the intangible and the eternal.

The chronology of loss prior to Tagore’s writing of ***The Post Office*** was astounding: his wife died in 1902; his oldest son died in 1903, Satischandra Ray, his assistant at Santiniketan died in 1904; his father died in 1905; his younger son, Samindra, died in 1907. He wrote ***The Post Office*** in Bengal in 1911 and he gave a description of how he came to do so. In the middle of the night, while lying under the stars on the roof of his house in Santiniketan (Abode of Peace), he had a strange experience. “My mind took wing. Fly! Fly! –I felt an anguish... There was a call to go somewhere and a premonition of death, together with an intense emotion. This feeling of restlessness I expressed in writing *Dak Ghar* (***The Post Office***.) He explains:

*“When I wrote *Dak Ghar*, my soul was besotted by an ocean of feeling. It was a very strong wave. Come, venture outside, before you leave you will have to traverse this world. You have to feel the sorrow and joy and thrill and excitement of the human heart. At the time I was deeply involved in establishing the university [Shantiniketan] but suddenly I don’t know how it happened that early one morning between 2 a.m. and 3 a.m. my heart stood on the rooftop and sprouted wings. I felt a great premonition of a momentous event, perhaps Death. I felt as if I had to jump onto the platform of a train station, as if I were leaving immediately. I was saved. When the call was so strong, how could I resist. The call to go somewhere and the mystery of death is what I expressed in *Dak Ghar*. ”* [Translated by Julie Mehta].

*"I remember at the time when I wrote the play, my own feeling which inspired me to write it. Amal represents the man whose soul has received the call of the open road... But there is the post office in front of his window and Amal waits for the King's letter to come to him direct from the King, bringing him the message of emancipation. At last the closed gate is opened by the King's own physician, and that which is 'death' to the world of hoarded wealth and certified creeds brings him awakening in the world of spiritual freedom. The only thing that accompanies him in his awakening is the flower of love given to him by Sudha."*

He was inspired to write this magnificent play about the “death” of a child, Amal, which is in fact the boy’s liberation, and the beginning of a great voyage toward the Outside. Through the child’s demise, Tagore expresses his conviction that the full meaning of life can only be grasped in death. Yet he does this with such a light, elegant and poetic touch that ***The Post Office*** has found its way into the hearts of audiences everywhere and in many different languages. Worth citing are two examples that demonstrate the impact this delicate piece has had on people in moments of extreme need: in 1940, the evening before the Nazis entered Paris, André Gide’s French translation was read over the radio, so it was heard by almost the entire nation; in 1942, in the Warsaw ghetto, the Polish version of *The Post Office* was the last play performed at the orphanage of the great Jewish educator, Junusz Korczak. Asked why he chose this, Korczak responded “eventually we have to accept with serenity the angel of death.” Within a month, he and the children were taken away to the gas chambers. But these examples should not suggest that the play is heavy or depressing; on the contrary it is a beautifully inspired look at the way in which we live on in the intangible and the eternal.

The following verse, with its six contradictory propositions, from The *Upaniṣads*, which Tagore used a great deal in his lectures, sums up a so much of what makes *The Post Office* so complex, and spiritual.

**He moves, and he moves not. He is far, and likewise near.**

**He is within all, and he is outside all.**

*The Īśā Upaniṣad*

## Flag of India:



- The National colours of India are **deep saffron yellow** and **green**
- The Indian flag bears a **Chakra**
- The Chakra symbolizes the impermanent things of life (represented by the **spokes**) surrounding the spiritually permanent thing (the **Truth**) in the centre.

## Pre>Show Activity:

**What is the national flag(s) of your heritage? Illustrate it and research what the colours and images represent.**

## **Synopsis:**

---

Amal is an orphaned child of about ten, from a rural village in India. He has been taken in by a childless but loving couple living in the city. Now, however, Amal is gravely ill, although he doesn't know the extent of his sickness. The very traditional local Healer has insisted that he remain indoors, much to the dismay of his loving "uncle," Madhab Dutta. So, confined to his room, he sits by the open window where he engages with a variety of passersby. Many of them are people of self-appointed importance or they fulfill some function of order in society. One by one, Amal converses with these folks and one by one, his innocent questioning and absence of judgement touches them all in such a way that they are changed by this child. All are taken aback by his simple but tireless quest for knowledge, his unflinching love for life and his need to discover the world around him... and the world beyond. Across the street, Amal sees a shiny new building with a bright yellow flag waving from the roof: it is the King's Post Office. Though he can't even read, he is fascinated by the notion of letters, which are people's thoughts and feelings, flying about through time and space; he would very much love to get a letter from the King and he would love to be in touch with the world far away. He would also like to travel to the distant hills on the far horizon. As Amal's physical strength diminishes, his spiritual strength expands. The central metaphor of the play is that life itself is like a post office, a central clearing house from which our words, thoughts and sentiments emanate out across the world. Not only that but, even when we are gone, our spirit will remain in the surrounding air.



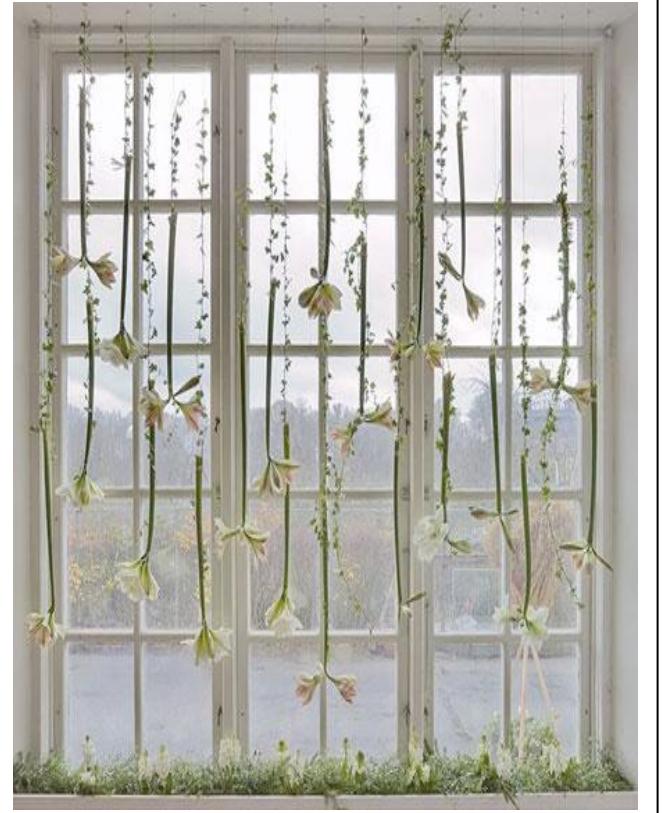
**Don't Be Afraid To See The World  
Through The Eyes Of A Child**

# Glossary

---

<b>Dak Ghar:</b>	the Post Office
<b>Madhab:</b>	Krishna (Hindu deity)
<b>Sudha:</b>	nectar
<b>Shastras:</b>	the holy medical scriptures
<b>Thakurda:</b>	grandfather
<b>Pundit:</b>	in India, a scholar or expert, especially of traditional Indian law, philosophy, or music
<b>Nagra:</b>	shoes with curled up toes
<b>Dhoti:</b>	a rectangular piece of cloth, customarily white or cream in color, that is five yards long worn by men in India (sarong)
<b>Chhatu:</b>	graham flour and water
<b>Tatka Doy:</b>	fresh curds
<b>Panch Mura Hills:</b>	where the five roads meet
<b>Ramayana:</b>	one of the great epics of India, the story of <i>Sri Rama</i> by the great sage <i>Valmiki</i> , it has been a perennial source of spiritual, cultural and artistic inspiration, not only to the people of India but also to the people all over the world. It has helped to mould the Hindu character and has inspired millions of people with the deepest of love and devotion.
<b>Champa flowers:</b>	plumeria
<b>Fakir:</b>	a person who dedicates his or her life to a pursuit of contemplative ideals and practices extreme self-denial or self-mortification for religious reasons.

## Pre-Show Activity:



**Imagine you are looking out of your favourite window.  
What do you wish you could see? Be specific.**

**Once you can imagine this, draw a picture of everything  
you've imagined.**

**Now, write a letter to a close friend describing what your  
perfect place looks like, how it makes you feel, and why  
you wish you could go to this place.**

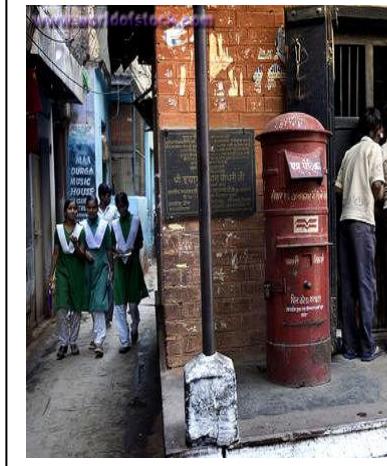
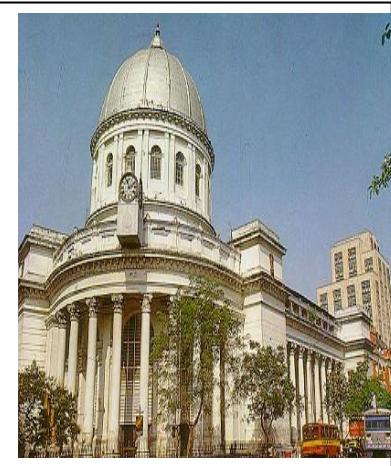
## Central Metaphors of the Play:

- Though he can't read, Amal is fascinated by the idea of letters, which are people's thoughts and feelings, flying about through time and space
- What kind of knowledge is important?
- Imagine there is only one post office- the central source of information, sharing, and communication
- Life is like a post office, a central clearing house from which our words, thoughts, sentiments, and deeds emanate out across the world.
- Play is about emancipation, spiritual freedom, expansion, new life, liberation
- Characters defined by function but become a person and not just a function through their meeting and interactions with Amal.
- As his physical state deteriorates, his spiritual state, and ours expand.
- Tagore's insights into death seem to be deepest with this play.

*"I have had so many experiences of loved ones who have died that I think I have come to know something about death, something perhaps of its deeper meaning. Every moment that I have spent at the death bed of some dear friend, I have known this, yet it is very difficult to describe how for me that great ocean of truth to which all life returns, can never suffer diminution by death... I see how the individual life comes back into the bosom of this ocean at the moment of death, I have felt too how great and fathomless this ocean is, yet how full it is of personality. For personality is ever flowing into it... It becomes instilled with personality. Yet this ocean seems as nothing, as neither light nor darkness, but as one great extension of the universe, an eternity of peace and life..."*

*Science recognises atoms, all of which can be weighed and measured, but never recognises personality, the one thing that lies at the basis of reality. All creation is that, for apart from personality, there is no meaning in creation. Water is water to me, because I am I. And so I have felt that in this great infinite, in this ocean of personality, from which my own little personal self has sprung, lies the completion of the cycle, like those jets of water from a fountain which rise and fall and come back home again."*

## Post Show Activity:



Hello Jenny, नमस्कार जेनी  
What do you do? क्या करते हो आप?  
Notice this is your first card  
from India. This card shows  
a national monument from  
Delhi. I hope you like this  
card.

Happy Postcrossing  
Regards,  
Kamran

INDIA GATE, DELHI, INDIA - 2531 ©  
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VZINDIA  
Picture Post Cards

AIR MAIL  
PAR AVION  
POST CARD



BY AIR MAIL

To,

ENGLAND

इंग्लॅण्ड (वीज टिप्पेट)

Write a letter to the King.

- How would you describe yourself to him?
- What are your hopes and your dreams?
- What is missing from your life that he could help you with?
- If you had one wish that he could grant you, what would it be?

# Symbolism in The Post Office:

While using symbolism to express controversial political views was not an invention of Tagore, his play, ***The Post Office***, uses it effectively. Tagore designed ***The Post Office*** to be deceptively simple.

The symbolism in the play is central to Tagore's ideology. He was an Indian, under British colonial rule. While Britain has lost many of its colonies, it still held onto India. Many Indians wanted to emancipate themselves from British rule and regain their sovereignty. But many others benefited from British rule and were content with the status quo. Throughout the play, Tagore's symbols help explain the current state of India, help explain the current state of India, and help produce strong imagery of the past present and future.

## **Characters:**

Tagore keeps his character list short, and uses a common language style. The characters, aside from Amal, are each represented and defined by their function

- **Amal** has an intense curiosity of the outside world and yearns for the type of knowledge that can't be learned from a book
- **Sudha**, gathers flowers, is naïve and happy to do work for her parents
- **Madhab Dutta**, Amal's guardian is a man who believes in learning from books and feel comfortable in his home than outside
- **The Healer** is the man who diagnoses Amal and will not let him leave the house because he is sick
- **The Curdseller** does exactly that, she sells curds, is a peddler and is not learned, but is experienced in life.
- **The Watchman** is a loyal servant to the king; he is knowledgeable of the government and the King's systems.
- **The Headman** is placed in power by the King but is not popular with locals
- **Group of Boys** who encourage Amal to defy the doctor and leave the house

# Symbolism in The Post Office cont.:

## **The Healer and Amal.**

**Amal:** *See that far away hill from our window- I often long to go beyond those hills.*

**The Healer:** *You musn't let him set foot outside, not at all.*

The Healer symbolizes the British Empire or British rule. All the characters throughout the book respect him; some characters encourage Amal to listen to his decisions (symbolizing those content with British rule). Others want Amal to rebel (symbolizing those who want to be rid of British rule). Amal is in transition. He is obedient enough to stay inside, but he wants to leave. He knows he is too young, but he knows his future is disappearing. In a way he represents the youth of India.

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## **Madhab Dutta and Amal.**

**Madhab:** *Formerly, earning was a passion for me...now I know it is all for this dear boy, earning becomes a joy.*

Madhab represents the older generation. He is content to stay at home and listen to the orders of the doctor. He regrets not being a more learned man, and wants Amal to stay home and study. He symbolizes a generation that is set in their ways. Madhab is content with his life and now turns his attention toward the boy's life.

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## **Amal and the Other Young Characters.**

The young people are all symbols of India's youth generation.

**Sudha:** *Poor thing! But you musn't step outside- you've got to listen to the Healer.*  
She symbolizes the young and naïve, and those who wish to obey the older generation. However she is willing to listen to Amal's ideas as she spends more time with him.

**The Boys:** *What Healer! You don't need a Healer!* Representing the future of India, they are willing to defy the doctor and encourage Amal to join them. One asks if they will be the group that will eventually rise up and control India.

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## **Amal and the Curdseller, the Watchman, the Headman.**

**Amal:** *Will you teach me how to sell curds?*

**Curdseller:** *Why would you want to sell curds?*

The Curdseller, the laborer, is unhappy with his work but would not dare go against British rule. He encourages Amal to stay inside and learn.

**Amal:** *Aren't you going to ring your gong?*

**Watchman:** *The time has not yet come.*

**Amal:** *Some say the time has gone by and some say the time hasn't come. But if you ring your gong, it will be time.*

Amal represents the school of thought that the people should start freeing themselves from the British, that his generation has the power and timing to overthrow the ruling class, the gong being the metaphorical gong that will start the revolution. The Watchman represents someone who follows British rule but does not know why, and does not appear to care why. He is content with his job, and does not question his orders. While India may be ready to rid itself of British rule, not everyone is willing.

**Headman:** *Who dares yell out my name like that?*

The last working class character presented by Tagore, he represents the controlled mass, who appears to have a degree of power, and is unwilling to change in order to hang on to his power.

All three of these characters symbolize different working class levels of the Indian population, and represent Tagore's views on the current Indian generation.

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## **Post Show Activity:**



Besides the Curd-seller, the Flower Seller, the Watchman, and the Royal Healer, who else might you find in the Market place?

**In groups, act out a scene from a typical market place.**



## **Post Show Activity:**

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*The objective of the following activity is to have students reflect on the play that they have seen and engage with the text as performers themselves.*



1. Discuss the play and the production
2. Besides text, what other theatrical elements were used in this production?
3. Give an example in the production where music is used to convey emotion.
4. What character did you identify with and why?

## **Scene Analysis:**

**Read the following scene between Amal and Dutta as a group.**

1. What does this scene say about their relationship?
2. Identify all the action words/verbs. (or phrases that require action)
3. Once they have successfully mined the scene, divide the class into three groups, A, B, C. These groups will represent a third of the following scene .
4. Pick two people per group who will be responsible for the text (Amal and Dutta)

5. The remaining people in each group will be divided in two: Physical (gesture/movement/dance/tableau etc) and Vocal (song, sound, objects in room etc).
6. Each group will explore the scene as indicated for 15 minutes.
7. Now, you will bring all the Amal and Dutta's together and they will present the scene as a whole just with text. Then all three Physical groups will present their share of the scene. Next all the Vocal/Sound groups will present their share of the scene. By the end, we will have seen the full scene with text, the full scene with just movement, and the full scene with just sound.
8. Now see what happens if you put all the groups together so that we hear the text with sound effects, and movement.

## **Scene**

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### **Section A:**

Amal: Uncle!

Madhab Dutta: Yes, Amal?

Amal: Can't I go out into the courtyard?

Madhab Dutta: No my child.

Amal: Look, look, there where Auntie is cracking open the lentils. There on the broken branches the squirrel, bouncing on his tail, nibbles the lentil bits, crunch, crunch...Can't I just go there?

Madhab Dutta: No my child.

Amal: Oh if only I were a squirrel, it would be wonderful. Uncle, why won't you let me go out?

Madhab Dutta: The healer says you will fall very ill if you step outside.

Amal: How does the healer know that?

Madhab Dutta: Amal, what're you saying? That the healer doesn't know? He reads the fattest books.

Amal: Can you know everything if you read books?

Madhab Dutta: Oh, and you didn't know that!

Amal: *[Sighing]* I haven't read any books, so I don't know.

Madhab Dutta: All the wise men are like you, they never leave their homes.

Amal: They don't go out?

Madhab Dutta: No, where's the time! They sit and read and read with their eyes glued to their books. Little Amal, when you grow older you too will become a pundit. You will read the fattest books... and everyone will be amazed.

Amal: No, no, Uncle, I beg you, at your feet, I don't want to be a pundit... please uncle, I won't be a pundit.

Madhab Dutta: What do you mean, Amal? If I could have been a pundit, I would have been another man.

## **Section B:**

Amal: And I, I want to see everything. Everything!

Madhab Dutta: Will you listen to that! What is there to see?

Amal: Those hills that you see far, far away in the distance, from our window, I want to climb those hills, and go beyond them.

Madhab Dutta: What crazy talk is that! For no rhyme nor reason, "I think I'll climb that mountain." He doesn't know what he is saying. When the mountain stands as a great barrier then you must understand that you are not meant to climb it. Otherwise, what would be the use of piling up all those stones to make such an edifice?

Amal: Uncle, do you think the mountain is telling us not to climb it? I think the blue sky raises its arms and beckons because the earth is mute. Even those who are far away and sit in the afternoon, alone, peering out the window, they too can hear the call. Can't the pundits hear it?

Madhab Dutta: Pundits aren't crazy like you. They don't want to hear it.

Amal: Yesterday I met someone as crazy as me.

Madhab Dutta: Really? Let's hear.

Amal: On his shoulder he had a bamboo stick, and on the end of the bamboo hung a little cloth bag. In his left hand, he carried a water pot. He was wearing an old pair of shoes and walking down that path, through the meadow, towards the mountain. I called out and said "where are you going?" He said "Who knows, wherever." I asked him "Why are you going?" He said "I am looking for work." Uncle, do you have to search for work?

Madhab Dutta: Of course. So many people are always looking for work.

Amal: Excellent. I'll also go looking for work.

Madhab Dutta: And if you can't find work?

Amal: If I can't find work, I'll keep searching. As the traveller with *nagra* shoes walked away, I stood by the door and watched. Then, where the fig tree stands by the little stream, he dropped the bamboo pole and washed his feet in the water. Then, he undid the little bundle, mixed the gram flour he carried in it with some water from the stream and began to eat. When he'd finished, he tied the cloth up again, put the pole back on his shoulder, hitched up his *dhoti* above his knees and crossed the stream. I have told Auntie that one day I, too, will sit by the stream and eat chhatu.

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## **Section C:**

Madhab Dutta: And what did your auntie say?

Amal: Auntie said "first you get well and then we'll take you by that stream and let you feast on chhatu." When will I get well?

Madhab Dutta: It won't be long now, child.

Amal: Not long? When I am well, I am going to go away.

Madhab Dutta: Where will you go?

Amal: When everyone's snoozing in the afternoon behind closed doors, I will step out into many crooked streams and cross them all, looking for work.

Madhab Dutta: Fine! First, you get well, and then...

Amal: And don't tell me to be a pundit, dear Uncle.

Madhab Dutta: Then what do you want to be?

Amal: I can't think of anything now – I'll tell you after I've thought about it.

Madhab Dutta: But, don't be stopping passersby and start speaking with them.

Amal: But I love strangers.

Madhab Dutta: What if they kidnap you?

Amal: Oh, wouldn't that be exciting. Nobody takes me anywhere. Everyone keeps me indoors.

Madhab Dutta: Work to do. I am leaving now. But child, be sure you don't wander outside.

Amal: I won't. But Uncle, I will sit at this window overlooking the road.



# Evaluation Rubrics:

Learning Expectations	Task Specific Criteria	Level 1 (50-59%)	Level 2 (60-69%)	Level 3 (70-79%)	Level 4 (80-100%)
CR2.01 tasks and interrelated responsibilities of individuals in creation of theatre	- meeting obligations	- met limited number of obligations	- met some obligations	- met considerable number of obligations	- always or almost always met obligations
CR1.01 create and develop a character, using a classical style of characterization	- creation of character	- creates on a superficial level (mechanical)	- creates with some degree of competency (some fluidity)	- creates with a considerable degree of competency (fluid)	- creates with a high degree of competence (artistry)
CR1.04 reinterpret characters, using notes in subsequent rehearsals and performances	- flexibility in using conventions taking notes from peers and director	- has frequent difficulty changing to meet new circumstances	- has difficulty changing to meet new circumstances sometimes	- has difficulty changing to meet new circumstances rarely	- has no difficulty changing to meet new circumstances
CR2.02 responsibility of members of ensemble to develop, communicate the intended meaning or theme	- synthesizes previous reflection into the work	- demonstrates limited ability to synthesize previous reflection into the work with difficulty	- demonstrates some ability to synthesize previous reflection into the work to some degree	- demonstrates considerable ability to synthesize previous reflection into the work to a considerable degree	- demonstrates superior ability to synthesize previous reflection into the work to a high degree

Learning Expectations	Task Specific Criteria	Level 1 (50-59%)	Level 2 (60-69%)	Level 3 (70-79%)	Level 4 (80-100%)
CR1.02 convey character through the effective use of voice and movement techniques	- voice is clear and audible	- demonstrates limited ability to use voice to portray character	- demonstrates some ability to use voice to portray character	- demonstrates considerable ability to use voice to portray character	- demonstrates a high degree of ability to use voice to portray character
CR1.02 effective use of movement techniques	- movement enhances meaning	- demonstrates limited ability to use movement to enhance meaning	- demonstrates some ability to use movement to enhance meaning	- demonstrates considerable ability to use movement to enhance meaning	- demonstrates a high degree of ability to use movement to enhance meaning
CR1.06 - apply a set of specific criteria in the process of creating scenes, or dramatic forms for presentation	- integrates distinct style characteristics into presentation	- integrates characteristics of the style of theatre with a limited degree of effectiveness	- integrates characteristics of the style of theatre with some degree of effectiveness	- integrates characteristics of the style of theatre with a considerable degree of effectiveness	- integrates characteristics of the style of theatre with a high degree of effectiveness

# Pleiades Theatre:

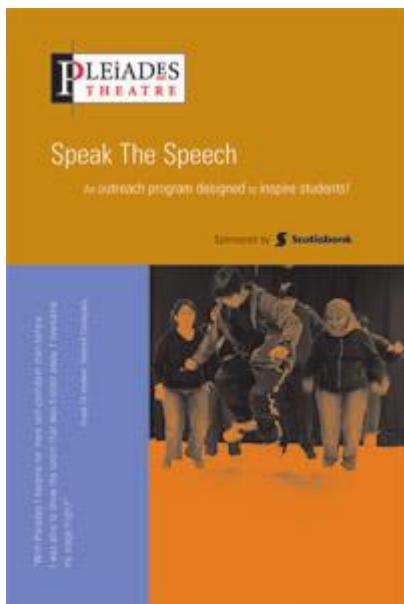
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**PLEIADES THEATRE** produces outstanding works of theatre in translation and also engages youth through educational outreach. **PLEIADES THEATRE** believes that Canadian lives are enriched by the shared stories of world cultures expressed through theatre. We produce plays from the Canadian and international repertoires. We present them in modern, Canadian translations and innovative productions. New or classical, they are selected for their entertainment value and because they introduce writers and styles not widely known to Toronto audiences. Also, through training, workshops and outreach, which we can offer in both English and French, we make a concerted effort to ensure that the creative process of theatre is accessible to young people of all cultural backgrounds. We do this through our unique educational program, **Speak the Speech!** This work is integral to our operation and our philosophy.

## PRODUCTION HISTORY

- 1997 ***Marcel Pursued by the Hounds***, Michel Tremblay, translated by John Van Burek and Bill Glassco, in co-production with Tarragon Theatre; world premiere in English
- 1998 ***The Government Guy*** (adapted from Gogol), Michel Tremblay, translated by John Van Burek, in a French-English co-production with Théâtre français de Toronto; a world premiere in English
- 2000 ***The Game of Love and Chance***, Marivaux, translated by John Van Burek
- 2001 ***The Triumph of Love***, Marivaux, translated by John Van Burek; Canadian premiere in English
- 2002 ***Counterfeit Secrets***, Marivaux, translated by John Van Burek, Canadian premiere in English
- 2003 ***Heart of a Dog***, Mikhaïl Bulgakov, translated and adapted by Anne Nenarokoff, in an English-French co-production with Théâtre français de Toronto, a world premiere in English
- 2004 ***Beaux Gestes & Beautiful Deeds***, Marie-Lynn Hammond, a bilingual play with music
- 2005 ***The Seven Days of Simon Labrosse***, Carole Fréchette, translated by John Murrell, a joint production with the Montreal Young Company, in honour of the late Bill Glassco
- 2005 ***The Amorous Servant***, Carlo Goldoni, translated by John Van Burek, English language world premiere
- 2006 ***Hosanna***, Michel Tremblay, translated by John Van Burek and Bill Glassco
- 2007 ***Dying to be Sick***, Moliere, translated by John Van Burek and Adrienne Clarkson
- 2008 ***Shakuntala***, Adapted by Charles Roy
- 2009 ***La Sagouine***, by Antonine Maillet, translated by John Van Burek

# Speak the Speech!:



At Pleiades, our aim is to bridge cultural divides by bringing people together through the art of theatre. Our exciting, bilingual educational program, Speak the Speech! is driven by the same philosophy. While integrating Ontario Curriculum Guideline expectations into the work, we go into GTA schools and Community Centres where our theatre professionals work alongside teachers, using classical and contemporary text, movement, voice, mask and collective creation to improve literacy, self-expression and confidence. Through the work we do with youth and adult ESL students we not only help improve language and communications skills, but we encourage the development of creative potential through the use of drama. Wherever possible, our workshops focus on a dominant cultural group within a school or neighbourhood. Most of our workshops have been created specifically to empower students to have a deeper understanding of their own cultures and lives, as well as those they are less familiar with. The purpose of this is to stimulate curiosity and cultural inclusion rather than segregation and indifference. The ultimate goal is to encourage young people to use theatre in the telling of their own stories. While providing teachers and youth workers with ideas and exercises they can use in their classrooms, we have helped thousands of young people discover the power of language and the enjoyment of creative work.

We also want to ensure that the creative process of theatre is accessible to young people of all cultural and social backgrounds. We offer significantly discounted ticket prices to young people through our programme **Get Thee to a Theatre!**

In 2009 alone, through workshops, talkbacks, and innovative programming, we reached almost 3000 young people by celebrating the diversity that makes our country what it is.

## **What makes our program special?**

- Programs are offered for grade levels K to 12
- ESL classes can benefit as workshops improve reading and comprehension skills
- Workshops can vary from one period to a series of sessions -all tailored to your needs
- Instructors are bilingual and can design programs specifically for French Immersion, Extended or Core French classes
- Programming is available in-class or after-school
- All programs are offered at a reasonable cost

Sponsored by:



Pleiades Theatre would like to extend a special thank you to Judith Esser at the TCDSB for her continued support of Speak the Speech!

For information about our Speak the Speech! Program, please contact Outreach Director, Lauren Brotman at [outreach@pleiadestheatre.org](mailto:outreach@pleiadestheatre.org) or call (416) 203-1227.