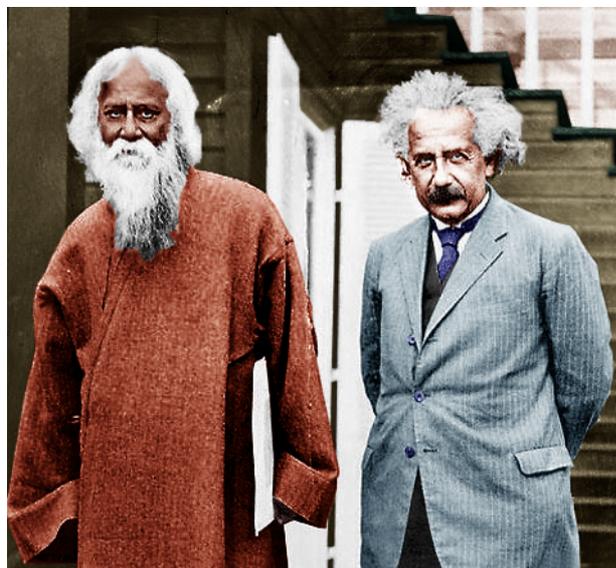


A Pilgrim of Eternity Now Resting in the Soil of the Black Forest Or, The Life of Nitindranath Ganguly, Grandson of Tagore¹

Arabella Unger



Tagore and Einstein

source: Jason Elijah, *These Things Inside*

During the celebrations of the sesquicentennial anniversary of Rabīndranāth Thākur (anglicized *Tagore*; henceforth *Rabindranath* or *The Poet*) in 2011 there were many commemorative (academic) events, especially in Germany. There, over many years, he had inspired a lot of readers. Thinking of Germany it was this fact for which always he expressed his special feelings of gratitude.² Less known, however, and tragically interwoven with his memory of this country was one of the Poet's great personal losses: the death of his only grandson Nitindranath (hereafter: *Nitu*) Gangopadhyay (anglicized *Ganguly*).³ Born in 1911⁴ Nitu was the only son of Rabindranath's daughter Mira Devi (1894-1969; henceforth: *Mira*) and Nagendranath Ganguly (1889-1954) (hereafter: *Nagendranath*).⁵ Nitu and his sister Nandita were Rabindranath's only surviving natural grandchildren. Nandini, his other

granddaughter, had been adopted by the Poet's son Rathindranath, and his wife, Pratima Devi. Rabindranath's close emotional relationship to Nitu and Nandita were based on the fact that they grew up close to their grandfather (DR, p. 238).

¹ The author's kind thanks are directed to the following institutions: Archiv der *Technischen Universität München*, *Stadtarchiv München*, *Stadtarchiv Mainz*, *Gutenberg-Gesellschaft Mainz*, *Archiv der Hochschule für Grafik und Buchkunst Leipzig*, and *Sächsisches Staatsarchiv Leipzig*, to the latter especially for giving their consent to the publication of some of their archival records.

Special acknowledgements are expressed further to the community of Schömburg, in particular to its Mayor Bettina Mettler and to Inga Rochow, for giving information and permission to have a photo of Nitu's grave inserted in this paper. Last but not least Wolfgang Obert merits our extraordinary thanks for accompanying the creation of this paper with warm interest and making it possible to be placed on the his website < <http://www.hp.heimat-schoemberg.de/> >.

² For example, to his German translator Helene Meyer-Franck he wrote (June 14, 1921): "I have had wonderful greetings and love and kindness everywhere in Germany which I shall never forget" (Kämpchen & Paul, p. 68).

³ Besides this spelling found on the tombstone sometimes there exist other versions of the name like *Ganguli* or *Gangulee*.

⁴ The lettering on the tombstone shows December 5, 1911 as date of birth while in some other publications (such as Banerjee, p. 259) "1912" as year of birth is given.

⁵ Nagendranath was born in a high caste Kulin-Brahmin family, the eldest son of Upendranath Ganguly and Ambalika Devi. For Nagendranath's biography, see DR, p. 68, n.1. Ambalika's father Trailokyanath Sanyal had been a famous poet of spiritual songs for the *Brahmo Samaj* (for this religious community, see note 43); (see

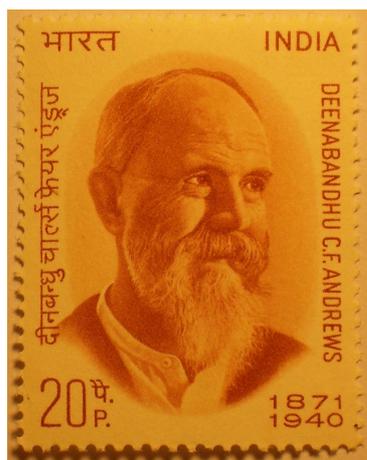
< <https://www.mainstreamweekly.net/article2003.html> > or < https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trailokyanath_Sanyal >, both accessed May 3, 2018).

Nagendranath's siblings also were famous: his brother Dhirendranath Ganguly was one of India's early cinema directors and producers (see < https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dhirendra_Nath_Ganguly >, accessed on May 4, 2018). Both sisters Purnima Banerjee and Aruna Asuf Ali were champions in India's campaign for freedom (see < <https://www.thebetterindia.com/135221/aruna-asaf-ali-quit-india-movement/> >, or < https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Purnima_Banerjee >, both accessed on May 12, 2018).

Even since his baby days Nitu had been of ill health.⁶ Possibly this was the reason that he always had been an object of special love and care. For example, William W. Pearson, a teacher of Rabindranath's school at Shantiniketan, describes the fun his pupils had with Nitu as a silent guest at their lesson:

“Nothing gives the boys of the upper class at Shantiniketan more pleasure than to be allowed to bring to their class the grandson of the poet, a little boy of four who sits through the period quite quietly and solemnly, with only an occasional diversion, if anything interesting is happening near the tree under which the class is being held” (Pearson, p. 68 f.).

In 1909 Nagendranath (together with his brother-in-law Rathindranath and Santosh Chandra Majumdar) were sent by Rabindranath to Urbana (Illinois, USA) for the study of agriculture. On his return early in 1911 Nagendranath had found an employment within the Tagore family estates (then administered by the Poet). But soon his irascible nature and lack of empathy for the needs of the tenants and also his handling of the institution's financial resources did cause many conflicts. Although Rabindranath was constantly trying to mediate eventually Nagendranath wanted to realign his own professional future. He searched for an employment at the University of Calcutta. Therefore the Poet had a word with them on his behalf.⁷ He felt forced to do so for feeling himself responsible for the well-being of the young family, but also because the marriage originally “had been entirely his idea” (DR, p. 226). However, the strain within the marriage was constantly rising so that Mira and the children moved to Shantiniketan: periodically since 1919, and permanently at the end of the 1920s. There Nitu was enrolled at the primary school.⁸



Charles F. Andrews
(Commemorative Postage Stamp on the Birth Centenary of Charles Freer Andrews, issued in 1971). There Andrews is described as "Deenabandhu" (Friend of the Poor People)

Nevertheless, as often as possible Nagendranath tried to take Nitu with him to Calcutta. For this reason the dispute between the parents escalated more and more. Charles F. Andrews⁹, a friend of both the parents and also Rabindranath's confidant, was forced to act as mediator. In a letter (February 21, 1921) he described to the Poet - then travelling in Europe - the rising emotional roller coaster for mother and son provoked by Nagendranath:

“I am anxious about Khoka¹⁰ [...] [I]f Khoka can be here, she [Mira] can have comparative relief to her own mind. But Nogen [Nagendranath] has been finding every excuse to take him away and he will try to do so after the vacation is over.”¹¹

⁶ See Rabindranath's letter (likely of July 1913) to Mira dealing with an eczema of the then eighteen months old Nitu (DR, p. 121). Further (ibid., p. 383) in his letter to Mira (August 12, 1930) the Poet's states that “Nitu does not possess a strong constitution.” See further the mentioning of illness ascribed to Nitu (ibid., p. 212) and finally the record of Nitu's medical examination at Leipzig. There he stated having measles (*Masern*) since his childhood (StA-L).

⁷ (See < <http://sesquicentennial.blogspot.de/2013/01/rabindranath-and-nagendranath-closing.html> >, accessed on May 12, 2018), see further Singh, Dinesh Chandra: *Rabindranath, Nagendranath and Calcutta University*. Unfortunately, this book could not catch the author's eyes.

⁸ (See < <http://sesquicentennial.blogspot.de/2013/01/rabindranath-and-nagendranath-closing.html> >, accessed on May 12, 2018.)

⁹ (See < https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles_Freer_Andrews >, accessed on May 14, 2018.)

As Nagendranath was striving to gain a professorship of the University of Calcutta the latter demanded a higher academic qualification in form of a doctorate.¹² For this purpose Nagendranath accompanied by William W. Pearson¹³ and Nitu on March 19, 1923 was sailing for the United Kingdom.¹⁴ Just before their departure, in a letter (February 2, 1923) Rabindranath had informed Nagendranath of a hint given to him by Pearson proposing a good school for Nitu:

“Pearson informed us of a good school at Lichfield¹⁵ [...] I think Nitu will be benefited there.”¹⁶

But obviously Nagendranath did not show any interest in Nitu’s education, his only aim was vested in getting money. So he tried to sell some manuscripts of the Poet. Unfortunately Pearson who always was wholeheartedly engaged in furthering Nitu had been fatally injured by a train accident causing his death on September 25, 1923. Then, in a letter to Nagendranath (January, 24 1923) Rabindranath made another proposal which apparently was not followed:

“One lady of Paris came to our place at Shantiniketan. She heard about Nitu. She is willing to take the charge of his education in Paris with all necessary expenditure.”¹⁷

Having received his Ph.D. from the University of London Nagendranath together with Nitu returned to India. During his flat-hunting at Calcutta Nagendranath gave Nitu in charge of his younger brother Dhirendranath, thus preventing him to be cared by his mother Mira. Full of disappointment Rabindranath wrote (February 22, 1927) to his son-in-law:

“I thought that you have a definite plan for educating your son Nitu and for this reason I endured silently when you have taken away Nitu from Mira only to disassociate. I don’t think Mira possesses less rights over [...] Nitu than you have per rule. But you have possess some force and no rule will be applicable there. But when you have kept Nitu without any occupation with Dhiren[dranath], I find this will punishing both Nitu and his mother.”¹⁸

We don’t know Nagendranath’s answer. Anyhow, sometimes later Nitu returned to his mother at Shantiniketan. However, he was lacking a lot of time that otherwise could have been spent for his education, not to speak of all his emotional pressures endured during these years.

¹⁰ The literal meaning is “little boy”, but it is also used as a nick name for young males in general.

¹¹ (See < <http://sesquicentinnial.blogspot.de/2012/07/rabindranath-and-nagendranath.html> >, accessed on May 12, 2018.)

¹² (See < <http://sesquicentinnial.blogspot.de/2013/01/rabindranath-and-nagendranath-closing.html> >, accessed on May 13, 2018.)

¹³ (See < https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_W._Pearson >, accessed on May 13, 2018.)

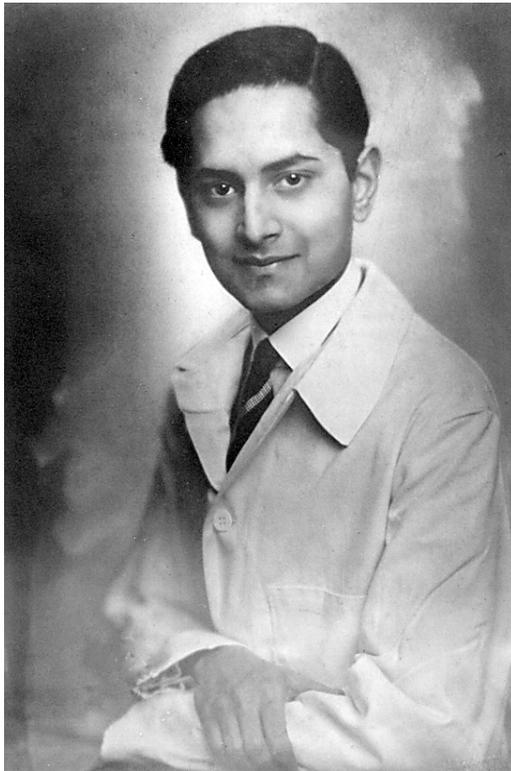
¹⁴ (See < http://sesquicentinnial.blogspot.de/2012/07/rabindranath-and-nagendranath_54.html >, accessed on May 13, 2018.)

¹⁵ Probably Pearson was thinking of the famous grammar school which now is bearing the name King Edward VI school (see < https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/King_Edward_VI_School,_Lichfield >, accessed on May 13, 2018).

¹⁶ (See < <http://sesquicentinnial.blogspot.de/2013/01/> >, accessed on May 13, 2018.)

¹⁷ (See < <http://sesquicentinnial.blogspot.de/2013/01/> >, accessed on May 13, 2018.)

¹⁸ (See < <http://sesquicentinnial.blogspot.de/2013/01/> >, accessed on May 13, 2018.)



Nitindranath Ganguly
(Photo, Rabindra Bhavana, Shantiniketan)
Courtesy: Chhanda Chatterjee

Furthermore, we have no idea of Nitu's interest to undergo a professional training in printing. However, it may be assumed that in some way this seemed to be convenient for Rabindranath, too. The latter's educational project *Visva-Bharati*¹⁹ at this time still was in its build-up phase. Special publications were established²⁰, for the documentation of the activities of the institution and its founder. But there was also the need of some sort of self advertisement via these publications because the institution was private-run and needed donors. It had becoming state-run only after the death of the Poet in 1951. For that purpose there existed a growing need for a good printing quality of their publications.²¹ Some years before benevolent citizens of Lincoln (Nebraska/USA) had given a printing press as a present to Visva-Bharati under the condition that the latter should pay the cost of transport (DR, p. 196, n. 2). In addition the technique of printing had been part of the syllabus of the *Siksha Satra*²², the reform orientated more practical school of Visva-Bharati, located at the *Institute of Rural Reconstruction*²³ at nearby Sriniketan (Elmhirst, p. 70).

Surely it was Rabindranath's plan for a later date to ensure the inclusion of Nitu into the whole editorial work of Visva Bharati without limiting his activity to the technical process. Therefore, on his trip to Germany in 1930 the Poet tried to find out the best places for Nitu's education. To Mira he wrote ((August 12, 1930):

"You may not be aware be aware for printing and publishing there is no better place than Germany. The cities of Munich and Leipzig are world famous for it [...] If he [Nitu] begins his training in Munich, he can complete it in Leipzig. He can also carry on with his general education here - so that he will become not only a printer but a well-rounded person. He will seriously learn both literature and art and the technical aspects of printing. In addition there is the great skill of publishing - he will master that" (DR, p. 383).

As to the use of traditional Indian printing press the Poet anticipated health problems for Nitu, as he wrote to Mira in the same letter:

¹⁹ (See < https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Visva-Bharati_University >, accessed on May 20, 2018.)

²⁰ E.g., *The Visva-Bharati Quarterly* and *Bulletin Visva-Bharati*.

²¹ At this point it may be interesting to know that in 1934 Rabindranath received a letter from Arthur Probsthain, an "oriental publisher in London, suggesting that a young German printer friend of his be invited to Bengal to start printing schools and improve the quality of publishing by the University of Calcutta, 'whose books are published in a matter totally unworthy of a real university'". For the Poet his secretary replied "that Shantiniketan had no resources for this and that [the Poet] was 'keenly conscious of our deficiency in the line und it is precisely because of this, that he sent his grandson [...] over to Germany to study the latest methods of printing in Europe. Unfortunately he died at the early age of 20 of consumption.'" (DR, p. 383).

²² (See < <http://www.visvabharati.ac.in/SikshaSatra.html> >, accessed on May 22, 2018.)

²³ (See < <http://www.visvabharati.ac.in/Sriniketan.html> >, accessed on May 15, 2018.)

“[...] I did not like the look of Nitu at all before I left for Europe. Everyone knows that in our climate to work in a stuffy printing press is unhealthy. Nitu does not possess a strong constitution, and at this age, when he his growing, the strain is not good for him” (ibid.).

Concerning Nitu’s expenses for cost of study and living which the Poet then estimated to come to fifty or sixty Rupees per month Rabindranath in the same letter to Mira referred to friends who had promised support:

“Such an opportunity is not available to everyone, it is possible only because of the respect that people here have for me. Moreover, there is no lack of local people willing to look after Nitu as if he were part of their own family. If you waste such a chance, you will doing Nitu a real injustice” (ibid.).

As to the best time for Nitu to depart for Germany the Poet addressed Mira further:

“Were you send him in September when you get this letter of mine, I could myself start him off while I am here. But if sending him so soon is simply not possible, then to wait until March would not be a bad plan. If that is what you jointly decide, then keep Nitu at Shantiniketan and let him have intensive practice in German for a few months. He does not need to learn mathematics, so he need not be anxious about that” (ibid.).

Thus, in April 1931 Nitu left for Germany (DR, p. 384, n. 4). From May 9, 1931 on he was registered at the resident’s registration office of the city of Munich (Fürther Strasse 58, student hostel) (Stadtarchiv München). Several investigations of the author to find a document showing Nitu’s formal registration at the *Höhere Technische Lehranstalt der Stadt München*²⁴ were not successful. But we know that Nitu in summer of 1931 had become a witness of some political riots (*Universitätskrawalle*) organized by Nazi students in Munich.²⁵

In a letter to Nitu (July 31, 1931) the Poet was reasoning on the political situation in Europe seeing the rise of a danger for (personal) freedom:

“ Just as weak people struck by poverty can be gripped by epidemics, so the spread of famine in Europe is enabling Fascism and Bolshevism to get a strong hold. Both are symptoms of unhealthiness. No sane person can regard the suppression of independent thinking as something beneficial to man [...] Man’s brutality to man makes me shudder [...] “ (DR, p. 403).

He instantly is begging Nitu not letting himself being involved therein:

“Whatever you do, do not become part of this cannibal party. Europe today is denying her own greatness. Our own people - Bengalis especially - if they can do nothing else, can imitate; and many of them are busy aping this European malaise. Keep yourself aloof from this contagion of mimicry. There are sure to be many of these Indians with possessed minds where you are. Don’t associate with them, carry on working on your own” (ibid.).

Probably in some earlier letter Nitu had told his grandfather of having started to learn how to play the violin because the Poet refers to this in the following part of this letter:

“I [...] don’t feel much enthusiasm for your learning the violin. But the cello appeals to me quite a lot. I think it is a good instrument for playing our music. But what you say is quite true - to pick up any of these instruments will take

²⁴ Nowadays this institution is part of the *Hochschule für angewandte Wissenschaften München* (see < https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hochschule_f%C3%BCr_angewandte_Wissenschaften_M%C3%BCnchen >, accessed at May 28, 2018).

²⁵ The riots were caused out of a remark of a German professor, Hans Nawiasky, in one of his lectures. There he made a comparison between the Treaty of Versailles of 1919 which many Germans regarded as an agreement of the victorious powers forced upon them (*Diktatfrieden*) versus a similar peace treaty which earlier in 1918 the Germans had forced upon Russia at Brest-Litowsk. The Nazi students regarded this comparison as an offence and rioted in a way that the university had to be closed for some days (see < https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/M%C3%BCchner_Universit%C3%A4tskrawalle >, accessed on May 14, 2018).

up so much time that your other studies will suffer. So better postpone it. The most important thing for your work is to improve your design skills. When you return you will be able to follow this line” (ibid.).²⁶

On September 9, 1931 Nitu moved from Munich to Mainz (Stadtarchiv München). It may be assumed that there he intended to search contact with the *Gutenberg-Gesellschaft* (Gutenberg Society²⁷), named after the inventor of the art of book printing. Nitu succeeded in having included a small essay into their Yearbook of 1932. ([page 1](#) - [page 2](#)) There he pleaded for “local schools of printing in India” and for the indigenous art of producing books (Ganguly, p. 269):

“The birth of national printing can never be expected from the government printing offices, where the work produced such as official reports etc. are no typographical masterpieces. Besides the English style is strictly adhered to [...] In [...] Bengal [...] I have seen some books, neatly printed, the pages rich with ornaments, decorations, and bound in an Indian motif - altogether a beautiful production, which proved how the artist can help the printer and how important it is to co-operate with each other” (Ganguly, p. 270).

On March 1, 1932 Nitu registered at the then *Staatliche Akademie für graphische Künste und Buchgewerbe*²⁸ (Academy of Graphical Arts and Book Trade) at Leipzig. He enrolled for the subject of *Reproduktionsverfahren* (reprography).²⁹ His Professor was Carl Blecher (1876 - ?) who after having studied Chemistry served (e.g., in the winter term 1903-04) as a permanent Assistant to Professor Dr Adolf Miethe who then had been “professor of photography, photochemistry, and spectral analysis” at the “Royal Technical University” (*Königlich Technische Hochschule*) in Berlin. On April 1, 1926 Blecher joined the Leipzig Academy working - till his retirement in 1943 - as professor “for photomechanical reproduction and printing.”³⁰ There, his special interest had been vested “in the exact reproduction in magazines and books of images captured on the then-new color transparency film. Connected with this effort, he developed a color order system” (Kuehni & Schwarz, p. 199).³¹

²⁶ We know of Nitu’s musical talent out of an entry of Leonard K. Elmhirst in his diary (January 23, 1922). There he was referring to a tea party celebrating the visit of a rich Dutch lady, Mrs. Mary van Eeghen, which herself was very fond of Rabindranath’s own music which she taught at Shantiniketan. During his visit in the Netherlands in 1921 she had hosted the Poet and his party in her house. Elmhirst tells us that this evening in Shantiniketan Nitu, then aged ten, together with Rabindranath and Mrs. van Eeghen entertained with music (see < <http://sesquicentennial.blogspot.de/2012/06/surul-mary-van-eeghen-and-rabindranath.html> >, accessed on May 14, 2018).

²⁷ (See < <http://www.gutenberg-gesellschaft.de/en/the-society/> >, accessed on May 29, 2018.)

²⁸ E-Mail message to the author (March 29, 2012) by Vincent Klotzsche from the archive of the *Hochschule für Grafik und Buchkunst*. For this institution, (see < https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hochschule_f%C3%BCr_Grafik_und_Buchkunst_Leipzig >, accessed on May 4, 2018).

²⁹ According to the entry in the records of the medical entrance examination dating from March, 14 1932 (StA-L).

³⁰ (See < <http://www.matrikel.uzh.ch/active/static/2511.htm> >); see further < http://www.google.de/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=4&ved=2ahUKewiEh5CIpPncAhVQ6KQKHcg_AQQOFjADegQIBxAC&url=http%3A%2F%2Fubsrvgoobi2.ub.tu-berlin.de%2Fviewer%2Ffile%3Bjsessionid%3D6803F1525F42EFDEF7DC307EF9C7EB47%3Fpi%3D2423%26file%3DTUB_VV_1903_1904.pdf&usg=AOvVaw2apgfJoKAHeOuoppyrn4Qe > [page 16]; see further < https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Adolf_Miethe >, all three accessed on August 18, 2018). E-Mail message to the author (September 11, 2018) by Julia Blume from the archive of the *Hochschule für Grafik und Buchkunst*.

³¹ Blecher had been a respected lecturer with much practical experience. He was famous for his classic manual *Lehrbuch der Reproduktionstechnik. Mit ausschließlicher Berücksichtigung der auf photographischer Grundlage beruhenden Methoden zur ein- und mehrfarbigen Wiedergabe von Bildern durch Druck. Bd. 1 (Einleitung und Theoretischer Teil)*. Halle a.d.S. 1908. Furthermore, he had been the inventor of the first arc gravure printing machine, produced in 1908 by Kempe at Nuremberg (see < <http://www.arbeitskreis-druckgeschichte.de/downloads/zeitleisteborisfuchs.de> >, accessed on May 15, 2018).

In the documents on the medical entrance examination Nitu is described as being of 1.80 meters in size (thin, narrow). In regard to his lung the diagnosis was “tuberculosis combined with persistent catarrh.” The medical summary states that first the future development of the catarrh had to be waited for. However, after a short time Nitu had to interrupt his studies probably caused by the progress of the tuberculosis. Practically, he could not complete his first term.³² In a hand-written letter in fluent German (July 13, 1932) ([page 1](#) – [page 2](#) - [Professor's response - Translation of letters](#)) which he sent to Blecher from his Leipzig residence (Haydnstrasse 12) Nitu expressed this thanks for letting him have a folder of papers the content of which due to his ill health he was not able to transcribe.³³ In this letter he further informs Blecher that on Monday next (July 18, 1932) he intended to leave Leipzig for Schömberg³⁴ hoping to get a successful cure of his tuberculosis there. Referring to the prospects for his health Nitu states he was hoping to be able to report anything but good news to the professor. Now, he said, he was feeling able to travel to the Black Forest to get a “complete recovery” there (StA-L). It must remain open for us to judge whether Nitu’s optimism had been congruent with his own inner estimation on his state of health.

Thus, Nitu accompanied by an Indian doctor proceeded to Schömberg. It is said that Nitu had been treated in the [Neue Heilanstalt Schömberg](#) (at present *Psychiatrische Fachklinik Schömberg*) and accommodated at the [Villa Elven](#).³⁵

In the meantime at home Nitu’s family had become conscious on the seriousness of his state of health. In a letter (July 2, 1932) addressed to the artist and art dealer Mukul Chandra Dey³⁶ Rabindranath is reminding him to proceed with the sale of his paintings:

“[T]he difficult time forces me to write. You know that my zamindari³⁷ has stopped functioning. Even then I was not perturbed. But (now) I have received information from Germany that Nitu is affected with consumption. I have to send Mira there. Therefore, at this difficult hour, I am compelled to remind you of my due payment.”

Charles F. Andrews at this time just was visiting his homeland, the United Kingdom. His biographers describe the challenge that he had to face due to the worsening of Nitu’s physical condition:

“Suddenly there came a tragic call for help. Tagore’s only grandson, Nitu, then a student in Germany, was struck down with tuberculosis. He was dying, and the parents had to be summoned. Andrews had known the boy from

³² The list of his marks bears the entry „ill“ (E-Mail message to the author (April 4, 2012) by StA-L).

³³ In this folder probably there were parts of Blecher’s lecture manuscripts, see the copy of Blecher’s letter to Nitu (July 15, 1932) (StA -L).

³⁴ Schömberg, situated on the northern edge of the Black Forest at this time had been a famous health resort especially for the curement of tuberculosis (Schütz, p. 42 f.), (see also < [https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sch%C3%B6mberg_\(Landkreis_Calw\)](https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sch%C3%B6mberg_(Landkreis_Calw)) >, accessed May 14, 2018).

The community is part of the administrative district of Calw (*Landkreis Calw*) and therefore situated in the homeland of the famous writer Hermann Hesse and his grandfather the noted missionary and author of the first Malayalam dictionary, Hermann Gundert.

³⁵ E-Mail message (July 4, 2013) by Wolfgang Obert, local historian. The caption of an illustration showing the Villa Elven reads that already in 1931 Nitu had moved to this building “accompanied by 31 persons, among them an Indian doctor” (Bertsch, p. 31). Thus, there is a possibility that Nitu had been at Schömberg even earlier. Unfortunately, the records of the hospital are no longer available.

³⁶ (See < <http://www.chitralkha.org/articles/rabindranath-tagore/rabindranath-tagores-exhibition> >, accessed on May 15, 2018.)

³⁷ At this time Rabindranath already had transferred the function of *zamindari* (landowner) to his son Rathindranath (DR, p. 393, n. 5) and strived to change his life style, as he was writing to his son (October 31, 1930): “It is time to change our lives radically, and I hope I can do so with a contented heart“ (DR, p. 393). For himself he decided “that he must live in a mud cottage” (Kripalani, p. 409).

childhood, and the parents were his friends. During the agonising days that followed, he lifted every possible burden from the stricken father and mother. It was he who read the burial service in the little Black Forest churchyard, and, indescribably weary as he was, strove to comfort those in India by long letters telling of the affection with which they had all been surrounded, and the beauty of the lad's last resting place. Andrews' letters to friends in England reveal the depth to which this tragedy had stirred him. The beauty of the mountains around brought no comfort then; the poignant contrast between their majestic peace and the agony he was called upon to witness and to share was well-nigh intolerable. Comfort lay elsewhere - in the Cross. Out of the suffering which had strained his faith to its foundations, came the new book, *Christ in the Silence*. The outline of it had sprung clear to his brain on a sleepless night journey through Germany as he hurried to Nitu's side, and he knew that it had been kindled to a living power by the searching experience which had followed. When all was over he went from the Black Forest to Switzerland to call over both parents³⁸ and also to give them spiritual support" (Chaturvedi & Sykes, p. 258).

Nitu's death came on August 7, 1932 imminently caused by pneumonia.³⁹ Via telegram Rabindranath was informed of it on August 8, 1932. At this time he was just reading in Andrews' spiritual autobiography *What I owe to Christ*.⁴⁰ The latter had written to the Poet (August 7, 1932) trying to comfort him:

"And you, my dearest Gurudev⁴¹, have the very hardest lot of all - to remain behind and wait and know that suffering is going on and yet be unable to help" (DR, p. 410 f.).

On the day he heard of Nitu's death Rabindranath noted the following lines:⁴²

"On this day of the accident I say to my pencil.
Do not cause any shame.
Do not hold in front
Of everyone's eyes
The shock that did not strike against everyone.
Do not hide your face in the darkness,
Do not lock up your door with a bolt.
Do not be stingy."

Two days earlier, on August 6, 1932 in premonition of Nitu's death Rabindranath wrote a poem addressing it to *Durbhagini* (the woman stricken by fate). There he is imagining "his daughter standing before him and he cannot look her in the face. Her eyes have been drained of tears and there is only a persistent question in them: Why, o Why" (Kripalani, p. 409).

³⁸ Probably Nagendranath did arrive immediately from the United Kingdom where he had his permanent residence since 1932 (DR, p. 68, n. 1).

³⁹ According to the hand-written entry at the records of the medical examination at Leipzig (StA-L).

⁴⁰ London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1932. While writing his book, Andrews decided to dedicate all royalties which proved to be substantial to Shantinikan. The sum "also assisted with the funeral and other arrangements for Nitindranath, Mira and Nagendranath in July-Aug[ust] 1932" (DR, p. 410, n. 1).

⁴¹ A respectful form of addressing the Poet, its literal meaning is "Divine Teacher".

⁴² (See the photographic reproduction of the Bengal original: < <http://sesquicentennial.blogspot.de/2013/03/grand-son-nitindra-ganguly-son-of-mira.html> >, accessed on May 16, 2018). Special gratuities go to Carmen Brandt for translating the Poet's lines from the Bengali.

On August 8, 1932 the funeral service⁴³ was celebrated by Andrews.⁴⁴ Having returned to the UK after the death of Nitu he informed the then British Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald,⁴⁵ an old friend of Visva-Bharati, of Nitu's death (DR, p. 415). His letter of condolence was answered by the Poet on September 24, 1932:

“[Nitu] was young, lovable and promising. My sorrow is for him as well as for his mother who is stricken sore. However, having travelled a long path of life I have learnt the lesson of death and have received the training which enables to be reconciled to the inevitable” (DR, 416).⁴⁶

Some weeks earlier on August 28, 1932 he had written to Mira then on her way home from Germany:

“I deeply loved Nitu, and when I thought of you, an intense sorrow oppressed me. But I am ashamed to trivialise my grief before the whole world. [...] I must cope with my grief myself. [...] I was afraid lest everyone to console me, and that is why for a few days, I forbade anyone to come near me. [...] I did not want to drop any of my duties and so exhibit my feelings. The night before Shami⁴⁷ departed, I told myself with all my heart that he must have a smooth voyage into the Great Beyond - my grief must not hold him back even a little. In the same way, when I heard that Nitu had left us, for days I repeated to myself that I had no responsibility left, except to pray that he should find well-being in that Infinite to which he has gone” (DR, p. 411).

As to his way to sublimate his grief by continuing with his work the Poet wrote:

“My work for everyone continues [...] I must have the courage, not to grow weary, must allow no thread to be broken anywhere - I must freely accept what has happened, and I must not hesitate to welcome what is to come” (ibid.).

As always the Poet now was confronted with new challenges having tried for the first time to use the free metre scheme for his poetry. Out of this resulted his new book *Punasha* (Postscript) published in 1932 and dedicated to the memory of Nitu (Kripalani, p. 494).

⁴³ E-Mail message by Inga Rochow (July 9, 2013). Although Nitu at his registration at Munich called himself a “Hindu” (Stadtarchiv München) it is well known that whole Tagore family always professed being followers of the *Brahmo Samaj*, a reform movement within Hinduism with a liturgy of their own (see < https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brahmo_Samaj >, accessed May, 16 2018).

According to their regulations in regard to the funeral both ways, burial or cremation of the corpse, were allowed, although in India normally cremation is preferred (see < <http://www.thebrahmosamaj.net/liturgy/funeral.html> >, accessed May 16, 2018).

⁴⁴ As the Brahmo Samaj had some similarities with Christian traditions, especially the Unitarians, Rabindranath probably did not have any reservations allowing Andrews to celebrate the funeral rites for Nitu in a Christian way. Furthermore, during his long time stay in India with her multitude of religions Andrews had learned not to become Christian fundamentalist. He was coined by his relationship to many different personalities, such as his friends, Rabindranath and Mohandas K. (*Mahatma*) Gandhi, but also Albert Schweitzer, the great theologian and friend of humans and animals alike (Chaturvedi & Sykes, pp. 89,198). Often Andrews confessed having a vision of Christ in an Indian character: “Christ the Jewish peasant lived instinctively, as part of his own nature, this non-Jewish ideal of *ahimsa*, which is so akin to Hinduism” (Chaturvedi & Sykes, p. 102). Ahimsa, not only in Hinduism, but also in Buddhism and in Jainism is the ideal of “noninjury [...] toward all living beings” (Grimes, p. 20).

⁴⁵ Mac Donald had been a “[p]olitical patron of Andrews (DR, p. 415)” and also a friend of Shantiniketan which he had visited first in 1913 (Mukherjee, p. 65).

⁴⁶ During his long life the Poet had to lament the loss of many members of his family. His faith always helped him to sublimate these experiences in a productive way. Even in 1911 he did express this belief of a productive connection between life and death, writing to his daughter-in-law Pratima who then had to bear the loss of her mother: “[U]nless we see death conjoined with life, we cannot see truly” (DR, p. 83).

⁴⁷ Here Rabindranath is referring to his son Shamindranath who died in 1907, aged eleven (DR, p. 411 n. 2).

After this diversion we return to Nitu's tomb. The inscription on the gravestone (in German and English) had been ordered by Mira and Rabindranath. It consisted of letters in bronze. The English version reads as follows:



Om./
Nitendra Nath Ganguly/
Born December 5th 1911. Calcutta, India./
Passed away August 7th 1932./
To the Loving Memory of Nitu. My dear suffering boy.
Mira Tagore/
My Nitu. You are now a pilgrim of Eternity. Baba.⁴⁸

[Nitindranath Ganguly's tomb](#)
at Schömberg cemetery

From this time on the community of Schömberg has cared for the maintenance of Nitu's grave. Twenty years later, in 1952, a renovation took place financed by the Indian embassy in Germany, then residing at Bonn. At the beginning of the 1990s the gravestone began to crumble and some bronze letters got lost. Gradually the tomb began to look shabby. In 1996, as consequence of a communal planning for a new design of the cemetery the grave almost would have been disbanded.



Bei der Übergabe vor dem restaurierten Grabmal von links Klaus Indefrey; Hanne Indefrey; der indische Botschafter in Bonn, Satinder Kumar Lambah; Georg Stoll, die erste Stellvertreterin des Bürgermeisters, Marga Fader; Oswin Linder; Karl-Heinz Bertsch; die Herren Zerhusen und Fahrner von den Fischer-Werken Waldachtal, der Sponsorenfirma und Werner Sauer, Kassier des Heimat- und Geschichtsvereins.

Inauguration of the renovated tomb 1998
(Photo, source Schütz, p. 43)

feel honoured to care for the future maintenance of the grave in the same way as they did in the past (Schütz, p. 42 f.).

But fortunately some citizens took the initiative in trying to preserve the tomb. Among these were Karl-Heinz Bertsch then chairman of the association for promoting local history (*Geschichts- und Heimatverein*) who succeeded in finding as project partner Hans-Joachim Fuchtel, Member of the German Parliament (*Deutscher Bundestag*) and also representing the constituency which Schömberg is part of. The latter contacted the Indian embassy in Germany (now residing at Berlin) and also a regional sponsor the project, Fischer Works at Waldachtal, famous for its automotive systems and invention of the dowel. The inauguration of the restored grave took place on May 8, 1998. Speaking for the community then Deputy Mayor Marga Fader assured that they would

⁴⁸ *OM* (more precisely *AUM*) represents the holy syllable derived from the Sanskrit language and used in Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism. "It represents the Divine and the power of God. It is a sound symbol for the ultimate Reality" (Grimes, p. 216). "Baba" in Bengali means "Father".

Whether the story of Nitu possibly would have caused the arrival of some sort of South Asian spirit breathing at Schömberg is difficult to say. Nevertheless, it is a fact that since some years the community has intensive relations with the Himalayan kingdom of Bhutan after the adoption of Bhutan's model of Gross National Happiness⁴⁹ as their own motto. Thus, they are calling themselves *Glücksgemeinde* (community of fortune). In her model Bhutan is striving for a gross national fortune for her citizens which means having a constant symmetry of economic growth and sustainable development. For her part Schömberg is affirming again and again steadily seeking inspiration from Bhutan in regard to achieve (respectively maintain) this symmetry.⁵⁰

In his concept of rural development the Poet himself long before had anticipated a similar model:

“In the service of our country our first duty must be to work for the welfare of the mass people - to make them healthy in body and mind, happy in spirit; to foster their self-respect to bring beauty in their daily work, their daily life; to show them the way to strife together, in mutual respect, for mutual welfare” (Tagore, p. 294).

During the last years there were many delegations from India and Bangladesh which, always accompanied by Hans-Joachim Fuchtel, had visited Nitu's tomb such paying tribute also to his grandfather.⁵¹ In a certain sense such they were able to find some sort of home away from home. For in their daily life Rabindranath is still omnipresent. It was he who was chosen to give to both nations the texts and melodies of their respective national anthems (Zingel, p. xii-ix). But in a more special way common people there know his songs even if they possibly may not be able to read his texts:

“A young farmer whom we met on his field, which was green with young paddy, wanted to greet us with warmth. He spontaneously burst in a Tagore song [...]” (Kämpchen, p. 70).

In recent years the community of Schömberg began to estimate the rising resonance which it found with her obligation to care for the maintenance of the grave now and in the future. A sign for this feeling may be the inauguration of a commemorative plaque for Nitu on May 11. 2018, donated by the community and engaged citizens for the promotion of local history.⁵²

For all this Schömberg merits the perpetual gratitude not only of the friends of the Poet's work or the citizens of India and Bangladesh alike, but even of the whole world. In the last stanza of one of his most famous songs Rabindranath succeeded in bridging the borders between the hemispheres as did his grandson now a permanent guest resting at Schömberg (Singh, p. X):⁵³

“Journeying across
The whole earth,
In your country
I have arrived -
A guest at your door
O dweller of an alien land.”

⁴⁹ (See < https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gross_National_Happiness >, accessed on May 31, 2018.)

⁵⁰ (See < <https://www.schoemberg.de/de/Gl%C3%BCck/Die-Idee> >, accessed on May 16, 2018.)

⁵¹ (See < <https://www.schwarzwaelder-bote.de/inhalt.schoemberg-botschafterin-schlaegt-bruecke-zu-indien.2cdb9110-f869-4335-a260-160f945e576b.html> >, or see further < <https://www.schwarzwaelder-bote.de/inhalt.schoemberg-delegation-aus-bangladesh-besucht-besonderes-grab.ca88b6a8-f5b1-451f-bce1-53d3008bebbb.html> >, both accessed on August 12, 2018).

⁵² (See < <https://www.schwarzwaelder-bote.de/inhalt.schoemberg-erinnerung-an-nitindra-nath-ganguly-geschaffen.fd922638-442a-497a-a3ec-cc0a19b0f10c.html> >, accessed on June 30, 2018.)

⁵³ This song, written in 1895, begins with the following lines (it has no formal title): *Ami Chini Go Chini Tomarey Ogo Bideshini Go Chini* [...].

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