Part 1: The „Indian Prince“ Dwarkanath Tagore and Queen Victoria

Part 2: The „Indian Goethe“ Rabindranath Tagore in Germany

The two-part documentary (2 x 45 Min.) depicts the touching journey of an Indian family living in Berlin since 40 years - a journey tracing the footsteps of their renowned forefathers: The Tagores. It will highlight the culture-historical importance of the Tagores in the context of European-Indian and German-Indian relations. The occasion for this documentary is to commemorate the 150th birth anniversary (7th May 2011) as well as the 70th death anniversary (7th August 2011) of the Nobel Prize laureate Rabindranath Tagore.

The Tagores - Modern mentors and national heros of ancient India

The Tagores are considered to be the most successful Bengali family from the state of Bengal (nowadays divided into West Bengal and Bangladesh) in the last 300 years. The Tagores, who were unusually progressive, open-minded and widely travelled family, gave birth to many artists, poets, musicians, philosophers as well as businessmen, social-, cultural- and religious reformers of international repute. As early as in the 18th century they supported reform movements in India and protested against child marriage and burning of widows (sati).

Dwarkanath Tagore was already considered as a pioneer of Indian business society in the 19th century for his active participation in the international commercial world. As a member of the East India Company he enjoyed a high esteem in the British royal family and developed a “special relationship” with Queen Victoria.

Rabindranath Tagore is the most internationally renowned member of this family. He is the first Asian to win a Nobel Prize. He composed the national anthem of India and Bangladesh. He developed good contacts with European personalities like Albert Einstein. Tagore and Einstein laid the foundation stone for our present day cultural and academic exchanges leading to better international relations.

The Tagores - German descendents in today’s Berlin

V.K. who has been living in Berlin for 40 years is a descendant of the illustrious Tagore family. Knowing he doesn't have much time due to his deteriorating health conditions - he wishes to get his daughters acquainted with his family backgrounds and their history. His daughters are 22 and 24 years old, both born and brought-up in Germany. He wishes to give them personally a glimpse of their glorious past and to make them aware of the important role his family played in laying the foundation stone for European-Indian and German-Indian relations. The 64-year old man and his daughters go on a journey back to the time of his forefathers. Our film-team will accompany the family during their journey so the audience will have an insight into life style and work of the Tagores.

The Tagores - A documentation of their journey in the past

V.K. takes his daughters to show the footprints of their forefathers left in the historical places in Germany, England and in India. For the first time he introduces some of their relatives living in his birth place in Kolkata, like the film stars Sharmila Tagore and her son Saif Ali Khan. They share family anecdotes, admire portraits of their forefathers and scroll through a photo
album and old newspaper articles. They dwell in reminiscences and you can visualize the year 1794, the birth year of the legendary forefather, Prince Dwarkanath Tagore. The viewers can live the historical life of the Tagores with the help of Re-Enactments, Archive and film clippings from German and Indian films.

The Tagores - Interview with the experts
The Humboldt University is considered to be the cradle of Indology in Europe. Prof. Dr. Oesterheld from the department of Indology, Tagore specialist Dr. Martin Kämpchen and president of Tagore-Einstein Council Dr. Sunil Sen Gupta will contribute their knowledge in both parts of the documentary. We will also meet V.K. and his daughters with other contemporary individuals and biographers > Interviews.

The Tagores - The sound track
Already in 1880/90 Rabindranath Tagore and his nephew Raja Sourindro Mohun Tagore started to compose and perform their first Indian musical comedies on stages and operas. European composers like Bach, Tschaikowski, Beethoven and others inspired them. The music researcher and composer Daniel Laumans has researched the influences of Tagore’s compositions and transformed them for the sound track.

Part 1: „The Indian prince“ Dwarkanath Tagore and Queen Victoria
Die Tagores - In London
V.K. und his daughters visit the graveyard of their forefather Dwarkanath Tagore (1794 Kolkata - †01.08.1846 London). They also visit Dwarkanath’s palace near London and see his private steam yacht, which docked at the East India Dock for the first time in 1842. Interviews, Re-Enactments and archive photos follow.

The Tagores - The Prince Dwarkanath Tagore
Dwarkanath, the legendary founder of the Tagore-Dynasty is still known in India as the “fabulous prince Dwarkanath Tagore”. This is not because of his luxurious life style, like the Maharajas but also because of his intimate relationship with Queen Victoria (“24.05.1819 – †22.01.1901). He is one of the first innovative Indian businessmen with international fame. He established Anglo-Indian firms and banks and operated worldwide, especially with Europeans. At his matured age and at the peak of his business, he decided to follow the path of his friend, a radical leader of modern reform movement “Brahmo Samaj”, Raja Rammohan Roy towards Europe.

The Tagore - Dwarkanath and the Queen
On 09.01.1842 this is how it stands: The INDIA, his own steam yacht penetrates the sea. After six months, when he arrived in London he was warmly welcomed by the 23 year old Queen, belonging to the “Haus Hannover”. In the next five months Dwarkanath and the Queen became closer to each other. In the beginning they just met for some official meetings and later - regularly for private audiences. To show her affection, she presented him a medal bearing her own portrait. After returning to India he enjoyed not only a high position in East India, but also the position of a Zameendar, a big landlord and a tax collector. The British colonial government presented him a special train carriage in white colour with his initials “DNT”. In spite of those privileges and recognitions, he was still plagued by financial worries. In March 1845 he went to England for the last time and died in August 1846 leaving behind a huge debt. His body was buried there and only his heart was brought to Kolkata to be burned in a ritual ceremony.
R.K remembers that his grandmother told him about the train carriage and about a family album which contains original letters of the Queen written to Dwarkanath.

**The Tagores - Family residence „Jorasanko“ in Kolkata**

V.K. and his daughters travel to Kolkata and they visit their traditional family residence „Jorasanko“. Their nephew, who lives there, shows this glorious house, which was bought by Dwarkanath Tagore in the 19th century and it is now used as a Tagore museum. This antique house is astonishingly furnished in a European style. V.K. says the Tagores had adopted European dresses, they ate European foods, and they smoked and drank alcohol - a very unusual and liberal life style in Kolkata for that time. Since 1961 the Rabindra Bharati University is also situated in the same compound, it was founded on the occasion of Rabindranath Tagore’s birth centenary.

**The Tagores - And the Indian Art house films**

In Jorasankos V.K. meets with his daughters and the film stars Sharmila Tagore and her son Saif Ali Khan. They all belong to the family of Dwarkanath Tagore. Although the profession of a film star does not have as high a reputation as the Tagore family feels they deserve, Sharmila (Rinku) and her sister (Tinku) achieved a very unusual film career. In the film “Kabuliwala” (The man from Kabul), written by Rabindranath Tagore, Tinku Tagore, then aged only 9 years, played the role of a female main character. This film “Kabuliwala” won the Silver Bear in 1957 as a first ever Indian film participating at the German international film festival “Berlinale”. V.K. and his daughters are proud of this achievement.

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**Part 2: The „Indian Goethe“ Rabindranath Tagore in Germany**

Rabindranath = Master of sun/ Tagore (Thakur hindi) = Lord, master or god.

**The Tagores - Memorials of Rabindranath Tagore in today’s India.**

After visiting the Tagore museum in Kolkata (end of first part) V.K. shows his daughters the existing memorials in the pulsating city of millions, Kolkata. He narrates on Rabindranath Tagore:

Rabindranath Tagore (*7.5.1861 - †7.8.1941, was considered as a universal genius. He was not only famous as a successful poet, philosopher, composer and musician but also because of his engagement in the field of science and politics and his active participation in cultural and civil issues. He was the first none European scholar to receive the literature Nobel Prize in the year 1913 for his collection of poems “Gitanjali” (= prayer offering of songs). Later, he was named the Indian Goethe in Germany. Since then he was invited from the whole world on several occasions to deliver speeches on harmony between nature and mankind and to bridge the gap between orient and occident.

**The Tagores - The Visva-Bharati-University**

V.K. travels with his daughters towards “Shantiniketan” (West Bengal, India). There they are expected by the German Tagore specialist and author Martin Kämpfe. In the following days he shows them the Visva-Bharati-University which was founded in 1921 by Rabindranath Tagore and also briefs them on its historical beginning of Indian pedagogical reforms, as this university is the first education center where no discrimination prevailed between different casts; where Rabindranath Tagore met Mahatma Gandhi and supported Mahatmas liberation movement through several poems and songs.
The Tagores - Einstein-Council
The Tagore-Einstein-Council is also situated in the University campus where the traditional exchange of humanitarian ideas of Tagore and Einstein still continues. V.K. and his daughters enquire about the ways and means of intercultural exchange between Tagore and Einstein and what it was all about. This follows interviews of experts, Re-Enactments, Archive photos and film clippings.

The Tagores - Rabindranath Tagore and Germany
“(…) Germany took part more than any other country of the world in transferring and performing the intellectual power of west to India.(…)” [Thanks letter of Rabindranath Tagore in 1921 to the German Tagore commission].

The Tagores - Rabindranath Tagore in the Weimar republic
Rabindranath Tagore’s exceptional cordial relationship with Germany has special reasons: The period of instability in Weimar republic and the aftermath of the world war created an intellectual vacuum in Germany. The Germans were longing for balmy words of wisdom and warm rays of hope which could bring them out of their despair. During this “cold and gloomy environment” Rabindranath filled the German classrooms with warmth thoughts, his saintly appearance and gentle tone. German newspapers published pictures of Rabindranath on their cover pages and post cards with his portrait were printed. Much of his works were translated into German language and “Tagore reading circles” were established.

The Tagores - An India-Trend in Germany
Tagore- and India trend is gradually emerging. It is not a mere chance that Fritz Lang with his Film "The Indian Graveyard" in 1921 and Herman Hesse with his story “Siddharta” in 1922 corresponded to this trend. Like a misty-eyed Jesus proclaiming the message of world peace, Rabindranath, hailing from the land of poets and philosophers, aspires for the recognition and acceptance of his philosophical and political values.

The Tagores - Rabindranath Tagore and the Germans
In his three consecutive visits in the years 1921, 1926 and 1930, Rabindranath Tagore meets German avant-garde artists, writers, intellectuals, academicals and political elite, like Paul von Hindenburg, Paul Löbe, Thomas Mann, Käthe Kollwitz, Stefan Zweig, Graf Keyserling and others. He especially had a memorable exchange of views with Albert Einstein which is considered to be a mile stone in German–Indian relationship. Their intensive conversations held in Berlin have been extensively documented.

The Tagores - The round trip ends in Berlin.
In the final stage of the film V.K. and his daughters come back to Berlin to visit Einstein’s home in a village called Kaputh. There they meet Prof. Sunil Sen Gupta, who lives in Berlin and is the present director of the Tagore-Einstein-Council. He gives them the details of the meetings held between Tagore and Einstein: Interview, Re-Enactment at original location in „Einstein-House“.

The Tagores - End of journey.
The journey for V.K. and his daughters comes to an end in “Calcutta”, the first Indian restaurant in Berlin. Their relatives and friends are anxiously waiting to hear their experiences gathered in this fantastic journey. For our camera team and the audience it comes to end too. We see how the daughters of V.K. are emotionally struck by their journey, while he turns towards us, standing nearby a window and taking his wife in his arm.