

SACRIFICE
AND OTHER PLAYS

RABINDRANATH TAGORE

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SACRIFICE AND OTHER PLAYS



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SACRIFICE
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BY
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SANYASI
OR
THE ASCETIC

“Lead us from the unreal to the real.”

TO DR. JAGADISH CHANDRA BOSE

SANYASI, OR THE ASCETIC

I

Sanyasi, outside the cave

The division of days and nights is not for me, nor that of months and years. For me, the stream of time has stopped, on whose waves dances the world, like straws and twigs. In this dark cave I am alone, merged in myself,—and the eternal night is still, like a mountain lake afraid of its own depth. Water oozes and drips from the cracks, and in the pools float the ancient frogs. I sit chanting the incantation of nothingness. The world's limits recede, line after line.—The stars, like sparks of fire, flown from the anvil of time, are extinct; and that joy is mine which comes to the God Shiva, when, after æons of dream, he wakes up to find himself alone in the heart of the infinite annihilation. I am free, I am the great solitary One. When I was thy

slave, O Nature, thou didst set my heart against itself, and madest it carry the fierce war of suicide through its world. Desires, that have no other ends, but to feed upon themselves and all that comes to their mouths, lashed me into fury. I ran about, madly chasing my shadow. Thou drovest me with thy lightning lashes of pleasure into the void of satiety. And the hungers, who are thy decoys, ever led me into the endless famine, where food turned into dust, and drink into vapour.

Till, when my world was spotted with tears and ashes, I took my oath, that I would have revenge upon thee, interminable Appearance, mistress of endless disguises. I took shelter in the darkness,—the castle of the Infinite,—and fought the deceitful light, day after day, till it lost all its weapons and lay powerless at my feet. Now, when I am free of fear and desires, when the mist has vanished, and my reason shines pure and bright, let me go out into the kingdom of lies, and sit upon its heart, untouched and unmoved.

II

Sanyasi, by the roadside

How small is this earth and confined, watched and followed by the persistent horizons. The trees, houses, and crowd of things are pressing upon my eyes. The light, like a cage, has shut out the dark eternity; and the hours hop and cry within its barriers, like prisoned birds. But why are these noisy men rushing on, and for what purpose? They seem always afraid of missing something,—the something that never comes to their hands.

[The crowd passes.]

Enter a VILLAGE ELDER and TWO WOMEN

First Woman

O my, O my! You *do* make me laugh.

Second Woman

But who says you are old?

Village Elder

There are fools who judge men by their outside.

First Woman

How sad! We have been watching your outside from our infancy. It is just the same all through these years.

Village Elder

Like the morning sun.

First Woman

Yes, like the morning sun in its shining baldness.

Village Elder

Ladies, you are overcritical in your taste. You notice things that are unessential.

Second Woman

Leave off your chatter, Ananga. Let us hasten home, or my man will be angry.

First Woman

Good bye, sir. Please judge us from our outside, we won't mind that.

Village Elder

Because you have no inside to speak of.
[*They go.*]

Enter THREE VILLAGERS

First Villager

Insult me? the scoundrel! He shall regret it.

Second Villager

He must be taught a thorough lesson.

First Villager

A lesson that will follow him to his grave.

Third Villager

Yes, brother, set your heart upon it.
Never give him quarter.

Second Villager

He has grown too big.

First Villager

Big enough to burst at last.

Third Villager

The ants, when they begin to grow wings, perish.

Second Villager

But have you got a plan?

First Villager

Not one, but hundreds. I will drive my plough-share over his household.—I will give him a donkey-ride through the town, with his cheeks painted white and black. I will make the world too hot for him, and—

[*They go.*]

Enter TWO STUDENTS

First Student

I am sure Professor Madhab won in the debate.

Second Student

No, it was Professor Janardan.

First Student

Professor Madhab maintained his point to the last. He said that the subtle is the outcome of the gross.

Second Student

But Professor Janardan conclusively proved that the subtle is the origin of the gross.

First Student

Impossible.

Second Student

It is clear as the day-light.

First Student

Seeds come from the tree.

Second Student

The tree comes from the seed.

First Student

Sanyasi, which of these is true? Which is the original, the subtle or the gross?

Sanyasi

Neither.

Second Student

Neither. Well, that sounds satisfactory.

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