

SACRIFICE AND OTHER PLAYS

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Sacrifice and other plays by Sir Rabindranath Tagore

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SIR RABINDRANATH TAGORE

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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.