

APPENDIX - I

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THE SUNSET OF THE CENTURY

(written in Bengali on the last day of the century)

1

The last sun of the century sets amidst the blood-red
 clouds of the west and the whirlwind of hatred.
 The naked passions of self-love of Nations,
 in its drunken delirium of greed,
 is dancing to the clash of steel and
 the howling verses of vengeance.

2

The hungry self of the Nation shall burst in a violence
 of fury from its own shameless feeding.
 For it has made the world its food.
 And licking it, crunching it and swallowing it in big morsels,
 It swells and swells,
 Till in the midst of its unholy feast descends the sudden
 shaft of heaven piercing its heart of grossness.

3

The crimson glow of light on the horizon is not the light of
 thy dawn of peace, my Motherland. It is the glimmer of the
 funeral pyre burning to ashes the vast flesh-the self-love of
 the Nation - dead under its own excess.
 Thy morning waits behind the patient dark of the East,
 Meek and silent.

4

Keep watch, India.

Bring your offerings of worship from that sacred Sun rise.

Let the first hymn of its welcome sound in your voice and sing.

' Come, peace, thou daughter of God's own great suffering.

Come with thy treasure of contentment, the sword of fortitude,

And meekness crowning thy forehead.'

5

Be not ashamed, my brother, to stand before the proud
and the powerful.

With your white robe of simpleness.

Let your crown be of humility, your freedom the freedom of
the soul.

Build God's throne daily upon the ample bareness of your poverty.

And know that what is huge is not great and pride is not
everlasting.

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The poem entitled :

" THE SUNSET OF THE CENTURY " Strikes the key note of Tagore's ideas on Nationalism. Originally, it was written in Bengali on the last day of the 19th century,¹ and was published in his collection of poems names ' Naivedya ' in the year of 1901. The essay on nationalism seemed to be the later development of his ideas which found first expression in poetic version under the title of ' the Sunset of the century '. (64th poem of the Naivedya series)

The composition of the poem had a historical background.² The last decade of the 19th century visualised the growth of a number of nation-states in Europe. Those nation-states of Europe with the instrument of the idea of nationalism had very soon turned into imperialism. They pursued most aggressive expansion policy towards the countries of Asia and Africa to build a colonial empire. Tagore was very much critical of the devilish character of Western imperialism. He cautiously observed the defeat of the Boers of Africa at the hands of the British imperialism. The war was known as Boer War (1899-1902). In the Eastern part of the world, the imperial powers wanted to devour the great china as war booties. Germany captured the kiachow province of China in the year of 1897. Russia demanded port-Arthur to China. France and England established their hegemony over

the South and the central China. The U.S.A. already coveted philippines and demanded open door policy of international trade to China. There occurred a great revolt in China to tear off the Chains of imperialism. In history, it was known as Boxar Revolt (1899-1901). Britain, France, America, Germany, Russia and Japan unitedly launched an offensive against China to put down the uprising. The plundering policy of the Western nations greatly reacted upon the mind of Tagore. Perhaps, the poem was the out come of the reaction of his creative mind. He observed the decline of ideology of human civilization in the midst of naked passions of self-love of nations. He believed that the wild behaviour of the Western nations based on selfish interest would meet a sudden death. Thus, he opposed the western concept of nationalism which was always directed towards exploitation, injustice and inequality.³

The poet expressed hope that India would be the deliverer of mankind from this profound crisis through her message of spiritualism and universal brother hood.

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: NOTES AND REFERENCES :

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2. Majumdar Nepal : Bharate Jatiyata O Antar
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3. Mukherjee K. N. : Political philosophy of
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