

Unheeded Caveats: Examining Pax Americana in the Light of Tagore's Nationalism

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Abstract

Rabindranath Tagore's much discussed opposition to nationalism has often been seen as a source of consternating confusion which not only invoked the ire of many contemporary nationalists who interpreted his vision as one of helpless inaction as well as by certain contemporary critics who have considered *Nationalism* to be a disorienting product of "impassioned myth-making" which falls within the tradition of English liberalism¹. This paper seeks to analyse *Nationalism*, as well as other related texts, in a different light, by comparing Tagore's assessment of 'Nation' and Nationalism in the West', with both the *Communist Manifesto*, as well as Lenin's *Imperialism, The Highest Stage of Capitalism* in order to reveal how Tagore's explorations constitute a sustained and scathing critique of capitalism, as manifested through the European bourgeois nation-state which is also relevant for this present age of U.S. imperialism and its consequences as many of the crises unfolding around us were presaged by Tagore's unheeded caveats. The paper also suggests that whatever post-imperial vision we may imagine for our future, they must always be based on those values that Tagore championed throughout his life and which have often been dismissed as sentimental naivety.

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Ernest Gellner, in his *Nations and Nationalism* remarks "Nations are not inscribed into the nature of things, they do not constitute a political version of the doctrine of natural kinds."² Instead he goes on to remark that nationalism is actually "the consequence of a new form of social organization" by which he refers to changes brought about by the industrial age. Therefore he claims "nationalism is indeed an effect of industrial social organization" which leads to "the establishment of an anonymous impersonal society with mutually substitutable atomized individuals..."³ Although Tagore was no professional scholar of these issues he too had astutely comprehended this link between nationalism and industrialism in Europe which is why he states "A nation, in the sense of political and economic union of a people is that aspect which a whole population assumes when organized for a mechanical purpose."⁴ Tagore calls this mechanical aspect a "soul-less organization" (20) and compares it to a hydraulic press or defines it as an "octopus of abstractions sending out its wriggling arms in all directions of space and fixing its interminable suckers even into the faraway-futures." (18) Such comments are indicative of Tagore's insightful apprehension regarding the monstrosities made possible by the conjunction of the rhetoric of national glory with the growth of capitalism in the 20th century, within the framework of the

national state as was happening in the war-ridden contemporary Europe. His thoughts were already anticipated by Marx and Engels who had declared,

The bourgeoisie keeps more and more doing away with the scattered state of the population, of the means of production, and of property. It has agglomerated production, and has concentrated property in a few hands. The necessary consequence of this was political centralisation. Independent, or but loosely connected provinces, with separate interests, laws, governments and systems of taxation, became lumped together into one nation, with one government, one code of laws, one national class-interest, one frontier and one customs-tariff.⁵

Tagore's analysis, though controversial and debatable, not only harped on those malaises generated by the aftermaths of capitalism in European societies but also offered an ethical critique of those imperial actions which necessarily germinated then and which are still plaguing the world through the American grand strategy for a War against Terror.

In contrast to his earlier essay *Nation Ki? (What is a Nation?)*, where, following Renan's discussion he had defined nation as 'a living entity, a mental construct' (ekti sojeeb sotta, ekti manas podartho)⁶, in *Nationalism* Tagore proposes an idea of nation that is entirely bereft of such mental, spiritual qualities and goes on to accuse its mechanical organization for completely dehumanizing human existence:

In the West, the national machinery of commerce and politics turns out neatly compressed bales of humanity which have their use and high-market value but they are bound in iron hoops, labelled and separated off with scientific precision and care. (10-11)

Such an industrial and scientific metaphor not only highlights that pervasive mechanization Tagore harps on but also insists on the loss of human individuality owing to the nation's search for homogeneous, anonymous citizens who may easily be substituted for one another. Gellner therefore remarks that Nationalism "imposes homogeneity both inside and to a lesser degree between political units" and also stresses "the obligatory cultural unity of the rulers and the ruled." According to Tagore it is this demand for homogeneity that made European nations intolerant of difference and this is why he remarks that European nationalism is "based upon exclusiveness...always watchful to keep aliens at bay or to exterminate them." (62) This sharply contrasts the basic nature of Indian civilization which Tagore perceived as accommodation of difference and reluctance towards strict organizations which encouraged cultural exchanges. It is to this tradition that Amitav Ghosh also referred in *In An Antique Land* which he defined as "rich confusions... of hospitality and accommodation."⁷ It is to sustain this feature that Tagore opposed the conformity producing rhetoric of nationalism as heard in contemporary Europe or even amidst Indian nationalists. This opposition is not only reflected in his novels like *Gora* or *Ghare Baire* but even in a play like *Rakta-Karabi* – the numerical identities of the labourers of

Jakkhapuri might well be a reminder of the dehumanized existence of the citizens of a modern nation, as also visible in Chaplin's *Modern Times*. All such representations offer an artistic version of that alienation and mechanization which Marx had spoken of while analyzing the transformation of labour into commodity within the capitalist production, as exemplified by the following remarks from the *Communist Manifesto*:

In proportion as the bourgeoisie, i.e., capital, is developed, in the same proportion is the proletariat, the modern working class, developed--a class of labourers, who live only so long as they find work, and who find work only so long as their labour increases capital. These labourers, who must sell themselves piece-meal, are a commodity, like every other article of commerce, and are consequently exposed to all the vicissitudes of competition, to all the fluctuations of the market.

Owing to the extensive use of machinery and to division of labour, the work of the proletarians has lost all individual character, and consequently, all charm for the workman. He becomes an appendage of the machine...⁸

The way Tagore sees it Nationalism engenders this transformation in its quest for material prosperity as it obsesses itself with political and commercial considerations which gradually extinguish all other humane qualities. For Tagore, "the organization of politics and commerce, whose other name is the Nation" (16), not only disrupts social harmony by giving rise to limitless greed of wealth and power but also ensures the eclipse of "the moral man, the complete man" to "the political and commercial man, the man of limited purpose." (20) This "wealth-producing mechanism", combined with continuous technological innovations, ceaselessly develops into a vastly expanding force and Tagore comments

...when with the help of science and the perfecting of organization this power begins to grow and brings in harvests of wealth, then it crosses boundaries with amazing rapidity. For then it goads all neighbouring societies with greed of material prosperity and consequent mutual jealousy and by the fear of each other's growth into powerfulness. The time comes when it can stop no longer for the competition grows keener, organization grows vaster and selfishness attains supremacy. (13-14)

Such a transformation could only occur because the system of capitalist production, which characterised contemporary western European societies, insisted on maximization of surplus value in order to perpetuate profits at all costs and moral considerations hardly mattered when it came to the issue of concentrated capital accumulation, which Tagore would call "multiplication of materials." (67) It is this process that Marx had earlier described in a specifically economic vocabulary in his *Das Kapital* when he said:

The continual re-transformation of surplus-value into capital now appears in the shape of the increasing magnitude of the capital that enters into the process of production. This in turn is the basis of an extended scale of production, of the

methods for raising the productive power of labour that accompany it, and of accelerated production of surplus-value. If, therefore, a certain degree of accumulation of capital appears as a condition of the specifically capitalist mode of production, the latter causes conversely an accelerated accumulation of capital. With the accumulation of capital, therefore, the specifically capitalistic mode of production develops, and with the capitalist mode of production the accumulation of capital.⁹

It is this process of capitalist production in Europe which was also responsible for the rise and growth of colonialism which was blatantly evident in India itself where English colonialism was established through the notorious East India Company before the establishment of Queen Victoria's rule in 1857. As Marx said,

The need of a constantly expanding market for its products chases the bourgeoisie over the whole surface of the globe. It must nestle everywhere, settle everywhere, establish connexions everywhere...It compels all nations, on pain of extinction, to adopt the bourgeois mode of production; it compels them to introduce what it calls civilisation into their midst, i.e., to become bourgeois themselves. In one word, it creates a world after its own image.¹⁰

It is in acknowledgement of this reality that Tagore said:

Nation is the greatest evil...Its one wish is to trade on the feebleness of the rest of the world, like some insects that are bred in the paralysed flesh of victims kept just enough alive to make them toothsome and nutritious. Therefore it is ready to send its poisonous fluid into the vitals of other living peoples. Who not being nations are harmless...And for all this the Nation has been claiming the gratitude of history and all eternity for its selfishness; ordering its band of praise to be struck from end to end of the world, declaring itself to be the salt of the earth, the flower of humanity, the blessing of God hurled with all his force upon the naked skulls of the world of No-Nations. (34-35)

This concept of the Nation is simply the manifestation of modern capitalism through the machinery of the nation-state which, along with the British inspired other countries like Netherlands, Portugal or France to hunt for colonies around the world and this is why Tagore says

The government by the Nation is neither British nor anything else; it is an applied science and therefore more or less similar in its principles wherever it is used...Our government might have been Dutch or French or Portuguese and its essential features would have remained much the same as they are now. (21-22)

Obviously, despite certain differences, colonized people all over the world have indeed suffered similar atrocities and exploitation and all of it have stemmed from the same forces of bourgeois capitalism which had gripped Europe, especially Western Europe. It is to highlight this similarity that Marx said:

...the bourgeoisie has at last, since the establishment of Modern Industry and of the world-market, conquered for itself, in the modern representative State,

exclusive political sway. The executive of the modern State is but a committee for managing the *common affairs* (emphasis mine) of the whole bourgeoisie.¹¹

How did Tagore perceive the impact of foreign colonial governments upon the colonized subjects? As an Indian Tagore obviously referred to the callous indifference of the British Government in India which is compared to a gigantic machine, “relentlessly lifeless and accurate and monotonous in its production” (22) and solely concerned with profit and loss, which paid no heed to the suffering Indians. Hence the categorization of the colonial government as a “dead white wall of granite blocks” (29) which acts as “a thick mist of a stifling nature (21).” For Tagore, the root of such injustice, which also contradicts the ‘spirit of the West’ (24) lies in the inherent selfishness of nationalism. Since the construction of the national self inevitably entails the construction of an ‘Other’ which is ceaselessly denigrated to boost the image of the ‘Self’, nationalism often leads to a detrimental conviction of national superiority which was most gruesomely manifested by Europe in the two World Wars. This is why Tagore defined nationalism as the “organized self-interest of a whole people” (19) and later termed it the “apotheosis of selfishness” (48). However, the bellicose national states which seemed to embody this “apotheosis of selfishness” were only those, as was explained by Lenin, which reached the highest stage of capitalism that necessitated imperialism. Marx had already said that “The bourgeoisie, wherever it has got the upper hand... has left remaining no other nexus between man and man than naked self-interest, than callous ‘cash payment.’”¹² The imperial wars for the re-distribution of colonies which provoked Tagore’s indictment were only a manifestation on the international scale of this same selfishness which was also voiced by Lenin, though in a different vocabulary:

Capitalism has grown into a world system of colonial oppression and of the financial strangulation of the overwhelming majority of the population of the world by a handful of “advanced” countries. And this “booty” is shared between two or three powerful world plunderers armed to the teeth (America, Great Britain, Japan), who are drawing the whole world into their war over the division of their booty.¹³

Tagore was obviously aware of the devastating consequences of such conflicts. Therefore in an essay entitled *Birodhmulak Adarsha* (Oppositional Doctrine) he states “Age amar nation, tar pore baki ar somosto kichhu, ei spordha somosto bishwabidhaner proti bhrukuti-kutil kotakkho nikkhep koritechhe” (First my nation, then all else – this audacity is casting scornful frowns at the whole universal order)¹⁴. The victims of such audacity are obviously the colonies “selected...for the purposes of exploitation” which were being ravaged and plundered by large European nations which are described by Tagore as a “pack of predatory creatures that must have its victims...nations are fighting among themselves for the extension of their victims and their reserve forests” (25-26). The driving force

of this sanguinary competition, Nation in Tagore's words, is only a special phase of Capitalism in general as explained by Lenin:

The more capitalism is developed, the more strongly the shortage of raw materials is felt, the more intense the competition and the hunt for sources of raw materials throughout the whole world, the more desperate the struggle for the acquisition of colonies.¹⁵

It is this desperate struggle which Tagore condemned when he said, "a cruel epidemic of evil that is sweeping over human world of the present age and eating into its moral vitality." (21) He therefore asserts, "It (Western nationalism) is carnivorous and cannibalistic in its tendencies, it feeds upon the resources of other people and tries to swallow their whole future." (62-63)

Quite naturally, Tagore was deeply perturbed by the consequences of this 'carnivorous and cannibalistic' turn of history which he also described as the 'dance of the Furies' (49). And like his friend Yeats, who envisaged the trauma of civilisational collapse in his 'Second Coming', Tagore too repeatedly sounded apocalyptic warnings through his writings. He therefore viewed the First World War as a "wrestling match of powerfulness" (32) by the European countries to bring about "an eternal damnation of their own humanity. (33)" Tagore believed that such a disaster was brought about by the fact that Europeans had replaced the true god with the idol of the nation which had destroyed the moral basis of their civilization. This inevitably leads to a kind of moral vacuity and spiritual emptiness which led to "slow decay and decomposition" (49) in Europe, culminating in the monstrosity of the World Wars. Tagore termed this turn of history as the "fifth act of the tragedy of the unreal" (49). Five years later Eliot would agree and remark:

Falling towers
Jerusalem, Athens, Alexandria
Vienna London
Unreal.¹⁶

It is to prevent such a collapse that Tagore had always espoused the ideals of humanism and held them more sacred than any other doctrine or dogma. This is why in 'Desh Kotha' (Of Country) he said that "Monushyotto ke nationalotter cheye boro boliya janite hoibe (Humanity must be privileged over nationality)"¹⁷. It was because Europe blinded by its own greed and megalomania that it had lost sight of this truth and hence the catastrophe of the world wars which Tagore had already envisioned at the dawn of the twentieth century:

The naked passion of self-love of Nations, in its
Drunken delirium of greed is dancing to the clash
Of steel and the howling verse of vengeance. (131)

Unfortunately poets are never even acknowledged now as “the unacknowledged legislators of the world”¹⁸. The cautionary visions of Eliot, Yeats or Tagore have always been ignored by us at our own peril. Therefore, almost a century after Tagore's scathing indictment of Nationalism in the West, the world continues to reel under those same forces which were tormenting the world then and that too in a much greater scale as the Capitalism which Tagore had condemned then with his individual vocabulary has now assumed an even more global character under the leadership of the USA which seeks to lord over the world to satisfy those very desires of wealth and power that had once plunged the world in unprecedented disaster. The invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, justified by recurrent formulations of American Grand Strategy have brought to the forefront all those malaises Tagore had once critiqued and this is precisely why his ethical critique, articulated in Nationalism, is all the more relevant now.

The latest proponent of this Grand Strategy was of course the previous American President, George W. Bush Jr. A year after the horrible tragedy of '9/11', in a speech explaining America's mission and responsibility he said:

We will defend the peace by fighting terrorists and tyrants. We will preserve the peace by building good relations among the great powers. We will extend the peace by encouraging free and open societies on every continent...We will cooperate with other nations to deny, contain and curtail our enemies' efforts to acquire dangerous technologies. And as a matter of common sense and self-defense, America will act against such emerging threats before they are fully formed...Finally United States will use this moment of opportunity to extend the benefits of freedom across the globe. We will actively work to bring the hope of democracy, development, free markets and free trade to every corner of the world.¹⁹

All these promises curiously combine the ideals of peace and freedom with threats of military interventions and the desire to promote free-market capitalism. More importantly, it announced the policy of preventive action which basically meant that America can attack any country it chooses simply because it perceives that they may endanger the United States in some future. The menacing reality of such inhumanly arrogant assertions of power became absolutely incontrovertible to the people of Iraq, who, after being strangled by previous wars and subsequent sanctions, were subjected to mindless atrocities simply because it was alleged that Saddam Hussain, a former pet of USA had harboured “weapons of mass destruction” or WMDs which however have never been found. There is also no evidence still to prove that there ever was any link between Al-Qaeda and Saddam's regime. As the invasion of Iraq began, the prominent historian and Kennedy adviser Arthur Schlesinger wrote that

The president has adopted a policy of "anticipatory self-defense" that is alarmingly similar to the policy that imperial Japan employed at Pearl Harbor, on a date which, as an earlier American president said it would, lives in infamy. Franklin D. Roosevelt was right, but today it is we Americans who live in infamy.²⁰

Another expert on International Affairs, John Ikenberry has described this new policy to be a "grand strategy [that] begins with a fundamental commitment to maintaining a unipolar world in which the United States has no peer competitor," a condition that is to be "permanent [so] that no state or coalition could ever challenge [the US] as global leader, protector, and enforcer."²¹ They of course were referring to one particular objective of National Security Strategy which categorical stated: "Our forces will be strong enough to dissuade potential adversaries from pursuing a military build-up in hopes of surpassing, or equalling, the power of the United States."²² It is to condemn all such manifestations of destructive, avaricious power that Tagore wrote "It [political civilisation which has sprung up from the soil of Europe] is always afraid of other races achieving eminence, naming it as a peril and tries to thwart all symptoms of greatness outside its own boundaries, forcing down other races of men who are weaker, to be eternally fixed in their weakness." (63)

Isn't this exactly what the United States has been doing through its recurrent bombing of Iraq, punctuated with severe crippling sanctions that have led to the death and destruction of thousands? Wasn't this the basis of the dreaded Cold War which was deliberately escalated by USA despite Soviet attempts at mutual reduction of ammunitions, even dragging the world to brink to nuclear holocaust?²³ Isn't this what USA did with most unprecedented virulence in Vietnam, which made Bernard Fall warn that "Vietnam as a cultural and historic entity ... is threatened with extinction" as "the countryside literally dies under the blows of the largest military machine ever unleashed on an area of this size"?²⁴ All the crimes of dehumanising quest for profit and power that Tagore had once discerned in Europe during the First World War have been embodied by the US and she too now possesses the key, as Britain and others once did, "to open the floodgate of hell-fire upon the fair earth whenever she chooses, and can dance, in their own measure, the devil dance of pillage, murder and ravishment of innocent women, while the world goes to ruin." (86) Anybody aware of the ravages caused by American soldiers and its modern ammunitions (Bunker Busters, Daisy Cutters, Napalm Bombs etc) can realise the literal veracity of Tagore's prescient pronouncements.

The gruesome examples of this kind of 'apotheosis of selfishness' culminating in "mad orgies of militarism" (63) designed to "trade on the feebleness of the rest of the world" that Tagore had spoken of, perpetrated by the USA, are too many to list here. Driven by the same forces of capitalism that led to the outbreak of the First World War based on imperial conflict over colonies, it is quite natural that America would initiate that dance of the furies Europe had once unleashed to further the cause of global capitalism, primarily headed by US-based multinational companies. The invasion of Iraq, preceded by similarly disastrous interventions in Afghanistan, Indo-China, Nicaragua, Kosovo and several other places not only exemplifies this process but also illustrates that "terrible disaster" of imperial politics "fixing its fangs deep into the naked flesh of

the world.”(33) And all such assaults are fuelled by the stated desire to expand “free market and free trade to every corner of the world”, which obviously can neither withstand socialist or communist regimes that seek to nationalize natural resources or ensure a more equitable distribution nor those regimes which, despite being oppressive, are also defiant enough to not let go of their own resources for the benefit of American companies. The following excerpt from David May’s article may help to clarify this process:

In the latest in the long line of corporate scandals involving the Bush Administration, Halliburton, the energy giant formerly run and still largely influenced and controlled by Vice-President Dick Cheney, has announced that it will repay the US government over \$27.4 million after it was discovered that it had grossly overcharged for the meals it supplies to the US military in Iraq. This follows on the heels of the discovery of bribery on the part of Halliburton agents who overcharged the military \$6.3 million for fuel delivered to bases in Iraq and Kuwait. These glaring cases of graft and bribery may seem outrageous, but they are only the tip of the capitalist iceberg – just business as usual for US imperialism. These kinds of practices are in no way unique to Halliburton, or even the Bush Administration. The interconnections between capital and the state run deep, not just in George W. Bush’s America but in all capitalist countries.

The overcharging discovery involves Kellogg, Brown & Root, a wholly-owned subsidiary of Halliburton. In a controversial “no-bid” contract, KBR was awarded a total of \$8 billion to provide laundry, food supply, and build bases for the US military in Iraq. This also includes \$1.2 billion to restore production in the southern Iraqi oil fields. It just so happens that Vice-President and major Halliburton stock-holder Cheney was directly involved in the awarding of rebuilding contracts in Iraq! That is not to say that only Halliburton got a share – so did Major Bush-backer Bechtel, the construction firm, and of course a Texas-based company by the name of Exxon-Mobil...

Imperialist wars have always provided ample business “opportunities” - and the current war in Iraq is no exception. This is a defining feature of capitalism, specifically capitalism in its era of imperialism and decay. The following quote from a former US Marine general sums it all up: “I helped make Mexico, especially Tampico, safe for American oil interests in 1914. I helped make Cuba and Haiti a decent place for the National City Bank boys to collect revenues in. I helped in the raping of half a dozen Central American Republics for the benefits of Wall Street. The record of racketeering is long. I helped purify Nicaragua for the international banking house of Brown Brothers in 1909-1912. I brought light to the Dominican Republic for American sugar interests in 1916. In China I helped to see to it that Standard Oil went its way unmolested. During those years, I had, as the boys in the back room would say, a swell racket.” (General Smedley Butler, from a speech in 1933.)²⁵

This is only the modern version of what Tagore had called “organised gregariousness of gluttony, commercial and political.”(36)

The twin towers of the World Trade Centre were indeed a monumental testimony to this historical process which continues till date and the heinous terrorist attack that decimated them is only a result of those processes that had been unleashed long ago by USA itself. It is one of those macabre ironies of history that the same 11th September on which George W. Bush Sr. announced to a joint session of the Congress the plan to attack Iraq²⁶, was chosen to attack the twin towers by that same organisation, Al Qaeda, which was once funded and armed by the CIA to fight the Soviets in Afghanistan²⁷! The consequent War on Terror is another illustration of that same process which Tagore referred to when he said:

The furies of terror which the West has let loose upon God's world, come back to threaten herself and goad her into preparations of more and more frightfulness; this gives her no rest and makes her forget all else but the perils that she causes to others and incurs herself. To the worship of this devil of politics she sacrifices other countries as victims (86).

The same logic of inhuman atrocity that had been unleashed through the annihilation of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the ruthless devastation of Vietnam or the approved brutalisation of Palestinians now returns with vengeance and proves the veracity of Tagore's warning: "Never think for a moment that the hurts you inflict upon other races will not infect you, or that the enmities you sow around your homes will be a wall of protection to you for all times to come." (82) And even though '9/11' had led to two successive imperial invasions which were supposed to display America's authority to the world, the fact is that years after declaring victory, American soldiers still continue to die in both Afghanistan and Iraq which have not only witnessed a spurt in terrorist activities but have generated similar forces throughout the world which are collectively bleeding the United States which is also up against a growing international public opinion that now includes more US citizens than ever. We recall how Tagore had asked:

Does not the voice come to us, through the din of war, the shrieks of hatred, the wailings of despair, through the churning of the unspeakable filth which has been accumulating for ages in the bottom of this nationalism – the voice which cries to our soul that this tower of national selfishness, which goes by the name of patriotism, which has raised its banner in treason against heaven, must totter and fall with a crash, weighed down by its own bulk., its flag kissing the dust, its light extinguished? (94)

Arundhati Roy, a bitter critic of American imperialism, while celebrating the colossal contribution of Noam Chomsky to this end, boldly asserts, "When the sun sets on the American empire, as it will, as it must, Noam Chomsky's work will survive. It will point a cool, incriminating finger at a merciless Machiavellian empire as cruel, self-righteous and hypocritical as the ones it has replaced."²⁸ Tagore's nationalism can serve as a similar purpose even as it now assures us about the eventual collapse of American imperialism as an abnormal monstrosity that goes against the divinely ordained harmony man tries so hard to upset: "But

ruins of skyscrapers of power and broken machinery of greed, even God's rain is powerless to raise up again; for they were not of life, but went against life as a whole – they are relics of that rebellion that shattered itself to pieces against the eternal.” (63-64)

What was this eternal pattern that Tagore held as ideal? It was a utopian vision:

Be more good, more just, more true in your relation to man, control your greed, make your life wholesome in its simplicity and let your consciousness of the divine in humanity be more perfect in its expression. (35-36)

Despite the apparent naivety of such an assertion, in the last analysis, there is no other alternative for sustaining civilisation than a future based on such values which can only be established through sustained struggle against both the material and cultural infrastructure of empire and its ugly aftermaths. Empires have fallen in the past only to be replaced by new ones and a future beyond empires cannot come into being without receiving that spiritual sustenance which Tagore planned to offer:

And we can still cherish the hope that when power becomes ashamed to occupy its throne and is ready to make way for love, when the morning comes for cleansing the blood-stained steps of the nation along the high-road of humanity, we shall be called upon to bring our own vessel of water – the water of worship – to sweeten the history of man into purity, and with its sprinkling make the trampled dust of the centuries blessed with fruitfulness. (51)

We pray that his hope would be realised for future generations to be ushered into a new era, heralded by the 'Mahamanaba' who would chant:

Adharmenyoidhate tabat toto bhadrani poshyoti
Totoh sopotnan joyoti somulosto binoshyoti.²⁹

(Unrighteousness leads to cunning, success and even triumph against enemies – but only culminates in absolute destruction.)

Notes

¹ Harish Trivedi, “Nationalism, Internationalism, Imperialism: Tagore on England and the West”, *Colonial Transactions: English Literature and India* (Kolkata: Papyrus, 1993) 71-87.

² Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1983) 49.

³ Gellner, 48, 50 & 57.

⁴ Rabindranath Tagore, *Nationalism* (New Delhi: Macmillan, 2001) 13. All subsequent references are from this edition and the page numbers are parenthetically provided.

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- ⁵ Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, <<http://www.gutenberg.org/files/61/61.txt>> (January 25, 2005 EBook #61). Accessed on 15th June, 2010.
- ⁶ Rabindranath Tagore, "Nation Ki", *Rabindra Rachanaboli* vol. XIII (Kolkata: Govt of West Bengal, 1990) 38.
- ⁷ Amitav Ghosh, *In An Antique Land* (New Delhi: Penguin, 2008) 237.
- ⁸ Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, <<http://www.gutenberg.org/files/61/61.txt>> (January 25, 2005 EBook #61). Accessed on 15th June, 2010.
- ⁹ Karl Marx, *Das Kapital*, <<http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1867-c1/ch25.htm#S2>>. Accessed on 15th June, 2010
- ¹⁰ Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, <<http://www.gutenberg.org/files/61/61.txt>> (January 25, 2005 EBook #61). Accessed on 15th June, 2010.
- ¹¹ Ibid.
- ¹² Ibid.
- ¹³ V.I. Lenin, *Imperialism, The Highest Stage of Capitalism* <<http://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1916/imp-hsc/pref02.htm>>. Accessed on 15th June 2010.
- ¹⁴ Rabindranath Tagore, "Birodhmulak Adarsha", *Rabindra Rachanaboli* vol. XIII (Kolkata: Govt of West Bengal, 1990) 330.
- ¹⁵ V.I. Lenin, *Imperialism, The Highest Stage of Capitalism* <<http://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1916/imp-hsc/ch06.htm>>
- ¹⁶ T.S. Eliot, "The Waste Land", *The Waste Land and Other Poems* (London: Faber and Faber, 1968) 41.
- ¹⁷ Rabindranath Tagore, "Deshar Kotha", *Rabindra Rachanaboli* vol. XIII (Kolkata: Govt of West Bengal, 1990) 348.
- ¹⁸ P.B. Shelley, 'A Defence of Poetry', *English Critical Texts* ed. D.J. Enright and Ernst De Chickeria (New Delhi: Oxford UP, 2006) 255.
- ¹⁹ George. W. Bush, "America's Responsibility, America's Mission", *The Imperial Tense* ed. Andrew. C. Bacevich (Chicago: Ivan. R. Dee, 2003) 6-7.
- ²⁰ Quoted by Noam Chomsky in *Hegemony or Survival: America's Quest for Global Dominance* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2003) 5.
- ²¹ Ibid, 11.
- ²² Ibid, 11.
- ²³ Ibid, 149-50.
- ²⁴ Ibid, 29.
- ²⁵ David May, "The Halliburton Scandal: Business as Usual", <http://socialistappeal.org/usa/halliburton_scandal.html>. Accessed on 15th June, 2010.
- ²⁶ Arundhati Roy, *An Ordinary Person's Guide to Empire* (New Delhi: Penguin, 2005) 31.

²⁷ Noam Chomsky, *Hegemony or Survival: America's Quest for Global Dominance* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2003) 74.

²⁸ Roy, 72.

²⁹ Rabindranath Tagore, "Sobhyotar Sonkot", *Rabindra Rachanaboli* vol. XIII (Kolkata: Govt of West Bengal, 1990) 738.

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