



# *In Order to be Great, One must be a Woman: Reading Sanjukta Dasgupta's Dilemma: A Second Book of Poems*

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## How to cite this article:

Mallick, S. (2019). In Order to be Great, One must be a Woman: Reading Sanjukta Dasgupta's Dilemma: A Second Book of Poems. *Thesis*. Vol. 8. Iss. 1. Pristina: AAB College. (85-113).



Published online: June 8, 2019



Article received on 28th of February, 2019.  
Article accepted on the 12th of May, 2019.



Conflict of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interests.

## *In Order to be Great, One must be a Woman: Reading Sanjukta Dasgupta's Dilemma: A Second Book of Poems*

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## Abstract

Poets play an important role in alighting the lamp of the human mind. The technique of writing poetry comes with 'creation' which is the primacy of knowledge and Sanjukta Dasgupta's poetry is the source of light vindicating her formidable creativity and apt awareness as a 'progressive [woman] writer' of Indian Writings in English. Women writers contribute towards the female literary tradition of *écriture féminine*, strengthening the genre of gynocriticism. Elaine Showalter comments 'women writers...found [themselves]...without a history, forced to rediscover the past anew, forging again...the consciousness of their sex' facilitating the patriarchal interrogation through women's writings, accelerating the birth of a woman authored literary canon. It has enabled them to break the silence towards an egalitarian world. This essay explores the 'micropolitics' of an urban environment in Dasgupta's *Dilemma: A Second Book of Poems*, and critically reconnoiters her entelechy to observe life and interrogate the stereotypes society imposes upon women.

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**Keywords:** *Women's Writing, Interrogation, Patriarchy, Gender stereotypes, Positive endurance, Progressive future.*

Through their own joyful extension, poets play an important role in keeping alight the lamp of the human mind as its part in the illumination of the world (Tagore, 2003, p. 1). It is through this realm of freedom that the poet not only speaks of great human truths but also narrates the verses of victory (Tagore, 1978, p. 20) as knowledge is freedom leading towards the creation of Art, and "man's civilization is built upon his surplus" (Tagore, 2007, p. 8). Life and Society can reach to the highest realms of freedom if they actively endeavor "to solve the problem of mutual relationship" (Tagore, 2011, p. 628). Therefore, the poet being the "world-worker" is able to "transcend the limits of mortality" (Tagore, 2005, p. 55) towards an existence where all the people are coordinated by the vision of the poet to be "receptive as well as creative" towards an "inspiring atmosphere of creative activity" (Tagore, 2003, p. 2) through which "a harmonious blending of voice, gesture and movement, words and action, in which [the poet's] generosity of conduct is expressed" (Tagore, 2001, p. 495). Through an expression of her/his own worldview and ideology, the poet is able to voice the universal experience of humanity facilitating an interrogation of the hypothesis of marginality which has often been used to describe Indian poetry written in the English language as "English is no longer the language of colonial rulers; it is a language of modern India...attending to local realities, traditions and ways of feeling" (King, 1987, p. 3). Therefore, through their poetry written in English the Indian poets have been able to maintain their pluralism by enhancing the arrangement of inter-connections among cultures and communities, traditions and technologies to locate the literary

cultural heritage of Indian English poetry. As concerns of identity have been one of the commonest themes of Indian writings in English (Narayan, 1995, p. 63), it may be considered as "a risk" (Singh, 2011, p. 3) which many Indian-English poets have adopted through a "process of adjustment on emotional, intellectual and ethical-philosophical planes" (Gadgil, 1995, p. 8) by incurring a methodology to harmonize the classical tradition along with the richness and variety of the Western literature, ensuring Indian poetry in English to be "a complex labyrinth of subtle interweavings" (Paniker, 1991, p. 16) but the Indo-English writer must "steer clear of the Scylla of invoking excessive 'local colour' reference and the Charybdis of embracing some 'Indianisation' theory that asserts a limited or biased view of Indian religion, philosophy and politics" (Singh, 2011, p. 3). As the "poet is not the product of an ethnic stud" (Katrak, 1971, p. 243) therefore Indian poetry in English is pan-Indian poetry which is "capable of expressing the totality of Indian experience" (Paranjape, 2009, p. 6). The English language was not "a medium of merely utilitarian communication" but "a potent vehicle of progressive thought and passion" (Bose, 1996, p. 515) for writers to voice their creative aspirations through a creative homogeneity involving a cultural comprehension between the East and the West towards a ubiquitous magnitude by exploring the secrets of existence and discovering "the principle of unity in nature...by boldly crossing barriers of diversity and peeping behind the screen" (Tagore, 1996, p. 379). As a result, the English language cannot be dismissed as an alien language because "the native intellectual will try to make European culture his own. He will not be content to get to know Rabelais and Diderot, Shakespeare and Edgar Allan Poe; he will bind them to his intelligence as close as possible" (Fanon, 1970, p. 176) rather

“the creative choice of language must be respected and one should judge by results” (Rajan, 1965, p. 93). Writing is an activism for a writer; it is the only possible way by which she/he can express her/his political standpoint, ideology, worldview, dreams and visions; leading towards a harmonious fusion of ideas (Dasgupta, 2015, np) in an “understanding world of creative participation” (Fraser, 2015, p. 66). Through their creative writing the poets continue the art of discovering the mystical humanity. As communication of life can only be possible through a living agency therefore writers through their art of writing communicate and nurture the growth, development and progress of a culture which grows, moves and multiplies in life (Tagore, 2003, p. 21).

### *The Female Author - Gynocriticism*

To ensure an efficient communication of life, a cultural evolution within “a social environment that blended the traditional with the modern, the Eastern with the Western” (Dasgupta, 2017b, p. 26) is necessary. This evolution is complete when the “psychodynamics of the individual or collective female literary tradition” (Showalter, 1981, p. 201) receives the vindication of ‘great’ literature, similar to the literature authored by men. Women writers being enthralled by their “inspirational eleventh muse” (Dasgupta, 2017a, p. 49) successfully continue the tradition of *écriture féminine* through a room and a voice of their own to rapidly and powerfully contribute towards the strengthening of the exclusive style of women’s writing “which draws upon the formless primeval song that emanates from the voice of the mother” (Bhaduri and Malhotra, 2016, p. 112), which the male writing often attempts to erase as “an undercurrent” (Moi, 1985, p. 55) thereby

naturalizing their gender roles as the virtuous woman, the seductress and the sacrificing mother (Nayar, 2010, p. 94). As a result, Elaine Showalter (1977) comments “each generation of women writers has found itself, in a sense, without a history, forced to rediscover the past anew, forging again and again the consciousness of their sex” (pp. 11 - 12) which contributed towards the birth of a strong subculture within patriarchy (Nayar, 2010, p. 97). Such patriarchal mechanisms augmented through the naturalization of power structures are interrogated through women’s writings which contribute towards the birth of a literature of their own bearing a feminine aesthetic which is often identified with language: a language which is discrete to women’s writing, whose variance is guaranteed by the feminineness of the author. This language used by women authors, poets contribute towards the birth of a literary canon by women as Showalter has argued by consigning the authors into three main types, equating to the three main stages in the evolution of women’s writing itself in her *A Literature of their Own: British Women Novelists from Bronte to Lessing* (1977). She coined the term ‘gynocriticism’ which involves in “the study of women as *writers*, and its subjects are the history, styles, themes, genres, and structures of writing by women; the psychodynamics of female creativity; the trajectory of the individual or collective female career; and the evolution and laws of a feminist literary tradition” (Showalter 1982, pp. 14 - 5) to account for the woman writer as the author [creator] of texts and meanings involving critical interpretations and thereby “uncover particular modes of women’s writing by positioning the woman’s experience as being at the centre of both writing and criticism” (Nayar, 2010, p. 97). This distinctive difference in women’s writing became a reality as women began to voice their causes, depict their real selves through

their women characters as they should be, unlike the male authors whose women characters are repressed under patriarchy. As a result, the literary creation and critical interpretations by women authors gave birth to 'woman-centered criticism' and accelerated breaking their centuries' silence and ripping apart the imposed barriers of barbed wires towards "a wider field of their talents". Therefore, women's literature is a firm response and challenge to patriarchy disintegrating at once "the relative segregation of the women as [the second] sex" (Guha, 2012, p. 267) by probing their "servile submission to custom and practice" (Banerjea, 2009, p. 118). This process aims to revive and preserve "the echo of women's literature" (Spaull, 1989, p. 85) and strengthen the female literary tradition for creating a world characterized by disenfranchisement, egalitarianism and erudition where the woman writer cannot be contained, smothered, confined or silenced from gyrating the world with her perception embodied through her writings (Fraser, 2015, p. 61).

### *The Poetry of Sanjukta Dasgupta*

Being indoctrinated in the principle of "No, no, don't be afraid, you are bound to win, this door will surely open - / I know the chains that bind you will break again and again" (Tagore, 2013a, p. 35) Sanjukta Dasgupta's poetry is the source of "light where the sun sets" (Fraser, 2015, pp. 93). The technique of writing poetry comes with 'creation' which is the primacy of knowledge (Fraser, 2014, p. 24) and Dasgupta's poetry authenticates her formidable creativity and apt awareness as a "progressive writer" (Hasan, 2006, p. xiii) to awaken the 'Jibandebata' through her creativity which aims to unite the fragments of life "allowing it to be in harmony with the world"

through an "encompassing fullness" (Tagore, 2009, pp. 4 - 5) as our socio-cultural issues resonate in the recesses of the poet's mind (Dasgupta, 2017a, p. 6) wandering in search of a space with more light. Dasgupta's *Dilemma: A Second Book of Poems* (2002) explores the "cultural roots and commitment to the enduring earth" and unravels the fathomless depths pertinent within the "micropolitics of everyday living in an urban environment" (np) in order to contribute towards the genre of women's literature through their ingenious distinctive style (Moers, 1977, p. 66). This intuitive style of the female poet is 'the echo of women's literature' which patriarchy tries to erase through several coercive mechanisms but remains unsuccessful. The power of poetry facilitates Dasgupta to re-vision women "to seek out a feminine aesthetic, or 'essence', which differentiates women's writing from men's" (Spaull, 1989, p. 84) and their varied dimensions in their respective cultures, questioning and revising the passive, impoverished and anaemic stereotypes, to "celebrate and venerate the dignity and strength of the enlightened woman and represent a critique of the regressive ideals of patriarchy" (Kumar, 2009, p. xxvi). The style of Dasgupta's poetry is an expression of a woman poet's experience of the home and the world; contributing to the style and content of women's writing "by which women offer some resistance to patriarchy through their writing" (Spaull, 1989, p. 86). Her poetry echoes the birth of a female reader impeding the strategic patriarchal alienation and manipulation of the female reader/writer and the implanted male perspectives as expostulated by Judith Fetterley's arguments regarding the politics of manipulation, androcentric value system and the portrayal of female characters through 'male eyes' in her famous book *The Resisting Reader: A Feminist Approach to American Fiction* (1978). Like other women writers, Sanjukta

Dasgupta's poetry is deeply engaged with issues involving not only to women's history, culture and literature, but also their plight and neglect by patriarchal generations which are often suppressed and unrepresented. As the proverbial narratives of Scheherazade, there is always a room for further relating and reviewing of these subjects (Kumar, 2009, p. xix), similarly Dasgupta's poetry aims towards creating

a new understanding of our literature [in order] to make possible a new effect of that literature on us [providing] the conditions for changing the culture that the literature reflects (Fetterley, 1991, p. 497).

### *Dilemma: A Second Book of Poems*

Through the thirty-nine poems in *Dilemma: A Second Book of Poems*, Sanjukta Dasgupta has passionately not only re-explored the aura that determines her creative words, but also addressed issues that require immediate attention and interrogation. The poems in this collection portray Dasgupta's experiences as well as establish her "authentic female voice in women's writing: a style and genre which were distinctly female" (Spaul, 1989, p. 84). From exploring a self-dilemma to interrogating social issues and stereotypes, and recollecting a memoir at the 2001 SAARC Writers Conference, this collection of poetry places before the reader a "woman-centered criticism" (Showalter, 1981, p. 198), observations, opinions and worldviews of various aspects of life; of truths that get negated by the dominating power structures of society and life. Anette Kolodny's essay "Dancing Through the Minefield" (1983) exposes these androcentric power structures and "deactivates its components" (p. 113) facilitating the birth of a "unique and

uniquely powerful voice capable of cancelling all those other voices" (Capkova, 2011, p. 4) which has coerced the former since times immemorial. "Permeated with the spirit of creation" (Tagore, 1978, p. 3), most of Dasgupta's poems seem to interrogate women's caged freedom; they also instigate our thoughts on the necessity of women to be a free female Prometheus, as evident through Dasgupta's *Lakshmi Unbound* (2017), a "response and a challenge to patriarchy" (Spaul, 1989, p. 85). The introductory poem "Dilemma" has an inherent poetic charm to depict the dilemma which often gets nurtured in a sensitive soul brought up amidst the cacophonous city only to feel the call of the Mother Nature through the symphonous countryside. The imagery employed through the following lines

I feel the soil under my eager feet  
I dig in my toes, I want to be a tree now.  
I want to have birds in nests, leaves, flowers, fruits  
These are the treasures that I seek;  
My feet cling to the earth child-like (Dasgupta, 2002, p. 1)

seems to embody an assimilation of the poet's soul with the soul of Nature; a romantic admiration for Nature which involves "a deep sense almost from infancy of the Nature, an intimate feeling of companionship with the trees and the clouds, and felt in tune with the musical touch of the seasons in the air" (Tagore, 1978, p. 3). But with time as the city summons the poet departs with an ecstatic admiration in her heart which is still in a dilemma as expressed when she states "Should I hail a cab and leave? / Should I stay here till birds, flowers, fruits hide me?" (Dasgupta, 2002, p. 1). The poems that follow are the

poet's debriefing of social issues which often seem to entrap humanity in the context of social norms, both at home and the world. "Shame", "Identity", "Empowered" are creative outpourings through which Dasgupta interrogate the enslaved femininity drubbing its wings prudently in the dark. Employing the classical reference to Draupadi, the woman who was born from fire in the *Mahabharata* "Shame" cross-examines the methodology employed by the "saree" to become a social instrument to coerce women and limit her movement which has often been stigmatized as 'transgression' as explored by the poet when she writes "The saree folded me with care / I folded myself into the saree / Till years later I suddenly saw / My legs were lost alas / Shrouded in five meters of graceful cloth- / Draupadi's textile trap" (Dasgupta, 2002, p. 2). While the poet denounces this patriarchal instrument, with "a free and happy and intense approach" (Lal, 1971, p. vi) she also juxtaposes within the fabric of the poem the image of "the sky-clad dusky Kali" who stripped to be herself "shining rapier in uplifted arm" (Dasgupta, 2002, p. 2) only to emerge with "A garland of skulls round her neck / The dark woman warrior / In tempestuous rage / Flings off the shame-shielding textile / Night-shawled Kali on the kill - / Woman Terminator annihilating shame-enforcing demons" (Dasgupta, 2002, p. 2).

### *Balance for Better*

Through the use of the images of the "saree" and "Kali" the poet as a socially conscious citizen raises serious questions and addresses issues of a patriarchal society which on the one hand subtly coerces women and on the other hand indulges in extravagance to worship the Goddess, the woman in her divine incarnate. The two images are quite contrasting, while "saree"

is employed by the poet to establish the idea of covering the body - slavery, while the image of "Kali" in her half-naked clan is embodying the principle of power and freedom without any inhibition. 'Shame' seems to be a sequel poem to "Trapped" from *Snapshots* (1996), Dasgupta's first collection of poems, where the poet exposes the 'don'ts' imposed relentlessly upon women leading towards a "cloistered, claustrophobic" (p. 21) existence interrogated and exposed by the poet. She seems to be compelled to be a part of this social struggle but through the inspiration of her "Eleventh Muse" (Dasgupta, 2017a, p. 46) she looks forward to "that midnight hour / Of metamorphosis" when she incarnates as the "stark dark Kali / With flying tresses / Unbound" (Dasgupta, 2002, p. 3) - her power resides in her physical and mental strength as the 'phenomenal woman'. This powerful note strikes the necessity of the advent of the true empowerment of women in this era of cultural and economic globalization where they will exist and be respected and honoured at par with the men i.e. 'balance for better', the UN theme for international women's day 2019. This clarion call ventured by the United Nations women's organization focuses on treading towards a gender-balanced world, where women are not considered and treated as the other. We hope towards a society where a collective effort will be endeavored to root out all kinds of sexual exploitation.

The "midnight hour" harks the approach of a new millennium where the murder of the female foetus, molestations and witch slaughtering will cease to exist, the tribal Dopdi, Roop Kanwar, Mrinal and Satyabati will have their due honour, when Tasleema's true voice will be recognized and respected to enable human beings to understand that women are "not just breasts, vagina and uterus" (Dasgupta, 2002, p. 5) but human beings; they are also

empowered individuals who are neither “to be used”, or “abused”, or “to be seduced” (Dasgupta, 2002, p. 6), nor are they “goddess to be worshipped, nor yet / The object of common pity to be brushed aside / Like a moth, with indifference” (Dasgupta, 2017a, p. 21). These powerful and moving images sway the mind of the readers who can apprehend the message the poet wants to convey and fathom its depth, by recollecting the injustices inflicted upon women since time immemorial. They are “the epicenter of human validity, / Daring the adventurer and dreamer” as they are “the Renaissance seeker of wisdom” (Fraser, 2015, p. 65), who with their individual identity assert themselves to be the assimilation of the forces embedded within “*sangam* and *shakti*”, being the source of the “power of fire, water, air and earth”, “the Mother-provider of every root” (Dasgupta, 2002, p. 7). Like most of her other creative artefacts Dasgupta through these poems too contribute as the gynocritics’ aim to “construct a female framework for the analysis of women’s literature, to develop new models based on the study of female experience’ to create an awareness for the ‘visible world of female culture’” (Rice and Waugh, 1993, p. 94). The psychodynamics of the feminine aesthetic in Dasgupta’s poetry contribute to the echo of women’s literature and thereby “challenge to the male tradition and to the silencing of women effected by patriarchy” (Spaull, 1989, p. 85). She attempts to spread the positive, hopeful force for a social awakening towards a space of more light, as evidently embedded through the eight lines (Dasgupta, 2002, p. 6) of her bright poem “Seasons!” in this collection. Like Dasgupta’s other poems, this also bears a concerted effort towards a day when men and women will understand that gender equality is not for any exclusive advantage for women but for the benefit of every citizen of a nation, from children to

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adults (Dasgupta, 2019, np). Amartya Sen in *The Argumentative Indian* (2005) had stated

Women are, in this broadened perspective, not passive recipients of welfare enhancing help brought about by society, but are active promoters and facilitators of social transformations. Such transformations influence, of course, the lives and well-being of women, but also those of men and all children - boys as well as girls (p. 222).

### *Nature in Dilemma: A Second Book of Poems*

Sanjukta Dasgupta’s association with Nature plays an important aura through the creative canvas of *Dilemma: A Second Book of Poems*. Rabindranath Tagore was mesmerized by the monsoon clouds and the pelting rain, similarly Sanjukta Dasgupta being an ardent admirer of the Bard seems to be captivated by rain drops which seems to cast a spell upon her “earthen elixir bowls” (Dasgupta, 1996, p. 18) washing the bitterness and frustration for peace to descend upon her disturbed soul, as “sleep, the balm of hurt minds” (Dasgupta, 1996, p. 41). Through the intriguing portrayal of nature in “Misfit” the poem is an apt epigraph to T. S. Eliot’s “Preludes” through the discontinuities in postmodern life which it embarks for the individual to exist with a hope that “Every yesterday pours into today / A cupful of the same dregs / The fog and moss like mucus / Blurs the view / Deludes with the never-will-be / But then turning away / Is a hemorrhage that kills” (Dasgupta, 2002, p. 8). “Loneliness”, “Nihilism” and “Ecstasy” are the poems that nurture ahead the theme propounded by “Misfit”. The journey of a soul towards loneliness establishes the existential perspectives of life which gets established when the poet, like Samuel Beckett states “It is nothing / Nothing at

all / Nothing is happening / Nothing will ever happen" (Dasgupta, 2002, p. 10). Through her creative canvas the poet has successfully portrayed the postmodern individual's "languor [which] stretches" "out in a listless stupor" causing the verbal signals to be blurred and slurred (Dasgupta, 1996, p. 41) along with "the smug Sargasso sea / Of chores and chatter / Narcotic domestic daze" (Dasgupta, 2002, p. 11). Nature images have been widely used to relive the charm that involves in the art of poetry as it is "an art as exacting and painstaking as the carving of an original design in ivory...a delicate choreographic pattern within a state of balanced tension produced in a refined sensibility...must be used precisely, nobly and with a sense of purpose" (Lal, 1971, p. vii). Dasgupta's poetry not only percolate such fragrance but also contribute towards the development of the efflorescence in poetry by moving beyond one's "tight little private world" (Lal and Rao, 1959, p. vi) to the cosmos by representing her creative musings as embodiments of modern Indian English poetry, and thereby contributing towards a

better understanding and communication not only among Indians speaking different languages but also between Indians and people of other countries [as] English has in a very real sense become a common medium for people of different races, nationalities and traditions [through which] the feelings and the thoughts of the poet can however raise echoes in the hearts of the people across the barriers of language (Kabir, 1958, p. 12).

Carrying ahead the spirit of a comprehensive dissemination of universal ideals and feelings Dasgupta's "Wild Rose", "For You", "On the Birthday of Buddha" and "Urban Krishnachura" seem to possess a ray of hope after an existential turmoil. The wild rose, like Banaphool's "Neem

Tree" becomes a metaphor of a woman who in spite of her talent gets stereotyped, ignored and faintly remembered after her demise as "a ravaged token" (Dasgupta, 2002, p. 12). While the romantic overtones in "For You" echo personal associations of one's loved people, "On the Birthday of Buddha" vindicates the need of peace in a world ready to wage a war and "Urban Krishnachura" is a colourful rendering of nature and its seasonal changes which also affect our lives from "radiant red" to "dark brown" (Dasgupta, 2002, p. 15). "Dawn", "Lunar Daze", "Telephone", "Reconstructed", "Ceaseless", "Definition" and "Death of a Flower" are observations on several spheres of life through the use of images and metaphors as portrayed through the desire "in its intense core" for a peaceful calm life like the dawn when "calmness seems unreal [due to] motor horns, sound of speeding wheels [and] air thick with sky shrouding fumes" (Dasgupta, 2002, p. 16), the deluge of the modern city life. The passage of time and the onward march of life towards death get poignantly explored in "Lunar Daze" and "Telephone". The note of personal touch which is poignantly embedded in Dasgupta's poetry often bereaves a sensitive reader who can associate to her powerful words and their "kinetic force" (Dasgupta, 1996, p. 32) with her/his life and associations. "Telephone" is a sensitive poem and its predicament can be shared by anyone who has gone through the phase of losing her/his near and dear ones; echoing avidly the intensity of the poet in her poem "Dad" from *Snapshots* (Dasgupta, 1996, p. 30). Along with the other compositions, "Reconstructed", "Ceaseless", "Definition" and "Death of a Flower" are equally powerful to report and portray aspects out of a life which are uncertain and bleak, where hope and determination is "reborn from its ashes" to challenge



“destructive deconstruction” (Dasgupta, 2002, p. 20) through a poetic vein.

### *Towards a Liberal Space*

With her structurally diligent tonal patterns, Sanjukta Dasgupta’s poetry is most scrupulous, polished and precise (Peeradina, 2010, p. ix) in its argument and reverberations, authenticating the female literary tradition through the “demonstrable working of a genius” (Narasimhaiah, 2006b, p. 1) whose is a “vibrant voice of the Indian poetry in English” (Narasimhaiah, 2006a, p. xxiv). Though Salman Rushdie had castigated the prose of the Indian languages due to its inferior quality, he grudgingly admitted that “the rich poetic traditions of India [which has] continued to flourish in many of the sub-continent’s languages” (Ramakrishnan, 1999, p. xix). These poetic traditions are “opportunities to sift, reevaluate, rethink ourselves and our traditions; or simply to assert our tastes, laying on them the line in the service of discussion, in ‘the common pursuit of true judgement’, however elusive and conflict-ridden these may be” (Dharwadker, 1996, p. ix). Dasgupta’s poetry is a “redefinition of the paradigms of modernism” by connecting “poetry and the public sphere in Indian society” (Ramakrishnan, 1999, pp. xix - xx). Poems like “Analysis”, “Alliteration”, “Passing by”, “Mahalaya - 1996”, “Estranged”, “Mythologies”, “Learners”, “Shower Drops”, “In Memoriam”, “Sometimes”, “Lament”, “My Fifty Year Old Woman”, “Transition”, “Revisited” are very simple yet they are dynamic and enthralling in thoughts and perspectives which vindicate Dasgupta’s “female imagination” seeking “to find answers to the questions that come from our [women’s] experience” (Showalter, 1981, p. 184). It augments “as the only

possible measure for women’s true aspirations”, which affirms in “far-reaching ways the significance of their inner freedom” (Spaull, 1989, p. 88) through which women’s own subject, own system, own theory and their own voice are recognized (Showalter, 1981, p. 184). Like Thomas Hardy’s “In Time of ‘The Breaking of Nations’” and Jibanananda Das’s “Ora Kaaz Kore”, these poems by Dasgupta inscribe the truths of life, beyond the portals of worldly, externally constructed dichotomies, an association the poet has intensely experienced in her heart through all her descriptions and images. It has enabled her to comment on the truth which is the continuity of life as “two streams flow in the same city, / meeting only in cemeteries and crematoriums” with a free heart “in the map-free domain of endless time” (Dasgupta, 2002, pp. 27, 31).

### *The Poet’s Progressive Individuals*

Amidst all the discontinuities and bleakness of life, Sanjukta Dasgupta’s admiration for Rabindranath Tagore, Ernest Hemingway and Che Guevara is vividly intimated through the poems “To Rabindranath”, “Remembering You In Our Time: On Ernest Hemingway’s Birth Centenary (1899 - 1999)” and “On Reading Anderson’s Che” respectively. In “To Rabindranath” the poet in her aesthetic style conveys her esteem for the Bard but also manifests his influence upon her creative spirit, as evident is the influence of Tagore’s “Bajao Amaare Bajao” (2013b)

Set my life to music

Play your melody of the light at dawn in my life.

The tune that fills your wordless songs, and a child’s flute of life

Smiling at its mother's face – make me the instrument of that tune.

Adorn me,

Adorn me in the dress that adorns the dust of this earth.

The rhythmic beauty of the evening malati, adorned in its secret aroma,

The decoration that joyfully forgets itself, embellish me in that adornment (p. 12).

“Remembering You In Our Time: On Ernest Hemingway's Birth Centenary (1899 – 1999)” and “On Reading Anderson's Che” are bereaved outpourings of an anguished heart residing in a society bereft of heroes and progressive individuals like Ernest Hemingway and Ernesto “Che” Guevara. The poet with her progressive ideals justifies that in spite of their cruel demise they eternally exist

In-between sound and fury

Cosmos out of chaos for a while

Stirring in the memory

Of a single sprouting thought

Like a bud unfurling its proud petals

Like a bird stretching its wings of power

Like the venturing spirit of Prometheus

Like a flash of searing light

Faster than any sound

Each end is also a beginning, as always (Dasgupta, 2008, p. 37).

The concluding poems of *Dilemma: A Second Book of Poems* – “My Fifty Year Old Woman”, “Transition”, “Revisited” and “SAARC Writers Conference – 2011” bear the note of hope in spite of a desolating existence. Looking forward “for a new dawn” the poet contemplates and revisits the transitions of life which in spite of all bizarre, trauma and shock authenticates as “the old, zestful, enduring” spirit. It augments the ethos of “love and peace among shards and rubble” as the “serene fury of ahimsa” remains “unvanquished” (Dasgupta, 2002, pp. 38 - 42) when

the words reach the world

Spinning in wild wonder

Whirling through the planet

Touching a heart

Caressing a mind

Coaxing a nod

A flutter of butterfly wings

Somewhere, anywhere

Links in an invisible chain

That is after all invincible (Dasgupta, 2008, p. 53).

### *Conclusion*

With the “freedom of metre and courage of expression” (Tagore, 1978, p. 3), Sanjukta Dasgupta's poetry sustains the spirit of a gynocritic and guides us towards “a new conceptual vantage point” (Showalter, 1981, p. 185). It involves breaking free women's writings from “the glass coffin of the male-

authored text” only to attain and enjoy “a dance of triumph, a dance into speech, a dance of authority” (Gilbert, 2000, p. 44). Her poetry possesses a distinct Indian character, context, tone, sensitivity and language (Peeradina, 2010, p. xi), intertextuality encapsulating that “all creative art must rise out of a specific soil and flicker with a spirit of place” (Gifford, 1986, p. 58) to “open new windows and doors of perception enabling a holistic understanding of the world” (Dasgupta, 2016, np). Dasgupta’s entelechy is explored through her astute treatment of the issues of our everyday life through her poetry as for her, with a strange crisis each poem is born (Dasgupta, 1996, p. 32) and as these creative petals embedded with a vibrant force are unfurled by the sensitive reader, the individual thinks and sometimes tries “to stand up” against “trauma, fears and oceans of tears” (Dasgupta, 2017a, pp. 73, 77). Like Sanjukta Dasgupta’s *Snapshots* (1996), *First Language* (2005), *More Light* (2008) and *Lakshmi Unbound* (2017), *Dilemma: A Second Book of Poems* (2002) also interrogates and deconstructs “the double blind with power and understanding” towards “a wider trajectory of the cultural diversity” along with the “ideological position of the subject’s voice of power” (Dasgupta, 2006, p. 178). Both at home and the world Dasgupta’s poetry is an odyssey which facilitates the reader no jargons, no illusions but a positive endurance “which the reader himself has not experienced, or experienced without sufficient sensibility, but to which he is rendered sympathetic by the rhythm, linguistic precision and incantation of the poem he is reading” (Lal, 1971, p. vii). Sanjukta Dasgupta’s “delicate perception” through an “intense self-reflexivity” (Prasad, 2009, np) colour her creative aura and emanate an emotion when an individual posses “only the faintest intellectual, and no emotional, idea of what that emotion is” (Lal, 1971, p. vii). Through her poetry Dasgupta

elevates the female literary tradition which encourages the ‘female imagination’ as the only feasible vent for women’s true aspirations, the means by which they can “affirm in far-reaching ways the significance of their inner freedom” (Spacks, 1976, p. 316). With Dasgupta’s poetic creations her words reach the world and “ceaselessly deconstructs the male [androcentric] discourse” (Jacobus, 1979, pp. 12, 13) only to provide a window to witness and hear the long unheard voices, which are different and distinct, but orchestrated together in its identity and sensibility (Vatsyayan, 2009, p. xviii); facilitating a realization of gender inclusiveness and gender equality – the harmony of androgyny, instead of misandry and misogyny (Dasgupta, 2019, np). Voicing herself through her verses Sanjukta Dasgupta undergoes the process of “self-discovery” which establishes her identity as a woman poet whose experiences, like most other women poets, differ from men’s in profound and regular ways – as “for every aspect of identity as men define it, female experience varies from the male model” (Gardiner, 1982, pp. 178, 179). The reason is that female experiences vary as it involves a shift in “the point of view” (Spacks, 1976, p. 315) to emphasize female imagination – creativity - voice by transcending historical boundaries; and it is through these great experiences as a woman Sanjukta Dasgupta envisions a creative genre of postcolonial women’s writing in Indian English for whom creative effluence are words that

tumble out in incessant rush,  
Eager to reach out, care or sting,  
Each word spoken, a kinetic force,  
Each word withheld, a potential bomb.  
Words congealed, dormant behind

Silent, sealed lips. Eyes spy,  
Words well up in their eyes.  
Arms, fingers, hands and feet are word banks too,  
Bridges of power, forging bonds  
Intimacy of signifiers and signified.  
Body crumbles, ashes fly,  
Words live on.  
Words colonize memory, tease thought,  
Expressions mind-monitored.  
Cautious, thoughtful, effusive, thoughtfree,  
Creating, destroying, at the drop of a word (Dasgupta, 1996, p. 32).

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### End Notes:

1. The title of this essay "In Order to be Great, One must be a Woman" is inspired from Dale Spender's *Mothers of the Novel* (1986) where she concludes that "in order to be great, one must be a man" (p. 119).
2. The concluding sentence of Sanjukta Dasgupta's poem 'Gora's Re-birth' from her fifth collection of poetry, *Lakshmi Unbound*. The title of the essay is inspired from Tagore's essay 'The Artist' (Tagore, 1978, p. 21).

### Acknowledgements:

I am grateful to Dr Sanjukta Dasgupta, Professor, Department of English, University of Calcutta, for her perpetual guidance, inspiration and blessings. I also take this opportunity to heartily thank Mr Aditya Prasanna Bhattacharya for his wisdom. Last but not the least, this essay is for Mr Norman Aselmeyer for his percipience, and enduring love, support and friendship.

In Order to be Great, One must be a Woman:  
Reading Sanjukta Dasgupta's *Dilemma: A Second Book of Poems*<sup>1</sup>

"The magic mantra of limitless freedom"<sup>2</sup>

### **Indo-Scottish Reminiscence, Association and Belonging:**

#### **Transnationalism in Bashabi Fraser's Poetry<sup>1</sup>**

Dr Saptarshi Mallick

Diffusion of life is encouraged through a living agency, and culture can only be transmitted from man to man, enabling it to grow, move and multiply (Tagore *The Centre* 21). This transculturalism is the foundation of progress within humanity which accelerates the establishment of true unity by erasing borders, breaking up boundaries and forming global networks through the cultivation of the spirit of freedom which is the quest of the universal man (Tagore "The Union of Cultures" 435) nurtured with the "development of the rational, ethical, and aesthetic faculties" (Gokak 62). Transculturalism is a pluralistic approach entailing greater association and interaction between different cultural groups through "more volatile migrational flows" (Benessaieh 15). As a variant of transculturalism, "transculturality", as used in 1940s by Fernando Ortiz Fernandez, is the notion of converging cultures through geographical mobility, continuous proximity and cultural mixedness. "Diaspora" involves the physical movement of individuals; it accelerates the subtle process of acculturation connecting the world with the home and vice-versa, enabling us to perceive the world by our senses and feel it through our soul (*Selected Essays* 263). Though "diaspora" is the voluntary or the forcible movement of people from their homelands into new regions, a central historical fact of colonization, colonialism itself was a radically diasporic movement, involving the temporary or permanent dispersion and settlement of millions of Europeans over the entire world, in a process which came to be known as ecological imperialism (Ashcroft 68-69). This process contributes towards locating the question of culture in the realm beyond to "reinscribe our human, historic commonality" (Bhabha 7). It is based on love which leads "freedom through cultivating a mutual sympathy" as the principle "to solve the problem of mutual relationship" and "liberate ourselves from the fetters of self and from all those passions that tend to be exclusive" ("Freedom" 628). Like Wallace Stevens' *Harmonium*, transculturalism initiates a happy cooperation between "unity and significance

on all the joy and sorrow and circumstance of life" by interrogating all shadow-lines of race, nation, class, caste, or creed, threading into a single harmonious whole the various forms of the self through which an individual can experience the unity within the universe – the realisation of the "Jibandebata" (*Of Myself* 7), the immortal immersed in humanity. This essay will illustrate how Bashabi Fraser's poetry builds on Rabindranath Tagore's ideas of the universal man, and the philosophy of the union of cultures.

#### **Bashabi Fraser: Connecting The Two Worlds**

Following the Vedic "Aabirbirnya edhi" (*Selected Essays* 262) and inspired by Rabindranath Tagore's ideals, Bashabi Fraser has been able to transcend the limitations of race, class and gender to gather together all human beings within one spiritual circle of union through the purview of her "creative realm of expression" (*The Religion* 66, 81) i.e., her poetry, through which we feel she is at home in India as well as in Scotland through "a long shared history between Scotland and South Asia – especially how Scots brought India back with them" (Rodrigues 7). Her creativity is an extension of her own ideals of transculturalism and joy which has enabled her to explore the realms of freedom in order to realise the great human truth that "our mind and our words come away baffled from the supreme Truth, but he who knows That, through the immediate joy of his own soul, is saved from all doubts and fears" (*Angel of Surplus* 20-21, 6-7). Fraser's poems enable us to be familiar with the world by realising the true spirit of "love" through which we are able to travel from untruth to truth, from darkness to light, and from death to immortality (*Selected Essays* 263). Endorsing the transcendence of parochial and narrow nationalistic considerations for the sake of the larger interests of mankind, Fraser, "an exotic Bengali flower, transplanted in auld Edina" (Jamieson 13), posits the importance of a "multicultural citizenship" (*Contemporary Literary* 179) in this globalised ever-changing world with a "real heterogeneity of interests and identities" (*Contemporary Literary* 180). Identity is "not strictly one-dimensional but recognized in rapport with the other" (Cuccioletta 8), and Fraser's transcultural identity is a highly dynamic "web of significance" (Geertz 4) emphasizing "if home is where the heart is, [she] is most definitely at home in both her worlds, peopled as they are by loved ones – both Scottish and Indian" (*With Best Wishes* 10).

Bashabi Fraser who regularly visits India is an important cultural ambassador who with her "fascination, affection and happiness" (Singh 5) connects the land of Rabindranath



Tagore, Mahatma Gandhi and Nazrul Islam with the land of Robert Burns, Sir Walter Scott and Robert Louis Stevenson, culturally as well as nationally. The assimilation and association of the several forms of “English” out of the local languages and “the Imperial standard in post-colonial times (which in Scotland owed much to Grassie Gibbon’s own experiment)” is a process that networks together Scotland and India (Jamieson 13). I have mentioned ‘culturally’ and ‘nationally’ because through Fraser’s poetry we can decipher a transcultural consciousness assimilating Indian and Scottish history, nostalgia and belonging, as well as harmonious coexistence which emanates from the “the union of knowledge, senses and love” (*Selected Essays* 265) necessary for any nation or culture or heritage (Krishnamurti 89). Fraser’s “Between my Two Worlds” interconnects not just two geographical spaces but also their history, culture, literature and human beings

To be enfolded in India

In its rich living spree

Yet turning to Britain

In my memory (*Tartan* 91).

Fraser is equally conscious of several burning issues which have affected the two countries, as evident in the poems exploring the Partition of India, its aftermath and the continuing displacement and dispossession, such as “Refugees of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century”, “Shadow Lines”, “The Ballot Box Explodes”, “War”, “Borders and Boundaries” from *Tartan and Turban* as well as “The Homing Bird”, “This Border”, “Walled-In: Walled-Out” from *The Homing Bird*. As a multi-meshed and inclusive understanding of culture *The Homing Bird* is “a harmonious blending of voice, gesture and movement, words and action, in which [Fraser’s] generosity of conduct is expressed” (“Creative Unity” 495). Through her poems Fraser has judiciously addressed the need to “transcend the narrowness of traditional and monocultural ideas and constraints, [towards] an increasingly transcultural understanding” (Welsch 78) by adhering to the integrating spirit of human unity, mutual-understanding, love and respect. This is an individual’s discovery and acceptance of transculturalism, a journey “from the unreal to the real for *satyam is anandam*” leading to *mukti* (*The Religion* 166), necessary for accepting societal transculturality (Welsch 79). Fraser’s poetry is a medium to unite the fragmented aspects of life towards *mukti* or a harmony of the soul which unites the

joys and sorrows of the world giving birth to a transcultural creative spirit where “a simple matter is matter a large one, and rather than being personal it is of the wider world” (*Of Myself* 3, 4). *Mukti* is intrinsically linked with the development of new diversity, and an important demeanour of this congenial process is incorporated in ‘travelling’. This new diversity embodies the “different cultures and forms of life, each arising from transcultural permeations and exhibiting a transcultural cut” (Welsch 81) by exploring the “completeness of humanity” and the “real human knowledge” (“Illuminated Travel Literature” 715-716) through comprehending cultures and assimilating its significance in the global and local, universalistic and particularistic aspects towards “the reciprocal recognition of a universe of shared significations” (Bouju 2).

### **The Beginning: *Life and With Best Wishes from Edinburgh***

Bashabi Fraser’s *Life and With Best Wishes from Edinburgh* emphasize solidarity and connectedness, establishing the importance of the percolation of cultures in close interaction with one another. On the one hand, the spirit of ‘vasudhaiva kutumbakum’ reverberates with the rhythmical sounds of the Scottish highlands, adding to the rich tradition of pastoral verse, while on the other hand, Fraser is never far away in her thoughts and ideas from her other ‘home’, to which she keeps returning. Her poem “India” (*With Best Wishes* 33) is evidence of the development of transculturality at the macro-cultural level, as multiple cultural associations and connectedness are decisive in the context of our cultural formation (Welsch 71). In “India” the poet embodies her motherland as the Mother Goddess with the eternal power to subdue evil and restore good. The poem ends with an existential note as observed in Tagore’s “Ora Kaaj Kare” and Thomas Hardy’s “In Time of ‘The Breaking of Nations’”. “Take the Blue but Leave the Red and White for Me” from *Life* reflects the poet’s intimate association with Indian nature characterized by “joy and mirth” in order to be “pure and white” and “blue and bright” (*Life* 34). In “The Suffering Symbol of Humanity” (*Life* 45) the poet interrogates the patriarchal system where women are deprived of liberty and stereotyped in their existence from birth as the ‘second sex’ and “pushed back for good into the mere region of the decorative by man’s aggressiveness of power” (*Personality* 165). Woman is never allowed to die and also debarred from rising after her death, as Christ did after three days, because rebirth is a privilege enjoyed by males. A woman cannot die in spite of her suffering, her being sold, betrayed, and slashed, because she has been in this world only to supplement the male and his gaze; to be subjected to male sexual politics without any will,

life or a voice of her own. This fiery spirit is further manifested in the poem “Let Me Live Again” (*With Best Wishes* 46) which epitomises the spirit of liberty breaking all fetters of life, as the soul undergoes a rebirth to enjoy the life lost in slavery and bondage. However, in spite of such powerful, socially conscious remarks against the dominating patriarchy, Fraser simultaneously weaves the story of true love among partners, friends or associates in life in “Shall We Walk Hand in Hand” (*With Best Wishes* 55) where she says,

I hold out my hand

You may come, if you can –

I will not say why or when

You may questions me where

And I’ll take you there

Away from your care-ridden land (*With Best Wishes* 55).

“With Best Wishes, from Edinburgh” is the poet’s prayer to the Lord to keep her associations in her motherland fresh, happy and blissful while she is in a distant land. The colourful nature references like the green paddy fields, mango buds, flailing hail, storms and clouds, the blazing trail, sheltering palms, flaming gulmohars and the cuckoos’ melody add an ethereal dimension to the poem. The poet is praying for these objects of Nature to be protected while she is distant from them, a practice we generally undertake for the welfare of our loved ones who are far away from us. Two of Bashabi Fraser’s later poems, “The Same Moon: from Edinburgh to Calcutta: A Refracted Lens” (*Thali Katori* 126, 127) and “Flowers Here and There” (*Home Thoughts* 55) also establish connecting ideals of cultures and histories, showing that we all possess “multiple attachments and identities” (Bell 243). Like Walt Whitman’s “I am large...I contain multitudes” (Whitman 84), or Arthur Rimbaud’s “JE est un autre” (Rimbaud 250), the moon in Fraser’s former poem becomes a signifier of cultural, historical and geographical unity, and the reader feels the warm presence of Scotland and India and their shared history and culture. Like the Ganga and the Tay, the latter poem celebrates nature’s magnificence through flowers – whether they are daffodils or *krishnachura* – these simple flowers with their liveliness connects the universal ebullience of eternal Nature, above political boundaries and barriers. From the micro-level to the macro-

level, these cultural determinants act as a transcultural lens “bringing to light what is common or alike amid what seems to be different” (Benessaieh 18, 35). Interrogating nation spaces, borders and all kinds of externally created differences and impositions, the poet is moved by the beautiful abundance of nature as a nurturer who is omnipresent. The poet derives aesthetic pleasure from the dance of the daffodils, the sight of the fiery red *krishnachura*, the vividness of the blue sky, the brightness of the sun, the cherry trees in blossom, manifesting the powerful impulse of Fraser’s poetry where the Upanishadic principle of *sarbang pran ejati* i.e. “everything is vibrating with life” (*Selected Essays* 183) is vindicated. Through her poetry we discover a “deep sense almost from infancy of the beauty of Nature, an intimate feeling of companionship with the trees and the clouds, and felt in tune with the musical touch of the seasons in the air” (*Angel of Surplus* 3).

### **Bridging Two Cultures and Two Worlds: *Tartan and Turban***

Like Montaigne’s view of his mixed identity (*The Complete Essays* 242) and Novalis’ emphasis on individual identity being “several people at once”, which suggest that pluralism is an unavoidable innermost essence of human beings (Novalis 250, 571), Fraser’s *Tartan and Turban* invites readers to enjoy the warmth of her poetic hospitality and explore her Indo-Scottish migrant existence/identities. Fraser elegantly steps between the first and second generational cultural perspectives, as her vibrant images take us from West Bengal to London to the Highlands of Scotland and back to the Himalayas, to be suffused by the ever hopeful sunrise on the peaks (*Tartan* 107). In “Between my Two Worlds” (*Tartan* 91), she depicts the psychic movement of her perspective in between India and Scotland. The poem begins on a light, happy note, with the poet writing on English summers, bluebells, blackbirds and snow after her departure from London. However, the tone of the poem undergoes a metamorphosis when the poet is back in Scotland and longs for the

...monsoons

The flocks flying homewards

In the deep sunset glow (*Tartan* 91).

The poet states with deeply felt pain that she has prioritized her marital family and her emotional associations to sacrifice her longings, desire and passions for a land, by burying them deep in her heart. Like Nietzsche’s harbouring many mortal souls within a being

(*Menschliches* 386), Fraser's poetry vindicates her transcultural soul through her Indian and Scottish identities governed by the principle of love, amity and fellowship. The glitter in the poet's eye is discernible when she gets an opportunity to return to the land that burns under a tropical sun, i.e. India. But she has to return as she now resides in one land physically. However, she can be present in both the geographical spaces psychologically. "Between my Two Worlds" concludes on a note of melancholy where the poet's dual identity encounters certain responsibilities in life as she adopts the identity of a 'space' which her daughter considers as her own country. The poem is Blakeian in its use of language, rhyme and meter; it is also a culturally complex one which entraps the silent, submerged feelings and longing for the land of one's birth. Fraser states, "...I now know that my two countries have always lived with me, as I miss the other and defend it when I am away" (*Tartan* 107).

With deep insight into the Partition of India and its miseries through the direct experiences of her parents, Bashabi Fraser could not have chosen a better medium to integrate two countries, residing in one and yearning for another in a language which is [hers] because [she] writes in it (*Tartan* 107). Fraser does not "believe in political borders and boundaries...What worries [her] most are borders of the mind which create so much conflict in the world" (Mallick 191). Her poetry gives voice to the life and struggle of many individuals who were compelled to leave Lahore's historic walls to "find new roots in a post-border age" and to "encounter another history that is intricately woven in a fabric of overlapping identity" in order to renovate and reconstruct days of plenty, so that with an "energetic vigour" their "children fit into this new rubric" "for an era to begin" by building "new nests, transforming the territory of the wind and the tide" to a "force forging new encounters" (*Ragas* 65, 75, 77, 81, 101).<sup>2</sup> The 'diasporic' integration, association and assimilation of cultures, histories and individuals in the two or more "spaces" – "a multinational world of interwoven interests" by linking the transcultural components (*Ragas* 97) are succinctly documented in the "Afterword" to *Ragas & Reels* where Fraser states "the sense of uncertainty of the first generation has often been replaced by the confidence of second, third and even fourth generations, educated from the beginning in Scotland and proud to be Scottish...The rhythm of Bhangra, the sparkle of Bollywood, the culinary success of curries, the sophistication of Indian classical music in *ragas* and *talas*, that have seeped into the Scottish consciousness, bringing a new excitement...The younger generations carry two

cultures with them...They have owned and applauded their 'broon' inheritance, comfortable in their in-betweenness, as they stride two continents and hold their poise" (*Ragas* 120-121).

#### **Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam [Connecting Cultures]: *From the Ganga to the Tay***

Bashabi Fraser's *From the Ganga to the Tay* is a modern epic poem which like the lamp of the mind, contributes towards the illumination of the world (*The Centre* 1) by connecting cultures and the history between India and Scotland. Tagore believed that pure enjoyment of knowledge is freedom upon which science and philosophy thrive (*Personality* 8). In this epic the poet liberates herself and is able to traverse beyond the forms and essences of nature's beauty (*Of Myself* 13) as she proceeds to archive the shared history of the two nations and thereby "reinscribe our human, historic commonality" (Bhabha 7) that belies the view of culture as monolithic and bounded by clear frontiers (Welsch 101). In accordance with Patrick Chamoiseau's ideals of a coherent continuum, *From the Ganga to the Tay* inspires the necessity to "develop a practical or imaginary sense of homeness in the world and worldness at home" (Benessaieh 27) i.e. a global soul (Iyer 18). Echoing Tagore's articulation on the relationship between the river and human beings in "Tapaban", "Prakriti", "Kule",<sup>33</sup> this epic poem maps the connecting power of rivers – their fresh, pure, and natural paths which weave through their worlds their watery shores, assimilating one culture and its history with that of the other. As a river connects, making its flow steady in spite of several obstacles, *From the Ganga to the Tay* unabashedly connects Fraser's early poetic career with her later creations illuminated by the spirit of knowledge, independence, self-realisation and love which guides civilization towards modernity, involving the expression of human beings "dharma and not merely his cleverness, power and possession" (*The Religion* 133). An instance of the "shared sense of the interdependence of the local, the national and the international" (Macdonald 11) may be read in the Tay's words:

Tay: ...Yours is a culture

My people sought,

Looking for spiritualism

When smothered by

the materialism

they bought so easily in lands where the sun set  
and families felt fractured

by the tide of individualism (*From the Ganga* 20).

Fraser's carefully crafted poetry is not just a reflection of her personality (*Personality* 17), but also an exploration of thoughts and memories of association and belonging, thereby enabling the readers to identify with the spontaneous overflow of the conscious narrative where the dreams cross towards the light at the end of the tunnel; as Tagore has stated:

Wisdom and spirit of the universe!

Thou soul, that art the entity of thoughts,

And giv'st to forms and images a breath

And everlasting motion (*The Religion* 88).

As "there is a fragment of India in every Scot" (*Thali Katori* 23), Bashabi Fraser with her cosmopolitan outlook and tolerant spirit interweaves the East with the West through her poetry with clarity of thought and expression, which erodes the discords of life in order to germinate an existence in the "universal world" ("East and West" 349) of freedom, love and harmony based on humanism and culture. In this poetic universe, "the light of the morning has come, not for entrenching ourselves behind barriers, but for meeting in mutual understanding and trust on the common field of co-operation; never for nourishing a spirit of rejection, but for that glad acceptance which constantly carries in itself the giving out of the best that we have" ("East and West" 469).

### **The Archival Saga of Scotland and South Asia: *Ragas and Reels***

Fraser's *Ragas and Reels* depicts "a long shared history between Scotland and South Asia" through the presentation of "a whole social fabric that is both representative and illuminating, illustrating their contribution to Scotland" (Rodrigues 7). This collection is a continuation of the Bengal-Scotland dialogue on revising histories, cultures, and the ensuing interface. "The Fyrish Monument", "Madras College, St Andrews", "Patna in the West", "Breakfast – Scottish style", "The Doctor at Home", "From Salisbury Crags", "The Hindu Temple in Leith", "Durga Puja in Glasgow", "Eid Outdoors", "From Lahore to West

Lothian", "Literature that travelled East" – to name just a few from this collection, embody the diasporic spirit of

Living in isolated distant turrets

Till one afternoon, by common consent

The four cornered brotherhood converges to vent

Its strength at the golf course as the horizon melts (*Ragas* 29).

The poems in this collection bespeak the inherent competence for "healing past time-blurred rifts" towards a "vision of fusion from home and abroad" that

...witnesses the Forth's embrace

Which laps the poet's present muse

And chosen fate (*Ragas* 55, 61, 53)

This collection of visual and poetic stories depicts "moments and memories [which have] held layers of history...[and] have not been a one-way journey and do not form just a recent phenomenon" on account of being displaced by violence, pain, loss, "(un)-belonging", memory and nostalgia of a "displaced multitude" ("The Crossing") due to the senseless imposition of the shadow lines. This multitude "discovered that they were without a nation overnight, which enforced journeys across the 'black waters' in search of a 'home', which they found in Scotland" (*Ragas* 120) and saw "the old world merge with the new" (*Ragas* 67). Fraser's poetry intensifies with a vitality and dynamism resulting in a creative ebullition through her verse on the Bengal/Scotland interface in literature. In this global economy Fraser creatively spaces two different worlds while she celebrates and rejuvenates the contrasts of the two countries amidst the similarities by focusing on issues and themes like displacement, removal, belonging and identity, invoking "cultural nationalism" (Gandhi 131), a process of "cultural mutation and restless (dis)continuity that exceed racial discourse and avoid capture by its agents" (Gilroy 2). The photographs by Hermann Rodrigues and the poems by Bashabi Fraser in *Ragas & Reels* illustrate voyages undertaken by "itinerant merchants, post-Partition migrants, economic migrants, people moving worlds because of marriage or drawn to Scotland's renowned universities and hospitals" (*Ragas* 120). Therefore

the inherent diasporic voice asserts that “it is better to cling to our roots and readjust or multiply them [accordingly in a new space], if more and other roots are needed, instead of being rootless and attempting to join our stems to roots that thrive in other soils” (Gokak 83).

### **The Chemistry between Kolkata and Edinburgh: *The Homing Bird***

In “The Homing Bird” Bashabi Fraser has divided the poetic narrative in the form of a journey between two parts of the world, Part I Kolkata and Part II Edinburgh. Fraser is weaving the myriad forms of her own self in order to discover and feel the unity within the universe (*Of Myself* 7). As writing is a vehicle for a writer to express her/his political standpoint, ideology, worldview, dreams, visions and ideas through a balanced integration with ingenuity, *The Homing Bird* not only decodes and interrogates the act of the “one-man commission, cutting/a nation with a knife-edged pen/In the privacy of his room” (*Thali Katori* 6), but also reverberates with the resonant spirit of liberty, transculturalism and togetherness; poetry is the other tongue that voices the languages of humanity (“Introduction” 24) erasing barriers as “an unbroken link between [the poet] and the natural universe”, exerting a deep pull and an association (*From the Ganga* 10). In the introductory poem “The Homing Bird” the poet is in dialogue with Kolkata and Edinburgh, “Kolkata do you miss me?”, “But have you accepted me, Edinburgh?” (*The Homing Bird* 5, 12). Through a graphic description of “the second city of Empire” and the “City of Literature” (*The Homing Bird* 9, 13), Fraser has conjured a poignant narrative between the two cultures which are her transcultural ways of life (Singh 27) and identity. Through memories of the Raj, Partition and her childhood in Part I of this poem, she creates a nostalgic aura for the “city of contrasting histories” (*The Homing Bird* 10), while in Part II as one of “post-midnight children” (*The Homing Bird* 11) she embraces Edinburgh with a global spirit, the “intimate city” (*The Homing Bird* 12) with an “urban inspiration” (*The Homing Bird* 13) as an “embodiment of strength” (*The Homing Bird* 13) for enabling her to voice her

...thoughts in celebratory confetti

Over this city, to merge with its cloud canopy

And dissolve with its rare sunlight,

Suffusing my lines with the skyline of Edinburgh (*The Homing Bird* 14).

*The Homing Bird* is a concurrent study of two cultures, nostalgia, and memories for a long desired home/space bereft of dissension. Employing simple words in powerful expressions, Bashabi Fraser has created a transcultural vision with conviction and foresight. The poet has successfully created a Dantesque odyssey for the reader to find solace after experiencing the trauma of Partition, and in the concluding section, by unraveling a maternal love of humanity, radiating the mysteries of eternal life by announcing its inherent beauties (*Of Myself* 19).

### **Conclusion: Towards a Harmonious Future**

Independent in her use of metre and her courage of expression, Bashabi Fraser’s poetry is characterized by beauty of form and music of the worlds permeated within a creative spirit – “the creative force in the hand of the artist” (*Angel of Surplus* 11). Her poetic oeuvre is an association of reminiscence, endearment and celebration – an endorsement of life and its immanent energy in “a multinational world of interwoven interests” (*Ragas* 97). Her poetic creations embody “the right to cross borders and the need to police borders” (*Postcolonial Literature* 190), i.e. the necessity for mutual cooperation, not conflict, between cultures, erasing all boundaries to enjoy freedom, the freedom we experience in the love of our dear friends (*Angel of Surplus* 6). In her poetical creations there is always a wandering to the past, followed by a return to the present in order to be able to revisit the former once again.

Identity in diasporic writing is a process of re-discovery, it “is not merely an exercise in exploring multiplicities of location and subjecthoods” (*Postcolonial Literature* 191) – it is transcultural where “the world is home, and the world is at home” (Benessaich 29). It involves universal justice, cultural integrity, free will and worldly association through “passionate research...directed by the secret hope of discovering beyond the misery of today, beyond self-contempt, resignations and abjuration, some very beautiful and splendid era whose existence rehabilitates us both in regard to ourselves and in regard to others” (Fanon 485). As “a scholar from a great metropolis, a classical Indian dancer and cultural activist, drawing confidently on rich and ancient traditions of Scotland and India” (Jamieson 13), Bashabi Fraser’s poetry explores the Indo-Scottish “friendship of lasting value” (Singh 31) through an interplay of word, mood and beat that “conjure(s) up sketches that jostle in words and images to create the commingling of two different worlds she coexists in” (Patel). The two different worlds she harmoniously weaves through her poetry remind us of Rabindranath Tagore’s

Merging me with your clay,  
 with tireless feet you make your way  
 now here, now there in the endless sky,  
 circle the sun as aeons go by  
 of countless days and nights. Your grass  
 has risen in me, and a mass  
 of flowers has bloomed, and in me showers  
 of pollen-dust, leaves, fruit and flowers  
 have rained down from great trees (*Of Myself* 10-11).

Fraser's poetry is a "profound cultural discovery" (Hall 116), alluring the readers through her mind and heart, and the humaneness of the Upanishadic principle of *anandarupamritang jadbivati* (*Selected Essays* 188) which is the yardstick of success of her poetry – i.e. the significant *sahitya* which is close to our hearts. As a South-Asian transcultural writer, Fraser has established herself as an eminent poet writing in English about her experiences as part of the Indian diaspora in Scotland (Das), and has been successfully able to intermingle her transcultural interests in her academic endeavours which bridge India with Scotland and their centuries' old history and culture, liberating the "collective modes of representation from the historical hierarchies associated with them" (Gonzalez 42, 50). In a recent conversation, Bashabi Fraser admits "I always wrote in verse; I could not write in prose. For me, poetry reflects the rhythm of life itself and is its very essence" (Mallick 183); and her poetic "vision is bathed in an illumination of [the] consciousness...reigning supreme over all differences...[as] peace is the inner harmony which dwells in truth...its perfection in the response of our love" (*Angel of Surplus* 7). Such compassion enables her poetry to bear "the subtlest of manners like a charming accent upon the familiar, spicing her vocabulary with words from afar as subject matter casts them up" within a "fruitful territory between certainties and languages which cultural and geographical removal entails" (Jamieson 14, 15), and creates

That light whose smile kindles the universe,

That Beauty in which all things work and move (*The Religion* 89).

Bashabi Fraser's poetic cosmos is a journey of refined tranquility towards wisdom associated with the grace of reconciliation with[in] dislocation and difference (Jamieson 15), inspiring individuals towards a fellowship with all humanity through "mutual understanding and trust on the common field of co-operation" ("East and West" 355).

<sup>1</sup> Acknowledgement: this essay is dedicated to Professor Stefan Brandt, University of Graz, for his perpetual encouragement, affection, and grace.

<sup>2</sup> The poems referred to are "From Lahore to West Lothian", "Building the Bodyline", "Football in the Meadows", "The Candidate", "Wee Cumbrae".

<sup>3</sup> "Tapaban" refers to hermitage, especially one situated in a secluded place; "Prakriti" refers to nature; "Kule" refers to the banks of the river.

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## Debriefing the Satanic Gyres of Patriarchy: A Bengali Gynocritic and Her Daughters

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**Abstract:** The language employed by women authors bear a ‘difference’ guaranteed by the author’s femaleness. This contributes towards the development of the female literary tradition as a challenge to the male tradition. Voicing her daughters through her short stories ‘Mira’s Madness’, ‘Distress’, ‘Abuse’, and ‘Rage’, Sanjukta Dasgupta, a Bengali gynocritic, explores women’s experiences of trauma, frustration and fears imposed upon them through several constraints of the society. Dasgupta’s short stories contribute towards women’s writing and female creativity, transcending the various historical boundaries. It is a result of her intense observation of the dynamics of our society where women emerge as ‘the second sex’. This essay will investigate the unheard chronicles of the women of the society, a story that never makes it to the headlines. It will also vindicate how women can understand other women’s predicament and play an important role to assist them in need. Mira, Suchandra, Preetilata, Malati, and Alo, like Dasgupta’s other women protagonists, negate the androcentric power structures of society, and expose them. Permeated with the spirit of creation Sanjukta Dasgupta’s short stories interrogate women’s caged freedom emphasizing the need of liberty for women, as evident through her *Lakshmi Unbound*, a response and a challenge to patriarchy.

**Keywords:** *Indian English, women author, short stories, difference, interrogating patriarchy, liberty.*

‘May I offer my life as oblation in freedom’s quest.’  
(The last sentence of “My Emancipation” – Translation of  
Rabindranath Tagore’s “Amar Mukti Aloy Aloy”) in  
*Tagore: The World Voyager* [Bose, 2013: 28].

### Introduction

The term ‘identity’ is cardinal to the dynamics of contemporary cultural and literary criticism. It is a paradoxical term which not only enhances similitude, but also asserts difference or contradictions, especially when we explore the idea of ‘identity’ in the context of women authors, their writings and their creative characters. The history of

women’s struggle for vindicating their identity will corroborate that under the satanic gyres of patriarchy women for a long time continued to exist a life which is ‘male-identified’ and her roles have been limited as well externally specified through the male figures associated in her life since her birth when she is identified as the ‘girl child’ of her father. This process of pseudo-identification of the women has made them to be comfortably considered by patriarchy as the ‘second sex’ where their ‘difference’ of their self, mind and soul remains unrecognized, dominated and exploited in one way or the other. These imposed identities are subtly coercive and seldom are women able to extract themselves from this strong hidden adhesive which unconsciously entraps them just as a wild python does mercilessly upon its prey before swallowing up the creature, or like as a Venus-fly trap, without leaving any trace. The woman’s body and its specific characteristics which are biologically, culturally and literally different becomes a space where patriarchy treads to explore only to control and violate it, as Victor Frankenstein attempted with the female monster in Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*. This violation serves as a reprimand upon the liberating, self-willed woman for interrogating the patriarchal advances, and also emerges as a metaphor of repercussions faced by any woman for employing her freedom of choice by crossing the ‘lakshman-rekha’ which she is not expected to transgress – a metaphorical patriarchal admonition and sexual politics to affirm manhood [Bagchi, 2019: 7]. Succumbed to these entrapping processes of imposed identities the woman emerges as the Eastern ‘Lakshmi’ [Dasgupta, 2017: 11] and the Western ‘Angel of the House’ [Woolf, 1970: 238] only to be subjected to sexual exploitation, rape, murder, acid attacks, dowry deaths, child marriage, abuse of the girl child, female infanticide, female foeticide, marital rape, sexual harassment in workplaces and domestic violence among others. Amidst all this turmoil which unfortunately continue even today, the true self of the woman is lost forever, and she continues to remain as the ‘other’ sacrificing her life at the altar of patriarchy without any reverence and respect for her as an individual, but to her pseudo-identifications which satisfies the male ego where the idea of the individual identity of the person as a woman ceases to exist. It is of utmost necessity to interrogate patriarchy and debrief its violent ramifications and enable women to lead a life of their own, realising their own selves. It is therefore imperative for women to be empowered in this era of cultural and economic globalization where they will exist and be respected and honoured at par with the men i.e. ‘balance for better’, the UN theme for international women’s day 2019. This clarion call ventured by the United Nations women’s organization focuses on treading towards a gender-balanced world, where women are not considered and treated as the other. In recent times due to the spread of education and enthusiastic endeavours undertaken by various organisations exploitation upon women have been checked to a great extent, if not completely eradicated. It is necessary to eradicate such inhuman crimes which are committed upon women – often these do not make it to the headlines, it remains concealed within the abysmal depths of the patriarchal structure of the society, unknown, and unheard. Women’s experiences easily ‘disappear, become mute, invalid and invisible, lost in the diagrams of the structuralist or the class conflict of the Marxists’ [Showalter, 1997: 219]. Like feminist activists addressing such issues through various endeavours, the entelechy of the creative writers have enabled them to explore these unheard and unknown phases of women’s life, the disguised and subdued messages of women in history, in anthropology, in psychology, and study these sensitive issues to vindicate its seriousness and emphasize through their creative medium the need for liberating women from the androcentric clenches. Sometimes they have been able to quiver the society through their argument leaving an indelible impression among all sensitive minds. Writing is an activism

<sup>1</sup> Acknowledgements: I am grateful to Dr Geraldine Forbes, Distinguished Teaching Professor Emerita, Department of History, State University of New York Oswego, for her perpetual guidance, inspiration and blessings. This essay is for Mr Norman Aselmeyer for his enduring love, support and friendship.

for a writer; it is the only possible way by which she/he can express her/his political standpoint, ideology, worldview, dreams and visions; leading towards a harmonious fusion of ideas [Dasgupta, 2015: np] in 'a thinking, understanding world of creative participation' [Fraser, 2015: 66]. Through their creative writing the creative artists continue the art of discovering the mystical humanity. As communication of life can only be possible through a living agency therefore writers through their art of writing communicate and nurture the growth, development and progress of a culture which grows, moves and multiplies in life [Tagore, 2003: 21] as *yat kincha yadidam sarvam prana ejati nibhritam* i.e. 'all that there is comes out of life and vibrates in it' [Tagore, 2005: 54]. Therefore the author being the 'world-worker' is able to 'transcend the limits of mortality' [Tagore, 2005: 55] towards an existence where all the people are coordinated by the vision of the poet to be 'receptive as well as creative' towards an 'inspiring atmosphere of creative activity' [Tagore, 2003: 2] through which 'a harmonious blending of voice, gesture and movement, words and action, in which [the poet's] generosity of conduct is expressed' [Tagore, 2001: 495]. Through an expression of her/his own worldview and ideology, the author is able to voice 'universal, human experience' [Parthasarathy, 2002: 11]; this has facilitated an interrogation of the hypothesis of 'marginality' [Paniker, 1991: 12] which has often been used to describe Indian literature written in the English language as

English is no longer the language of colonial rulers; it is a language of modern India in which words and expressions have recognized national rather than imported significances and references, attending to local realities, traditions and ways of feeling [King, 1987: 3].

The English language is not 'a medium of merely utilitarian communication' but 'a potent vehicle of progressive thought and passion' [Bose, 1996: 515] for Indian writers in English to voice their observations addressing several burning issues through a creative homogeneity involving a cultural comprehension between the East and the West towards a ubiquitous magnitude by exploring the dynamic secrets of existence and discovering 'the principle of unity in nature not through the help of meditation or abstract logic, but by boldly crossing barriers of diversity and peeping behind the screen' [Tagore, 1996: 379]. Employing the global *lingua franca* the Indian women writers continue to strive a reinvention of womanhood by addressing issues of women and their lives. Through their endeavours they have been able to break the silence and emphasize the need for women to journey towards 'self-discovery' and 'a search for identity' [Showalter, 1977: 13] through their creative medium. These creative endeavours by women help their struggling fellow sisters and daughters to recognize themselves, and their identity, as Nancy Chodorow's psychoanalytic insights vindicate that all perspectives of identity are androcentric in nature, but female identity and experiences differs from the male model in profound and regular ways. This element of 'difference' contributes towards the evolution of a feminine aesthetic, a language which is particular to women's writing, whose 'difference' is pledged by the 'femaleness' of the author [Spaull, 1989: 84].

### The Female Author - Gynocriticism

The evolution of the feminine aesthetic is complete when the 'psychodynamics of the individual or collective female literary tradition' [Showalter, 1981: 201] receives the vindication of the canon of 'great' literature, at par with the literature authored by men. Women writers being enthralled by their 'inspirational eleventh muse' [Dasgupta, 2017: 49]

successfully continue the tradition of *écriture féminine* through a voice of their own rapidly contributing towards strengthening the exclusive style of women's writing 'which draws upon the formless primeval song that emanates from the voice of the mother' [Bhaduri and Malhotra, 2016: 112] which the male writing often attempts to erase and stereotype them as a 'subordinate to the main stream: an undercurrent' [Moi, 1985: 55] which thereby naturalize their gender roles as the virtuous woman, the seductress and the sacrificing mother [Nayar, 2010: 94]. As a result Elaine Showalter comments that 'each generation of women writers has found itself, in a sense, without a history, forced to rediscover the past anew, forging again and again the consciousness of their sex' [Showalter, 1977: 11-12] which contributed towards the birth of a strong subculture within patriarchy [Nayar, 2010: 97]. Such patriarchal mechanisms augmented through the naturalization of power structures are interrogated through women's writings which contribute towards the birth of a literature of their own bearing a feminine creativity and inventiveness which is established through the use of language by women authors to represent her female protagonists' 'journey towards self-fulfillment [inner awakening] with Jungian rites of passage' [Baym, 1978: 11]. This language used by women authors, poets contribute towards the birth of a literary canon by women as Showalter has argued by consigning the authors into three main types, equating to the three main stages in the evolution of women's writing itself in her *A Literature of their Own: British Women Novelists from Bronte to Lessing* (1977). She coined the term 'gynocriticism' which involves in

the study of women as *writers*, and its subjects are the history, styles, themes, genres, and structures of writing by women; the psychodynamics of female creativity; the trajectory of the individual or collective female career; and the evolution and laws of a feminist literary tradition [Showalter, 1982: 14-15]

to account for the woman writer as the author [creator] of texts and meanings involving critical interpretations and thereby 'uncover particular modes of women's writing by positioning the woman's experience as being at the centre of both writing and criticism' [Nayar, 2010: 97]. This 'unique difference' [Showalter, 1981: 186] in women's writing became a reality as women began to voice their causes, depict their real selves through their women characters as they should be, unlike the male authors whose women characters are repressed under patriarchy with limited opportunity to offer any kind of resistance against the exploitative institution. As a result the literary creation and critical interpretations by women authors gave birth to 'woman-centered criticism' and accelerated breaking their centuries' silence and ripping apart the imposed barriers of barbed wires towards 'a wider field of their talents'. Therefore women's literature is a firm response and challenge to patriarchy disintegrating at once 'the relative segregation of the women as [the second] sex, relaxes the restrictions that otherwise narrow women's functions' [Guha, 2012: 267] by probing the 'servile submission to custom and practice without regard to their tendency for good or evil' [Banerjee, 2009: 118]. This process aims to revive and preserve 'the echo of women's literature' [Moers, 1977: 66] and strengthens the female identity and the female literary tradition and for creating a world characterized by disenfranchisement, egalitarianism and erudition where the woman writer cannot be contained, smothered, confined or silenced from gyrating the world with her perception embodied through her writings [Fraser, 2015: 61]. The metaphorical concept of 'female identity' is an inherent process dependent upon a mother-daughter bond, which the female creators/authors develop with their female characters [Gardiner, 1982: 179]; and besides

being the hero of the author's creation, she also becomes her author's daughter as this connection contributes towards women's psychological identities [Gardiner, 1978, 244]. Therefore the female authorship creates this association and an identity of this association contributes towards the development of a distinct engagement between the woman writer and her characters and 'indicates an analogous relationship between woman reader and character' [Gardiner 1982: 179]. Through this literal identity often an individual/reader feels remarkable and cogent in spite of being pharmaceutically subjected to a state of identity dissipation. Therefore through this distinct female identity Indian women authors writing in English have been able to portray women as 'seats of consciousness' [Donovan, 1997: 212], their selves, their female voices, the social setting and audiences, and their responses towards it which differs to the male tradition, only to metamorphose the 'voice' as a woman-centered criticism [Showalter, 1981: 186] – portraying aspects of 'women's experience which generate the style and content of their writing; and to examine the means by which women offer some resistance to patriarchy through their writing' [Spaull, 1989, 86] and 'deactivates its components' [Kolodny, 1991: 113]. The female experience is the foundation of an 'autonomous art, extending the feminist analysis of culture to the forms and techniques of literature' [Showalter, 1997: 218].

### The Bengali Gynocritic

Through her insightful contributions towards the genre of women's literature following an intuitive and distinctive style [Moers, 1977: 66] Sanjukta Dasgupta has effectively contributed towards maneuvering 'the echo of women's literature' [Moers, 1977: 66] which patriarchy tries to erase through several coercive mechanisms but remains unsuccessful. The dynamic feminine power of her creative outlook facilitates Dasgupta to re-vision women 'to seek out a feminine aesthetic, or 'essence', which differentiates women's writing from men's' [Spaull, 1989: 84] and their varied dimensions in their respective cultures, questioning and revising the passive, impoverished and anaemic stereotypes, to 'celebrate and venerate the dignity and strength of the enlightened woman and represent a critique of the regressive ideals of patriarchy' [Kumar, 2009: xxvi]. Like her poetry, the remarkable style of Dasgupta's short stories, endorses an expression of a woman author's experiences of the home and the world and vindicates the 'self-defined critical consciousness' of women as 'opposed to a mass-produced or stereotypical identity' [Donovan, 1997: 212]; contributing to the style and content of women's writing 'by which women offer some resistance to patriarchy through their writing' [Spaull, 1989: 86]. Her short stories facilitate the birth of a 'unique and uniquely powerful voice capable of cancelling all those other voices' [Capkova, 2011: 4]. They echo the birth of a female reader impeding the strategic patriarchal alienation and manipulation of the female reader/writer and the implanted male perspectives as expostulated by Judith Fetterley's arguments regarding the politics of manipulation, androcentric value system and the portrayal of female characters through 'male eyes' in her famous book *The Resisting Reader: A Feminist Approach to American Fiction* (1978). Like other women writers, Sanjukta Dasgupta's short stories are deeply engaged with issues involving not only to women's history, culture and literature, but also their plight and neglect by patriarchal generations which are often suppressed, unheard and unrepresented. As a woman writer she addresses them from the woman's experience facilitating the woman as the producer of textual meaning. This intense association and commitment towards her [female] characters not only make them lively and familiar, but also connects to them as her daughters, whose unheard stories and issues of life get addressed through her creative medium as it reaches to the common ear

breaking the glass closet which patriarchy builds around women's writings. 'This is gynocriticism derived from Elaine Showalter's *la gynocritique: gynocritics* who are 'more self-contained and experimental, with connections to other modes of new feminist research' [Showalter, 1997: 216]. Through her short stories Dasgupta, an ardent gynocritic from Bengal [India] interrogates the Miltonic secondness and otherness imposed upon women [Gilbert and Gubar, 2000: 191] only to create 'a new understanding of our literature [in order] to make possible a new effect of that literature on us, and to make possible a new effect in turn to provide the conditions for changing the culture that the literature reflects' [Fetterley, 1991: 497]. Sanjukta Dasgupta is perhaps an Indian embodiment of Showalter's observations regarding the programme of gynocriticism which involves the fabrication of

a female framework for the analysis of women's literature, to develop new models based on the study of female experience, rather than to adapt male models and theories. Gynocriticism begins at the point when we free ourselves from the linear absolutes of male literary history, stop trying to fit women between the lines of the male tradition, and focus instead on the nearly visible world of female culture [Showalter, 1997: 217].

This process of artistic creation by a woman author involves in her exploring the spirit of difference; it also involves her 'anxiety of authorship' which is due to the conventional 'male definitions of herself and her own potential' [Spaull and Millard, 1989: 127] enclosing her within the patriarchal gyres of the man's indecisive feelings about his impotence to reign his own birth, physical survival and death. This is a struggle which like all female authors, even Sanjukta Dasgupta undertakes, dealing 'not against her precursor's [male] reading of the world but against his reading of *her*' [Gilbert and Gubar, 2000: 49] and her texts. Dasgupta's triumphant struggle vindicated through her characters [daughters] of her short stories as well as through her poetry bears the hallmark of [her] female creativity [Spaull and Millard, 1989: 128] which becomes the female precursor contributing towards a feminist poetics and a feminist literary tradition by transcending the anxiety of authorship by reviewing the male genres in order to enact 'a uniquely female process of revision and redefinition that necessarily caused them to seem "odd"' [Gilbert and Gubar, 2000: 73]. Debriefing the androcentric codes and the cultural construction of femininity through her powerful feminist narrative in her short stories Sanjukta Dasgupta has been able to create some simple yet extremely powerful women characters who are very familiar to us, yet their stories are unknown and unheard. Dasgupta's association and feeling with them becomes lively in the course of the narratives, which establishes the metaphorical maternal association between the female author and her female characters who become her daughters. Dasgupta as the mother of all her characters [female] portray the dynamics of their life struggles within the patriarchal domain drawing her themes from our surroundings – it is their quest for their own identity, their self-definition [Showalter, 1977: 13] in order to be able to erase the lines of control which had trapped them within the humiliating and terrifying domestic space and to 'spread her arms like wings / [spin] wildly on her toes / [sing] like a Koel in spring' [Dasgupta, 2017: 15]. In this essay we will explore the struggles of Dasgupta's [fictional] daughters - Mira, Suchandra, Preetilata, Malati, and Alo, who have been able to resist 'the self-perpetuating and closed nature of patriarchal structure and institutions' [Palmer, 1987: 183] by relentlessly fighting their way for their rights and helping other women at times of need. They are very common people whom we perhaps meet every day, but seldom do we hear and come to know of their distinctive female experiences. Indoctrinated in the Marxian philosophy and enthralled by

her Eleventh Muse [Dasgupta, 2017: 49] Sanjukta Dasgupta's short stories speak of the regular grapples undertaken by the common women with whom majority of us [the readers] can relate and thereby feel the author's anger which proliferate every corner of the narratives, thereby contributing towards the development of women's writing and furthering the cause of women's literature.

### The Daughters and Their Stories

#### Mira

Mira's story from Dasgupta's 'Mira's Madness' reflects the predicament of every [creatively] conscious middle-class woman struggling within the abysmal depths of the androcentric society to carve a space and a room of her own. Like the narrative of most of Dasgupta's stories, here too we observe how the society and the stereotyped conventions act as a trap to continue the act of coercing women in the name of conventions, marriage and family. Mira dreams to be a school teacher but her failure to clear the school-service examination at the first attempt becomes the yardstick to get her married off to a man, and marriage makes her life miserable. It is very interesting to observe that Dasgupta has used sentences which are very typical of the patriarchal Indian society exposing its gruesome reality. Some sentences like, 'She was thin, just what young men fancied, she was fair and beautiful and she was educated', 'Young girls are given away not to the bridegroom alone but they are given away to be guarded, groomed and gobbled by the *sasur bari*, the house of the father-in-law with its in-house residents', and 'Mira knew she had to attract him with her devotion, smiling silence, shyness, lisping tone and downcast eyes' [Dasgupta, 2014: 252] among others, vindicate the strategies of the institution of marriage existing in our society where parents of a girl child still feel the compulsion to marry off their daughter since the time of her birth. The story establishes how Mira's life and her bright dreams metamorphoses in to unnerving bleakness which creates an aura of inescapable illusion. Exploitation at the in-laws is not always physical, but even psychological, which interrogates the very existence of a sensitive individual. Trapped within the laborious chores and unable to stand against the 'relentless torture' [Dasgupta, 2014: 252] of the *sasur bari*, on the twenty-fifth day Mira takes advantage of the possible opportunity and returns to her father's home on the pretext of her sister's illness; it was more of an escape rather than just a mere return or a courtesy visit. This is evident when Mira dived into her mother's arms and cries her heart out, 'Take me back, please let me stay here. I'll find a job and go away if you don't want me her, but please, please don't send me back there' [Dasgupta, 2014: 252]. But her once supportive mother was different to her then. Instead of supporting and feeling for her maltreated, abused daughter, Alpana, her mother remained unaffected and unmoved and spoke as an extended manifestation of her *sasur-bari*, the prison house as Rabindranath Tagore had stated in *Tasher Desh*. Blatantly she stated, 'now that you are married Mira, your *sasur-bari*, your marital home, the house of your father-in-law is your real home. Girls have to obey their in-laws, no matter how unreasonable their demands are' [Dasgupta, 2014: 253]. In spite of being a very disturbing statement from a mother to her own daughter, yet this statement by Alpana deserves a close interrogation. It focuses on 'social structurally induced psychological processes' [Chodorow, 1978: 6-7] where we observe that psychic disparity between the sexes is historically inconsistent. It may not be the predicament of married women everywhere but the number of women subjected to such politics is not negligible, subjected to such an invisible machinery which confines them and grafts their position and identity in accordance to the androcentric desires. Alpana's words act as a polite rebuke to Mira who

finally gets entangled in the 'fear of losing one's unique identity' [Pratt, 1978: 11] and unable to get any support she returned to the in-laws home and committed suicide only to be rushed to the hospital. With Alpana's admonishing words to her daughter Mira we tend to think of her own predicament in her life after she got married, her struggle amidst the societal stereotypes which rendered her to a state of helpless existence where she was destined to accept her life within the space of her in-laws sacrificing at once the spirit of her own being. Though this has not been explicitly stated in this short story but Alpana's gestures and words to married Mira perhaps echo her own plight which she considers to be the fate of every woman after marriage. Though giving birth to a daughter and nurturing her is emotionally gratifying for a mother as it accelerates the mother to thoroughly return to the symbiotic and perceptive state that she would like to derive from mothering [Stone, 2011: 9-10]; this plight of the mother and her daughter echos Nancy Chodorow's first observation regarding the development of a girl's personality, i.e. a girl develops her gender identity conclusively, in becoming like the mother with whom she initiates life in a symbiotic combination [Chodorow, 2000: 348]. Though Mira was saved due to the advancement of medical science but no police complaint under section 498 of the Indian Penal Code was lodged. She began to be treated like an unknown being, while her mother did not want her back, her mother-in-law was eager to send her back to home, unable to do so she tagged her as 'bad and mad', and Mira became the mad Mira. Madness is one of the stereotypical identities which patriarchy imposes upon women who have transgressed their set orders and have become *alakshmi* instead of the much expected *lakshmi*. Mira tried her best to get a job by her own efforts but all appeared to be in vain. The concluding section of the short story not only voices Mira's present situation but also vindicates the necessity of certain factors for women like Mira to have a life of their own. It states 'Mira does not have a job yet. She has no money, she cannot speak English, she is not computer savvy, she is just a university graduate and now she is mad Mira' [Dasgupta, 2014: 253]. The story ends with a rhetorical question implying that Mira's position will not improve very easily as the system is corrupt and stereotypical towards women, and their education, vocational training and takes utmost careful measures to crush the woman's endeavour towards 'self-definition' of her own self as 'a woman's sense of gender, her sexuality, and her body may assume a different, perhaps a more prominent, shape in her conception of her self than these factors world for a man' [Gardiner, 1982: 190].

#### Suchandra

Suchandra in Dasgupta's 'Distress' is an embodiment of the 'new woman' who is intelligent, educated, self-sufficient, sensitive, hard working and is the ever assuring space to her psychologically tormented students [female and male]. Though through the narrative we come to know of certain important aspects of Suchandra's personal life, yet how she is a true mentor to her students to whom they could confide themselves draws our attention. Suchandra is perhaps very dear to our author; those of us who are Professor Sanjukta Dasgupta's students can surely realise how Suchandra is the creative incarnate of Dasgupta through a fictional vein. Though many aspects of Suchandra's life are fictitious, yet like Dasgupta, Suchandra is also a supportive and encouraging teacher, and a true scholar with a large heart who has time to patiently hear her students and their problems, only to help the person to solve or ease the matter with her pragmatic advice. In the first part of the story we can understand the bond between the author and her daughter, soon we realise how the bond gets depicted through a fictional vein within the narrative of the short story, i.e. Suchandra and her students who are almost like her children. Though the narrative

states of a bleak phase in Suchandra's emotional life, yet through certain descriptions in this story we can discover Dasgupta's interrogation of patriarchy or the exploitative androcentric traps to which women are succumbed. 'Why did women trust men so much?' [Dasgupta, 2018: 281] is perhaps the author's and her daughter's take upon this stereotyped society. Through certain aspects of her students' lives, like, Ajoy, Pulak, Mitali and Kanika, we not only become familiar regarding creative women's trauma within the turmoils of marriage, but also of the predicament of creative men when they tend to pursue a life and a career beyond the society accepted set parameters. Suchandra is the woman who is not only the reader but also the writer, and through the stories of her students she is successfully able to critique the society which coerces women and men, the former the most. Through her 'own subject, own system, own theory, and own voice' [Showalter, 1981: 184] Suchandra offers resistance and interrogates the violent gyres of the society through her creative medium. Her female imagination becomes the possible passage for her, more ardently for her students' true aspirations through which they are able to 'affirm in far-reaching ways the significance of their inner freedom' [Spacks, 1976: 316]. Her critique, like Dasgupta's, is to seek answers to the questions that derive from her experiences, and to underscore the subtle and often neglected problems and issues, and here the experiences, problems and issues are both from her own observations of the society, as well as the occurrences in the lives of her students who struggle to have a space exclusively of their own amidst the confinements of life. As a literary woman, Suchandra's indignation to such complexities of life rattle her nerves which get soothed only through her 'pen' [Dasgupta, 2018: 280], giving a free flow to her spirit and expression, contesting the excruciating gyres of patriarchy by not being a 'good, sane, silent Lakshmi', or an 'angel in someone's house', or 'a disembodied spirit', but by being *alakshmi* through her liberating intellectual activities [Showalter, 1982: 12] which transgresses the set guidelines only to enjoy liberty like an eagle [Dasgupta, 2017: 13]. Through the reference to the 'pen' in this story through which Suchandra enjoys her literary freedom, we are reminded of the metaphors of literary paternity as exposed by Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar in *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* through which they evaluate the theoretical injunction that

the text's author is a father, a progenitor, a procreator, an aesthetic patriarch whose pen is an instrument of generative power like his penis... [it is] not just the ability to generate life but the power to create a posterity to which he lays claim as... 'an increaser and thus a founder'... [therefore the pen] in patriarchy [is] more resonantly sexual [Gilbert and Gubar, 1979: 6].

This inadvertently raises the interrogating question regarding the organ through which the females generate texts [Gilbert and Gubar, 1979: 7], and this forms the foundation of the arguments for *écriture féminine* and gynocriticism i.e. women write through their experiences and their body, their sexual differentiation [Burke, 1978: 851]. This argument has been augmented when *Of Woman Born* vindicates female 'physicality as a resource rather than a destiny' [Rich, 1977: 62] interrogating at once the Freudian coordinates of 'penis envy, the castration complex, and the Oedipal phase' which determine women's relationship with language, fantasy, and culture [Showalter, 1982: 24]. The stories of Mitali and Kanika whose affliction Suchandra portray in 'Distress' are two strong epitomes of women's anguish in this society which for many people is too common an affair to be discussed and intervened. However in both the situations we do not get to

know where and how they are at the present moment; the author leaves the readers to contemplate. Was Mitali able to get inspired by Ibsen's Nora and leave her home? Did Kanika overcome her domestic anguish and explore her hidden talents? Are they still alive? are some disturbing questions that continue to hover in the reader's mind. Sanjukta Dasgupta's Suchandra and her students are subjected to social contexts which get responded through their teacher, corroborating the author's attempts to establish that 'women's culture forms a collective experience within the cultural whole', an encounter that attaches women to each other over time and space [Showalter, 1982: 27].

#### Preetilata and Malati

Preetilata in Sanjukta Dasgupta's 'Abuse' is perhaps the twenty-first century paragon of the women's culture within the cultural matrix of this society who aims towards connecting, helping and supporting women through her NGO named Mitali. Balancing subtly the home and the world, Preetilata is the modern middle aged woman who is conscious of women's predicament in the patriarchal society, therefore attempts in her own way to help women like Mira, Mitali and Kanika, perhaps aiming to create an awareness in the society in her own small yet constructive way to restore the 'balance for better'. Through this short story Dasgupta's pragmatic approach towards reaching out to women who need help and support is vindicated. Preetilata is Dasgupta's daughter who has ventured in this world to 'support, educate and empower the helpless' [Dasgupta, 2013: 2], an embodiment of her dynamism to stand by the oppressed and the wretched in the society, her sensible advice and suggestions have been conclusively life-changing for several individuals. As Suchandra is a feminist author writing her experiences, similarly Preetilata is the feminist activist empowering the defenceless, which unfortunately in the stereotyped society is the woman ever subjected to all kinds of torture. In this story before we explore the mother – daughter relationship which Dasgupta has fostered through Preetilata and Malati, it is interesting to notice the various social stereotypes the author has carefully grafted within the narrative in order to debrief it through her use of language. Though it is quite surprising, but we hardly interrogate the matter, in most of the families the male members expect the female member[s] of the family to cook good dishes on Saturdays and Sundays which are their weekly holidays, but have we ever noticed a change in this pattern. Have we ever seen that on Saturdays and Sundays the male members take the responsibility of cooking, and facilitate the women to relax from the activities at the kitchen? It may be one or two in a thousand, but it is never comprehensive. An inherent evil deep rooted within the immeasurable depths of our society is the inhuman stigmatization of the first born girl child, or sometimes the newly wedded daughter-in-law, as the cause of any mishap in the family after their birth or arrival. They are ever condemned as 'harbinger of bad luck' [Dasgupta, 2013: 3] and often disparaged as witches. The predicament of such a girl child or woman becomes repugnant as she continues to suffer physically and psychologically from such derogatory comments both at home and at the society outside. A very serious social problem is the molestation of girls and women within the home front and by their family members; they are often subjected to life threats by the convicted family members and die in their own selves by being silent only to face the consequences of such unprotected forceful sexual encounter. The evil does not cease here, when the unmarried girl being subjected to regular molestation becomes pregnant the society raises questions against her character, but no one hears her pangs of affliction and ordeal. She suffers within and unable to take any action, or speak to anyone she commits suicide; some of their deaths get reported in the newspapers, some to the court only to be

lost in the recesses of time and history in the androcentric world. Another social evil which is persistent even today is the importance of dowry [money and kind] in marriages – the father of the bride pays a huge amount of money and other gifts to the groom's family only to facilitate the marriage of his daughter, as if the daughter is a commodity who is being bargained and sold in the market of marriage. It is a shame for the Indian society that even today suicide deaths, and inhuman murder of wives by their husband and in-laws due to their father's inability to pay dowries promised before marriage gets recurrently reported in the media, yet women continue in their position as the second sex in this banal society. These are the primary issues which Dasgupta debriefs in 'Abuse' through the traumatic life of Malati who being subjected to repeated molestation by her own father becomes pregnant and is forcefully married off to evade the premarital pregnancy to a man who needed a maid for his family, and not a wife, lands up to Preetilata [Mitali] after being subjected to inhuman torture from her husband when her father had failed to deliver the promised money as marriage dowry, seeking help and advice. Preetilata succeeds in settling the matter in its own fashion, and presently Malati is at a peace as the money changed hands and her husband is caring towards her after receiving his due. The story apparently settles the deep rooted problem but disturbs a sensitive reader as it raises serious questions on the persisting issue of money [dowry] in marriage and the dilemma of women within such internment in the modern day. Towards the end of the story Preetilata as a mother advises Malati to pursue her dreams of becoming a school-teacher, and looks forward to her visit to Mitali after she has achieved it. The story vindicates the important role women play in supporting and helping other women to possess 'a self-defined critical consciousness' and thereby challenge the various complexities of life which aim towards establishing 'a mass produced or stereotypical identity' of these women [Donovan, 1997: 212]. Like *A Room of One's Own*, 'Abuse' facilitates a feminist analysis of the material conditions – social, political and economic – in which women struggle to have a sphere and room of their own [Whitson, 2004: 278]. The woman's sphere is governed by the 'cult of true womanhood' and the 'feminine ideal' which develop the women's culture redefining women's activities and objectives from a woman's perspective through an 'assertion of equality and an awareness of sisterhood, the community of women' based on values, institutions and relationships and processes of communication consolidating female ordeal and culture [Lerner, 1981: 52, 54].

### Alo

While Malati accepted the life after the dowry was settled with the prudent help from Preetilata, Alo in 'Rage' is Sanjukta Dasgupta's rebellious daughter ready to confront the tormenting patriarchal system only to interrogate and teach it a lesson for a life time. Alo is Dasgupta's Nora who is infused with the determination to fight against all kinds of disrespect, injustice to have her due respect and share from the institution of marriage. Apart from the suggestive gruesome impact of the partition of India upon human lives, represented through the lives of Nibaran and Chhaya [Alo's parents] in the introductory section of the narrative, here too we read several social stereotypes carefully grafted by Dasgupta in order to interrogate them through her use of language in the course of the narrative. The social stigma of educating the boy and neglecting the education of the girl is vivid in this story where Sudhir is admitted to the school, while Alo remains at home to learn household duties only to be received by 'a suitable boy' [Dasgupta, 2013: 8] through the system of marriage. The evil system of dowry is prevalent, along with the trauma of a married girl being subjected to multiple pregnancies which are often a result of marital

rape. The irrational activities which women are forced to undertake due to the imposing patriarchal pressure upon them for the birth of a boy over a girl, and it is condemnable and irreligious if a woman has a caesarian baby get critiqued through this short story. Alo undergoes all trials and tribulations, has a caesarian baby boy after three daughters, only to receive the immutable thunderbolt of her life when her husband [Kartick] marries another woman [Maya], and within the house with her 'negative source of powerlessness' [Showalter, 1981: 204] Alo in spite of being 'quiet and submissive' [Dasgupta, 2013: 9] Alo becomes the neglected 'other' and the kitchen becomes her space with her children [Chini, Reba, Sabita and Bimal]. This repressive patriarchal process of 'otherness' is employed to render the women as the 'muted group' facilitating the development of a cultural cynicism as the fountain of competence and robustness which contributes towards the evolution of the female dialogue [Spaul, 1989: 95]. Alo revolts fiercely and much to everyone's surprise she rebels against her husband in a loud voice unknown to anyone [Dasgupta, 2013: 9], leaves her in-laws home after her father's demise for her mother and brother, she refuses to return to her in-laws and struggles vehemently by working as live-in maids at Calcutta, and finally files a divorce with the help of Mrs Gupta, another instance of women's sisterhood and association, against Kartick. Sanjukta Dasgupta had inverted the dominant ideology to enable the muted group, represented in 'Rage' by Alo, also in Mrinal Pande's 'Girls', to speak against androcentric cultural and gender differences which identify women 'as negative, as wrong, and their reality invalid' [Spaul, 1989: 105]. After a prolonged struggle she wins the court case and forces her husband to pay the alimony, the price for tormenting and abusing her. Therefore like Rochester in *Wide Sargasso Sea*, Kartick gets thoroughly displaced from his tormenting male-dominated society, and comes one on one with the wild zone of female encounter or ordeal. Kartick subsequently begs forgiveness, and is ready to accept her but she refuses knowing how 'women are killed each year in the villages' [Dasgupta, 2013: 12]. Amidst this turmoil, Alo fights her way to save her second daughter from being sold off, a gruesome picture of the mysterious Calcutta where young women, like money, are abducted and change hands only to be lost from their homes for ever. After a year the alimony promised by Kartick stopped, and Alo's daughters were infuriated but Alo seemed to have lost her 'positive source of strength and solidarity' [Showalter, 1981: 204] to pursue the matter once again; she had won her disposition and thereby forgives the poor man as Christ had forgiven his crucifiers.

### Conclusion

With the freedom of words and dynamic courage of expressing women's unique experiences Sanjukta Dasgupta is a Bengali gynocritic whose short stories bear 'a new conceptual vantage point' [Showalter, 1981: 185] of feminist literary tradition. It involves breaking free women's writings from 'the glass coffin of the male-authored text' only to attain and enjoy 'a dance of triumph, a dance into speech, a dance of authority' [Gilbert, 2000: 44]. The narrative in her short stories possess a distinct Indian character, context, tone, sensitivity and language [Peeradina, 2010: xi], intertextuality encapsulating that 'all creative art must rise out of a specific soil and flicker with a spirit of place' [Gifford, 1986: 58] to 'open new windows and doors of perception enabling a holistic understanding of the world' [Dasgupta, 2016]. Dasgupta's entelechy is explored through her astute treatment of the issues of our everyday life through her short stories, like her poetry, which being embedded with a vibrant force inspires the sensitive reader to think and 'to stand up' against 'trauma, fears and oceans of tears' [Dasgupta, 2017: 73, 77]. Like Sanjukta Dasgupta's poetry collections *Snapshots* (1996), *Dilemma: A Second Book of Poems* (2002), *First*

*Language* (2005), *More Light* (2008) and *Lakshmi Unbound* (2017), her widely published short stories also interrogate and deconstruct ‘the double blind with power and understanding’ towards ‘a wider trajectory of the cultural diversity’ along with the ‘ideological position of the subject’s voice of power’ [Dasgupta, 2006: 178]. Sanjukta Dasgupta’s ‘delicate perception’ through an ‘intense self-reflexivity’ [Prasad, 2009] colour her ‘female imagination’ as the only feasible vent for women’s true aspirations and interrogate the anxiety of authorship to emanate an emotion of motherhood towards her female characters, who as her daughters ‘affirm in far-reaching ways the significance of their inner freedom’ [Spacks, 1976: 316]. Dasgupta’s short stories ‘ceaselessly deconstructs the male [androcentric] discourse’ [Jacobus, 1979: 12-13] only to provide a window to witness and hear the long unheard voices, which are different and distinct, but orchestrated together in its identity and sensibility [Vatsyayan, 2009: xviii]; facilitating a realization of gender inclusiveness and gender equality – the harmony of androgyny, instead of misandry and misogyny [Dasgupta, 2019]. The ‘dynamics of female friendship’ [Abel, 1981: 434] through the mother – daughter bond between Sanjukta Dasgupta and her female characters represent women’s experiences which differ from men’s in profound and regular ways – as ‘for every aspect of identity as men define it, female experience varies from the male model’ [Gardiner, 1982: 178-179]. It involves a shift in ‘the point of view’ [Spacks, 1976: 315] to emphasize female imagination – creativity – voice by transcending historical boundaries; and it is through these great experiences as a woman Sanjukta Dasgupta envisions a reiteration of women’s literature through a creative genre of postcolonial women’s writing in Indian English.

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‘এবং মল্লয়া’-বিশ্ববিদ্যালয় মঞ্জুরী আয়োগ (U.G.C.- CARE List) অনুমোদিত  
তালিকার অন্তর্ভুক্ত। ভারতীয় ভাষায় পত্রিকা ত্রমিক নং-৯৬, ২০১৯।

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পত্রিকা ক্রমিক নং-৯৬ (ভারতীয় ভাষার ১১৪টির মধ্যে),

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গোলকুঁয়াচক, পোস্ট-মেদিনীপুর, ৭২১১০১, জেলা-প.মেদিনীপুর, প.বঙ্গ।

মো.-৯১৫৩১৭৭৬৫৩

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# হাজার বছরের বাংলা কবিতা : প্রসঙ্গ বুদ্ধচর্চা

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বুদ্ধের আবির্ভাব খ্রিষ্টপূর্ব ষষ্ঠ শতাব্দীতে (৬২৪-৫৪৪ খ্রি.পূ.)। তিনি কোনও দৈব বাণী শুনে হঠাৎ একটা নতুন মতবাদ প্রচারে প্রবৃত্ত হননি। সম্পূর্ণ নিজের অভিজ্ঞতার আলোকে, সামাজিক দৃষ্টিভঙ্গি দিয়ে তিনি যা দেখেছেন তারই ওপর ভিত্তি করে কতকগুলি সিদ্ধান্তে পৌঁছেছেন এবং তা জনসমক্ষে প্রচার করেছেন। তাঁর বক্তব্য ছিল মূলত প্রচলিত ধ্যান ধারণা ও জ্ঞান-বিশ্বাসের বিরুদ্ধে। অর্থাৎ আজকের দিনে এস্টাব্লিশমেন্ট বলতে যা বোঝায়, তার বিরুদ্ধে তিনি প্রায় এককভাবে বিদ্রোহ ঘোষণা করেছিলেন। সব মানুষ সমান। ব্রাহ্মণ চণ্ডালে কোনও উঁচু-নীচু ভেদ নেই; বুদ্ধের মুখে এ ধরনের অশ্রুতপূর্ব কথা শুনে সাধারণ মানুষ অভিভূত হয়ে পড়েছিল। মানব প্রেমের কথা মানুষ আগেও শুনেছে, কিন্তু সমগ্র প্রাণী জগতের প্রতি এই উদার মনোভাব ইতিপূর্বে এত বলিষ্ঠ কণ্ঠে আর কখনো কেউ বলেননি। বুদ্ধই প্রথম মানুষ যিনি বিশ্বের সৃষ্টিকর্তা বলে কোন অদৃশ্য শক্তিকে মেনে না নেওয়ার সাহসিকতা দেখিয়েছেন। তিনিই প্রথমে দেখালেন-অস্তি নেই, নাস্তি নেই নিয়ত পরিবর্তনের মধ্যে। আত্মাকেও তিনি মানেননি। তা সত্ত্বেও ভারতীয় সভ্যতা ও সংস্কৃতিতে রয়ে গেছে চিরস্থায়ী বৌদ্ধ প্রভাব।

বৌদ্ধধর্ম শেষ আশ্রয় পেয়েছে বঙ্গদেশে। এখানে অপেক্ষাকৃত বেশি দিন থেকে পাড়ি দিয়েছে প্রতিবেশী দেশগুলিতে। তাই বঙ্গভূমির আর এক নাম বুদ্ধভূমি। কেননা এখানকার সভ্যতা ও সংস্কৃতির প্রাণ বুদ্ধের ভাবধারায় উজ্জীবিত। বৌদ্ধধর্ম আড়াই হাজার বছরের বিবর্তনে এগিয়েছে। আর বাংলা সাহিত্যের ইতিহাস প্রায় এক হাজার বছরের। যার পরিচিতি বহন করছে চর্যাপদ। চর্যাপদের মাধ্যমে বাংলা সাহিত্যের আত্মপ্রকাশ। বাঙালির কাব্যে বুদ্ধচর্চার প্রথম পরিচয় তাঁর আত্মপ্রকাশ কালে।

বুদ্ধের স্মৃতিস্পর্শে চর্যাপদ ধন্য। সেই চর্যাপদ থেকে বুদ্ধচর্চার যাত্রা শুরু বাংলা সাহিত্যে। ধর্মের তত্ত্বকে সহজভাবে গ্রহণ করে বৌদ্ধ সিদ্ধাচার্যগণ বাংলা কাব্যধারার প্রথম সৃষ্টিকর্ম সম্পাদন করেন। সহজ সরল ভাষা ও ভঙ্গিতে পদ রচনা করেন। বৌদ্ধ সহজিয়া পন্থীরা সুদূর অতীত থেকে দুঃখ তাড়িত মুমূর্ষু মানুষের মুক্তির পথ নির্দেশ করেছেন। চর্যাপদের কবিরা বলেন, দেহের মধ্যে 'বুদ্ধ' বাস করেন আর এখানে তাকে সন্ধান করতে হবে, জপ-তপে, ধ্যান-ধারণায় নয়-

পণ্ডিত সঅল সখ বরখানই।

দেহহি বুদ্ধ বসন্ত ন জানই।।

(বৌদ্ধ গান ও দোহা, ১৩২৩, পৃ.১০৭)





# Stable carbon and nitrogen isotopic characterization and tracing nutrient sources of *Ulva* blooms around Jeju coastal areas<sup>☆</sup>

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## ARTICLE INFO

### Article history:

Received 5 April 2019

Received in revised form

30 July 2019

Accepted 8 August 2019

Available online 9 August 2019

### Keywords:

Jeju island

*Ulva* blooms

C/N ratio

$\delta^{13}\text{C}$

$\delta^{15}\text{N}$

$\delta^{18}\text{O}$

## ABSTRACT

The present investigation was aimed to characterize the *Ulva* blooms and to identify the probable sources for *Ulva* blooms along the Jeju Island coast for pertinent control measures. Algal isotope signatures ( $\delta^{13}\text{C}$ ,  $\delta^{15}\text{N}$  and  $\delta^{18}\text{O}$ ) and tissue nitrogen and carbon were analyzed to map nutrient sources around the Jeju coastal areas. The algal  $\delta^{13}\text{C}$  values were ranged from  $-20.52$  to  $-4.39\text{‰}$ , while  $\delta^{15}\text{N}$  and  $\delta^{18}\text{O}$  values ranged from  $4.26$  to  $8.29\text{‰}$  and  $12.80$ – $17.34\text{‰}$ , respectively. Moreover, site-specific significant differences were observed in algal stable isotope ( $\delta^{13}\text{C}$ ,  $\delta^{15}\text{N}$  and  $\delta^{18}\text{O}$ ) values. The bi-plot ( $\delta^{15}\text{N}$  vs  $\delta^{18}\text{O}$ ) diagram indicated four dominant nitrogen sources along the Jeju coast, with 1) soil organic nitrogen mixed with livestock wastes (spring water samples and E), the 2) synthetic fertilizer input (A3 and B2), 3) sewage discharge (D1, D2 and I3) and 4) aquaculture waste (fish farm samples, A4, A5, B1, G and I2). Present findings revealed the different potential nitrogen sources for localized increase of algal growth along the Jeju coast. Finally, the present findings could be used as baseline data for efficient nutrient management to remediate *Ulva* blooms along Jeju coastal environment.

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Palas Samanta

## 1. Introduction

Worldwide, anthropogenic activities such as fertilizer use, sewage discharge or aquaculture, etc., have resulted in dramatically increased nutrient loadings specifically nitrogen to shallow coastal waters over last few decades (Howarth et al., 2011). Coastal ecosystems, as a result, are under accelerating threat of pollution, eutrophication and even macroalgal blooms (Zhang et al., 2014; Varekamp et al., 2014; Kim et al., 2015a). Additionally, nutrient loadings speed up the deterioration of marine ecosystems (Viana and Bode, 2015). High accumulation or blooms of seaweeds can cause ecosystem disturbance, such as oxygen depletion, habitat loss, and nutrient cycling (Lapointe and Bedford, 2007; Varekamp

et al., 2014; Wu et al., 2018). Moreover, algal blooms can cause negative economic impacts on commercial fisheries, and recreational and tourist industries (Liu et al., 2009; Teichberg et al., 2012). Therefore, nutrient source determination could be an effective means for nutrient management policies, and sound regulation of anthropogenic nitrogen disposal to restrict algal blooms (Ahad et al., 2006; Tedesco et al., 2014; Kim et al., 2014, 2015b).

Assessment of nutrient concentrations specifically nitrogen in water column alone is not enough to identify sources and loads as their concentrations are regulated not only by primary producers such as algae (Fry et al., 2003; Corey et al., 2012) but also by factors such as light availability (Needoba and Harrison, 2004), nutrient dispersion (Orlandi et al., 2014) and turbulence (Barr, 2007). Natural processes like coastal upwelling spring water adequately enhanced nutrient concentrations (Aristegui et al., 2006). Different land-use patterns also significantly influenced algal blooms by adding variable amount of nutrients to coastal environment (Tedesco et al., 2014). Therefore, despite great efforts to identify sources (point or non-point) related to different land use patterns, it is still challenging to identify nitrogen sources for algal blooms.

<sup>☆</sup> This paper has been recommended for acceptance by Dr. Sarah Harmon.

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# Effects of pH on growth and biochemical responses in *Agarophyton vermiculophyllum* under different temperature conditions

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Received: 25 May 2019 / Revised and accepted: 16 September 2019  
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## Abstract

The effects of pH (6.2, 7.2, 8.2, 9.2, and 10.2) under rising temperature (30 °C vs 20 °C) on *Agarophyton vermiculophyllum* growth and bio-physiology were investigated. Results showed that *A. vermiculophyllum* exhibited lower growth rates under elevated temperature in all pH values. Chlorophyll *a*, carotenoid, and phycocyanin levels were significantly enhanced by temperature elevation ( $p < 0.05$ ). Enhanced H<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub> production either at lower or higher pH values correlated with lipid peroxidation (LPO) levels under elevated temperature, which suggested oxidative stress development. Oxidative damage was more severe at elevated pH values, which is confirmed by higher reactive oxygen species (ROS) levels. Compared with ambient pH 8.2 value, lower pH values under elevated temperature lead to increase activities of superoxide dismutase (SOD), catalase (CAT), and glutathione *S*-transferase (GST), indicating that these enzymes played an important role to combat stress. However, decreased glutathione reductase (GR) and glutathione peroxidase (GPx) activities indicate least contribution for ROS scavenging at lower pH values. On contrary, SOD and CAT declined at elevated pH values compared with ambient pH, suggesting least contribution for ROS removal. Moreover, enhanced GR and GPx activities at elevated pH and temperature are not enough to scavenge ROS production. These data are consistent with higher H<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub> and LPO levels, and lower GST activities. Collectively, our results indicated that either pH fluctuations or elevated temperature displayed a disadvantageous influence on growth and bio-physiology of *A. vermiculophyllum*. Therefore, rising temperature alleviates adverse effects of seawater acidification, but it aggravates the negative effects of seawater alkalization on growth and bio-physiology of *A. vermiculophyllum*.

**Keywords** *Agarophyton vermiculophyllum* · Rhodophyta · Antioxidant enzymes · pH · Temperature · Oxidative stress

## Introduction

*Agarophyton/Gracilaria* is an economically important mariculture macroalga and has gained considerable attention due to the presence of abundant nutritional ingredients and bioactive compounds (Kim et al. 2017; Chen et al. 2018; Rocha et al. 2019). Additionally, *Agarophyton/Gracilaria* mariculture has great potential to purify waste seawater from aquatic breeding facilities, remediate nutrients from eutrophic near-shore seawater, and control phytoplankton blooms (Kim

et al. 2014; Yang et al. 2015; Gorman et al. 2017; Chen et al. 2018; Wu et al. 2018). The nutritional ingredients in *Agarophyton/Gracilaria* are strongly associated with its metabolism, which is greatly influenced by temperature, light, pH levels, CO<sub>2</sub>, etc. (Kim and Yarish 2014; Kim et al. 2016; Xu et al. 2017; Chen et al. 2018). Temperature and pH have been recognized as environmental stressors to influence the *Agarophyton/Gracilaria* bio-physiology (Gorman et al. 2017; Park et al. 2017). Previous studies have shown that elevated temperature due to global warming phenomenon has considerable impacts on nutrient uptake and growth (Xu et al. 2011; Kim et al. 2016; Gorman et al. 2017; Park et al. 2017), nutritional ingredient accumulation (Chen et al. 2017), and oxidative stress (OS) development in *Agarophyton/Gracilaria* (Cade-Menun and Paytan 2010; Zou and Gao 2013). Additionally, temperature plays an important role in regulating protein and carbohydrate constituents during photosynthesis (Kim et al. 2007; Cade-Menun and Paytan 2010; Corey et al. 2012; Kim et al. 2016). Elevated temperature can be beneficial for growth and accumulation of nutritional

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