

Indo-Scottish Reminiscence, Association and Belonging:

Transnationalism in Bashabi Fraser's Poetry¹

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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 “Aabirabirnya 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 Grassic 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 21st 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).² 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”,³³ 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* unbaisedly 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” (Benessaieh 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).

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² The poems referred to are "From Lahore to West Lothian", "Building the Bodyline", "Football in the Meadows", "The Candidate", "Wee Cumberae".

³ "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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