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Saptarshi Mallick

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

Saptarshi Mallick, PHD.

Guest Lecturer at the Department of English, the Sanskrit College and
University, Kolkata, West Bengal, India.

Email: saptarshieng@gmail.com

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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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" (Spaull, 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" (Spaull, 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

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).

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In Order to be Great, One must be a Woman:
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Poems*¹

"The magic mantra of limitless freedom"²