

Vedanta and Cosmopolitanism in Contemporary Indian Poetry

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WILLIAM BLAKE (1757–1827) burnt into W B Yeats (1865–1939). A E Housman (1859–1936) absorbed both

Blake and Yeats:

On the idle hill of summer,
Sleepy with the flow of streams,
Far I hear the steady drummer
Drumming like a noise in dreams ...
Far the calling bugles hollo,
High the screaming fife replies,
Gay the files of scarlet follow:
Woman bore me, I will rise.¹

The dream-nature of all reality is important to note. This is Vedanta. True poetry reaffirms the truths of Vedanta from which arises cosmopolitanism. Neither the Cynics nor Martha Nussbaum invented cosmopolitanism. This description of hills and vales abound in Yeats's² and Housman's poetry. Pride in being resilient is seen in poems like Yeats's *An Irish Airman foresees His Death*. And all three of them have burnt into the poetry of Bashabi Bhattacharya née Fraser.³ Fraser's poetic imagery abounds in the wonders of nature: hills, vales, starlit nights; all of course leading to resilience. Fraser's poetry affirms the fact that description of nature in poetry is not generally a commentary on nature but on the human relationship of a person to nature:

I have known loneliness
When I walked down meandering roads
That hugged the rhododendron mountain
walls
Through evening mists in spring.

I have felt abandoned ...

I discovered pettiness in a gloating vaunting
Of the past that had been predatory⁴

The line 'When I walked down meandering roads' echoes Robert Louis Stevenson's (1850–94) *The Vagabond*. Further glossing or annotation of Fraser's poems are not needed here and will be done in a complete annotated edition of her poems by this author. The glossing or annotation proves her absorption of literary influences, which she may herself not be aware of. A poet who does not suffer the *anxiety of influence* of great poets before her or him is not worth annotating.

In 'From Salisbury Crag,'⁵ she weaves myths as did Blake and Yeats before her.⁶ Housman too wove myths into his poetry.

Mastery of imagery is essential for any poet. Poets may have agendas to grind. But that is strictly speaking, in the realm of the social sciences. Caroline Spurgeon's *Shakespeare's Imagery, and What It Tells Us*⁷ still remains unsurpassed in providing us with a methodology for separating good poetry from bad. Bad poets pretend to be abstract since they cannot construct or handle imagery. Fraser, like good poets before her, is a master of imagery construction. Her 'Suruchi for Guid Taste: A Menu Ye Cannae Beat'⁸ is one of the most synaesthetic poems this author ever read. The aroma of good Indian-Scottish food jumps out of the text and yet not at the cost of imagery: 'There's licht stappit samo-sas an' cheese stappit nan' (73). The 'nan' imagery

is now cosmopolitan and is also an image of hospitality. Fraser's poetic corpus should be analysed for images, which establish her as a true cosmopolitan poet and a philosopher—all poets are philosophers—who makes imagery once again worthy of study and hospitable in the sense that Emmanuel Levinas defined hospitality in his *Entre Nous*.⁹ She is not just an Indian poet but a poet who can be connected with the great English Victorian novelists. For examples, description of food is to be found in *Vanity Fair: A Novel without a Hero*¹⁰ and in all of Charles Dickens's novels.¹¹

It is crucial to see Fraser as a poet in continuity with great novelists and poets rather than bracket her as a poet of colour or a diasporic poet, and so on. Great novels are great poetry too. Fraser is suffering the fate of Maya Angelou (1928–2104). Professional scholars who have well-nigh destroyed literary studies are doing doctorates on Fraser as a poet of colour. Angelou is a great poet; it is incidental that she is a Black American poet. Had Angelou and Fraser not been Black and Indian poets respectively, then too their poetry would stand the test of time. But career academics will keep harping on their ideologies and skin-colour just to spite Harold Bloom's (b. 1930) understanding of literature in the latter's *The Western Canon: The Books and School of the Ages*.¹² Bloom includes many Indian books; one would know that if one bothered to read him. It is avant-garde to hate Bloom. Fraser in talks with this author declares herself sold on the idea that all poetry is eventually political. That is what happens when good poets have to obsessively write scholarly tomes on other poets for academic credibility.

The tradition of glossing poetry is now seen to be a waste of time. The fashion is to critique poetry. Therefore, it is worthwhile to gloss a few words in Fraser's poetry and both thus prove the

need for glossing, which is an ancient Indian tradition, as well as show how Fraser individualises tradition. 'I Have Known Loneliness' echoes T S Eliot's poetry; loneliness is also a textual register which puts her in continuum with Anglo-Saxon poetry, where loneliness is a recurrent trope.¹³ Human experiences are universal and that is why the Hindu scriptures keep speaking of the essentially undifferentiated nature of the human person. Were human experiences like the *oceanic feeling*,¹⁴ not real; the late Saint Pope John Paul II would not have studied and written extensively on the philosophy of the human person.¹⁵ See the lines from Fraser's 'I am the Absolute: To the Dancer in Rupsha from Her Mother':

I stand at the centre, resolute,
Unwilling to multiply or be divided
Except in your dreams of the Absolute.¹⁶

Notice how glossing one word leads to other poems and notice too, the inherent Upanishadic wisdom or Vedanta in her works. Fraser's academic work has exposed her to Vedanta. One suspects her path-breaking work on Rabindranath Tagore has willy-nilly turned her an advocate for Vedanta. In a private conversation with this author she has shown admiration for the *Ishta Upanishad*. This is one of the shortest major Upanishads, and in a certain sense, the essence of the Bhagavadgita.

Tagore and through him, Fraser is more of a monist than a liberal humanist. Works on her poetic corpus fail to bring out the monist or Advaita Vedantist in her. Existing scholarship consigns her to a status of non-religious poet. This author is of the opinion that she needs to be seen as a religious poet too. Her poems, like 'An Illusion'¹⁷ simultaneously show on her the influence of Henry Vaughan's religious sensibility as we find in Vaughan's 'The World', and also in mystical union with the supreme god-head aka Brahman in the Upanishads. The title

of the poem itself indicates her understanding of *samsara* as Vedanta sees it; it is how Raja Rao (1908–2006) before her saw the world in his own novels. Fraser's biblical understanding of the world is to be found in poems such as 'The Suffering Symbol of Humanity' (24–5) and 'There Will Be Time For Everything' (29). This trope of the Suffering Servant we encounter within Judeo-Christian literature is also a recurrent trope in her poetry. The trope of the Suffering Servant is best elucidated in the Qumran Scrolls, which were accidentally discovered during 1946–57 in Palestine. It is important that we research Fraser's religious zeitgeist and world view for two reasons: none before has attempted it while it is certainly there in her poems and more importantly, in spite of Fraser's own Enlightenment-informed scholarly writings—also to be found in her numerous interviews; she is very much a product of Tagore's Vedanta and her own schooling under Roman Catholic nuns. It is never easy to silence the religious element in anyone, leave alone a poet like Fraser. 'Satan' (44) and 'The Saviour' (45) are explicitly biblical and Christian in their subjects and tonalities. Existing scholarship on Fraser does nowhere mention her as a very religious poet, albeit without fanaticism.

It is wrongly assumed that the main mode of poetics in English written by Indian-origin writers is realist; anti-romantic and counterpoised against the likes of Emily Dickinson and even Rabindranath Tagore.¹⁸ As it were, Tagore is the last acceptable Romantic in Indian poetry. These assumptions do more harm within Indian letters since being a Romantic is not an easy task. One suspects that the inability to carry on the heritage of Romanticism in their own works force many Indian poets and scholars to decry Romanticism. It is also fashionable to poohpoo the idea that poetry is universal and essentially apolitical. The transcendence of poetry is

not permitted in intellectual discussions of poets and their works. A K Ramanujan (1929–93),¹⁹ Kamala Das (1934–2009), and in Bengali, Sunil Gangopadhyay (1934–2012) did great disservice to Indian poetry and poetry at large by haranguing against the Romantics. Fraser's poetry is generally seen as poetry produced from her singular position as a Bengali woman writing, teaching, and living in Scotland. Existing scholarship has successfully but wrongly pigeonholed her as a diasporic²⁰ writer engaged with political issues of her own times. This article will revisit the politics of poetics in Indian and Western academia. Also it will establish that good poetry does not necessarily demand one to know of the poet's socio-cultural milieu. This too is nothing new since 1929.²¹

So what is poetry? This is the question that generations of English major students have to first come to terms with. They are systematically fed William Wordsworth's definition of poetry.²² That is fine. Lawrence Ferlinghetti's (b. 1919) definition of poetry is more natural: 'Poetry is eternal graffiti written in the heart of everyone.' In other words, that is poetry which is inscribed in our hearts; akin to what is known within jurisprudence as natural justice or natural law. In other words, poetry is that which one knows instinctively to be poetry. Like we do not need to define the air that we breathe in for the humdrum purpose of living; poetry is that which quickens our hearts.²³ Ramanujan experimented with free verse and Kamala Das had her feminist agenda to grind. And these too are fine. But Das's poetry will not be remembered since it is more diatribe than literature. She will of course be adulated in various studies' departments. But these latter are not literature departments; they are social sciences' departments and therefore her poetry like Sylvia Plath's poetry will be recommended reading in area studies where social scientists will nitpick their

writings for understanding social upheavals. In short, their poetry is versified journalism and not exactly, *The Canterbury Tales* by Geoffrey Chaucer (1343–1400) or *Tintern Abbey* by William Wordsworth (1770–1850).

Every time one reads Ramanujan one only remembers that rivers in South India regularly flood and a few cattle die and float away each year in those floods.²⁴ And it is not faraway that one will entirely forget Ramanujan, when Indian writings in English are no longer taught.²⁵ Walt Whitman (1819–92), Robert Frost (1874–1963), and much earlier, Kalidasa (c. 4th century CE), are all poets not because they are only read by American Studies' scholars and Indologists respectively. They are poets because their words once read become *eternal graffiti* in our hearts. 'When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd' by Walt Whitman written in 1865, is poetry. If anyone has doubt about it being poetry without doing courses in American Studies, then that person will have to study lifelong to verify that *Abhijnana-Shakuntalam* of Kalidasa is poetry too! Bashabi Fraser happens to be a Bengali woman who has settled in Scotland and she has played into the hands of academicians of all sorts and has been slotted as a diasporic feminist writer.²⁶ Fraser, in a personal communique to me, has this to say of those who she thinks influenced her:

I do read and relate to Elizabeth Bishop, Charlotte Smith, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Christina Rossetti, Letitia Elizabeth Landon, Mary Shelley, Fanny Burney, Elizabeth Gaskell, etc. More recently, I like poets like Sylvia Plath, Carol Anne Duffy, Debjani Chatterjee, Shanta Acharya, Usha Kishore, Imtiaz Dharker, Sharon Oates, Grace Nicols, Jackie Kay and others. ... Women fiction writers like Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Azar Nafisi, Arundhati Roy, Jhumpa Lahiri, Anita Desai, Ashapura Devi, and Mahasweta Devi are amongst those, whose works move me.

Her choice of writers or poets is exactly what an English literature professor will come up with. This obsession with conflating oneself with one's poetry is dangerous and often, counterproductive. What Fraser does not realise is that she is a poet worth our time because her poetry is part of that eternal graffiti etched in all our hearts. It has a Jungian collective effect on us.

In *Life*, Fraser struggles with major poets who matter. We can see her grappling with T S Eliot when she writes:

I have seen the storm in my teacup²⁷ (Life)

And

The mist is amazing—
It has Machiavellian finesse
Settling on windows of this
Speeding train's prowess²⁸

And she struggles with Robert Browning, W B Yeats, Shakespeare and John Keats in her 'Why?'²⁹

There is a valley tucked away in mountains
Where I can guide your steps today ...
And what will happen when you wake again?³⁰

And in *An Ethereal Sleeping Beauty*³¹ among so many other poets she tries to overcome Gerard Manley Hopkins (1844–89). And this is the early Fraser.

Bashabi Fraser obsesses with Rabindranath Tagore. If one were to be a Bengali litterateur, this is inevitable. Either one keeps adulating Tagore and fixates on him as Harold Bloom fixates on Shakespeare or, like the late Sunil Gangopadhyay, bad-mouth Tagore. Fraser belongs to the first group and in her ecstasy about Tagore, one suspects that she has forgotten that her genius lies not in editing learned tomes on Tagore but honouring Tagore by writing poetry, which is unique and not imitative of Tagore. Thankfully, she has been able to slowly work her way through and out of Tagore and those English poets who influenced Tagore:

The scaffolding is the backdrop
 To the story of conservation ...
 Facilitated by the muscle
 Of dedicated energy
 That roughens the sinews
 And one labour leads to another
 Fruit, building the perfect body
 That prompts the applause
 Of an approving population.³²

Fraser has made a name for herself as a Tagore scholar. In her article 'Rabindranath Tagore's Global Vision'³³ we see her sparkle as a Tagore expert. She outdoes Ketaki Kushari Dyson (b. 1940). Fraser is less well known than Martha Nussbaum (b. 1947) mentioned in the beginning of this article, since she is honest. Nussbaum has made her career by hiding her Jewishness and touting cosmopolitanism through her weak readings of Rabindranath Tagore's corpus. While Nussbaum deliberately forgets Tagore's Vedanta, Fraser nowhere in her 'Introduction' to 'Rabindranath Tagore's Global Vision' forgets that Tagore was a product of his times and milieu. The Indian Renaissance, as Fraser puts it, was bookended by the Tagores—Dwarkanath was part of its beginning and Rabindranath, sort of closed the Indian Renaissance. And those times were deeply religious as well as revolutionary. It is this intellectual honesty that sets Fraser apart from Nussbaum's non-transcendental discourse about liberal humanism:

Tagore was an environmentalist, a social and educational reformer, decades ahead of his time. He went back to Indian tradition in Upanishadic interpretations and welcomed modern scientific studies in a liberal education that wedded the past to the present, brought the East and the West in an inter-dependent continuum that was global in scope and vision. This is what Tagore Studies opens up (162).

What Fraser can easily own up to; that is Tagore's religious roots, others within Tagore scholarship simply cannot come to terms with.

Apart from Fraser, it seems to this author that the true Tagore causes anxiety in most. They want to répress the religious Tagore. Fraser in her 'Introduction' to the special issue of *Literature Compass*, which contains her article, enacts the reversal of the répression of the religious, essentially Upanishadic Tagore. Répression here indicates a political act elaborated by Michel Foucault in his *Madness and Civilization*.³⁴ Igor Grbić's essay in this special issue of *Literature Compass* is very original and is existentially true. But without Fraser's intervention as the writer of the 'Introduction', this volume would lose its value and be lost in the morass of rapidly increasing Tagore scholarship worldwide.

The culture brigade which makes its business discussing poetry will have their insightful moments reading *Ragas and Reels*. Here at last is the political Fraser, and as we already know, Fraser herself believes that poetry can only be political. But looking at these lines from a non-political aka ideological manner, the poem is about conserving a city, which needs conservation. Only those who take examinations need to know and proclaim that Robert Browning's Duke in his *My Last Duchess* may have been a historical tyrant. Common sense tells us we are encountering a male chauvinist in Browning's poem who has most probably murdered his wife before launching into a beautiful oration. Similarly, it is redundant to know that Fraser is writing about a Scottish city and a migrant labourer. Searching for Bashabi Fraser on the Internet makes one feel that she is either of these four: a woman poet, a Bengali poet, a Scottish poet, or a high-profile academician. The former three roles crib and cram Fraser within South Asian Studies' literature—if such can be called literature! She is Thomas Gray's (1716–71) *The Bard* warning us against dogmatism, fascism, and xenophobia.³⁵

Who will not enjoy her wonderful poem 'Tweedledum - Tweedledee'?³⁶ Sukumar Ray

(1887–1923) comes to mind. Just because she has written a long poem ‘From the Ganga to the Tay’³⁷ where the Holy Ganges shelters meditating holy men (45) and the Scottish Tay gave refuge to hermits (46), it does not mean that Fraser is Scottish, Bengali, or Indian. This long poem indicates that Fraser is trying to reinvent the epic form in English and she has so far done a good job of it. Her epic is worth reading because Fraser is experimenting with a form, which has no takers today since there are no writers of Fraser’s calibre in recent times. ‘From the Ganga to the Tay’ is on a par with Thomas Hardy’s (1840–1928) *The Dynasts* and Housman’s *A Shropshire Lad*.

This author, as a postgraduate student, had Indian writings in English as his special paper. It is sad that the syllabus framers did not include Bashabi Fraser as one of the set poets for study then, nor even now. Arvind Krishna Mehrotra (b. 1947) too does not mention her anywhere in his magnum opus on Indian literature.³⁸ The time has come that we include Bashabi Fraser in our school books along with Emily Dickinson (1830–86) and Robert Frost. It does not need saying that she should be taught also at the bachelor’s level and of course, at the masters’ level in English literature courses everywhere. How Amit Chaudhuri (b. 1962) and Jeet Thayil (b. 1959)³⁹ missed including her in their literature anthologies flabbergasts this author. Fraser’s ‘Student Monk’⁴⁰ should have been included by Thayil since he is bipartisan in matters of religion. For example, Chaudhuri and Thayil not only miss Fraser but also another important poet. This may be because both Chaudhuri and Thayil are better as creative writers.

Further, critical work is best left to critics. This author who has never written a line of poetry himself, being bereft of originality, knows that the job of a literary critic is never to philosophise, keep singing praises for those who are already known, but to consciously connect


different media with poets and novelists who are geniuses. Here is another poet, whose poem was sent electronically to the author, whose work Chaudhuri and Thayil have both missed. Swami Vivekananda and his master Sri Ramakrishna, would be pleased with the following poem and the Tamil movie *Kabali* (2016), which deals with the annihilation of caste:

The Shadowed God

Large umbrella, small umbrella
 One for God, one for priest
 Uppity gentry clinging to umbrellas
 Running, not from the sun
 But from people
 Shadowed by them
 Lives or mere shadows?
 Meek faceless followers
 Voiceless slaves
 Bound to the bodies of the holy
 Necessary shadows
 Yet feared shadows
 O’ God, why create the sun,
 If shadows were to be shunned?
 Was it you?
 Or these your priests?
 I remain in the shadows
 As one of them
 Waiting for the sun to illumine.

This author is glad to have discovered the poet Fraser and this other poet, who has requested anonymity for the moment. And this author is glad to show that the main mode of Indian poetry in English is Romantic and Vedantic. In fact, the main mode of all good poetry is Vedantic. Shakespeare’s sonnets deal with the transient nature of samsara expressed through physical beauty. Therefore, Vedanta is the sine qua non of true art.

Vedanta is the essence of Hinduism. The essence of Hinduism is that all religions lead to God qua Brahman. All people are the same; differences are only apparent. And the Godhead permeates everything and *is* everything. This is

neither religious nor moral relativism. As the Hindu seers see reality, Vedanta asserts: 'Truth is one; sages call it by various names.' Vedanta is the logical conclusion to all knowledge honestly probed and acquired. 

Notes and References

1. A E Housman, *A Shropshire Lad*, 35.
2. See W B Yeats, *The Stolen Child*.
3. She was born in 1954 in Purulia, West Bengal and acquired the surname Fraser through her marriage. She is known globally as Bashabi Fraser.
4. 'Isolated', Bashabi Fraser, *Life* (London: Diehard, 1997), 7. This book should be compulsory reading in school syllabi. Especially poems like *A Tryst with Time* (26). This poem will teach adolescents the need to seek out allusions; to admire rhythm and to supplement *She Walks in Beauty* by Lord Byron (1788–1824).
5. See 'From Salisbury Crags', Bashabi Fraser, *Ragas and Reels: Visual and Poetic Stories of Migration and Diaspora: Poems* (Edinburgh: Luath, 2012), 53.
6. The ability to construct and negotiate myths is the hallmark of a great poet. A poet who invents totally new myths is a bad poet. Fraser, like Blake and Yeats before her creates new myths. This mythopoeic nature of Fraser's poetry cannot be assessed here due to constraints of space.
7. See Caroline Spurgeon, *Shakespeare's Imagery, and What It Tells Us* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1935).
8. See *Ragas and Reels*, 73.
9. See Emmanuel Levinas, *Entre Nous*, trans. Michael B Smith and Barbara Harshav (New York: Columbia University, 2000).
10. See William Makepeace Thackeray, *Vanity Fair: A Novel without a Hero* (London: Bradbury and Evans, 1848).
11. There is no distinction between good poetry and great novels. If a great novelists cannot be compared to a great poet, then the novelist will not stand the test of time. For example, James Joyce's (1882–1941) novels are indeed poetry and not merely poetical. Existing scholarship on Fraser has not compared her poems and epic to novels. This is a lacuna in Fraser scholarship which needs to be addressed, but is beyond the scope of this essay.
12. See Harold Bloom, *The Western Canon: The Books and School of the Ages* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1994). A book which is no longer part of English Literature syllabi in most places in the world, yet a book which counters fads like fat studies.
13. See 'The Seafarer' and 'Wulf and Eadwacer'.
14. See Romain Rolland's letter to Sigmund Freud dated 5 December 1927.
15. See Karol Wotjyla (later Saint Pope John Paul II), *Ocena Możliwości Zbudowania Etyki Chrześcijańskiej Przy Założeniach Systemu Maksa Schelera* (Evaluation of the Possibility of Constructing a Christian Ethics on the Basis of Max Scheler's System) (Polish) (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1980).
16. Bashabi Fraser, *Tartan and Turban* (Edinburgh: Luath, 2004), 44. This book should be taught as part of new literature in English at the graduate level.
17. See *Life*, 31.
18. In classrooms across the world today Romanticism is decried. But that is the main and only worthy mode of poetry and even, all literature. The last Romantic is not Yeats but Fraser now. The title will hopefully shift. There is nothing other than Romanticism in poetry. Students of English literature need to understand that Modernist poets like T S Eliot and W H Auden and later, Ted Hughes are all negotiating Romanticism and not what is mistaken as Modernism. Fraser is not a Modernist in the pejorative sense of the term. Her experiment with the epic-form makes her a classicist. But which classicist worth one's mettle is not a Romantic? Thomas Carlyle (1795–1881) too was a Romantic. Just because someone happens to be categorised as a sturdy Victorian does not mean that she or he escapes the influence of the Romantics.
19. See A K Ramanujan, 'Three Hundred *Rāmāyaṇas*: Five Examples and Three Thoughts on Translation' in *Many Rāmāyaṇas: The Diversity of a Narrative Tradition in South Asia*, ed. Paula Richman (Berkeley: University of California, 1991), 22–49.
20. This is another term which is used without much thought. Diaspora is a specifically biblical term which leads to *Parousia*. The global culture brigade forgets that most people of Indian

- origin in the First World will never return to any 'promised homeland'. So this author asks the discerning student—established self-proclaimed literature gate-keepers are mostly beyond help!—to interrogate the term diaspora using biblical scholarship and not books written by the likes of the ancient Padmini Mongia.
21. See I A Richards, *Practical Criticism: A Study of Literary Judgment* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench and Trubner, 1930).
 22. See William Wordsworth, 'Preface to Lyrical Ballads' (1800) <<http://www.bartleby.com/39/36.html>> accessed 10 August 2016.
 23. Quickening of our hearts is a trope in poetry. Medieval English literature stresses this trope. Fraser quickens our hearts.
 24. See A K Ramanujan, *A River*.
 25. Literature students have to be very careful that while studying they do not fall for fads: *isms*, which will fade once some or the other eminent teacher retires! For example, once linguistics was the staple of many English literature departments because someone in the department had a bias to that field. But linguistics has little to do with untameable literature or fat studies. This author once heard an overweight literature professor lecture on fat studies!
 26. Being a successful feminist cannot be reason enough to be considered a great poet. The late Mahashveta Devi (1926–2016) was famous not for being a social reformer or for running non-governmental organisations. She was a great word-artist and therefore people noticed her social work. Not the other way around. Fraser's feminism will be remembered because she is a great poet, not because she is a feminist thinker. Who is a greater feminist: Charlotte Brontë (1816–55) or Toril Moi (b. 1953)? Outside of hallowed social sciences' departments few have heard of Moi!
 27. 'Entrapping Light', *Life*, 7.
 28. 'As I am Carried from Edinburgh to London' in *Tartan and Turban*, 88.
 29. See *Life*, 51.
 30. The influence of John Keats's *La Belle Dame Sans Merci* is evident here. Keats was influenced by Vedanta through the German Idealists and the chimera that is the lady without gratitude or mercy is the true nature of samsara.
 31. See *Life*, 23–4.
 32. 'Building the Bodyline', *Ragas and Reels*, 75.
 33. See Bashabi Fraser, 'Rabindranath Tagore's Global Vision', *Literature Compass*, 12/5 (May 2015), 161–72.
 34. See Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason* (New York: Vintage, 1961).
 35. See 'Medical Aid for Palestine' in Bashabi Fraser, *Letters to My Mother and Other Mothers* (Edinburgh: Luath, 2015), 48–9. Fraser's poetry is in the best Vedantic tradition: '*Vasudhaiva kutumbakam*; the world is one family.' Sri Ramakrishna would have been happy with Fraser.
 36. See *Life*, 33.
 37. See Bashabi Fraser, *From the Ganga to the Tay: A Poetic Conversation between the Ganges and the Tay—An Epic Poem* (Edinburgh: Luath, 2009). Excerpts from this book should be compulsory reading in any masters' syllabi in English literature. And the entire book should be compulsory reading within specialisations, which deal with neo-epic genres and in courses which offer Indian English poetry at the masters' level.
 38. See *A History of Indian literature in English*, ed. Arvind Krishna Mehrotra (New York: Columbia University, 2003). He has a stellar group of scholars writing for him but none of them showed critical acumen by omitting Fraser. That may be because this stellar group sold out to anti-Hindu forces. Fraser's alliance with Hinduism will disqualify her from being included within bombastic poetry discussions. Her *Ragas and Reels* is replete with Hindu symbols and has explicit Hindu and Christian poems. These are enough to enrage the subaltern attendants, who have taken over Shimla's Indian Institute for Advanced Studies and also, centres for academic excellence in India like the Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.
 39. See Amit Chaudhuri, *The Picador Book of Modern Indian Literature* (London: Picador, 2001); and *The Bloodaxe Book of Contemporary Indian Poets*, ed. Jeet Thayil (Tarsset: Bloodaxe, 2008). Thayil, as has been mentioned in this article, should confine himself to writing original stuff and leave editing to professional critics.
 40. See *Ragas and Reels*, 85.