Science, Medicine, and Gender Politics in Colonial Bengal: A Reading of Gretchen Green's Memoir *The Whole World & Company*

MADHUMITA ROY

Abstract: Following Nancy Miller's theoretical underpinning(s) related to the construction of the idea of autobiography that emphasizes on how the politics of gender is rivetted with the genre of autobiography, this study attempts to read the memoir of Gretchen Green, *The World & Company*, and try to reformulate the discourse of science where narratives by women are categorically suppressed. Gretchen Green was an American paramedic-cum-nurse who came to Santiniketan when Rabindranath Tagore was in dire need of a dedicated medical worker to serve the villages that came under his project of rural reconstruction. In her memoir, Green excavates her past and provides a detailed picture of her stay and work at the poet's rural reconstruction project. In 1921, she left America and joined Institute of Tropical Medicine in London for her formal training in nursing and midwifery. In 1922, she joined Sriniketan. Her primary responsibility was to establish a health centre in a nearby village, and create health awareness among the rural women.

The purpose of this paper is to closely examine the memoir and reconstruct a history of science in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century Santiniketan whose discursive contours are largely defined and constructed by eminent male teachers as well as prolific writers of science, for instance, Jagadananda Roy, Tejeshchandra Sen, Pramathanath Sengupta and others. Rabindranath's own interest towards science was largely qualified by his friendship with scientists like Jagadish Chandra Bose, Prafulla Chandra Ray, and even P.C. Mahalanabish. Unfortunately, if we look at the study as well as cultivation of science within the space of Santiniketan, a prominent dearth of women's participation is felt. Santiniketan becomes a microcosmic representation of the larger scenario of the nineteenth and early twentieth century Bengal where science was largely considered to be a male prerogative and women were systematically kept at the fringes when the praxis of scientific education was concerned.

Keywords: Memoir, science, medicine, gender, politics, discourse.

> I cannot believe that I am leaving India . . . On the housetop for the last time the serpent lamps flickered on teak and lacquer and brass. For the last time the bullocks galloped to Santiniketan . . . It seemed incredible the night could be the last . . . Impossible to stay upon the housetop, I ran to the ground again, and walked in the fragrance of the *nim* grove. In the Tree House I could see the Poet writing. I climbed the swinging steps and said, "It is for the last time." (Green 177-78)

Gretchen Green was so deeply attached to Rabindranath's Santiniketan that her decision to leave the place forever was not easy at all. A deep sense of pain lingers as she recalls her final day at Santiniketan. Gretchen Green's sudden departure from Santiniketan at a crucial stage was very unfortunate for the rural community which was recovering from age-long stupor and becoming active under her guidance. Green was their "mai", a mother figure who not only assumed the role and responsibility of a care giver but also relentlessly acted as a constant source of inspiration for the women of Santiniketan and the neighbouring villages. The purpose of this paper is to closely exam-

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ine Green's memoir, *The Whole World &Company* (1936), and reconstruct a history of science in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century Santiniketan whose discursive contours are largely defined and constructed by eminent male teachers as well as prolific writers of science, for instance, Jagadananda Roy, Tejeshchandra Sen, Pramathanath Sengupta and others. Rabindranath's own interest towards science was largely qualified by his friendship with scientists like Jagadish Chandra Bose, Prafulla Chandra Ray, and even P.C. Mahalanabish. Unfortunately, if we look at the study as well as cultivation of science within the space of Santiniketan, a prominent dearth of women's participation is felt. Santiniketan becomes a microcosmic representation of the larger scenario of the nineteenth and early twentieth century Bengal where science was largely considered to be a male prerogative and women were systematically kept at the fringes when the praxis of scientific education was concerned.

The diffusion of Western education and ideas in nineteenth century Bengal resulted in the formation and consolidation of middle-class Bengali intelligentsia who brought in new reformist zeal in almost every sphere of the society. Of all the other missions, the need to educate the women and construct a "reformed female subjectivity" was realized immediately (Sen 176). Thus, several efforts to introduce education in the innermost quarters of a Bengali household were seen since the beginning of the century. The historians, who have worked in the area of *strisiksha* or female education, like Tanika Sarkar, contends that before the turn of nineteenth century the issue of female education was not at all discussed. While quoting Adam's Second Report on the State of Education in Bengal, Sarkar explains that female education was a threat to the society primarily due to the superstition that education would bring widowhood. In addition to that, there was the latent fear that an educated and hence, empowered woman would not show an unmitigated devotion to the social dictates. Rather, she is likely to question her confinement within four walls in the name of domesticity, and challenge the double standard dictates of a patriarchal society (Sarkar 157). Hence, the history of women's education is interspersed with several arguments, debates, and remarkable splits in the then society.

The first school for women was founded by a missionary, Robert May, in 1818. Between 1823–1828, Mary Ann Cook established a number of girls' schools with the assistance of Church Missionary Society. Nevertheless, these schools could elicit very little response from the elites of Calcutta. The rigid observance of the *Purdah* system as well as a deeply rooted fear of conversion prevented them to send their daughters to such schools. Ghulam Murshid even points out that the reformist thinkers like Rammohan Roy and Radhakanta Dev, who preached the idea of women liberation, were reluctant to send their own daughters to such schools. Hence, girls belonging to low caste families like Bagdi, Byadh, Bairagi and those of the prostitutes went to those schools (Murshid 14).

Apart from the sporadic efforts of the missionary societies, the formal inauguration of Victoria Girls' School in 1849, later renamed as Bethune School, proved to be an important landmark in the history of female education. Though Bethune had a committee of respectable Hindus like Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, Kalikrishna Dev, Harachandra Ghosh, and others, still very few respectable families allowed their daughters to attend the school. The conservative Bengali periodicals played vicious role in defaming the school as well as its students. One such journal was *Chandrika O Prabhakar*, which offered piquant criticism marked with obscenity. It said: "If respectable Hindu gentlemen want to turn their wives into prostitutes, who can prevent that? Not us . . . on the contrary, we would love to visit these schools when night falls and set tests to these female students" (qtd. In Sarkar 169). Another conservative newspaper, *Samacharchandika* presumed the male teachers as potent threats to the girl students: "If young girls are sent off to schools, they might be deflowered since lust-stricken men would never let them alone" (qtd. in Sarkar 170).

It is to be considered that a number of factors were actually contributing to the stunted growth of female education in the first half of nineteenth century. The prevalent social customs, like, early marriage and observance of the *purdah*, the lack of female teachers in schools, and the fear of social ostracism were always there that made the Bengali middle-class families quite hesitant to send their

daughters to school. Therefore, the emphasis was more on the schemes of *antahpur* education. Ghulam Murshid provides a list of women like Kailashbashini Devi, Kumuduni, Brahmamayi, Jnanadanandini Devi who were taught by their husbands at home (18). The second half of nineteenth century saw a rise of women voice asserting their right to education. A number of societies were popping up which addressed the issue of women liberation of which the foundation of the *Bamabodhini Sabha* in 1863 by Umesh Chandra Dutta and Bejoy Krishna Goswami is worth mentioning. The mouth-piece of the society, *Bamabodhini Patrika,* which ran for sixty years (1863-1922), emerged as a significant platform where writings by women on various issues including the issue of female education were published. Apart from inviting articles by women, the journal also announced an essay competition for women in its 1874 issue on interesting topics such as "The benefits that can be expected from women's education, and the evil effects of not educating them" or "The harmful customs and superstitions that need to be eradicated before the women of our country can improve their status". Madhumati Mukhopadhyay of Shaligram wrote the most appraised article on female education, which was published in the 1865 issue of the journal. She seriously comments on the importance of women's education and perceives education as the way to learn good conduct. According to her, a literate wife can run her household more systematically and raise her children properly. Education teaches women how to be docile before her husband and her in-laws. She also mentions that an enlightened woman may write and earn but most part of her essay concentrates to evaluate education as a training to become a good housewife and a better mother (31-32). Thus, a dual and complicated stance is noted in Madhumati's non-urban voice, which realizes the importance of education for women but does not attempt to question and transgress the rigid patriarchal social codes. Another conservative article, "Strishiksha-Pranali" (The Methods of Women's Education, 1874) contends that men possess the ability to deduce knowledge from the intense theories of science and literature but women are not eligible for higher intellectual exercises. The sole aim of the amount of education available to the women is to prune them as daughters, wives, and mothers. Such an argument points out to the major demand of the era for a separate curriculum for women. The heated debates over what should be the ideal curriculum for women caused a rift in Bramho Samaj too. This essay prescribes subjects like Bengali prose and poetry, grammar and composition, history, geography, mathematics and science for women. Interestingly, the author instructs that science teaching should be complemented with a compulsory understanding of God and the glory of his creation (134-38). This conscious choice of coupling modern science with religion hints at the patriarchal strategy of obstructing a rational outlook in women, which would otherwise lead them to question their position in the society. *Bamabodhini* prepared the stage for educating girls at home and published a five-year syllabus to promote the scheme. Moreover, it strongly asserted the need to establish Teacher's Training Institutes for women, and kept statistical records of the number of girls' schools in districts, the *antahpur* schools along with the "number of entrants and successful examinees in both formal and home-based schools" (Sen 179). However, at the same time, it consciously published the conservative writings demanding a suitable education for women, a kind of education that would help them not to deviate from their social roles. There were significant women voices like that of Prasannatara Gupta, Kulabala Devi expressing doubt whether the newly educated women would still abide by the social customs or not. *Bamabodhini* became a mirror of the contemporary society, which fashioned the subjectivity of new woman but always underlined the importance of controlling them. It granted their right to education but set limits in their curriculum. As Krishna Sen asserts, "The newly articulated liberation discourses in fact contoured the paradigm of woman in more demanding ways than ever before. The educated, upper-class/caste woman, whose badge of difference from her lower-class/caste sisters was her literacy and "liberated" access to companionate marriage, must now please as well as serve her man" (Sen 185). However, the importance of the journals like *Bamabodhini* lies in the fact that they encouraged women to raise their voice, and express themselves in print media. The rise of such periodicals and along with it, the increasing availability of literate women who could act as teachers, and above all the demand of educated wives

led to an unprecedented growth of female schools and girl students in the second half of nineteenth century. Ghulam Murshid provides the statistical Report on Public Instruction in Bengal, which shows that in 1863, the number of girls' schools was ninety-five, and girl students was two thousand four hundred and eighty-six. In 1890, there were two thousand two hundred and thirty-eight schools and more than seventy-eight thousand girls were enrolled as students (20). However, it can be clearly identified that the policies of educating the womenfolk were not framed without a purpose. Almost every thinker, who was behind this project, was aware of the fact that education would shape women according to the demand of the newly educated men. As Partha Chatterjee clarifies, the new woman, educated and groomed, was "subject to a new patriarchy" (127). Most of the articles, including those by women, reflected the ideology that women should be taught embroidery, cooking, hygiene along with some basic sciences, arithmetic and language which would refine their tastes and make them better partners, better mothers, and better housewives. Murshid puts forward the limitations of various women thinkers of nineteenth century regarding the idea of women liberation. While most of them demanded their right to education, very few could perceive education as a significant route to employment.

Partha Chatterjee in his essay "The Nation and its Women" finds this tendency to preserve the tradition as a dominant one in the discourse of nineteenth century nationalism. The strong objection regarding the higher studies for women, or even women employment and a parallel reinforcement of the social duties and responsibilities of women actually resulted from a complicated strategy of the native intelligentsia who tried to shape a separate curriculum for women. Taking his cue from Sumit Sarkar's analysis of the nineteenth century ideology of reform, he points out:

> The Renaissance reformers . . . were highly selective in their acceptance of liberal ideas from Europe. Fundamental elements of social conservatism such as the maintenance of caste distinctions and patriarchal forms of authority in the family, acceptance of the sanctity of the sâstra (scriptures), preference for symbolic rather than substantive changes in social practices all these were conspicuous in the reform movements of the early and mid-nineteenth century. (117)

While considering this matter of selection in the ideal of reform, Chatterjee probes deeper into the realms of history to locate the woman question, and the reason why the emphasis on tradition was always gaining ground whenever the issue of modernizing the native women came in. He argues that the Indian women, oppressed and confined, were always cited by the colonial masters to justify their "orderly, lawful, and rational procedures of governance" that stood in stark contrast to the "barbaric" social customs of the Indian society, supported by their religious scriptures too (118). Thus, the condition of the women became a seat for the colonizer's sympathy and hence, was strategically used to justify their act of subordination. It became very easy for them to criticize an entire tradition, which actually supported the project of colonialism founded with a purpose of "civilizing" the East. In response to this, a counter ideology of nationalism developed. The discourse of nationalism identified two separate sections in the cultural sphere—the material and the spiritual. Trying to explain the argument further, Chatterjee says,

> The claims of Western civilization were the most powerful in the material sphere. Science, technology, rational forms of economic organization, modern methods of statecraft—these had given the European countries the strength to subjugate the non-European people and to impose their dominance over the whole world. To overcome this domination, the colonized people had to learn those superior techniques of organizing material life and incorporate them within their own cultures. (119-120)

However, the same ideology claims the superiority of the spiritual domain of the East. Hence, the distinctiveness of the national culture is to be preserved in the spiritual domain, which must be left untainted by the Western influences. The spiritual/material divide led to the formation of other binaries such as inner/outer, and home/world. It can be clearly assumed that the "world" was meant to be dominated by the masculine whereas the "home" stood for the spiritual domain, to be contoured by the feminine. This also explains why the nineteenth century literature attempted to parody

the westernized Bengali women. The new woman shaped by the new patriarchy was granted a status of superiority. She was educated and culturally refined, but at the same time possessed the essential, feminine virtues like "chastity, self-sacrifice, submission, devotion, kindness, patience, and the labours of love" (129). Consequently, education for women was perceived as training for them so that they could adjust according to the demands of the outer, material world but at the same time retain their traditional values. Therefore, the project of educating the Indian women was always punctuated with significant prescriptions for women regarding their code of conduct.

Women's entry into the arena of public health as medical professionals did not happen with ease. Geraldine Forbes argues that the issue of female health, especially, the process of birthing was highlighted by the women missionaries, which got the support of the Western educated middle class Indian women. The problem of "high maternal and infant mortality rates" was addressed with the establishment of "lying-in hospitals, nursing homes, new female wards in older hospitals, and institutions specifically designed to train female doctors and nurses" (80). The ambience of the inner quarters or the zenana of the Bengali household was significantly marked by orthodoxy. A very primitive process of birthing was followed, where the mother and the new-born were kept in a secluded parlour. Even in cases of complicated delivery, no male doctors were allowed. The entire process of childbirth was supervised by the midwives or the *dhais,* who had no formal training. By mid-nineteenth century, a class of elite Bengali intellectuals responded to the Western mode of treatment and abandoned the age-old custom "of secluding the new mother and her baby in an unventilated, filthy outhouse or side room" (84). However, the transformation of the entire traditional process of childbirth in a Bengali household was possible due to the intervention of the missionary women who had access to the inner apartments/quarters where they taught and got first-hand knowledge of Indian household. They felt a strong urge for lady-doctors and proper training schemes for the midwives to arrest the untimely deaths during childbirth. In 1869, Clara Swain, MD & a member of the Women's Foreign Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church (USA) came. There were many projects initiated by the wives of the Viceroys and supported by the government to improve the condition of female health in India. The efforts of Lady Dufferin were significant. The Dufferin Fund begun in 1885. Its chief purposes were "providing medical tuition to doctors, hospital assistants, nurses and midwives; medical relief through dispensaries, female wards, female doctors and female hospitals; and training nurses and midwives" (86). One of its targets was also to train the native women, particularly the *dhais*. It provided scholarships to train Indian women in England. There is no doubt that such trainings opened up several possibilities for the Indian women to gain financial autonomy, but, the amount of discrimination and social ostracism that women faced while pursuing a degree of medicine or a training in midwifery was no less. Chitra Dev shows how women, irrespective of their nationality, struggled hard to ensure their admission into medical college and received severe condemnation. The plight of Elizabeth Blackwell in the 1840's America was no less in comparison to our Abala Das, who could not enroll in Calcutta Medical College and so went to Madras to study medicine. Unfortunately, she could not complete her studies (Dev 62). There are instances of women doctors, like Virginia Mary Mitter, who gave up their practice after marriage (Forbes 113). Chitra Dev interestingly mentions the case of Dr. James Barry, a woman, who enrolled herself in Edinburgh University to study medicine in the disguise of a male candidate. She gained enormous success in surgery and practiced for many years, but could not discard her disguised identity (38). Kadambini Ganguly, the first Indian woman doctor faced scathing attack by the then orthodox Bengali periodical, *Bangabasi.* In 1891, it published an article where the author "accused her of being a whore" (qtd. in Karlekar WS 27). Kadambini achieved her BA degree from Calcutta University in 1882. She decided to pursue medicine in the same University but her admission into the course was not at all a smooth journey. Malavika Karlekar reports, "Though Kadambini passed in all the written papers for the final medical examination, she failed in one essential component of the practicals. Instead of the MB degree, she was awarded in 1886 a GBMC (Graduate of Bengal Medical College), which nonetheless gave her the right to practice"

(qtd. in WS 27). Despite her competence as a medical professional, she had to face severe discrimination in her career. Geraldine Forbes mentions her complaint that the Dufferin Fund "favoured foreign women over Indian women. *The Bengalee* grumbled that high positions in the Duff Fund were reserved for European and Eurasian women" (112). The Indians had to accept meagre salaries and thus, faced humiliation. Moreover, Kadambini was ostracized in her own society. It is true that Kadambini's plight as a lady-doctor firmly establishes the tragedy of Indian women in medicine. However, it is quite assuring that there is a proper documentation of her contribution in the history of Indian medicine. But, what about those thousands of trained midwives who were assisting the male doctors or those hospital assistants trained at the Campbell Medical School who were posted in the district hospitals of Bengal? In the erasure of their names from the history of medicine in India, one cannot but sense a constant working of categorization that prioritized some while silencing many voices. In fact, western medicine was a Janus-faced reality for Indian women. On one hand, it created a liberating space for them, identified the need of training Indian women, addressed the issue of female health in India, and demanded reformation, while on the other, it operated in subjugating the natives under colonial control more effectively. The traditional *dhais* were not accommodated within the system, but were severely criticized and castigated. The native lady-doctors had to accept low positions, meagre salaried works and constant discrimination within a framework that always proclaimed the superiority of their European colleagues. We cannot deny the fact that the Western medicinal discourses and its practicing frameworks in India perpetuated the colonial and patriarchal hegemony which decided to what extent women were to be trained, who were to be included within the system and who were to be marginalized. Indian women were actually safe baits in the Empire's vicious political game of subordination.

Gretchen Green was the daughter of an American preacher whose family endorsed the idea of rendering service to community and people. Right from her childhood, Green had harboured deep love and sympathy for mankind. Always eager to help people in distress, she began her social work at Philadelphia. Soon she met and befriended Dorothy Straight who acted as a conduit between Rabindranath and Gretchen Green. Green's desire to work in India was fulfilled when she received a telegram from Dorothy in June 1921 which says, "work ready in India" (Green 102). In 1921, she left America and joined Institute of Tropical Medicine in London for her formal training in nursing and midwifery. In 1922, she joined Sriniketan. Her primary responsibility was to establish a health centre in a nearby village, and create health awareness among the rural women. The poet's vision was explained to her very clearly. As she recounts, "The Poet wants someone to help with the village women. To gain the confidence of women is often to revolutionize the lives of men . . . He suggests a dispensary to start with, other duties to develop—they did, in multiple" (Green 102).

Gretchen Green undertook a number of projects in Sriniketan. The surrounding villages were infested with malaria, which posed a severe threat to the lives of the local people. Under Green's assistance Rabindranath established an Anti-Malaria Society at Sriniketan. Apart from her innovative and experimental treatments, she toiled hard to disseminate health awareness through several exhibitions, posters and magic lantern shows. In 1923, a new health centre was inaugurated at Binuria, and by 1924, twelve health societies were founded for the purpose of offering treatments as well as initiating public awareness programmes. Green's active engagement in all such ventures is documented in her memoir, where she also hints at the practical problems lying underneath such projects:

> There are beginning of a dairy, a poultry farm, a tannery, a cooperative shop and weaving and dyeing departments, a dispensary is being built; and Boy Scout troops are being formed. It is up to me to run the Dispensary, and to do something for the women ... *Subhnibas* is the name to be given to the Dispensary, Sanscrit for House of welfare. But will it ever be finished? (*The World* 113)

She utilized the Santiniketan Fair (*Poush Mela*) as a significant platform for her demonstrations. As she recounts in her memoir, "I enticed mothers into a welfare booth, washing babies free at stated intervals, presenting each angry but hygienic baby with a shirt for cold weather wear" (120). The

figure of Gretchen Green, nursing the villagers in the dispensary, and training other local village women for the similar purpose was considerably admired by the community. She herself recounts, “I have been christened *Mai,* meaning mother—this is synonymous with love and respect” (Green 146). With her gradual emergence as a mother figure to the rural community, she could successfully break through the social barriers and win their trust. Along with Snehalata Sen, she established ‘Girl Guide’ with fourteen girl students of Santiniketan in 1923. The purpose was to inspire the girl students to volunteer in several social services and awareness programmes in Sriniketan like the Boy Scouts. Unfortunately, this venture was short lived.

Green was instrumental in the creation of an inclusive space within Santiniketan where women received formal training in nursing and midwifery and worked under her tutelage. Within a few days after her arrival, she became a popular teacher holding classes of nursing and midwifery with local women. In her memoir, she ruminates the enthusiasm of Mrs. Nanibala Roy, “The *Dais* of the District come in for classes. Nuniwalla, a young woman of caste, character, and ability is going to Calcutta to train in the Eden Hospital as a midwife and return to nurse in the villages hereabout” (148). In early twentieth century, when Green was staying and working in Santiniketan, women’s participation in the health sectors in India was very limited. Though female education was encouraged by the chief architects of the Bengal Renaissance, the debate, as to whether it is permissible for women to study science or not, continued to exist even in twentieth century Bengal. With an ambition to train women as suitable housewives who would be able to cater to the demands of the newly educated Bengali *Bhadraloks*, there were pressing demands to design a separate curriculum for women that would include religious scriptures, cooking, embroidery, house-keeping and so on. According to the orthodox thinkers of the day, women should not be encouraged to study subjects like physical science, mathematics, human anatomy, and medicine. The discourse of female education was problematic as it was largely dominated by the power politics within a patriarchal social framework.

Green’s autobiographical narrative becomes a significant repository of her first-hand experiences of working with the women at Santiniketan. Her engagement with the community, detailed depiction of treatment techniques and gradual development of filial affection towards the people of Santiniketan are meticulously documented in the pages of her memoir:

> Impossible to wait longer for a proper dispensary, because patients with all manner of diseases come thick and fast. I have a student to interpret and help dispense medicine: the patient brings his own bottle, we glue on strips of paper to denote a dose. Epsom salts are a joy, answering every purpose from eyewash to cleansing wounds— cow-dung poultices are my bane. Fussy patients balking at brown cinchona, I dye it red with beet juice. The Dispensary takes so much time, I have trained a student to show visitors the school. (119)

Apart from being a significant documentation of Green’s days at the Poet’s school in Santiniketan, *The Whole World & Company* stands as a testimonial of women’s training and active engagement in health care. Green recounts an incident when a Muslim villager brings his wife to her to learn the skills of midwifery. Her happiness rests upon the fact that she could ultimately break all social barriers and infuse an enthusiasm among the women of Santiniketan and Sriniketan towards rendering service in health sector. Green also performed several secretarial jobs for the poet, often answering his letters or recording his poems. She was also nominated as the Surul Samiti member on 1929. In spite of that, a more perplexing question persists as to why she had to leave Santiniketan at a crucial hour when she became an almost indispensable among its rural community. Her memoir expresses her intense desire to go back. With a lingering sense of pain, she says, “We may have the most modern system of education, but give me again the classes beneath the trees of Santiniketan” (Green 250). It is quite surprising that the reason for her early departure from the poet’s place is not recorded in *The Whole World & Company*. However, though her span of time in Santiniketan was short, her contribution in making a separate niche for the women of Santiniketan in public health sector was immense. She acted as an interlocutor between the discourse of modern medicine and the rural

community of Santiniketan by diffusing modern methods of treatment into the rural space. She took an earnest initiative to direct the first documentary on Santiniketan in the year 1923. Thus, her contribution to beautifully articulate the image of Rabindranath's *Ashram* was immense:

> The poet on location behaved beautifully. We photographed him walking through paddy fields with cultivators stopping to take the dust off his shoes; as the teacher with disciples sitting at his feet; and finally as the centre of a festival scene, professors and students, villagers and visitors surrounding him. Eventually it was shot . . . The apex of excitement was the preview in a Calcutta theatre with audience of the Poet and a hundred friends. (Green 151)

Green's stay in Santiniketan was not for a considerable period of time. Yet it was interspersed with innumerable events of considerable significance. She assumed a prominent role to inspire the rural women and urged their active participation in Rabindranath's project of rural reconstruction. Her journey in India was not smooth. She had physical ailments during her stay, yet tackled every problem with rare acumen. In no time she became an indispensable part of Santiniketan community. The reason why she left so early is still unknown. However, her sudden departure did not snap her ties with Rabindranath and Santiniketan. She closely followed the poet's travels and often struggled hard to meet him. She was also a witness to Rabindranath's meeting with Einstein and Hellen Keller (Green 288). Gretchen Green was among those few people who could realize the nature and importance of Tagore's project and left indelible imprint despite her short stay at Santiniketan. Rabindranath's farewell gift to the gracious lady says everything about her:

> The feel light comes and speaks to all—be glad, be free in mind,
> The free breeze comes with caresses, it whispers—let there be free opening of Hearts
> The Poet sings, "Take my love:
> Be great, have great hopes. (Green 176)

Adamas University, Kolkata, West Bengal

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