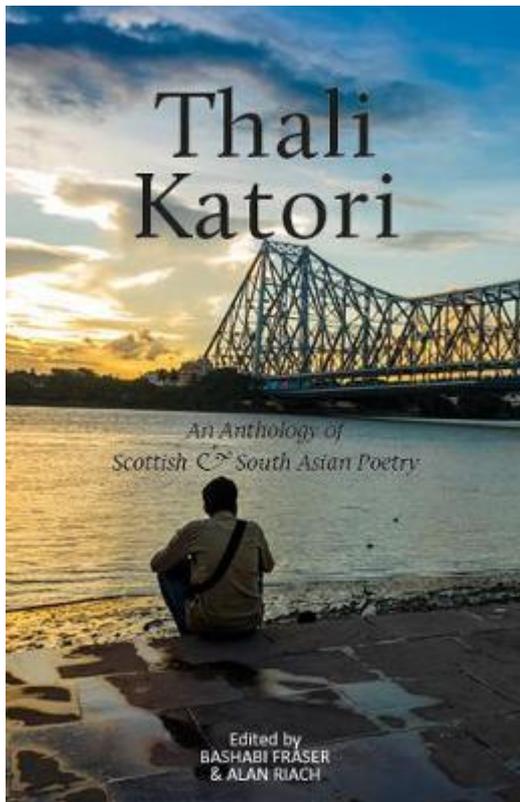


The Mohona: A Confluence Of Identity

By Bashabi Fraser



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As day dawned, kites were flying in the free skies of India and Pakistan. Yet freedom had come at a cost: India was divided on the basis of religious politics, with Partition creating two mindless borders which led to the biggest displacement of people the world has ever seen, an estimated eighteen million. But in any estimate of the Indo-Scottish colonial encounter and its effects vis-à-vis today's reality, 'India' conjures a vast sub-continent, the land that extended from the Hindukush to the borders of what was then Burma. And today's South Asia, as we know, encompasses this pre-Partition India which includes India, Pakistan and

Bangladesh.

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Many of the Scots posted to India served the East India Company as surgeons, administrators and military personnel, and many of them wrote poetry, publishing in local journals. They are known as the Company Poets. They were dismissed at 'home' as amateurish, but some were slowly taken seriously in literary circles. With the implementation of Macaulay's (a Scot) *Minute on Education* in 1835, English was introduced as a language in schools and higher education to produce a tribe of brown sahibs who took up subordinate administrative and professional jobs which helped the governance of British India. English remains a thread that connects the two countries today.

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She recalls hoopoes on the maidan, flashes of minivet, oriol and bulbul peering through the flowers. She can hear the bargaining in the bazaar in 'abundant India'. In 'My Indian Self' she affirms:

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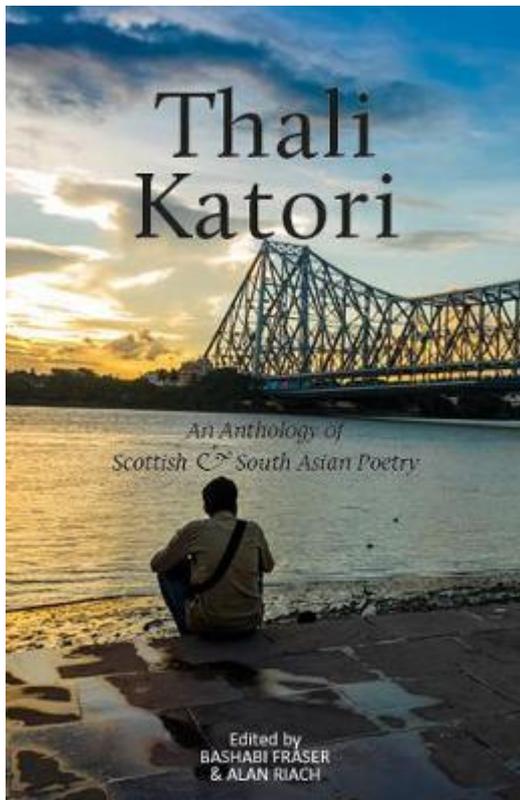
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'The Meeting Point'

— MOHONA⁴ —

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Reminiscing on a boat building past
The turquoise hull of Buena Vista⁵
Stands still, its journeys over.
Here I am a heron taking flight
On a wing of fancy
Able to dream of a riverine terrain⁶
And conjure a mohona
Of meetings the boats once intended.*



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(c) *The Bottle Imp*