

P R E F A C E

The present dissertation is intended to be my thesis for the degree of PH.D. in English of the University of North Bengal. Much has been written and with good reason on Walt Whitman by men of letters, scholars and critics from all the four corners of the globe since his debut in 1865 in the field of American poetry with his Leaves of Grass which he so lovingly called 'the handkerchief of God'. The present work ventures to add one more modest leaf to the vast mass of scholarship devoted to the interpretation of the mind and art of that grand patriarch of American poetry. At this date it is hardly possible to say anything absolutely original on the matter; yet, I should not be blamed if I cherish the feeble but modest hope that my reappraisal of the poet of a new dawn in American literature from two specific points of Indian view will not prove to be altogether tiresome so as to deserve a place in the garbage dump. Whitman is a poet of infinite charm and freshness and with every new reading that captivating hold of his poetry on the mind increases. Thus, there can be no cliché regarding Whitman's poetry or discussion of it. Every study, each appraisal of it remains fresh as the poet and his work.

In this connection I must express my whole-hearted gratitude to my guide S. P. Sengupta, M.A. Ph.D. (London),

Professor of English In North Bengal University, who initiated me to the perpetual charm and mystery of Whitman's poetry. I should express my obligation to my teacher Dr. R. K. Dasgupta, former Director of National Library, Calcutta, and Dr. Fabitra Roy, my colleague in the Philosophy department of North Bengal University, for their many valuable suggestions. I should be failing in my duty if I do not acknowledge the friendly assistance rendered by the authorities and staff of the American Centre Library, Calcutta, American Studies Research Centre, Hyderabad, National Library, Calcutta, State Central Library, Shillong, Jadavpore University Library, Visva-Bharati University Library, Santiniketan, and North Bengal University Library. I must express my thankful indebtedness to my wife Keku Banerjee and daughter Nandini for their kind reading of the type script, correction of the occasional typing errors, and assistance in the preparation of the alphabetical order of the bibliography.

For the purpose of textual quotations the one-volume Reader's Edition of *Leaves of Grass* edited by n.w. Bledgett and Sculley Bradley (Univ. of London Press, 1965) has been followed all through unless otherwise mentioned. The dissertation in its present form incorporates all the suggestions put forward by one of the external examiners for the improvement of the work. I have taken utmost pains to follow the hints and present the matter accordingly.