

**SHAKESPEARE IN NINETEENTH - CENTURY
BENGALI DRAMATIC LITERATURE :
AN ANALYTICAL SURVEY**

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE UNIVERSITY OF
DHAKA FOR THE DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

BY

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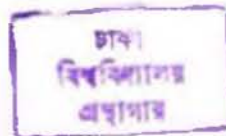
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SHAKESPEARE IN NINETEENTH - CENTURY BENGALI
DRAMATIC LITERATURE : AN ANALYTICAL SURVEY

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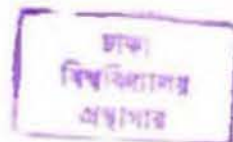
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In carrying out this analytical survey on Shakespeare in the Nineteenth Century Bengali Dramatic Literature, I have tried to explore the contact between Shakespeare and modern Bengali drama. I have tried to evaluate the Shakespearean pursuits in modern Bengali Dramatic Literature for the development of modern Bengali drama. I have discussed how Bengali translations and cultural translations of Shakespeare's plays inspired the Bengali playwrights of the nineteenth century to imitate and adapt Shakespeare for transformation into original dramatic creation as well as the making of cultural meaning through translation, adaptation and transcreation in the pattern of cultural translation in Bengali. I have chosen the nineteenth century for my study because the development of modern Bengali drama started from the middle of that century.

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F O R E W O R D

In the following study on "Shakespeare in nineteenth century Bengali Dramatic Literature", my investigation will stretch from the early indigenous literary period of Bengal to 1800; 1800 to 1850; 1850 to 1872, 1860 to 1899 and 1872 to 1899. This will be an analytical survey because there are various opinions about the origin of Bengali dramatic literature as well as Bengali Theatre in the nineteenth century. Theatre and literature employ two different languages, but have certain commonalities that bind them together. One such commonality is the dramatic text which begins as a literary understanding of a certain event or attitude; but the stage brings its own interpretations to bear on this text. Dramatic text is the final creation of the stage.

Some scholars think that the origins of Bengali drama before the nineteenth century are a mixture of early indigenous literary elements. These literary elements are much earlier, possibly as early as 2500 B.C. Other scholars contend, however, that Bengali drama is an imitation of English Drama by Anglicised Bengalis. A third group argues that the influence of Sanskrit drama helped to originate Bengali drama in the nineteenth century.

All three views demand a proper analysis and investigation.

In order to understand fully the growth and development of Bengali drama with all its early and later ingredients in the introductory chapter, I shall examine the historical and literary nature of the contact between Shakespearean and Bengali drama in the nineteenth century. I shall attempt to investigate the history of Bengali dramatic elements that existed in early indigenous literary forms. I shall show that first, Bengali drama originated from indigenous elements. Secondly, a gradual transformation occurred from verse to prose form to Jatra which was then transformed into modern Bengali drama by a mixture with European drama including Shakespearean dramatic forms, language, ideas and characters. This survey of the first phase within my introduction will extend to the formation of Fort William College, Calcutta, in 1800.

The period from 1800 to 1850 will be studied closely to bring out the activities of the English theatre at Calcutta that laid the foundation for the dramatic development in Bengali. From 1850 to 1872, the study will deal with Shakespearean translations in Bengali Dramatic Literature; the beginning and the development of theatres that staged Shakespeare's translations in Bengali. I would like to examine a classification of translation, Shakespearean translations and

translators, the first Shakespearean translations in Bengali through an analysis to determine its value and impact on the growth and development of Bengali dramatic literature, the role of private theatres and performances of Shakespeare's plays on the stage (both in original and Bengali versions).

I shall also investigate the extent of borrowing and adaptations of structural features as well as thematic pre-occupations of Shakespearean drama by the Bengali playwrights that occurred in the second half of the nineteenth century.

The study will divide the translations into three categories : (i) Literal Translation : word for word, (ii) Poetic translation or adaptation : idea to idea. It means that attempts for this type of translation is to recapture the spirit and feeling in language inherently possessing the capability of reaching the audience for which it is intended. In an adaptation, scene and live alteration is entirely possible because the intention is to transform a play, not as a piece of literature, but as a piece of theatre. (iii) Cultural translation : partial word for word in terms of contemporary social economic and political circumstances. By examining these translations of Shakespeare in Bengali version, I shall try to show the tendency, attitude and objective of the playwrights in translating them into Bengali.

Five Bengali translations of Shakespeare's plays, namely Rudrapal (Cultural translation of Macbeth), Kusum Kumari (Cultural translation of Cymbeline), Bhim Singha (Cultural translation of Othello and Macbeth (a literal translation) were enacted in public theatres in Calcutta from 1872 to 1899. I shall work on four translated plays of Shakespeare to examine the relation between language of stage and text of Shakespeare's translation in Bengali. A comparison will also be made between these translated plays and early traditional forms of Bengali drama. Emphasis will be given to the role of the audience and the determination and development of the stage space. I shall also work through theatrical approaches to acted Shakespeare's plays in Bengali. I shall examine metrical prose, Jatra tendencies, devotional sentiment, colloquial dialogue, looseness in the construction of the plot into acted Shakespeare's translations in Bengali from 1872 to 1899.

The period between 1860 and 1899 will be surveyed for an understanding of the transformation of Shakespeare's plays into original dramatic creations. I shall try to show the method of imitating Shakespeare's plays within this time period to understand the nature of the transformation into original dramatic creations under the influence of Shakespeare's themes, ideas, form, language and style.

In the concluding chapter I shall discuss how Bengali translations and cultural translations of Shakespeare's plays inspired the Bengali playwrights of the nineteenth century to transform his plays into original dramatic creation as well as the making of cultural meaning through translation, adaptation and cultural translation in Bengali. My study will include the categories of thought, forms of power, political and moral stances, notions of nationality, race, class in translated plays of Shakespeare in the nineteenth century.

INTRODUCTION :

A current view among a section of scholars is that Bengali drama is a combination of western influence, western dramatic techniques like stage-craft, lighting and sound, the idea of tragedy, tragi-comic scenes, five-act division of Elizabethan and Shakespearean plays, and use of music, all imported into Bengali drama. This view suggests that Bengali drama has a continuity and at the same time a distinctive characteristic. Its distinctiveness lies in its blend of traditional cultural forms and European dramatic techniques.

Before the nineteenth century, there were various indigenous dramatic traditions in Bengal, popularly known as Kabis, Panchalis and ballad recitations like the Kathakatha. There were semi-religious musical performances such as the Tappa and Kirtan and the multifarious forms of rural entertainment like Haf-akhrai, Punthi and Jatra. These were the popular traditional dramatic forms in Bengali literature. Through a gradual transformation, these indigenous forms helped an early growth of modern Bengali drama in the nineteenth century.

The most popular traditional cultural form used in Bengali drama is the Jatra. The word Jatra literally means a "procession"

which is customary with Hindu worshippers and devotees during their religious festivals. Jatra, whether ancient or modern, is a combination of two elements - the dramatic and the lyrical. The dramatic part consists of dialogues and monologues setting forth a plot and interspersed with serious and comic episodes. The lyrical part is practically two-thirds of the performance. The Jatras consist of numerous songs scattered throughout the play. The protagonist sings, the antagonist sings too and in fact, all the dramatic personae sing on the slightest provocation.¹ The song element became important not only in Jatras but also in almost all other types of dramatic and semi-dramatic performances in Bengal like the Kabis, Panchalis, The Tappa, The ballad Recitation, The Kathakatha, Kirtan and Haf-a-khrai.²

The existence of these dramatic and semi-dramatic elements can be traced as far back as the sixteenth century. Extract from a popular Jatra, The Rai Unmadinee (Madness of Radha, lover of Krishna, the Hindu god) is given below in order to provide a general idea of the way in which dramatic motives, dialogues and songs are treated in the Jatras.

Once Radha has become perfectly disconsolate, sakhis (friends) have done all to pacify her, but in vain. In this dilemma, one of the sakhis (Chitra) ingeniously suggests that Krishna had probably not

left Vrindavana (the sacred forest of the Hindus) but still somewhere in Vrindavana, most likely hiding himself in sport in some shady nook or retired grove of the forest to test Radha's patience and love for him, as he had done so often before. At this Radha thanks Chitra for the kind suggestion which raises her hope, for even the false report of a good news is welcome, and goes out alone that very moment in search of her beloved. Srimati the word Srimati in these Jatras always stands for Radha. She was endowed with Sri, that is to say, beauty and prosperity. It is another name for Lakshmi, the goddess of beauty and prosperity.

Where, O where art thou, Lord of my life;
O thou cruel flute-player;

Visakha : Friend Lalita, look ! The moon-faced goes out¹ Look ! At the glory of the love of the moon-faced, who in the three worlds could find a limit to Radha's love ?
She who can neither stand upright without somebody's help,

¹ Recitative in payar the Bengali units for measuring syllables in verses and songs

But the absence of Krishna has made,
Pyari's² frame feeble, Look !
She tramples thick and through as she
goes.³

The surviving specimens of this kind of Jatra belong mostly to the period from 1800 to 1830.

KABI : Originally Kabi songs formed a part of the Jatras. Later they were made into a separate form sung by professional minstrels called Kabiwals. A Kabi partly consisted of both men and women and divided into two groups, each singing in chorus. The singers were known as Danda Kabi who extemporised their songs and were accompanied by musicians playing the mandala (a stringed instrument). An example is given below from Rasa and Narasimha's composition which expresses the way in which a lover is ironically reproached :

তোমার চরিত, পখিক বেমত হয়ে শ্রান্তি যুত, বিখাম করে ।
শ্রান্তি দূর হলে, যায় সেই চলে পুনঃ নাহি ফিরে ।⁴

(Your activities are like the tired passer-by,
who being tired takes rest -
After relieving his fatigue, goes away -

² pyari is one of the names of Radha

Never looking back.)

Kabi songs contained a good deal of poetic charm but never attained a high degree of literary excellence. In the twentieth century, rivalry arose between the different groups of Kabiwals and the songs degenerated into mere personal abuse.

PANCHALIS was a form of doggerel poetry, recited or sung and dealing mostly with religious themes. Panchalis were usually performed before somewhat informal assemblies. The following lines have been taken from Rasikh Chand's Panchalis :

বজনী প্রভাতে, ভানুর প্রভাতে আলোময় হলো ধরা,
লয়ে গোপাল, বলিয়ে গোপাল, বলাই
অধরে কানাই আমি একা নই, শ্রীধাম সুদাম আদি
উদয় হলো রবি, আর কিরে রবি,
দুগ্ধ পানে নিরবধি।⁵

(Accompanying Gopal and calling him Balai - arise Lord, I am not alone, everything is now fair and perfect.

The sun has risen - what else is left - Drinking milk, I am now boundless.)

KATHAKATHA : Kathakathas were passages taken from the popular folk tales from the Bhagavat Gita epitomising the teachings of the Upanishads (the philosophical portion of the Vedas) and the

Epics, usually narrated by professional "kathaks" (story-tellers). The effect of the narration was heightened by songs. The aim was to impart religious instruction and to arouse devotional sentiment. The passages were usually in a highly ornate and Sanskritised Bengali and poetic in character.⁶ The following lines have been taken from Sridhar Kathaks (written between 1760 and 1830) :

তব প্রেমে কি সুখ হতো - আমি যারে ভাল বাসি
সে যদি ভাল বাসিত !!⁷

(Whether happiness would come in love or not, that I could learn, whom I love if he (or she) would love too.)

TAPPA : Tappa was the name given to a specific mode or style of music. The music was of light kind, mostly suited to love songs imitated from Indian music. Tappa consisted of a single theme, usually of a very trifling and erotic nature. Unlike Kabis and Panchalis, Tappa was primarily a baithaki song (popular music), fashionable with the upper classes. An example of the Tappa written by Bidhu Babu is given below where the heroine tells the hero :

তুমি হলে রাজেন্দ্র, আমি তব দাসী, তোমার অধীন হয়ে থাকি,
ভালবাসি, করি অনেক সাধন, এমন হয়েছে মন,
ইহাতে সদয় থাকো, সুখী দিবা নিশি ।⁸

(You are the king, I am your maid, Having your Lordship, I love to remain, Worshipping for long, my mind has taken this shape, Be pleased, I am also happy with this life.)

KIRTAN : Kirtan is the most popular of the old musical entertainments surviving to the present day. A kirtan usually consists of verses called padas taken from Vaishnava Padakartas (Verse-makers of Vaishnava sect who were followers of Sri Chaitanya (1486-1533), a Hindu mystic.

An example of kirtan is taken from the works of Chandi Das :

পিরিতি বলিয়ে তিন অক্ষরে এ তিন ভুবন সুর,
অর মোরে মনে হয় রাতি দিনে ইহা বই নাহি আর ।⁹

(Love - these three letters - Nothing more is on earth except these three letters - Nothing is greater than this.)

HAF-A-KHRAI : Haf-a-khrai was a hybrid species of entertainment, formed by a combination of Kabi, and a musical performance of

the Tappa class. The following lines are taken from Bidhu Babu's Hap-a-khrai :

মনের যা সাধ ছিল মনে তো রইলো
তোমার সাধনা করি সাধনা পুরিল।¹⁰

My heart's desire remained where it was,
Worshipping you - my worship is complete.

These indigenous elements have more or less dealt with dramatic elements to determine a proper history of Bengali drama. These were used in performance without language. They were commonly mimetic and pantomimic in form and were gradually clothed with language in the name of Jatras. Jatras which used to deal with religious themes and sentiments were known as old religious Jatras. Eventually, old Jatras were turned into new Jatras and then into theatrical Jatra, a high quality of performance from which modern Bengali drama of the nineteenth century derived as formative inspiration. The Jatra was connected with the western form, technique and presentation. Theatrical presentation, in a word, was considerably influenced by the Calcutta theatre techniques. Jatras had been prevailing in Bengal for many years with their own traditions before the advent of the English theatre in Bengal. Old Jatras were gradually modified and

replaced by the new Jatra which has a strong social content and an awareness of current time. The new Jatra was therefore also known as Samajik Natak (or social drama). As the new Jatra was being performed, a process of assimilation also set in --- it accommodated newer expressions of mood, newer ways of exploring a plot and a much more disciplined expressive style. This resulted in a gradual transformation of the new Jatra into what came to be known simply as Jatra. This new kind of theatrical Jatra had a close connection with both the stylized presentation of traditional Jatras and the European form and atmosphere. We therefore can have a line of transformation which shows that Bengali drama originated from indigenous elements and gradual transformation occurred to turn them from verse to prose, from prose to Jatra and then into modern Bengali drama by admixture with European drama as well as Shakespearean dramatic form, language, ideas and characters.

END NOTES :

- 1) P. Guha Thakurta, The Bengali Drama : Its Origin and Development, (London : Stephen Austin & Sons Ltd., 1930), p.23
- 2) Thakurta, p.24.
- 3) Nishi Kanto Chatopadhyay, The Yatras, (London : Trubner & Co. 1882), pp. 36-37.
- 4) Sushil Kumar De, Bengali Literature in the nineteenth century (1757-1857), (Calcutta : Calcutta Oriental Press Private Ltd., 1962), p. 322.
- 5) Asit Kumar Bannerjee, Banqla Sahityer Itibritta, Vol. 4 (History of Bengali Literature), 1933 rpt. (Calcutta : Sonnet Printing House, 1985), p. 606.
- 6) Thakurta, p. 25.
- 7) Gopal Halder, Bengala Sahityer Ruprekha (An Outline of Bengali Literature), (Dhaka : Dhaka Press, 1974), p. 235.
- 8) Asit Kumar Bannerjee, p. 293.
- 9) Gopal Halder, p. 72.
- 10) Asit Kumar Bannerjee, p. 287.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER II

SHAKESPEARE IN CALCUTTA THEATRE AND DRAMA (1800-1850) : THE BEGINNINGS.

- 2.1 HISTORY OF ENGLISH THEATRE IN CALCUTTA.
- 2.2 ENGLISH THEATRE AND ITS IMITATORS AND FOLLOWERS.
- 2.3 EARLY TRANSLATIONS.

2.1 HISTORY OF ENGLISH THEATRE IN CALCUTTA :

In the first quarter of the nineteenth century, a number of educational institutions in Calcutta including the celebrated Hindu College began to organise play reading and performances of vignettes from Shakespeare. Among the male participants were many who grew into distinguished personalities in the intellectual history of Bengal.¹ Outside academic circles, the demand for Shakespeare's plays in the theatre also increased. The first quarter of the nineteenth century saw in Calcutta many of Shakespeare's plays enacted before crowded houses with as much success and applause as would flatter even a professional troupe.² The plays performed at these theatres were by dramatists whose names were well known to the students of the Hindu College. The reading of Shakespeare's dramas, recitations and enacting of scenes from them were practised and encouraged in many early nineteenth century educational institutions of Calcutta.³ Generally, English theatres in Calcutta followed the model of the London theatres and the sponsors of the early English theatres in Calcutta got advice, direction and substantial help from David Garrick, London's greatest actor of the time.⁴ To the new educated class, that is, the English educated Bengalees of Calcutta, London provided the ideals not only in literary and dramatic tastes, but other fields as well.

Bengali theatre in Calcutta from 1800 to 1850 was mainly a direct offshoot of the English theatre in the city. There is no doubt that the city's English theatre influenced the sponsors of the native theatre in the first phase. When the English came to Calcutta, they brought with them the plays of William Shakespeare.⁵ Actually, Shakespeare was easy to be grasped both for understanding and for performing on the stage. Shakespeare's plays had begun to be staged in the theatres that the local Englishmen had set up in the city for their entertainment and relaxation.

From 1800 to 1850 the English took an active part on the stage of Calcutta and plays of Shakespeare were frequently staged by them. The Bangalees also took similar initiative but their efforts did not prove successful until the middle of the nineteenth century when the English educated Bangalees acquired the capability and expertise. Before 1800, occasional attempts to stage Shakespeare's plays in Calcutta were made by the British civilians, army-men or housewives. Even overseas talent worked in Calcutta to stage Shakespeare's plays. Being requested by some top officers of John Company, David Garrick of London sent one of his pupils to Calcutta, with instructions about the staging of Richard III and Hamlet.⁶

The earliest record of a Shakespeare performance at Calcutta coincides with the publication of The Bengal Gazette in 1780.⁷ In 1784, Hamlet (November 18), The Merchant of Venice (October

18), Romeo and Juliet (October 23) were staged in the new playhouse. The key figure of the Calcutta theatre world at that time was Dr. Francis Rendell who had already earned some reputation in London as a follower of Garrick. This handsome young physician in the service of the Company, the first to introduce actresses on the Calcutta stage, organised several shows of Hamlet, King Lear, Othello, Henry IV, and Richard III.⁸ The next performance of a Shakespearean play - that of Richard III - was on January 24, 1788 and on November 19 of that year, The Merchant of Venice was put on the stage.⁹ In the first week of April, 1814, Macbeth was staged. In 1816, Henry V was staged to collect a benefit fund for the families of soldiers who had been killed in the battle of Waterloo.¹⁰ On January 18 in 1824, Coriolanus was performed. Richard III was again performed on December 19, 1824.¹¹

A contemporary account described another notable dramatic event that occurred around this time :

The following extraordinary event occurred at an entertainment given by Sir Charles Metcalfe on December 2, 1827, to the Right Hon'ble the Governor-General and Countess Amherst. The company amounted to about 400 persons comprising all ranks, beauty and fashion of Calcutta. In the course of the evening, a group of visitors made their appearance in the proper costume of Shakespeare's plays, led on by Prospero,

and the rear brought up by Dogberry. On reaching the gorgeous pavilion where the Governor-General and his party were seated, Prospero delivered an appropriate address. The several personages in the group then mixed in the dance exhibiting sundry amusing anachronisms. Falstaff led out a fashionable beauty of the 'ancien regime'. The Ghost of the father of Hamlet too might have been observed holding converse with Titania until scared a little by the sudden appearance of Bottom, who just brayed his appreciation of the scene and then vanished. Shylock also, for a moment, forgot his bond and spoke to some lady he recognised, while Henry VIII addressed Lady Percy and Anne Boleyn replied to Dr. Caius who did not at all get surprised to see Oberon treading on the toes of the venerable Dogberry or the haughty Walsey, holding a long confab with Jolly Carter.¹²

The description shows that some characters of Shakespeare's plays were so popular that their acquaintance and association became common and easy to the public.

The Merchant of Venice was performed on January 2, 1829.¹³ While on the 27th of the next month, Othello was staged. This performance was led by J.H. Stocqueler and Mrs. Esther Leach, a famous name in the Calcutta theatre world and Macbeth was staged two more times in the next four years.¹⁴ In 1832 a performance

of selected scenes from some of Shakespeare's plays was arranged; the plays were : A Midsummer Night's Dream, (II iii), Coriolanus (III ii, III iii), The Taming of the Shrew (i), King Lear (III iii), Henry IV (Part II, IV ii) and The Tempest (V). Mrs. Leach appeared in several roles (including Katherine, Titania) while Mr. Stocqueler impersonated Malvolio, Prospero, Justice Shallow, Lear. Other Notable actors included Mrs. Godall - Atkinson, Mrs. Bland, Mrs. Francies, Mrs. Mary Gottlieb, Mrs. Kelley, Mrs. Black and Mr. Block.¹⁵ Around the same time, other Shakespeare performances include Henry IV and Garrick's version of The Taming of the Shrew.¹⁶ On April 5, 1841, The Taming of the Shrew was staged at the Town Hall. Madam Dhermainville played the role of Katherine and on November 10 of the same year, Macbeth was staged yet again with Claude Melnotte in the role of Macbeth. The Merchant of Venice was also performed again on November 2, 1843. The cast included : Shylock - Mr. Vinnings, Portia - Mrs. Deacle, Bassanio - Captain. . Copp, Gratiano - Colonel Briton, Jessica - Mrs. Leach and Nerissa - Mrs. Cowley. This was also followed on December 20 by a performance of Romeo and Juliet. Miss. Deacle and Mr. Vining played the roles of Juliet and Romeo respectively and in 1844, when Hamlet was put on at the Sans Souci, Claude Melnotte played the role of Hamlet and Mrs. Ormonde that of Ophelia.¹⁷

But the performance that is most remembered by Indians was the staging of Othello, on August 17, 1848. In that production, a young Bengali appeared as Othello, a role immortalised by such

great English actors as Richard Burbage, David Garrick, Henry Irving and others. This was Baishnavcharan Auddy, whose appearance in this challenging role of Shakespeare's tragic hero with an English lady, Mrs. Anderson (daughter of the great actress, Mrs. Leach) as Desdemona, was greeted with applause.¹⁸ A Bengali youth in an English play in an English theatre catering to an English audience in the middle of the nineteenth century, is certainly a memorable event in the history of Calcutta theatre. In 1849 The Merchant of Venice was staged once more with a full English cast.¹⁹ By now, young educated Bangalees started to be involved in theatrical performance having been inspired and influenced presumably by the performance of Baishnavcharan Auddy. The Bangalees began to attempt performances of plays both in Bengali and English at their self-devised stages - a feature that will be examined at a later stage of this paper.

2.2 ENGLISH THEATERS AND ITS IMITATORS AND FOLLOWERS :

When the theatre was enjoying a high rating by the public, the Bangalees were interested in learning English in Calcutta to become bhadraloks (literally, a gentleman, educated class) and carry out an Indo-English relationship in India.²⁰ The establishment of the Hindu College on January 20 of 1817 paved the way for ushering in a new era in which English school and college students and sub-sequently, Bengali students increasingly got involved in dramatic performances of

Shakespearean literature. H.H. Wilson and D.L. Richardson, two Englishmen who were associated with dramatic activities in Calcutta became professors at the Hindu College. However, even before these two Englishmen came to Hindu College, some Calcutta schoolboys had already made their debut in the amateur stage.²¹

The first report received from the college campus about Shakespeare's dramas is associated with the name of Henry Derozio. In 1822, Derozio, then only thirteen, was a student of Drummond's Dharomtolla Academy.²² It is interesting to note that two years later, on the occasion of another dramatic performance at this school (January 20, 1824), Derozio recited a poem of his own which included the following lines :

No mighty Kemble here stalks o'er the stage
No Siddons all your feelings to engage,
But a small band of your aspirant boys
In faintest miniature the hour employs.

Thus it appears that even as far back as 1824, Calcutta schoolboys were aware of Kemble and Siddons.²³ A few years later, Derozio wrote a couple of sonnets on Shakespearean subjects on Romeo and Juliet and read the plays with his students in the Hindu College where he had joined as a teacher.

On January 27, 1827, selected scenes from Julius Caesar were staged at a college function in which Kashiprasad Ghosh

participated.²⁴ Next year, the trial scene of The Merchant of Venice was enacted by the Hindu College boys on January 12, 1828, in the Government House; the cast was : The Duke - Krishnahari Nandi, Shylock - Kashiprasad Ghosh, Antonio -Atul Chandra Ganguli, Bassanio - Harishchandra Das, Gratiano - Ramchandra Mitra, Salarino - Kali Kumar Bose, Portia - Krishnadhan Mitra, Nerissa - Harihar Mukherjee.²⁵ In 1828, on a similar occasion on February 27, the students of the school society recited portions of Henry V. Madhusudan Sen and Hurry Mohan Mullick gave a playreading of the dialogue between Henry and the Lord Chief Justice.²⁶ In 1829, the students of the Hindu College organised a number of recitations from several plays (Julius Caesar, Macbeth, Troilus and Cressida, Cymbeline, Henry VI, Hamlet) at the Government House on February 18. Notable among the reciters were the following who became distinguished citizens in later life : Krishna Mohan Bannerjee (Horatio), Ramtonoo Lahiri (Brutus), Radhanath Sikder (Guiderius), Digambar Mitra (Cassius), Mohesh Chandra Singh (Ross), Dakhina Ranjan Mukherjee (Macduff).²⁷

In 1830, the boys of the school society, staged a scene from Julius Caesar at their annual function on March 13, 1830 at Gopimohan Deb's house at Shobha Bazar. The participants were : Ganganarayan Chandra (Octavius), Woomachurun Bose (Antony), Madhusudan Pramanick (Brutus), Balaram Sen (Cassius). Their performance was better in many respects than that of the Hindu College boys, but the next year, the latter revived their

prestige with an enactment of Act III, Scene i of The Merchant of Venice on February 12 at the town hall. The cast was : Kailash Chandra Dutta (Shylock), Ramgopal Ghosh (Tubal), Taraknath Ghosh (Salanio), Bhubun Mohan Mitra (Salarino).²⁸

The year 1831 is significant in the history of Shakespeare performance in Bengal in as much as a theatre troupe, specially to stage Shakespeare's plays, was formed by Prasanna Kumar Tagore. The troupe staged Julius Caesar on January 7, 1832.²⁹ In 1833, some scenes from Two Gentlemen of Verona and Othello were staged. One of the actors was Ramtonoo Lahiri. In 1834, Madhusudan Dutta (a boy of ten at that time) played the Duke of Gloucester in Henry IV and the trial scene of Part II was enacted again in 1837. Performances for 1838 included the soliloquies of Henry V, Richard III and Hamlet recited by Shyamcharan Basu. This was a development we will have look at closely at a later point in this chapter.

From this period onwards, stage performances of plays or selected scenes as a part of collegiate education began to decline.³⁰

In 1840, Messrs Geoffrey and Ritchie of Oriental Seminary coached their boys in Julius Caesar but the play was not actually staged; some members of this team along with several students of the Metropolitan Academy staged it twelve years later (1852) under the guidance of an Englishman named Clinger.³¹

It should be noted here that in addition to the performance of Shakespearean plays, Calcutta theatre had the distinction of staging plays of such well known English playwrights as Massinger, Otway, Congreve, Farquhar, Nicholas Rowe, Sheridan and others.³² From 1800 to 1850, we get evidence of performance of many English plays, but the names of playwrights had not been mentioned at many places. Examples include The Earl of Essex (1812), Castle Spectre, Sixtythird Letter (1813), Sheridan's The School of Scandal (1826) etc.³³ Other titles of plays performed during this time include Each for Himself, The Lying Valet, The Young Widow, My Landlady's Gown, Three Weeks After Marriage, The Sleeping Draught, Rising the Wind.³⁴ Mention should be made here of a performance of Moliere's The Tits of Scrapes in 1808.

The dramatic performances of Shakespeare in the first half of the nineteenth century are linked naturally with the rise in numbers of theatre audiences in Calcutta at that time and with the creation of playhouses of both amateur and commercial varieties. The best among the English theatres in Calcutta, broadly speaking, between the last quarter of the eighteenth century and the middle of the nineteenth century were The New Playhouse or Calcutta Theatre (1775), Mrs. Bristow's Private Theatre (1789), Wheler Place Theater (1779), The Chandannagar Theatre (1808), The Atheneum Theatre (1812), The Chowtinghee Theatre (1813-39), The Dum Dum Theatre (1817), The Boitaconnah Theatre (1824) and Sans Souci Theatre (1839-49).³⁵ The founder of the first Calcutta playhouse, The New Playhouse or Calcutta

Theatre, was George Williamson, an auctioneer, popularly known as Vendumaster. It was situated at the northeast corner of Lyons Range, behind Writers' Building in the area now known as the new China Bazar. The New Playhouse was a well equipped theatre very neatly furnished with props, back-stage facilities and decoration. The artistes were all amateurs and female roles were enacted by men, as women were still not permitted to appear on stage.³⁶ Mrs. Bristow's Theatre was started by her at her Chowringhee residence in 1789. It was not merely an apartment in a house temporarily filled up for a single representation, but a distinct edifice completely furnished with every usual convenience and decorated with every ornament customary in familiar places of exhibition - in short, a perfect theatre differing only from a public one in its dimensions.³⁷ Edward Wheler, a member of Warren Hastings' Council, opened the Wheler Place Theatre in 1797. It was popularly known for its farcical plays though it was short-lived.³⁸ The Chandannagar Theatre (1808) was located at Kidderpore. It was another short-lived theatre which provided entertainment for the English people only.³⁹

Other playhouses continued to be set up from the very first decades of the nineteenth century. In 1812 Atheneum Theatre was set up at 18, Circular Road. In spite of grand publicity, performances in it were poor. Failing to attract a sufficient audience, the Atheneum withdrew from the theatrical scene within two years. It was situated at an aristocratic area, so high

Government officials often used to visit this theatre. Though it was not a professional theatre-house, nobody could enter without ticket or card.⁴⁰ Chowringhe Theatre (1813-39) was situated at the crossing of Chowringhee Road and Theatre Road (now Shakespeare Sarani). It had a galaxy of stars and exerted a direct influence on the elite of the town who were usually invited to witness the performances. Chowringhee Theatre was also known as a private subscription theatre. All the subscribers got their share of theatre through subscription. All the male artistes were amateur but actresses were paid and they lived within the premises of the playhouse. It was said that although housed in an unimpressive looking building, Chowringhee Theatre captivated its audience right on the opening night by its competent production.⁴¹

In those days, most of the performances were held in the Chowringhee Dharamtolla area. The short-lived playhouses were situated in that area. A market of the locality came to be known as Shakespeare Bazar. It continued till the closing years of the eighteenth century. Though the market catered primarily to the members of the company and some theatre lovers, it also represented a significant way of performing Shakespeare at the beginning of the nineteenth century in Calcutta.⁴²

Dum Dum Theatre, a neat playhouse that was set up in the cantonment area in 1817, was meant mostly for the entertainment of the soldiers. It was founded and operated by men in the army

and the cast was also drawn from among army personnel. Wives of high ranking officers participated in the plays along with their husbands.⁴³ A few professional actresses were also brought to this stage. Towards the end of its brief career, some actresses of the Dum Dum Theatre transferred their allegiance to a new theatre that was coming up - the Boitaconnah Theatre. On May 24, 1824, Boitaconnah Theatre opened with Mrs. Francis, Mrs. Cohen and a few others who had left Dum Dum Theatre. It was situated near Bow Bazar. It simply maintained the tradition of dramatic representation after European models and provided entertainment for the English people only.⁴⁴ It is heard that a playhouse for staging Shakespeare plays in Calcutta, however, was set up in an improvised theatre at the Esplanade by the uncrowned stage queen of the city, Mrs. Esther Leach who succeeded in organising the famous Sans Souci. Sans Souci was originally located at the crossing of Waterloo Street and Government Place East, the site where Ezra Building now stands. It was inaugurated on August 21, 1839, the year in which Chowringhee Theatre was gutted in a fire. This playhouse was also non-professional but production cost of the play was borne by push selling of tickets. Sometimes entrepreneurs also contributed by giving subscription which helped it to continue for a period.⁴⁵ This theatre earned a solid reputation in a short time. Talented actors and actresses from England who were also experts in acting of Shakespeare's plays came over to Calcutta to join this Company. The Sans Souci continued its Shakespeare performances upto May 20, 1849. The description of

Sans Souci reminds one of a typical stage of eighteenth century England. Plays of Shakespeare were the main source of inspiration to the company. When Sans Souci was opened, its vice president Hume expressed his gratitude towards Shakespeare in these words :

To what or to whom honour
could be rendered next
More appropriately than to him
Who was closely associated in
the mind of every Englishman
with the Drama - him, who
was not only the greatest
dramatist, but the greatest
poet of the world - one,
in whom was combined
the wit of the wittiest, the
pathos of the most pathetic,
in whose writing universal nature
was reflected, and who had
drawn in every mood⁴⁶

Even toasts were offered, first in the names of king and queen, then to the great poet Shakespeare. As Sans Souci specialised in Shakespearean performance, it also influenced enthusiastic Bangalees to join them for performance in English plays, specially those by Shakespeare. Here the performance of

Baishnab Charan Addya (a Bengali young man) in the role of Othello in 1848 remains a landmark in the stage history of Sans Souci as well as in the stage history of Bengal.⁴⁷

Thus it can be seen that in the seventy years or so between the last quarter of the eighteenth century and the first half of nineteenth century, there was a strong growth of theatrical interest among the population of Calcutta and that is reflected in both the numerous and manifold dramatic activities that took place as well as in the establishment of no less than nine major playhouses in the city of mixed commercial and amateur varieties, catering to both Englishmen and Bangalees. All these activities say that this was a Shakespearean contribution to the beginning of Bengali drama and theatre.

2.3 EARLY TRANSLATIONS :

The demand for new methods of entertainment must have called forth the creative activity of the writers to adapt themselves to the English form, or rather the western model. Many poems were called Natak (drama) in those days, but they were so only in name. Prem Natak by Panchanan Bannerjee of Shyampukur, Probodh - Chandrodoy Natak by Gangadhar Vidyaratna, and other works like these were poems in fact and should never mislead even the careless reader into believing that they were prototypes of the modern drama.⁴⁸

So far we find, young Bengalee actors were trained in western methods, but suitable plays composed in the vernacular were not yet forthcoming. As there was hardly any Bengali translation of Shakespeare in this period, some Bengalee scholars tried to translate some plays of Shakespeare. In addition to Bengalee scholars, it is found from the records of Fort William College that Shakespeare's The Tempest had been translated into Bengali by a student named Claude Monkton of the College in 1805, but no copy of this work has been found or described anywhere as yet.⁴⁹ After forty-three years of this translation, the first translation of a Shakespearean work attempted by a Bengalee was Romeo and Juliet from Lamb's Tales from Shakespeare rendered into Bengali prose form in 1848, by Gurudas Hazra. Another translator Muktaram Bidyabagish, who was also a Sanskrit scholar translated some more Shakespearean tales from Lamb's Tales from Shakespeare with the title of Opurba Upakhyan at about the same time.⁵⁰ That these early translators chose to base themselves on simplified children's version of Shakespeare's text rather than the original version merely testifies to the caution and seriousness with which the Bengalee writers approached the difficult task of converting the profound works of the great genius into the rhythms and accents of their own cultural lives. Yet, Moliere's Love Is The Best Doctor, and a portion of The Disguise by Mr. Joddrell were translated into Bengali in 1795 and 1796 respectively. This spate translation activity reflected a cosmopolitan attitude of the educated and elite classes of the time. As education has a distinctly humanistic

bias, and classics became the models on which this was based, translations of not only English plays but Sanskrit plays as well became a favourite activity among the educated class. Thus a number of old Sanskrit plays were translated, keeping in mind the needs of the Bengali Stage. Among these were : Krishnamisra Hasyarna's Probodh Chandrodoy Natak, (1822), Kautuk Sarvasva (1828), Abhijnan Shakuntalam (1848) and Ratnavali (1849) Probodh Chandrodoy Natak (The Moon of Intellect, an allegorical drama) was first translated into English in 1812 and then into Bengali which was published under the title of Attatatto Kowmudi in 1822. 51

END NOTES :

1. Pallabsen Gupta, et al. "Shakespeare in Calcutta Theatres"
Calcutta Essays on Shakespeare Ed. Amalendu Bose,
(Calcutta, Abinash Press, 1966), p. 196.
2. Gupta, p. 197
3. Brajendranath B, Bangiyō Natyasalar Itihaas, 1933 rpt.
(Calcutta : Bangobani Printers, 1979) p. 25; also see Pulin
Das, Bango Rango Mancho O Bangla Natak 1795-1920, Vol. i,
(Calcutta: Siri Guru Printing Works, 1983), pp. 13-14.
4. Sushil Kumar Mukherjee, The Story of the Calcutta Theatres,
1753 - 1980, (Calcutta : Nabajibon Press, 1982), p.13.
5. Mukherjee, p. 13.
6. Amal Mitra, The first hundred years of Shakespeare drama in
Calcutta : Hindustan Standard, Calcutta, 19th April, 1964.
Also see Gupta, p. 197. This information was provided by
Mr. Simpson, the librarian of the Royal Commonwealth
Countries, held in April, 1964, was given in "Desh",
Calcutta, 2nd May, 1964. Also in Homages to Shakespeare,
Ed. Nandagopal Sengupta, (Calcutta:Baghbazar Press, 1964).
7. Gupta, p. 197.

8. Memoirs of William Hickley, translated by Benoy Ghosh in his Sutanuti Samachar, Calcutta, 1962. Quoted by Gupta, p. 197.
9. The Calcutta Gazette, 26 November, 1788. Quoted by Gupta, pp. 197 - 208.
10. Amal Mitra, "The first hundred years of Shakespeare drama in Calcutta" : Homages to Shakespeare, Ed. Nandagopal Sengupta, (Calcutta : Baghbazar Press, 1964), p. 53.
11. Robert Macnaughten Ed. John Bull, Vol. i (Calcutta : The Hindoo Stances Press : 18 Jan. 1824); The Calcutta Gazette 1 March, 1824; John Bull, 15 Dec. 1824, mentioned in Amal Mitra, Kolkatai Bideshi Rangaloy (Exogenous Theatre in Calcutta), (Calcutta : Ramkrishana Press, 1967), pp. 223-224; also quoted by Gupta, pp. 198-199.
12. W.H. Carey. The Good Old Days of Hon'ble John Company, Vol. i, (Sinha : n.p. 1882) pp. 124-5.
13. John Bull, 7 January, 1829; quoted by Gupta, pp. 199-208.
14. The Bengal Harkara, 2 March, 1829, quoted by Gupta, pp. 199-208; also Banqla Natto Manche Shakespeare, Rabi Mitra Ed. The Darshak, Vol. 5, No. 13, 31 January, (Calcutta : Nirmal Mudran, 1965), p. 7.

15. The Bengal Harkara, 23rd February, 1832; The Statesman, 29 October, 1905. Quoted by Gupta, p. 197.
16. Amal Mitra, The first hundred years of Shakespeare drama in Calcutta, p. 54.
17. Ibid, p. 54.
18. Mukherjee, pp. 6-7. Here it may be mentioned that The Bengal Harkara published the following news under the caption, "Sans Souci Theatre - The Hindoo Othello" on August 19, 1848.

Othello, of Shakespeare's plays the latest and the best, was the great attraction on Thursday night - the player, however, but not the play. Performed by Babu Bustomchurun Addy, with Barry for his Roscius, all expectations were, of course, centred in the young aspirant for dramatic fame, who has gallantly flung down the gauntlet to the rest of the members of the native community. For in England, it is well known, the poetry of the mind has long given way to the poetry of motion, and Shakespeare, exiled from the country he honours so much, seeks an asylum on the Calcutta Boards. Right well was he hailed, and though for our part we rather prefer to ponder over the mighty workings of his transcendent genius in the study than to see him attempted on the stage Also see Amal Mitra, Kolkatai Bideshi Rangaloy (Exogenous Theatre in Calcutta), pp. 205-206.

19. Gupta, pp. 202-203.
20. Kironmoy Raha, Bengali Theatre, (Calcutta : Roopak Printers, 1978), p. 6. Idea of Indo-English relationship and partial language has been taken from this page.
21. The Calcutta Gazette, 18 July and 5 September, 1822; The India Gazette, 22 Feb. 1824 quoted by Gupta, pp. 199-200. Gupta also quotes an advertisement in a local newspaper of the period betrays the intensity of love that Calcuttans had for plays and histrionics, referring to the fact that they were prepared to buy 42 volumes of Inchbald's British Theatre or to spend Rs. 18/- to procure a set of practical illustrations of theatrical gestures of Sarah Siddons.
22. Gupta, p. 200. A local newspaper and The India Gazette wrote on 31 December, 1822 :

The English recitations from different authors were extremely meritorious and reflect great credit upon the scholars and teachers. A boy of the name Derozio gave a good conception of Shylock.

23. Sanat Kumar Mitra, Shakespeare O Banqla Natak (Shakespeare and Bengali drama), (Calcutta : Joy Guru Printing Works, 1983), p. 27. The source indicates that Kemble John Philip

(1757-1823) and Mrs. Siddons (1755-1831) were brother and sister. They were famous tragic actor and actress of Shakespeare's plays. They worked in Drury Lane Theatre in London.

24. The Calcutta Gazette, February 1, 1827. Quoted by Gupta, p. 200.
25. Gupta, p. 200. A contemporary comment on the performance went thus :

Surely then, this may be called a remarkable epoch in the history of India, seeing as we do, the native youth of Bengal Cultivating the dramatic literature of the West, and even encountering the difficulties of theatrical representations.

Also see The Calcutta Gazette, January 17, 1828.

26. The Calcutta Gazette, February 28, 1828. Quoted by Gupta, p. 200.
27. The Calcutta Gazette, February 19, 1829. Quoted by Gupta, p. 201.
28. The Calcutta Gazette, February 14, 1831. Quoted by Gupta, p. 201.

29. The Samachar Darpan tells us on January 7, 1832's issue on the continued performance of the Hindu College boys. Contemporary documents offer fairly full reports published in The Calcutta Monthly Journal, March 1833; Samachar Darpan March 12, 1834; The Calcutta Monthly Journal, March, 1834; Samachar Darpan, April 1, 1837, quoted by Sanat Mitra, pp. 28-29.
30. Gupta, p. 201.
31. Sanat Mitra, p. 29. Clinger was the Principal of English Department of Calcutta Madrasa.
32. Mukherjee, p. 2.
33. Mukherjee, pp. 3-4.
34. Mukherjee, p. 5.
35. Amal Mitra, Kolkatai Bideshi Rangaloy, pp. 7-10; also see Mukherjee, pp. 2-3.
36. Ibid, pp. 7-10.
37. Ibid, pp. 7-10.
38. Ibid, pp. 34-38.

39. P. Guha Thakurta, The Bengali Drama : Its Origin and Development, (Calcutta : Stephen Austin and Sons Limited, 1930), p. 41.
40. Sanat Mitra, pp. 15-16.
41. Mukherjee, pp. 3-4.
42. The Calcutta Monthly Journal, April, 1798, quoted by Gupta pp. 198, 208. Also see Arabindo Poddar, Amalendu Bose, Shakespeare in John Company Calcutta, Calcutta Essays on Shakespeare, (Calcutta : Abinash Press, 1966), p. 164.
43. Mukherjee, p. 5.
44. Amal Mitra, Kolkatai Bideshi Rangaloy, pp. 80-82.
45. Pulin Das, Banqo Rang Mancho O Banqla Natak (1795-1920), Vol. 1 (Bengali Theatre and Bengali Drama, 1795-1920) (Calcutta : Siri Guru Printing Works, 1983), pp. 12-13.
46. Das, p. 13.
47. Amal Mitra, p. 141.
48. P. R. Sen, Western Influence in Bengali Literature, (Calcutta : Academic Press, 1966) p. 162.

49. J. Long, A Descriptive Catalogue of Bengali Works, (Calcutta : Sanders Cones & Co., 1855), p. 823.
50. Rina Ghosh, Shakespeare Anubad O Anubad Samasya (Translations of Shakespeare's plays and problems of Translation), (Calcutta : Nipun Mudran, 1975), pp. 47-49.
51. Promode Mukhopadhyay, Bangla Anubad O Natak Samiksha (Investigation of Translated Dramas in Bengali), (Calcutta : R.K. Printers, 1984), pp. 11, 28, 30, 267.

CHAPTER III

SHAKESPEARE IN CALCUTTA THEATRE AND DRAMA (1850-72) :

TRANSLATIONS AND PERFORMANCES

- 3.1 CLASSIFICATION OF TRANSLATIONS
- 3.2 SHAKESPEAREAN TRANSLATIONS AND TRANSLATORS
- 3.3 CULTURAL TRANSLATIONS : THE FIRST TRANSLATION OF SHAKESPEARE'S PLAY INTO BENGALI
- 3.4 ROLE OF PRIVATE THEATRES AND PERFORMANCES OF SHAKESPEARE'S PLAYS ON THE STAGE (BOTH ORIGINAL AND BENGALI VERSIONS)

3.1 CLASSIFICATION OF TRANSLATIONS :

There were three kinds of translations of Shakespeare during the period from 1850 to 1872. These were :

- (i) Literal translation : Word for word.
- (ii) Adaptation : Idea for idea.
- (iii) Cultural translation : Mixture of literal translation and adaptation in terms of contemporary social, economic and political circumstances.

Before Girish Chandra Ghosh's translation of Macbeth in 1899, plays based on Shakespeare's themes and ideas were actually cultural translations. In fact, cultural translations have brought Shakespeare nearer to the reading public who are not in a position to study his works in the original. Adaptations and cultural translations were profusely done in the nineteenth century; cultural translations in particular enjoyed greater popularity. The translators changed the original titles. They introduced Indian characters, Indian settings and costumes. The social customs, religious beliefs etc. were changed to suit Indian conditions. Translators have repeatedly put forward their reasons for such changes. Their argument was that drama is an imitation, not a translation. First, owing to the native differences between English and Bengali languages, the original

loses its poetic charm in translation. Secondly, the divergences of local customs and manners, religious ideas etc., make literal translations unpleasant to the ear and hardly please the taste of Bengalee readers. The Bengali translators of Shakespeare's works have obtained located the scenes in a drama outside Bengal to create an impression in the minds of the readers that the events which would not be possible in Bengal, might be possible in some distant parts of the country with which they were not familiar. On the other hand, these writers have frequently introduced the convention of Sanskrit drama to render the works of Shakespeare. Addition of new scenes is quite common. The most interesting feature of these translations is the large number of songs interpolated in order to attract public appreciation. Even grim tragedies like Macbeth and Hamlet have quite a few songs to entertain the audiences. Translators were aware of the tastes of Bengali readers and audiences. Bengalees are fond of music and the early dramatic elements were also in song form. When indigenous song elements began to be transformed into modern dramatic trend, playwrights as well as translators unflinchingly tried to use this idea in their works. These translations have very little literary value, but they show how strongly Shakespeare influenced our playwrights and translators.

Among this category of plays, the notable ones were Hara Chandra Ghosh's Bhanumati Chittabilash, Charumukh Chittahara, Pyarilal

Mukhopadhyay's Surlata Natak, Tarini Charan Pal's Bhimsingha, Hemcharan Bandopadhyay's Nalini Basanta. Apart from these, Madhusudan Dutta's Krishna Kumari, Padmabati, Dinabandhu Mitra's Nabin Tapashini, Lilabati were transformed into original creations under the influence of various plays of Shakespeare such as King Lear, King John, Antony and Cleopatra, The Merry Wives of Windsor, Macbeth, Romeo and Juliet. Madhusudan Dutta and Dinabandhu Mitra have neither translated nor adapted the plays of Shakespeare, but at many places, similarity with the diction, tone, style, spirit, verse, form and language of the above mentioned plays of Shakespeare do not escape our notice. These similarities were often a matter of the dramatists' through classical grounding and their exploitation of a repertoire of imagery and linguistic constructs that was common to the western classical tradition. But sometimes these similarities were deliberate, showing the influence of Shakespeare at work. Their plays are original in the sense that they are written in a different language for a different audience but the similarity between the acts and scenes, the plots and the stories of those plays show a kind of distant translation characterised by the influence of Shakespearean themes and techniques. This is a maturer form and the trend established in these works is an influential idea prone to adaptation but not based on the meaning of a particular play. The adaptation of this kind of trend inspired playwrights to write modern Bengali drama of the nineteenth century.

Actually, modern Bengali drama is based on the influence of Western dramatic literature which was developed in the second half of the nineteenth century. Plays written from 1850 to 1872 were mostly translations from Sanskrit and Shakespeare's plays. Besides these, a few plays inspired by Shakespeare's themes and ideas also inspired translators to introduce a new dramatic dimension for the creation of a dramatic literature in Bengali, grasping their own traditional form, e.g. Jatra, and classical modes and rules of Sanskrit plays. It can thus be reasonably argued that almost all known and anonymous playwrights were thus directly or indirectly influenced by Sanskrit and English plays and Shakespeare, to many, was the model for their literary judgement.¹

3.2 SHAKESPEAREAN TRANSLATIONS AND TRANSLATORS :

After the failure of the Sepoy Mutiny in 1857, two important events occurred. First, on August 2, 1858, the East India Company was abolished and India was brought under the direct control of Queen Victoria. Secondly, a nationalistic feeling was generated with the emergence of an English educated Hindu middle class in Bengal. This feeling of nationalism helped to build the National Theatre in 1872.² The general sentiment of the time was that plays should be done more in an Indian way. From 1858 onward, a number of old Sanskrit plays were rediscovered and translated. New plays were written with anti-

British stances. A number of plays by Shakespeare were translated into Bengali with Indian adaptations. These variously translated and adapted plays of Shakespeare were examples of a new style of Bengali dramatic literature enriched with new ideas and technologies borrowed from the English Theatre, without losing its traditional identity.

Before the translations began, the practice of staging or play-reading of Shakespeare among students had continued. When Sans Souci was closed down in 1849, the course of Shakespeare's performance in Calcutta took a different turn. It is generally acknowledged that the year 1852 is an important landmark in the study of the western influence on Bengali drama, specially the influence of Shakespeare. In that year, a notable attempt was made to introduce a new model of play in Bengali, named Bhanumati Chittabilash.³ By this period, Bangalees interested in drama and dramaturgy had begun to pay more attention to plays in their own language than in English and Sanskrit.⁴ From 1850 to 1872, students who were active in reading and staging of Shakespeare's plays in English became interested in translating their practiced works into Bengali.

When Sanskrit plays were being translated into Bengali, Shakespeare's plays were also continuing to be rendered into Bengali. In addition Shakespeare's plays continued to be read and performed in academic circles in Calcutta. This influence

was wider than that of Sanskrit plays because the activity of Shakespeare among Bangalees began in educational institutions, not on the stage.

During this initial period, Shakespeare's plays were translated culturally, and sometimes adapted. There were few literal translations and all attempts for cultural translations and adaptations were made in order to assimilate the ideas of Shakespeare with the Bengali culture and tradition.

Bhanumati Chittabilash by Hara Chandra Ghosh in 1852 was admittedly an adaptation of The Merchant of Venice. It is learnt that it was designed as a Bengali Natak, written much after the manner of an English play. It was the first venture of the author in dramatic composition. It was begun as a literal translation. As the work progressed, it gradually became independent and original.⁵ The next play written by Hara Chandra Ghosh was also a translation. It was Charumukh Chittahara, rendered into Bengali from Romeo and Juliet and published in 1864. The same stylistic features as observed in the previous play are seen there - anka for an act, anga for a scene, for example. Slight additions and alterations have been introduced to adapt the play to the "original dress" and to suit the tastes of the classes of the country. The language was colloquial. The purpose of translating the play was for performance on the stage, not for study.⁶ The first Indian.

Civil Service (I.C.S) officer from India and second eldest brother of Rabindranath Tagore, Satyendranath Tagore wrote a play named Sushila Bir Singha in March, 1867, which was an imitation of Shakespeare's Cymbeline.⁷ In June, 1868 Cymbeline was again translated into Bengali by Chandrakali Ghose and given the name Kusum Kumari. The translation was done at the request of Shobha Bazar, a private theatrical company of Calcutta, set up by some educated Bangalees.⁸ The poet Hemchandra Bandopadhyay translated Shakespeare's The Tempest in 1868. It was evidently a trans-creation under the name Nalini Basanta.⁹ In 1870, Romeo and Juliet was again translated, this time by Radhamadhab Kar. The play was called Basanta Kumari.¹⁰ Benimadhab Ghosh translated The Comedy of Errors in 1873 and gave it the title Bhramakautuk Natak.¹¹ Then, in 1874, the playwright Haralal Roy, who was a school teacher by profession, translated Macbeth. He named it Rudrapal.¹² In the same year, Hamlet was translated by Pramathanath Basu as Amar Singha.¹³ Taraknath Mokhopadhyay translated Macbeth in 1875.¹⁴ In the same year, Tarinicharan made an Indianised version of Othello which he called Bhimsinha.¹⁵ In 1876, Madan Manjari was adapted by Biharilal Addya from Shakespeare's The Winter's Tale.¹⁶ Pyarilal Mukhopadhyay wrote an Indianised version of The Merchant of Venice under the title Suralata Natak in 1877.¹⁷ In 1878, Yogendranarayan Das Ghose wrote Ajayasingha Vilasvati Natak which was a trans-creation of Romeo and Juliet.¹⁸ In the same year, Nilratan Mukhopadhyay adapted Sarat Sasi Natak from

Shakespeare's A Midsummer Night's Dream.¹⁹ In 1885, Nagendranath Basu wrote Karnavir, an adapted drama with Indian characters following the text of Shakespeare's Macbeth.²⁰ Lalitmohan Adhikari, an advocate of Pabna, translated Hamlet in 1892.²¹ In 1893, Kaliprasanna Chatopadhyay adapted Othello.²² Hemchandra Bandopadhyay also translated Romeo and Juliet in 1895.²³ It was not a literal translation, although the translator retained the original name of the play. In the same year, Hamlet was again adapted as Hariraj by Nagendranath Chowdhury but it was made mainly for the Indian stage with an Indian background.²⁴ After Hariraj, an adaptation with Indian setting by Annadaprasad Basu's Anangaranqini in 1897, made a new addition in the history of Bengali translation and adaptation of the nineteenth century. Basu had adapted it from Shakespeare's As you Like It.²⁵

Girish Chandra Ghosh also translated Macbeth in 1899. This was the first literal translation of Shakespeare in Bengali and Girish Chandra Ghosh retained the original name of the play without any modification or change.²⁶ But he added five songs in the translation. He claimed it to be a more literal translation than those of his predecessors. Translations of Shakespearean plays into Bengali had begun long before, but they do not fall under the category of literal translations. They were cultural translations and adaptations from a literary point of view. Literal translations, that is, word for word

renderings, are always considered original translations, but from 1852 to 1897, plays followed Shakespeare's originals. However, the translations were neither literal nor word for word; they were rather poetical adaptations. They were a mixture of literal translations and adaptations in terms of contemporary social, economic and political circumstances.

3.3 CULTURAL TRANSLATIONS :

The first translation of a Shakespearean play in Bengali, Bhanumati Chittabilash is not an instance of verbal translation only, but one in which the play is recreated in terms of prevailing theatre practices and social, economic and political circumstances.

Bhanumati Chittabilash, is a cultural translation, because the play was partially adapted and recreated in terms of the cultural and social norms of the time and in keeping with economic and political circumstances. Indian culture has been followed and characters have been drawn from different parts of India. The author Hara Chandra Ghose wrote in his preface :

I took their advice and undertook to write in the shape of Bengali Natak or Drama, taking only the plot and underplot of The Merchant of Venice, with considerable additions and alterations to suit the

native taste, but at the same time, losing no opportunity to convey to my countrymen, who have no means of getting themselves acquainted with Shakespeare save through the medium of their own language, the beauty of the original author's sentiments as expressed in the best passages of the play in question.²⁷

The purpose of this translation by Hara Chandra Ghose was to suit the reader's native taste and make the Bengali readers acquainted with Shakespeare. Hara Chandra Ghose further wrote:

In presenting this piece of dramatic composition to my indulgent readers, I would observe, that at the suggestion of a European friend of native education, I had originally undertaken the translation of Shakespeare's The Merchant of Venice - a play which, though inferior in some respects to Macbeth, Hamlet, King Lear and Othello, or perhaps to the first and second parts of Henry IV, was considered the best for the purpose, for which the translation was avowedly undertaken by me. But the plan was abandoned before I had distanced the flight of Jessica, some of the learned friends having surmised that my performance was not likely to be popular, unless the mode in which it was done was altered.²⁸

Hara Chandra Ghose was neither a professional actor nor a playwright. He was born in 1817 and after a long and successful career, died on 24 November 1886. His father's name was Haladhar Ghosh. They belonged to Hooghly district and his father was the head-clerk of the Hooghly Collectorate. When he was a student of Hindu College, he took an active role in staging a number of plays of Shakespeare in English. He was a translator from his school days. He got a prize for translation of Bacon's essay "on Truth". The Government report on Education for 1840-41 and 1841-42 also lists another of his achievements:

"The Right Honourable The Earl of Auckland having offered for composition at the Hindu and Hooghly Colleges, a prize of a gold watch for the best translation in Bengali of Hume's essay "On the Dignity and Meanness of Human Nature", there appeared by the reports of the Examiners an extraordinary superiority in winner Hara Chandra Ghose (a student of the Hooghly College) in his composition, over those of all the others (which were very inferior indeed) of the Hooghly College and the Hindu College students."²⁹

John Clark was the examiner of the translated essay.³⁰ The comment he made about Harachandra's translation capabilities are important in measuring his translation of Shakespeare later in his life :

The youth has not, in some few instances, caught the exact meaning of the author, but the general character of the translation is fidelity; and some of the most difficult passages have been rendered with an accuracy and just appreciation of the beauty of the original, which is surprising. The style of the Bengali is remarkable for purity and classical excellence; the writer has knowledge of his own language which is rarely met with in young men whose time is devoted to English studies, and very great credit is due to the instructions which he has received in his own tongue.³¹

All the above comments and praises show that Hara Chandra Ghosh was a real translator. He proved himself a good translator in his early days, but he failed to prove the same worth in translating The Merchant of Venice into Bhanumati Chittabilash. He expected his translated play to be introduced as a text for study at the educational institutions. But the translation was so poor that it could not qualify itself for inclusion in the syllabus. Bhanumati Chittabilash was not translated word for word. Hara Chandra Ghosh had no idea about dramaturgy because he had no connection with the stage. He merely followed the ideas, theme and tone of the play, The Merchant of Venice and was only content with bringing out cultural translation into Bengali.

Bahnumati Chittabilash was published in 1853. The following words are written on the title page :

The play Bhanumati Chittabilash written by ex-student of Hoogly School and present Superintendent of Taxes of Maldah, Siri Horochandra Ghosh. Printed from Calcutta Purnochandroday Printing Machine, Year : 1853"

Lamb's Tales from Shakespeare was the model to the students and translators of Shakespeare into Bengali in the nineteenth century. Their purpose was to convert the works of Shakespeare into the rhythm and accents of their own cultural life. Hara Chandra Ghosh was not an exception. He put Indian names for the dramatis personae. He also changed the names of the places, and effected a different cultural transmissions of ideas, themes and points of view. His attempt was a cultural animation for easy understanding of the Bengali readers. In the translation, Bhanumati represents Portia, and Chittabilash represents Antonio. Places are Gujerat and Ujjaini which were important business centres of antiquity. Ujjaini was under the rule of Rajas (kings) and Zamindars before the rule of the English. Episodes of epic love and war were quite common during the pre-English period. Similarly, Gujerat became the obvious choice for the centre for business. The character Lakhopati hailed

from Gujerat and he represents Shylock in the translated play.

The story of The Merchant of Venice centres on the life and activities of Antonio, a merchant of Venice. Similarly the story of Bhanumati Chittabilash centres on love, marriage and other social matters. Charudutta the merchant in Bhanumati Chittabilash is not as prominent in the translated play as Antonio was in the original. Hara Chandra Ghosh meant the character of Charudutta to represent Antonio, but in an Indianised manner so that he does not draw any sympathy from the readers. Indian culture could not deepen the situation for Charudutta as the western culture did for Antonio in the original. The language used by the playwright-translator was sharp nor witty enough for providing a dramatic validity to his characters. Certain additions and alterations in the roles and dialogues of the characters might have served the taste of the Bengali readers of the period but there was no conformity with the original text of The Merchant of Venice in language, custom, culture or allusions.

Hara Chandra Ghosh also created a few additional characters like Birbar (King of Ujjaini), Bishnu Sharma (Priest), Chandrabali (Queen), Sabitri (wife of Lakhopati), Sebika (maid-servant of Sabitri), Bilash (funny wife of jester Sadananda), Sushila (attendant of Bhanumati), Ganganayak (Royal messenger of Ujjaini), Ganapati Roy (relative of Lakhopati) and Nanda Lal

(old father of Dulal the servant of Lakhopati). The merchant of Venice does not have anyone resembling them. Hara Chandra Ghosh added these characters for cultural transcreation. Unlike Portia, Bhanumati cannot lead a single life without parents in Indian society, so the characters of the King and Queen were required. The character of the priest Bishnu Sharma has also been created to conduct the marriage ceremony of Bhanumati : Hindu custom needs a priest to officiate in marriages. Lakhopati represents Shylock but he is not portrayed as so cruel and heartless a character as the Shylock of Shakespeare. The translator created the role of Lakhopati's wife to portray his indifference to family life and family values. This indifferent attitude towards wife and daughter is meant to explain his cruelty towards Charudutta, the merchant of Gujerat. He acted like Shylock but his conflict was not the same as in The Merchant of Venice because Shylock was a Jew and Antonio a Christian, both of them living in a Christian society whereas in Bhanumati Chittabilash, both Lakhopati and Charudutta belonged to the same community in which they lived. Their differences were caused by business rivalry as both were depicted as merchants. It was business rivalry that motivated Lakhopati to humiliate Charudutta publicly. The maid servant of Lakhopati's wife has been created to depict the feudal attitude of Indian society of the period. The wealthier classes in Indian culture preferred to appoint maid servants for their wives and daughters. Two or three attendants or ladies in waiting served

at a time in some families. Sushila, the attendant of Bhanumati became an additional attendant with Sulochana. But there is only one waiting maid Nerissa in The Merchant of Venice.

Hara Chandra Ghosh followed the Shakespearean model of five acts and named them 'Anka' (Act) and 'Anga' (Scene). The beginning of his work is full of images of romantic beauty attained by classic allusions. Prayer to Saraswati (Goddess of Knowledge) and a dance sequence written in Payar (a metrical system of Bengali poetry in which each line consists of fourteen letters or syllables) form the exposition of the play. "Swayambara Sabha" is an assembly where the bride-to-be chooses her groom herself from amongst a number of invited suitors. In ancient India - till as late as the eleventh century - this system was quite usual in royal families. Hara Chandra Ghosh describes the function of the Swayambara Sabha in an indigenous manner. He uses the tune of Bengali "Punthi" (a traditional form of rhymed tale still extant) to describe the function. He also uses both prose and verse in colloquial language. He was inspired by the Bengali poet Bharat Chandra of the eighteenth century. Allusions from the Indian epic Mahabharata have been used. The character of Shurpanakha (sister of Ravana the villain of another Indian epic - The Ramayana) has been referred to in the translation to compare the feeling of winning the favours of Shurpanakha and Bhanumati. Bhanumati desired Chittabilash and Shurpanakha desired Lakshmana (brother of Rama the hero of

Ramayana). The dominant tone of Mrischakatik, a Sanskrit drama is found in the tones of many characters like Sushila and Sulochana, attendants of Bhanumati. Dialogues used in Bhanumati Chittabilash are in the style of Jatra, of which melodrama is the main characteristic. Early translations as well as early original Bengali plays were usually melodramatic and they had a close resemblance to the Jatra form. Being a vegetarian or a non-vegetarian differentiates the characters of Charudutta and Lakhopati. Charudutta was a vegetarian and Lakhopati was a non-vegetarian. This social differentiation in Indian society was meant to highlight, as it still does, the character of a person. A vegetarian was supposed to be more humane, kind and soft-hearted than a non-vegetarian. In keeping with this character difference, Lakhopati, a non-vegetarian is portrayed as a cruel person, and Charudutta as a mild-mannered person. Reference of Sree Krishna and his mother Menoka and Kumbhakarna (brother of Ravana) are used by the translator as analogies. Lakhopati rebukes his servant Dulal for sleeping during conversation and he compares his sleep with the sleep of Kumbhakarna. Harachandra thus makes his setting thoroughly Indianised by including mythological allusions which the audience could easily identify.

Use of onomatopoeic words is often noticed in the translation and the colloquial language of Hooghly district has penetrated much in the writing. Dr. Sirajul Islam Chowdhury has commented:

"Influence of Jatra in Bhanumati Chittabilash is significant for use of music. The role of Horochandra Ghose as a playwright was historical and memorable and it was a weak attempt in translating Shakespeare's play in Bengali".³² Dr. Sukumar Sen has remarked: "The play Bhanumati Chittabilash was a failure in satisfying the readers. It was not a successful attempt".³³ Dr. Sushil Kumar Dey also said : "The playwright has no experience about human characters so he could not correctly depict life. Characters were not lively and the language was not elegant. Poetic power was not strong and it also had no spontaneity in writing prose".³⁴ Hara Chandra Ghosh had limitations and he had acknowledged the fact in his preface. He had no desire to translate the play word for word. He tried to suit the Bengali taste and tried to Indianise the characters and places. He realised the wide cultural gap between the Venice of the sixteenth century and Bengal of the nineteenth century and for that reason, chose the path of cultural translation. He felt that the taste of the society could not be overlooked. He was influenced by the contemporary social, economic and political circumstances. References to Indian culture, myth and classical allusions have made the Shakespearean play come close to the Bengali readers. It was a kind of assimilation in which Shakespeare's characters could be made to suit the Indian social atmosphere. Alterations and additions were made in many places, but they did not change the original story of The Merchant of

Venice. Hara Chandra Ghosh was the first translator of a western play into Bengali after Herasim Labedev and credit also goes to him for translating the first Shakespearean play into Bengali.

3.4 ROLE OF PRIVATE THEATRES AND PERFORMANCE OF SHAKESPEAREAN PLAYS ON THE STAGE (BOTH ORIGINAL AND BENGALI VERSIONS) :

When Shakespearean plays began to be translated into Bengali, they were also being performed in the original language on different stages in Calcutta. These stages were founded by rich men of Calcutta, and their patronage inaugurated the age of private theatres in Bengal. From 1850 to 1872, a number of private theatres were set up and patrons were interested in continuing the practice of staging plays according to the rules of Sanskrit dramaturgy.³⁵ At the beginning of private theatres, translated Sanskrit plays were predominant. Of such theatres, Oriental Theatre (1853-57), Jorasanko Natyashala (1854), Belgachia Theatre (1859-72), Shobha Bazar Theatre (1865-67), Jorasanko Theatre (1865-67), Bowbazar Theatre (1868) and Baghbazar Theatre (1868-72) deserve special attention.³⁶

ORIENTAL THEATRE : (1853 - 57).

Oriental Theatre was not an aristocratic theatre set up in a residential house. Its performances were open to the public

against the sale of tickets. A few Shakespearean plays were staged at this theatre. An advertisement in "The Citizen" (2 March, 1854) makes this clear:

The Oriental Theatre, No. 268, Gurranhatta, Chitpore Road, The Merchant of Venice will be performed at the above theatre on Thursday, the 2nd March, 1854, By Hindu Amateurs. Doors open at 8 P.M. Performance to commence at 8:30 P.M.

Besides this, the boys of David Hare Academy staged The Merchant of Venice on 16th and 24th February, 1853 and Othello on 26th of September, 1853. The performance was repeated on 5 October. Among the other plays performed was HenryIV (15 February, 1855). The Hindu Patriot (21 February, 1855) regretted that the play could not generate public enthusiasm and advised the staging of Bengali plays.

JORASANKO NATYASHALA : (1854).

The Theatre was set up by Pyari Mohan Bose and was situated at his Jorasanko residence (Baranasi Ghose Street). Julius Caesar in English was staged on 3 May, 1854. There was a gathering of four hundred people including Englishmen and ladies. The Samvad Prabhakar (May 5, 1854) appealed for reduction of price of admission to witness such theatrical shows. This makes it clear

that Jorasanko Natyashala was not strictly a private theatre housed in a residence. The Hindu Patriot (11 May, 1854) appealed to this theatre to stage plays in Bengali for the Bengali audience.

No other theatre staged Shakespearean plays except the two above mentioned theatres. The premises of these playhouses were chosen near the holiday homes known in Bengali as Bagan Bari (literally "Garden house") of the patrons. Aristocrats were the usual playgoers. Elites of the society, both English and Bengalee, high officials and zamindars were invited at these private theatres. Money was spent lavishly. Sometime tickets were sold, but that was very much restricted to that class. Patrons used to invite playwrights and dictated to them to write plays according to their choice. It is true that the private theatres paved the way for staging of Bengali plays in Calcutta. Translated plays also appeared in those theatres at that time, but their number is insignificant.

After the closure of the Sans Souci in 1849, the staging of Julius Caesar in 1852 under the guidance of Mr. Clinger introduced Shakespeare afresh among the students. The students of the David Hare Academy twice staged The Merchant of Venice (16th and 24th February 1853) under Mr. Clinger's guidance.³⁷ In the same year, the old and new students of the Oriental Seminary twice staged Othello (on 26 September and 5 October).

Mr. Roberts, formerly of the Sans Souci, Mr. Parker and Miss Ellis, both formerly of the Chowringhee Theatre, trained the boys under the general supervision of Mr. Clinger. The venue of these shows was 268, Chitpore Road and the principal actors were : Dinanath Ghosh (Othello), Priyanath Dutt (Iago), Khagendranath Mullick (Brabantio), Raj Rajendra Mitra (Desdemona) and Radhaprasad Basak (Emilla).³⁸ The same group from the Oriental Seminary twice staged The Merchant of Venice in 1854 (on March 2 and 17). Priyanath Dutta's Shylock and Radhaprasad Mitra's Portia were particularly praised by the playgoers.³⁹ An English lady, Mrs. Grigg, participated in the second show as Portia.⁴⁰ In 1855, this group staged Henry IV on 15th February with Keshab Chandra Ganguly as Henry, Priyanath Dutta as Falstaff, and Nrityalal Roy as Hotspur.⁴¹ In 1857, it is seen from another report that these groups made further venture into Shakespeare but unfortunately the details are not available.⁴²

Besides these academic Shakespeareans, other groups too undertook to stage Shakespeare. Peary Mohan Basu of Jorasanko arranged a production of Julius Caesar at his residence on 3 May, 1854. The most notable among the actors was Brajanath Basu. More than four hundred aristocrats of the city were present to see the play and on that very day there was a heavy thunder-shower at night.⁴³ The following cast : Caesar (Mohendranath Basu), Brutus (Krishnadhan Dutta), Caassius (Jadunath Chatterjee) made the play successful. The

contemporary press was so loud in praise of this production that there was a repeat performance.⁴⁴ By this time, Shakespeare had also been staged once in a village. An instance of this popularity is found in the report of a performance of Hamlet in the village of Gouribha in Hooghly district, sometime in March, 1857, at the residence of Keshab Chandra Sen, the distinguished social and religious reformer. The cast was as follows : Hamlet (Keshab Chandra), Claudius (Mahendranath Sen), Polonius (Bholanath Chakravarty), Ophelia (Narendranath Sen) and Keshab Chandra designed the costumes and sets.⁴⁵

Another notable performance was held in 1870 at Krishnanagar where the Sahitya Parishad, an association of the old and new students of the town, arranged a show of The Merchant of Venice.⁴⁶

After 1872, however, translated Shakespeare's plays began to appear in public theatres and did not remain confined within private stages.

The impact of Shakespeare's plays helped translators to transform Shakespearean theme and idea into Bengali and a good number of transformed works in Bengali appeared in the mid-nineteenth century, both on the stage and in literature. Performance of tragic plays of Shakespeare at residential theatres was a great prohibition. Women of the house thought it

a curse in disguise and patrons could not go against the whims of their ladies.⁴⁷ In this, Hindu conservatism played an important role. The conservatives could not accept the marriage between Hamlet's mother and his uncle because Hindu religion prohibits such a marriage. However, translated Shakespearean plays had an insignificant effect on the stage of private theatres. Translated plays of Shakespeare in Bengali were considered merely literary works till the birth of Public Theatre in 1872. The educated middle class preferred tragedies but they had no access to those private theatres. Patrons of private theatres, who liked Shakespeare's plays, had to limit their choice to comedies like The Merchant of Venice or The Comedy of Errors due to social and religious taboos.

These two private theatres where Shakespeare had been staged in the original language were built not by the rising class of English educated "bhadralok", in residential houses. These were open to the public and initiative was taken by students and ex-students of the Seminary who raised a sum of Rs. 800/- for staging Shakespeare's plays. The pioneers included Priyanath Dutta, Dinanath Ghosh, Sitaram Ghosh, Keshab Chandra Ganguly and others all elites of the society. Two things are to be noticed in this connection : first, it was not an aristocratic theatres in residential houses like Prasanna Kumar Tagore's Hindu Theatre or Nabin Chandra Basu's Shyambazar Theatre. Secondly, the performances were open to the public against the sale of

tickets.⁴⁸ In short, these two so called private theatres were not strictly speaking private theatres though housed in private residences.

An interesting feature of the theatrical performance of the nineteenth century was that the audience was mixed. Many European gentlemen were invited to witness the performances and the band from Fort William served as the orchestra. The implication of these two factors should be properly understood; for one, they sought to impart a new tone called the Eastern atmosphere, and secondly, the novelty of the music and the need for explaining the play to the Europeans and make them interested about its significance and influence in the art of those who had originated the shows.⁴⁹ Looked at from another angle, the plays of Shakespeare, either in the original or in Bengali versions, though discouraged by the patrons and playwrights of private theatres, were able to influence them deeply in regard to their practice.

The practice of staging, play-reading, imitating and translating Shakespeare's plays either in English or in Bengali from the beginning of Calcutta Theatre in 1780 continued till the staging of Girish Ghosh's translation of Macbeth in 1899. When translated versions of Sanskrit plays in Bengali began to be staged at private theatres, Shakespeare's plays were simultaneously being adapted and transformed in Bengali. It.

shows that Shakespeare's influence was extensive for the growth and development of dramatic literature in Bengali.

When original Bengali plays began to be staged on the professional stage by Bengalees, Shakespeare was seldom produced on those stages; instead, plays closely modelled on his were put on the boards. Thus Rudrapal (Macbeth) by Haralal Roy was produced at the Great National Theatre on 31st October, 1874⁵⁰, Kusum Kumari, a translation of Cymbeline by Chandrakali Ghosh was staged at the old National Theatre. The same play was also staged at the Great National Theatre on April 25, 1874.⁵¹ In the next year, the Bengal Theatre produced Bhim Singha on 27 February which was a Bengali version of Othello made by Tarini Pal.⁵² During the last week of April, 1889, a band of distinguished Indian ladies and gentlemen staged The Comedy of Errors (in Bengali translation) at the Corinthian Theatre.⁵³ The next noteworthy occasion was the performance of Hariraj (Hamlet) by Nagendranath Chowdhury, at the Classic Theatre on 21 June, 1897. The cast was as follows : Hariraj (Amarendra Dutta), Jayakar (Mantu Basu), Dadimukh (Bholanath Das) Kaladhvaj (Koshta Behari Chakravarty), Srilekha (Rani), Queen Aruna (Tarasundari).⁵⁴ Previous to this occasion, a few performances of this play were organised by the Victoria Club, in which a few members of this group participated under the directorship of Chandra Kumar Sen. Among these productions, the most remarkable Shakespeare production of the professional theatre was Girish

Chandra Ghosh's translation of Macbeth in 1899, and with this production of Shakespeare at the Minerva Theatre, the practice of staging culturally translated, adapted and transformed Shakespearean plays in Bengali on the professional stage came to a close. It is seen that the historical outlines of Shakespeare productions in the original English as well as in Bengali translations, adaptations, cultural translations and transformations in the Calcutta theatre continued to decline by the end of the century. The reason for this decline may be that anti-British attitudes brought certain changes in public taste which did not accord well with the old taste for Shakespeare. Again, the Bengali drama of the nineteenth century had to bear a new burden and convey new values. Another reason may be that theatre entrepreneurs ignored Shakespeare because they loved him too well and they did not want to distort his inimitable language in Bengali translations or adaptations.⁵⁵

END NOTES :

1. Promode Mukhopadhyay, Banqla Anubad Natak Samiksha (Investigations into Translated Bengali Dramas), (Calcutta : R. K. Printers, 1983), p. 26.
2. Pulin Das, Banqla Rangamancha O Banqla Natak, 1795-1920, (Bengali Theatre and Bengali Drama, 1795-1920), (Calcutta : Siri Guru Printing Works, 1983), pp. 68-69.
3. P. R. Sen, Western Influence in Bengali Literature, (Calcutta : Academic Press, 1966), p. 162.
4. Pallab Sengupta, et al. "Shakespeare in Calcutta Theatres" Calcutta Essays on Shakespeare, Ed. Amalendu Bose, (Calcutta : Abinash Press, 1966), p. 204.
5. P. R. Sen, p. 164.
6. P. R. Sen, p. 166.
7. Satendranath Tagore, Sushila Bir Singha, (Calcutta : Natun Sanskrit Mudran Jantro, 1867). Adaptation of Cymbeline.

8. Chandrakali Ghose, Kusum Kumari, (Calcutta : Eastern Hope Mudran Jantro, 1868); also see Mukhopadhyay, p. 139. Transcreation of Cymbeline. The price of the play was one rupee.
9. Hemchandra Bhattacharya, Nalini Basanta, (Calcutta : Stanhope Mudran Jantro, 1868). A transcreation of The Tempest.
10. Radhamadhab Kar, Basanta Kumari, (Calcutta : Kar Press, 1870). Another transcreation of The Tempest. The following words were printed on the title page :

Is a picture of love and its pitiabile state/
In a world whose atmosphere is too sharp for this/
The tenderest blossom of human life.

Schlegel.
11. Benimadhab Ghose, Bhramakautuk Natak, (Calcutta : Natun Bengal Mudran Jantro, 1873). A transcreation of The Comedy of Errors. The price of the play was eight annas.
12. Haralal Roy, Rudrapal, (Calcutta : Roy Mudran Jantro, 1874). A transcreation of Macbeth.
13. Pramathanath Basu, Amar Singha, (Calcutta : Siddharta Mudran Jantro, 1874). A transcreation of Hamlet. The

title page of the book has these words :

Amar Singha, or Shakespeare's tragedy of Hamlet,
Siri Pramathanath Basu. "False face must hide
what the false heart doth know" - Macbeth.

14. Taraknath Mukhopadhyay, Macbeth, (Calcutta : North Suburban Press, 1875). A translation of Macbeth. The title page of the book reads as follows:

"Shakespeare's Dramatic Works

Macbeth

Translated by Taraknath Mukhopadhyay

Printed by Mahendranath Chakrabarty at

The North Suburban Press, Barahanagar.

15. Tarini Charan Pal, Bhim Singha, (Calcutta : People's Friend Mudran Jantro, 1875). A transcreation of Othello.
16. Biharilal Addya, Madan Manjari, (Calcutta : Wellington Press, 1876). A transcreation of The Winter's Tale. The price of the play was twelve annas.
17. Pyarilal Mukhopadhyay, Surlata Natak, (Calcutta : Bidyaratna Mudran Jantro, 1877). A transcreation of The

Merchant of Venice.

18. Jogendra Narayan Das Ghosh, Ajayasingha Bilasbati Natak, (Calcutta : Kar press, 1878). A transcreation of Romeo and Juliet.
19. Nilratan Mukhopadhyay, Sarat-Shashi Natak, (Calcutta : Arora Press, 1882). A transcreation of A Midsummer Night's Dream.
20. Nagendranath Basu, Karnabir, (Calcutta : Great Eden Press, 1885). A transcreation of Macbeth,
21. Lalitmohan Adhikari, Hamlet, (Calcutta : n.p. 1852). Translation of Hamlet.
22. Kaliprasanna Chattopadhyay, Othello, (Calcutta : Kalika Mudran Jantro, 1893). Adaptation of Othello. The price of the play was one rupee.
23. Hemchandra Bandopadhyay, Romeo and Juliet, (Calcutta : Kalika Mudran Jantro, 1895). Translation of Romeo and Juliet. The price of the play was eight annas.
24. Nagendranath Chowdhury, Hariraj, (Calcutta : Eden Press, 1895). A transcreation of Hamlet. The title page of the

book reads as follows :

I could a tale unfold, whose lightest - word
Would harrow up thy soul; freeze the young blood;
Make the two eyes like stars, start from their
spheres,
Thy knotted and combed locks to part
And each particular hair to stand on end
Like quills upon the fretful porcupine.

Hamlet, Act - I, Scene-V.

Published by Siri suresh Chandra Basu,
6, Veem Ghosh Lane, Calcutta.

25. Annada Prasad Basu, Anangaranqini, (Calcutta : Victoria Press, 1897). Adaptation of As you Like It. The following words were printed on the title page of the book:

Wedding is great Juno's crown
Oh, blessed bond of board and bed
'Tis hymen peoples every town
Then high wedlock be honoured
Honour, high honour and renown
To Hymen, God of every town

Shakespeare.

26. Girish Chandra Ghosh, Macbeth, (Calcutta : Great Eden Press, 1899). A literal translation of Macbeth. The price of the book was twelve annas. This play was performed in both Minerva and Classic Theatres in 1893; also see Mukhopadhyay, p. 107; About this literal translation of Girish Ghosh, a prominent Indian lawyer named P.L. Roy commented in "The Indian Nation" that : To translate the inimitable language of Shakespeare was a task of no ordinary difficulty. But Babu Girish Chandra Ghosh has performed that difficult task very creditably on the whole, and his translation is in many places quite worthy of the original.

27. Hara Chandra Ghosh, Bhanumati Chittabilash, (Calcutta : Purnochandroday Mudran Jantro, 1853). A cultural translation of The Merchant of Venice.

28. Hara Chandra Ghosh, p. 1.

29. General Report of the Late General Committee of Public Instruction for 1840-41 and 1841-42.

30. Siri Brojendranath Bandopadhyay, Nilmoni Basak, Harachandra Ghose, (Calcutta : Sanirayan Press, 1944), p. 22.

31. General Report on Public Instruction for 1839-40 and pp. 43-44.
32. Serajul Islam chowdhury, Dwitiyo Bhuban (The Second World), (Dhaka; Eden Press, 1974), pp. 33-34.
33. Sukumar Sen, History of Bengali Literature, (New Delhi: Sree Gouranga Press Private Ltd., 1960), p. 48.
34. Dr. Sushil Kumar Dey, Nana Nibandho (Harachandra Ghose and his dramatic works), (Calcutta : n.p..n.r), pp. 151-162.
35. Sen, p. 168.
36. Sushil Kumar Mukherjee, The Story of the Calcutta Theatres; 1753-1980, (Calcutta : Nabajiban Press, 1982), pp. 15-28.
37. Sambad Prabhakar, 10, 16 and 26 February, 1858, and The Bengal Harkara, 15 and 28 February, 1853; quoted by Gupta, pp. 209-203.
38. The Bengal Harkara, 26 September, 1853; The Citizen, 5 October, 1853. Quoted by Gupta, p. 209.
39. Biswakosh, ed. H. Basu, (Calcutta: n.p. 1905), Vol. 16, pp. 173-174. Quoted by Gupta, p. 209.

40. The Bengal Harkara, 16 March, 1864; quoted by Gupta, p. 209.
41. The Bengal Harkara, 22 February, 1855 and Biswakosh, Vol. 16. Quoted by Gupta, p. 209.
42. Sambad Prabhakar, 6 May, 1854; quoted by Gupta, p. 209.
43. Sanat Kumar Mitra, Shakespeare O Bangla Natak (Shakespeare and Bengali Drama), (Calcutta : Joy Guru Printing Works, 1983), p. 34.
44. The Sambad Prabhakar, 5 May, 1854. The Hindu Patriot, 11 May, 1854; quoted by Gupta, p. 209.
45. Mitra, p. 37
46. Mitra, p. 37.
47. Darsan Chowdhury, Unish Shataker Natya Bishoy (on Theatre and Drama in the Nineteenth Century), (Calcutta : Siri Hari Printers, 1985), p. 117.
48. Mukherjee, p. 17.

49. Sen, p. 170.
50. Hemendranath Gupta, Bharatiya Rangamancha (Indian Theatre), (Calcutta, n.p. 1945), pp. 28-30; quoted by Gupta, et al. p. 209; also see Mitra, p. 36.
51. Mukhopadhyay, p. 142. About the play and performance, Amrita Bazar Patrika on 15 January, 1874 advertised as follows :
- Exhibition of Chemical Operations and Magical Entertainments by Chemical Professors lately arrived from Europe.
52. Mitra, p. 36.
53. Mitra, p. 36.
54. Hemendranath Das Gupta, op. cit. p. 52; quoted by Gupta, et al, p. 209.
55. S.K. Bhattacharya, "Shakespeare and Bengali Theatre", Indian Literature, Vol VII, (Calcutta; n.p. 1964); quoted by Mukhopadhyay, p. 151.

CHAPTER IV

**SHAKESPEARE IN BENGALI PUBLIC THEATRE
(1872 - 1899)**

CHAPTER IV

4.1 a) ACTING IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY BENGALI THEATRE AND ITS INFLUENCE ON THE ACTING OF SHAKESPEARE'S TRANSLATIONS.

b) LANGUAGE IN BENGALI TRANSLATIONS OF SHAKESPEARE'S PLAYS : RUDRAPAL (CULTURAL TRANSLATION OF MACBETH, 1874), BHIM SINGH (CULTURAL TRANSLATION OF OTHELLO, 1875), KUSUM KUMARI (CULTURAL TRANSLATION OF CYMBELINE, 1974), AND MACBETH (TRANSLATION, 1899) AND BENGALI THEATRE.

4.2 THEATRICAL APPROACHES TO ACTED SHAKESPEAREAN TRANSLATIONS IN BENGALI.

4.3 POPULAR TRADITION IN ACTED PLAYS OF SHAKESPEARE IN BENGALI.

4.1 a) ACTING IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY BENGALI THEATRE AND ITS INFLUENCE ON THE ACTING OF SHAKESPEARE'S TRANSLATIONS.

b) LANGUAGE IN BENGALI TRANSLATIONS OF SHAKESPEARE'S PLAYS : RUDRAPAL (CULTURAL TRANSLATION OF MACBETH, 1874), BHIM SINGH (CULTURAL TRANSLATION OF OTHELLO, 1875), KUSUM KUMARI (CULTURAL TRANSLATION OF CYMBELINE, 1874) AND MACBETH (TRANSLATION, 1899) AND BENGALI THEATRE.

Except the translation of Girish Chandra Ghosh's Macbeth, none of the translations of Shakespeare's plays in Bengali from 1852 to 1899 were literal. Translations in Bengali of Shakespeare's plays were cultural translations. These translated plays were not suitable for stage production. When the activities of the Public Theatre began in 1872, a few Bengali translations of Shakespeare's plays likely Rudrapal (Cultural translation of Macbeth), Kusum Kumari (Cultural translation of Cymbeline), Bhim Singh (Cultural translation of Othello), Hariraj (Cultural translation and adaptation of Hamlet) and Macbeth (literal translation) were staged in the public theatres. Rudrapal was produced at the Great National Theatre on 31 October, 1874.¹ Kusum Kumari was staged at the old National Theatre as well as the Great National Theatre, on 25 April, 1874.² Bhim Singh was produced at the Bengal Theatre on 27 February, 1875.³ Macbeth was staged at the Minerva Theatre in 1899.⁴ Rudrapal (Cultural translation of Macbeth) was written by Haralal Roy. Kusum Kumari (Cultural translation of Cymbeline) was translated by Chandrakali Ghose. Tarini Pal wrote Bhim Singh (Cultural

translation of Othello) and Girish Chandra Ghosh literally translated Macbeth from the original version of Shakespeare's play. None of these translators except Girish Chandra Ghose were at all conversant with stagecraft and dramaturgy and had no idea of the technology involved in a stage production. They merely followed the idea, theme and tone of a particular play of Shakespeare. Some of them translated from the original while others based their translations on the prose versions of Shakespeare's plays by Charles Lamb. In fact, Lamb's Tales from Shakespeare was more popular with those translators than the original texts. It also happened that some of them were influenced by the existing imitated and adapted versions of Shakespeare's plays in Bengali.

Translations of Shakespeare's plays during the nineteenth century were neither successful from the literary point of view nor from the theatrical point of view. But in spite of all these flaws and limitations, five plays of Shakespeare in Bengali translation were staged at public theatres. But those performances failed to impress the spectators. Girish Ghosh was an exception because he was personally associated with the stage and theatrical performances. His sense of dramaturgy was not devoid of theatrical perception. Yet his translation of Macbeth was not a successful production on the stage. Acting methodology and language of translation were two contributory factors for the failure of translated Shakespearean plays on the stage in the nineteenth century. If these stage productions are

sufficiently analysed, other interesting features could be found, especially when they are set against the contemporary social situation in Calcutta. The Bengali setting and social mores, local customs, manners and religious ideas, and the local and traditional influences of Sanskrit drama and Jatra - all these exerted their different pulls from different directions, all at the same time. Neither the translators, nor their producers were able to produce a uniform and homogenous blend of all these contradictory pulls.

ACTING :

A dominant, and certainly widely followed concept of acting is that it is the art of changing one's personality on a stage before the audience, following the director's idea of a play. During the nineteenth century, acting was formal in nature, because playwrights and directors were interested in the literary and poetic value of the play. Their main emphasis was in recitation. Bengalees are supposed to be quite emotional, and romantic by nature. The acting procedure of Shakespeare during the Elizabethan period was considered romantic on its emphasis on displaying emotion and was akin to ceremonial acting of the earlier times. This kind of acting however, does not conform to the model that bases itself on realistic representation. Actors and actresses preferred recitation to movement. Whether professional or amateur, actors and actresses can easily perform this kind of acting while it easily appeals

to the audience. The characteristics of acting in translated plays of Shakespeare during the nineteenth century were, to say the least, mixed. There was an illusion of real life, simultaneously with the melodramatic flavour infused from the indigenous Jatra. Speech in acting was usually emotional and recitative. Translators used poetical metre, but they were quite long and different from the original versions of Shakespeare's plays. The imitative nature of the poetic metre, together with a Shakespearean as well as Indian atmosphere, and the declamatory speech of translated Shakespeare's plays in Bengali during the nineteenth century, though different from Shakespeare's original speeches, rendered an emotive, and recitative quality to the acting of Shakespeare.⁵ A good number of poetic quotations were used for recitations. Actors and actresses were very much interested in recitation, and in delivering their speeches which resulted in a clear disregard to controlled body movements. Emphasis was seldom given to the critical word in a phrase or line. A kind of musical incantative quality could be noticed in the delivery of speeches. It is interesting to note that though the spirit of the play was Shakespearean, the metrical tones of Panchali, Ramayana, Mahabharata and other indigenous tunes were taken from indigenous traditions. The nasal tone that becomes a dominant feature in delivering any emotional speeches bedevilled speech deliveries. The performers preferred speak through recitations. This was, of course, an old and traditional custom. And that kind of acting, in fact was not contrary to contemporary taste.

Actors and actresses could keep the spectator spell-bound by changing the tone and accent making slight modulations according to their abilities. There existed no facility for the training of actors during the nineteenth century. Before the time of Girish Chandra Ghosh actresses were rarely available. More often than not, boys used to play female roles. One or two actresses were found on the stage, but they were not cultured enough to understand the message of the play and their role in it and convey the play's feelings to the audience. Their acting, therefore, lacked discipline and their speech pattern was colloquial. A kind of rhythmic accent was widely used by the actresses which the audiences did not much appreciate. Performers were more interested in showing themselves before the audiences. They moved round the stage and delivered their speeches. The openness of the stage contributed to the loudness of their voice. In delivering the dialogue, the artistes deliberately modulated their voices to keep the audience in a constant state of excitement.⁶ Two interesting elements were found in acting during the nineteenth century which were universally followed by the performers of these translated plays of Shakespeare in Bengali during that period. They were (a) vibration of the throat or larynx and (b) gestures of the face, and of the neck and gestures in movement. Scenes and backdrops were usually painted by foreign artists. Personal belongings, rich clothes and ornaments were used in acting.⁷ Except for the one literal translation of Macbeth by Girish Chandra Ghosh, no other translated play of Shakespeare in Bengali was successful

on the Calcutta stage. And except for that one play, no particular comment was made by the reporting media about the translated plays staged in Calcutta.

Macbeth was first staged on January 28, 1893 at the Minerva Theatre.⁸ The cast of the first night performance consisted of the following persons :

Duncan	-	Haribhushan Bhattacharya
Malcolm	-	Surendranath Ghose (Dani Babu)
Macbeth	-	Girish Chandra Ghosh
Banquo	-	Kumudnath Sarkar
Macduff	-	Aghorenath Pathak
Lady Macduff	-	Promoda Sundari
Lady Macbeth	-	Tinkori Dashi
Attendant	-	Harimati
Stage Manager	-	Dharmadas Sur and his two assistants, Jaharlal Dhar and Shashibhushan Dey
Doctor	-	Ardhaundu Shekhar Mustafi. ⁹

Girish Chandra Ghosh commented about the costumes and set of the play :

I have freely availed myself of European aid in mounting and dressing the piece with strict adherence to time and place.¹⁰

Girish Chandra Ghosh appointed Mr. Willard to paint the scenes for the play and Mr. Pim was appointed for make-up. Abinash Chandra Gangopadhyay has written in his book that the acting of Macbeth tremendously developed the dramatic art of Bengal. He made particular reference to the acting of Tinkori :

It is praiseworthy that the performance of Tinkori was superb. Many well-educated actresses were frightened of the role of Lady Macbeth, but Tinkori was intrepid. She with the help of Girish Ghosh played the role with skill.

Not only Macbeth, other Bengali translations of Shakespearean plays also failed to continue their performances on the stage because the audience which consisted mainly of ordinary people could not grasp the essence of the play. The educated class liked those plays on the stage, but the quality and success of plays depend on much wider audience appreciations.

LANGUAGE :

Language was one of the factors for which translated plays of Shakespeare during the nineteenth century failed both on the stage and as literature. The dialogue is what gives a drama its character, which is entirely different from the character of any other form of literature. No matter whether written for the

stage or merely for reading, language used in plays must be the language used by the respective characters in their day to day lives, easy to grasp and natural. Even in rhetoric, the language will have to be the same kind of rhetoric used in everyday life. It is only then that the play gains popularity, whether with the reading public or with the theatre audience. But in the nineteenth century, that rule was not followed. The dialogues were formal and stilted. It was mainly for this reason that most of the Bengali translations of Shakespeare during the nineteenth century were not ever staged.

In fact, most of the translators of the day had seen the works of Shakespeare not as stage-plays but as works of literature, not for acting out on the stage, but only to be read. As a result, most of the dialogues were in the so called "pure" or literary form of Bangali, not the colloquial form used in everyday life. In his preface to his translation of Cymbeline under the title of Kusum Kumari, Chandrakali has written :

A play named Cymbeline was staged at a private theatre in Shobha Bazar. During the play, some members of the audience requested me to translate a play by Shakespeare into pure Bangla.¹¹

From this it is evident that a section of the educated classes, found it easy to appreciate the literary or pure language at least in literature and drama. Whether that language was a part

of their common, everyday use, is a different matter. The bhadraloks of the nineteenth century were, indeed, accustomed to using this language in their households.

Some of the trends noticeable in the nineteenth century translation of Shakespeare deserve to be mentioned :

- a) Use of rhyme or poetry,
- b) Ambivalence in the selection of language used in the translation,
- c) Ignorance of the structure and technique of play-writing, and
- d) use of music.

In addition to these, one also notices innovations impelled by the urge to create a novelty with the additional weakness of the most basic ignorance of stage-craft. Some innovations were caused by blind copying of the original writer's style and techniques etc.

The influence of poetical metre was prominent in Bengali drama before prose came to be the common medium of expression in literature, including drama. The infiltration of poetic mode of speech had always influenced Bengali social life. The reason might have been that metrical compositions are easy to memorize and it is for the same reason that in the early period of translations, the poetic medium was preferred. The translator might also have wished the readers to memorize the important

passages so that they could become popular. As such they had reposed a great trust in rhymed work.

In the nineteenth century translations of Shakespearean plays into Bengali, there was not only widespread use of poetry but in fact, poetry dominated the entire process. Various ungrammatical usages are, however, discernible in such translations - such as the use of both literary and colloquial languages in the same passage or even in the same sentence, non-differentiation of personal pronouns, etc. Such treatment might have appeared proper for the translation of Shakespeare, but they do not conform to the universally accepted style of dramatic poetry or poetic drama. The true form of a rhymed drama was absent in all cases. The use of rhyme by Shakespeare in his creations was an expression of genius while the translations in the nineteenth century in contrast appear mediocre. It has been repeatedly stated that the language of drama must be natural and spontaneous - the language of everyday use; otherwise, drama appears to be divorced from reality and becomes artificial. The strifes and conflicts of everyday life when reflected in stage-plays must not be clothed in an artificial medium, and conversely, such highbrow poetry cannot be used to reflect the strifes and conflicts of everyday life.

In a play in a situation where the dialogue is electrified by emotion, the use of a particular type or style of language often

goes unnoticed. But the problem in translating English plays into Bengali is intensified by the dilemma of personal pronouns. In English the second person has only one form : "you" in all cases. But in Bengali there are three forms for the second person. "Apni" (Bengali word for "you") for a superior or older person or unknown or not well acquainted person of equal or unknown status; "tumi" for equals, close friends, lovers and spouses; and the word "tui" corresponding to the French and Spanish "tu" for very intimate friends, family members and for those inferior in status. The translators were ridden with the problem of which pronoun to use for whom and in what situation. For instance, how will Desdemona address Cassio or Iago ? Will it be "apni" or "tumi" ? Although such discrepancies are not so obvious in the translations, they become so when one seeks to compare the translations with their respective originals. In addition, the use, or rather overuse in some cases, of ancient rhetorical style of language had also depreciated the literary merit of many of those translations of Shakespeare during the period under discussion.

In translating Shakespeare's plays, the translators of the nineteenth century had, while attempting to conform to local traditions and customs, religious beliefs, social mores etc., also at the same time tried to introduce styles and techniques which do not reflect any constructive ideas. On the other hand, some of their idiosyncracies such as the use of brackets () for asides also deteriorated the literary quality of the

translations. In some cases, the entire play has been imprisoned within brackets. In many cases, such widespread use of brackets merely reflect the ignorance of stage-craft among the translators. Haralal Roy's Rudrapal based on Macbeth is a case of enclosing the entire story within brackets, which is totally unnecessary.¹² The translator while characterising Rudrapal in the role of Macbeth has used such language and bracketed large portions of dialogue (or monologue) for which no reasonable excuse can be found. In addition, the use of punctuations within brackets remains questionable as to their purpose or meaning. It is not clear whether such brackets or apparently unnecessary punctuations and even quotation marks within brackets have in any manner enriched the translation. There are also several instances where, in the midst of a highly emotional situation in which highbrow language is used, some very common colloquialisms have found their way in, thus destroying whatever literary merit the passage might have had without such an unwelcome intrusion. Because of these limitations, the intention of the translator to popularise the work by the use of such colloquialisms failed to materialise.

4.2 THEATRICAL APPROACH AND POPULAR TRADITIONS :

Whether in the original Bengali drama or in translation, the use of music had always been welcome. To a Bengalee, music is a kind of religion, with all the devotion it generates. From Harachandra Ghose to Girish Chandra Ghose (1852-1899) all

playwrights and translators have made ample use of music in their works. The translator who had been most faithful to the original in the nineteenth century was Girish Chandra Ghose. A competent stage personality as well, even he was not able to go against the tide and deviate from the common practice of using music as an important ingredient in stage plays. He used five songs in his literal translation of Macbeth.¹³ One has however, to give due consideration to public taste during the latter part of the nineteenth century and make allowance for Girish Chandra Ghose for catering to public demand. But he minimized, the influence of Jatra as well as that of North Indian Classical music in his Macbeth. This influence is certainly less in this play than in any other translation.¹⁴

One of the trends that can be noticed in the stage plays of the nineteenth century, whether in the translation or in original Bengali drama, is the entry on to the stage of the heroine's girl friends with song on their lips. In Macbeth there is no scope for creating any role of such additional female characters. But Girish Chandra Ghose did not disappoint those who were fond of such characters. He disguised his "sakhis" or girl friends in the character of the witch. But these witch friends have not in any way embellished the play. They enter the stage singing a song and then depart. This totally unnecessary addition which looks more like an intrusion of witch friends into the scenes probably reflects the public taste of the time.

Other translators too, while Indianising Shakespearean plays in their translation into Bengali, have catered to the public taste by profusely using music in their versions, even though, in many instances, music seems totally extraneous to the theme or even incongruous to the mood of the play. The songs were merely introduced in tune with the public demand of the times. The popularity of a form of improvisational music, Tappa, and devotional or folk songs influenced the use of music on the stage. This trend also reflects either the ignorance of the translators about the Elizabethan stage, or their predilection to cater to the popular taste. A case in point is the use of music in Kusum Kumari of Chandrakali Ghose, based on Shakespeare's Cymbeline.¹⁵

It has also been noticed that in the use of music in Bengali translations (including literal translation, adaptation and cultural translation) of Shakespeare and in original Bengali plays, an odd and curious mixture of several schools or types of music has been used, such as age-old folk tunes, the tunes of rhymed tales or Punthis, North Indian classical music, Hindu and Muslim devotional music, etc. Sometimes even Oriya and Hindi songs were included in the plays so translated. And in many cases, attempts were made to inject an essence of European music in the songs.

In spite of the grounds that existed for the use of music on

Bengali stage, some of which have been discussed above, it is still not clear as to what the translators intended by including such songs in Shakespeare translations. There is also no evidence as the playwrights and translators did not have behind any written records whether they themselves had any idea as to what they were doing by inserting such songs.

No drama written or translated in the nineteenth century was free from practical reformation. The use of monologues and asides in both western and eastern dramatic cultures have been similar in nature, from the very earliest times. But in practical usage, quite a wide range is discernible. Some translators have been minimalists in their use of such stage techniques, employing them only where they were indispensable. But some have over-used these techniques. An examples is one when an entire scene is devoted to a monologue. It must be admitted that monologue can never be an effective substitute for action or dialogues. Some translators have attempted to reflect their own opinions by the insertion of their personal philosophies into them. The number and length of monologues were usually greater in the translations than in their respective originals. One finds no practical need for the excessive rhetorical adornments used in these translations. It is quite possible that the translators were trying to earn the readers' approbation and gain popularity by resorting to highly emotional outbursts in such monologues. Another example of practical modification was the use of gas lights on the stage,

and another was the serving of various kinds of food and drink to the audience. ¹⁶

POPULAR TRADITION :

Besides, there are quite a number of traditional and proverbial as well as mythological references found in those translated plays of Shakespeare of the period. In Kusum Kumari based on Cymbeline, a good number of comparisons with Ramchandra (Rama, the central character of the epic Ramayana) are found. Literary allusions and comparisons with the objects of day to day life have also been used in many of those translations. In the play Bhim Singha based on Othello, Bhairab (representing Iago of the original) says :

ভৈরব: বানরের গলায় মুক্তার মালা !¹⁷

(Bhim Singha, Act III, Scene i)

"A necklace of pearls on a monkey !" translated.

In the original, Bhairab's remark is taken from colloquial idiom which the audience could take very easily. In some translations, where relationships are concerned, Bengali terms have been used without regard to their universality of application. Thus the Bengali word of colloquial usage, "Khuro", meaning uncle, has been used according to Hindu custom, which is not universal for all Bangla speaking people. Swarnalata (prototype of Desdemona of Othello) has been compared

to Sita (Wife of Rama, the central character of Ramayana) in the translated play Bhim Singha.¹⁸ In Rudrapal, Cultural translation of Macbeth, Haralal used three Bhairabis (Manifestations of the Mother Goddess Durga) to portray the characters of witches. The Bhairabis are references from Hindu mythology.¹⁹ In the same play, a cloud has been compared to an Asur (demon) of Hindu myth.²⁰ And while trying to be faithful to the principal theme, the translator often made a version that reflected his own tradition and customs to such an extent that the work seemed like an original play written for a native audience. In spite of all these incongruities, however, one is bound to admit that while in most cases the nineteenth century Bengali translations of Shakespeare had ended in disappointment, examples of success are not rare. The period represented a period of transition, a period of trial and error, through which Bengali dramatic literature had to pass before it could attain a standard comparable to any other literature, because it was by means of these translations that Bengali speaking people came to know Shakespeare and modern Bengali drama came into existence.

END NOTES :

1. Hemendranath Das Gupta, Bharatiya Rangamancha (The Indian Stage), (Calcutta : New Madan Press, 1947), pp. 28-30. Quoted by Pallabsen Gupta, "Shakespeare in Calcutta Theatres", Amalendu Bose Ed. Calcutta Essays on Shakespeare, (Calcutta : Abinash Press, 1966), p. 209; also see Sanat Kumar Mitra, Shakespeare O Banga Natak (Shakespeare and Bengali Drama), (Calcutta; Joy Guru Printing Works, 1983), p. 36.
2. Promode Mukhopadhyay, Bangla Anubad Natak Samiksha (Investigations of Translated Drama in Bengali), (Calcutta : R.K. Printers, 1984), p. 142. About the play, The Amrita Bazar Patrika dated January 15, 1874, carried this advertisement :

Exhibition of Chemical operations and Magical entertainments by Chemical Professors, lately arrived from Europe.
3. Mitra, p. 36; also see B. Brojendranath, Bangiyo Natyashalar Itihaas : (1775-1876) (History of Bengali Theatre : 1775-1876), 1933, rpt. (Calcutta : Bango Bani Printers, 1979), p. 173.
4. Mukhopadhyay, p. 111.

5. Ajit Kumar Ghosh, Banqla Natyabhinayer Itihas (History of Acting in Bengali Theatre), (Calcutta : Gyanodoy Press, 1985), p. 39.
 6. Ajit Kumar Ghosh, p. 13.
 7. Ajit Kumar Ghosh, p. 24.
 8. Promode Mukhopadhyay, p. 111.
 9. Mukhopadhyay, p.111.
 10. Mukhopadhyay, p. 112.
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11. Chandrakali Ghosh, Kusum Kumari, (Calcutta : Nutan Bangla Jantra, 1872), p.1.
 12. Haralal Roy, Rudrapal Natak, (Calcutta : Roy Jantra, 1874), p. 57.
 13. Ashutosh Bhattacharya, Banqla Natya Shilper Itihas ; 1852-1900 (History of Theatrical Art in Bengali : 1852-1900), (Calcutta : Oriental Press, 1960), p. 565.
 14. Ibid, p. 568.

15. Chandrakali Ghosh, Kusum Kumari, (Calcutta : Natun Bangla Jantra, 1872), p. 23.
16. Darsan Chowdhury, Unish Shataker Natya Bishoy (Collection of Critical Essays on Drama and Stage of the nineteenth century), (Calcutta : Sirihari Printers, 1985), p. 134.
17. Tarini Charan Pal, Bhim Singh, (Calcutta : People's Friend Jantro, 1878), p. 41.
18. Ibid, p. 50.
19. Haralal Roy, p. 1.
20. Haralal Roy, p. 12.

CHAPTER V

TRANSFORMATION (1860–1899)

When the work of translation began in Bengali, original Bengali plays were also being written. Madhusudan Dutta and Dinabandhu Mitra were popular among theatre-goers and lovers of drama. But neither of them translated a single play into Bengali during that period.¹ Their original plays were popular and staged at local private and amateur playhouses which gradually wrought a revolutionary change in the art of play-writing at the time.

So the tendency for translations of Shakespeare's plays diminished comparatively. But the influence of existing translated works of Shakespeare began to inspire local playwrights to adopt an independent idea for creation of original Bengali plays. This influence shows that the new forms, styles and ideas that were being shaped, owed much to Shakespeare. Original dramatic creation in Bengali was not a sudden phenomenon; it was a gradual evolution of a sort - and a process where the imitation and adaptation of two or three plays of a particular playwright that inspired others to adopt the form, style and technique while creating original themes and plots were of great significance. This trend was already apparent in the first phase of the mid-nineteenth century Bengali drama and continued into the late nineteenth century and even to the early twentieth century.

After the emergence of Public theatre in 1872, playwriting was seen mainly as an activity related to the larger for nationalistic movement. Playwrights were more interested in

writing original plays than translations.

The Hindu renaissance of the nineteenth century negated and contradicted many of the ideas and practices of Hindu conservatism. The renaissance inspired the new generation writers and dramatists to search for nationalistic roots in the ancient and still living Sanskrit dramatic tradition. However, aspects of conservation could not be assimilated, and this contradiction inhibited them. Besides, Shakespeare's plays were culturally alien, and their translation became increasingly self-conscious of this alienness. As a result, the trend of translating Shakespearean plays did not last long. Instead, the infusion of new ideas, forms and styles helped the advancement towards original creation of Bengali plays.

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Sanskrit plays were of a bygone era; the culture and lifestyle reflected in them existed only on the level of fiction. On the other hand, Shakespearean and other European plays reflected an alien culture and lifestyle, with norms and standards far different from those that existed in India. As a result, translations, whether from Sanskrit or from Shakespeare, did not have much appeal as they did not "relate" to the existing lifestyle of the people. Even the play performed on the stage did not leave any lasting impression on the audience, except perhaps, of novelty. But the translations, whether of Sanskrit or of Shakespeare, proved useful. The form, style, structure and technique of European dramatic literature, specially

Shakespearean, were blended with the Sanskrit dramatic tradition and helped create original plays based on Bengali culture and tradition.

Admittedly, Bengali drama has been immensely helped by this influence. When the question of analysis comes for the nature of Shakespearean influence, something peculiar strikes us. It is observed that the influence, with all its magnitude, has always been on the surface. It was external in nature and never went deep. Bengali transcreations of the first phase of mid-nineteenth century clearly exhibit this lack of depth and their failure to modify the inner nature of the Bengali drama. The reason may be that the external physical world of Elizabethan England that clothed the inner world of Shakespeare was of a particular time and place which were totally alien to nineteenth century Bengali way of life.

In spite of Europe's diversity of languages, customs and practices, Shakespearean Europe had a cultural, religious, moral and ethical unity, which helped him blend the two worlds - the inner and the other - into such an artistic whole that the one refuses to be dissociated from the other. But in the case of those who attempted to transplant the Shakespearean plots on Indian soil, it was an impossible task, and destined to fail from the very start. The translations of Shakespearean plays into Bengali failed to blend the European ethos of Shakespeare with the lifestyle of nineteenth century Bengal. As a result,

these attempts ended in imitations of the appearance in isolation. As a result assimilating Shakespeare into the texture of Bengali drama became more difficult. In this respect, Rabindranath Tagore remarked that by and large, Shakespeare has been a wrong model for Bengali writers and that imitations of Shakespeare have apparently been useless. He also implied that the waste of literary energy involved in these imitations might have been avoided if the ethos of Bengal could have shaped for itself a formal structure that would give it the most natural expression.²

In addition to this, dramatists of the mid-nineteenth century who attempted to translate and transcreate Shakespeare in Bengali were only inspired and enamoured with the stories of Shakespeare's plays, but they had no idea about his stage and dramaturgy. They wanted to cater to the divergent tastes of the conservative and progressive readers at the same time, and this dilemma resulted in the adaptations and translations of Shakespeare into Bengali becoming a partial failure.

But, the criticism of Rabindranath Tagore notwithstanding, Shakespeare did influence Bengali playwriting and dramaturgy. Where wholesale adaptations, literal translations and transcreations failed, the imitation of Shakespeare's form, technique and style in the original dramatic creations in Bengali played an important role in the development of Bengali drama. The theme, the language, tone, style and technique of

Shakespearean plays invariably attracted those playwrights who attempted writing original plays in Bengali. Thus the blank verse form, the five-act structure, the spirit of individualism, Shakespearean pattern with its emphasis on the hero, became the natural and positivistic heritage of Bengali drama. The imitation and adaptation of these aspects of Shakespearean drama seem to be compatible with the context of Bengali life and literary tradition.

The song element and the use of soliloquies are also striking features of Shakespeare's that were transformed into nineteenth century Bengali dramatic literature. As the song element already existed in the early indigenous form, it easily blended with the new dramatic tradition influenced by Shakespeare. Also, like Shakespeare, playwrights who were associated with the modern Bengali dramatic literature were cognizant of stage structure and dramaturgy. And this conception helped them in their work of transforming Bengali drama into its modern form.

Michael Madhusudan Dutta, Dinabandhu Mitra, Jyotirindranath Tagore, Girish Chandra Ghosh, Dwijendralal Roy, Amritalal Bose, Khirode Prasad Bidyabinode and Rabindranath Tagore always found in the Elizabethan dramatist something worth emulating. Even their lesser contemporaries like Kalipada Bhattacharjee, Lakshminarayan Chakravarti, Umesh Chandra Gupta, Upendranath Das and Rajkrishna Roy were more or less indebted to Shakespeare.³

The first Bengali dramatist of real literary merit was Michael Madhusudan Dutta. Widely read in European literature, Madhusudan discerned the general weakness in Bengali drama as the result of the fettering influence of Sanskrit tradition. So he looked west for inspiration. Shakespeare had very little influence on Madhusudan; indirectly, however, the young man had much to learn from the Shakespeare.⁴ In Madhusudan's drama, the use of blank verse, the conception of character and tragedy, the use of the 'comic' in tragedy and the introduction of certain technical devices, were due considerably to Shakespearean influence. In Padmabati, written in 1860, Madhusudan was quite infused with Shakespearean features. For instance, the characters of Shakespeare's Goneril and Lady Macbeth seem to lie behind the conception of Madhusudan's characters Indranil and Padmabati. The motivation of Madhusudan's Sachi echoes Shakespeare's Lady Macbeth. Additionally, Bidhushak reminds one of Falstaff.⁵ In another play of Madhusudan, Krishna Kumari, written in 1861, there is a character named Dhanadas whose machiavellian intrigue and evil are very much like those of Shakespeare's Iago, although the poet himself denied any deliberate correspondence in his creation.⁶ Madhusudan always believed that no real improvement in Bengali drama could be expected until blank verse was introduced in it. He has also claimed to have wanted to create a Romantic tragedy in the play Krishna Kumari and the tragic conception here was much in the line of Shakespeare. The protagonist, Bhim Singh, marks a close resemblance to King Lear, and the language used by him is very

close to that of Lear. Bhim Singh says :

বজ্রের কি ভয়ংকর শব্দ ! এ কি প্রলয় কাল !
তা আনার মন্তকে কেন বজ্রাঘাত হউক না ?
(উর্দ্ধে অবলোকন করিয়া)
কাল আমাকে গ্রাস করো ।
হে বজ্র ! এই পাপাত্মাকে বিনষ্ট করো ।
ওহ নিশাদেবী
এই পাষণ্ডকে পৃথিবীতে আর কেন রাখো !
বিনাশ করো ।

(Krishna Kumari, Bengali, V, ii)

"What a tremendous roar of thunder !
What a doomsday !
Why not that thunderbolt strike my head ?
(Looking up to the sky)
Oh time, devour me,
Oh thunder, Destroy this degenerate soul,
Oh goddess of darkness
Why keep this villain alive in this world
Destroy him ! (Krishna Kumari, V, ii)
(In translation).

In the same manner, King Lear says :

"Vaunt couriers of oak-cleaving thunderbolts,
Singe my white head ! And thou, all-shaking thunder,
Strike flat the thick rotundity o' the world !

Crack nature's moulds; all germens spill at once
That make ingrateful man !"

(King Lear, III ii, 5-9)

When King Lear laments the death of Cordelia he says :

"Cordelia, Cordelia, stay a little".

(King Lear, V iii, 272)

In like vein, when Bhim Singh laments the death of his daughter,
Krishna Kumari, he says :

হা কৃষ্ণ ! হা কৃষ্ণ ! আমি যাই মা, আমি যাই ।

"O' Krishna ! O' Krishna ! Let me come, child, let me come." 7

(Krishna Kumari III ii)

Bullendra Sing is decidedly a counterpart of the Bastard in King John. Madanika's use of the sex-concealment device (male playing the role of female) is doubtless in the model of Shakespeare and suited to the practice of the Bengali theatre in the same manner as in Elizabethan England when boys played female roles. Further, the mixing of the 'comic' with the 'tragic' in this play is evidently a Shakespearean idea. Madhusudan believed that the most beautiful plays in the world are combinations of comedy and tragedy. Finally there is a very interesting similarity between the two so far as the conclusions are concerned. No Shakespearean play closes at the intense

tragic point. Before the final curtain, some characters, less directly connected with the tragic issues, are made to speak at least a few lines so as to restore the sense of the norm. The same purpose and method are evident in the closing words of Satyadas.

Dinabandhu Mitra was no less familiar with Shakespeare than Madhusudan. Quotations from Shakespeare are frequent in his plays. But the nature of Shakespearean influence on his drama was always external and limited very much to the surface. It was almost always confined to situations or characters or theatrical conventions or patches of dialogue here and there. The most striking example of Dinabandhu's indebtedness to Shakespeare is to be found in Nabin Taposhini. The play is virtually a clone of Shakespeare's The Merry Wives of Windsor in both action and language.

Mrs. Ford : He is too big to go in there. What shall I do ?

Falstaff : (Starting from his concealment) Let me see't, let me see't I'll in, I'll in. Follow your friend's counsel. I'll in,

Mrs. Page : What, Sir John Falstaff ? (Aside) Are these your letters, knight ?

Falstaff : (To Mrs. Page) I love thee. Help me away -
Let me creep in here. I'll never - (Goes
into the basket; they put clothes over him).

(The Merry Wives of Windsor, III iii, 134-
142)

We notice the same kind of incident in Nabin Taposhini :

- জল : মালতি আমার মাথা খাও দোর খুল না,
আমি লুকুই, দোহাই তোমার, দোহাই তোমার,
জগদম্বারে রাঁড় করোনা। মল্লি, পালংগের নীচে, যেতে পারব না ?
- মল্লি : এখন রংগের সময় নয়, আজ যদি বাঁচি
তবে রংগের অনেক সময় পাওয়া যাবে।
- মালতি : মল্লিকে ঐ কোণে ফরমাসে গামলায় কোতরা গুড় আছে,
তাইতে ডুবায়ে রাখ,
মুখ যদি ডুবাতে না পারে সেখানে
একটা মুখোশ আছে, সেইটে মুখে বেঁধে দে।
- জল : দেখি, (চিত হইয়া শয়ন করে পালংগের নীচে যাইতে চেষ্টা)
না, পেট ঢোকে না, ভুঁড়িতে বাধে।
- মল্লি : মালতি, ঐ খানটা ছেটে দে।

Jaladhar : I beseech you, Malati, do not open the door.
I will hide for your sake. Dear Mother
goddess, do not be angry ! Mallika, can't I
go under the bed ?

Mallika : Cut that joke now; If I survive this day,
There'll be lots of time to make fun.

Malati : Mallika, there's a jar in the corner -
containing molasses. Sink him in it; if the
face does not go in, take the mask and
fasten it on the face.

Jaladhar : Let me try (Lying on the floor, attempts to
go under the bed). No, the belly is too
big, it stands in the way.

Mallika : Malati, cut away that portion of it.

(Nabin Taposhini, IV, iii)

(Translated from the original Bengali Text)

The character of Jaladhar is the comic situation very similar to that of Falstaff. This incident occurs in the house of Ford in The Merry Wives of Windsor; and in Nabin Taposhini, it occurs in the bedroom of Ratikanto. Kamala Kamini, Lilabati, Shadhabar Ekadashi by Dinabandhu Mitra are other examples where the language, love scenes, motto of the play, dialogue and action remind us of Shakespeare's Macbeth, The Winter's Tale, Romeo and Juliet and Othello.

Jyotirindranath Tagore, a younger contemporary of Madhusudan and Dinabandhu, shared the nineteenth century admiration for

Shakespeare. His Punarvasanta is a feeble work on the theme of A Midsummer Night's Dream. Asrumati, however, is a mature work in the Shakespearean line where the development of theme as well as the conception of the principal characters bear the impress of Shakespeare's Othello.

Of all the names connected with the late nineteenth century Bengali stage, Girish Chandra's is the most pre-eminent. Much of his drama was marked by qualities that are unmistakably Shakespearean. His language, contrivance of situations, plots in patches, partial or total conception of many characters, use of a number of theatrical conventions, all these show how carefully Girish Chandra had studied Shakespeare. Girish Chandra's dramatic language was created after Shakespeare, specially in his use of prose as the medium for coarse and common speech. Regarding dramatic material, Girish Chandra used Shakespeare in a way similar to the use by Shakespeare of Plutarch or Cinthio or Holinshed. Sometimes he limited the entire setting, sometimes he borrowed the thematic structure and assimilated it in the garb of some national mould. As for transplantation of insulated situations from Shakespeare to his own plays, Girish Chandra seldom missed the opportunity. His characterisation was no less influenced by Shakespeare than his themes. The character of Jana reminds us of Volumnia in Coriolanus. In Shakespeare's play, Volumnia says to her daughter-in-law, Virgilia :

"Away, you fool, it more becomes a man,
Than guilt his trophy. The breasts of
Hecuba, when she did suckle Hector,
looked no lovelier
Than Hector's forehead when it split forth blood
At Grecian sword, contemning

(Coriolanus I, iii, 39-43)

In the same fashion, in Girish Chandra Ghosh's play, Jana says
to her daughter-in-law, Madan Manjuri :

এনেছি কি পুত্রবধু নীচ কুল হতে,
যুদ্ধ কার্য্য নিত্য সে ঘরে
আছে তথা অমংগল আশঙ্কা সর্বদা
কিন্তু তোর সম গুণি দূর সমীরণ ধ্বনি
রোদনের ধ্বনি অনুমানি অকল্যাণ চিন্তা
কেবা করে আবে হীন মতি
পতিভক্তি এই কি তোমার ?
কেবা অর্জুন - কেবা নারায়ণ
পতি শ্রেষ্ঠ সবা হতে ।

(জনা ২.১)

Have I brought this daughter-in-law of mine
From a lower caste, from a household which is
Ever engaged in wars, where bad omen is always
Present - But like you -
Feel a distant sound of wind which seems bewailing

Who doesn't think of such calamity ?
Is this a show of loyalty to your husband !
Whoever, Arjun or Narayan,
But your husband is the best !⁹

(Jana, II, i)

(Translated from the original Bengali Text)

Apart from these, Girish Chandra also made very free use of a number of Shakespearean devices. The appearance of a ghost in critical dramatic junctures in Chandra or Kalapahar is reminiscent of the Spirit of Hamlet's father or the ghost of the murdered Caesar. Use of the sex-concealment device by a number of Girish Chandra's characters was doubtless after the model of Shakespeare.

Dwijendralal Roy made the freest as well as the finest use of Shakespeare in his plays. His language, situations, themes, characters and a good many theatrical devices were considerably influenced by Shakespeare. D.L. Roy started his dramatic career by writing Tarabai in blank verse reminiscent of Shakespearean blank verse. After much reconsideration, he discarded the blank verse in favour of prose. The poetic flavour in his later prose dramas was due mainly to his earlier experiments in Shakespearean verse form. For dramatic material, D.L. Roy had constant recourse to Shakespeare. Small situations were taken up and readily assimilated into his dramatic texture. The

theatrical structure in Tarabai is an unabashed imitation of Macbeth. The character of Lear must have been his great favourite, for he has often invested his central characters with Lear-like passion. Next to Lear, Hamlet fascinated D.L. Roy most. In some plays, he has derived most of his central characters from Shakespeare. In Shahjahan, the emperor's character, with its grandeur, irascibility and elemental passion provoked by filial ingratitude are reminiscent of Lear's agony. The wit and apparent defencelessness of the fool have been combined in the same manner in the character of Dildar. In Shakespeare's play, the fool says to Lear :

Fool : She will taste as like this a crab does to a crab.

Thou cans't tell why one's nose stands`i' the middle
of one's face ?

Lear : No.

Fool : Why, to keep one's eyes on either side o'nose,

That what a man cannot smell out, he can spy in.

(King Lear, I, v, 18-22)

The same tone and dialogue resound in Dildar's dialogue with Murad :

দিলদার : ঈশ্বর নাক দিয়েছিলেন কেন ?

নিশ্বাস ফেলবার জন্য তো ?

মুরাদ : হ্যাঁ, আর শুকবার জন্য ও বোধ হয়।

দিলদার : কিন্তু মানুষ তার উপর বাহাদুরী করছে !

সে আবার সে নাকের উপর চশমা পরে !

দয়াময়ের সে উদ্দেশ্য ছিল না।

(শাহজাহান - ১.২.)

Dildar : Why did God give a nose ? Certainly for breathing !

Murad : Yes, and perhaps for the purpose of smelling too.

Dildar : But Man has surpassed Him !

Now he puts a spectacle over his nose,

But it was not the desire of his Creator.¹⁰

(Shahjahan, I, ii)

(Translated from the Original Bengali Text)

These lines not only merely portray characters and story, but also transform them into original dramatic creation under the influence of Shakespeare's plays. This also represents transcreation of whole dramatic materials and ideas into interesting new forms. It is in such exciting new mutations that the passionate love of Romeo and Juliet, the helplessness of King Lear and his lamentations, the jealousy of Othello, entered into Bengali drama and Shakespeare's devastating pictures of life inspired the Bengali playwrights to write tragedies in Bengali. In addition to all these, D.L. Roy

frequently attempted to use such Shakespearean expedients as the sex-concealment device, hallucinations in critical junctures and the use of lyrics to heighten dramatic tension. D.L. Roy also discerned the inner conflict as the core of Shakespearean drama. In Nurjahan he worked upon this principle and achieved a dramatic tour-de-force.¹¹

From this survey, it is obvious that Shakespearean influence had been wide in scope and great in dimension from the days of Madhusudan's Padmabati (1860) upto the early dramatic writings of Tagore (1890-91). After that various dramatic forms and influences have blended with Bengali dramatic literature. The standard of prose language achieved by dramatic literature made the playwrights more confident in writing original plays in Bengali without any direct outside influence.

At the beginning of these literary pursuits, the theatre enthusiasts among the first generation of English-educated Bengalis staged English plays, where they imitated the manners and culture of the English residents of the city. This attitude, however, gradually changed with the dawning of nationalistic sentiments. It was felt that plays had to be in the language that people in general spoke. This prompted the promoters of the theatres to fall back on translated Sanskrit plays, partly for reasons of national pride. But such plays were not many. It soon became evident that neither English nor Sanskrit could prevent the Bengali theatre from dying in its

infancy if original Bengali plays could not be produced. But at that critical moment of time, when Bengali plays were not forthcoming, instead of translating literally, or transcreating Shakespearean plays, Bengali playwrights began to adopt the form, style and technique of Shakespeare to produce original plays in Bengali. Madhusudan was the first who did so successfully, and it must be admitted that consciously or unconsciously, he used Shakespeare as at least one of his models, if not his sole model.¹²

Though Madhusudan wrote Bengali plays, the credit for the first original Bengali play must undoubtedly go to Dinabandhu Mitra. Like Madhusudan, Dianabandhu Mitra also wrote for private theatres, but he was less influenced by Shakespeare than Madhusudan. He did not translate any play, nor did he translate or transplant whole ideas, settings, themes, styles, characters and situations as many others had done. He was more independent and he followed his own style and created his own tradition. Neither Sanskrit nor European plays including Shakespeare fully influenced him. Instead, he took the best ideas available from whatever source and blended them with his own ideas.¹³

Madhusudan, on the other hand, though showered with offers to translate Sanskrit plays into Bengali, broke the fetters of the traditional rules of the Sanskrit drama. Instead, he moulded his plays according to the English model and in this manner, modernised Bengali drama.¹⁴

But whatever form Bengali drama took from the middle of the nineteenth century onwards, translations from Sanskrit and English, transcreations of Shakespearean plays, imitated Shakespearean plays, and original Bengali plays helped raise the standard of Bengali as a language and also helped it attain a standard form. The contributions of Michael Madhusudan Dutta, Dinabandhu Mitra, Ramanarayan Tarakaratno, Jyotirindranath Tagore and other playwrights of their times were outstanding in this regard. The contributions of Jyotirindranath and Ramanarayan were directed mainly towards translating into Bengali, while the others concentrated on creating original Bengali plays. These two trends for a time continued simultaneously and together helped revive a new consciousness which later helped the Calcutta Public Theatre to attain a firm footing. This theatre was no longer amateur, but professional. As the organ of western influence, this medium of amusement was at last assured of a secure and permanent footing.¹⁵ This was in 1872, and the year thus marks, as has been said, a watershed in the advance of western influence in Bengal. The machinery of the stage and the main dramatic form were, as has been noticed, taken up already, and it remains now to trace its further progress under western influence from 1872 till the present time.¹⁶

New tragedies, comedies and farces written by the best authors of the time began to be acted on the stage of Calcutta Public Theatre. The authors included Girish Ghosh, Dinabandhu Mitra

and D.L. Roy. The professional stage, conducted wholly by Bengalees, came into existence with the foundation of the National Theatre in 1872. The Theatre started staging the original plays of those writers.

The coming into existence of the Calcutta Public Theatre did not mean that Shakespeare was banished from the repertoire of the Calcutta stage. Side by side with Bengali plays of different classifications such as romantic, classical, historical and modern Bengali plays, translations or Bengali versions of Shakespearean plays also continued to be staged during this period.

These were transcreated and transformed according to the attitude of the nineteenth century. Bengali translators followed either the gorgeous, historical, legendary, romantic plot, or tragi-comic episodes as in Cymbeline, A Winter's Tale and Measure for Measure. The translations were intended for both the play-going as well as the play-reading public. Sometimes, following Charles Lamb, plays were turned into fiction; sometimes the dramatic shape was kept intact. Initially, however, the translations were in imitation of Lamb's Tales from Shakespeare. Although these translations and transcreations - especially in the prose narrative novel-like form, fascinated the middle class readers, but did not much impress the highly educated class.¹⁷ The Merchant of Venice, Macbeth, Romeo and Juliet, Othello and A Midsummer Night's Dream

were translated more than once, and by more than one translator.

These Bengali translators of the nineteenth century were predominantly conservative. Although their English education gave them an idea of freedom of choice and expression, still they were inhibited by limitations of national customs and traditions. As a result, whenever they were confronted with any idea that they felt would be considered as adverse to the time and age, they abandoned it or altered it or adapted it in a new shape.¹⁸

Shakespeare became a part of Bengali tradition and culture through cultural translations, a way of Indianization with a Bengali setting and conditions. These cultural translations did not affect the culture of the Bengali intelligentsia, but gave incentive to Bengali playwrights to create original plays in Bengali. Cultural translation is also a kind of 'influence' which indirectly works on authors. When plays of Shakespeare began to be translated culturally in Bengali since 1852, G.C. Gupta was enthused with writing an original drama in Bengali in the same year. His Kirtibilas was modelled after Hamlet.¹⁹

While the process of translation and cultural translation was going on, staging of Shakespeare's plays in English, both by the English residents of Calcutta as well as by Bengali students of schools and colleges continued side by side, and thus Shakespeare continued to influence the attitude of the educated

upper class.

It is true that Shakespeare's influence cannot be measured by the number of productions of his translated and adapted plays on the Bengali stage. It went much deeper, and it would be no exaggeration to say that the budding playwrights and critics of renascent Bengal had their initiation in dramaturgy from Shakespeare. It was from the plays of Shakespeare that they learnt the concept of tragedy, the meaning of conflict, the art of characterisation, orchestration of characters, in short, the knowledge of how to make a drama a dynamic expression of life in its severest moments of crisis, conflict and catastrophe. To the playmaker no less than to the connoisseur, Shakespeare was the standard of value.²⁰

In short, this tendency of imitating and assimilating Shakespeare into Bengali culture and tradition that began in 1852, helped modernise Bengali drama. From 1852 onwards, a trend of literal translation of Shakespeare was introduced in the Bengali dramatic literature. As a parallel trend, the tendency of transformations with the influence of a particular playwright through adaptations and cultural translations of Shakespeare's plays in the mid and late nineteenth century also continued.

END NOTES :

1. Kiran Moitra, "Peshadar Mancho O Apeshadar Natyaprobaho" (Professional stage and non-professional dramatic trend) Asit Kumar Ghose and Ashutosh Bhattacharya, Ed. Shatoburshay Natyoshala (Playhouse of a hundred years), (Calcutta : Lakshmikanta Panda Adimudrani, 1973), p. 555.
2. Bhabatosh Dutta, "Rabindranath Tagore on Shakespeare" Amalendu Bose Ed. Calcutta Essays on Shakespeare, (Calcutta : Abinash Press, 1966), p. 150.
3. Rudraprasad Sengupta, "Bangla Natakey Shakespearer Probhab" (Influence of Shakespeare on Bengali Drama) Subodh Gupta Ed. Parichoy, (Calcutta : North Brothers Printing Works, 1964), p. 355.
4. Sen Gupta, p. 356.
5. Jogindranath Basu, Michael Madhusudan Dutta Jiban Charit, (Calcutta; n.pr. 1978), pp. 38-39, pp. 484-485; also see Munir Chowdhury, Tulona Mulak Samalochana (Comparative Criticism), (Dhaka : Quality Printers, 1969), pp. 237-239.
6. Madhusudan said, "As for Dhandas, I never dreamt of making him the counterpart of Iago. The plot does not admit of such a character, even if I could invent it, which I gravely doubt". Ashutosh Bhattacharya, Natyokar Sree

Madhusudan (The playwright Sree Madhusudan), (Calcutta : Adhimudrani, 1968), pp. 46-51; also see Serajul Islam Chowdhury, Dwitiyo Bhuban, (Dhaka : Bangla Academy Press, 1974), pp. 29-61. In fact, Madhusudan Dutta also said in a letter to Rajnarayan Basu, a friend of his, "Some of my friends - and I fancy, you are among them - as soon as they see a drama of mine, begin to apply the canons of criticism that have been given forth by the masterpieces of William Shakespeare. They perhaps forget that I write under different circumstances. Our social and moral developments are of a different character". Shakespeare was perhaps an un-nerving comparison for Madhusudan, but the poet's modesty should not debar one from the usefulness of considering a strong unconsciousness of Shakespearean influence at work on the poet.

7. Question is found in Sanat Kumar Mitra, Shakespeare Ō Banglai Natak (Shakespeare and Bengali Drama), (Calcutta : Joy Guru Printing Works, 1983), pp. 79-80.
8. Khetro Gupta, Dinabandhu Rachanabali, (Calcutta : Sangsad edition, 1967), pp. 31-32.
9. Mitra, p. 105.
10. Mitra, p. 140.

11. Rudraparasad Sengupta, p. 367.
12. Kironmoy Raha, Bengali Theatre, (Calcutta : Roopak Printers, 1978), p. 16.
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CONCLUSION

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION :

From the early indigenous literary elements upto 1899, three distinct trends could be distinguished in Bengali dramatic activities. These trends were the early indigenous folk tradition, Sanskrit dramatic tradition and Shakespearean tradition. Among them, the Shakespearean tradition worked immensely on the Bengali playwrights and in Bengali dramatic literature of the mid and late nineteenth century as well as in the early twentieth century.

English Theatre at Calcutta began in 1775. English education was introduced with the establishment of the Fort William College in 1800. These two landmarks helped awaken the Bengali mind and intelligentsia for the pursuit of a new dramatic literature in Bengali. The Hindu College was established in 1817 which created new conditions for change among the Bengali students. Their attempts towards the development of Bengali culture provided the impetus which led finally to the development of a unique Bengali dramatic literature.

When the Englishmen residing in Calcutta started stage performances there for own enjoyment, Shakespeare's plays were the most obvious choice. The English civil and military officers as well as a few Bengalee aristocrats and rich men were

the usual playgoers of theatres like Mrs. Bristow's private theatre (1789), Calcutta Theatre (1775), Wheler Place Theatre (1797) etc., which staged plays in English. When Fort William College was founded, the first attempt at making a Bengali translation of a Shakespearean play, The Tempest, was made by one Claude Monkton a student of the College, in 1805. Many English teachers like Mr. D.L. Richardson and Mr. Clinger inspired the students to stage the plays of Shakespeare at their respective educational institutions.

When the practice of play-reading and staging of Shakespearean plays in English by both the English and Bengali students was in vogue, the western educated bhadraloks and the rich of the society wanted to build playhouses like the English playhouses to perform plays with a Bengali cast. The influence of English education and the performances of Shakespeare's plays in the original was so deep that the contemporary Bengali literati sought their source of inspiration more in the western literary works than in the indigenous and Indian source materials.

Social and political causes were certain factors that motivated the Bangalees to adopt Shakespeare in the curriculum as well as in their cultural activities to educate the Bangalees and to change their religious beliefs and social attitudes. The motive might have been to keep the Bangalees loyal to the British and they thought that such activities would be effective for the strengthening of the colonial administration. These cultural

and educational activities of the British inspired the Bangalees to imitate Shakespeare in Bengali versions of his plays. But the psychological conflict caused by the intrusion of alien ideology, customs, manners, social mores and religion made them conscious about their national identity. This led to adaptation and recreation, principally in the manner of Charles Lamb (Lamb's Tales from Shakespeare) with the intention of development of Bengali culture and language.

From 1852 to 1899, only twenty two culturally translated and adapted Bengali versions of Shakespeare's plays have been recorded to have existed in published form. But all these translations were imitations and adaptations of Shakespeare's originals, except for Girish Chandra Ghosh's Macbeth (1899). From the time of Girish Ghosh, the era of literal translations in Bengali commenced. The early translators merely followed the idea, theme and tone of a particular play of Shakespeare and sometimes based their versions on both the originals and the already translated and adapted plays then available. This kind of work failed to achieve any success either in the field of literature or on the stage, as already dealt with in detail in the preceding chapters.

As a sense of nationalism, inspired by the abortive Sepoy Mutiny of 1857, began to grow in the minds of the Bangalee intelligentsia, they experienced an urge to create original works in Bengali, for which no better model than Shakespeare was

available. So they borrowed ideas, techniques and stagecraft from Shakespeare and these were superimposed on original Indian themes. But the earlier experience of imitating and adapting Shakespearean plays, which was in reality a kind of Indianisation of Shakespearean plays, though they failed to achieve any success on the stage or in print, at least taught the Bengali theatre activist many techniques and elements of modern European stage. The foreign experts who came to paint scenes, design costumes and provide make-up were imitated and copied, as without perfecting these and many other ingredients of drama no modern drama could be created. And as these foreign experts did their work in connection with Shakespearean plays produced in English, as well as later on in Bengali as well, their styles and techniques were studied by the Bengali theatre activists of the time and copied later on, and adapted according to the requirement of the play, for the original Bengali dramas. Hence it can be stated with certainty that Shakespeare was the real source of inspiration that led to the development of Bengali dramatic literature as well as Bengali dramatic art.

It was not only in dramatic literature that Shakespeare had cast an impress on Bengali; the creation of characters in Shakespeare's plays also inspired novelists and followers of other forms of literature also to measure the quality of their characterisations against a Shakespearean criterion.

The Bengali translations of Shakespeare's plays in the

nineteenth century, which were not really literal translations, but adaptations, imitations, cultural translations and Indianisations of his works, were not of an accepted standard. In order to conform to local norms, beliefs and taboos, they had to alter situations piece-meal, as a result of which the translation became disjointed, loose and characterless. While engaged in the work of translating these plays, they were not aware that they were doing anything wrong. It was only when they failed to find acceptance among the readers and producers that they, as well as others having the same intentions, realised that such adaptations and imitations are not suitable for the Indian Society.

In the lifetime of an individual, half a century is a long time indeed, and it can cover a great span of evolutionary change in art, culture and literature. Although the number of "Cultural" translations was very small, the impact of acted plays of Shakespeare, both in the original as well as in their Bengali versions, had a tremendous effect on the minds of the literary and theatrical activists. Even though the customs and manners of Shakespeare's characters differed from those of Bangalee characters in cultural translations, adaptations and transformations, there were other factors to be mentioned, for example (a) Literary and traditional taste, (b) Introspection towards National Philosophy and Sociology and (c) Attempts to create a Bengali dramatic trend. Playwrights and translators who made suitable adaptations in their own original creations,

helped develop modern Bengali drama.

The tradition that was set up then continued throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The Bengali drama of today owes much to this tradition. The many innovations and experimentations that have been carried through were possible because of the dedicated efforts of the earlier dramatists. Whatever Bengali drama has achieved, on which the future will stand, and whose signs are very promising, the nineteenth century pioneers had made a great contribution.

Hence it can be confidently asserted that Shakespeare was the principal role model and inspiration for the development of modern Bengali dramatic literature as well as the modern dramatic art of Bengal.

THE END

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