

**Shakespeare and Bengali Little Magazine:  
Indigenous Responses and Framing of an  
Alternative Discourse in Post-Independence  
Bengal**

THESIS SUBMITTED FOR THE DEGREE of  
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY (Arts)

In

**ENGLISH**

By

**BIPLAB DAS**

**DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH**

**JADAVPUR UNIVERSITY,**

**188, RAJA S. C. MALLICK RD,**

**KOLKATA-700032**

**2025**

# Shakespeare and Bengali Little Magazine

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2025 Acknowledgement

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I would like to acknowledge the unwavering support of

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University is based upon my work carried out under the Supervision of PROF.  
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And that neither this thesis nor any part of it has been submitted before for any degree  
or diploma anywhere / elsewhere.

  
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I would like to acknowledge the unwavering support of my family members, especially my parents, for their continuous encouragement to complete my research work. I am also indebted to my four-year-old son Trinabha, whose patience, understanding, and silent companionship gave me the emotional strength to keep going.

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## **Preface**

This research study explores how Shakespeare has been interpreted and represented in Bengali little magazines beyond the bounds of traditional academic discourse. Little magazines, known for prioritizing experimental writing and promoting avant-garde voices, often function as platforms of literary rebellion. Their anti-establishment nature fosters alternative narratives that challenge dominant cultural and literary norms. In Bengal, Shakespeare's journey from a colonial icon to a figure embedded in diverse cultural expressions marks a significant transformation. Despite this evolution, the role of Bengali little magazines in shaping a non-mainstream, alternative discourse around Shakespeare remains insufficiently explored. This study also considers independent theatre magazines as part of the broader little magazine movement due to their similar ethos and editorial practices. Through qualitative content analysis of writings on Shakespeare published in little magazines from his quatercentenary in 1964 to his 450<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2014, this research highlights how Shakespeare has been continuously reimagined in this alternative literary space over a span of fifty years.

# INTRODUCTION

## (i) Tracing the Roots: Beginning of Shakespeare Study in Bengal

The historical journey of Shakespeare's influence in India began around 1780 when employees of the East India Company introduced his works to Calcutta. This introduction marked the beginning of a significant impact on Indian theatre and literature, which has been explored in various scholarly works. Notable studies include *Shakespeare in Indian Languages*<sup>1</sup>, edited by D. A. Shankar, *Shakespeare's Impact on Hindi Literature*<sup>2</sup>, edited by Jagdish Prasad Mishra, *Shakespeare Came to India*<sup>3</sup>, edited by C. D. Narasimhaiah, and *India's Shakespeare*<sup>4</sup>, edited by Poonam Trivedi and Dennis Bartholomeusz. These studies illustrate how Shakespeare's presence in India evolved during the 18<sup>th</sup> century, leading to a profound influence on theatre and literary practices across major Indian languages. The Charter Act of 1813 marked a significant turning

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<sup>1</sup>D. A. Shankar's *Shakespeare in Indian Languages* is a significant academic work that examines the profound influence of Shakespeare on various Indian languages. Published in 1999, this edited volume analyzes how Shakespeare's plays have been translated and adapted, reflecting the complexities of cultural exchange between English and Indian literary traditions. The book highlights the adaptations' role in shaping Indian literature and identity, showcasing the intricate interplay between translation and cultural assimilation.

<sup>2</sup>*Shakespeare's influence on Hindi literature*, as explored by J.P. Mishra in 1970, is profound. His works inspired Hindi drama to evolve from folk traditions to a more sophisticated stage, fostering original compositions. Mishra's critical study highlights Shakespeare's role in shaping modern Hindi literary forms and enhancing cultural exchanges between India and the West.

<sup>3</sup>C. D. Narasimhaiah's *Shakespeare Came to India* explores the complex introduction and adaptation of Shakespeare's works in India, particularly during the colonial period. The book argues that Shakespeare arrived not as a tool of imperialism but as part of a cultural exchange, facilitated by early British merchants and educators. It highlights the role of institutions like Hindu College in Calcutta, where Shakespeare was embraced by Indian intellectuals who sought to blend Western literature with indigenous traditions. Narasimhaiah emphasizes that this interaction led to a unique Indian interpretation of Shakespeare, reflecting both admiration and critique of colonial influences.

<sup>4</sup>*India's Shakespeare: Translation, Interpretation, and Performance*," edited by Poonam Trivedi and Dennis Bartholomeusz, explores the complex relationship between Shakespeare and Indian culture over two centuries. The collection of essays examines how Shakespeare's works were translated, adapted, and performed in India, reflecting the dynamics of colonialism and postcolonial identity. It highlights the literary, social, and political implications of this interaction, showcasing how Shakespeare has influenced Indian theater and cultural discourse while also addressing what "India" represented to Shakespeare himself.

point in the educational landscape of India, particularly in Bengal, by promoting Western education and literary excellence among the Bengali intelligentsia. Despite the financial commitment annually for the education of Indians, there was a lack of immediate action, with funds remaining largely unutilized for over two decades due to ongoing debates about the direction and nature of education. During this period, public missionary institutions, such as the Church Missionary Society, London Missionary Society, and others, played a crucial role in providing Western education. They filled the gap left by the British government's hesitance to invest significantly in education until the mid-1830s. Macaulay's 'Minute on Indian Education,' presented in 1835, became pivotal in shaping educational policy by advocating for English as the medium of instruction and emphasizing English literature—especially works by Shakespeare and other Renaissance authors—as symbols of English identity. Between the Charter Act of 1813 and Macaulay's Minute in 1835, British colonial policy on education in India underwent a significant transition. During this period, Orientalists advocated for traditional Indian learning in classical languages, while Anglicists pushed for Western education through English. The General Committee of Public Instruction, set up in 1823, played a key role in curriculum planning. By the late 1820s, under increasing Anglicist influence, the curriculum of the Hindu College had moved significantly closer to a Western model. However, its internal divisions reflected the broader ideological debate. This ideological conflict set the stage for Macaulay's decisive 1835 Minute, which favored English education and Western curriculum and marked a clear shift toward Anglicist policy. The introduction of English literary studies during this time was viewed by some remarkable scholars like Gauri Viswanathan, Ania Loomba, Jyotsna Singh, Jasodhara Bagchi, Rosinka Chaudhuri, and a plethora of critics. Most of them viewed the initiation of English studies during the colonial period as a strategy by colonial authorities to maintain control over the Indian populace. According to Gauri Viswanathan<sup>5</sup>:

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<sup>5</sup>Gauri Viswanathan's *Masks of Conquest: Literary Study and British Rule in India* is a seminal work in postcolonial studies that explores the introduction and development of English literary studies in India during British colonial rule. Originally published in 1989 and recently reissued in a twenty-fifth anniversary edition, the book argues that the establishment of English studies was not merely an educational endeavor but also a strategic tool for cultural domination and control.

The introduction of English literature marks the effacement of a sordid history of colonialist expropriation, material exploitation, and class and race oppression behind European world dominance. The English literary text, functioning as a surrogate Englishman in his highest and most perfect state, becomes a mask for economic exploitation...The split between the material and the cultural practices of colonialism is nowhere sharper than in the progressive refinement of the rapacious, exploitative, and ruthless actor of history into the reflective subject of literature. (20-21)

As more Indians became familiar with the English language, Shakespeare's influence spread, particularly in areas of Calcutta predominantly inhabited by Bengali and European communities. Hema Dahiya<sup>6</sup>, in her book *Shakespeare Studies in Colonial Bengal: The Early Phase*, has discussed the role of Hindu College and the eminent teachers associated with this institution in the context of introducing Shakespeare studies in Bengal. According to Dahiya, 'Initiated by Henry Derozio and carried forward to its great heights by D. L. Richardson and H. M. Percival, Shakespeare studies became a hallmark of Hindu College. This college produced eminent intellectuals who became leaders in the movement called the Bengal Renaissance, which finally led to a greater awakening in the whole of India.' (2) Dahiya's 2011 doctoral thesis, at Sheffield Hallam University, examines the introduction and development of Shakespearean studies at Hindu College. Dahiya's thesis, later published in book format in 2013, challenges the broad postcolonial critique that English education in colonial India served solely as a tool for British political agendas. Dahiya argues that, while English education did further colonial interests, it also introduced Enlightenment ideas that contributed to Bengal's intellectual awakening. Recently, in his latest book, Manojit Mandal<sup>7</sup> has recaptured the issue 'following Viswanathan,

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<sup>6</sup>Hema Dahiya's *Shakespeare Studies in Colonial Bengal: The Early Phase* examines the introduction of Shakespearean education at Hindu College (founded in 1817) through three pioneering teachers: Henry Derozio, D.L. Richardson, and H.M. Percival. Their secular, humanist pedagogy fostered critical thinking and Renaissance ideals, countering postcolonial claims that Shakespeare was a colonial tool. The work highlights how their teachings ignited the Bengal Renaissance, emphasizing indigenous agency in embracing Enlightenment values.

<sup>7</sup> *Shakespeare and Indian Nationalism: The Bard and the Raj*, Routledge, 2024 by Manojit Mandal, aims to articulate the reception of Shakespeare by the 19th century Indian intelligentsia from Bengal and their ambivalent approach to the Indian Renaissance and consequent nationalist project.

Jasodhara Bagchi held a substantially different view relating to the beginning of English literary/Shakespeare studies...’ (Introduction, 8). Jasodhara Bagchi<sup>8</sup> presented a significantly different perspective on the origins of English literary studies and Shakespearean scholarship compared to Viswanathan. She emphasized the proactive involvement of notable figures in these developments. According to Bagchi, the traditional and progressive factions within the Bengali elite found considerable advantage in embracing English or Western education. Bagchi wrote,

The demand for English studies from a section of the indigenous population gave a lie to the belief that western education was foisted on the native subject...a crucial part of an ideological project to free the minds of the educated Bengali *bhadralok* so that they could cultivate their cultural/spiritual sphere while making a niche for themselves in the new socio-economic terrain opened up by the British (pp. 147-148).

The late 19<sup>th</sup> century witnessed a significant shift in the approach to translating and performing Shakespeare in colonial Bengal, driven by the expansion of English education. Many translations during this period were produced in prose, often adapted from Mary and Charles Lamb’s *Tales from Shakespeare*, focusing more on educational purposes than theatrical representation. The emergence of Bengali theatre played a pivotal role in popularizing Shakespeare’s works, as the local intelligentsia sought to emulate the grandeur of his dramas, creating a vibrant theatrical culture that embraced Shakespearean themes and styles. Shakespeare’s influence permeated Bengali literature, inspiring writers and poets to incorporate his characters, themes, and narrative techniques into their works. This integration was part of a broader cultural synthesis, where local traditions interacted with global influences to form a distinctive literary landscape. Despite the reverence for Shakespeare, his study faced criticism amidst the rising

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<sup>8</sup>Jasodhara Bagchi’s writing that addresses the introduction of English studies in Colonial Bengal is titled “Shakespeare in Loin Cloth: English Literature and the Early Nationalist Consciousness in Bengal.” Svati Joshi, ed. *Rethinking English: Essays in Literature, Language, History*, 1991, pp. 146-159.

nationalist sentiments in the 1920s, leading to a decline in translations and performances during that period.

However, post-independence in 1947 brought with it a new era of engagement with Shakespeare's works, characterized by a deeper understanding and appreciation of his complexities. The partition of India and the establishment of West Bengal brought about significant cultural and political changes. The period following independence saw an increasing indigenization of Shakespeare in Bengal. The nationalist movement had already encouraged a search for indigenous literary traditions, and after 1947, the need to redefine Indian identity in a post-colonial framework became more pronounced. Shakespeare was no longer viewed merely as part of the colonial curriculum but was increasingly adapted to suit local sensibilities. The quatercentenary celebrations in 1964 highlighted a renewed affection for Shakespeare among Bengali intellectuals. The quatercentenary anniversary of Shakespeare's birth in 1964 was celebrated with great enthusiasm in Bengal and across India. Various literary, theatrical, and academic institutions marked the occasion through seminars, performances, and publications that reflected Shakespeare's influence on Indian literature and culture. This auspicious occasion was commemorated through various publications and performances that celebrated and reinterpreted his works. One notable publication from this period is the *Shakespeare Commemoration Volume*<sup>9</sup>, edited by Professor Taraknath Sen of the Department of English at Presidency College, Calcutta. Although published in 1966, this volume was planned as part of the 1964 celebrations and was released under the auspices of the Government of West Bengal. This volume features contributions from esteemed scholars, including Professor Subodh Chandra Sengupta's essay "Shakespeare the Man," which delves into the Bard's life and legacy. *Indian Literature*<sup>10</sup> Sahitya Akademi's bi-

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<sup>9</sup>*Shakespeare Commemoration Volume*, edited by Taraknath Sen, was published in 1966 by the Department of English at Presidency College, Calcutta. This scholarly work comprises a collection of essays celebrating Shakespeare's contributions to literature and drama. It reflects Sen's deep engagement with Shakespearean texts, showcasing various critical perspectives and analyses. The volume serves as a tribute to Sen's legacy as an influential educator and scholar in the field of English literature, particularly in the study of Shakespeare.

<sup>10</sup>In 1964, the Sahitya Akademi published a special issue of *Indian Literature* to commemorate the 400th anniversary of Shakespeare's birth. This edition featured a diverse range of articles discussing Shakespeare's impact on Indian theatre across various languages, including Bengali and Gujarati. It marked a significant moment in the "vernacularization" of Shakespeare, reflecting a shift towards indigenizing his works and making them accessible to Indian audiences. The issue highlighted performances, adaptations, and scholarly discussions that contributed to a renewed interest in Shakespeare in post-colonial India.

monthly journal, published a special issue in 1964 dedicated to Shakespeare, contributing to the re-emergence and appreciation of his works in the Indian literary landscape. The emergence of little magazines in Bengal and the little magazine movement also played a crucial role in reshaping Shakespeare study in Bengal. This movement, in fact, facilitated a dynamic engagement with Shakespeare, leading to critical essays, experimental adaptations, and reinterpretations of Shakespeare's works in local contexts. While Shakespearean drama had been performed in Calcutta since the 19<sup>th</sup> century, post-1947 productions witnessed a paradigm shift in performance style and thematic emphasis. Directors such as Shambhu Mitra, Utpal Dutt, and Badal Sircar experimented with Shakespeare's plays, blending them with folk traditions like jatra and using them as tools for political commentary. In the academic sphere, Shakespeare remained an essential part of university curricula in Bengal, but his study evolved in response to post-colonial literary theories. With the advent of postcolonial theory, scholars began to interrogate the notion of a universally loved Shakespeare, critiquing it as a remnant of colonial legacy. In the postcolonial period, another aspect that has enriched the study of Shakespeare is how his works have been practiced and adapted into films. The book *Shakespeare and Indian Cinema*<sup>11</sup>, edited by Poonam Trivedi and Paromita Chakravarti, represents a significant contribution to the study of Shakespeare's influence in Indian cinema. It is the first comprehensive exploration of Shakespeare's adaptations across a diverse range of Indian languages and cinematic traditions, including those that are less commonly recognized. In contemporary Bengal, Shakespeare's legacy endures, with his plays being performed across urban and rural landscapes. The digital age has further expanded access to his works through online adaptations and discussions, fostering a global dialogue about his influence on Bengali culture and literature.

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<sup>11</sup>Poonam Trivedi and Paromita Chakravarty's book, *Shakespeare and Indian Cinemas: Local Habitations*, 2019, explores the integration of Shakespeare's works within Indian cinema. It examines adaptations across various regional films, highlighting how these interpretations reflect Indian identities and socio-political contexts, ultimately showcasing Shakespeare's transcultural relevance in contemporary storytelling.

## (ii) Literature Reviews:

Shakespeare in Bengal has been a fertile site for researchers for quite some time, and various perspectives have extended this field and added new dimensions to it. Let's see the groundbreaking works that shape the Shakespearean study in Bengal and in India. Shakespeare's 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary, the quatercentenary year, saw a body of writings coming out addressing multiple issues related to Shakespeare's works. The year 1964 was the powerful platform for the discussions and debates concerning the indigenization of Shakespeare's writings. *Indian Literature*, published by the Sahitya Akademi, commemorated a special volume on this auspicious occasion. K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar's essay, "Shakespeare in India," published by *Indian Literature* in 1964, is a seminal work in Indian literary criticism that delves into the profound impact of Shakespeare's writings on Indian literature and culture. Iyengar meticulously examines the enduring legacy of Shakespeare in the Indian context, spanning across centuries. The article begins by highlighting how Shakespeare's works were introduced to India during the colonial era, primarily through British educational institutions. However, it quickly evolved beyond colonial imposition to become an integral part of India's literary and theoretical traditions. The same volume consisted of another beautiful essay contributed by S. K. Bhattacharya in "Shakespeare and Bengali Theatre." The author also mentioned the profound influence of Shakespeare on Bengali theatre. Bhattacharya's work highlights the extensive adaptation and reinterpretation of Shakespearean plays within the context of Bengali culture and theatre during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. The essay begins by elucidating the introduction of Shakespearean drama to Bengal during the colonial period, primarily through British theatre troupes. Bhattacharya explores how Bengali playwrights and directors not only translated Shakespeare's works but also reimagined them, infusing them with indigenous themes, settings, and characters. This fusion allowed Bengali audiences to relate to and appreciate Shakespeare's universal themes of love, ambition, and tragedy in the context of their own cultural milieu.

Rosa M. Garcia Periago's article "The re-birth of Shakespeare in India: Celebrating and Indianizing the Bard in 1964," published in 2012, explores the fascinating intersection of Shakespearean theatre and Indian culture. In 1964, India witnessed a remarkable transformation of Shakespeare's works into something uniquely Indian. During this time, India was undergoing significant sociocultural changes, and Shakespeare's plays became a canvas for Indian artists to

express their own identity and issues. This re-birth of Shakespeare can be attributed to the efforts of directors like Ebrahim Alkazi and B.V. Karanth, who blended Western theatrical traditions with indigenous Indian art forms, such as Kathakali and Yakshagana. The result was a vibrant fusion that resonated with Indian audiences. One of the key elements discussed by Periago is the use of traditional Indian music and dance in Shakespearean productions. This infusion of local elements breathed new life into familiar stories like *Hamlet* and *Othello*, making them more relatable and engaging for Indian spectators. Periago also highlights how Shakespearean characters were adapted to address contemporary Indian issues, including caste, gender, and nationalism. This approach allowed Shakespeare's works to serve as a mirror to Indian society, sparking important conversations.

Gauri Viswanathan's iconic book *Masks of Conquest: Literary Study and British Rule in India*, published in 1989, critically examines how English literary education was systematically introduced in colonial India as a tool of imperial control. She argues that English literature was not merely an academic subject but a cultural and ideological instrument used by the British to establish intellectual and moral authority over Indians. The book demonstrates how English literary studies served the colonial agenda by shaping Indian minds to internalize British values, reinforcing the legitimacy of colonial rule. This book provides crucial insights into the ideological functions of English literary education in the colonial period. However, this book helps me to contextualize the reception and adaptation of Shakespeare and is also essential for understanding how Shakespeare's presence in Bengal was mediated through colonial education policies.

Jyotsna Singh's 1989 article "Different Shakespeares: The Bard in Colonial/Postcolonial India," published by the Johns Hopkins University Press, explores the multifaceted relationship between Shakespeare's works and the colonial and postcolonial dynamics in India. Singh's work studies how Shakespeare's plays became a prominent part of India's literary and cultural landscape during the colonial period. British colonialists introduced Shakespeare to the Indian subcontinent, using his works to assert cultural dominance. It also examines how Indian writers and scholars engaged with Shakespeare's texts, using them as a tool for decolonization and self-expression. Additionally, Singh discusses the impact of Shakespearean adaptations and performances in India, particularly in the realm of theatre. These adaptations often blended Shakespearean plots with Indian elements, treating unique artistic expressions that reflected the complexities of Indian

society. It beautifully illuminates the intricate interplay between Shakespearean literature, colonialism, and the emergence of a postcolonial Indian identity. It showcases how Shakespeare's works served as both a tool of colonial dominance and a means of cultural resistance and self-discovery in India's colonial and postcolonial history.

Thomas Cartelli's book *Repositioning Shakespeare*, published by Routledge in 1999, examines the ways in which modern adaptations and appropriations of Shakespeare's plays reflect cultural and political shifts. Cartelli argues that these adaptations provide insights into how societies interpret Shakespeare to address contemporary concerns. He focuses on three main approaches: the 'autumnal' approach, which emphasizes nostalgia and the passage of time; the 'carnavalesque' approach, which explores the chaotic and subversive elements of Shakespeare's works; and the 'multicultural' approach, which engages with issues of diversity and identity. Through detailed analyses of various adaptations, including film, theatre, and literature, Cartelli demonstrates how these approaches have been employed in different contexts. He also highlights how the shifting interpretation of Shakespearean characters and themes mirror changing societal values and anxieties. Overall, Cartelli's book provides a comprehensive exploration of how Shakespeare remains relevant by continually being repositioned within evolving cultural landscapes.

Another important book that made a huge impact on Shakespearean study in India is Poonam Trivedi and Dennis Bartholomeusz' *India's Shakespeare: Translation, Interpretation and Performance*, Pearson, in 2005. The work delves into the rich tapestry of Shakespearean adaptation in Indian contexts. This insightful analysis explores how Shakespeare's works have been translated, adapted, and performed within India's diverse linguistic, cultural, and social milieu. They highlight the remarkable fusion of Shakespearean themes with Indian traditions, showcasing how iconic characters and universal themes find resonance in the Indian ethos. The book examines translations of Shakespeare's plays into various Indian languages, shedding light on the nuances of linguistic and cultural choices made during the adaptation process. It also investigates the creative liberties taken by Indian playwrights, directors, and actors in reimagining Shakespeare's narratives to address contemporary issues and local sensibilities. In fact, this book serves as a comprehensive exploration of the dynamic relationship between Shakespearean drama and Indian culture. This book underscores how Shakespeare's enduring universality continues to

inspire and resonate within India's vibrant theatrical landscape, reflecting the ongoing interplay between global literature and local creativity.

Jyotsna Singh and Gitanjali G. Shahani's article "Postcolonial Shakespeare Revisited" (2010) again explores how Shakespeare's works continue to resonate in a postcolonial world, offering fresh insights into the ongoing dialogue between Shakespearean literature and the complex legacies of colonialism. It underscores the adaptability and universality of Shakespearean themes while highlighting the importance of recognizing diverse voices in the interpretation and adaptation of his works in a globalized, postcolonial era. The authors argue that Shakespeare's plays have served as a powerful tool for postcolonial writers and directors to explore issues of identity, power, and resistance. They highlight how these adaptations often challenge and subvert colonial narratives, offering new perspectives on history and culture. They provide in-depth analyses of specific postcolonial adaptations of Shakespeare, shedding light on how these reinterpretations engage with themes of colonialism, nationalism, and decolonization.

Hema Dahiya's 2011 doctoral thesis, "Shakespeare Studies in Colonial Bengal: The Early Phase," examines the introduction and development of Shakespearean studies at Hindu College, Calcutta, established in 1817. Amidst debates between Orientalists and Anglicists and tensions involving Christian missionaries and orthodox Hindus, Hindu College emerged as a pioneer in imparting secular Renaissance humanism through Shakespeare's works. Dahiya highlights the contributions of key figures such as Raja Rammohan Roy and David Hare in fostering a secular educational environment. The thesis focuses on three early educators: Henry Derozio, D. L. Richardson, and H. M. Percival. This thesis challenges the broad postcolonial critique that English education in colonial India served solely as a tool for British political agendas. Dahiya argues that, while English education did further colonial interests, it also introduced Enlightenment ideas that contributed to Bengal's intellectual awakening. This work offers an original perspective by presenting evidence of secular Shakespeare studies in colonial Bengal, led by educators like Derozio, Richardson, and Percival. Dahiya's work provides me with valuable insights into the early academic engagement with Shakespeare's works and their role in the region's cultural and intellectual history.

Arindam Mukhopadhyay's 2014 doctoral thesis, "The Changing Bengali Response to Shakespeare—A Critical Study of Shakespeare Criticism by Bengali Writers and Academics," at

the University of Calcutta under the supervision of Professor Dipendu Chakravarti, delves into the evolving engagement of Bengali intellectuals with Shakespearean works. This thesis underscores the dynamic relationship between Bengali literary circles and Shakespeare, highlighting a journey from colonial imposition to creative assimilation and reinterpretation. This proposed research will explore how Bengali writers and scholars from both pre- and post-independence eras have engaged with Shakespeare, highlighting the extent to which their responses are derivative versus genuinely Bengali. The study argues that Shakespeare scholarship among Bengali academics has largely developed under the influence of English Shakespeare studies, resulting in a predominantly derivative approach, which was a natural outcome of being a British colony. Unlike their French and Russian counterparts, Bengali scholars have not been able to create unique perspectives on Shakespeare, leading to a lack of significant critics like Voltaire or Tolstoy in Bengal. The patterns observed in the 1950s, 60s, and 70s—prior to the emergence of contemporary theories in Shakespeare studies in West Bengal—are now repeating in the 21st century, reflecting a new phase of derivativeness masked as originality. However, the post-colonial context has opened avenues for interpreting Shakespeare through a Bengali lens. This thesis intends to assess the validity of this hypothesis in light of the historical tradition of Shakespeare studies among Bengali writers and scholars. Chapter VIII of this thesis, titled “Shakespeare in the Bengali Little Magazines,” offers a background of Bengali little magazines in Shakespeare discourse in Bengal. This is not a systematic study on the role and contribution of Bengali little magazines in diagnosing its true essence on the broader discourse of Shakespeare study in Bengal. Undoubtedly, this chapter helps me to dive into the rich heritage of Bengali little magazines and the dynamic relationship it holds with Shakespeare.

*Performing Shakespeare in India: Exploring Indianness, Literatures, and Cultures* by Sharmistha Panja, published by Sage Publications in 2016, provides a comprehensive analysis of the rich tapestry of Shakespearean performances in India, showcasing the ongoing dialogue between Shakespeare and Indian theatre tradition and how this interaction reflects the broader cultural landscape of the country. The book highlights the multifaceted ways in which Indian theatre artists have engaged with Shakespeare’s works, drawing upon diverse performance styles, languages, and regional traditions. Panja examines how Shakespeare’s universal themes resonate with local audiences and how they are reimagined to address contemporary issues in India. The author also delves into the complexities of translating Shakespeare’s language into various Indian

languages, capturing the nuances of both cultures. This book also sheds light on the role of gender and caste in Indian adaptation of Shakespeare, exploring how these factors influence character interpretation and performances.

Jyotsna Singh's *Shakespeare and Postcolonial Theory*, published in 2019, explores Shakespeare's works through the lens of postcolonial theory, examining how his plays engage with themes of empire, race, and cultural encounters. Singh argues that since Shakespeare wrote in the pre-colonial era, his texts became central to British colonial discourse and later to postcolonial critiques. She traces how postcolonial scholars have reinterpreted Shakespeare, from Edward Said's *Orientalism* to Homi Bhabha's hybridity and Gayatri Spivak's subaltern studies. Bengali literary culture has a long history of engaging with Shakespeare, often negotiating colonial inheritance and local reinterpretation. The theoretical perspectives in Singh's work help analyze how Bengali little magazines have historically positioned Shakespeare—whether as a colonial figure, a symbol of literary modernity, or a source for creative reimaginings. By applying Singh's insights, one can explore how Bengali little magazines use Shakespeare in ways that challenge, adapt, or resist colonial narratives, making this book an important source for this study.

Supriya Chaudhuri's article "Remembering Shakespeare in India: Colonial and Postcolonial Memory," published in 2019, explores the enduring influence of Shakespeare's works on India's cultural landscape. Chaudhuri delves into both colonial and postcolonial periods to unravel how Shakespeare's plays were received, adapted, and remembered in India. During the colonial era, British imperialists introduced Shakespeare to India as a means of consolidating their cultural dominance. The Bard's works were used to assert British superiority and justify colonial rule. However, Indian intellectuals and nationalists also engaged with Shakespeare, using his writings to critique colonialism and advocate for Indian self-determination.

Suddhaseel Sen's book *Shakespeare in the World: Cross-Cultural Adaptation in Europe and Colonial India, 1850-1900*, published in 2022, focuses on how Shakespeare's works were received and adapted in the nineteenth century, particularly among non-English-speaking communities in Europe and colonial India. Sen delves into various adaptations of Shakespeare's plays, including theatrical performances, operas, novels, and prose, many of which remain influential today. These adaptations were instrumental in integrating Shakespeare's works into diverse cultural traditions, fostering 'nationalist cosmopolitanism' within those societies. Rather

than viewing Shakespeare's global reception solely through the lenses of 'hegemony' and 'mimicry,' Sen highlights significant similarities in how Shakespeare was adapted across Europe and colonial India. The book effectively balances Shakespeare's status as an icon with his impact in colonial and post-colonial contexts, making a valuable contribution to the field of Shakespeare studies.

*Shakespeare and Indian Nationalism: The Bard and The Raj*, Manojit Mandal's book, published in 2024, explores the complex reception of Shakespeare by 19<sup>th</sup>-century Bengali intellectuals and their nuanced relationship with the Indian Renaissance and the emerging nationalist movement. Highlighting the cultural dynamics of British imperialism, the book examines the works of six early nationalist writers—Iswarchandra Vidyasagar, Hemchandra Bandopadhyay, Girishchandra Ghosh, Purnachandra Basu, Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay, and Rabindranath Tagore—and their engagement with Shakespeare. Utilizing Gramsci's theory of hegemony alongside key texts in cultural politics, nationalism, and Indian history, this interdisciplinary study bridges postcolonial and Shakespearean scholarship. It seeks to reconcile the widespread admiration for an English cultural figure in India with the concurrent rise of nationalism and resistance to British rule, ultimately reassessing Shakespeare's role in academic, political, and popular nationalist discourses in postcolonial India.

### **(iii) Research Problem:**

The existing body of literature on Shakespeare study in Bengal primarily focuses on traditional academic discourses, translations, and theoretical adaptations. Scholars have delved into how Shakespeare's works were adapted and localized to suit the Bengali socio-cultural context. Research has also highlighted the role of formal educational institutions and mainstream publications in shaping the Shakespearean discourse in Bengal. Despite the rich scholarly attention on Shakespeare in Bengal, little magazines—a vital component of Bengal's literary culture—have received minimal focus in this context. The glaring research gap lies in the insufficient exploration of how Bengali little magazines have contributed to Shakespeare study in Bengal. Bengali little magazines, often characterized by their independent, non-commercial nature, have historically served as vibrant platforms for alternative literary and cultural discourses. Bengali little magazines offer a space for voices that might otherwise be marginalized or overlooked in mainstream literary circuits. This gap in scholarship is particularly pronounced when considering non-mainstream,

grassroots perspectives that challenge or diverge from conventional academic narratives. The under-researched role of Bengali little magazines in the study of Shakespeare in Bengal presents a significant gap in the existing literature. Addressing this gap could offer a more comprehensive view of the cultural and literary landscape in Bengal. The core research problem, therefore, lies in uncovering and critically examining how Bengali little magazines contribute to and shape the non-mainstream discourse surrounding Shakespeare study in Bengal.

**(iv) Objectives of the Study:**

1. To explore the role of Bengali little magazines in decentralizing Shakespearean discourse in Bengal and how little magazines have contributed to a Bengalized understanding of Shakespeare.
2. To interrogate how little magazines subvert mainstream literary hegemony by fostering experimental interpretations of Shakespeare.
3. To examine the transformation of Shakespeare's presence in Bengali little magazines from the quatercentenary year onwards and to evaluate the contemporary relevance of little magazines in Shakespeare studies, assessing their adaptation to digital platforms, interdisciplinary approaches, and responses to globalization in Bengal.
4. To compare metropolitan vs. suburban/rural little magazines' engagement with Shakespeare, examining how regional socio-cultural contexts shape divergent critiques and adaptation of Shakespeare's works.
5. To understand criteria for classifying independent theatre magazines as 'little magazines' based on editorial autonomy, non-commercial ethos, and grassroots engagement with avant-garde or subversive Shakespearean performances.

## **(v) Research Questions:**

The following questions will be addressed in this proposed research to throw light on this uncharted treasure land:

1. What is the contribution of Bengali little magazines in the realm of non-mainstream Shakespeare discourse in Bengal?
2. How does a little magazine challenge the mainstream literary discourse?
3. What alternative narratives and critiques of Shakespeare's works emerge from the pages of little magazines?
4. What unique perspectives do little magazines offer on Shakespeare published in metropolitan spaces and those from suburban or rural regions?
5. How do the Bengali little magazines cater to the demands of Shakespeare studies in Bengal in contemporary times?
6. What makes an independent theatre magazine qualify as a little magazine?

## **(vi) Methodology:**

Since I mentioned in my research problem that the contribution of Bengali little magazines to the non-mainstream Shakespeare discourse in Bengal is often overlooked, I decided to work on this topic, as there has been no significant effort to collect and highlight the scattered writings on Shakespeare in Bengali little magazines. First, I collected specific issues of little magazines focused on Shakespeare from various little magazine libraries like *Little Magazine Library O Gabeshana Kendra*, College Street, Kolkata; *Kangal Harinath Little Magazine Library*, Barasat; and *Dhansiri Rarebooks & Craftsshop*, Mohonbati, Raiganj. Besides, I got immense help from some little magazine stockists—*Patiram*, College Street, *Dhyanbindu*, College Square, etc. Then, I have organized these articles according to different chapters. My research spans writings from 1964 to 2014. Then, I conducted a content analysis of writings on Shakespeare across metropolitan space, non-metropolitan spaces, writings in contemporary times, and independent theatre magazines, considering them under the category of little magazines. The researcher did not frame the analysis in a pre-biased manner with any specific theoretical framework; rather, the emphasis has been given to how these articles represent Shakespeare. The researcher has allowed articles to

speak for themselves in terms of themes, and this analytical framework has been applied accordingly. I focused only on critical essays about Shakespeare in these little magazines, which are limited to West Bengal. As secondary data, I have included edited volumes, dissertations, and research articles.

### **(vii) Origin of Magazines, Their Nature and Characteristics:**

The word ‘magazine’ has its roots in Arabic and French. It originated from the Arabic word ‘makhazin’, meaning storehouse or depot, and was borrowed into Old French as ‘magasin’. Over time, the term evolved to refer to a place where goods were kept and sold. By the late 16<sup>th</sup> century, ‘magazine’ began to denote a repository of articles or writings, particularly in the publishing context. The modern meaning emerged in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, denoting a periodical publication containing articles, illustrations, and information on various topics. Thus, ‘magazine’ carries a rich history of transformation from a storehouse to a repository of knowledge and entertainment.

The Oxford English Dictionary<sup>12</sup> defines ‘magazine’ as follows:

1. A periodical publication containing articles and illustrations, typically covering a particular subject or area of interest, and published regularly, usually weekly or monthly.
2. A chamber for holding a supply of cartridges to be fed automatically to the breech of a gun.

The Cambridge Dictionary<sup>13</sup> also defines ‘magazine’ as follows:

1. A type of thin book with a paper cover that contains articles, photographs, and advertisements, usually published every week or month.

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<sup>12</sup>The definition of "magazine" as a periodical can be found in the Second Edition of the Oxford English Dictionary, published in 1989.

<sup>13</sup>The Cambridge Dictionary defines a magazine as "a big, thin book that you can buy every week or month that has pictures and writing" in its Essential English Dictionary edition. It emphasizes that magazines are periodical publications, typically featuring articles, photographs, and advertisements, and are issued regularly, such as weekly or monthly.

2. A container for bullets in a gun, or a metal container for bullets that can be easily removed from a gun and replaced with another container.

The word ‘magazine’ came into use in 1731 with the publication of *The Gentleman’s Magazine*<sup>14</sup>, edited by Edward Cave. From the very beginning, it was arranged to contain varied content, much like a storehouse of materials. Overall, magazines provide a rich blend of informative, entertaining, and visually stimulating content, making them a beloved medium for readers seeking both knowledge and enjoyment. When the term ‘little’ was added to ‘magazine’, it failed to reach the broader audience. Its publication stood in contrast to the frenzy of mainstream publications, aiming instead to cater to a niche readership. A little magazine is a small, non-commercial publication that typically focuses on literary and artistic content. These magazines are often produced on a limited budget, with a small print run, and are usually aimed at a niche audience. Unlike mainstream magazines, little magazines prioritize creative expression, experimental work, and the promotion of emerging or avant-garde writers and artists over commercial success. When the word “little” is associated with the word magazine to signify a new terminology, in fact, both the words lose their original significance. Little magazines are neither little in terms of the littleness of their size and circulation nor are they magazines in the true sense. "Little" has a metaphorical connotation here; it is the repercussion of an intellectual movement that tries to build up a resistance against popular mainstream literary practices. *Encyclopedia Britannica (1995)* provides a true portrait of a little magazine:

A little magazine usually begins with the objective of publishing literary work of some artistic merit that is unacceptable to commercial magazines for any one or all of three reasons: the writer is unknown and therefore not a good risk; the work itself is unconventional or experimental in form; or it violates one or several popular notions of moral, social, or aesthetic behavior.

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<sup>14</sup>Edward Cave (1691–1754) founded *The Gentleman's Magazine* in January 1731, marking it as the first general-interest periodical in English. It served as a "storehouse" of diverse content, including news, essays, and poetry, and ran until 1922. Cave's innovative approach influenced journalism significantly, coining the term "magazine" for such publications.

Little magazines are typically non-profit ventures, often run by writers, artists, and intellectuals passionate about literature and art. The term ‘little magazine’ carries a linguistic and economic explanation rooted in capitalism, and the word itself is used within that framework. However, the concept of the little magazine goes beyond mere publishing and capitalism. It stands as a unique weapon in the fight against anything large, institutional, or rooted in capitalist-feudal mentalities. Now the question arises: Is this capitalism purely economic, or does it extend to thematic and ideological aspects? Little magazines sell reasonably well, but the editors do not become wealthy from those sales. Instead, the revenue is reinvested in future issues, maintaining the continuity of the publication. They rely on subscriptions, donations, or small grants rather than advertising revenue, allowing them to maintain editorial independence and focus on creative content. These magazines are known for their willingness to publish experimental, avant-garde, and unconventional work. They often serve as platforms for emerging writers and artists who may not fit into mainstream publications. This emphasis on innovation makes little magazines important incubators for new literary and artistic movements. Little magazines usually have a small print run, sometimes as few as a few hundred copies. They cater to a niche audience, often composed of fellow writers, artists, and intellectuals. The limited circulation reflects both the specialized nature of the content and the modest resources available for production. Unlike commercial magazines, little magazines often do not adhere to a strict publication schedule. They might be published quarterly, biannually, or even less frequently, depending on the resources and time available to the editors and contributors. Despite their small size and limited resources, little magazines are known for maintaining high editorial standards. Publishing a little magazine is a crusade—a weapon. It requires one to focus on the work, not on oneself. This is the mindset needed to move forward. The editors are often deeply involved in the literary community and are committed to publishing work of genuine artistic merit. A little magazine editor works not for profit but out of a sense of duty. The goal is to express thoughts, share literary ideas, and reflect the consciousness of the surrounding life through that very publication. Little magazines often foster a sense of community among contributors and readers. The contributions of little magazines offer their editors and workers profound rewards such as refined taste and sensibility, artistic perspective, self-respect, and a sense of social responsibility. These are the ultimate achievements of a little magazine worker. However, little magazines do not conform to the dominance of mainstream media. The work of a little magazine is focused and purposeful, not meant to cater to

a wide audience. It is neither driven by the lure of awards nor the prestige of wealth, nor does it engage in commercial transactions. Little magazines are a unique form of literary creation. They have had connections with the masses from the very beginning, but they have never been dependent on mass appeal. They are collaborative spaces where like-minded individuals can share ideas, critique each other's work, and support the growth of new voices. Alan Swallow, the first interpreter of little magazines, lists three general characteristic features of little magazines in his article "The Little Magazines" (1946): (i) The magazines are economically unsound; (ii) they seldom provide any gain for those associated with them, i.e., writer, editor, or publisher; and (iii) big cities like New York, etc., are not the centre of their activity. Abu Mounir, in his article "Little Magazines in Bengal: The Voices of Creative Independence,"<sup>15</sup> lists three functions of the little magazine, in accordance with Swallow: "to provide a market for the great writing of our time; to sponsor experiment controversy, and new movements; and to give a hearing to unpopular ideas" (2002). These characteristics make little magazines vital to the literary and artistic landscape, offering a space for creative expression and innovation that might not find a home in mainstream media. And the ability 'to say something sharply' is one of the defining aspects of Little Magazine, and this quality upholds the brand of modernism in general. As William Troy in "The Story of Little Magazines" attempts to eulogize the genre, "The genealogy of magazines offers one of the most confusing of studies. To pursue the different strains of heredity, to separate the tangled crisscross of influences when the subject is not even as dependably concrete as a man but only one of the more elusive and insubstantial of man's expressions, is a petty, nearly hopeless task" (1947, p. 481).

Peter Brooker and Andrew Thacker, in their edited volume *The Oxford Critical and Cultural History of Modernist Magazines*<sup>16</sup> (2009), offer a comprehensive study of modernist

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<sup>15</sup>Mounir, Abu. "Little Magazines in Bengal: The Voices of Creative Independence", *Economic and Political weekly*, Vol. 57, Issue No. 12, 19 March 2022, ISSN (print)-0012-9976.

<sup>16</sup>Peter Brooker and Andrew Thacker's *The Oxford Critical and Cultural History of Modernist Magazines* (2009) is a three-volume scholarly series analyzing the pivotal role of "little magazines" in shaping modernist movements globally. Volume I covers Britain and Ireland (1880–1955), Volume II North America (1894–1960), and Volume III Europe (1880–1940). Each volume combines essays examining how avant-garde journals like *The Egoist*, *The Little Review*, and *Der Sturm* fostered experimental literature, art, and political discourse, reshaping modernist cultural landscapes.

magazines, including Little Magazine. Sociological theories of little magazines focus on their role as communities of practice and their function within literary networks. This approach examines how these publications create and sustain literary communities, offering writers and artists a sense of belonging and shared purpose. Pierre Bourdieu's (1986) concept of "cultural capital"<sup>17</sup> is often employed to understand how little magazines contribute to the formation of literary fields and hierarchies. By providing a space for emerging writers and artists to publish, little magazines help establish new forms of cultural capital that can later be recognized and legitimized by the broader literary establishments. Besides, little magazines are examined through archival and canonical lenses. As many little magazines have been historically underrepresented or forgotten, archival research plays a crucial role in recovering and re-evaluating these publications. Scholars working in this area seek to understand how little magazines contribute to or challenge literary canons.

The Little Magazine Movement had its roots in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, paralleling similar developments in the West. Significant early examples include *The Dial* (1840-44), which was edited by Ralph Waldo Emerson and Margaret Fuller in Boston, and *The Savoy* (1896), overseen by Arthur Symons in London, both of which sought to challenge Victorian materialism. These little magazines played a crucial role in shaping avant-garde literary movements such as Modernism and Post-modernism throughout the twentieth century. In India, the movement gained momentum during the 1950s and 1960s across various languages, including Bengali, Tamil, Marathi, Hindi, Malayalam, and Gujarati. Kolkata emerged as a central hub for this movement, particularly through Bengali-language magazines. A literary-focused intensity is the hallmark of little magazines. In Europe, modernist movements were spearheaded by magazines like *Yellow Book*, *Dada*, *Little Review*, *Blast*, *Dial*, and *Criterion*—now legendary name. In Bengal, the first such magazine of this kind was likely *Sabuj Patra*. In later eras, we find *Kallol*, *Parichay*, and subsequently *Kabita*, *Purbasha*, and much later, *Krittibas*, edited by Sunil Gangopadhyay. Contemporary Bengali little magazines include *Alinda*, *Shotobhisha*, *Songbed*, *Ebong Ei Somoy*, *Kabipatra*, *Nahabat* etc. These little magazines carry gunpowder, the potential for explosions—

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<sup>17</sup>Pierre Bourdieu introduced the concept of the 'cultural capital' in his 1973 essay titled "Cultural Reproduction and Social Reproduction". However, the concept was more fully developed in his later major work, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, published in French, 1979, in English 1986. Bourdieu's concept of 'cultural capital' explains how knowledge, tastes, and cultural awareness serve as social assets. In the metropolitan hub of Kolkata, urban intellectuals used Shakespearean discourse to assert their cultural sophistication and distinguish themselves within elite literary circles.

bursting forth in new, unconventional creations and groundbreaking forms of expression. They can shatter what is traditional, familiar, and sanctioned by the establishment. Some writers rise from little magazines to prominence in commercial publications, while others remain forever loyal to the spirit of little magazines, never forsaking their roots.

Ashrukumar Sikdar, in his essay “Little Magazine: A Debate in the Barometer of Literature”<sup>18</sup>, has stated—

A little magazine lacks organizational efficiency or financial stability. Its existence is as precarious as a drop of water on a lotus leaf, constantly trembling. It survives by battling uncertainty about its very existence. These publications work as pioneers, as agents of the avant-garde. Like a group of skilled and fearless soldiers in an army who advance, leaving the main force behind, little magazines play a similar leading role. They pave the way for new dimensions, heralding fresh literary movements. Their smallness seems to be a protest against the vastness of commercial publications. The mission of these magazines is to satirize the establishment, to wound it amidst the torrents of criticism. (24, translated)

From the perspective of their nature and character, little magazines can be divided into four categories- Brahmin little magazines, Kshatriya little magazines, Vaishya little magazines, and Shudra little magazines. Sandip Dutta, in his book, *Little Magazine Bhabnay*, mentioned that,

Some magazines appear grand in their outlook and advertisement; these can be termed as Brahmin little magazines. These magazines usually have their own offices and publication houses. Kshatriya little magazines are militant in nature. They characterize themselves through the sharp weapon of anti-establishment sentiment. It is this character that gives little magazines their significance. The primary objective of Vaishya little magazines is business and profit-making

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<sup>18</sup>Ashrukumar Sikdar, “Little Magazine: A Debate in the Barometer of Literature”, *Nahabat*, Ashoknagar, North 24 Parganas, 2013, pp. 23-25.

under the guise of a publication. Shudra little magazines represent the ongoing battle of little magazines standing against the monstrous backbone of capitalist civilization. These magazines truly embody the voice of little magazines. (25)

Shankarlal Bhattacharya, in his essay “Magazine er Boro-Chhoto”<sup>19</sup>, discusses the distinctiveness and significance of magazines, particularly highlighting the contrast between large, commercial publications and smaller, more intimate little magazines. He emphasizes how little magazines act as a platform for experimental, non-conventional literary expressions and serve as the vanguard of new literary movements. Bhattacharya also reflects on the role these publications play in shaping both individual writers and the broader literary landscape, underscoring their importance despite their often precarious existence. Bhattacharya wrote,

I often struggle to find a satisfactory answer to the question of why a little magazine is called ‘little’ and what makes the big magazines ‘big.’ The concept of a little magazine is somewhat akin to that of the third world. Little magazines offer just enough scope for free thought and dreams that the term ‘little’ often feels entirely out of place for this kind of magazine. (28, translated)

Small magazines and small publishers possess an aesthetic and morality that one cannot expect from larger establishments. From little magazines, we find at least two things that we don’t anticipate from big publications—a perspective and a personality. A little magazine is inherently a paradox because it seeks to be both significant and modest at the same time. True little magazines possess a distinct aesthetic of their own, with a remarkably high standard, and this lofty aspiration often demands boldness from emerging writers. In “Little Magazine Prasange,” Saiyad Khaled Nouman stated—

The practical sequence of the evolution and expansion of little magazines has roughly unfolded as follows: irregular, unconventional, or marginal, a limited literary effort either for self-expression or self-promotion, which, though not

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<sup>19</sup>Shankarlal Bhattacharya “Magazine er Boro-Chhoto”, *Nahabat*, Ashoknagar, North 24 Parganas, 2013, pp. 28-31.

necessarily about a specific subject, tends to be rebellious, anti-commercial, and anti-establishment in nature. A little magazine is expected to have its own distinct character and philosophy, which essentially define its identity. This identity can be described as a form of atheism—opposing entrenched interests and the established system, rejection, and rebellion. A courageous character, being argumentative, politically aware, and critical of authority, akin to a heretic or a revolutionary, represents the true nature and identity of a little magazine. (16, translated)

The inability and inadequacy of authors to uphold the true essence of the term ‘little magazine’ has caused the identity and respect of little magazines to diminish, with readers turning away and the content becoming monotonous and grotesque. The largest institutional magazines in Bengal reject the authenticity or existence of little magazines, and they have renamed them ‘Anu Patrika.’ However, the essence of ‘little’ is not reflected in the term ‘Anu’. The word ‘little’ carries character and philosophy, but ‘Anu’ does not. While little magazines are small in scale and modest in their approach, they are grand in their voice, intent, and worldview. To label them as ‘Anu Patrika’ is to undermine their significance. The pace of little magazine culture, the selected, limited, and knowledgeable reader’s heart contains the essence of the little magazine’s life. The little magazine does not engage in anything. It can be dismissed, but it rises again after a while. This discontinuity, this self-renunciation, is its worth. Even if little magazines are discarded like trash in a dustbin, they must still remain thoughtful and cautious in their distribution. Poetry, as a mainstream magazine, is never sufficient; it needs to be accompanied by reflective stimuli, argumentative clarity, and bold prose. Prose that is avoided does not become a little magazine. Perhaps the little magazine is so individualistic and idiosyncratic that it cannot be organized. That uniqueness and independence have become the essence of the little magazine’s style. A magazine without independence, distinctiveness, personal voice, or tone can never be a little magazine. The little magazine is certainly a refuge for literary efforts, self-expression, and exploration. Therefore, the little magazine should not indulge in printing the works of commercial writers to gain praise or promote their own publication. Such a mentality is against the spirit of the little magazine.

### (viii) Journey of Little Magazines in Bengal:

The journey of little magazines in Bengal is far from insignificant. Amid the grand, advertisement-laden literary magazines like *Prabashi*, *Manasi*, and *Bharatbarsha*, the youth-driven *Sabuj Patra* was born in 1914, edited by Pramatha Chaudhuri. This modest, image- and advertisement-free magazine sparked a new wave of thought and declared a jihad against conventionality. The turbulence of Europe during World War I in 1914 and the establishment of socialism in Russia under Lenin's leadership in 1917 provided a new worldview that shook public consciousness. *Sabuj Patra* continued until 1918. Later, in 1923, *Kallol*, edited by Dinesh Ranjan Das and Gokul Chandra Nag, highlighted various aspects of the marginalized working class life and created a new standard of values in literature. *Kallol* magazine became a pivotal platform for modernist writers, including notable figures such as Kazi Nazrul Islam, Mohitlal Majumder, Achintyakumar Sen Gupta, Satyendranath Dutta, Premendra Mitra, and Buddhadeb Basu. The young writers ushered in a different literary era, known as the *Kallol* era. Their enthusiasm against the conservatives and reformists eventually waned, and *Kallol* ceased publication in 1930. According to Biswabandhu Bhattacharya<sup>20</sup>-

The historical journey of Bengali little magazines began with *Pragati*, *Kallol*, and *Kalikalom*. Almost all defining characteristics seem to align in their case-standing in opposition to the prevalent and established mainstream periodicals, a spirit of independence, and a fierce struggle against poverty and the desire for self-expression. These magazines were not driven by the pursuit of wealth, fame, or popularity but aimed to express their literary ideas and creativity. The editors or initiators of these magazines sought to convey their literary thoughts and the intense yearning for self-expression. They held a suitable weapon in their hands to challenge the existing literary norms. The established, commercially conscious magazines were unwilling to encourage the exploration of stories and poems. However, ignoring the intense desire for creation was also impossible. Therefore, when a group of young individuals, disregarding extreme financial

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<sup>20</sup>Biswabandhu Bhattacharya, "Little Magazine: Chirajuba O Chirojibi," *Korok*, Bengali little magazine, Prak-Sharod Sankhya, May-August, 2006, pp. 15-21.

constraints and commercial mindsets, started publishing their magazines, the true little magazine was born. (19, translated)

The magazine *Baromash* started as a monthly publication, later becoming a quarterly, biannual, and now an annual one. In reality, a little magazine is not just a platform for publishing a large volume of diverse writings. Bengal did not lack large-format, widely circulated magazines. In the past, there were magazines like *Prabashi*, *Bharatbarsha*, *Manasi*, and *Bichitra*, which featured various types of writings to entertain different readers. For a magazine to be self-sufficient, it needs a significant number of subscribers. A magazine cannot cover its publication costs solely through sales, necessitating advertisements. To attract advertisements, a magazine's circulation must increase, leading to the need to cater not just to readers but also to advertisers. Sometimes, a magazine becomes a livelihood for its editor or publisher, turning into a profitable business. While the terms 'little' and 'large' are relative, it's not uncommon for a small magazine to transform into a large one. A true little magazine is not just small in size but usually has a limited readership. There are not many wealthy, idealistic editors who can sustain a loss-making magazine for long. Buddhadeb Bose believed that a little magazine is a journal of pure literature. However, not all literary journals qualify as little magazines. Institutional publications like *Sahitya Parishad Patrika*, *Biswabharati Patrika*, and *Rabindrabharati Patrika* cannot be categorized as little magazines. On the other hand, little magazines can focus on literary topics, such as *Itihas* and *Jiggasa*. Nevertheless, little magazines are generally referred to as literary journals. There is no objection to considering Bankimchandra's *Bangadarshan* and *Prachar* as literary journals. However, despite being literary journals, they are not the original examples of Bengali little magazines. In the essay "Little Magazine: Pratyasha O Prapti"<sup>21</sup> Alok Roy has stated that 'Behind a little magazine, there is sometimes the leadership of an individual and sometimes the collective effort of a group of writers. Financial considerations are also taken into account, but a little magazine is never a means of earning profit' (11). In his essay "*Sahityapatra*," Buddhadeb Basu states, "A genuine little magazine can never be formed by creating a committee, holding meetings, or establishing a limited company" (qtd. Roy, 11, translated). When *Kalikolom* was published

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<sup>21</sup>Alok Roy, "Little Magazine: Pratyasha O Prapti," *Korok*, Prak-Sharod Sankhya, May-August, 2006, pp. 7-14.

alongside *Kallol*, or *Nirukto* alongside *Kabita*, and *Sahityapatra* alongside *Parichay*, it becomes evident how literary groups form and dissolve. From this, it seems possible to categorize little magazines into two types: individual-centric and group-centric publications. The outcome of both seems similar—the enthusiasm and vigor of an individual last for a short period, while groups often break apart after a brief time. The *Kallol* group was instrumental in bringing modernist themes to Bengali poetry, particularly in the 1930s, alongside other influential magazines like *Kabita* and *Parichay*, edited by Buddhadeb Bose and Sudhindranath Datta, respectively. In 1935, Buddhadeb Bose initiated the magazine *Kabita* to publish modern poetry. Poets like Jibananda Das and Sukanta Bhattacharya infused poetry with a new language and sensibility. In the 1940s, amidst the backdrop of World War II, the partition of India, riots, famine, and the independence movement, magazines like *Arani*, *Somosamoyik*, *Golpobharati*, *Dwandwo*, and *Kranti* emerged. In his essay, Alok Roy further states:

Major publishers are often unwilling to publish good books, especially those written by unknown young writers with potential. Once someone becomes a publisher, the desire to become a major publisher arises, making it difficult to maintain the unique character of a little magazine. This is what happened in the case of *Prama* magazine. *Prama* Publishing House became eager to publish all kinds of books, with the income from publishing supporting the magazine. Gradually, it is seen that the enthusiasm and initiative of the magazine's editor become largely dedicated to the prosperity of the publishing house. Today many publishing houses have emerged centered around little magazines, which may even become competitors to commercial publishing houses. Magazines like *Chatuskon*, *Kobi O Kabita*, *Anustup*, *Ebong Ei Somoy*, *Ebong Mushayera*, and *Korok*—to name a few—have their own publishing divisions. Those who do not publish books themselves often have special issues of their magazines published in book form by commercial establishments. (12, translated)

In the 1950s, during the refugee crisis and the effort to build a new India, magazines such as *Krittibas*, *Mayukh*, *Anukto*, and *Kabipatra* became notable. This era also saw the rise of various little magazines, which were predominantly pro-left and anti-establishment, reflecting a broader

cultural shift towards modernity and individual expression in Bengali literature. In 1953, *Krittibas* emerged in Kolkata, further shaping the literary landscape in the post-independence phase. It became a significant outlet for young poets who later gained prominence in modern Bengali poetry. The inaugural issue was edited by Sunil Gangopadhyay, alongside Ananda Bagchi and Dipak Mazumdar, with Gangopadhyay eventually becoming its sole editor. Other notable editors included Shakti Chattopadhyay and Sarat Kumar Mukhopadhyay. During the early 1960s, some poets like Shakti Chattopadhyay, Malay Roy Choudhury, and a few others from *Krittibas* transitioned to the avant-garde Hungry Movement, which sought to redefine literary boundaries in Bengal.

The Little Magazine Movement in West Bengal emerged prominently after 1961, significantly influenced by the Hungry Generation Movement, which disrupted the existing cultural landscape. In the 1960s, during the Hungry movement and other anti-establishment trends, the prevailing spirit was to reject everything institutional and conventional. This movement not only transformed the types of publications but also the titles of magazines themselves. The Hungry Generation sought to challenge the literary establishment and critique what they viewed as a decaying societal structure. Key figures in this movement include Shakti Chattopadhyay, Malay Roy Choudhury, Subimal Basak, Tridib Mitra, Samir Roychoudhury, Falguni Roy, Basudeb Dasgupta, and others. Thus, through political, economic, and social changes, countless magazines have been published and disappeared over time.

In the current era of globalization, unrestricted commerce, electronic media, military aggression, political corruption, government misconduct, terrorist activities, and, most importantly, a crisis of values, people are often diverted from reflective pursuits. Little magazines emerged as the free medium of self-expression in this context. As the digital age unfolds, marked by rapid connectivity and information exchange, the position of these publications is both challenged and revitalized. The internet has transformed the landscape for little magazines. Digital platforms allow for broader distribution, enabling these publications to reach global audiences. Unlike their print counterparts, online little magazines can bypass traditional distribution barriers, allowing them to publish and promote work more efficiently. Websites and social media platforms facilitate the sharing of content, attracting readers who may not have access to print editions. Digital formats enable little magazines to experiment with multimedia content, such as audio,

video, and interactive features. By leveraging digital tools to enhance accessibility and engagement while remaining committed to quality and authenticity, little magazines can continue to thrive and fulfill their crucial role in the literary ecosystem. The essence of little magazines is not only preserved but can be revitalized in this new era, ensuring their relevance for future generations of readers and writers. However, some magazines have kept the little magazine tradition alive, including *Rokto Mangsho*, *Simanta Sahitya*, *Korok*, *Mushayera*, *Anustup*, *Bibhab*, *Kourab*, and *Prama*. Additionally, *Aneek*, *Shamibrikhho*, *Avijan*, *20 Dine*, *Kiran*, *Rourab*, *Shabdik*, and *Somoy* have been published irregularly.

Independent theatre magazines can also be considered under the broad category of a little magazine. Bengali little magazines and theatre magazines are both significant components of Bengali literary and cultural discourse, but they differ greatly in terms of their objectives, content, audience, and historical context. The primary aim of Bengali little magazines is to promote avant-garde, experimental, and alternative literary and artistic expressions. On the other hand, theater magazines focus specifically on the theatre arts, covering all aspects of drama, including playwriting, direction, acting, stage design, and theatre criticism. To determine whether a theatre magazine can be classified as a little magazine, one must consider its specific features: a) Intent and Content: Is the magazine focused on exploring innovative or underrepresented ideas in theatre? Does it prioritize artistic expression over commercial success? b) Audience and Circulation: Does it cater to a niche audience with limited distribution? and, c) Independence: Is it independent and free from corporate or institutional control? Some theatre magazines, such as those produced by experimental theatre groups or focused on fringe productions could be considered little magazines. Since a chapter of this thesis focuses on independent theatre magazines and how they can be considered under the category of a little magazine, let me give here a brief outline of the history of theatre and theatre magazines in Bengal. The establishment of the *Calcutta Theatre* in 1775 laid the groundwork for modern theatre in Bengal. The *Hindu Theatre*, founded by Prasanna Kumar Tagore in 1831, truly catalyzed the growth of Bengali theatre. The late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries witnessed theatre becoming a vehicle for nationalist movements. *The Great National Theatre*, established by Girish Chandra Ghosh in 1872, became a landmark institution in professionalizing Bengali theatre. Until 1901, India did not have any theatre magazines. In 1901, Amarendra Nath Dutta transformed theatrical practice by launching *Rangalaya*, a weekly theatre publication. Then, theatre magazines like *Rangabhumi*, *Rangamancha*, *Natyamandir* emerged. After independence,

theatre magazines like *Gananatya*, *Bohurupi*, *Group Theatre* etc. also emerged. But they were institutionally affiliated publications and acted as the mouthpiece of their respective theatre groups. On the other hand, *Natya Bhuban*, *Natyachinta*, *Epic Theatre*, *Purba Paschim*, etc. are some of the examples of independent theatre magazines, which often share the same ethos of intellectual and artistic freedom that characterize little magazines.

Another issue has also become a matter of concern for little magazines. Authors of little magazines are concerned about the way little magazines award the best poet, storyteller, essayist, and even editors each year. Authors seek recognition and appreciation from readers. However, such recognition is not found in awards given by institutions. There is a close connection between awards, authors gaining publicity, and the magazines also getting a chance for wider exposure. At one time, commercial magazines initiated the practice of awarding authors. From *Anandabazar Patrika* and *Yugantar Patrika* to *Ultorath Patrika*, awards were given to promote authors. However, little magazine writers engage in writing to resist the mainstream. A little magazine is neither driven by profit nor bound by a capitalist mindset. Its true capital lies in nurturing intellectual capital—by engaging writers in meaningful work and fostering creative thought. Therefore, the essence of a little magazine is not about size or scale but about reaching readers with meaningful literature, inspiring them, and guiding them toward intellectual and enlightened paths. The responsibility of a little magazine is not the same as that of commercial publications. Little magazines transcend academic boundaries and aim to create a deeper connection with readers, promoting genuine literary engagement and critical thought. Little magazines also play a role of opposition. Does it suit the authors and editors of little magazines to accept literary awards in a banquet hall of a grand hotel? The recognition that authors seek cannot be granted by any institution. Little magazines were born out of resistance to institutional authority. Accepting institutional awards does not enhance the honor of little magazine writers. The anti-establishment nature of the Bengali little magazines is one of their most defining characteristics, setting them apart from mainstream literary and cultural publications. These magazines emerged as platforms for dissent, critique, and alternative thinking, often challenging the socio-political status quo and the cultural norms of their time. Rooted in a spirit of rebellion, they have played a significant role in shaping the intellectual and literary landscape of Bengal, particularly during periods of political unrest and social change. Little magazines became the ideal medium for the expression, as they were free from the commercial and ideological constraints that governed mainstream publications.

Bengali little magazines were often founded in opposition to the perceived conservatism and elitism of mainstream literary culture. Mainstream publications were seen as being aligned with the establishment, often promoting literature that conformed to traditional values and aesthetics. In contrast, little magazines embraced new and experimental forms of expression, challenging the literary conventions of the time. Little magazines played a dominant role in bringing the wave of modernism in Bengali literature to Bengal. Despite the significance of these cultural artifacts, comprehensive efforts to preserve them were lacking in both academic and public libraries until 1979, when Sandip Dutta established a library dedicated to this purpose. This library was officially registered in 1996 as the Kolkata Little Magazine Library and Research Centre. The West Bengal Bangla Akademi's Little Magazine Fair started in 1998. It is a state-sponsored fair exclusively for little magazines. The Akademi attracts magazines from Kolkata and the districts. Little Magazine has taken part in the Kolkata Book Fair since its inception in 1976. A dedicated Little Magazine Pavilion was started in the 1980s. Along with the government initiatives, the Little Magazine Co-Ordination Forum started the Little Magazine Fair in 2008. This forum, by organizing fairs in various districts, aimed to motivate district-based little magazines and empower district-level writers in West Bengal.

In the world of little magazines, where at first glance the struggle may seem unequal, it is actually a fair fight. When a commercial magazine fails to sustain itself, it disappears; however, a little magazine does not. They lack financial capital but possess literary capital. Hence, for every magazine that fades, a new one emerges, bringing along a new wave of writers with a fresh editor. This is why little magazines are both everlasting and resilient. They do not thrive on the market of literature but rather control its creation, giving due recognition to talented but overlooked writers. Despite numerous temptations and even after achieving fame, many writers remain loyal to little magazines as a gesture of gratitude. Therefore, little magazines have never been disregarded. At times, it seems that this parallel stream is throwing a powerful challenge towards the mainstream. However, the nature of omnibus national or syllabus-centric little magazines, focused on personal gains or losses, is corroding the essence of little magazines and undermining their honor. This should be identified and addressed. Additionally, little magazines that dream of becoming commercial publications in the future should not be given undue importance. It is not harmful to accept invitations from major magazines, but those who compromise the purity of little magazines while waiting for such opportunities are not truly writers of any magazine. Some of the little

magazines are no longer running, but the articles published in these little magazines started being compiled, and this compilation is a new trend of little magazines today, and this proves the relevance of the little magazine movement.

### **(ix) Shakespeare in Bengali Little Magazines in the Post-Independence Period:**

The 20<sup>th</sup> century saw a surge in the publication of little magazines in Bengal, particularly in the aftermath of India's independence in 1947. These magazines were characterized by their non-conventional formats, small print runs, and experimental content. They offered an avenue for new and emerging writers to be heard and were platforms for artistic expression, cultural debates, and socio-political commentaries. In the post-independence period, Bengali little magazines played a significant role in promoting literature and art, including the translation of Shakespeare's plays. It was in the post-independence period that the little magazine truly embraced Shakespeare's plays and poems, paving the way for a unique blend of Western literary genius and Bengali literary sensibilities. Shakespeare started to appear in the Bengali Little Magazines in the post-independence period. Though the magazine movement in Bengal turned up in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the specific issues started flowing on the auspicious occasion of Shakespeare's quatercentenary anniversary in 1964. Like every other nation, India witnessed a special attraction for Shakespeare during this time. Various magazines came out commemorating this sacred moment by publishing special volumes. However, it was Srikumar Bandopadhyay who pioneered the journey of writing on Shakespeare in a Bengali little magazine. Bandopadhyay's article, "Shakespeare Pratibha" in 1964, according to Arindam Mukhopadhyay <sup>22</sup>(5), pioneered the journey of writing on Shakespeare in a Bengali little magazine after independence. Later, we saw many such little magazines like *Uttaran*, *Uttarsuri*, *Parichay*, and *Ispaater Chithi* concentrated on publishing their special issues in 1964. Not only Bengali little magazines but also various journals of national and international repute published on Shakespeare. These publications are an

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<sup>22</sup>Arindam Mukhopadhyay, in his 2014 doctoral thesis, mentioned that Srikumar Bandopadhyay's article "Shakespeare Pratibha" was the first essay on Shakespeare in a Bengali little magazine.

interesting study to decipher how the indigenous approaches to Shakespeare intersect with the socio-political contexts of the milieu. These issues were quite successful and appealing to the readers, as these experimental and non-conformist writings welcome us for a stage of alternate discussion and debate. Later, many other Bengali little magazines focused on Shakespeare as a special theme of their edition. Contemporary magazines like *Natun Disha* and *Ebang Mushayera* have dedicated special issues to Shakespeare. Additionally, *Alapparba* and *Nandan* released special issues on Shakespeare to mark his 450<sup>th</sup> birth anniversary. At first glance, it may seem that discussions on Shakespeare in little magazines are tied to specific occasions. However, *Natun Disha* stands out as an exception, as it published a special issue on Shakespeare in the 441<sup>st</sup> year of his birth. This actually proves that our passion for Shakespeare is a continuous process, and through this process, we are constantly rediscovering Shakespeare in new ways. In fact, little magazines have evoked a better response for the Bengalization of the Bard of Avon.

This thesis has four core chapters excluding the introduction and the conclusion. This thesis aims to highlight the contribution of Bengali little magazines to Shakespeare study in Bengal during the post-independence period. It explores how these magazines have approached Shakespeare study in a more holistic, inclusive, and unconventional manner, shedding beyond the traditional boundaries of Shakespearean discourse. Where little magazines are recognized as a non-mainstream literary form, this thesis attempts to explore how a global icon like Shakespeare is viewed through the lens of Bengali perspectives via these little magazines. The first chapter of the thesis titled **‘Echoes of the Bard: Metropolitan Interpretation of Quatercentenary Issues in Bengali Little Magazines,’** examines the responses to Shakespeare’s works in the context of Bengali little magazines during the quatercentenary celebrations of his birth in 1964. This chapter focuses on the specific Shakespeare issue of three Bengali little magazines- *Uttaran*, *Uttarsuri*, and *Parichay*—published in Kolkata, a hub of intellectual and cultural activity, offering significant insights into how urban intellectuals and critics engaged with Shakespeare’s legacy. The writings featured in these special issues reflect a critical moment for Bengali interpretation of Shakespeare, as they emerge from a time when there was a concerted effort to ‘Indianize’ his works. The chapter highlights the importance of Pierre Bourdieu’s concept of ‘cultural capital,’ which helps explain how the elite classes perceive and engage with Shakespeare. According to Bourdieu, the upper classes, ‘Bangali bhadroloks,’ utilize cultural knowledge to maintain social distinctions, and familiarity with Shakespeare serves as a marker of intellectual prestige and social refinement. In

Kolkata, this cultural capital is cultivated through educational institutions such as Hindu College (now Presidency University), Calcutta University, and Jadavpur University, where Shakespeare's plays are integral to the curriculum. The metropolitan response is characterized by an intellectual engagement that is often exclusionary, shaped by highbrow aesthetics and academic frameworks. Despite their metropolitan origins, these magazines often embraced the ethos of subversion, challenging dominant narratives and offering alternative perspectives. Within the elite space of Kolkata, there was a conscious effort to move beyond Eurocentric frameworks. The quatercentenary issues of three Bengali little magazines explored in the first chapter exemplify this trend. Most of the essays analyzed in Chapter I, though they came out of the metropolitan hub of Kolkata, still engaged in the form of cultural resistance and presented alternative readings of Shakespeare. While the quatercentenary celebration was a global phenomenon, these three little magazines localized the celebration within the specific cultural and political context of Bengal. The quatercentenary issues reflect a desire to challenge rigid interpretations of Shakespeare, influenced by Kolkata's tradition of intellectual dissent and leftist ideologies. Editors and contributors approached Shakespeare not as an untouchable figure but as a subject ripe for interpretation. While these writings express deep respect for Shakespeare's genius, they also critique the perpetuation of cultural hierarchies and Eurocentric views. This dynamic illustrates the complex interplay between respect for Shakespeare's legacy and the push for new interpretations that reflect local contexts and experiences.

The second chapter titled '**Shakespeare Beyond the Metropolis: Suburban and Rural Responses in Bengali Little Magazines**', explores the engagement with Shakespeare's works in Bengali little magazines published outside Kolkata, focusing on *Ispater Chithi* from Raniganj, West Bengal, and *Natun Disha* from Dumdum, North 24 Parganas, West Bengal. This chapter aims to illustrate how discussions surrounding Shakespeare manifest in suburban and rural contexts, contrasting these responses with those found in metropolitan areas. The term 'Shakespeare beyond the Metropolis' refers to the study and appreciation of Shakespeare's works in smaller communities, emphasizing that his influence is not limited to urban centres. While major cities like Kolkata are recognized for their Shakespearean scholarship, local theatre groups and schools in rural areas have also embraced his plays, often adapting them to reflect regional dialects and cultural contexts. This adaptation process highlights the timeless and universal appeal of Shakespeare, challenging the perception that his works are solely for elite audiences. Bengali little

magazines have historically played a vital role in promoting avant-garde literary voices, providing platforms for emerging writers to express unconventional ideas. The unique perspectives offered by little magazines published in metropolitan spaces versus those from suburban regions are noteworthy. Metropolitan little magazines often reflect the views of the urban, English-educated elites, who often tend to approach Shakespeare from an exclusionary perspective. In contrast, little magazines- *Ispater Chithi* and *Natun Disha*, explored in this second chapter—provide a more localized engagement with Shakespeare. These magazines challenge the elitism of mainstream literary discourse and break the linguistic and cultural barriers. These magazines have expanded the scope of Shakespeare study in Bengal, making it more inclusive and representative of Bengal’s diverse cultural landscape. *Ispater Chithi*, emerging from the industrial backdrop of Raniganj, reflects themes of labor and social struggles, resonating with the town’s working-class culture. This magazine serves as a counter-narrative to mainstream literature, focusing on marginalized communities often overlooked in urban-centric discussions. The special issue of *Natun Disha* dedicated to Shakespeare showcases various adaptations and translations of his works, illustrating his popularity across Bengal. By celebrating Shakespeare’s 441<sup>st</sup> birth anniversary, this edition continues a rich tradition of Shakespeare studies in Bengal. Both magazines highlight the fascination with Shakespeare among rural readers, demonstrating how these publications democratize access to his works by overcoming linguistic barriers and challenging elitism. Through these little magazines, readers are encouraged to engage with Shakespeare from their own perspectives, moving beyond colonial legacies. This chapter ultimately reveals how rural and suburban interpretations of Shakespeare contribute to a broader understanding of his relevance in diverse cultural settings across Bengal.

The third chapter titled ‘**The Bard in the Digital Age: Shakespeare in 21<sup>st</sup> Century Bengali Little Magazines,**’ examines the enduring relevance of Shakespeare’s works over four centuries and how digital technology has transformed our understanding of his texts. This chapter focuses on the dynamic relationship between Shakespeare’s legacy and Bengali little magazines, particularly in the context of accessibility, education, audience interaction, and scholarship in the digital era. This chapter specifically investigates discussions surrounding Shakespeare in three contemporary Bengali little magazines: *Ebong Mushayera*, *Alapparba*, and *Nandan*. It critically analyzes special issues dedicated to Shakespeare published in these magazines during the 21<sup>st</sup> century. *Ebong Mushayera* features a notable issue on *Hamlet*, which intertwines Shakespeare’s

themes with contemporary Bengali social and political issues, highlighting existential angst and moral dilemmas relevant to local contexts. Little magazines have historically been vital in shaping cultural and literary conversations. In the current digital landscape, characterized by rapid connectivity, these publications face both challenges and revitalization. The internet has broadened their reach, enabling global distribution and fostering literary communities that thrive both online and offline publications. Social media platforms enhance real-time engagement, allowing for dialogue among writers, artists, and readers. They continue to champion underrepresented voices, providing a platform for perspectives often overlooked by mainstream media. *Ebong Mushayera* has embraced digital formats like e-magazines and online archives to expand its readership, particularly among younger audiences who favor digital consumption. This adaptation not only enhances its relevance but also strengthens its community-oriented focus through social media interactions. *Alapparba*, a little magazine, takes a multidisciplinary approach by including contributions from literary scholars that deepen the understanding of Shakespeare's relevance today. A recurring theme across these publications is Shakespeare's role as a catalyst for intellectual discourse. The 450<sup>th</sup> anniversary edition of *Nandan*, a little magazine edited by Aniruddha Chakraborty, has made a notable impact on the appreciation of Shakespeare in Bengal. This special issue not only honored Shakespeare's enduring legacy but also sparked discussions among contemporary Bengali writers and scholars regarding his relevance in modern times. Such efforts contribute to the ongoing tradition of Shakespeare discourse in Bengal, fostering a renewed interest among younger generations. Both *Nandan* and *Alapparba* are recognized for their engagement with cultural and intellectual themes, though they tend to cater to a more elite audience. *Nandan*, in particular, is often viewed as a more prestigious publication due to its historical significance and the caliber of contributions it features from esteemed authors. Collectively, these magazines play a crucial role in continuing the popularity of Shakespeare in modern times and nurturing the rich heritage of Shakespeare studies in Bengal. This chapter highlights how Bengali little magazines serve as crucial mediums for engaging with Shakespeare's works in the digital age while questioning whether the essence of little magazines has been compromised in the modern context. Through localized interpretations and innovative discussions, these publications contribute significantly to both local cultural discourse and global appreciation of Shakespeare.

The fourth chapter, titled ‘**Alternative Voices: Bengali Theatre Magazines’ Independent Responses to Shakespeare,**’ investigates the contributions of two independent theatre magazines to the discourse surrounding Shakespeare in Bengali theatre. The researcher aims to highlight how these magazines serve as platforms for diverse interpretations of Shakespeare, distinct from the perspectives typically presented by mainstream theatre publications. To classify a theatre magazine as a little magazine, certain criteria are essential: a) Intent and Content: The magazine should focus on innovative or marginalized ideas in theatre and prioritize artistic expression over commercial interests. b) Audience and Circulation: It should cater to a niche audience with limited distribution. c) Independence: The magazine must operate independently, free from corporate or institutional control. Theatre magazines like *Natyachinta* and *Epic Theatre*, which are produced by independent entities rather than specific houses, exemplify these characteristics. The 450<sup>th</sup> anniversary issue of *Natyachinta*, published in 2014, was particularly significant in the context of Shakespeare study in Bengal. This edition celebrated Shakespeare’s impact on Bengali culture and theatre, featuring contributions from scholars and practitioners that examined the relevance of his works in contemporary society. These theatre magazines, operating outside institutional frameworks, demonstrated a radical departure from colonial-era reverence and metropolitan elitism and posited Shakespeare as a catalyst for experimental theatre. By rejecting commercial and institutional pressures, both *Natyachinta* and *Epic Theatre* exemplify how alternative media can preserve artistic autonomy and amplify counter-hegemonic voices. The essays featured in *Natyachinta* and *Epic Theatre* offer unique insights into Shakespeare study in Bengal. Their independence allows them to present unbiased analyses and alternative interpretations that diverge from the established norms often found in group-affiliated publications. This chapter emphasizes how these independent magazines contribute new perspectives on Shakespeare, enriching the ongoing dialogue about his relevance in today’s cultural landscape.

Finally, it can be said that the essays discussed in little magazines have brought forth a new dimension to Shakespeare study in Bengal. While most Shakespearean discourse remains confined to academic circles, focusing on translation, adaptation, theatrical productions, and mostly Anglo-centric, little magazines have introduced a fresh perspective. Bengali little magazines have tried its hard to transform Shakespeare from a colonial icon to a figure of cultural manifestation from the perspective of Bengalization. However, Shakespearean studies in little magazines have not yet penetrated suburban spaces in a significant way; they remain largely limited to Kolkata-based

publications. This does not mean that little magazines are not discussed in small towns and marginalized regions of Bengal. Writings on Shakespeare from areas like North Bengal are indeed hard to find. Nonetheless, these discussions in little magazines will undoubtedly enrich Shakespeare study in Bengal.

## **CHAPTER 1**

### **Echoes of the Bard: Metropolitan Interpretation of Quatercentenary Issues in Bengali Little Magazines**

#### **1.1 Shakespeare's Quatercentenary at a Glance:**

A quatercentenary refers to the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of a significant event. The term is derived from the Latin 'quater,' meaning "four times," and 'centenary,' meaning "a period of 100 years." It is used to mark the completion of 400 years since a particular event, such as a birth or founding. The quatercentenary of Shakespeare's birth refers to the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his birth, celebrated in 1964. Born in 1564, Shakespeare is widely regarded as one of the greatest playwrights and poets. The occasion was marked with global events honoring his cultural and literary contributions over four centuries. I have chosen the post-independence period (1964-2014) as the time frame of my study. The justifications for choosing this time frame are: First, post-independence in 1946 brought a new era of engagement with Shakespeare's works. Amidst the rising nationalist sentiments in the 1920s and 30s, studies surrounding Shakespeare faced criticism, leading to a decline in translation and performances, but in 1964, the quatercentenary brought renewed affection for Shakespeare. This auspicious occasion was commemorated through various publications, e.g., Prof. Taraknath Sen's *Shakespeare Commemoration Volume* and Sahitya Akademi's bi-monthly journal *Indian Literature* published a special issue on Shakespeare in 1964. Jadavpur University also published a commemoration volume titled *Shakespeare: A Book of Homage*, edited by Dr. S. C. Sen Gupta. He contributed to the volume with an insightful and comprehensive essay, "Shakespeare-Through the Ages." Another significant publication from 1964 was *Shakespeare Chaturtha Janma Smaraka Grantha*, produced by a dedicated committee led by Dr. Srikumar Banerjee and his students, known as the Shakespeare Quarter-Centenary Birth Celebration Committee. This anthology sparked renewed interest in Shakespeare among non-academic readers. The volume is divided into two main sections. The first, written in English and itself split into two parts, opens with essays by prominent scholars and admirers of Shakespeare

from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century up to Indian independence. It features reflections on Shakespeare's literary genius by eminent Bengali intellectuals such as Michael Madhusudan Dutta, Swami Vivekananda, Sri Aurobindo Ghosh, Sir Brojendranath Seal, and Acharya Prafulla Chandra Roy. The second part includes significant contributions by leading Shakespearean scholars like Dr. S. C. Sen Gupta, Tarapada Mukherjee, Taraknath Sen, Amalendu Bose, and Prafulla Kumar Guha, which have been included to show that Shakespeare study in Bengal was not only academic but even had an aesthetic appeal beyond this. Notably, most contributors to this section were students of Dr. Srikumar Banerjee, either from Presidency College or the University of Calcutta. The National Library also published a Shakespeare Commemoration Volume, featuring two anonymous essays that explore the translation, performance, and critical reception of Shakespeare in India. This volume serves primarily as an archival repository, documenting Shakespeare's cultural journey through India. The second reason for choosing this time frame is quite significant. Most importantly, the magazine movement in India gained momentum in the 1950s and 60s across major Indian languages. And third, the first article on Shakespeare in a little magazine appeared in 1964.

The year 1964 marked a pivotal moment in India for various reasons. At this point, India had recently emerged from the shackles of British colonialism. The nation was in the midst of defining its identity and cultural heritage while simultaneously grappling with the remnants of British influence, particularly in literature, education, and the arts. Shakespeare, a symbol of Western literary canon and British imperialism, became a focal point of this postcolonial cultural reflection during the quatercentenary anniversary. The year was crucial because it provided an opportunity for India to interpret and indigenize Shakespeare, making him relevant to Indian audiences, both as a cultural figure and as a tool for navigating complex postcolonial realities. Instead of being a mere colonial import, he was being reimagined and localized within Indian languages, cultures, and contexts. One of the most significant ways in which Shakespeare was indigenized in 1964 was through theatre. For example, in 1964, the renowned Marathi playwright and actor B. V. Karanth directed a landmark adaptation of *Macbeth* in Kannada, titled *Barnam*

*Vana*,<sup>23</sup> premiered in 1979 and is notable for its innovative use of the traditional *Yakshagana* dance-drama form, which is integral to Karnataka's cultural heritage. Karanth's adaptation blended Shakespeare's tragedy with traditional Indian performance styles, including Yakshagana, a form of dance-drama from Karnataka. By the 1960s, Bengali playwrights and directors' adaptations were no longer simple translations but transformative works that blended Shakespeare with Bengali aesthetics and social realities. Sombhu Mitra, a prominent figure in Bengali theatre, staged adaptations of Shakespeare's plays that resonated with Indian sensibilities. His production of *King Lear*, for instance, was not just a presentation of Shakespeare's tragedy but a reflection on the feudal patriarchal system that mirrored some aspects of Indian society. Similarly, Utpal Dutt, another towering figure in Bengali theatre, adapted several Shakespearean plays through various forms of Bengali folk theatre. This indigenization of Shakespeare through theatre helped to create a uniquely Indian Shakespeare reflecting local traditions and cultural values.

Supriya Chaudhuri, a noted academician, in her article "Remembering Shakespeare in India: Colonial and Postcolonial Memory" (2019), showcases the memorial practice, particularly the time that Shakespeare inhabits in different forms of cultural appropriations—the universal time, sedimented time of history, and the time of a reformed present. She highlights-

The Shakespeare Quatercentenary turned out to be an intensely memorable event. It drew, among much else, a special number on Shakespeare in Indian languages brought out by the Sahitya Akademi journal *Indian Literature*, as well as a catalogue of translations (with 670 listed items) published by the National Library of India. Other kinds of tribute were also forthcoming. A commercial company, Indian Oxygen Limited, brought out a special number of *Oxygen News*, while a scholarly Shakespeare Commemoration Volume was edited by Taraknath Sen and published in 1966 from Presidency College, Calcutta, formerly the Hindu College where Derozio and Richardson had taught. There were numerous collections of critical essays, including *Shakespeare: A Book of*

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<sup>23</sup>*Barnam Vana*, B. V. Karanth's adaptation of Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, is a landmark production that premiered in 1979. The title translates to "The Forest of Ambition," reflecting the central theme of the play, which explores the destructive nature of unchecked ambition and power.

Homage from Jadavpur University and the suggestively titled Shakespeare Came to India, edited by C. D. Narasimhaiah. (115-116)

While theatre was the primary medium for adapting Shakespeare in 1964, Indian cinema also began to embrace the Bard's works. In the years leading up to the quatercentenary, Indian filmmakers started exploring Shakespearean themes through films. The quatercentenary heightened this trend, as filmmakers began to realize the cinematic potential of Shakespeare's stories. One notable example was *Shakespeare Wallah* (1965), a British-Indian film directed by James Ivory, produced by Ismail Merchant, and written by Ruth Praver Jhabvala. It tells the story of a British troupe of travelling actors, modeled after the real-life Shakespeareana theatre company<sup>24</sup>, founded by Geoffrey Kendal and his family, who perform Shakespeare's plays across post-colonial India. While Vishal Bhardwaj's Shakespeare-inspired films- *Maqbool* (2003), *Omkara* (2006), and *Haider* (2014)<sup>25</sup> were not from Bengal, they had a profound influence on the indigenization of Shakespeare. Through theatre, cinema, and scholarly critique, Indians reclaimed Shakespeare from his colonial origins and transformed him into a figure who could speak to their own realities. But in 1964, Shakespeare was neither reborn nor did the quatercentenary truly initiate the process of indigenization and decolonization. Instead, he had been indigenized from the beginning; however, decolonization diminished his cultural significance and prevalence, transforming him into a dogmatic repertoire that could be adapted to new contexts, genres, and performance styles. From 1947 to 1980, there was a noticeable decline in translation efforts, with fewer actual performances. In *Repositioning Shakespeare: National Formations, Postcolonial Appropriations* (1999), Thomas Cartelli distinguishes between adaptation and appropriation in the

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<sup>24</sup>Established in 1953 by Geoffrey Kendal and his wife Laura, the company began its journey shortly before India's independence, marking a significant cultural moment. The Kendals actively recruited and trained Indian actors, fostering a new generation of performers. Notable figures like Utpal Dutt and Shashi Kapoor emerged from this environment, contributing significantly to Indian theatre and cinema.

<sup>25</sup>*Maqbool*, *Omkara*, and *Haider* are notable Indian films directed by Vishal Bhardwaj, each serving as a modern adaptation of Shakespeare's tragedies, specifically *Macbeth*, *Othello*, and *Hamlet*, respectively. These films not only recontextualize the original narratives within the Indian socio-cultural milieu but also explore themes of ambition, jealousy, and revenge.

context of Shakespeare's works. Adaptation refers to the process of modifying a source text to suit a different cultural, social, or temporal context while maintaining a clear, respectful connection to the original. Appropriation, in contrast, involves taking Shakespeare's works and reshaping them more radically, for the purposes of critique, resistance, or reinvention. Cartelli sees appropriation as a more political act, especially when used by marginalized groups or cultures seeking to deconstruct Shakespeare's legacy. It was not until the 1990s that India was caught up with another kind of engagement, what is called Global Shakespeare. Global Shakespeare became a distinctive phenomenon in cinema and theatre worldwide. The quatercentenary thus acted as a catalyst for a movement that sought to indigenize his works, transforming him from a symbol of colonial icon to a universal figure of cultural manifestation. Poonam Trivedi, in the Introduction to *India's Shakespeare: Translation, Interpretation, and Performance* (2005), brilliantly cites our love for Shakespeare in Phanibhushan Chakraborti's introspective foreword note to the commemorative brochure of the *Shakespeare Fourth Birth Centenary Celebration Committee of West Bengal*:

But why are we, in West Bengal, celebrating the fourth centenary of the birthday of Shakespeare, the founder of the second empire? He is an alien poet and belongs to the race of our last foreign rulers. Every year, on Independence Day, we celebrate the termination of their unwanted rule with national rejoicings. What then makes it appropriate that in the case of Shakespeare, we should publicly avow our fervent allegiance to him and make the fourth centenary of his birth an occasion for making a ceremonial offering of homage to his personality and celebrating the continuance of his empire?...The British empire in India crumbled down, because it had only annexed our territory, but failed to annex our love...Shakespeare, on the other hand, approached us genially with a regal abundance of gifts and expected nothing from us except that we should accept them from him for our use and enjoyment. (19)

The first chapter delves into the metropolitan responses to Shakespeare in quatercentenary issues of Bengali Little Magazines. *Uttaran*, *Uttarsuri* and *Parichay* magazines published from Kolkata, the center of intellectual and cultural excellence. Through the writings published in these magazines on the auspicious occasion of Shakespeare's 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 1964, the high time

of Indianizing Shakespeare in India, the responses conveyed are of paramount interest. This chapter aims to show how discussions about Shakespeare took place within the elite or metropolitan space of Kolkata. It would be interesting to see how Bengali intelligentsia, general lovers of Shakespeare, theatre practitioners, academicians, and others came out with their valuable observations in these Bengali little magazines. Along with that, it also wants to explore whether the writings in these special issues were able to capture the overall essence of little magazines, even from Kolkata's metropolitan space.

## 1.2 Metropolitan Echoes:

By the term 'metropolitan,' we generally refer to anything related to a large city or its surrounding areas. In a broader context, "metropolitan" can also refer to someone or something that is sophisticated, cosmopolitan, or connected to major cities. In the context of Bengal, the metropolitan response to Shakespeare would involve how urban intellectuals and critics, particularly from Kolkata, engage with Shakespeare's works. Pierre Bourdieu's concept of 'cultural capital'<sup>26</sup> is central to understanding how the elites respond to Shakespeare. In *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (1984), Bourdieu posits that the upper classes use cultural knowledge and practices to maintain social distinctions. For metropolitan elites, Shakespeare often represents a form of cultural capital—knowledge of his works signifies intellectual prestige and social refinement. Familiarity with Shakespeare is perceived as a mark of high education, taste, and cultural superiority, which urban elites often cultivate to reinforce their status. Universities and literary institutions like Hindu College (now Presidency University), Calcutta University, and Jadavpur University have been central in fostering critical discourse on Shakespeare. His plays are frequently part of these elite educational curricula, and discussions around his works occur in literary societies like the Shakespeare Society of Eastern India and academic journals like the Rabindra Bharati University academic journal, magazines of Presidency College, etc. All these spaces are dominated by the metropolitan elite.

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<sup>26</sup>Bourdieu's concept of 'cultural capital' highlights the importance of cultural knowledge and socialization in shaping individuals' opportunities and status within society, emphasizing that power extends beyond mere economic wealth to include cultural assets as well.

A little magazine is a small, non-commercial publication that typically focuses on literary and artistic content. These magazines are often produced on a limited budget, with a small print run, and are usually aimed at a niche audience. Unlike mainstream magazines, little magazines prioritize creative expression, experimental work, and the promotion of emerging or avant-garde writers and artists over commercial success. Originally, the word ‘magazine’ meant the storehouse of a weapon, a cartridge, or a cartridge holder. Little magazines are typically non-profit ventures, often run by writers, artists, and intellectuals passionate about literature and art. They rely on subscriptions, donations, or small grants rather than advertising revenue, allowing them to maintain editorial independence and focus on creative content. These magazines are known for their willingness to publish experimental, avant-garde, and unconventional work. They often serve as platforms for emerging writers and artists who may not fit into mainstream publications. This emphasis on innovation makes little magazines important incubators for new literary and artistic movements. Little magazines usually have a small print run, sometimes as few as a few hundred copies. They cater to a niche audience, often composed of fellow writers, artists, and intellectuals. The limited circulation reflects both the specialized nature of the content and the modest resources available for production. Unlike commercial magazines, little magazines often do not adhere to a strict publication schedule. They might be published quarterly, biannually, or even less frequently, depending on the resources and time available to the editors and contributors. Despite their small size and limited resources, little magazines are known for maintaining high editorial standards. The editors are often deeply involved in the literary community and are committed to publishing work of genuine artistic merit. Little magazines often foster a sense of community among contributors and readers. They are collaborative spaces where like-minded individuals can share ideas, critique each other’s work, and support the growth of new voices. Swallow<sup>27</sup>, the first interpreter of little magazines, lists three general characteristic features of little magazines: (i) The magazines are economically unsound; (ii) they seldom provide any gain for those associated with them, i.e., writer, editor, or publisher; and (iii) big cities like New York, etc., are not the centre of

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<sup>27</sup>Alan Swallow is recognized as one of the first interpreters of little magazines, having made significant contributions to the understanding and appreciation of this literary form. His seminal work, "The Little Magazines" (1946), outlines the essential functions and characteristics of these publications, which are typically small, non-commercial periodicals dedicated to serious literary writing. Swallow defined little magazines as platforms that provide a space for innovative writing and artistic expression, often showcasing works that mainstream publications might overlook.

their activity. He also lists three functions of the little magazines: to provide a market for the great writing of our time; to sponsor experiment, controversy, and new movements; and to give a hearing to unpopular ideas. These characteristics make little magazines vital to the literary and artistic landscape, offering a space for creative expression and innovation that might not find a home in mainstream media.

The anti-establishment nature of the Bengali little magazines is one of their most defining characteristics, setting them apart from mainstream literary and cultural publications. These magazines emerged as platforms for dissent, critique, and alternative thinking, often challenging the socio-political status quo and the cultural norms of their time. Rooted in a spirit of rebellion, they have played a significant role in shaping the intellectual and literary landscape of Bengal, particularly during periods of political unrest and social change. This anti-establishment ethos of Bengali little magazines can be traced back to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, a time of significant political and social upheaval in Bengal. The rise of nationalist movements, the struggle for independence from British colonial rule and the subsequent socio-political challenges in post-independence India created an environment where young writers and intellectuals sought platforms to express their dissatisfaction with the existing order. Little magazines became the ideal medium for the expression, as they were free from the commercial and ideological constraints that governed mainstream publications. Bengali little magazines were often founded in opposition to the perceived conservatism and elitism of mainstream literary culture.

Peter Brooker and Andrew Thacker, in their edited volume *The Oxford Critical and Cultural History of Modernist Magazines* (2009), offer a comprehensive study of modernist magazines, including Little Magazine. Sociological theories of little magazines focus on their role as communities of practice and their function within literary networks. This approach examines how these publications create and sustain literary communities, offering writers and artists a sense of belonging and shared purpose. Bourdieu's concept of 'cultural capital' is often employed to understand how little magazines contribute to the formation of literary fields and hierarchies. By providing a space for emerging writers and artists to publish, little magazines help establish new forms of cultural capital that can later be recognized and legitimized by the broader literary establishments. Besides, little magazines are examined through archival and canonical lenses. As many little magazines have been historically underrepresented or forgotten, archival research plays

a crucial role in recovering and reevaluating these publications. Scholars working in this area seek to understand how little magazines contribute to or challenge literary canons.

Shakespeare was featured in the Bengali little magazine around 1964, coinciding with the four-hundredth anniversary of his birth. However, even earlier, in the late nineteenth century, various translations and creative pieces appeared in publications such as *Bharati* and *Bharatbarsha*. Special issues dedicated to Shakespeare were highly sought after whenever a publishing house took the initiative to produce them. Sometimes, these little magazines become a passion for those who believe they are on a path to achieving something significant. Today, articles focusing on Western authors and comparative literature have become a common theme in these magazines. Among foreign writers, Shakespeare is arguably the most frequently discussed and remains highly regarded by Bengalis, even in this post-colonial era, although special issues are limited in number. Contributions come not only from academic scholars but also from actors, lawyers, creative writers, teachers, and students, resulting in over two hundred articles on Shakespeare in Bengali. According to Prof. Arindam Mukhopadhyay<sup>28</sup>, “It was Srikumar Bandopadhyay who pioneered this journey after independence with his article entitled "Shakespeare Pratibha" ('Talents of Shakespeare') in 1964 in which he shows the unaccountable enigma of the poet and dramatist and how successful he has been in creating an unrealized beauty to the known world and life and thus brought before us an unworldly riddle” (5). In it, he delves into the complex enigma of Shakespeare, highlighting his remarkable ability to create an unrealized beauty within our understanding of the world and life, presenting us with a profound riddle. Though the magazine movement in Bengal turned up in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the specific issues started flowing on the auspicious occasion of Shakespeare’s quatercentenary anniversary in 1964. Like every other nation, India witnessed a special attraction for Shakespeare during this time. Various magazines came out commemorating this sacred moment by publishing special volumes. Later, we saw many such little magazines like *Uttaran*, *Uttarsuri*, *Parichay*, concentrated on publishing their special issues in 1964. Not only Bengali little magazines but also various journals of national and international repute published on Shakespeare. These publications are an interesting study to decipher how the indigenous approaches to Shakespeare intersect with

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<sup>28</sup>Arindam Mukhopadhyay’s dissertation “The Changing Bengali Response to Shakespeare: A Critical Study of Shakespeare Criticism by Bengali Writers and Academics” (2014, University of Calcutta).

the socio-political contexts of the milieu. These issues were quite successful and appealing to the readers, as these experimental and non-conformist writings welcome us for a stage of alternate discussion and debate. Later, many other Bengali little magazines focused on Shakespeare as a special theme of their edition. Magazines like *Natun Disha* and *Ebang Mushayera* represent their homage to Shakespeare purely from their own native perspectives.

### **1.3 Shakespeare's World Meets Ours: Perspectives from *Uttaran* Little Magazine:**

*Uttaran* is a distinguished Bengali little magazine, widely recognized for its contribution to the literary and cultural landscape of West Bengal. The magazine was founded by poet and writer Sukanta Bhattacharya in the early 1960s. Bhattacharya, along with a group of like-minded literary enthusiasts, sought to create a platform for avant-garde literature that challenged the mainstream literary trends of the time. Under Bhattacharya's editorial leadership, *Uttaran* quickly became a crucible for new and experimental writing. The magazine was committed to publishing works that pushed the boundaries of conventional literature, offering a space for young, emerging writers and poets who were eager to explore innovative themes, styles, and forms. *Uttaran* played a significant role in popularizing the study of Shakespeare in Bengal, especially during a period when literary discourse was expanding to include global influences. While Shakespeare had already been a part of the academic curriculum and theatre culture in Bengal, *Uttaran* contributed by making his works more accessible and engaging to a broader audience beyond the academic and elite circles.

*Uttaran*, the influential Bengali little magazine, made a significant contribution to Shakespearean studies in Bengal with a special issue edited by Kiranshankar Sengupta. This issue, dedicated entirely to the works and influence of William Shakespeare, was a milestone in the Bengali literary scene, as it sought to explore and reinterpret Shakespeare's legacy through a distinctly Bengali lens. Kiranshankar Sengupta, a respected literary figure and scholar, took the

helm as guest editor for this special issue. His deep understanding of both Bengali literature and Shakespearean works made him the ideal choice to lead such a project. Sengupta's vision for the issue was to create a dialogue between Bengali and Shakespearean literature, emphasizing the relevance of Shakespeare's themes in the contemporary Bengali context. The magazine was published from Kolkata, West Bengal. Kolkata, being the cultural and literary hub of Bengal, has been home to numerous little magazines that have played pivotal roles in the literary landscape, and *Uttaran* is one of them.

This special issue featured a rich collection of essays, translations, critical analyses, and creative adaptations of Shakespeare's works. Contributors included prominent Bengali writers, poets, and scholars who brought diverse perspectives to Shakespeare's plays and sonnets. This special volume consists of eight articles, each written in the vernacular Bengali language. Some essays focused on the universality of Shakespeare's themes, such as love, power, and betrayal, while others delved into the challenges of translating and adapting his works into Bengali. The first essay, titled "Shakespeare O Bangali" ("Shakespeare and the Bengalees"), contributed by Amalendu Bose, is a fascinating essay. He begins the essay with a fundamental question: "Why are we celebrating Shakespeare in such a grandiloquent manner, even after 400 years of the bard's death?" This question actually sets the tone of his arguments that he projects in the later part of his essay. He further elaborates his point of argument that we are celebrating or worshipping Shakespeare, with whom we do not have any similarities in language, culture, religious beliefs, or even socio-political scenarios. So, why is there still so much devotion to this Western master? Even if we consider Shakespeare's work and know the time in which he produced his works, it is very clear that those modern scientific thoughts are now obsolete. With the passage of time, new thinking, new ideologies, and even new perspectives evolved human civilization. So, what is the demand of the hour? Or what is going to be fulfilled with this commemoration? Is there any definite reason for the reverence? Now, the author himself puts forward his arguments, and he never tries to impose his analysis on us. Neither did he endorse the brand of Shakespeare on us, nor did he criticize it blatantly. He realistically presented his views and, through this perspective, set the tone of the whole volume. The first thing that can be indisputably claimed of Shakespeare is that he is a timeless writer. His popularity has transcended the material and demographic boundaries. Therefore, he is for everyone; anyone can be attracted to the humanistic appeal of his writings. Bose writes, "We turn to Shakespeare for the human values we all feel. Inspired by those

human values, we don't think any more whether Shakespeare is writing in my language or in another language." (2, translated). Bose articulated his thought by saying that when he had come across these splendid lines from Shakespeare's works, like "The rest is silence," "I am bound/ Up on a wheel of fire," (Bose, 3) and "All the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand" (3), he pondered over his initial questions. He said that these beautiful lines are the finest examples of a writer he ever came across. Furthermore, the essay delves into the translations of Shakespeare's works into Bengali, discussing the challenges and artistic liberties taken by translators to make the language and themes accessible to Bengali readers. Bose underscores the importance of these translations in making Shakespeare's works part of the Bengali literary canon. So, this particular essay, "Shakespeare O Bangali," offers a comprehensive overview of the dynamic relationship between Shakespeare and Bengali theatre, illustrating how the Bard's works have been reimagined and integrated into the cultural fabric of Bengal. The essay is a testament to Shakespeare's universal appeal and his ability to inspire creative expression across different cultures and languages.

"Shakespeare Shotobarshikir Ekti Dik" ('A Perspective on Shakespeare's Centenary') by Lokenath Bhattacharya, published in this special issue, is another reflective essay that commemorates the centenary of Shakespeare's enduring influence on world literature, and more specifically, on Bengali culture and thought. Lokenath Bhattacharya, an esteemed writer and intellectual, uses this piece to explore a particular facet of Shakespeare's legacy as it resonates in Bengali. In this essay, Bhattacharya focuses on the thematic and philosophical dimensions of Shakespeare's works that have deeply influenced Bengali writers, thinkers, and audiences. He argues that Shakespeare's exploration of human nature, morality, and the complexities of power and ambition are universal themes that transcend cultural boundaries, making his works timeless and relevant even centuries later in a completely different cultural context like Bengal. He writes:

Here is such a great poet; he can be called a great national poet of all time and all ages. Today, on the occasion of his 400<sup>th</sup> birth anniversary, we have had the opportunity to pay special tribute to him. At this time, I cannot forget the historical debate centered around Shakespeare; a solution that is completely universal still seems distant; perhaps such a solution may never be possible in the future. (19, translated)

Bhattacharya also examines how Shakespearean themes have been woven into the fabric of Bengali literature, particularly in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when Bengal was grappling with its own social, political, and existential crises. He draws parallels between the moral dilemmas faced by Shakespearean characters and those depicted in modern Bengali literature, suggesting that Bengali writers have often turned to Shakespearean archetypes to express the anxieties and aspirations of their time. Additionally, the essay reflects on the role of translations, adaptations, and appropriations of Shakespeare's works in Bengali, highlighting how these efforts have not only made Shakespeare accessible to a wider audience but have also allowed Bengali writers to reinterpret his themes within their own cultural and historical contexts. "Shakespeare Shotobarshikir Ekti Dik" is a thoughtful exploration of the enduring relevance of Shakespeare in Bengal, emphasizing how his works continue to inspire and challenge Bengali literature, making them an integral part of Bengal's literary heritage.

Another insightful essay, "Shakespeare Charita" ('The Life of Shakespeare') by Anil Biswas, published in the special issue of *Uttaran*, delves into the life and legacy of Shakespeare, exploring the man behind the masterpieces that have captivated readers and audiences for centuries. Anil Biswas, a respected writer and critic, presents a nuanced portrait of Shakespeare, blending historical facts with literary analysis to offer readers a deeper understanding of the Bard's personal and professional journey. In this essay, Biswas begins by tracing Shakespeare's early life in Stratford-upon-Avon, discussing his humble origins and the societal influences that shaped his worldview. He explores how Shakespeare's experiences in Elizabethan England, including its political and cultural climate, informed the themes and characters in his plays. Biswas emphasizes Shakespeare's keen observation of human nature, which allowed him to create timeless characters that resonate with audiences across different cultures and eras. Anil Biswas's essay is a tribute to Shakespeare's genius, highlighting how his literary contributions continue to influence and inspire writers and thinkers in Bengal and beyond.

The Shakespeare special issue of the Bengali little magazine *Uttaran*, edited by Kiranshankar Sengupta, stands as a remarkable contribution to both Bengali literature and the broader discourse on Shakespeare in India. This issue, dedicated entirely to exploring various facets of Shakespeare's influence and relevance, reflects the editor's vision of bridging the gap between Western literary traditions and Bengali cultural thought. One of the key achievements of

this special issue is its ability to make Shakespeare accessible and relevant to Bengali readers. Through critical essays like Amalendu Bose's "Shakespeare O Bangali," the issue explores the deep cultural exchanges between Shakespeare's world and Bengali literature. This issue does not shy away from engaging with contemporary issues through the lens of Shakespeare's works. Essays such as Lokenath Bhattacharya's "Shakespeare Shotobarshikir Ekti Dik" reflect on how Shakespearean themes continue to resonate with modern Bengali society, addressing universal concerns like power, morality, and human nature. This special issue is also notable for its inclusion of Bengali adaptations of Shakespearean plays, which demonstrates the creative ways in which Bengali playwrights have made Shakespeare their own writer, blending with local traditions and concerns. *Uttaran* has had a tumultuous publication history, reflecting the challenges often faced by little magazines in sustaining themselves financially and editorially. Throughout its history, *Uttaran* has remained true to its roots, offering a platform for intellectual and creative freedom. The editorial board, though changing over the years, has consistently been composed of individuals deeply committed to the arts and literature. The magazine's focus on Shakespeare was not just academic; it was also creative. *Uttaran* encouraged writers to engage with Shakespeare in innovative ways, leading to adaptations and reinterpretations of his plays in Bengali literature. This included modern retellings, reinterpretations of his characters, and the infusion of Shakespearean motifs into Bengali poetry and prose. Such creative endeavors helped demystify Shakespeare, making his works more approachable and relatable to us.

#### **1.4 Exploring New Horizons: Voices from *Uttarsuri* Little Magazine:**

Now let us deal with another special issue of a renowned Bengali little magazine, *Uttarsuri*. This special issue on Shakespeare was edited by Arun Bhattacharya as a guest editor. *Uttarsuri* played a huge role in strengthening the little magazine culture, although it was discontinued for some unavoidable reasons. Later, it was again launched by poet and editor Prabhat Mukherjee. It focused on showcasing innovative literary forms and experimental writing. This magazine had a significant impact on the literary scene of Bengal. Through all the articles published in this issue, it would be interesting to see how the metropolis response triggered a stage for discussion and debate on Shakespeare's popular culture in Bengal. The first essay, by Amalendu Bose, titled "Shakespeare Comedir Bhumika" ('The Role of Comedy in Shakespeare'), is an insightful analysis that delves into the essential elements and functions of comedy in the works of Shakespeare.

Amalendu Bose was an eminent Bengali writer and intellectual known for his work in essays and criticism and as a key figure in the Bengali little magazine movement. Professionally, Bose worked as a lecturer and professor in English literature. He was also an active participant in the little magazine movement. His essays and critical writings, often published in the little magazines, earned him recognition for their depth and innovative perspectives.

Bose begins by acknowledging Shakespeare's unparalleled ability to blend humor with serious themes. He argues that Shakespeare's comedies are not merely light-hearted plays; instead, they play a crucial role in exposing the human condition. The characters in his comedies often embody various societal archetypes, making the plays rich with social commentary. Regarding the classification of Shakespeare's plays, Bose writes,

Shakespeare's plays were classified into three categories, but the classification method was inconsistent; because, 'History' in the sense refers to the narrative and characters of the play, while 'comedy' and 'tragedy' refer to the two fundamental natures of the play, driven by dramatic emotions. In fact, if the two fundamental natures are our criteria, it would be appropriate to classify Shakespeare's plays into the categories of tragedy and comedy. (309, translated)

Bose opines that in comedy, Shakespeare's creative energy found its expression naturally and effortlessly. To Bose, comedy was the natural development of Shakespeare's creativity. Bose again mentions, in this essay—

Repeatedly examining Shakespeare's plays and witnessing many of their performances, I have realized that although Shakespeare expressed intense human emotions and profound existential thoughts in his tragedies, his creative talent is more refined and straightforward in his comedies. In comedy, the naturalness and spontaneity of his creativity are much more evident and varied. (311, translated)

Bose then moves on to discuss the structural elements of Shakespearean comedy. He points out that these plays typically follow a pattern where the initial conflict, often a result of misunderstanding or mistaken identities, leads to a series of humorous situations. The resolution

usually involves the clarification of these misunderstandings, resulting in a harmonious conclusion, often in the form of marriages or reconciliations. Bose also highlights the importance of the festive spirits that permeate Shakespeare's comedies. Festivities like May Day, Lots-wold games, Bartholomew Fair, Lord Mayor's Show, Whit Sunday, Plough Monday, Hock Tuesday, Strove Tuesday (315) allow characters to temporarily break free from the societal norms that usually govern their behavior. During these moments of freedom, characters explore new possibilities, leading to both comic situations and deeper self-realizations. An interesting aspect of Bose's analysis is his discussion of the role of the fool or clown in Shakespearean comedies. These characters, though seemingly foolish, often serve as the voice of reason, offering insightful commentary on the actions and attitudes of the other characters. The author also explores how Shakespeare's comedies reflect the society of his time. He notes that the plays often include critiques of social structures such as class distinctions and gender roles. Moreover, Bose emphasizes the psychological depth of Shakespeare's comedic characters. Unlike the one-dimensional figures often found in traditional comedies, Shakespeare's characters are complex and multifaceted. Their actions and motivations are rooted in psychological realism, making them relatable to audiences, even centuries later.

Bose boldly upholds his decision regarding Shakespearean comedy. He said that Shakespeare's comedies are "affirmative comedy" (318). Amalendu Bose's essay thus presents Shakespeare's comedies as works that go beyond mere humor, offering rich insights into society, human nature, and the complexities of life. However, as with any critical work, there are aspects of Bose's arguments that can be both praised for their depth and critiqued for their limitations. "Shakespeare Comedir Bhumika" is a valuable contribution to the study of Shakespeare's comedies, offering insightful analyses of their structures, themes, and characters. This essay also offers a critical explanation of Shakespeare's comedies within the context of Bengali literary tradition. It reflects a broader discourse within the little magazine, enriching the local literary landscape. Bose's essay is representative of the little magazines' commitment to exploring complex literary themes with depth and scholarly rigor. Most people often argue that Shakespeare's tragedies are better than his comedies. Since little magazines destabilize the traditional literary notions, through this particular essay, somehow, Amalendu Bose offers a bold argument in favor of Shakespeare's comedies.

The next article in this issue is Bhabotosh Dutta's "Rabindrasahitya O Shakespeare" ('The Works of Rabindranath Tagore and Shakespeare'). Dutta, a distinguished Bengali writer, has made significant contributions to the realm of Bengali little magazines. He holds a deep academic background in Bengali literature. His scholarly pursuits have been complemented by his passion for writing, particularly in the domain of little magazines, which are known for their avant-garde and experimental literary content. Dutta's professional journey as a writer began in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century when he contributed essays and short stories to various Bengali little magazines. Bhabotosh Dutta's essay "Rabindrasahitya O Shakespeare" offers a compelling comparative analysis between the works of Rabindranath Tagore and William Shakespeare. Edited by Arun Bhattacharya, this special issue sought to explore the intersections and divergences between the two literary giants, and Dutta's essay is a cornerstone of this exploration.

In his essay, Dutta embarks on a nuanced examination of the thematic and stylistic elements that define both Tagore and Shakespeare. He begins by acknowledging the vastly different cultural and temporal contexts within which these two writers created their works. Shakespeare, writing during the English Renaissance, and Tagore, emerging from the Bengal Renaissance, were products of their respective societies, yet their works resonate with universal themes that transcend time and place. Dutta argues that one of the most significant similarities between Tagore and Shakespeare is their profound understanding of human nature. Both writers, through their complex characters and intricate plots, unfathomable human psyche, and exploration of emotions, motivations, and moral dilemmas. Dutta mentions Tagore's own statement in *Rabindra Rachonabali*-'Shakespeare's plays have always been the ideal form of drama to us. The multifaceted variety and the depth of conflict present in Shakespeare's works, which captivated our minds from the very beginning (539). The essay also explores the stylistic approaches of the two writers. Dutta notes that while Shakespeare is renowned for his mastery of the English language, his use of blank verse, and his innovative dramatic structures, Tagore's genius lies in his ability to blend lyricism with narrative, creating a unique literary voice that seamlessly integrates poetry, music, and drama. Dutta emphasizes that Tagore's literary style, particularly his use of rhythm and melody, is deeply rooted in the Indian tradition, yet it exhibits a universality that makes it comparable to Shakespeare's work.

Moreover, Dutta draws attention to the thematic parallels in their works. Both writers, he argues, are preoccupied with the tension between the individual and society. Shakespeare's plays often revolve around conflicts between personal desires and social expectations, a theme that resonates in Tagore's works as well. In plays like *Roktokorobi* (*Red Oleander*), Tagore examines the individual's struggle against societal norms and the quest for personal freedom, themes that are central to Shakespeare's tragedies and comedies alike. Dutta also points out the differences in their treatment of these themes. While Shakespeare often portrays the tragic consequences of the clash between the individual and society, Tagore tends to offer a more optimistic vision, where reconciliation and harmony are possible. This difference, Dutta suggests, is reflective of their cultural contexts—Shakespeare's England, marked by political turmoil and social upheaval, and Tagore's Bengal, with its spiritual and philosophical underpinnings. Thus, Dutta's essay in *Uttarsuri* provides a rich, comparative study between Tagore and Shakespeare. Additionally, Dutta's essay is somewhat Eurocentric in its evaluation of literary merit, subtly positioning Shakespeare as the standard against which Tagore is measured. While Dutta clearly respects Tagore's genius, the essay occasionally reflects a comparative hierarchy that risks diminishing the originality and cultural specificity of Tagore's contribution to world literature.

Shankarananda Mukhopadhyay's essay "Shakespeare-er Biruddhye", ('A Critique of Shakespeare') offers a critical examination of Shakespeare's revered status in the literary world. Shankarananda Mukhopadhyay was a prominent Bengali writer and critic, particularly active in the Bengali little magazine movement during the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. He was known for his sharp, critical essays that challenged literary norms and conventions. Professionally, he was engaged in literary criticism, contributing regularly to various little magazines, including *Uttarsuri*. In this essay, Mukhopadhyay challenges the conventional adulation of Shakespeare, questioning whether his works deserve the near-universal claim they have received over the centuries. Through this essay, he has presented various Eurocentric scholars' independent observations on Shakespeare starting from Robert Greene to Tolstoy and Shaw. The essay begins by situating Shakespeare within the broader context of Western literary tradition, highlighting how the Bard's works have been canonized to the point of near-sacredness. He argues that this adulation has led to an uncritical acceptance of Shakespeare's works, often disregarding the flaws and limitations present in his writings. He contends that Shakespeare's plays, while undeniably rich in language and dramatic

technique, are not without significant weaknesses, such as inconsistencies in plot, superficial character development, and a lack of moral depth.

Mukhopadhyay is particularly critical of the way Shakespeare's works have been elevated above those of others equally, if not more, deserving playwrights and poets from different cultures and languages. He argues that this elevation is a result of cultural imperialism, wherein the literary standards of the English-speaking world have been imposed on other cultures, often at the expense of their own rich literary traditions. The essay also explores the limitations of translating Shakespeare into Bengali, pointing out that much of the nuance and beauty of his language is lost in translation. The writer calls for a more balanced and critical approach to Shakespeare's works, advocating for a reassessment of his place in world literature. He encourages Bengali readers and scholars to look beyond the Shakespeare canon and explore the wealth of literary treasures in their own tradition. Mukhopadhyay's primary argument is that Shakespeare's canonization has led to an uncritical and exaggerated reverence for his works. He raises necessary questions about cultural imperialism and the way literary canons are constructed, often privileging Western over non-Western works. Amitava Dasgupta's essay, "Shakespeare-er Kobitar Antwashila" ('The Inner World of Shakespeare's Poetry'), published in the *Uttarsuri* Bengali little magazine, 4<sup>th</sup> Issue, 1964, under the editorship of Arun Bhattacharya, delves deeply into the intricacies of Shakespeare's poetic expressions.

Dasgupta's analysis is profound, focusing on the complex emotional and intellectual layers that constitute the essence of Shakespeare's poetry. Amitava Dasgupta was a significant figure in Bengali literature, known for his insightful essays and critical writings. Dasgupta writes:

Shakespeare came to London from the village with the endless wealth of folk songs in his pockets. Moreover, his musical talent was exceptional. He composed those works in a favourable environment and with the right opportunities. (372, translated).

The essay highlights Shakespeare's unparalleled understanding of human psychology. He points out that Shakespeare's characters often embody conflicting emotions and thoughts, reflecting the complexities of real human beings. This psychological depth is particularly evident in Shakespeare's sonnets, where the poet grapples with feelings of love, jealousy, betrayal, and existential angst. Dasgupta marvels at Shakespeare's command over the English language,

particularly his inventive use of words and phrases that resonate with readers, even centuries later. He discusses how Shakespeare's choice of diction, rhythm, and structure adds a musical quality to his verses, enhancing their emotional impact. Dasgupta also notes how the translation of Shakespeare's works into Bengali presents unique challenges, as capturing the nuances of his language in another tongue requires immense skill and creativity.

The essay touches upon Shakespeare's influence on Bengali literature, particularly on Bengali poets and playwrights. Dasgupta observes that Shakespeare's works have been a source of inspiration for Bengali writers, who have adapted his themes and stylistic elements to suit the Bengali cultural and literary context. This cross-cultural exchange has enriched Bengali literature, infusing it with the depth and sophistication characteristic of Shakespeare's work. Finally, the writer explores the philosophical dimensions of Shakespeare's poetry. He contends that Shakespeare was not just a poet of his time but a thinker whose works engage with timeless questions about the nature of existence, the limits of knowledge, and the search for meaning in a world often marked by uncertainty and change. Dasgupta's bold remark: 'The essence of Shakespeare's poetic nature is not fully realized in his poems, not even in his sonnets. It is scattered throughout his plays, from scene to scene, in soliloquies, in the diverse revelations of the heart, in the subtle nuances of dramatic tension—in short, in every aspect of his plays' (372, translated), sums up his point of view beautifully. Amitava Dasgupta's academic career was marked by his dedication to teaching and his deep engagement with literary analysis. His work not only influenced his students but also contributed significantly to the intellectual milieu of Bengali little magazines during the 1960s and 70s.

Four hundred years after Shakespeare's birth, the tragic characters inspired by Shakespeare do not disturb us as much. Whether it's due to the passage of time or some other form of intellectual stimulation, Shakespeare's works no longer have the same urgent relevance to our refined lives. (376, translated)

With the above observation, Alok Sarkar has clearly articulated his opinion on what he wants to convey about Shakespeare in his essay "Shakespeare-er Tragedy" ('Tragedies of Shakespeare') in the 4<sup>th</sup> issue of *Uttarsuri* Bengali little magazine published in 1964. Sarkar emphasizes that Shakespeare's tragic heroes are not ordinary individuals; they are often individuals of high social standing or exceptional qualities, which heightens the magnitude of their

downfall. According to Sarkar, Shakespeare's protagonists possess a certain greatness that makes their inevitable descent into tragedy more poignant and impactful. Sarkar's essay also discusses the intricate relationship between fate and free will in Shakespearean tragedy. He argues that while the characters appear to be driven by their own decisions, there is a pervasive sense of inevitability that looms over their actions. This duality creates a tension between human agency and cosmic determinism, which Sarkar identifies as a key feature of Shakespeare's tragic vision.

Alok Sarkar was a regular contributor to several Bengali little magazines, including *Uttarsuri*, where his essays and critiques became highly influential. His contributions to these magazines were not just meant for literary criticism; he also engaged with cultural and philosophical issues. His work in little magazines cemented his reputation as a leading literary critic in Bengal. He has always conducted a thorough critique in a highly refined manner. Regarding the tragic essence in Shakespeare, Sarkar said-

In essence, Shakespeare was unable to truly experience the concept of separation. Therefore, for him, physical death was the most significant. Coming to the end of the play, he would not be satisfied unless he saw two or three deaths. The physical suffering of the truth-teller is not within the scope of bodily experience, and with the question of reality, he did not want to contemplate this matter. (378, translated)

The essay also addresses the moral ambiguity in Shakespeare's tragedies. Sarkar points out that not offering any clear moral judgments is central to the enduring appeal of his works. Shakespeare, according to the writer, was completely unaware of his immortal appeal to the next generation. According to him,

It seems that Shakespeare was not particularly concerned with creating extraordinary works, nor was he overly worried about immortality or whether future readers and audiences would like or dislike his work. The enthusiastic applause of the present audience was his only desire. After his plays were performed on stage, Shakespeare probably did not think much about them anymore; rather, he would immerse himself in writing new plays. (379)

Through this essay, Alok Sarkar meticulously examines Shakespeare's tragedies and offers his observations in an unbiased way. He conveys his views subtly, in a manner that captures the essence of a little magazine. He does not merely offer conventional praise on Shakespeare; rather, he compares Shakespeare's tragedies with Indian perspectives, and illustrates parallels with Kalidas and at other times with Rabindranath. Through this comparison, he places the literature of his own country at the forefront of his analysis.

Arun Bhattacharya's essay "Shakespeare: Adhunik Kobir Chokhe" ("Shakespeare: Through the Eyes of a Modern Poet"), published in the 4<sup>th</sup> issue of the Bengali little magazine *Uttarsuri* in 1964, is a profound exploration of William Shakespeare's enduring relevance through a modern poetic lens. Serving as both the editor of this issue and the author of this essay, Bhattacharya probes into Shakespeare's literary genius and carefully examines how the Bard's work strikes a chord with the sensibilities of contemporary poets and scholars. He initiates with powerful observation in the essay.

After nearly three hundred ninety years, it has become quite clear through the eyes of a modern poet that the original themes from which he wrote his plays were related to visual events or contemporary subjects. The way he began writing them and his inner creative drives have primarily led to their being conducted through poetic inspiration. (8, translated)

In his essay, Bhattacharya argues that Shakespeare's work transcends time and cultural boundaries, making him not just a playwright of the Elizabethan era but a universal poet whose themes and characters continue to speak to the modern psyche. He highlights how Shakespeare's exploration of human emotions, power dynamics, and existential dilemmas remains profoundly relevant to the issues faced by modern society.

Shakespeare was out and out a pure poet. His plays are the finest manifestations of his poetic oeuvre. Even only his soliloquies may be compiled into a remarkable collection, which could serve as a powerful introduction to the poet's inner thought process. When we delve into the core of each principal character, we realize that this world is not created by dramatists but solely

by poets. Bhattacharya pays equal attention to Shakespeare's poetic style, noting its complexity, richness, and innovative use of language. He suggests that Shakespeare's mastery of metaphor, rhythm, and wordplay sets a standard that modern poets still strive to achieve. Shakespeare was the first arena poet; the evidence of this lies not only in his poetic works and exquisite sonnets but also in many poetic passages in his plays. Bhattacharya discusses the renewed interest among modern scholars and poets in Shakespeare's works and suggests that this resurgence is fueled by a growing recognition of the Bard's ability to capture the universal aspects of human experience. Regarding this renewed interest in his poetic sensibilities, the writer says,

In recent times, the main appeal of Shakespeare studies seems to center around his poetic prowess. The discussion of Clemen and Spurgeon is noteworthy, and even without engaging in the debate, it is easily accepted that Shakespeare's influence has led many critics to seek connections beyond his identified strengths. Indeed, on matters like his characterization, events, and plot, the critics are generally more enthusiastic although their intense criticism towards his poetic quality remains significant. (383, translated)

Arun Bhattacharya's focus on the admiration for Shakespeare among modern poets and scholars might come across as overly celebratory. However, he has fully addressed the controversies or divergent interpretations that Shakespeare's work has sparked in contemporary literary criticism, especially in areas like postcolonial studies and feminist theory. The craze behind the commemoration of Shakespeare's 400<sup>th</sup> birth anniversary in India, along with all over the world, is primarily his poetic genius. His poetic vision is dedicated to the task of conveying this profound insight into the fabric of life. So, from the perspective of a modern Bengali poet, we get a poetic view in Shakespeare's works. He has also mentioned the possibility of a new excitement among scholars regarding Shakespeare's poetic style.

The last essay of this special issue is Gurudas Bhattacharya's "Chalachitre Shakespeare" ('Shakespeare in Cinema'). The writer here explores the adaptation of Shakespeare's works in cinema and talks about the challenges and intricacies of translating Shakespeare's complex narratives into the visual medium of cinema. At first, Bhattacharya mentions the historical

background and relevant perspectives of representing Shakespeare in this new, vibrant medium. As the writer states,

Shakespeare and his plays are 400 years old. Shakespeare's plays have been adapted into films for nearly 65 years. It's not much older than the medium of film itself. The noteworthy aspect is that shortly after its inception, this emerging art form—cinema—turned its attention to Shakespeare's works, and since then, his plays or scenes have been continuously adapted into films. (386, translated).

Gurudas Bhattacharya was a prominent figure in the literary and cultural circles of Bengal. He was engaged with various forms of literary expressions. Through this essay, he somehow, is the first writer to deliberate in a little magazine on the impact of Shakespeare's works in cinema.

During the silent era of cinema, in 1899, Herbert Beerbohm Tree produced a film adaptation of *King John* in London. Gradually, Shakespeare's plays were also adapted into films in other European countries. From the mid-1930s, full-length silent films began to dominate, leading to widespread adaptation and prominence of Shakespeare's works in Indian cinema and also in Bengal. Bhattacharya clearly acknowledges Shakespeare's global influence. He notes that his plays have been adapted across various forms of art, including theatre, literature, and cinema. However, he emphasizes that cinema, as a visual and auditory medium, poses unique challenges and opportunities when adapting Shakespearean works. The article also highlights the ways in which filmmakers have attempted to capture the essence of Shakespeare's plays on the screen. Orson Welles conducted the most significant artistic adaptations by bringing up a new dimension to Shakespeare's plays and translating them into film with great fidelity. Bhattacharya says that no matter how similar the external appearances may be, theatre acting and film, stage drama and cinematic adaptation, are still not entirely different. He opines that,

One cannot use one method for another purpose. The aesthetic process and presentation techniques are completely different, and the modes of performance are distinct. In theatre, dialogue is central, while in film, the language is image-visuals and cinematography. Dialogue and sound in film follow different principles. In theatre, the performance is presented through static elements, while in film, it is broken into fragments and dynamically reassembled using continuous, uninterrupted visual flow. (389, translated)

Gurudas Bhattacharya's "Chalachitre Shakespeare" is a valuable contribution to the discourse on Shakespearean adaptations in cinema. This article could have expanded its scope to include a more nuanced and comprehensive analysis of Shakespearean adaptations in Bengali cinema. Bhattacharya's involvement in little magazines like *Uttarsuri* exemplifies his commitment to promoting innovative and critical discourse within the Bengali context.

This fourth issue of *Uttarsuri*, a Bengali little magazine also called the Shakespeare Issue, published in 1964 and edited by Arun Bhattacharya, is a notable example of how Shakespeare's works were engaged within the Bengali literary landscape of the time. This special issue demonstrates a deep and multifaceted exploration of Shakespeare's influence and relevance in Bengali literary and cultural contexts. Arun Bhattacharya's editorial vision is evident in the careful selection of content that ensures a comprehensive examination of Shakespeare's legacy. His editorial decisions reflect an intention to spark intellectual engagement and encourage readers to view Shakespeare not merely as a distant figure from the Western canon but as a living influence in Bengali literary discourse. One of the striking aspects of this issue is its attempt to bridge the gap between Western classical literature and Bengali readers. By presenting Shakespeare through a localized lens, the magazine offers readers not just translations or adaptations, but also a critical discourse that contextualizes Shakespeare's works within Bengali socio-cultural frameworks.

### **1.5 Exploring the Bard's Enduring Impact in *Parichay* Little Magazine:**

The third segment of the first chapter is about another Bengali little magazine, which, like the abovementioned two magazines, published a Shakespeare special issue in 1964, from Kolkata. This is *Parichay*, a renowned Bengali little magazine. *Parichay* made significant contributions to the little magazine movement in Bengal. Launched in 1961, it became known for its innovative approach to literature and criticism and fostered a platform for new voices and experimental writing. The special Shakespeare issue of *Parichay*, edited by Gopal Halder and Mangalacharan Chattopadhyay in 1964, reflects a nuanced metropolitan response to Shakespeare's work. This issue beautifully illustrated how Kolkata, the intellectual and cultural hub, engages with Shakespeare. This issue stands out as a testament to the dynamic intersection between global and

local literary traditions. This edition showcases a variety of perspectives on Shakespeare, indicating a deep-seated interest in Shakespeare's work among Bengal's intellectual critics. The metropolitan response is marked by a critical and scholarly approach and blends traditional reverence with modern interpretations. The editors, Gopal Halder and Mangalacharan Chattopadhyay, curated essays and articles that not only celebrated Shakespeare's literary genius but also interrogated his relevance in the context of contemporary Bengali culture and socio-political issues.

The special issue of *Parichay* features two articles by Biswanath Chattopadhyay. He was a significant figure in the Bengali little magazine movement, known for his critical essays, literary discussions, and editorship. He played a crucial role in fostering a platform for emerging writers and poets in the 1960s and 70s, during a time when mainstream publications often overlooked experimental writings. Chattopadhyay's works in little magazines provided intellectual rigor and a critical voice that shaped the direction of Bengali literature. He has contributed two articles: "Shakespeare: Purvabhash" ('Visionary Insights of Shakespeare') and "Manche Shakespeare" ('Shakespeare on the Stage'). In the first article, he attempts to explore his life philosophy as a playwright, while the second article draws an outline of staging Shakespeare's plays from the Elizabethan era to modern times. The first article provides an analytical discourse on how Shakespeare's works transcended linguistic and cultural boundaries to leave a significant mark on Bengali literary tradition. Chattopadhyay starts with the appraisal of a Bengali poet, Nirendranath Roy on Shakespeare—'India's Kalidas, and the world's Shakespeare.' With this, Chattopadhyay also referred to him as the Kalidas of the World. Walter De La Mare once commented on the nature of Shakespeare's poetry: 'It shares the life that is common to all men, but it possesses life of this kind more acutely and abundantly, and it has the faculty of communicating it' (qtd. in Chattopadhyay 334). The writer investigates the historical reception of Shakespeare in Bengal and emphasizes the universal poetic sensibilities. He asserts- 'We find a deep connection with life through Shakespeare, so he is the only poet of extraordinary greatness. From the perspective of international appeal, there is no doubt that he is unmatched by any other writer. He is a poet for the common people' (334, translated). A key focus of the article is on the thematic resonance of Shakespeare's works in the socio-political landscape of Bengal. Chattopadhyay highlights the universality of Shakespeare's themes, such as power, morality, and human nature, and how these themes found relevance in the Bengali context, especially during periods of political turmoil and

cultural renaissance. Furthermore, the article discusses the pedagogical importance of Shakespeare in Bengali education and advocated for a deeper engagement with his works to foster a richer understanding of global literature. Chattopadhyay argues that Shakespeare's works, while being products of a different time and place, offer timeless insights that continue to inspire and challenge Bengali readers and writers. So, Biswanath Chattopadhyay presents a well-researched and insightful exploration of Shakespeare's impact on Bengal. And there is no end to the attempt to find this indelible imprint on Bengali culture.

Biswanath Chattopadhyay's second article, "Manche Shakespeare" ('Shakespeare on the Stage'), explores the complex relationship between Shakespeare's works and their adaptation on the Bengali stage. This also focuses on the challenges and triumphs of translating and performing Shakespearean drama in the cultural context of Bengal. The writer quotes Charles Lamb's statement on the performance of Shakespeare's plays: 'The plays of Shakespeare are less calculated for performance on a stage than those of any other dramatist whatever' (qtd. in Chattopadhyay 436). In support of this statement, many contemporary critics will agree. For the essence of Shakespeare's plays, feeling and imagination are considered more important than mere visual experience. Currently, this idea is widely accepted. Chattopadhyay emphasizes Shakespeare's universal appeal and mentions how his themes transcend time and geography. However, he also points out the significant cultural and linguistic barriers that must be navigated when bringing Shakespeare to a Bengali audience. Along with that, the essayist has minutely handled the approach to staging Shakespeare from the Elizabethan era to modern times. He mentioned, 'In the Elizabethan period, the stage was quite open and close to the audience. There were no curtains or partitions at the front or sides. The visual elements were minimal and often absent' (p. 436, translated). He also talks about the most notable actor of that period, Richard Burbage, who primarily performed tragic roles. One of the strengths of Chattopadhyay's essay is his nuanced understanding of the challenges involved in translating and performing Shakespeare in a Bengali context. His exploration of how cultural identity influences the reception of Shakespeare is insightful, highlighting the creative interplay between global literary traditions and local cultural expressions. His historical overview is particularly valuable as it offers readers a sense of the evolving relationship between Bengali theatre and Shakespearean drama. However, the essay could be critiqued for its somewhat idealized portrayal of the Bengali adaptations of Shakespeare. Chattopadhyay tends to emphasize the successes and innovations of these

adaptations, possibly overlooking or downplaying the difficulties and failures that might have also played a significant role in this cultural exchange. This essay could have engaged more critically with the influence of British colonialism on the Bengali reception of Shakespeare. While he acknowledges this influence, a deeper exploration of how colonial power dynamics affected the way Shakespeare was interpreted and staged in Bengali would have added a layer of critical complexity to the essay. Overall, both these essays by Biswanath Chattopadhyay are valuable studies for understanding the discourse on Shakespeare in Bengali theatre.

The Shakespeare special issue of *Parichay* contains two articles on the influence of Shakespeare in Bengali drama. The first essay, “Banglay Shakespeare Charcha”, by Sitangshu Maitra, published in the 1964 special issue, provides a comprehensive examination of the reception and adaptation of Shakespeare’s work in modern Bengali drama and on the evolving cultural milieu of Bengal. Maitra begins by declaring that,

Shakespeare has not been widely studied in Bengali. The effort to translate Shakespeare’s plays began in the era of *Bhanumati Chittabilas* and continues to this day, but no established tradition of Shakespearean criticism has emerged here. Not even a single critic has provided a complete or detailed analysis of Shakespeare’s dramaturgy (311, translated).

He emphasizes the historical context in which Shakespearean drama was introduced to Bengal. But unfortunately, scholars and theatre enthusiasts consider themselves accomplished merely by translating Shakespeare. However, the significant fact is that Shakespeare never gained a permanent foothold in Bengali theatre—neither in original form nor in translation. According to Maitra, the study of Shakespeare is thus confined within the four walls of classrooms. No significant literary discourse has developed around him.

In the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, during the formation of modern theatre and modern drama, both Western and Sanskrit influences became active in Bengali drama, with Shakespeare being a prominent component of the Western influence. The essay highlights several key adaptations of Shakespeare’s works into Bengali. Maitra discusses the pioneering efforts of figures such as Michael Madhusudan Dutta and others who attempted to bridge the gap between Western and

Bengali literary traditions. The first successful original attempt of this kind is Madhusudan Dutt's *Krishnakumari*. In a letter to Keshab Ganguly, a famous actor, Madhusudan Dutta writes<sup>29</sup>-

We Asiatics are of a more romantic turn of mind than our European neighbors. Look at the splendid Shakespearean drama. If you leave out the *Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Romeo and Juliet* and perhaps one or two more, what play would deserve the name of Romantic? Romantic in the sense in which *Sacoontala* is romantic? In the great European drama, you have the stern realities of life, lofty passion, and heroism of sentiment. With us it is all softness, all romance. We forget the world of reality and dream of fairylands. The genius of the Drama has not yet received even a moderate degree of development in this country. Ours are dramatic poems; and even Wilson, the great foreign admirer of our ancient language, has been compelled to admit this. In the *Sarmista*, I often stepped out of the path of the dramatist, for that of the mere poet. I often forget the real in search of the poetical. In the present play I mean to establish a vigilant guard over myself... (qtd. in Maitra 313)

However, *Krishnakumari* never gained prominence on the Bengali stage. Even those who wrote Bengali tragedies could not succeed in presenting their ideal, Shakespeare, effectively to the Bengali audience. Maitra also examines the role of *Bangiya Shakespeare Parishad* in popularizing Shakespeare in Bengal. He says,

Back in 1954, when the *Bangiya Shakespeare Parishad* was established, one of its many objectives was to popularize Shakespeare in Bengali. This was to be achieved through performances, critiques, the publication of accurate and authentic editions, and organizing regular meetings. (p.313, translated).

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<sup>29</sup>A letter was written by Michael Madhusudan Dutt to Keshab Ganguly, a prominent actor of the time. In this letter, Dutt discusses the romantic nature of Asian literature compared to European drama, particularly Shakespeare. He critiques the European dramatic tradition for its focus on stark realities and lofty passions, contrasting it with what he perceives as the softer, more romantic essence of Asian works like *Sakoontala*. Dutt expresses a desire to develop a national theatre that captures this romantic spirit while adhering to naturalistic dialogue, influenced by Dr. Johnson's views on language. He aims for his play, *Krishnakumari*, to serve as a foundational piece for this new theatrical movement in India.

But the present Shakespearean society and the two previous societies have not been able to establish Shakespeare's place on the Bengali stage, nor have they been able to bring any lively discourse on Shakespeare. (p. 314, translated). Maitra also reflects on the critical reception of Shakespearean plays in Bengal, mentioning both admiration and critique. He also mentioned Girishchandra Ghosh's play *Prafulla*. The main motif of this play is derived from Cassio's famous line in Shakespeare's play *Othello*: "O thou invisible spirit of wine, if thou hast no name to be known by, let us call thee devil!" (320). In this play, the main character, Ramesh, is a villain based on Iago from *Othello*, though other Shakespearean villains' traits are also evident. Lady Macbeth's somnambulism is mirrored in Uma Sundari's case. The central event of the play *Prafulla* is an economic catastrophe.

Thus, Sitangshu Maitra's thought-provoking essay "Banglay Shakespeare Charcha," published in the Shakespeare special issue of *Parichay* Bengali little magazine, offers an explorative study regarding the influence of Shakespeare on modern Bengali drama. The adaptation of Shakespearean plays into Bengali has been marked by a creative transformation rather than mere translation, reflecting the unique socio-cultural milieu of Bengal. He straightforwardly comments,

Why will Shakespeare not be popular in translation? His tragedies and comedies will not find a place on the stage, but those who receive higher education will only acknowledge Shakespeare's importance. How is this contradiction possible?" (314, translated). He sums up by stating, "Whether Shakespeare's popularity depends on the development of taste and refinement or on contemporary moral teachings. If it's the latter, we need to reconsider the essence of Shakespeare's universal appeal in a new light. (323, translated)

Another important essay analyzes the profound impact of Shakespeare on Bengali theatre. Rupraprasad Sengupta's essay "Bangla Natoke Shakespeare-er Prababh" ('The Influence of Shakespeare on Bengali Drama'), published in this Shakespeare special issue of *Parichay* in 1964, traces the origins and evolution of Shakespeare's influence in shaping the ground of modern Bengali drama. It offers a comprehensive analysis of how Shakespeare's works have permeated Bengali drama and shaped its development. The writer begins with a historical context:

In 1963, the head of the English department at Kolkata University was requested to send a comprehensive analysis of Shakespeare studies in our country from America. Their aim was to compile information on Shakespeare studies from various countries into a definitive book. It is a matter of great sadness that Dr. Amalendu Basu was unable to send any such information on that day. This unusual event vividly highlights our attention to the extraordinarily painful truth about the record of Shakespeare study in Bengal. (354, translated)

Shakespeare is intricately connected with our life experiences in various ways. However, a precise analysis of this particular valuable phenomenon has not yet been clearly established. He is of the opinion that one must admit whatever has happened is purely trivial and negligible, and overall these efforts have always been without proper planning. He boldly states, 'If one remains infatuated without careful analysis, it is important to remember that one might fall into the trap of superficial admiration' (354, translated). Shakespeare's drama laid the foundation for modern Bengali theatre. Without any exaggeration, it can be rightly said that modern Bengali drama would not have excelled to such heights save Shakespeare. Sengupta notes that Shakespeare's plays were initially translated and adapted into Bengali during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, a period marked by a significant cultural and literary renaissance in Bengal. A number of great Bengali writers practiced drama, being influenced by Shakespeare in multifarious ways. The first noteworthy Bengali dramatist, Michael Madhusudan Dutta, made an effort to showcase Shakespeare's influence in Bengali theatre. Madhusudan's plays are considered literary works, but they do not necessarily reflect successful theatrical performances. Madhusudan Dutta's *Padmabati*, *Krishnakumari*, and *Mayakanan* are worth mentioning here as far as the influence of Shakespeare on Dutta is concerned. Next, Dinabandhu Mitra was a student of Hindu College and had a particular acquaintance with English literature, especially Shakespeare. Nevertheless, his theatrical device was distinctive. In fact, he owes a great deal of credit for bringing Bengali theatre to the general public, nearly making it accessible from the realm of the elite. Jyotirindranath Tagore also is one of the foremost luminaries in the early history of Bengali theatre. The translation of Shakespeare that had previously been somewhat limited in scope was revitalized by him when he translated *Julius Caesar* in 1907, bringing new depth to it.

Rudraprasad Sengupta, in his article, also highlights the various ways Shakespeare's influence manifested in Bengali drama. He discusses the thematic and structural elements borrowed from Shakespeare's plays, such as the exploration of complex human emotions, intricate plots, and the use of dramatic irony. By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Girishchandra Ghosh held a prominent place among the various notable figures connected to Bengali theatre. He serves as a bridge between the early and middle periods of Bengali theatre, and his works, influenced by Shakespeare, are particularly noteworthy for discussion regarding their impact and effectiveness. Girish Chandra Ghosh's *Sirajdaulla*, and *Bilwamangal* are brilliant examples of the enduring legacy of Shakespeare in Bengali theatre. Additionally, through this essay, Sengupta talks about the influence on the aesthetics of Bengali drama and illustrates how elements of Shakespeare's works were incorporated into local narratives and styles. Girish Ghosh himself stated, 'The great poet Shakespeare is my ideal. I have followed in his footsteps' (361, translated). Dwijendralal Roy is another significant figure in the middle period of Bengali theatre. He vowed once to establish Shakespeare in our country, in the land of Kalidasa. His *Dildar*, *Noorjahan*, and *Sahajahan* might be worth mentioning. However, the influence of Shakespeare on Dwijendralal's plays appears to be quite superficial. In fact, between Shakespeare and Dwijendralal Roy, there is a genuine alignment in their approach to tragedy. He stated, 'In the play where internal conflict is depicted, that is where high-quality theatre is found' (369, translated). So, Sengupta's essay is a brilliant piece to understand the enduring legacy of Shakespeare in Bengali theatre. It highlights the dynamic interplay between Shakespearean and Bengali theatre traditions, showcasing how Shakespeare's influence has contributed to the growth and diversification of Bengali drama.

The Shakespeare quatercentenary issue of *Parichay*, published in 1964, contains two important essays on the rationale behind translating Shakespeare's works into Bengali vernacular language. The first essay, contributed by one of the finest figures of Bengali intelligentsia, Sunil Kumar Chattopadhyay, who himself translated Shakespeare's play *Othello*, is a fascinating study on the need for translation. Chattopadhyay's "Shakespeare Anubader Swapakhhe" ('On the Side of Shakespearean Translations') explores the significance and impact of Shakespeare's works in the context of Bengali translations. At the same time, he delves into the role of translation in making Shakespeare's works accessible to Bengali readers and the challenges associated with this process. The essay begins by acknowledging the history and evolution of Shakespearean translations into Bengali. He says,

It is not uncommon to find English scholars among Bengalis who are firmly convinced of the impossibility of translating Shakespeare, for whom there can be no greater toil than the task of translating this great poet. The toil lies in the fact that for those who know English and can appreciate the original work, a translation is merely a reminder of the original's loss of essence. And for those who do not know English, there is no reason to worry, since to them, Shakespeare and ordinary sugar syrups are the same. (394, translated)

It is an undeniable truth that no language has the ability to completely assimilate the essence of the original. Yet, by willingly depriving themselves, readers of different languages remain aware of the fact that a translation is always a secondary connection to the original. In his observation, on this 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Shakespeare while the rest of the world takes pride in their connection with him and celebrates their relationship, we, despite honoring him as a great poet, hesitate to think of him as one of our own. In this connection, he does not forget to mention the role and contribution of the *Bangiya Shakespeare Parishad*. In 1951, with the enthusiasm of Nirendranath Roy and the support of scholars interested in Shakespeare, this council was established. From 1952 to 1956, to the time before Nirendranath Roy's departure abroad, the council had organized several annual meetings to discuss Shakespeare. However, Chattopadhyay thinks that if the council had maintained the same unprecedented enthusiasm and stimulation, the accessibility of Shakespeare to Bengalis would have been much greater by now.

Sunil Kumar Chattopadhyay then reflects on early attempts by Bengali translators and their efforts to preserve the essence of Shakespeare's plays while adapting them to fit the cultural and linguistic nuances of Bengali. The essay discusses notable translators such as Girish Chandra Ghosh, Hemchandra Bandopadhyay and Debendranath Basu and their contributions to this literary endeavor. Girish Chandra Ghosh's *Macbeth*, Hemchandra Bandopadhyay's *Romeo and Juliet* and Hemchandra Basu's *Othello* are some of the examples worth mentioning here. Nevertheless, Shakespeare has not been adequately captured in Bengali translation. The primary reason is the limitation of this language in daily use. One of the challenges, the writer thinks:

It seems that if the living language of daily use had been recognized not merely as an imperfect medium for poetry but as a valuable vehicle for capturing the nuances of high and low aspects of Bengali life, then today the discussion of Shakespearean translation would be much easier. (397)

Even if Shakespeare's works translated into Bengali using prose, without any poetic elements, the Bengali theatre community and society would still have developed a deep and profound engagement with Shakespeare. The reasons for the inadequacy of Shakespeare's translation may be more fundamental. If one practices self-discipline, Shakespeare's translation becomes quite meaningful. The recent evidence from Sudhindranath Dutta, Bishnu Dey, and several other renowned modern poets' interpretations of Shakespeare's sonnets suggests that the impact is considerable. Chattopadhyay examines how translators balance fidelity to the original text with the need for cultural adaptations. He discusses the linguistic challenges faced in translating Shakespeare's intricate language, metaphors, and idioms into Bengali. This includes the challenge of retaining the poetic and rhythmic qualities of Shakespeare's verse while ensuring the translated text resonates with Bengali readers. In discussing the possibilities of translating Shakespeare, it is relevant to recall the poet Sudhindranath Dutta's remarks in the preface to the *Pratidhwani*:<sup>30</sup>

Bengali is a living language, and because of this, having grown up in the villages, not just in Sanskrit but also in Arabic, Persian, Hindi, Urdu, Portuguese, and English influences, it is established in a modestly wide scope today. Therefore, teaching it a new way of thinking is eagerly awaited, and translation is one of the most effective methods for enhancing its expression. (400, translated)

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<sup>30</sup>In the Preface to *Pratidhwani*, Sudhindranath Dutta articulates a vision for the Bengali language, emphasizing its vitality and adaptability. He asserts that Bengali is a "living language," enriched by influences from various languages, including Sanskrit, Arabic, Persian, Hindi, Urdu, Portuguese, and English. This diverse linguistic heritage has allowed Bengali to establish a "modestly wide scope" in contemporary expression. Dutta expresses an eagerness for new ways of thinking to be introduced into the language, highlighting translation as a powerful method for enhancing its expressive capabilities. He believes that through translation, Bengali can evolve and expand its literary potential, thereby fostering a deeper engagement with abstract concepts and modern ideas.

Following this above statement, Sunil Kumar Chattopadhyay focuses on the ethics and practical issues of translation in the context of Shakespeare translation and emphasizes the need for a thorough understanding of translation standards and practices. The author has provided examples from his translation of *Othello* to illustrate his approach to translation. The discussion touches upon three aspects of translation: content similarity, rhythm, and language. On the content similarity, Chattopadhyay argues that strict adherence to literal translation often results in a loss of the original's emotional depth and stylistic beauty. He also emphasizes the need for creative liberty in translation and advocates for allowing the translator to capture the essence and intent of Shakespeare's writing. According to him, content similarity should focus on preserving the spirit and cultural relevance rather than maintaining exact linguistic equivalence. His perspective advocates for an adaptive approach to translation, where the essence of Shakespeare's themes and emotions takes precedence over exact replication. Regarding the importance of rhythm in translating Shakespeare's works, Chattopadhyay argues that rhythm is a crucial element in preserving the musicality and emotional intensity of Shakespeare's language. He opines that Bengali translators should strive to maintain the natural flow and cadence of the original text, even if it requires altering the structure or choosing different words. Lastly, Sunil Kumar Chattopadhyay advocates for the use of 'chalita kathya bhasha' (colloquial language) in translating Shakespeare's works into Bengali. He thinks that the archaic, classical Bengali style often used in translations can distance readers from the emotional and dramatic essence of Shakespeare's plays. Chattopadhyay believes that the use of colloquial Bengali language in translation makes Shakespeare more relatable and accessible to modern readers, especially those unfamiliar with the high classical forms of Bengali. He contends that Shakespeare's original works, despite being written in Elizabethan English, were accessible to the common people of his time. Similarly, using a more conversational Bengali in translation can preserve the immediacy and vibrancy of Shakespeare's dialogue. The writer also does not forget to remind us that the use of colloquial language should not sacrifice the poetic qualities of the original text. He encourages translators to balance fidelity to the original with the fluidity and natural rhythm of spoken Bengali, ensuring that Shakespeare's language remains both elegant and comprehensible to contemporary audiences.

In fine, Sunil Kumar Chattopadhyay's essay underscores the importance of translation in bridging cultural and linguistic divides. He appreciates the efforts of Bengali translators in making Shakespeare's works accessible to Bengali-speaking audiences and acknowledges the ongoing

relevance of Shakespearean themes in Bengali literary and theatrical contexts. The essay serves as a reflection on the transformative power of literature and translation in fostering cross-cultural understanding and appreciation. He sums up advocating boldly for translation:

It is necessary to emphasize that translation requires an appropriate context. Discussions about Shakespeare and his plays in Bengali will prepare the ground for this. Until now, most Bengali scholars of Shakespeare have been limited to English. Consequently, while we often encounter responses from foreign Shakespearean scholars, we do not see Shakespeare through the eyes and perspective of Bengalis...Translation, like many meaningful artistic works, requires constant attention and dedication. Although it is aligned with the essence of the original, it still possesses its own unique artistic freedom. (411, translated)

Bishnu Dey, in his essay “Shakespeare O Bangali” (‘Shakespeare and the Bengalees’), critically examines the Bengali translations of Shakespeare’s works, including Sunil Kumar Chattopadhyay’s translation of *Othello*. In fact, this particular essay was written on the occasion of the publication of Sunil Kumar Chattopadhyay’s translation of *Othello*. Bishnu Dey was a prominent figure in Bengali literature, known primarily for his contributions as a poet, essayist, and literary critic. In this essay, Dey acknowledges Sunil Kumar Chattopadhyay’s contribution to making Shakespeare accessible to Bengali readers but expresses some reservations about the translation’s fidelity to the original. Dey points out that while translating Shakespeare into Bengali is a challenging task due to the linguistic and cultural differences, Chattopadhyay’s translation attempts to bridge this gap. Dey appreciates Chattopadhyay’s effort to retain the core narrative and structure of *Othello* but argues that certain cultural transpositions in translation may have altered the essence of the original drama. He suggests that Bengali readers may not experience the same intensity of Shakespeare’s tragic vision through this translation, as the richness of the Elizabethan language is hard to replicate in Bengali without losing some of its emotional depth and complexity. Despite his criticisms, Bishnu Dey views such translations as essential steps in the continuous engagement with

Shakespeare in Bengal and encourages future translators to delve deeper into the subtleties of Shakespeare's works while adapting them to the Bengali literary tradition.

The metropolitan or elite response to Shakespeare is marked by an intellectual, often exclusionary engagement with his works, shaped by cultural capital, highbrow aesthetics, and academic institutionalization. The quatercentenary special issues of these Bengali little magazines, often driven by the ethos of subversion, targeted the rigid, canonical interpretations of Shakespeare. Kolkata, with its strong tradition of intellectual dissent and left-leaning ideologies, provided fertile ground for these re-readings. Editors and writers of these magazines approached Shakespeare not as an untouchable literary figure but as a subject open to reinterpretation and critique. While it reflects deep respect for Shakespeare's genius, it is also criticized for perpetuating cultural hierarchies and Eurocentric worldviews. These little magazines, though they came out from the metropolitan hub of Kolkata, yet engaged in a form of cultural resistance, presenting alternative readings of Shakespeare that resonated more with indigenous and subaltern narratives than with the Eurocentric perspectives inherited from colonial times. It is also worth mentioning here that on the occasion of Shakespeare's quatercentenary in 1964, both little magazines and mainstream publications commemorated him, but their editorial stances were markedly different. Mainstream academic publications like Prof. Taraknath Sen's *Shakespeare Commemoration Volume* celebrated Shakespeare as more of a universal literary deity, whereas editors in little magazines not only worshipped him but also questioned his continued dominance. While the academic world reaffirmed Shakespeare as a global icon, little magazines treated the moment as an opportunity to destabilize that very image. While Shakespeare's quatercentenary celebration was a global phenomenon, these three little magazines in this chapter localized the celebration within the specific cultural and political context of Bengal.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **Shakespeare Beyond the Metropolis: Suburban and Rural Responses in Bengali Little Magazines**

In the second chapter, two Bengali little magazines have been selected that were published outside of Kolkata. This chapter focuses on *Ispaater Chithi*, which was published from Raniganj, Burdwan, West Bengal. And the other magazine is *Natun Disha*, which was published from Dumdum, North 24 Parganas, West Bengal. Through these two Bengali little magazines, this chapter aims to demonstrate how discussions on Shakespeare occurred in suburban or rural areas. It will be very interesting to see whether any noticeable differences can be observed between the discussions in metropolitan spaces compared to those in suburban and rural areas. This chapter also wishes to showcase how Shakespeare's status as a popular writer is reflected in the writings of magazines published from these rural areas. Through these magazines, publishing from the outskirts of Kolkata and even far away from metropolitan space, showcase the interesting case of Shakespeare's popularity in the provincial arena of Bengal.

#### **2.1 Shakespeare Beyond the Metropolis:**

By 'Shakespeare Beyond the Metropolis,' I mean the study, performance, and appreciation of William Shakespeare's works outside urban centers, especially in rural or smaller communities. While Shakespearean theatre and scholarship are often associated with cities like London, New York, Kolkata, or other cultural hubs, his influence extends far beyond these areas. In smaller towns and remote areas, local theatre groups, schools, and festivals have embraced his plays and adapted them to local contexts, sometimes even using regional dialects or settings. These adaptations often reflect the unique social, cultural, and historical circumstances of these rural areas, justifying Shakespeare's timeless and universal appeal. This idea challenges the notion that Shakespeare is only for elite or metropolitan audiences, thus emphasizing his accessibility and relevance to diverse communities worldwide. Exploring Shakespeare beyond the metropolis reveals the playwright's global reach and how his works can be reinterpreted and made meaningful in various local environments. Beyond the Metropolitan Space of Kolkata refers to the exploration and appreciation of Shakespeare's works outside the cultural hub of Kolkata, in smaller towns and

rural areas of Bengal. While Kolkata has a rich history of Shakespearean performance and scholarship, many communities outside the city also engage with his works through local theatre, festivals, and adaptations. Shakespeare's influence in Bengal is not only confined to major urban centers but also extends to more localized and diverse settings across Bengal.

Suburban and rural responses to Shakespeare often differ from those in urban centres, reflecting the unique cultural, social, and geographical characteristics of these areas. In suburban and rural regions, Shakespearean works are frequently adapted to suit local tastes, values, and issues to make his plays accessible to audiences that might not be familiar with the traditional staging of his works. The localized communities often bring a sense of intimacy and indigenous flavor to Shakespeare's stories, often setting them against backdrops that resonate with rural life or suburban concerns. Theatre groups in smaller towns may perform Shakespeare in open-air venues, community centres, or schools, often emphasizing local dialects or cultural practices in their adaptations. For example, rural adaptations may present *A Midsummer Night's Dream* as a tale set in local woodlands or *The Tempest* as a story of isolation and nature's power by using the natural environment as a powerful theatrical element. The local engagement with Shakespeare fosters a connection between his universal themes—love, power, jealousy, and identity—and the lived experiences of rural or suburban audiences. Prof. Ranjan Ghosh, in his article, “Whipping Homer, Cudgeling Shakespeare: Thinking Canon Tradition” (2020), critiques the traditional reverence for Shakespeare as a canonical figure. He contends that this canon-centric approach from a metropolitan space limits our understanding by excluding alternative perspectives. He mentions,

Canon is transdialectical “thinking”- a kind of attachment and “doing” that is reasonable and intangible, coming as inheritance under certain conditions of truth and acceptance and also as revelation. It filiates to a line of thinking and, again, “retires” into or “goes away” into the stream of existence and thought-the affiliative, the amateurism...To survive, canon has to “labor”, to “work”, bring an emancipation of ideas, generate matrices of desire, the potency of community thinking and a critique of the public sphere. Canon builds the “horizons of habit”; it is an act of prejudice too. The Western canon is invariably one. (447-448)

Raymond Williams, one of the foremost critics to engage with rural perspectives in literature, provides valuable insight into how Shakespeare can be understood through the lens of rural culture. Williams, in his seminal work *The Country and the City*<sup>31</sup>, explores the dichotomy between rural and urban life in literary traditions. He argues that rural communities possess a deep connection to the land, tradition, and collective identity, and this shapes their interpretations of literary works. In responding to Shakespeare, Williams suggests that rural audiences may identify with characters in plays like *As You Like It*, which portrays the pastoral life in contrast to the corrupt court. The response to Shakespeare through a rural lens is a rich and diverse field of interpretation, shaped by the lived experiences, values, and concerns of rural communities. Critical thinkers like Raymond Williams, Wendell Berry's *Imagination in Place*<sup>32</sup>, Gabriel Egan's *Shakespeare and Ecocritical Theory*<sup>33</sup>, and Jonathan Bate's *Shakespeare's Nature*<sup>34</sup> offer frameworks for understanding how rural audiences engage with Shakespeare's works.

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<sup>31</sup>*The Country and the City* by Raymond Williams was first published in 1973 by Oxford University Press. This seminal work examines the evolving representations of rural and urban life in English literature, highlighting the interconnectedness of these two realms throughout history. Williams critiques the idealized portrayals of the countryside, arguing that they often obscure the realities of class struggle and economic exploitation present in both rural and urban settings

<sup>32</sup>Wendell Berry's book that engages with rural responses to Shakespeare's works is titled *Imagination in Place*. Published in 2010, this collection of essays includes a significant analysis of Shakespeare's plays, particularly focusing on *As You Like It* and *King Lear* in the essay "The Uses of Adversity" (pp. 141–178). In this work, Berry reflects on the themes of place, community, and the human experience, drawing connections between Shakespeare's insights and contemporary rural life.

<sup>33</sup>Gabriel Egan's book that engages with rural responses to Shakespeare is titled *Shakespeare and Ecocritical Theory*, published in 2015. This work explores the natural world within Shakespeare's plays through an ecocritical lens, examining themes related to rural life and the representation of nature. Egan discusses how human consumption of natural resources and the portrayal of animals in Shakespeare's universe reflect broader ecological concerns. The book includes analyses of various plays such as *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *As You Like It*, *King Lear*, and "*The Tempest*", highlighting the interplay between human actions and their environmental consequences.

<sup>34</sup>Jonathan Bate's book that engages with rural responses to Shakespeare is titled *Shakespeare's Nature*, published in 2011. In this work, Bate explores how the language and practices of husbandry influenced Shakespeare's writings, examining the connections between the natural world and human experience in his plays and poetry. The book discusses how early modern agricultural discourse shaped attitudes toward nature and highlights the interplay between cultivation, social welfare, and economic systems during Shakespeare's time. By analyzing various works, including *The Tempest* and the *Sonnets*, Bate reveals how these themes reflect broader ecological and social concerns relevant to both Shakespeare's era and contemporary discussions about rural life and environmental stewardship.

## 2.2 The Journey of *Ispaater Chithi*<sup>35</sup> as a Little Magazine:

The journey of *Ispaater Chithi* as a Bengali little magazine reflects the vibrant and dynamic literary culture of Bengal, especially in the world of small, independent publications. As the title *Ispaater Chithi* translates to ‘Letter from Ispaat’ in English, it suggests a sense of communication and introspection. *Ispaater Chithi*, published from Raniganj, a town steeped in industrial history, is a testament to the enduring tradition of little magazines (chhoto kagaj) in Bengal. Little magazines have long been crucial to fostering experimental, avant-garde, and non-mainstream literary voices in Bengali literature, serving as a platform for emerging writers, poets, and thinkers to explore new forms of expression. Bengali intellectual and literary circles have always nurtured independent thought, and little magazines became a key vehicle for this. As early as the 1920s, magazines like *Kallol* and *Parichay* offered alternatives to the more mainstream publications, allowing space for radical and experimental ideas. In a similar spirit, *Ispaater Chithi* emerged in the relatively small industrial town of Raniganj. This geographical setting is significant. Raniganj, with its coal mines and working-class culture, provided a unique backdrop for the magazine, imbuing its literary output with themes of labor, industrial life, and social struggles that are often absent from urban-centric literary discourse. The town’s history, as part of the Bengal coal belt, offers fertile ground for engaging with ideas of social justice, class struggle, and identity, themes that resonate deeply in Bengali literary traditions. This magazine stands out in the Bengali literary landscape because of its commitment to voicing the concerns and experiences of marginalized communities, including workers and those outside urban cultural hubs like Kolkata. This magazine carries forward the legacy of little magazines by offering a counter-narrative to mainstream literary culture, which often focuses on the cosmopolitan elite. In its pages, readers find a blend of poetry, short stories, essays, and criticism, often addressing themes like displacement, labor, rights, environmental degradation, and the loss of local cultural identities. These themes are particularly

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<sup>35</sup>*Ispaater Chithi* is a notable Bengali little magazine that has contributed to the rich landscape of the little mid-20th century, which was characterized by a focus on alternative and experimental literary expression, often serving as a platform for new voices and innovative ideas in literature. Little magazines like “*Ispaater Chithi*” play a crucial role in showcasing contemporary Bengali literature, poetry, and criticism, reflecting the socio-political context of their times. They often challenge mainstream narratives and provide space for marginalized voices, thus fostering a vibrant literary culture.

magazine movement in India. This movement, which gained momentum in the

relevant in the context of Raniganj's coal mining industry, which has seen both prosperity and decline. The magazine serves as a voice for those who live on the margins. The journey of *Ispaater Chithi* as a Bengali little magazine is emblematic of the enduring power of independent literary platforms in Bengal. Rooted in the industrial heartland of Raniganj, *Ispaater Chithi* contributes to the rich tapestry of Bengali little magazines, fostering creativity, experimentation, and a diversity of voices that continue to shape the future of Bengal's intellectual culture.

One of the key contributions that *Ispaater Chithi* plays is its role in decentralizing the literary landscape of Bengal. Kolkata has traditionally been seen as the centre of Bengali culture and intellectual life, home to numerous little magazines that have shaped literary movements from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. By emerging from a rural belt, this little magazine disrupts the Kolkata-centric model, proving that important literary work and literary discussion can happen even in smaller towns and industrial areas. This decentralization is crucial to the magazine movement because it brings in voices, themes, and experiences that are often overlooked by urban publications. *Ispaater Chithi* thus provides a platform for writers who may not have the same access to Kolkata's literary circles but whose work reflects the lived realities of Bengal's rural regions. This inclusion of diverse perspectives broadens the scope of the magazine movement in Bengal, making it more representative of the entire region rather than just its urban elite. Like other little magazines, *Ispaater Chithi* also is a space for literary experimentation. Its distance from the mainstream literary establishment allows it to experiment with form, content, and style that larger, more commercial publications might avoid. This spirit of experimentation is a hallmark of the little magazine movement, and *Ispaater Chithi* continues to push the boundaries of Bengali literature. While Kolkata remains the epicenter of the Bengali literary scene, *Ispaater Chithi* has fostered a strong literary community in Raniganj and other parts of Bengal. The magazine's openness to young, budding writers ensures that it remains a space for innovation, offering the less established writers the freedom to explore bold and unconventional ideas without the constraints of more formal literary institutions. So, *Ispaater Chithi* has made a lasting impact on the Bengali little magazine by decentralizing the literary space and elevating the marginalized voices. It has contributed to a more inclusive, diverse, and dynamic literary culture, proving that important literary work can thrive outside the traditional centers of power.

As a typical little magazine, *Ispaaater Chithi* embodies all the key aspects of a Bengali little magazine. It maintains the non-commercial, independent nature that defines little magazines, prioritizing creative expression over profit. The magazine provides a platform for marginalized voices, especially those from working-class and industrial backgrounds. Much like other little magazines, *Ispaaater Chithi* operates on the fringes of the literary establishment. In its form and function, this magazine upholds the spirit of little magazines. Its regional focus reinforces the little magazine's role in encouraging diverse and grassroots perspectives. Overall, this little magazine captures the spirit of the Bengali little magazine- innovative, socially conscious, and committed to nurturing new, independent voices. Critics and readers alike have praised this little magazine for its editorial courage, particularly in addressing complex social and political issues. The editorial team, led by figures like Debabrata Mitra, has been commended for its commitment to nurturing new and unconventional writers. Its inclusive approach challenges the hegemony of metropolitan literary circles. However, like many little magazines, *Ispaaater Chithi* faced financial constraints due to the limited readership. Despite this, it managed to sustain its publication, thanks to the dedication of its editors and contributors. This resilience is often highlighted as one of the magazine's defining qualities. Some notable contributors to *Ispaaater Chithi* include Debabrata Mitra, Utpal Kumar Basu, Binoy Majumdar, Subhas Mukhopadhyay, Sandipan Chattopadhyay, Nabarun Bhattacharya, and many more. These authors, among others, helped establish *Ispaaater Chithi* as a significant publication in Bengal.

### **2.3 Popularity of Shakespeare in Bengal: A Tribute in *Ispaaater Chithi***

*Ispaaater Chithi*, a renowned Bengali little magazine, published a special issue on Shakespeare on the auspicious occasion of Shakespeare's 400<sup>th</sup> birth anniversary in 1964. This magazine holds a special place in the literary culture of Bengal. Unlike many other magazines of its kind, which were often centered in Kolkata, this magazine was published from Raniganj, a town in the Asansol subdivision in West Bengal. Published from Raniganj, *Ispaaater Chithi* brought a unique regional perspective to the Bengali literary scene, which was dominated by the Kolkata-centric publications. In 1964, this magazine brought out a special issue on Shakespeare edited by Pritwish Chakraborty. A respected scholar and critic, Pritwish Chakraborty, was instrumental in conceptualizing and editing this special issue. His deep understanding of Shakespeare's works and

his ability to contextualize them within the Bengali cultural and literary framework made the issue particularly impactful. This special issue featured a wide array of content, including essays, critical analyses, and creative reinterpretations of Shakespeare's plays and sonnets. Some essays focused on direct translations of Shakespeare's plays into Bengali, while others examined his influence on Bengali literature and drama. This collection is an important study in this research, mainly for two reasons: one, this issue was published after independence when the Indigenous approach to Shakespeare was at its peak; and secondly, this issue comes from the non-metropolitan sphere. This chapter is basically a focus on the rural response to Shakespeare. We often argue that if Shakespeare is really a popular writer, why is he only discussed, debated, and enacted in the urban city life of Kolkata? But this chapter tries to examine how this generalized assumption was not only wrong but also misleading.

The first article of *Ispaater Chithi Sankhya*, edited by Pritwish Chakraborty, is "Banglay Shakespeare Charcha" ('Shakespeare Studies in Bengal'), contributed by Chittaranjan Bandopadhyay. Educated in literature, Bandopadhyay has been deeply involved in grassroots literary activities since his youth. His works, often published in small independent magazines, reflect a profound understanding of Bengali culture, politics, and social issues. This essay explores the enduring legacy of Shakespeare in Bengal, tracing its roots from the colonial period to the contemporary era. At the very outset, Bandopadhyay points out:

Shakespeare first came to India with the English officials of the East India Company. The officials, for their own amusement in foreign lands, performed his plays. A few local Indians had the opportunity to watch these performances. Thus, our acquaintance with Shakespeare began. (7, translated)

He emphasizes the role of colonial education in introducing Shakespeare to Bengali students. The British government's implementation of English-language education in the 19<sup>th</sup> century made Shakespeare's works an essential part of the curriculum in prestigious schools and colleges across Bengal. Through the medium of both texts and performances, we first came to know Shakespeare.

Next, Chittaranjan Bandopadhyay discusses the subject of translating Shakespeare into Bengali. In fact, in the succeeding paragraphs, the writer focuses more on discussing translation and adaptations of Shakespeare in Bengal. He announces—

We had to wait until the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century for the translation of Shakespeare into Bengali. However, it is known that a translation was done even earlier, at the turn of the century. Claude Moncton of Fort William College made this translation. He was a student at the college from July 1806 to February 1809. As a civilian, it was compulsory for him to learn native languages, and he chose Bengali. He translated *The Tempest* as a test of his language skills. This information is recorded in the documents of Fort William College: Another enterprise of a similar nature has distinguished the collegiate exercises of this year. Mr. Moncton has undertaken, and has been able to execute, translation into Bengali of Shakespeare's tragedy of *The Tempest*... Mr. Monckton has triumphed over these obstacles. (8, translated)

Moncton is honoured as the first translator of Shakespeare into Bengali. However, apart from the mere historical fact, this translation holds no real significance. It was done as a classroom exercise, and there is no evidence that it was ever published. Long Saheb mentioned the translation in his catalogue, dating it to 1809.

The year 1853 is particularly memorable in the history of Shakespeare studies in Bengal. In that year, *Bhanumati Chittablias*, based on *The Merchant of Venice*, was published by Harachandra Ghosh, a famous student of Hooghly School and then Superintendent of Excise at Malda. The way the writer has highlighted Harachandra Ghosh's provincial background represents the rural response of the little magazine. Harachandra Ghosh published a free adaptation of *Romeo and Juliet* titled *Charumukh Chittahara* in 1864. From 1865 to 1900, many translations of Shakespeare were published in Bengali. In Bengal, Shakespeare's influence is primarily seen in the field of literature, unlike in Western India, where his plays were more prominently performed on stage. A review of the translations and adaptations published in Bengali reveals Shakespeare's

direct influence. Among all Indian languages, the study and exploration of Shakespeare have been most extensive in Bengali. It is not unreasonable to estimate that the number of Shakespeare's plays and stories translated or adapted into Bengali could be around 100. From the bibliography of Shakespeare in Bengali, it is most evident that *The Merchant of Venice* is the most popular among Bengali readers, followed by *Macbeth* in second place. Chittaranjan Bandopadhyay also mentions a few selected translated or adapted works: Gobinda Chandra Roy's *Vishak Duhita* on *All's Well That Ends Well* in 1888. Debendranath Basu's *Ilabati* on *Antony and Cleopatra* in 1928, Sunil Kumar Chattopadhyay's translation of *Othello* in 1957 on behalf of *Bangiya Shakespeare Parishad*, Sourindra Mohan Mukhopadhyay's *Moner Moton* on "As You Like It," etc. Nagendranath Choudhury adapted *Hamlet* into an Indian setting as *Hariraj* in 1896, Siddheshwar Ghosh as *Chandranath* in 1894, and Pramathanath Basu as *Amar Singh* in 1874. Only one translation of *Julius Caesar* has been done by Jyotirindranath Tagore, and it was published in 1907. Girish Chandra Ghosh's *Macbeth* is considered first-rate work among the Bengali translations of Shakespeare's literary masterpieces. The best Bengali adaptation of *Romeo and Juliet* has come from the poet Hemchandra Bandopadhyay. His *Nalini Basanta* is considered the first Bengali adaptation of *The Tempest*.

Despite the richness of Bengali poetry, a complete Bengali translation of Shakespeare's exquisite sonnets has not been published. In 1964, a book containing translations of selected sonnets was published. This translation was done by Manindra Roy. For readers unfamiliar with English, the world of Shakespeare is so unfamiliar that it becomes difficult for them to enter and appreciate its essence. Therefore, many believed that if the linguistic barriers of this unfamiliar world could be removed, the appreciation of its essence might become easier. Hence, translations focused heavily on Indianization. The setting, time, and social environment became localized, while the thoughts and stories remained Shakespeare's. This attempt at blending the two became the main feature of Shakespearean studies in India. Chittaranjan Bandopadhyay, the writer of this essay, finally reflects on the importance of these translations and adaptations in popularizing Shakespeare in Bengal. He says, 'No matter how many flaws and inconsistencies exist in the translated works of Shakespeare, these books still bear testimony to our attraction toward him. No other foreign author's works have reflected so diversely in the hearts of Bengalis' (16, translated). This essay stands as a testament to the significant role Shakespeare has played in shaping Bengali literary and theatrical discourse over the centuries.

Chittaranjan Bandopadhyay contributed another interesting essay in this special issue. His essay “Shakespeare-er Dristite Bharat” (‘Shakespeare’s View of India’) offers a scholarly exploration of how India and its people are portrayed in Shakespeare’s works. At the time of Shakespeare, India was largely a land of mystery and fascination for Europeans, known primarily for its wealth, spices, and exoticism. Bandopadhyay argues that Shakespeare, like many of his contemporaries, drew from second-hand accounts of travelers and merchants, which shaped his vague, sometimes romanticized portrayal of India. The writer, at the very outset, rightly affirms:

From various perspectives, India could be seen as a captivating image. India was a land of dreams—bright sunlight, a celebration of greenery, and a country of gold and jewels. In the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the wealth of England and India was almost equivalent. Writers of that era reflected this notion in literature. Shakespeare, too, used the word ‘India’ in this context in several of his plays.  
(17, translated)

He discusses the references to India in plays such as *The Merchant of Venice* and *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, where India is often depicted as a land of immense wealth and exotic luxury, symbolizing both material riches and cultural mystique. In the play *All’s Well That Ends Well*, Helena refers to the sun-worshippers of India. Helena loves Bertram, but Bertram remains indifferent. Helena feels that her situation is like that of the sun-worshippers of India—no matter how much they worship the sun, it will never come down to them, always remaining distant: ‘Thus Indian-like/ religious in mine error, I adore/ The sun, that looks upon his worshipper,/But knows him no more’ (Act I, scene III, p. 20). However, Bandopadhyay critically examines how these depictions were also marked by the inherent Eurocentrism of Shakespeare’s time. The essay reflects on how Shakespeare’s India is a product of Western imagination, filtered through the lens of colonial ambitions and orientalist fantasies that were emerging in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. One of the strengths of this essay lies in the writer’s ability to contextualize Shakespeare’s India within the broader Elizabethan worldview. However, Bandopadhyay could have delved deeper into how Shakespeare’s brief, often indirect references to India might be indicative of the broader European

process of ‘othering’<sup>36</sup> non-Western cultures. This would have enriched the essay’s intellectual scope by linking Shakespeare’s work to emerging colonial discourses, as postcolonial critiques of Shakespeare would later attempt. This essay serves as a starting point for discussions on Shakespeare’s engagement with the Orient, but it leaves many questions about the ideological and cultural implications of these portrayals unanswered.

Jatindra Dasgupta’s essay, “Shakespeare Charcha: Yug Theke Yuge” (‘Discussing Shakespeare: From Age to Age’), published in the 1964 Shakespeare Issue of *Ispater Chithi*, explores the enduring relevance of Shakespeare across different ages and cultures. Jatindra Dasgupta was a regular contributor to various little magazines. He was closely associated with magazines like *Krittibas*<sup>37</sup>, *Uttarsuri* and *Shatabdi*<sup>38</sup>. The essay is a critical reflection on how Shakespeare’s works have transcended geographical and temporal boundaries, continuing to influence generations of readers and theatergoers. Dasgupta opens by addressing Shakespeare’s unparalleled status:

On the occasion of Shakespeare’s 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration, a characteristic notice was issued by the English nation, stating that, possibly, there is no English household anywhere in the world where, even if there are no other books, at least

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<sup>36</sup>‘Othering’ is a complex social phenomenon that involves the process of defining and labeling individuals or groups as fundamentally different from oneself, often leading to marginalization and exclusion. While commonly associated with Western contexts, othering can also be understood as a non-Western phenomenon, reflecting broader global dynamics of identity and power. “Othering” refers to the act of categorizing individuals or groups as “the Other,” which entails creating a distinction between “us” (the in-group) and “them” (the out-group). This process often involves stereotyping, stigmatization, and the imposition of negative characteristics upon those deemed different. The concept is rooted in philosophical discourse, particularly in phenomenology, where it is seen as integral to the formation of self-identity through contrast with others.

<sup>37</sup>*Krittibas* is a Bengali little magazine that first appeared in Kolkata in 1953. It has played a crucial role in the evolution of modern Bengali poetry and literature, providing a platform for experimental and avant-garde writers. *Krittibas* was co-founded by notable poets Sunil Gangopadhyay, Ananda Bagchi, and Dipak Mazumdar. Sunil Gangopadhyay later became the sole editor and is most closely associated with the magazine's identity. The magazine emerged in the post-independence era of India, a time when there was a strong desire among writers to break away from traditional forms and explore new literary expressions. *Krittibas* became a voice for younger poets who sought to challenge established norms and introduce innovative styles.

<sup>38</sup>*Shatabdi* was founded in 1970 by the poet and editor Kalyan Mukhopadhyay. The magazine aimed to provide a platform for new writers and poets, fostering innovative literary expressions and exploring contemporary themes. Initially published quarterly, *Shatabdi* has adapted its format over time to remain relevant in the changing literary landscape. It continues to be an important outlet for literary expression in Bengali. *Shatabdi* stands out as a significant player in the Bengali little magazine movement, contributing to the richness of Bengali literature by promoting diverse voices and innovative writing styles. Its legacy continues to influence contemporary writers and poets in Bengal today.

two books are present: one, an unabridged English Bible, and two, a complete set of Shakespeare's works (21, translated).

Every English descendant has accepted these two works as the greatest symbol and representation of their national spirit and cultural glory. The first has been accepted as a symbol of their religious consciousness, and the second as a representation of their language and literature. Shakespeare was an adept actor in the contemporary English theatre, a shrewd box-office-oriented producer, and a master of crafting captivating and thrilling theatrical plots. Shakespeare, at least during his lifetime, did not enjoy any greater honor or recognition than that of a vibrant stage performer. It seems he had little expectation for such honors himself. As far as is known, the primary motivation behind his writings was merely the need for some immediate financial gain. He wrote his sonnets primarily to capture the favor of some of his wealthy patrons, and he produced one play after another at a rapid pace simply to keep the excitable London theatre audience continuously engaged and to ensure his own theatre's seats remained filled. Dasgupta argues that though this essay began with the mention of Shakespeare's worldwide, unparalleled establishment as a great poet, the foundation of that establishment is undoubtedly rooted in the vast expanse of his works. However, the true architects of his timeless universality are the generations of Shakespeare enthusiasts from different countries and eras who followed. Through the ages, with various questions, diverse approaches, different inquiries, and an ever-increasing variety of interpretations, resolutions, realizations, and tools of enlightenment, these later generations of Shakespeare enthusiasts have gradually constructed the grand edifice of the poet's universal status.

The person who must be mentioned as the very first pioneer of Shakespeare studies is none other than Francis Meres, a direct contemporary of Shakespeare himself. In this compilation, 'A Comparative Discourse of our English Poets, with the Greek, Laten [sic], and Italian Poets'<sup>39</sup>Meres

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<sup>39</sup>Francis Meres's work, *A Comparative Discourse of Our English Poets, with the Greek, Latin, and Italian Poets*, is a significant literary piece that highlights the stature of English poets in relation to their classical counterparts. Published in 1598 as part of his larger work "Palladis Tamia," this discourse serves as one of the earliest critical comparisons between English literature and the classical traditions of Greece and Rome. Meres's "A Comparative Discourse of Our English Poets" stands out as a pioneering effort in literary criticism that not only celebrates English poets but also situates them within a broader historical context. By drawing connections between English literature and classical traditions, Meres helped elevate the status of his contemporaries while laying groundwork for future literary analysis. His work remains a crucial reference for understanding the dynamics of Renaissance literature and its place in the global literary landscape.

edited and selected about one and a half hundred writers, and he also added an original Preface under this name. In this very Preface, Meres drew the attention of English readers to Shakespeare's remarkable poetic talent. The form in which we currently receive Shakespeare's plays owes its origin to Nicholas Rowe, who was the primary innovator of that structure. Another notable contribution by Rowe was his compilation and edited collections of Shakespeare's works, which also included a fact-based and credible biography of the great poet. Rowe's historic edition was published in 1709. After this, much like opening the floodgates of English publishing, numerous new editions of Shakespeare's works began to appear one after another. It has been calculated that from 1709 to 1790, at least seventy different editions were published. Among these, the two most notable editions are the one edited by the poet Alexander Pope and the other by Dr. Samuel Johnson. The primary significance of these two editions lies in the original, thought-provoking evaluation of Shakespeare. Dasgupta then analyzes the continental response to Shakespeare. In France, opinions about Shakespeare have historically been quite mixed. During the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, many French intellectuals, particularly those associated with the French Enlightenment, were critical of Shakespeare. Notable figures like Voltaire saw his works as lacking in classical restraint and order. However, by the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Romantic Movement in France, led by figures like Victor Hugo, embraced Shakespeare for his creativity, emotional depth, and complexity. Today, Shakespeare is revered in France as one of the greatest playwrights, and his plays are regularly performed in French theatres. Dasgupta then mentions that Shakespeare's works were first introduced to German audiences in the late 17<sup>th</sup> century, but it was in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, during the Sturm und drang (Storm and Stress) movement, that his influence truly took hold. German writers, particularly Goethe and Friedrich Schiller, embraced Shakespeare's works. Dasgupta writes,

From around the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, Shakespeare's characters and works were primarily associated with the influence of aestheticism and musical theatre. This was not only in England or Germany but spread across the entire Western world (28, translated).

From the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, specifically the 1890s, a distinct shift began to occur in Shakespearean discourse, which was evident across the entire Western world. Among these shifts,

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each note reflected a rhythm that was often discordant, embodying completely opposite melodies. Since the time after World War I until now, the devotional and overly reverent tone of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries in Shakespeare studies seems to no longer gather the same kind of enthusiastic response as before. The evolution of Shakespeare studies in Bengal has also shifted over time. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, he was revered almost unquestioningly and seen as the pinnacle of literary achievement. However, by the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, scholars were no longer content with simply praising Shakespeare. They began to analyze his works more deeply. Thus, Jatindra Dasgupta's essay presents an overall exploration of Shakespeare's place in world literature. The adaptability and timelessness of Shakespeare's works have not only survived through the ages but also thrived everywhere across different historical periods.

Dr. Asit Dutta's essay, "Samakalin Samajbhabna O Shakespeare" ('Contemporary Social Thought and Shakespeare'), published in the Shakespeare issue of *Ispater Chithi* in 1964, presents a detailed exploration of how Shakespeare's works reverberate with contemporary societal issues. Written in a period marked by intense social and political changes in India and across the world, Dutta emphasizes Shakespeare's enduring relevance to modern audiences, particularly in the context of social thought. Dutta points out at the outset, 'Shakespeare, through the creation of various diverse characters in his thirty-six plays, and through plots full of conflicts and events, has expressed certain statements, some observations, and conveyed his philosophical and social thoughts' (36, translated). Dutta simultaneously showcases an era in which Shakespeare produced his works. It was the reign of Tudor feudal lords. Although agriculture was still predominant in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, capitalism had started to emerge. Livestock and livestock-based goods production and exchange had begun, and trade was being conducted both domestically and internationally. However, the full influence of capitalism was not yet visible. In agriculture, horses began to be used in place of oxen. The Tudor feudal lords made extensive arrangements for sheep farming. Trade started to expand within other European countries and overseas, and along with this, conflicts and wars also began. Therefore, on one side, there was prosperity, and on the other, war and social conflicts crippled the country's economy, social structure, and culture. Historians have viewed it this way.

The age was not, as some would have us believe, one of unhindered and lavish expansion. Indeed, to the Elizabethans themselves it seemed dark and distressful,

with war and depression destroying ‘England’s’ commerce and wealth. In fact, it laid some foundations for later expressions in industry and trade. To the best of our knowledge, national wealth increased markedly. In part, this resulted from the legitimate trade of importing stolen bullion, but the most solidly prosperous part of English life was its booming agriculture. Although the price inflation brought much hardship and many problems, it also offered fine chances that did not go begging. (qtd. in Dutta, 41).

Dutta further explores the social division of the Tudor era—gentlemen, citizens, and burgesses, yeomen, artificers and laborers. Along with this were the king and the nobility. Again, the nobility was divided into two classes: the higher nobility and the knights. The role of the church was also significant. The old structures were breaking down, and a new era was emerging. In other words, the capitalist society was disrupting the old systems and modes of thought. We can see the reflection of this social transition in Shakespeare’s plays. The social ideas reflected include themes of class division, the role of power and authority, the complexity of human relationships, and the tensions between social norms and individual desires. Dutta writes,

In Shakespeare’s early play *Love’s Labour Lost*, we can observe social satire against the backdrop of changing tastes and fashion. The play highlights the preferences of the middle class and reflects on nature. The Tudor era experienced a challenge to the feudal system, marking the beginning of capitalist development. The bourgeois mentality began to take shape, influencing societal norms and behaviours. With the Renaissance, we see a rise in the awareness of women’s roles. Characters like Portia, Desdemona, and Miranda shine as symbols of independence and agency, representing the changing attitudes towards women in society. Through these portrayals, Shakespeare comments on the evolving landscape of social and gender dynamics during this transformative period. (40, translated)

Shakespeare, in the darkness of life, skillfully depicted the struggles of life. He witnessed the wars of the Tudor era, experienced societal conflicts, and portrayed them in his plays, while also reflecting on the contemporary new beginnings and the tales of the future, which he did not forget. In this way, Dutta underscores the universality of Shakespeare's work by asserting that his plays provide a mirror to society, reflecting both its virtues and vices. Shakespeare always discussed literature in the context of social transformation. Literature is not merely a photographic representation of social life but reflects contemporary productions, values derived from social relationships, mentalities, and life experiences. His plays, sonnets, and poems manifest these insights. Shakespeare has given a universal representation of historical life experiences, and here he stands as a meaningful, conscious playwright. Through this essay, Dr. Asit Dutta advocates for a continued engagement with Shakespeare's work as a means of understanding both individual and collective experiences in the modern world. Nonetheless, the essay succeeds in making Shakespeare accessible and relevant to a new generation of readers, encouraging them to engage with his works through the lens of their own social and political realities.

Suddha Satya Basu's article "Shakespeare er Natak Sampadana" ('Editing Shakespeare's Plays'), published in the 1964 Shakespeare Issue of *Ispater Chithi*, discusses the intricacies of editing Shakespeare's plays for Bengali readers. Basu provides a detailed discussion on the cultural and linguistic challenges that arise when adapting such an iconic figure's works for a non-English-speaking audience. The writer first mentions his early interaction with Shakespeare's works during his college days. He shares how during the honours classes, he was fascinated with the admiration and passionate discussions of professors. Suddha Satya Basu was a bright scholar and a significant contributor to the little magazines. Basu writes,

With wide-eyed wonder, I would become completely absorbed in the lectures of the professors, captivated by their eloquence. From that age, I began reading the stories of Shakespeare's plays—my first introduction was through the book Lamb's *Tales from Shakespeare*. After that, I started reading Shakespeare's original works. (33, translated)

The professor used to recommend reading the Verity edition<sup>40</sup>. He mentioned that many people have edited Shakespeare's plays in various ways, but for Indian students, the Verity edition would be the easiest to follow at first because it provides explanations of difficult words in clear and simple language. Basu also points out

Many scholars and intellectuals have edited Shakespeare's works. Shakespeare wrote plays for acting in theatre companies, and it's often said that he did not write them continuously. Instead, he would write only what was necessary for the actors, giving them their lines separately. That means he wrote the specific parts for each actor or actress. Scholars would go to the theatre, watch the performances of Shakespeare's plays, and be captivated and surprised. Afterward, they would sit down with pen and paper, note down the dialogues delivered by the characters, and gradually compile these to give Shakespeare's plays their complete form. (33-34, translated)

Shakespeare never imagined that his plays would one day become part of university curricula. It is not that scholars had not heard a few words differently while listening to the actors' dialogues. As a result, the versions of Shakespeare's plays edited by scholars show several discrepancies in the words. The reason for the many errors and variations in the language of Shakespeare's plays is primarily due to this.

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<sup>40</sup>The Verity edition of Shakespeare's works refers to a specific series of scholarly editions published by the Verity Press, which aimed to provide authoritative texts of Shakespeare's plays and poems. This edition is notable for its focus on textual accuracy and fidelity to the original manuscripts and early printed versions of Shakespeare's works. The Verity edition emphasizes the importance of presenting Shakespeare's texts as accurately as possible, often relying on the First Folio (1623) and other early sources to reconstruct the most authentic versions of the plays. Each volume typically includes extensive annotations, introductions, and critical essays that provide context and analysis, helping readers understand the historical, cultural, and literary significance of the works. The Verity edition aims to make Shakespeare's works accessible to both scholars and general readers, balancing scholarly rigor with readability. Many editions include illustrations or artistic elements that enhance the reading experience, often reflecting the themes or settings of the plays. The Verity edition often considers the performative aspects of Shakespeare's works, providing insights into staging, character interpretation, and historical performance practices.

Suddha Satya Basu also highlights that during the Elizabethan era, the printing press in England was not in very good condition. Scholars were not directly involved in the printing process. As a result, spelling mistakes and various printing errors were quite common at that time. The use of the English language has evolved significantly since the Elizabethan era. The language has become more standardized over time. So, many words in modern editions of Shakespeare's works are words that Shakespeare himself did not use. The scripts written for the actors are still preserved in museums. The notes that Edward Alleyn made about his role as Orlando in *As You Like It* is still available in the Dulwich papers<sup>41</sup>. Of course, scripts had to be censored at that time before they could be performed. Scholars would prepare the books from the censored copies of the theatre. At that time, there were no copyright regulations for plays, which allowed multiple versions of the same play to be produced by different people. Basu clearly mentions that there are no complete manuscripts of Shakespeare's plays, which is why the language and staging of his works are not fully established. Consequently, the reasons behind many of the language choices and theatrical directions in Shakespeare's plays are not entirely clear or definitive. In the context of editing Shakespeare's works, Pollard provides a clear perspective in his book *Shakespeare's Fight with the Pirates*<sup>42</sup>. He discusses the challenges and developments in the publication and preservation of Shakespeare's texts, highlighting issues such as the influence of piracy on the availability of authentic editions and efforts made to restore and standardize his works. Pollard emphasizes the importance of accurate scholarship in understanding and presenting Shakespeare's plays, making his insights crucial for anyone studying the editorial history of these texts. Suddha Satya Basu sums up by saying,

For all the editors who are editing Shakespeare's works, the task of editing has become more challenging for them. This is because the previous editions contain distinctions regarding the locations of those texts and the variations in the use of

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<sup>41</sup>The Dulwich Paper is likely referring to a specific type of practice paper used for entrance exams at Dulwich College, a prestigious independent school in London. These papers are part of the preparation for the 11 Plus examinations, which assess students seeking admission to selective secondary schools.

<sup>42</sup>*Shakespeare's Fight with the Pirates* is a pivotal work by Alfred W. Pollard, published in 1917, that addresses the issues of textual piracy and the transmission of Shakespeare's works. This book emerged from a series of lectures Pollard delivered at the University of Cambridge in 1915 and has since become an important text in the field of bibliographical studies concerning Shakespeare.

certain words, which need to be discussed logically. Furthermore, it is essential to articulate clearly and logically why he has established his own authority while taking care to align with the quarto and folio editions. (37, translated)

This Shakespeare special issue of *Ispaater Chithi*, a Bengali little magazine published in 1964, made a significant contribution to the popularization of Shakespeare in Bengal. Edited by Pritwish Chakraborty and published in the rural regions far from Kolkata, this issue on Shakespeare became a crucial platform for engaging with the Bard's works in a local context. Under Chakraborty's editorial guidance, the Shakespeare special issue was crafted not just as an academic exploration but as an accessible entry point for readers who might not have been familiar with English literature. This approach was critical, as it dismantled the elitist barriers surrounding Shakespeare's works. This issue featured various contributions from emerging writers, scholars, and theatre practitioners. This rich tapestry of content provided a space for alternative voices. *Ispaater Chithi*, with this issue, sought to bridge the gap between highbrow literary discourse and the rural audience, presenting discussions on Shakespeare in a manner that resonated with local sensibilities. This issue also acted as a catalyst for cultural exchange and inspired local writers and artists to engage with Shakespearean themes in their works. This initiative not only enriched the literary landscape of Bengal but also highlighted the power of little magazines in bridging cultural divides and promoting global literary heritage at the grassroots level.

#### **2.4 Contribution of *Natun Disha* from the Suburban Region:**

*Natun Disha* is a prominent Bengali little magazine that emerged as part of the broader little magazine movement in India, which gained momentum in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. Launched in 1978, *Natun Disha* has played a vital role in showcasing experimental and avant-garde literature, providing a platform for emerging writers and poets who often challenge mainstream literary norms. The magazine emphasizes non-conformist and innovative expressions, reflecting the socio-political landscape of Bengal. It has been influential in nurturing new voices and fostering a sense of community among writers who seek to explore unconventional themes and styles. Through its diverse content, *Natun Disha* contributes significantly to the richness of Bengali literature,

continuing the legacy of earlier little magazines like *Krittibas* and *Kallol*<sup>43</sup>, which also aimed to break away from traditional literary constraints. Moreover, *Natun Disha* has facilitated discussions on adaptations of Shakespeare's works in Bengali theatre, showcasing how local artists reinterpret these classics to resonate with regional audiences. By highlighting translations and adaptations, the magazine not only preserves Shakespeare's legacy but also enriches the local literary scene.

In 2005, on the occasion of Shakespeare's 441<sup>st</sup> birth anniversary, *Natun Disha* published a special issue dedicated to William Shakespeare. This edition, edited by Aniruddha Sikdar, aimed to explore the relevance of Shakespeare's works in contemporary Bengali literature and culture, reflecting on his influence and the universal themes present in his plays. In his editorial note, Aniruddha Sikdar states:

This great poet and playwright's universality is such that he is not merely a poet of England. He is the inner soul of India's cultural heritage. The name Shakespeare brings to us a monumental representation, especially in Bengal, where discussions about him began over forty years ago, in 1964, marking the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his birth. Various Bengali publications like *Parichay*, *Amrita*, *Desh*, *Prabandha Patrika*, and *Biswabharati Patrika* have initiated discussions on Shakespeare, resulting in countless essays focusing on him as a poet and dramatist. A few years later, the magazine *Ebong Mushayera* published a special issue on *Hamlet*. Although the trend of writing essays on Shakespeare in Bengali has slowed down recently, it remains ongoing. *Natun Disha* wishes to celebrate the 441<sup>st</sup> anniversary of this illustrious figure by publishing a special issue, focusing on the legacy of Shakespeare in Bengal. Despite our limited resources, we are compiling a collection of writings from numerous esteemed

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<sup>43</sup>*Kallol* is a significant Bengali little magazine that was published from 1923 to 1935 and played a pivotal role in the modernist literary movement in Bengal. The magazine emerged as a platform for young writers and poets who sought to challenge conventional literary forms and social norms. *Kallol* was established by a group of writers including Gokulchandra Nag and Dineshranjan Das, who were part of the "Four Arts Club" in Kolkata. The magazine's name translates to "the sound of waves" in Bengali, symbolizing the fresh, dynamic literary currents it aimed to introduce.

scholars for this edition. If anyone finds satisfaction in this effort, it will be a reason for our ultimate joy. (5, translated)

This special issue served as a bridge between the Western literary canon and Bengali artistic expression, encouraging readers to appreciate Shakespeare not just as a foreign author but as a timeless figure whose themes resonate deeply within local contexts. Sikdar's editorial vision emphasized the importance of cross-cultural dialogue, fostering an appreciation for literary heritage among readers in suburban regions. Publishing this magazine from the suburban region, Dum Dum, North 24 Parganas, West Bengal, and dedicating this special issue to Shakespeare's 441<sup>st</sup> birth anniversary proves that the Bengali passion and enthusiasm for Shakespeare is not based on any specific occasion like a tercentenary or quatercentenary but is an ongoing tradition.

The first article of the special issue of *Natun Disha* is Khetra Gupta's "Shakespeare O Bankimchandra" ('Shakespeare and Bankimchandra'), which presents a comparative analysis of the two towering literary figures, Shakespeare and Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay. Khetra Gupta was a prolific writer in Bengali little magazines, focusing on socio-political issues and literary experimentation. Gupta explores the profound influence of Shakespeare on Bengali literature, particularly highlighting how Bankimchandra, one of Bengal's leading 19<sup>th</sup> century novelists, was deeply impacted by Shakespeare's themes, characters, and dramatic techniques. By adopting Shakespeare's style, Bankimchandra created a model structure for the Bengali novel. Early English novelists always wanted to avoid dramatic techniques. However, in Bengali literature, drama was as new as it was a medium for the middle class. Bankimchandra had the keen insight to understand this situation. He wanted to build a unique form for the novel in his own language, where dramatic techniques and artistry could be used to create an innovative structure. Most of Bankimchandra's novels are structured like a pyramid. They are eventful, and among them, many are quite high in quality. The characterization style is almost theatrical. Gupta draws parallels between Shakespeare's understanding of human nature, tragedy, and the complexities of the human mind and Bankimchandra's nuanced portrayal of characters in his novels. He emphasizes how Bankimchandra's works reflect an internalized grasp of Shakespearean drama, especially in terms of psychological depth and moral ambiguity, which were relatively new to Bengali literature at the time. Shakespeare's influence is most evident in Bankimchandra's ability to create multifaceted

characters and explore conflicts that go beyond simplistic moral binaries. In his article, Gupta states:

Bankimchandra has specifically utilized dramatic artistry as needed, but he has not confined himself to those limits. He aimed to apply the unique advantage of the novel form. From various genres of earlier literature, he has drawn elements to create a distinctive and innovative structure for his novels. Description and narration are two principal tools of the novel, and he employed them fully. In this, he sometimes evoked the essence of autobiography, as seen in *Indira* and *Rajani*. At other times, he modeled his work on epic poetry, as seen in *Anandamath* and *Rajsingha*. (8, translated)

Through this scholarly reflection, Gupta argues that Bankimchandra was not merely an imitator but a creative force who adapted Shakespearean elements to enrich Bengali literature, making it more dynamic and reflective of complex human experiences.

In his essay, “Jiboner Rongomanche Nataraj” (‘Nataraj in the Canvas of Life’), published in the 2005 edition of *Natun Disha*, Biswanath Chattopadhyay explores the intricate relationship between life and performance, focusing on the metaphor of ‘Nataraj,’ the cosmic dancer from Hindu mythology. Chattopadhyay argues that life, much like dance, is a dynamic interplay of various emotions and experiences, highlighting the importance of adaptability and creativity in navigating life’s challenges. He reflects on how the roles we play in society mirror the art of performance, where individuals assume different identities and masks in different contexts. This notion emphasizes the theatricality of existence, where life’s stage presents both opportunities and obstacles, akin to the trials faced by a dancer. Really, all the world is a stage, and we all are the characters. As Hamlet reflects the motive of performance, ‘to hold, as it were, the mirror up to nature,’ Biswanath Chattopadhyay also reflects on the era when Shakespeare was fulfilling his creative zeal.

The age of Shakespeare was a time of great creative energy. In every aspect of life, the English nation found joy. The characteristics of this era were self-reliance and self-expression. Whether in life’s journey, in thought, or in literary

creation, the essence of vitality is evident everywhere. Regarding place and time, the perspective of the people of this era was always forward-looking. Their curiosity was intense, and their self-awareness was profound. The desire for knowledge was so strong during this time that people sought to conquer the entire realm of knowledge. (20, translated)

The essay, by invoking the image of Nataraj, Chattopadhyay invites readers to embrace the complexity of life's performance, encouraging a sense of mindfulness and appreciation for the diverse experiences that shape our identities. From the perspective of dramatic art, Shakespeare introduced an unparalleled style. Each initial scene reveals his expertise. By focusing on the essential themes and disregarding unnecessary matters, Shakespeare has created extraordinary plays that illuminate the critical moments of drama and clarify the transformations within them. For different plays, he adopted various structural techniques. In tragedies, soliloquies hold special significance, while in comedies, different narrative streams are skillfully intertwined. Shakespeare has extensively engaged with the principles of similarity and dissimilarity, harmony and conflict. For the storytelling in his plays, Shakespeare was never busy with mere personal reflection. He often collected narratives from various authors of his own country and influenced lands like Italy. However, through his unique touch, he transformed common narratives from other writers into extraordinary works, gaining unprecedented recognition for his artistry. "Jiboner Rongomanche Nataraj" serves as a profound meditation on the art of living, blending philosophy, culture, and the arts into a cohesive narrative. Chattopadhyay sums up by stating:

It is not possible for us to fully express what Shakespeare's philosophy of life was. He was not a philosopher, and his purpose was not to impart moral lessons. Along the pilgrimage of life, he observed many pilgrims on their journey, standing by the roadside, witnessing them—not from the perspective of a critic, but with the gaze of an ordinary observer. It was in this act of observing life that he found his joy. (13, translated)

Dipendu Chakraborty's article "Amader Shakespeare" ('Our Shakespeare') is an insightful exploration of Shakespeare's relevance in contemporary Bengal, focusing on how the Bard's works have been adapted, interpreted, and embraced by the Bengali literary and cultural community over time. Chakraborty is known for his specialization in literary studies and has contributed extensively to Bengali little magazines. He is actively involved in promoting literary discourse through his editorial and academic efforts, engaging with both contemporary and classical works. Chakraborty's essay begins with a story about Professor Taraknath Sen, and through this story he introduces his discussion on Shakespeare in the modern context. The story goes like this:

Once, an English professor at Presidency College asked his students in the class how many of them had read Shakespeare's plays. Some students raised their hands, admitting to having read one or two, maybe three. The professor then asked who had read all of Shakespeare's plays. One student raised his hand and said, "I have read them all." That student was none other than the renowned English professor, Sri Taraknath Sen. The moral of the story, as conveyed, is that a true scholar is one who has read Shakespeare. Even if they have not read anything else, it suffices because that was exactly what Macaulay had envisioned. (16, translated)

Through this anecdote, Chakraborty emphasizes Shakespeare's overwhelming presence in literary discourse and questions its continued relevance, pointing out how English education, deeply rooted in colonial influence, still shapes academic priorities. Chakraborty emphatically states his observation:

When the British started raising questions about Shakespeare, why should we remain silent? The colonial pursuit of knowledge, initiated through Shakespeare, has now turned into opposition to Shakespeare, driven by the demands of economic culture. Western academicians now represent the modern agency of traditional imperial rule. They are the ones claiming that Shakespeare is nothing

more than an icon of British imperialism. We, too, understand that in today's globalized world, when Tony Blair's Britain behaves like a colony of Bush's America, what market does Britain have left except for Shakespeare? That's why, from time to time, in this city of Kolkata, with the sponsorship of the British Council, some English theatre groups present Shakespeare's plays. And our college and university students eagerly attend, only to realize that although Shakespeare's importance in the curriculum has decreased, he remains omnipresent. Students pursuing English honours and masters have understood that the words of Macaulay still hold true—there is nothing beyond Shakespeare. (16-17, translated)

He is of the opinion that for ages, despite Shakespeare being taught in schools, colleges, and universities, we have not had the courage to adapt him in a way that captivates our imagination. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, there were some attempts at translations and adaptations, and in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Utpal Dutta gave us some performances. Beyond that, Shakespeare has been relegated purely to the realm of literary study. It seems as if Shakespeare wrote all his plays solely for classrooms and seminars. This is where the triumph of British imperialism lies. Our respected Shakespeare scholars, where will they find the courage to challenge the established Shakespeare discourse? He also says that, indeed, in this city of Kolkata, an institution called the Shakespeare Society has become quite popular among academics. The amusing thing is that there is no exchange between this society and Kolkata's theatre community. Chakraborty concludes his article with a note of regret: 'If we had viewed Shakespeare through our own lens, without diminishing his achievements even in the slightest, then that same Shakespeare could have become our Shakespeare' (19, translated).

Sanatkumar Mitra's essay titled "Aajo Shakespeare" ('Timeless Shakespeare'), published in the 2005 special issue, *Soujannya Sankhya of Natun Disha*, examines the enduring relevance of Shakespeare in contemporary society, particularly in the context of Bengali culture. The essay opens by acknowledging Shakespeare's universal appeal and timeless influence across cultures and periods. Mitra states, 'The position of Shakespeare in Kolkata is not just one of reverence but also of affection. Along with the firm establishment of modern Bengali culture, he has become a

prominent figure in the indigenous theatre scene' (25, translated). With the establishment of Fort William College in November 1800 and the founding of Hindu College on January 20, 1817, Shakespeare had a profound influence on the education and culture of the Bengali people. Over the next almost 150 years, literary figures such as Bankimchandra in the realm of novels and Girishchandra Ghosh, Dinabandhu Mitra, Rabindranath Tagore, and Dwijendralal, among others, in various ways and forms, imbibed the literary essence of Shakespeare. In 1947, when the British left India, there was a belief that perhaps Shakespeare's influence in performance, literary appreciation, and discussion would diminish. But that did not happen. Even in this 21<sup>st</sup> century, Shakespeare's vibrant presence continues to shine in our cultural thought and practice. Here, the writer presents a chronological account of Shakespearean performances and studies in the post-independence era. A significant chapter in the history of Shakespearean performances was created by the 'Souvonik Gosthi'<sup>44</sup> in an open-air setting. From April 26, 1964, to November 27, they performed 'Othello' for nearly 91 nights. The Bengali translation was done by Krishna Kundu, who himself played the role of Othello. On May 12, 1964, that same year, professors from Rabindra Bharati University performed *Othello*. Renowned English Professor Dr. Sitangshu Maitra directed the play, and the distinguished theatre critic Ajitkumar Ghosh took on the titular role. From April 7, 1965, for 30 consecutive nights, Gobinda Ganguly's Bengali adaptation of 'The Merchant of Venice' was performed in an open-air setting. Gobinda Ganguly, who translated, directed, and acted in the role of Shylock, earned special acclaim for his performance. At Kolkata's *Bijan Theatre*, on August 2, 1980, the Bengali adaptation of Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew*, titled *Srimoti Bhayankari*, was performed. The adaptation was done by Goutam Roy. Under the production of the *Paschim Banga Natya Academy*, Utpal Dutta's Bengali adaptation of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, titled *Chaitali Rater Swapno*, was performed from January 15-26, 1989, at Rabindra Sadan. A unique aspect of this production was that the cast was assembled by selecting actors from various theatre groups across Kolkata. In today's cultural and global advancements, the powerful voice of Shakespeare's influence still resonates. Over the past decade,

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<sup>44</sup>*Souvonik Gosthi* is a notable Bengali theatre group that has made significant contributions to the performance of Shakespeare's works in Bengal. Founded in the late 20th century, this group has been instrumental in adapting and staging Shakespearean plays, infusing them with local cultural elements and making them accessible to Bengali audiences. The performances by *Souvonik Gosthi* have revitalized interest in Shakespeare within the Bengali theatre scene. Their innovative approaches have encouraged other theatre groups to explore similar adaptations, leading to a resurgence of Shakespearean performances across Bengal. This has not only expanded the audience for Shakespeare but has also reaffirmed the relevance of his works in contemporary society.

Bengalis have maintained a deep reverence and commitment to this literary legacy, preserving its essence. Can this dedication be easily diminished or broken? Likely not. In one way or another, Shakespeare continues to appear regularly on various stages in Bengal. Recently, on August 22, 2003, it was reported that the British Council organized a festival featuring a play by Shakespeare, where discussions took place on how students from 17 schools perceive Shakespeare today. Such events remind us that he remains unique and relevant to us even now. On Shakespeare's birthday in 2004, a grand Shakespeare festival was held in the grounds of La Martinier School in Kolkata. It is also noteworthy that Kolkata is the only city in India with a street named after Shakespeare (Shakespeare Sarani). Thus, we can confidently say that in the cultural tapestry of Bengal, the mighty figure of Shakespeare is eternally cherished and celebrated. Maitra asserts that Shakespeare remains relevant in Bengal not only because of the universal themes in his works but also due to the creative and critical engagements of Bengali artists who continue to reinterpret his plays for contemporary audiences.

Krishna Bose's article "Ananya Shakespeare" ('Incomparable Shakespeare') is a compelling examination of how Shakespeare's work transcends cultural boundaries. Krishna Bose was a prominent writer in Bengali little magazines, blending literature and history. Her works often explored themes of nationalism, culture, and women's empowerment. Her insights encourage a deeper appreciation of Shakespeare's enduring impact and the creative potential of cross-cultural literary engagement. Bose emphasizes the adaptability of Shakespeare's characters and narratives, which allow for diverse interpretations that reflect the complexities of contemporary life. Krishna Bose lists mainly three qualities behind Shakespeare's incomparable uniqueness: his extraordinary capability of character creation, his unparalleled ability to evoke profound emotions, and his theatrical flexibility. Shakespeare's characters possess a unique depth that showcases the extraordinary capability of character creation. The characters in his tragedies present countless mysteries of life, bringing forth the intricate nuances of human emotions. We find ourselves captivated by these theatrical characters, becoming familiar with their inner worlds. Questions arise in our minds: What truths about life lie hidden in the mysterious depths of Hamlet's mind? Is King Lear a complex character driven by madness, or does he embody some unknown essence that claims dominion over him? Does the overwhelming horror of Macbeth stem from his own psyche, or is Lady Macbeth's influence more significant here? These mysterious aspects of humanity allow Shakespeare to powerfully immerse us in a world where we remain awestruck and

spellbound. Another essential aspect of Shakespeare's uniqueness is undoubtedly his unparalleled ability to evoke profound emotions. This is a rare gift, and it places him at the pinnacle of popularity among literary figures. Bose writes:

I am not sure if he has achieved such widespread recognition across different eras and cultures, but in our minds, Shakespeare stands as the most celebrated literary creator and playwright in the international context and in the timeless narrative. Within the mundane, he explores eternal truths, especially amidst the dynamics of specific eras, unveiling the enduring essence of humanity and the universal struggles of human existence—these themes resonate deeply in his plays. (32, translated)

Shakespeare's uniqueness lies in his theatrical flexibility; he does not adhere to any one character, yet he is present in all characters. He does not favor any particular character; it is impossible to grasp his true psychology. In every character he creates, he provides a profound search for that character's mysterious essence. Many playwrights cannot maintain this flexibility; they tend to lean towards one character or another. However, he can enter all characters, maintaining his unique perspective without losing his distinct quality, which is rare. Bose's article also discusses the role of little magazines like *Natun Disha* in promoting such innovative literary interpretations. These platforms serve as vital spaces for experimentation and dialogue, enabling writers to engage with global literature while remaining rooted in their cultural identity. Bose advocates for a continued exploration of Shakespeare's relevance in modern society, urging writers to seek inspiration from his timeless themes of love, betrayal, ambition, and morality.

Debasish Chattopadhyay's essay "Shakespeare er Gaan O Bangla Adhunik Gaan: Tradition and the Individual Talent" ('Songs of Shakespeare and Modern Bengali Songs') is an interesting article that wishes to explore Shakespearean emotions in modern Bengali songs. The essay explores how Shakespeare's use of music in his plays, particularly through the inclusion of songs and lyrics, has permeated Bengali musical tradition, highlighting both continuity and innovation in the process. Chattopadhyay states on the very first page of his essay:

It is deeply unfortunate that the songs in Shakespeare's plays, much like the 'neglected in poetry,' have not significantly stirred the hearts of people. Yet, with a little attention, it becomes clear that these songs are far from insignificant. Rather, they are rich in endless emotions and can progressively supply the necessary emotions. The primary aim of my essay is to explore these Shakespearean emotions within modern Bengali songs. (46, translated)

In this essay, the author has brought up the reference to T.S. Eliot's famous essay "Tradition and the Individual Talent"<sup>45</sup>. Eliot's theory is a powerful tool for analyzing the relationship between tradition and innovation, but Chattopadhyay does not fully explore its implications in the context of cross-cultural literary and musical exchanges. A more detailed examination of how this reference applies specifically to the Bengali cultural context, or even a comparison with other non-Western musical traditions influenced by Shakespeare, would have enriched the essay's theoretical depth.

Chattopadhyay begins by discussing Shakespeare's extensive use of music in plays like *Twelfth Night* and *As You Like It*, emphasizing how these musical elements serve narrative, thematic, and emotional functions. Chattopadhyay mentions:

I am presenting a few songs from Shakespeare's plays, where the themes, lyrics, melodies, etc., either take on an evolved form of some earlier tradition or, through Shakespeare's influence, have acquired a new dimension at the hands of another songwriter. This is the essence of tradition. Otherwise, why would the influence of Shakespeare's songs be evident in the music of West Bengal? It goes without saying that Bengali lyricists and composers, through their own expertise or individual talent, have glorified and enriched this Shakespearean

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<sup>45</sup>T.S. Eliot's essay "Tradition and the Individual Talent," first published in 1919, is a seminal work in literary criticism that articulates his views on the relationship between a poet and the literary tradition that precedes them. The essay is divided into three main parts: the concept of tradition, the theory of impersonal poetry, and a concluding assessment. Eliot argues that tradition is not merely a collection of past works but a living, evolving entity that influences contemporary writing. He posits that a poet must have a "historical sense," which allows them to understand the entirety of literary history from Homer to their own time. This understanding enables poets to write with awareness of how their work interacts with and contributes to the existing literary canon. Eliot emphasizes that true originality arises from this engagement with tradition rather than from a complete departure from it.

tradition, giving it a new form. So, let us observe how tradition attains excellence with the help of individual talent. (47, translated)

In *As You Like It*, when the Senior Duke along with his followers leaves the forest, he says-“I will not leave it”, praising the pastoral life. Following his praise, his follower Amiens begins to sing a song that echoes the beauty of the countryside:

Under the greenwood tree  
Who loves to lie with me,  
And turn his meery note  
Unto the sweet bird's throat  
Come hither, come hither, come hither,  
Here shall he see  
No enemy  
But winter and rough weather.  
Who doth ambition shun,  
And loves to live I'th' sun,  
Seeking the food he eats  
And pleased with what he gets,  
Come hither, come hither, come hither.  
Here shall he see  
No enemy  
But winter and rough weather. (Act 2, scene. 7)



It can certainly be said that the songs in Shakespeare's plays hold significant value. On one hand, some of these songs have created a new trend and helped in the development of other genres of lyric poetry, while on the other, they have infused life into older traditions, elevating them to greatness. The influence of foreign literary traditions on Bengali and Indian literature, music, cinema, and more is not a new phenomenon. Investigating the extent to which the songs in Shakespeare's plays have influenced Bengali music could indeed mark the beginning of a new direction—this point needs no further emphasis. Chattopadhyay concludes by emphasizing the ongoing relevance of Shakespeare's musical influence in Bengali culture, underscoring how contemporary composers continue to draw inspiration from the Bard's lyrical mastery, shaping Bengali modernity while preserving its rich artistic heritage. The essay presents a nuanced study of cross-cultural influence and the enduring power of Shakespearean music in Bengali artistic expression.

Sumita Banerjee's essay, "Dushon Daityer Kabale: Macbeth Natake Dushon Prasanga" ('In the Grip of Filthy Air: Exploring Environmental Issues in Macbeth'), featured in the 2005 Soujanya Sankhya issue of *Natun Disha*, delves into the intricate themes of corruption and duality in Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. The essay explores how *Macbeth* serves as a powerful allegory for the psychological and moral conflicts faced by individuals when consumed by ambition and power. The author writes:

The events in Shakespeare's play *Macbeth* unfold in a haunting manner. On that day, a gathering of three witches took place on a desolate moor, where the sound of thunder rumbled, lightning flashed, and ominous signs were heard: the howling of cats and the croaking of slimy toads. In this terrifying moment, the witches' united voices were heard as they invoked their dark powers to welcome a demonic spirit. How horrifying and blood-chilling was that incantation, and how dreadful were its subsequent consequences! (54, translated)

Fair is foul, and foul is fair

Hover through the fog and filthy air! (Act I, scene I, 10-11)

The moment this above incantation was uttered, Scotland's sky became shrouded in the ominous shadow of evil. An unrelenting veil of fog was soon joined by a suffocating layer of smog. The entire landscape of the play changed—what had once been a healthy, vibrant green was now marked by the signs of decay. Fog or mist is nothing new to the people of Scotland—what is surprising is the attack of the filthy air, or the demon of pollution.

Furthermore, the essay draws attention to the symbolic elements of corruption throughout the play. Banerjee interprets the imagery of blood and darkness as metaphors for the moral decay that engulfs Macbeth and Lady Macbeth. Their actions, though aimed at securing the throne, ultimately unravel the very essence of their humanity, leading to madness and death. The reach of pollution steadily increased in the skies and air of Scotland, especially after the three murders committed by Macbeth. Macbeth himself remarked that it was a rough night, where 'rough' serves as both an adjective and implies action. The verb form of 'rough' suggests making something dirty or disordered—exactly what had happened when chimneys in those days disappeared from rooftops. Now, along with the fog, there was smoke and soot, the dirt from the chimneys swirling in the air. The result of this pollution was an overwhelming darkness that engulfed everything. The black soot and dust had made the environment so horrifying that in the play, the character Ross, in utter frustration, expressed this to an old man:

...by the clock 'tis day,

And yet dark night strangles the travelling lamp...

That darkness does the face of earth entomb

When living light should kiss it. (Act II, scene iv, 6-10)

The word 'entomb' evokes the steadily deteriorating state of Scotland. What has become of the once vibrant and beautiful land of Scotland? It has transformed completely—from cradle to grave. Just as the pure air and skies of Inverness became polluted, Shakespeare replaced the cheerful martlet bird with crows and owls, creatures of ill omen. With Duncan's murder, the drumbeat of destruction begins, heralding the advance of darkness and the sinister rise of its black banner. Act IV, scene I, of the play *Macbeth* begins in a deep, dark cavern. There, a cauldron holds

a significant importance. The first sight of Hecate's servant, who is tasked with watching over the cauldron. The second sight reveals the witches themselves. Let's turn our attention to their preparation for a feast of strange ingredients that are naturally drawn from the surrounding atmosphere. The bizarre matter collected from various creatures is an essential element, and it can indeed be classified as a 'malicious' substance, representative of dark and wicked things. Sumita Banerjee's essay is an important study to explore Shakespeare's environmental issues in *Macbeth*. She states:

By invoking the horror of an insidious demon of pollution, Shakespeare introduces a remarkable remedy—the green solution. From Birnam Wood, branches and leaves have been cut, and a youthful army emerges, marching against Macbeth, a king who, like the evil he embodies, is destined for destruction. This is the most beautiful way to confront malevolence—go green, grow green. The lush greenery from Birnam Wood becomes a symbol of resistance against the tainted, filthy air of Scotland. In today's world, the quest for such green sanctuaries is rare. If we have Birnam Wood's vitality on our side, what fear do we have? (58, translated).

Prashanta Bhattacharya's essay "Gothic Shakespeare" explores the intersections between Gothic literature and Shakespeare's works. Bhattacharya argues that elements of the gothic—such as horror, the supernatural, and psychological complexity—are deeply embedded in Shakespeare's plays, transcending the traditional boundaries of genre. The essay begins by outlining the defining characteristics of Gothic literature, emphasizing its exploration of the darker aspects of human experience, including fear, madness, and the uncanny. Bhattacharya posits that Shakespeare's works, often perceived as the pinnacle of Renaissance literature, also grapple with themes that resonate with gothic sensibilities. Plays like *Macbeth*, *Hamlet*, and *King Lear* exemplify these themes, showcasing characters haunted by their ambitions, guilt, and the supernatural. The essay asserts that the gothic elements in Shakespeare's works not only enrich the narratives but also invite audiences to confront their own fears and vulnerabilities. By situating Shakespeare within the gothic tradition, Bhattacharya invites a re-evaluation of his plays, revealing the timeless and universal nature of the human condition as portrayed through the lens of gothic horror.

This special issue of *Natun Disha* has been dedicated to Shakespeare, with all the articles discussing his works from a regional perspective. The analysis of these writings reveals how popular Shakespeare is in Bengal. This special issue serves as an excellent document on multifarious perspectives ranging from various adaptations of Shakespeare's plays, their translations to the overall popularity of Shakespeare's works in Bengal. Dedicated to the celebration of Shakespeare's 441<sup>st</sup> birth anniversary, this edition continues the ongoing tradition of Shakespeare studies in Bengal. However, both Shakespeare-themed special issues of the two Bengali little magazines-*Ispaater Chithi* and *Natun Disha*, mentioned in this chapter reveal the fascination and acceptance of Shakespeare among Bengali readers in rural and marginal areas. These magazines, emerging from the rural and suburban regions of Bengal, have played a pivotal role in democratizing Shakespeare studies by breaking linguistic barriers and challenging elitism. Traditionally, Shakespearean discourse has been dominated by academia and urban intellectual circles, often engaging in discussions in English, which alienates non-English-speaking readers. These little magazines have begun to rewrite this narrative by making Shakespeare accessible to broader audiences. These issues serve as evidence of how Bengali readers, having moved past the colonial hangover, now embrace Shakespeare much more comfortably, analyzing him from their own Bengali perspectives. While maintaining the unique essence of the little magazine, these issues bring to us the rural and suburban interpretations or responses to Shakespeare.

Furthermore, these magazines dismantle elitism by involving voices from diverse backgrounds and grassroots artists. The trend of little magazines in Bengal significantly differs from that of the elite belt in terms of purpose, content, and audience. Contributors in both *Ispaater Chithi* and *Natun Disha* little magazines often reinterpret Shakespeare from a non-elitist perspective, drawing parallels with rural life or marginalized experiences. This inclusive approach resonates with a wider audience, breaking the traditional association of Shakespeare with only the educated elite. Magazines from the elite belt are often represented by mainstream publications and established literary circles and cater to a more affluent and influential audience. Even after searching through various district libraries in the rural and suburban regions in Bengal, specific issues on Shakespeare could not be found in most places. This proves that discussions on Shakespeare in little magazines have yet to significantly penetrate the distant districts and northern parts of Bengal.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **The Bard in the Digital Age: Shakespeare in 21<sup>st</sup> Century Bengali Little Magazines**

#### **3.1 Defining the Digital Age:**

The advent of the digital age has fundamentally transformed the landscape of human interaction, communication, and information dissemination. As we navigate through the complexities of a world increasingly dominated by digital technologies, it becomes imperative to examine the multifaceted implications of this transformation. In the past few decades, the rapid proliferation of the internet, mobile technologies, and social media platforms has not only reshaped how individuals connect with one another but also how information is created, shared, and consumed. The shift from analog to digital has enabled unprecedented access to knowledge while simultaneously raising critical questions about privacy, security, and the authenticity of information. In his seminal work, *The Rise of the Network Society*<sup>47</sup> Castells argues that the digital age is defined by the emergence of a networked society. He posits that the internet and digital technologies have led to a shift from traditional forms of social organization to networks that facilitate rapid communication and information exchange. This shift has profound implications for power dynamics, as new forms of authority emerge from decentralized networks rather than hierarchical structures (Castells 3). Known for his phrase "the medium is the message," McLuhan's theories<sup>48</sup> provide a critical lens for understanding the digital age. He has suggested that the nature

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<sup>47</sup>Manuel Castells' *The Rise of the Network Society* explores how contemporary society is increasingly organized around networks rather than traditional hierarchies. He argues that the interplay between the "Net" (social networks) and the "Self" (individual identity) shapes social dynamics, emphasizing the role of information technology in this transformation.

<sup>48</sup>Marshall McLuhan's concept "the medium is the message" emphasizes that the medium through which information is conveyed significantly influences how that information is perceived and understood. He argues that media are extensions of human capabilities, reshaping social interactions and consciousness. For instance, a light bulb, while contentless, transforms environments and alters human behavior. McLuhan categorizes media into "hot" and "cold," based on their sensory engagement levels, illustrating how different media affect our experiences and societal

of a medium influences how messages are perceived and understood. In the digital age, the interplay between different media forms—text, video, and audio—creates a complex environment where information is consumed in diverse ways, often leading to fragmented attention and understanding (McLuhan 7).

### 3.2 Shakespeare in the Digital Age:

William Shakespeare's works have transcended time, remaining relevant and influential for over four centuries. In the digital age, the ways in which we access, interpret, and engage with Shakespeare's texts have undergone significant transformations. This chapter delves into the multifaceted relationship between Shakespeare in the era of digital technology and Bengali little magazines, exploring how digital platforms have reshaped accessibility, education, audience engagement, and scholarship. The advent of the internet has revolutionized access to Shakespeare's works. Websites such as Project Gutenberg<sup>49</sup>, the Folger Shakespeare Library<sup>50</sup>, and MIT's Global Shakespeare project<sup>51</sup> provide free, searchable texts of his plays and poems. This democratization of access eliminates financial barriers, enabling a global audience to engage with Shakespearean literature. Scholars and educators can easily find primary texts, annotations, and critical essays, fostering a more inclusive literary community.

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structures. Ultimately, he posits that understanding media's impact is crucial for grasping their broader social consequences, rather than merely focusing on the content they deliver.

<sup>49</sup>*Project Gutenberg*, established in 1971, is a pioneering digital library that provides free access to a vast collection of public domain works. In the digital age, it has evolved significantly, utilizing volunteer efforts to digitize texts and expand its offerings across multiple languages and formats. This initiative democratizes literature, ensuring global access to knowledge and culture, reflecting the transformative potential of digital technology in preserving and sharing literary heritage. As it adapts to modern reading preferences, Project Gutenberg remains a vital resource for education and enlightenment in an increasingly interconnected world.

<sup>50</sup>*The Folger Shakespeare Library*, established in 1932 in Washington, D.C., houses the world's largest collection of Shakespeare-related materials. Founded by Henry and Emily Folger, it features over 240,000 items, including 82 First Folios. The library serves as a vital research center and cultural institution dedicated to Shakespeare's legacy.

<sup>51</sup>The MIT Global Shakespeare Project focuses on expanding the understanding and accessibility of Shakespeare's works through digital resources. It integrates the Global Shakespeare's Video and Performance Archive, providing educational modules that connect Shakespeare's plays with diverse global contexts. This initiative fosters collaboration among scholars worldwide, enhancing Shakespearean studies and promoting innovative teaching methods at MIT and beyond.

The rise of e-books<sup>52</sup> has further expanded accessibility. Digital editions of Shakespeare's works are available on various platforms, often enhanced with features like annotations, audio readings, and interactive elements. This flexibility allows readers to engage with the texts in personalized ways, catering to diverse learning styles and preferences. The digital age has transformed Shakespearean education. Massive Open Online Courses<sup>53</sup> (MOOCs) and online university courses have made Shakespeare's works more accessible to students worldwide. Institutions like Harvard and the University of Edinburgh<sup>54</sup> offer courses that explore Shakespeare's relevance through the lens of contemporary issues, encouraging critical thinking and engagement with the texts. The digital humanities have transformed Shakespearean scholarship, enabling researchers to analyze texts using computational tools. Projects like the "Shakespeare Quartos Archive"<sup>55</sup> provide digital editions of early printed versions of Shakespeare's plays, allowing scholars to examine variations in texts and their historical background. In the digital age, Shakespeare's works continue to thrive, adapting to the evolving

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<sup>52</sup>E-books, or electronic books, are digital publications that combine text and images, designed for reading on various electronic devices such as computers, tablets, and e-readers. Unlike traditional books, e-books are typically non-editable and reflowable, allowing them to adapt to different screen sizes. Common formats include EPUB and AZW, with PDFs being widely used despite not being reflowable. E-books offer benefits like portability, accessibility, and interactivity, making them popular for both leisure reading and educational purposes. Their rise has transformed the publishing industry, providing authors and readers with new avenues for distribution and consumption.

<sup>53</sup>Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) are online learning platforms that provide free access to courses for unlimited participants worldwide. They typically feature a mix of video lectures, readings, and interactive elements, fostering a collaborative learning environment. MOOCs democratize education by allowing anyone with internet access to learn, although they often lack formal accreditation and have low completion rates.

<sup>54</sup>Harvard University and the University of Edinburgh offer notable courses on Shakespeare, focusing on different aspects of his works. In Harvard University's *Shakespeare's Life and Work*, they offer a 4-week online course. This course explores Shakespeare's plays through his biography and historical context, emphasizing various literary analyses and performance interpretations. In *Shakespeare After All: The Later Plays*, Taught by Professor Marjorie Garber, this course examines key themes in Shakespeare's later works, encouraging interactive discussions on genre, gender, and politics. In *Shakespeare's Othello: The Moor*, this course delves into *Othello*, focusing on storytelling within the play and its broader implications regarding power and identity. In the University of Edinburgh, while specific details about the University of Edinburgh's Shakespeare courses weren't found in the search results, it is known for its strong emphasis on literature and drama studies, often offering modules that explore Shakespeare's texts in depth, integrating historical context with modern interpretations. Both institutions contribute significantly to Shakespearean scholarship and education through their innovative online courses.

<sup>55</sup>*The Shakespeare Quartos Archive* is a digital project that provides access to pre-1642 editions of Shakespeare's plays, created through a collaboration between institutions in the UK and the USA. Launched in 2009, it offers high-resolution images and transcriptions of these quartos, enhancing scholarly research and public engagement with Shakespeare's works. The project includes detailed studies of specific plays, notably *Hamlet*, and promotes the preservation and accessibility of early modern texts.

landscape of culture and technology. The accessibility provided by digital resources, the innovations in education, the engagement fostered through social media, and the advancements in scholarship all contribute to a renewed interest in his plays and poetry. By embracing digital tools and platforms, we not only preserve Shakespeare's legacy but also ensure that his works remain relevant and impactful for future generations. As we continue to explore the intersections of Shakespearean literature and digital culture, we recognize the importance of critical engagement with both the texts and the technologies that shape our understanding of them. This wealth of information facilitates new interpretations and deeper understanding.

### **3.3 Little Magazines in the Fast-Moving Era of Internet and Connectivity:**

Little magazines, often characterized by their focus on specific literary traditions, avant-garde perspectives, and niche audiences, have historically played a vital role in the cultural and literary landscape. As the digital age unfolds, marked by rapid connectivity and information exchange, the position of these publications is both challenged and revitalized. The internet has transformed the landscape for little magazines. Digital platforms allow for broader distribution, enabling these publications to reach global audiences. Unlike their print counterparts, online little magazines can bypass traditional distribution barriers, allowing them to publish and promote work more efficiently. Websites and social media platforms facilitate the sharing of content, attracting readers who may not have access to print editions. Digital formats enable little magazines to experiment with multimedia content, such as audio, video, and interactive features. This versatility allows for innovative storytelling techniques and engages readers in ways that traditional print cannot. For instance, a poem may be accompanied by a video interpretation or an audio reading, enriching the reader's experience and understanding. The proliferation of online content creates a competitive environment for little magazines. With countless platforms vying for attention, standing out becomes increasingly difficult. The sheer volume of available content can dilute the impact of individual publications, making it challenging for them to cultivate a dedicated readership. While digital platforms reduce some costs associated with print publishing, many little magazines still struggle with financial sustainability. Monetization strategies such as subscription

models, crowdfunding<sup>56</sup>, and donations are often necessary, but they can be unpredictable. Additionally, the reliance on advertising revenue can compromise editorial independence and the integrity of content.

Despite the challenges, little magazines continue to foster literary communities both online and offline. They create spaces for dialogue and collaboration among writers, artists, and readers. Social media platforms enable these communities to thrive, allowing for real-time interaction and feedback. Little magazines are often at the forefront of promoting underrepresented voices and marginalized perspectives. In the digital age, this mission remains crucial as they provide platforms for voices that mainstream media may overlook. By curating diverse content, these publications help to enrich the literary landscape and challenge dominant narratives. As little magazines adapt to the digital landscape, hybrid models that combine print and digital formats may emerge. This approach allows them to retain the tactile experience of print while embracing the advantages of digital distribution. Such models can cater to diverse audience preferences and create sustainable revenue streams. In an era of overwhelming content, the value of curation becomes paramount. Little magazines can differentiate themselves by focusing on quality over quantity, offering carefully curated content that resonates with their audiences. In the fast-moving era of the internet and connectivity, little magazines occupy a unique and evolving position within the literary landscape. While they face significant challenges, their role as platforms for diverse voices, innovative expression, and community engagement remains vital. By embracing digital tools and fostering meaningful connections, little magazines can navigate the complexities of the digital age, ensuring their continued relevance and impact on contemporary literature and culture. As they adapt to this new environment, little magazines will continue to serve as essential incubators for creativity and dialogue, enriching the literary world for generations to come and helping build a loyal readership and sustain relevance in a fast-paced environment. In the digital age, little magazines face both challenges and opportunities in upholding their true essence. While the landscape has changed dramatically, the core values of literary exploration, community engagement, and support for diverse voices remain vital. By leveraging digital tools to enhance

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<sup>56</sup>Crowdfunding is a fundraising method that allows individuals or organizations to collect money from a large number of people, typically via online platforms. It serves various purposes, including personal projects, creative endeavors, and startup funding.

accessibility and engagement while remaining committed to quality and authenticity, little magazines can continue to thrive and fulfill their crucial role in the literary ecosystem. The essence of little magazines is not only preserved but can be revitalized in this new era, ensuring their relevance for future generations of readers and writers. Shakespeare's presence in Bengali little magazines during the digital era reflects a dynamic interplay of tradition and innovation. As these publications engage with Shakespeare's works, they not only preserve his literary legacy but also reinterpret it for contemporary audiences. By localizing themes, embracing digital formats, and fostering community engagement, little magazines in Bengal contribute to a rich cultural dialogue that honors Shakespeare's relevance in today's world. As they navigate the challenges of the digital landscape, the continued exploration of Shakespearean literature promises to enrich both the literary and cultural fabric of Bengal.

This third chapter wishes to explore how discussions about Shakespeare are happening in Bengali little magazines in this contemporary era of technology. This chapter is also interested in examining whether the essence of little magazines has been lost in the modern era. This chapter will focus on three Bengali little magazines: *Ebong Mushayera*, *Alapparba*, and *Nandan*. Through these magazines, published in contemporary times, the researcher aims to investigate how Bengali little magazines continue to serve as an important medium for Shakespeare study in Bengal.

### **3.4 Special Issue of *Hamlet* in *Ebong Mushayera* Bengali Little Magazine:**

*Ebong Mushayera* is a Bengali literary quarterly, established in 1994, with its inaugural issue released in April of that year. Beyond its regular editions, the magazine has published special issues dedicated to renowned writers, philosophers, and diverse topics. As a publishing house, *Ebong Mushayera* offers a diverse range of titles, including poetry collections, fiction, and non-fiction works in both hardcover and paperback formats. The publishing house continues to play an important role in the cultural and academic space of Bengali literature and literary criticism. In 2002, the tri-monthly Bengali magazine *Ebong Mushayera* (8th year, 4th issue, Jan-March) published a special issue dedicated to *Hamlet*, edited by Subal Samanta. This edition featured contributions from academics and intellectuals who offered fresh perspectives on the play. It included a total of forty-three articles and seven fragmentary translations of *Hamlet* into Bengali,

created at various points since the late 18th century. The primary goal of this issue was to illustrate how interpretations of the play have evolved over time and to affirm our beliefs regarding the tragic hero. Samanta, in his editorial note, mentioned,

It has been more than four hundred years since *Hamlet* was written. *Hamlet* is still the most referenced play and the most discussed character. The source of *Hamlet* is a 13<sup>th</sup> century Latin-written Danish chronicle. The essence of *Hamlet* lies in the son's effort to avenge his father's murder and the recurring desire for revenge, the conspiracy of fratricide, and the ritualistic habit of plotting madness. *Hamlet* is an unparalleled example of Shakespeare's unique power of creation: alive with strength, forged in struggle, melancholic in wisdom, and lyrical in suffering. The play is filled with parallel and contrasting narratives of all situations and main characters, intense irony in the face of tragedy, puns, and a narrative rich in poetry. The young Hamlet, deeply shaken and disillusioned, loses his cherished world due to his father's murder and his mother's hasty remarriage. Driven by the desire for revenge, he is forced to take on a cautious and hesitant role in an unfamiliar world. Hamlet, both sincere and honorable, constructs a theatrical universe through feigned madness to uncover the reality of his father's murder, acting as both detective and artist. As if in a Western classical symphony, where the final movement of harmony and discord reaches profound depths, Hamlet ascends to a sublime state of pain and peace at the pinnacle of his soul. Facing death, Hamlet is able to unravel the knots of life. How he achieves this in a time of chaos and in a society devoid of order remains a question, a mystery both to Hamlet and to us, impenetrable. In a land of anarchy, Hamlet's tragedy takes us even greater significance, and even in a democratic society, the role of this prince seems worthy of adoption. Beyond the confines of a revenge tragedy, it is Hamlet's character that emerges again and again: the nobleman, soldier, scholar, orator, full of courage and love, a youthful yet eternal Hamlet. (P. 7, translated)

Jagannath Chakrabarty's essay "Hamlet" provides reasons for why *Hamlet* is the most widely read and critically examined work in world literature. However, his approach can be repetitive, and he sometimes fails to clarify his main argument. He references T. S. Eliot's comparison of *Hamlet* to the 'Mona Lisa' of literature, highlighting its complexities, including themes of delay, inaction, revenge, and tragedy. Chakrabarty asserts that Hamlet's inaction is central to the drama's unfolding and agrees with critics who believe that the reasons for this delay are not external but purely internal, attributing it to Hamlet's mindset. Despite the internal nature of Hamlet's delay, Chakrabarty views it as a long-term issue. He suggests that Hamlet's plans demonstrate a higher form of action linked to his idealism. Shakespeare depicts Hamlet as an ideal figure, valuing reason, action, and belief. Unlike Polonius, who embodies a belief in malicious revenge, Hamlet does not subscribe to such views. Chakrabarty points out that Hamlet's conflicting behavior generates a sense of oscillation within him. Ultimately, he argues that Hamlet is engaged in an internal struggle to overcome his compromising nature but ultimately fails.

Shibnarayan Roy's essay, titled "Hamlet Rahasya: Nayak, Natak O Upanyaser Upakramanika" ('The Hamlet Riddle: Hero, Drama, and Introduction to Fiction'), presents an innovative analysis of why Goethe regarded Hamlet as a handsome, pure individual capable of bearing significant responsibilities. Roy believes that Goethe examined Shakespeare's work with great care and recognized how a personal tragedy can evolve into a universal one. He also references the views of Ernest Jones, Freud's biographer, who asserts that Hamlet is a young man with a strong personality but has been influenced by his mother since childhood, reflecting the ideology of the "Oedipus Complex." Roy observes that this complex is evident in Hamlet's character in various facets of his behavior. By analyzing Hamlet's mental state and his statements, Roy highlights the significance of this psychological influence on his actions. Thinkers of Spain, like S. de Madariaga, characterizes Hamlet as both selfish and rude, prioritizing his own interests above all else and attempting to mask his internal conflicts through eloquent language. This perspective is echoed by German scholars such as Otto Rank and Kuno Fischer. In his concise twelve-page article, Roy concludes by noting that many critics have observed the play's incompleteness when evaluated against Aristotelian principles. He argues that Shakespeare reshuffled the source materials not just to create an entertaining narrative, but to convey the essence of Renaissance humanism, presenting characters through his unique and compelling lens for aesthetic purposes, which ultimately establishes him as the greatest dramatist.

Karlo Sandbury's essay "They All Want to Act out Hamlet," translated by Kakali Roy as "Tara Sobai Hamlet Abhinay Korte Chay," delves into the desire of contemporary Bengali actors to perform *Hamlet*. Sandbury discusses how the universal themes of betrayal, madness, and revenge in Shakespeare's works vibrate deeply with Bengali culture. He highlights the challenges actors face in interpreting Hamlet's complex character while maintaining authenticity in their performances. The essay also examines the cultural adaptations necessary to make the play relatable to a Bengali audience, emphasizing the transformative power of theater in exploring timeless human emotions and societal issues. Kakali Roy, in her translation of the essay, makes poignant commentary:

They all want to play *Hamlet*, for every actor carries a sorrowful heart within, searching for an outlet. Their inner pain resonates with Hamlet's plight, and they find solace in his tragic tale. This affinity makes them eager to portray Hamlet, as if their own story is being told. (263, translated)

Ashok Kumar Roy's essay "Bangla Bhashay Hamlet Charchapanji" ('Hamlet Studies in Bengali') in the *Hamlet* issue of *Ebong Mushayera* investigates the significance of the Bengali adaptation of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. He emphasizes how the cultural nuances of Bengali society influence character interpretations, particularly Hamlet's existential dilemmas. Roy states:

In our country, the first Bengali-established theatre was inaugurated with the performance of Shakespeare's play *Hamlet*. However, *Hamlet* did not gain much popularity on that day. Comparatively, *Othello* and *Macbeth* were far more successful, with performances taking place on Kolkata's improvised stages. Although much later, *Hamlet* was eventually performed alongside other Shakespearean plays in ordinary theatres. (327, translated)

Roy also asserts that the various adaptations of *Hamlet* capture the essence of despair and moral conflict, resonating with contemporary issues like identity and betrayal. He highlights the transformation of characters through local dialects and settings, making Shakespeare's themes

accessible to Bengali audiences. Ultimately, Roy has provided a list of the study of Shakespeare in Bengali from 1848 to 2001, with a special focus on the study of *Hamlet*.

Alokeranjan Das Gupta's examination of "Goethe's Hamlet" reveals that Shakespeare's influence in Germany began with Lessing, who successfully staged *Hamlet* thirty times. From this production, Goethe expressed that Shakespeare's openness allowed him to elevate the themes of freedom and reason, effectively bridging the Renaissance and modern worlds. In Biswanath Chattopadhyay's essay, "Mukhar Nayaker Birambana" ('The Delay of the Tragic Hero'), he notes that few literary characters have garnered as much attention as Hamlet. Chattopadhyay argues that Hamlet is not a figure from four hundred years ago; rather, he is very much a contemporary character, full of life and vitality. When considering the greatest tragic heroes, Chattopadhyay observes that while Macbeth is poetic, Othello is imaginative, and Lear is an orator, none possess the depth of thought that defines Hamlet. The complexity of Hamlet's character makes him a perplexing figure, evoking feelings of pity and pain. Chattopadhyay highlights the feminine traits in Hamlet's character, suggesting that he lacks the masculine strength necessary for action. This deficiency contributes to his hesitation in seeking revenge for his father's murder. Although he is eager to offer advice to others, he is reluctant to follow it himself due to his egotistical nature.

Dipendu Chakraborty's thought-provoking article, "Amrai Hamlet" ('We Are All Hamlet'), argues that Shakespeare's timeless themes remain relevant today. Chakraborty explores Hamlet's intellectual struggles, highlighting his disconnect between theoretical knowledge and real-world application. He also touches on Hamlet's complex relationships, including his Oedipal issues and conflicted feelings towards his mother. Despite his cynicism and misogyny, Hamlet ultimately avenges his father's death at the cost of his own life. Chakraborty draws parallels between Hamlet's struggles and those of contemporary intellectuals fighting against injustice, who often become disillusioned. Chakraborty's fresh insights offer a compelling perspective on Shakespeare's enduring universality. Partha Pratim Bandopadhyay's article "Amader Hamlet" ('Our Hamlet') explores the resonance of Shakespeare's tragedy in Bengali culture. He cites the Bengali poet Bishnu Dey's poems, *Ophelia* and *Elsinore*, as catalysts for renewed interest in *Hamlet* among common Bengalis. Bandopadhyay argues that Hamlet's emotional struggles, particularly his desire for solace in Ophelia's love after his father's death and mother's frailty, make the character relatable to Bengali writers. He justifies Hamlet's delayed revenge, suggesting

that similar dilemmas are commonplace in contemporary Bengal, making us all ‘Hamlets’ in our own struggles. Although the essay lacks cohesion and fails to fully explore Hamlet’s rationality behind his madness, it showcases flashes of brilliance.

Nabarun Bhattacharya’s article, “Amar Upolobdhite Hamlet” (‘Hamlet: In My Understanding’), offers a highly personal and reflective interpretation of Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*. Bhattacharya, a renowned Bengali writer known for his sharp political consciousness and distinct literary style, approaches *Hamlet* from a standpoint that blends the personal, political, and existential dimensions of the play. He has documented here his insights on *Hamlet* in the critique of Grigory Kozintsev’s visual adaptation of *Hamlet*, which was published in the *Parichay* little magazine about twenty-five years ago. Kozintsev’s *Hamlet*<sup>57</sup> (1964) is a Soviet-era adaptation of Shakespeare’s tragedy, known for its stark visual style and political undertones. Kozintsev emphasizes Hamlet’s inner struggle against oppression and tyranny, reflecting the broader societal issues of his time. The film features striking cinematography, utilizing sweeping landscapes and fortress-like settings to convey isolation and constraint. Shostakovich’s haunting score further elevates the film, making it one of the most acclaimed Shakespeare adaptations in Soviet cinema. Bhattacharya boldly states, “*Hamlet* is incredibly contemporary and deeply human, because true humanity lies in breaking the chains of imprisonment and changing the world—Hamlet leaves no stone unturned in that endeavor.” (182, translated) The essay is a thought-provoking one that blends Bhattacharya’s personal insights with his broader socio-political worldview. It positions *Hamlet* not just as a tragedy of revenge, but as a commentary on human existence, societal decay, and the dilemmas of modernity, making it deeply relevant to contemporary readers. Bhattacharya said,

Every era is Hamlet’s era. Globalization is insulting the poor nations of the world. Their culture, independence, and natural form are being destroyed, and

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<sup>57</sup>Grigori Kozintsev’s *Hamlet* (1964) is a Russian film adaptation that emphasizes the play’s political dimensions alongside its personal themes. Starring Innokenty Smoktunovsky, the film features a visually striking portrayal of Elsinore and a haunting score by Dmitri Shostakovich. Kozintsev’s interpretation is noted for its existential depth, capturing Hamlet’s isolation and moral dilemmas while condensing the text significantly, making it accessible and impactful. The film is acclaimed for its artistic cinematography and strong performances, particularly in conveying the tragic elements of Shakespeare’s narrative within a rich visual context.

their simple folklore and pride are being exiled. Can any Hamlet accept this injustice? (184, translated)

Ranajit Dash's article "Hamlet er Unmadana: Kabitar Mukti" ('Hamlet's Madness: The Liberation of Poetry') explores the idea of madness (unmadana) as represented in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, with a specific focus on its metaphorical and philosophical significance within Bengali poetry. The title itself suggests that Dash views Hamlet's madness as a liberating force for poetry and indicates that he interprets this element of Shakespeare's work as a catalyst for creative expression. Dash begins by analyzing Hamlet's madness not just as a personal psychological breakdown but as a reflective mirror for societal and existential anxieties. Dash points out,

The problem scholars face with the play is vast. The central issue of this complex problem is Hamlet's motive. What was Hamlet's driving force throughout the entire play? Was it revenge? Love of justice? Humanism? Cunning trickery? Throughout the play, a new motive is actually taking shape. A rebellious, transcendent, self-destructive motive. From the pride of the Middle Ages, the first child of the modern age is being born—Hamlet. He is a hesitant and skeptical individual, trying to understand the corruption of an invisible world through the eyes of a disbelieving man—and this is his motive. (297, translated)

The character's feigned madness, according to Dash, serves multiple functions—it questions authority, challenges conventional morality, and highlights the absurdity of life. Hamlet's madness, often portrayed as ambiguous or performative in critical studies, is here seen as a conscious rebellion against the constraints imposed by society and by the traditional forms of tragedy. This rebellion resonates in Bengali poetry, where poets seek to break free from conventional forms and thematic constraints. The article delves into the role of madness in liberating the poetic voice. Dash draws a parallel between Hamlet's inner turmoil and the fragmented consciousness of modern poets, who often grapple with themes of alienation, existential despair, and societal decay. According to Dash,

Out of a spontaneous realization, the mad poet Hamlet took form in the hands of the great poet Shakespeare. In this way, he prepared the stage for a new era, shaping both the thought and the expression of modernity. Who else but the cunning madman Hamlet could have accomplished this task in such a revolutionary manner throughout a long, chaotic, and vibrant play? This is where the uniqueness of the psychological structure of the play lies- it cannot be judged by any ancient standard. It is in Hamlet's madness that poetry finds its liberation from the clutches of antiquity. (298, translated)

A key aspect of Dash's argument is the idea of "kabitar mukti" (the liberation of poetry). He argues that Hamlet's madness represents the ultimate liberation of the poetic spirit. By shedding rationality, Hamlet frees himself from the constraints of societal norms and expectations. It also emphasizes the aesthetic significance of madness. In fine, Ranajit Dash's article "Hamlet er Unmadana: Kabitar Mukti" presents Hamlet's madness as a source of creative inspiration and poetic liberation. It highlights how the theme of madness offers a way to challenge traditional forms and explore new, experimental modes of poetic expression.

Krishanu Bhattacharya's article "Hamlet er Utso Sandhane" ('In Search of Hamlet's Origin') in the *Hamlet* issue of *Ebong Mushayera* offers an in-depth exploration of the sources and cultural contexts behind Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. Bhattacharya delves into both the historical and mythological underpinnings of the play, tracing its roots to earlier texts such as the 12<sup>th</sup> century Danish historian Saxo Grammaticus's *Gesta Danorum*<sup>58</sup>, which narrates the story of Amleth, a prince avenging his father's murder. He discusses how Shakespeare transformed this tale into a complex psychological drama, enriching the narrative with philosophical and existential themes. The essay emphasizes how *Hamlet* serves as a reflection of Renaissance humanism, grappling with individual morality, the uncertainties of life, and the corrupting influence of power. Additionally, Bhattacharya examines the influence of Elizabethan England's socio-political climate on the play, suggesting that Shakespeare's portrayal of Hamlet's indecision and moral conflict mirrored the

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<sup>58</sup>Saxo Grammaticus, a 12th-century Danish historian, authored *Gesta Danorum* (Deeds of the Danes), a monumental work in sixteen books chronicling Denmark's history from its legendary origins to the late 12th century. Commissioned by Archbishop Absalon, it blends mythology and history, influencing later literature, including Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, derived from the tale of Amleth.

anxieties of a nation in flux. He also connects *Hamlet* to broader questions of identity, existence, and the nature of action, which have made the play a perennial favorite for both literary scholars and theatre practitioners. Bhattacharya opines that,

Even though Shakespeare gathered stories or elements from various sources, the plays he wrote were not mere imitations. The poetic qualities at the core of Shakespeare's plays were entirely his own. Thus, through the sequence of dramatic events and the coexistence of love, affection, and revenge, Hamlet becomes distinctly Shakespeare's own creation. (296, translated)

Sudeshna Chakraborty's article, "Denmark-er Jubaraj Banglay: Hamlet er Bangiya Rup" ('The Prince of Denmark in Bengal: The Bengalization of Hamlet'), explores the history of Hamlet's translations and adaptations in Bengal since the British era. The phenomenon reveals Bengalis' enduring fascination with Shakespeare, unmatched in any other Indian language. Chakraborty observes that adaptations, rather than literal translations, captivated audiences by incorporating Indian costumes and local names. Consequently, Girish Ghosh's faithful translation, despite critical acclaim, failed to resonate with the masses. In his essay, "Shakespeare-er-Mancha Nirdesh O' Hamlet" ('Shakespeare's Stage Direction and Hamlet'), Abhijit Sen discusses Shakespeare's stage directions and use of directions in *Hamlet*. He provides context about stage conventions during Shakespeare's time in early modern English theater. Sen compares Shakespeare's approach to playwright Ben Jonson, saying Jonson gave more thorough and informative directions since he was focused on the physical staging and layout. However, Shakespeare crafted his plays with the audience's experience in mind above all else. As someone involved in acting and play production himself, Sen validates that Shakespeare's stage directions tended to be quite basic. But this served to make the plays more accessible to produce and direct. His minimal directions allowed for flexibility rather than being rigid scripts. Overall, Sen argues that while Jonson outlined directions better for the technical aspects, Shakespeare prioritized the audience experience over specific staging. And the barebones nature of his guidance made his plays quite effective to bring to life on stage.

In "Shakespeare-er-Hamlet na Amader?" ('Is it Shakespeare's 'Hamlet' or ours?'), Amitabha Roy reflects on whether *Hamlet* truly belongs to Shakespeare or if it has become

universal in a way. He says most theater folks feel their careers are incomplete if they do not direct Hamlet at least once. To back this up, Amitabha points to leading 20th-century directors across Europe who all staged their own versions. This shows how widely *Hamlet* has resonated. Interestingly, modern directors do not just see *Hamlet* as a product of the Renaissance period. Rather, they view him as representing universal humanist philosophies about life, society, and the times we live in. Amitabha feels even today audiences can relate to Hamlet's turmoil and highs/lows as if it was written about current issues. The play transcends any single era because Hamlet's voice continues to echo through generations. Roy suggests that *Hamlet* has transcended cultural boundaries, becoming a universal possession, as much ours as Shakespeare's. By exploring fundamental aspects of human nature, *Hamlet*'s timeless themes render it a relatable and enduring reflection of humanity. Manjubhash Mitra's article, "Freud-er Aloke Hamlet" ('Hamlet in the light of Freudian Interpretation'), explores how Shakespeare's tragedy influenced Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytical theory of the 'Oedipus Complex'. Mitra cites Kenneth Muir's critique<sup>59</sup>, which argues that reducing Hamlet's complexity to the 'Oedipus Complex' oversimplifies the play. Muir suggests that Hamlet's superego plays a more significant role, but Freud posits that the superego arises from the 'Oedipus Complex.' According to Freud, Hamlet embodies King Oedipus's legacy, unable to overcome his childhood complex due to his father's death and mother's remarriage. Mitra argues that Hamlet's egotistical envy of his mother's relationship, rather than focusing on his own love life, exacerbates the tragedy. Mitra's analysis, while insightful, is criticized for its abrupt treatment of Freud and Shakespeare.

Anil Acharya's essay, titled "Hamlet Ba Bangali Bhadrolok" (Hamlet and the Bengali Gentleman), appeared in this special issue, thoroughly examining the Bengali intelligentsia's complex relationship with Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and emphasizing the cultural resonance and symbolic weight that the character holds in Bengali society. Acharya suggests that *Hamlet* embodies the dilemma of the Bengali 'bhadrolok' class, who, like Hamlet, face a perpetual crisis of indecision and introspection. This class, often Western-educated and influenced by colonial ideals, is torn between action and contemplation, tradition and modernity. For Acharya, Hamlet

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<sup>59</sup>Kenneth Muir critiques Hamlet in his essay "Hamlet: A Psychoanalytic Study," published in *Shakespeare Survey* (Vol. 45, 1993). In this work, Muir explores Hamlet's character through the lens of Freudian theory, particularly focusing on the Oedipus complex and the psychological conflicts that arise from Hamlet's relationships with his mother, Gertrude, and his uncle, Claudius.

becomes a symbol of the bhadrolok's struggle to reconcile inherited values with an emerging, often conflicting, sense of individualism and modernity. The parallels between Hamlet's existential angst and the bhadrolok's struggles reveal deep-seated issues within Bengali society, particularly regarding identity, agency, and a sense of purpose. In this essay, Acharya draws on Nirad Chaudhuri's book *Atmaghati Bangali*<sup>60</sup> ('The Self-Destructive Bengali') to show the similarities between Hamlet and the Bengali gentleman. In the mentioned book, N. Chaudhuri speaks of the 'remote past' and 'immediate past.' Acharya highlights the conflict between the remote past and the immediate past in the Bengali gentleman's struggle for self-respect, describing this very conflict as akin to the inner turmoil experienced by Hamlet. The purpose of this comparative discussion, as Acharya states: 'is to show that the traits found in Hamlet's character can, in various ways, be observed among educated Bengali gentlemen, reflecting the presence of similar characteristics.' (250, translated)

Acharya explores how Hamlet's contemplative nature resonates with the Bengali bhadrolok's tendency toward introspection and philosophical debate, often at the expense of decisive action. He delves into the historical context of Bengal's educated class, who were shaped by the British colonial system yet alienated from both traditional Indian and modern Western identities. Acharya argues that this identity crisis is similar to Hamlet's hesitation and internal conflict, where thought paralyzes action, making Hamlet a mirror for the bhadrolok's intellectual and emotional turmoil. Furthermore, Acharya touches on the adaptations and interpretations of *Hamlet* in Bengali theatre and literature, showing how the play has been used to critique or reflect societal and political challenges. Bengali adaptations often emphasize Hamlet's internal struggle as a critique of the stagnation and passivity within the bhadrolok class. Acharya suggests that this identification with Hamlet is not merely literary admiration but reflects deeper psychological and cultural currents, linking Hamlet's existential dread to the socio-political discontent of the Bengali middle class. Acharya's essay thus presents Hamlet not just as a character in a Western play but as an enduring metaphor for the Bengali bhadrolok's psyche. The essay suggests that Bengali

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<sup>60</sup>Nirad C. Chaudhuri's book *Atmaghati Bangali* explores the complexities of Bengali identity and culture, reflecting on themes of self-determination and existential struggle. Through a personal lens, Chaudhuri critiques societal norms and historical contexts, articulating the challenges faced by Bengalis in a rapidly changing world. His work combines autobiography with cultural analysis, emphasizing the interplay between individual experiences and broader cultural narratives.

fascination with Hamlet stems from a shared sense of existential crisis and moral conflict, which speaks to the universal appeal of Shakespeare's work while highlighting its unique resonance within Bengali culture. Acharya concludes with this statement:

The point is that in this timeless Shakespearean play, *Hamlet*, we find a universal and eternal portrayal of the human mind and psyche. By looking at Hamlet from a straightforward perspective, we can uncover many different aspects of his character. This piece is not a scholarly analysis but rather a light-hearted view of Hamlet in the context of the Bengali gentleman. (260, translated)

Bitoshok Bhattacharya's essay "Stoic Hamlet," featured in this special issue, offers an interesting and unconventional reading of the Danish prince. Bhattacharya argues that Hamlet embodies stoic virtues by displaying restraint, endurance, and a deep philosophical understanding of life's transience. The essay challenges the mainstream interpretation of Hamlet as an indecisive and tragic figure overwhelmed by his circumstances, suggesting instead that Hamlet's contemplative nature and ethical dilemmas align with stoic ideals. The essay begins by placing Hamlet in the context of Stoicism, an ancient philosophy that emphasizes rationality, emotional control, and acceptance of fate. Bhattacharya notes that Hamlet's famous soliloquies, especially 'To be or not to be,' reflect his internal battle to reconcile personal suffering with a broader understanding of life's meaning. In this soliloquy, Hamlet contemplates existence from a stoic perspective, weighing the struggles of life against the peace of death. Bhattacharya interprets this as Hamlet's attempt to approach life's hardships with a stoic acceptance of suffering and mortality. Hamlet's deliberations on action and inaction, then, are not simply a sign of hesitation but represent a stoic grappling with the right course of action under morally ambiguous conditions. Bhattacharya also explores Hamlet's view of revenge through a stoic lens. Instead of immediately avenging his father's death, Hamlet considers the ethical implications of revenge, showcasing his awareness of the futility of violence and the impact of passions on moral judgment. For Bhattacharya, Hamlet's delay is not a flaw but a strength, demonstrating his commitment to reason and justice over impulsive, vengeful acts. Bhattacharya also notes, 'Hamlet is a stoic. Hamlet is neither a skeptic nor a cynic. Hamlet is a conflicted and disillusioned character. He had a complicated relationship

with the Stoics and a sense of opposition to the Christians. Yet, Hamlet is both a Christian and a Stoic. Shakespeare has shown this duality in Hamlet's character through his portrayal. (166, translated). Bhattacharya argues that Hamlet's careful consideration exemplifies stoic patience, as he seeks to act in alignment with higher principles rather than succumbing to immediate emotional responses. Moreover, the essay examines Hamlet's tragic flaw in a stoic framework. Hamlet's awareness of fate and cosmic order sets him apart from other tragic heroes. Unlike characters who fight fate, Hamlet reflects on his role within the broader human experience, accepting the inevitability of death. This acceptance, Bhattacharya suggests, is a hallmark of stoic wisdom, as Hamlet ultimately finds peace in surrendering to his fate, embracing death as part of life's natural cycle.

In her essay "Hamlet Notoke Atiprakito" ('Supernatural Elements in Hamlet'), featured in the 2002 special *Hamlet* issue of *Ebong Mushayera*, Sumita Banerjee explores the theme of the supernatural in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. Banerjee argues that the supernatural is more than just a plot device in the play; it serves as a profound element that shapes the narrative and reflects Hamlet's inner turmoil and the broader existential questions in the story. Her analysis emphasizes how the supernatural acts as a lens for understanding Hamlet's psychological and moral dilemmas, as well as the play's larger philosophical dimensions. Banerjee interprets the appearance of the ghost in the play not merely as a spirit but as a powerful symbol of guilt, revenge, and moral ambiguity. Its demand for vengeance becomes the driving force for Hamlet's actions, yet it also triggers a series of internal conflicts as Hamlet grapples with the ethical implications of revenge, duty, and justice. According to Banerjee, the supernatural here embodies the tensions between human action and divine will, raising questions about fate, free will, and moral responsibility. Further, Banerjee considers the supernatural as an extension of Hamlet's introspective and philosophical nature. The ghost's appearance deepens Hamlet's contemplation of life, death, and the afterlife. Hamlet's preoccupation with these themes, she argues, marks him as an 'atiprakito' (extraordinary) character, caught in the boundaries between reality and the supernatural. Banerjee also highlights Hamlet's famous soliloquies, particularly "To be or not to be", as moments where he delves into the mysteries of existence, influenced by his encounter with the ghost. For Banerjee, these existential reflections are integral to the supernatural framework of the play, presenting Hamlet as a character torn between his spiritual obligations and his human doubts. She also examines how the supernatural elements in the play mirror the uncertain, corrupt state of Denmark.

The ghost symbolizes not only personal but also societal corruption, acting as a haunting reminder of the moral decay surrounding the throne. In a nutshell, Sumita Banerjee interprets supernatural elements in *Hamlet* as essential to understanding both the character of Hamlet and the broader themes of the play.

Several articles and translations related to Shakespeare's *Hamlet* have emerged in Bengali literature. Notable works include "Hamlet: Chinta O Sanbitti" ('Thoughts and Consciousness') by Satya Bandopadhyay, "Hamlet: Kichu Katha: Bangla Natak O Manche Hamlet" ('Hamlet: Some Observations: Bengali Drama and the Staging of Hamlet') by Ajit Kumar Ghosh, "Elsinorer Jishu" ('The Jesus of Elsinore') by Tapati Gupta, and "Picasso, Aargau, Hamlet" by Samik Bandopadhyay. Additionally, "Hamlet ba Bangali Bhadrolok" ('Hamlet or the Bengali Gentleman') also contributes to this discourse. Ketaki Kusari Dyson, a prominent contemporary Bengali scholar residing in England, has translated several songs of Ophelia. Significant translations of selected passages from the play have been completed by Jatindranath Sengupta (Act I, scene iii), Ajit Gangopadhyay (Act I, scene iv), Tarun Sanyal (Act I, scene ii), Shamsur Rahman (Act I, scene iv), Sova Sen, and Shakti Biswas, among others. Moreover, notable critiques of *Hamlet* by esteemed critics such as T. S. Eliot, Boris Pasternak, and Ian Kott have also been translated for Bengali audiences. The effort to publish such a book is commendable and deserves recognition from both readers and scholars. Before this release, Bengali little magazines featured articles that often focused on random topics, primarily celebrating Shakespeare and his relevance in contemporary society, rather than offering critical or analytical assessments.

The special *Hamlet* issue of *Ebong Mushayera*, a little magazine, holds a significant place in Shakespeare studies in Bengal. This issue stands out as an important contribution to the exploration of Shakespeare through a localized lens, offering both critical analysis and creative reinterpretation of the play. In doing so, it bridges the gap between Western literary tradition and Bengali cultural discourse, highlighting the universal relevance of Shakespeare's work. One of the key contributions of this special issue is its focus on the interpretation of *Hamlet* in the Bengali context, where it brings forth diverse scholarly perspectives on the play's philosophical, psychological, and cultural aspects. Most of the essays discussed in this issue are not merely academic; they engage with the play's core concepts in a manner that resonates with the socio-political realities of contemporary Bengal, embracing Shakespeare's timeless play relevant to local

readers and thinkers. Furthermore, this issue serves as a platform for fostering scholarly dialogue and promoting a deeper understanding of Shakespeare within the Bengali literary community. The inclusion of *Hamlet* in a little magazine dedicated to literary and intellectual exploration speaks to the ongoing relevance of Shakespeare in the context of modern literary movements in Bengal. In this sense, the issue functions not only as a space for critical engagement with global classics in a local, postcolonial setting.

*Ebong Mushayera*, as a prominent Bengali little magazine, has maintained the essence of traditional literary publications while adapting to the contemporary era of digital technology. Little magazines, historically, have been celebrated for their focus on promoting non-mainstream literature and experimental writing and providing a platform for voices that challenge societal norms. In this context, *Ebong Mushayera* continues to uphold these core principles, even as it navigates the changing landscape shaped by digital advancements. In the past, little magazines were physical publications, often limited in circulation, with a primary focus on reaching a niche, intellectual audience. However, the digital age has transformed this landscape. Today, *Ebong Mushayera* is able to utilize digital platforms to expand its reach, making its content accessible to a broader, global audience while still preserving its traditional values. Through online issues, social media engagement, and digital newsletters, the magazine ensures that its literary vision and experimental work are available to younger generations and international readers who might not have been exposed to the Bengalization approach to Shakespeare. In an era dominated by mainstream media and fast consumption, *Ebong Mushayera* serves as a counterpoint by emphasizing deep, reflective writing, poetry, and essays that challenge conventional norms. While digital tools have made publishing more accessible, the magazine still retains its focus on quality, thought-provoking content rather than mass appeal. Ultimately, *Ebong Mushayera* navigates the digital era by enhancing its traditional role, ensuring that the Bengali little magazine culture—one of intellectual engagement and literary experimentation—remains relevant in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

### **3.5 Shakespeare in *Alapparba* Bengali Little Magazine:**

*Alapparba* is a Bengali little magazine that emerged in the early 1960s, during a period of significant literary and cultural upheaval in Bengal. It was founded by poet, editor, and critic

Nirmalprabha Bhowmick, with a strong focus on contemporary issues, radical ideas, and avant-garde expressions. The magazine's name, *Alapparba*, translates to "fragments" or "scattered pieces," which aptly reflected its editorial philosophy of presenting fragmented, experimental, and non-mainstream works of literature, art, and criticism. The 1960s were marked by a rising sense of dissatisfaction with the conventional literary forms and themes of the time. Writers, especially those in the little magazine movement, were disillusioned with the established norms and sought a more personal and direct approach to writing. *Alapparba* played a pivotal role in this transformation, providing a platform for innovative poets, short-story writers, essayists, and artists who were seeking to break free from traditional forms and genres. One of the defining characteristics of *Alapparba* was its commitment to social and political themes. The magazine was not only a space for literary experimentation but also for expressing dissent against the social order, especially in the context of the socio-political situation in Bengal during the time, which included the aftermath of the partition, the growing Naxalite movement, and the struggles of the working class. As a little magazine, it has always tried to uphold the pure essence of small magazines by not involving itself in any profitable marketization. One notable aspect of *Alapparba* was its inclusive nature. This inclusiveness allowed us to embrace various issues from several strata of society. This magazine published a special issue on Shakespeare in 2014 dedicated to the wide-ranging popularity across Bengal. This issue consists of three fine articles addressing subtle perspectives on Shakespeare's works.

The first article, Haraprasad Mitra's "Shakespeare O Tragedir Jantrona" ('Shakespeare and The Tragic Pain'), explores the essence and evolution of tragedy in Shakespeare's works. Mitra discusses how Shakespeare's tragedies deviate from classical norms, emphasizing the psychological depth of characters and their tragic flaws, such as ambition and jealousy. He highlights the societal impact of Shakespeare's tragedies, illustrating how the downfall of noble characters affects their communities. The essay also reflects on themes of fate and moral ambiguity, suggesting that Shakespeare's tragedies evoke complex emotional responses rather than straightforward catharsis, thus enriching the genre's legacy in literature. Regarding theatre, Haraprasad Mitra opines:

Theatre encompasses an extraordinary, unprecedented event that has been happening for centuries, supported by the norms of the society. Theatre is a

literary reflection of our lives. But this reflection is not like an ordinary mirror. By focusing on specific aspects of life, events, or nature, theatre allows us to experience the complexities of life's joys and sorrows in a unique way, often highlighting specific aspects that we might overlook. (14, translated)

Mitra discusses several key themes in Shakespeare's tragedies—psychological depth, fate vs. free will, societal impact, moral ambiguity, emotional resonance, etc. Mitra emphasizes the complex psychological motivations behind Shakespeare's tragic characters, highlighting their tragic flaws and moral dilemmas. The tension between destiny and personal choice is explored, illustrating how characters grapple with their fates. Macbeth, Lear, and Hamlet are characters that embody the profound struggles of life. Shakespeare, through his profound insight, has captured the essence of these characters, revealing the deep experiences of these noble individuals. They are undoubtedly tragic heroes, but their deaths do not signify the end of their torment. But the end of the tragedy is not only death. The author also compares Shakespeare's tragedies with Greek tragedies by highlighting several key differences. Mitra notes that Greek tragedies, like those of Sophocles, emphasize the power of fate and divine forces controlling human lives. In contrast, Shakespearean tragedies focus more on individual responsibility and the consequences of personal choices, showcasing characters who often bring about their own downfall through their flaws. Unlike the clear moral frameworks often found in Greek tragedies, Mitra suggests that Shakespeare's works present moral ambiguity, where characters face dilemmas without straightforward right or wrong answers. Besides the absence of a chorus in Shakespeare's plays and the inclusion of supernatural elements, through these comparisons, Mitra illustrates how Shakespeare transformed the tragedy genre by infusing it with humanistic themes and psychological depth, moving beyond the constraints of classical traditions.

Mitra also discusses the societal status of heroes in Shakespeare's tragedies by emphasizing their noble origins. He notes that Shakespeare's tragic heroes typically belong to the upper echelons of society- kings, princes, or military leaders. This high status is crucial as it allows the audience to relate to their fall from grace, illustrating that even those in power can succumb to human flaws and errors. Shakespeare's truthfulness regarding the suffering of our lives is evident. Through the struggles of experience, he intricately weaves narratives that reflect the turmoil of existence, characterizing the events that lead to transformation. He portrays characters in their

worldly conditions and the flow of circumstances, allowing them to become immortal through his art. Mitra concludes his essay by heaping huge praise on Shakespeare:

The infinite curiosity about life, the diverse experiences of profound suffering, the right to wonder, the knowledge of art, and the awareness of people's desires were all embodied by Shakespeare. He was a remarkable poet, filled with wonder and a sense of extraordinary suffering. The essence of suffering in his tragedies is worth contemplating. He has been referred to as a universal playwright—one for all nations. The universal suffering of human life is reflected in his works like *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *King Lear*, and *Macbeth*. (22, translated)

Sudhir Chakraborty's essay, "Shakespeare-er Natoke Sangeet" ('Songs in Shakespeare's Plays'), published in *Alapparba*, a Bengali little magazine, in 2014, presents an interesting exploration of the intersection of music and drama in Shakespeare's plays. Chakraborty, a renowned scholar of Shakespearean studies, delves into the significance of music in Shakespeare's theatre, examining its role in enhancing dramatic tension, conveying emotions, and creating a rich sensory experience. Chakraborty begins by highlighting the importance of music in Elizabethan theatre, where it was an integral part of the dramatic performance. He notes that some have compared the complete works of Shakespeare to a vast ocean. Among the many treasures hidden within the richness of the ocean, one of the most exquisite is the nectar of music. To quote Chakraborty,

To engage in a meaningful discussion about the role of music in Shakespeare's plays, it is essential to understand the musical trends of his time and his personal musical inclinations. Scholars such as Edward Naylor, Richmond Noble, and G. H. Cowling have unveiled the inseparable relationship between music and Shakespeare's plays, shedding light on the theatrical application of music within them. Consequently, in contemporary Shakespearean studies, the thread of music is being increasingly recognized. (25, translated)

However, the topic of music in Shakespeare's plays remains highly controversial. The key points of debate are: whether Shakespeare himself had any musical knowledge, whether his use of music served any specific dramatic purpose, and whether the absence of music would diminish the essence of his plays. Chakraborty mentions in his essay,

Between 1588 and 1632, England was flooded with poets and songwriters. Writers like Thomas Campion, John Byrd, and John Dowland filled Elizabethan England with melody and rhythm. Shakespeare breathed deeply in this Elizabethan musicality. Being a poet, he was inherently a lyricist, at least in the spirit of the age. Thus, music naturally found its way into his plays. However, as he was primarily a playwright, his use of music in drama was deliberate, well-suited, and deeply significant, with remarkable artistic intent. (26, translated)

Chakraborty is of the opinion that Shakespeare drew upon three sources for the flow of songs in his works. Firstly, elements of ballads or folk songs were prevalent up to his time. Secondly, from the lyrical collections of his contemporaries, such as Thomas Campion, John Dowland, and Thomas Lodge. Thirdly, from the English adaptations of the madrigal (a type of love song) originally derived from Italy. The excellence of these English madrigals was achieved through the efforts of a composer named Thomas Morley around the year 1580. Furthermore, Chakraborty discusses the cultural and historical context of music in Shakespeare's theatre. He notes that the music of Shakespeare's time was deeply rooted in Renaissance culture, reflecting the era's musical tastes and conventions. Chakraborty argues that Shakespeare's use of music was not only aesthetically pleasing but also culturally significant, reflecting the social and cultural norms of his time. Whether Shakespeare himself was a musician or whether songs were indispensable in his plays is a matter of debate. If the flame of one artist's dedication continues to inspire and influence the works of future generations, it testifies to their purity and originality. This is evident because playwrights like Lyly and Kyd introduced songs in their dramas. The frequent use of songs is also noticeable in the plays of Ben Jonson, Beaumont, Fletcher, Middleton, and Thomas Heywood.

The strongest evidence that Shakespeare understood music and knew how to use it effectively lies in the fact that not all his plays contain songs—only some do. For instance, there

are no songs in his history plays. In his tragedies, there may be one or two songs, while his comedies and tragicomedies often feature a festive abundance of music. Occasionally, other songs have been added to Shakespeare's plays over time. This is why special attention and caution are necessary when discussing the music in Shakespeare's plays, as Oliver Elton has pointed out, 'The songs must always be read in their surroundings; they belong to the occasion, and they arrest the action for a moment with their aerial or pastoral music.' (154) Shakespeare did not display any exceptional self-centeredness in incorporating songs into his plays. Instead, he infused his plays with movement by making subtle variations in the use of songs, seamlessly integrating them into the theatrical narrative. He skillfully turned songs into an indispensable part of the dramatic events, which was a highly challenging task at the time. This is because the general audience of that era was not accustomed to viewing songs as an essential element of a play. In incorporating songs into his plays, Shakespeare did not adhere strictly to tradition; instead, he prioritized beauty. He consciously refined native elements with artistic sensibility, making them both necessary and meaningful. The Willow Song, in terms of expressing the pain of tragedy, has created a sense of universal astonishment and recognition. Originally, the Willow song was a form of expression by a woman, and its haunting, melancholic tone specifically reflects the vulnerability and sorrow in its lower, softer register. Shakespeare has adapted the Willow song to align with Desdemona's emotional state, subtly altering it to reflect her inner turmoil:

'The poor soul sighting by a sycamore tree.

Sing all in green Willow.

Her hand on her bosom, her head on her knee

Sing Willow, Willow, Willow'. (qtd. in Chakraborty, p. 30)

This is a remarkable adaptation of the song! Without a true theatrical perspective, such an adaptation of the song would not have been possible, nor would the potential and skillful use of the song have been realized. Shakespeare's deep understanding of dramatic impact allowed him to make the song not just an element of music but an essential, emotional tool that reflects the character's inner world. In fine, Sudhir Chakraborty's essay "Shakespeare-er Natakae Sangeet" reflects on the cultural significance of integrating music into theatrical performances, suggesting

that this fusion not only preserves Shakespearean tradition but also revitalizes it for contemporary audiences.

Shibnarayan Roy's essay "Shakespeare-er Teen Begana" ('Three Outcasts in Shakespeare's Plays'), published in the Bengali little magazine *Alapparba*, explores Shakespeare's nuanced portrayal of marginalized individuals. Roy investigates three specific outcasts, analyzing how they embody the societal, moral, and existential conflicts of their respective eras while resonating with universal human struggles. Roy selects three pivotal characters from Shakespeare's oeuvre: Shylock (*The Merchant of Venice*), Othello (*Othello*), and Caliban (*The Tempest*). Each character, in Roy's view, represents different facets of alienation and the human yearning for dignity, justice, and belonging. These figures are not merely products of their societal circumstances but also metaphors for broader human struggles, transcending time and culture. Roy begins with Shylock, the Jewish moneylender, who embodies the racial and cultural prejudices of Elizabethan society. Shylock's marginalization is rooted in his identity, which leads to systemic oppression and personal humiliation. Yet, Roy emphasizes that Shakespeare does not depict Shylock as a one-dimensional villain. Instead, through Shylock's famous plea, 'Hath not a Jew eyes?' Shakespeare humanizes him, forcing audiences to confront the ethical dilemmas of prejudice and retribution. Shylock's ultimate defeat, Roy argues, underscores the harsh realities of power imbalances while evoking a profound sense of tragedy. Othello, the Moor of Venice in Shakespeare's *Othello*, is a quintessential outcast, marginalized due to his race and foreign origins. Despite his military prowess and noble stature, he remains an outsider in Venetian society, constantly navigating subtle and overt racism. Shakespeare portrays Othello with empathy, emphasizing his humanity while critiquing the societal biases that isolate and ultimately doom him, making his story a timeless exploration of exclusion and identity. In his analysis of Caliban, Roy highlights the colonial undertones of *The Tempest*. Caliban, the native inhabitant of Prospero's island, is dehumanized and subjugated by the colonizer's authority. While Prospero considers Caliban a 'savage', Roy draws attention to Caliban's eloquent articulation of his pain and resistance. The character symbolizes the colonized individual's struggle for identity and freedom in the face of cultural erasure. Roy posits that Caliban's defiance, though often dismissed as futile rebellion, is a poignant assertion of agency against imperial domination. Roy concludes by asserting that Shakespeare's treatment of these outcasts transcends the confines of his era. By analyzing these three 'beganas', Roy not only sheds light on Shakespeare's timeless artistry but

also prompts readers to reflect on the ongoing struggles of the marginalized in contemporary society.

### **3.6 Tribute to Shakespeare in *Nandan* Bengali Little Magazine:**

*Nandan* is a notable Bengali little magazine that emerged during the vibrant little magazine movement in West Bengal. Founded in 1957 by noted Bengali writer Buddhadeb Bose, the magazine quickly gained recognition for its commitment to experimental literature, poetry, and intellectual discourse. *Nandan* became a platform for emerging writers and poets to explore new literary styles and engage in critical discussions, often challenging the mainstream literary norms of the time. *Nandan* holds a significant place in Bengali literary culture as a little magazine. Little magazines are known for their experimental and non-commercial approach to literature, and *Nandan* embodies this spirit. It stands out for its minimalist aesthetics, creative typography, and unique content curation, attracting a niche readership passionate about serious literature. With its commitment to nurturing talent and preserving the essence of Bengali literary traditions, *Nandan* remains an essential voice in the world of little magazines, contributing significantly to Bengal's rich cultural and literary heritage.

The May 2014 issue of *Nandan*, a renowned Bengali little magazine, was a special edition celebrating the 450<sup>th</sup> birth anniversary of Shakespeare. Edited by Aniruddha Chakraborty, this issue marked the magazine's 49<sup>th</sup> year and 5<sup>th</sup> number and showcased its dedication to literary excellence by honoring the Bard's unparalleled legacy. This commemorative issue explored Shakespeare's profound influence on global literature, theatre, and culture. It featured thought-provoking essays, analyses, and creative interpretations by eminent writers and scholars. Articles delved into the universal appeal of Shakespeare's works, examining his relevance in contemporary times and his resonance within Bengali literature and culture. The contributions highlighted the Bard's exploration of timeless human emotions, his mastery of language, and his nuanced portrayal of societal complexities. This special issue of *Nandan* was a fitting tribute to Shakespeare's enduring legacy, reaffirming his universal relevance while enriching the Bengali literary landscape. Aniruddha Chakraborty's meticulous editorial vision ensured a multidimensional exploration of Shakespeare, making it a collector's delight for readers and literary enthusiasts

alike. Aniruddha Chakraborty's editorial stance in the special Shakespeare 450<sup>th</sup> Anniversary issue of *Nandan* was one of reverence and intellectual curiosity. He emphasized the timeless relevance of Shakespeare's works, highlighting their universal themes and cultural adaptability. Chakraborty curated diverse contributions that explored the Bard's influence on Bengali literature, theatre, and art, fostering a dialogue between Shakespearean classics and contemporary Bengali sensibilities. His approach blended scholarly rigor with creative engagement, inviting both critical analysis and fresh interpretations. By celebrating Shakespeare as a global literary icon, Chakraborty positioned *Nandan* as a bridge between global literary heritage and regional literary discourse.

In the introduction to this 450<sup>th</sup> anniversary issue of *Nandan*, Tirthankar Chattopadhyay writes:

April marked the 450<sup>th</sup> birth anniversary of Shakespeare. Along with the rest of the world, Indians too remembered him anew. For Indians, Shakespeare is not just a foreign poet and playwright to be commemorated; he represents a deeply nurtured spiritual connection. Shakespeare is often viewed as an agent of imperialism, a cultural weapon of neo-colonial dominance. But he is not just that. Indian readers, audiences, and directors have never allowed Shakespeare to remain confined within such boundaries. Through translation, adaptation, theatre, and cinema, Shakespeare has been reshaped and integrated remarkably into the independent evolution of Indian culture... This issue of *Nandan* offers a glimpse of that engagement through reprinted essays and new articles written specifically for this edition. (7, translated)

Amalendu Bose's essay "Shakespeare-er Kaal" ('The Age of Shakespeare') offers a detailed analysis of the socio-political and cultural milieu during Shakespeare's time. This piece, edited by Aniruddha Chakraborty, explores how the Elizabethan era influenced Shakespeare's works and how his works, in turn, reflected the zeitgeist of the period. Bose begins by contextualizing Shakespeare's era, emphasizing the Renaissance's intellectual fervor and its impact on the arts, literature, and society. He highlights the transition from medieval feudalism to early modernity, marked by the rise of humanism, scientific inquiry, and individualism. The essay sheds light on England's consolidation as

a nation-state under Queen Elizabeth I, whose patronage fostered a flourishing of theatre and literature. Amidst this cultural renaissance, Shakespeare emerged as a towering literary figure whose works mirrored the complexities of the age. Bose also examines the theatrical landscape, particularly the role of the Globe Theatre and the popularization of drama as a communal art form. He emphasizes how Shakespeare's genius lay in his ability to appeal to both the elite and the masses, transcending barriers of class and education. Bose writes,

In the literature of Shakespeare's era, we often hear a recurring note—a subdued, gentle tune resonating quietly alongside the vigorous, lively, and dynamic self-expression of active life. This tune reveals the weariness of labor, the alienation of urban life, the solace of retreating into private chambers away from the hustle and bustle of life, or the cruel pleasure of doing nothing; it reflects the contrast between public duty and private repose... However, Shakespeare's dreamland is not entirely an imaginary or idealized realm; it is a world inspired by reality—a serene, pastoral environment akin to the idyllic Warwickshire forest of Arden (22-23, translated)

His use of language, rich in metaphor and poetic resonance, is celebrated as a testament to the linguistic evolution of the period. Bose argues that Shakespeare's works are not mere artistic creations but historical documents that capture the ethos of the Elizabethan age. This essay beautifully offers an insightful exploration of Shakespeare's age and enduring legacy, bridging the past with the present through the lens of a Bengali scholar deeply immersed in global literary traditions.

Dipendu Chakraborty's essay "Shakespeare-er Nataka Mayeder Obosthan: Ekti Gobeshonar Prastab" ('The Position of Mothers in Shakespeare's Plays: A Research Proposal'), published in the *Nandan* little magazine, critically examines the roles and representations of mothers in Shakespeare's plays. This essay, written to commemorate Shakespeare's 450<sup>th</sup> birth anniversary, provides an insightful overview of the social, cultural, and political implications of female characters in the Bard's works. The author argues that Shakespeare's portrayal of women,

though influenced by the patriarchal society of Elizabethan England, offers a nuanced and complex perspective. Chakraborty mentions,

In the play *King Lear*, apart from a single mention, there is no reference to Lear's wife. Lear only briefly brings up his deceased wife while warning his daughter Regan. Similarly, in the play *The Tempest*, Prospero mentions Miranda's mother just once while recounting the story of his renunciation to his daughter. On the other hand, in *The Merchant of Venice*, Portia's father leaves a will stipulating that she cannot marry anyone of her choice without adhering to certain conditions. (44-45, translated)

Chakraborty suggests that these characters reflect not only the limitations imposed on women but also their agency, intelligence, and resilience in navigating the societal structures of their time. Through detailed analysis, the essay highlights how Shakespeare's works explore the dynamics of gender and power. In *Macbeth*, Lady Macbeth's ambition and her ability to influence her husband challenge traditional gender roles, though her eventual downfall underscores the societal fears of female authority. The essay concludes by emphasizing the need for further scholarly exploration of the evolving interpretations of Shakespeare's female characters in contemporary contexts. Chakraborty's proposal encourages a feminist re-reading of Shakespeare, inviting researchers to examine how these portrayals resonate with or challenge modern understandings of gender equality and women's rights.

The essay "Deshiya Dwidha O Dwidhar Deshiyata: Unish Shatake Macbeth er Dui Anugrahan" ('Native Binary and the Binary of Nativeness: Two Adaptations of *Macbeth* in the Nineteenth Century'), by Sarbani Choudhury and Bhaskar Sengupta explores the duality of cultural interpretation in the 19th-century Bengali adaptations of Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. Sarbani Choudhury was an academic and writer specializing in English literature, cultural studies, and postcolonial theory. She has contributed significantly to literary criticism, particularly in the study of Shakespearean adaptations in Bengal and the intersection of colonial and indigenous cultural identities. Bhaskar Sengupta is also a distinguished scholar and writer with expertise in Bengali literature, cultural studies, and theatre. Sengupta has been a regular contributor to Bengali little magazines, offering critical insights into literature and history. Published in *Nandan* on the

occasion of Shakespeare's 450<sup>th</sup> birth anniversary in 2014, this collaborative essay delves deeply into the intricate relationship between colonial influence and the assertion of indigenous identity during the Bengali Renaissance. This collaborative essay has been translated from the original English by Anirban Bhattacharya and Chinmoy De. In this essay, Sarbani Choudhury and Bhaskar Sengupta analyze the two adaptations of Shakespeare's play *Macbeth* in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Their discussion focuses on a critical examination of these two adaptations. The authors examine two specific adaptations: Haralal Roy's *Rudrapal* (1874) and Nagendranath Bose's *Karnabir* (1884/85). These adaptations of *Macbeth* highlight how Bengali navigated the tension between embracing Shakespeare as a symbol of modernity and redefining his works within local culture and linguistic frameworks. The authors argue that the adaptations reflect a simultaneous admiration for and resistance to colonial cultural dominance, embodying what they term 'deshiya dwidha' (indigenous dilemma). One reason for the immense popularity of *Macbeth* during the early phase of translation and adaptation is that it is one of Shakespeare's four major tragedies, where the punishment for evil deeds is a central theme.

In Haralal Roy's play *Rudrapal* (1874), the naming of characters reflects the influence of medieval moral plays, despite an overt presence of indigenous folktales and elements of the *Panchatantra*. The names of the characters themselves bear marks of their traits, simultaneously showcasing creativity and a certain inconsistency. In this adaptation, *Macbeth* is transformed into *Rudrapal*, a ruler driven by destructive ambition. The term 'rudra' signifies destruction, aptly explaining *Macbeth*'s tyrannical and destructive tendencies. However, the use of 'Rudra' also invokes mythological connotations, as *Rudra* is another name for the deity *Shiva*, the creator and destroyer of worlds. Despite this mythological resonance, the feminine force central to *Macbeth*'s character—*Lady Macbeth*—is notably absent. *Lady Macbeth* is reimagined as *Chaturika*, the wife of *Chatur* (a title suggesting cunning or deceit). Her very name conveys notions of trickery, strategy, malice, and animosity. The noble and magnanimous *Duncan* becomes *Suryapal*, king of the five rivers (*Panchanad*), whose name evokes the radiant and unblemished imagery of the sun. *Banquo* is renamed as *Binoy Pal*, and *Macduff* becomes *Ranabir*. Other secondary characters are also given names with a distinctly indigenous Hindu aesthetic, emphasizing the cultural adaptation in this localized retelling of Shakespeare's tragedy. Haralal's attempt to indigenize the original text compelled him to introduce various elements into his play that are absent in Shakespeare's work. Appropriation, rather than translation, is a more complex bilingual and bicultural process

that involves a form of assimilation of the original text, emphasizing its universality while preserving the appeal of its distinctiveness.

In Nagendranath Bose's adaptation, the moral qualities of the characters are emphasized over their individual traits. Banquo, Macduff, Malcolm, Donalbain, and Duncan are renamed as Bijoy, Sudhi, Debi, Keshari, and Ananda, respectively, with each name accompanied by the title Singha, symbolizing the bravery, valor, and heroic spirit of Rajputs. Like Haralal Roy, Nagendranath also imbues the names of secondary characters with indigenous influences—Shaktidhar (Lennox). Lady Macbeth is reimagined as Malina, a name associated with tarnish and decay, reflecting a subtle disapproval of the character's moral corruption while also hinting at the translator's ambivalence toward her. Clearly, Nagendranath's use of mythological, historical, or semi-historical names to indigenize the original text often falls short of achieving its intended effect. In both adaptations, the geographical and political repositioning of events highlights the efforts to indigenize the narrative. Haralal Roy transposes England and Scotland to Delhi and Punjab, offering a localized framework rooted in regional connections. Similarly, in Nagendranath's version, the geographical reimagining includes alterations in socio-cultural structures, with England and Scotland replaced by the fictional realms of Nishagar and Rajasthan, with Jaipur as the Hindu capital. The relocation of the narrative flow beyond Bengal serves as a form of justification or artistic liberty, reflecting the Bengali ethos. It underscores that Bengalis, historically, are not a warlike people and lack a history marked by military conquest or valor. This deliberate distancing from the narrative's original warlike context emphasizes the cultural and historical nonalignment of Bengal with the themes of warfare and heroism. Compared to Haralal Roy, Nagendranath Bose is much more consistent and skilled in the use of Hindu mythological narratives. Proficient in both foreign and native languages, Nagendranath takes the path of faithful translation and adheres to the poetic and prose divisions of the original text. This essay posits that these adaptations of *Macbeth* exemplify the nuanced ways Bengali playwrights balanced reverence for Shakespeare with a desire to assert a distinct cultural identity. By analyzing these works, the authors shed light on the broader dynamics of cultural exchange, resistance, and hybridity in colonial Bengal, offering a profound exploration of how global literary icons like Shakespeare were reshaped within indigenous contexts.

Jyoti Bhattacharya's essay, "Shakespeare-er Manabhriday" ('Shakespeare's Human Heart'), focuses on Shakespeare's deep understanding of human emotions and the complexities of human relationships, which continue to resonate across cultures and eras. In "Sahitya," *Rabindra Rachanabali*, Tagore wrote:

Whatever one might say, at the core of Shakespeare's poetry, there exists an immortal essence of Shakespeare himself. From there radiate all the philosophies, sciences, histories, renunciations, attachments, beliefs, and experiences of his life—like an effortless light spreading in diverse hues, enriching everything around. From that center emerges hatred for Iago, compassion for Othello, affection for Desdemona, amused friendship for Falstaff, reverent pity for Lear, and tender love for Cordelia. Through these, Shakespeare's human heart is forever expressed and diffused. (translated)

In the case of Shakespeare, it is not incorrect to say that a biography is scarcely available. The facts about Shakespeare's life that are known are so meager and devoid of significant characteristics that they hold very little value as the substance of what is traditionally known as a biography. Yet, human curiosity, imagination, and relentless endeavor are indomitable. Thus, the efforts to construct a biography of Shakespeare remain tireless. As a result of all this, it cannot be said that our understanding of Shakespeare's human heart has become significantly clearer. The aura of mystery surrounding Shakespeare's character, which has for centuries stirred intense curiosity and left admirers unsatisfied, remains just as dense. Perhaps this mystery is a creation of our own minds. Even if many more facts about Shakespeare's life are discovered, would we truly feel satisfied? Could any amount of information ever construct a biography of a person that aligns seamlessly and adequately with the entirety of Shakespeare's works? The essay also highlights Shakespeare's ability to portray diverse facets of human nature—virtues, flaws, passions, and conflicts—with unparalleled authenticity. Bhattacharya underscores the universality of Shakespeare's themes—such as love, power, betrayal, ambition, and redemption—which find relevance in the modern world. In fine, this essay, "Shakespeare-er Manabhriday," celebrates

Shakespeare as a master of human emotions and relationships, whose works remain an invaluable mirror to the complexities of human existence. Bhattacharya sums up his essay by asserting that,

Our curiosity about Shakespeare's human heart finds its answer in his works, as the true essence of that heart is revealed within them. Any conclusions about Shakespeare must ultimately be drawn from the information contained in his writings. Facts or pieces of information that may seem irrelevant here could still hold significant value in other contexts. However, neither the recovery of forgotten data nor the discovery of obscure knowledge adds any particular merit to the study of Shakespeare. It is time to clearly acknowledge that there is no likelihood of uncovering any information capable of fundamentally altering the overall understanding of Shakespeare's works. (39, translated)

The 450<sup>th</sup> anniversary issue of *Nandan*, a Bengali little magazine edited by Aniruddha Chakraborty, significantly contributed to the popularization of Shakespeare in Bengal by fostering a renewed interest in his works. This special edition not only celebrated the Bard's legacy but also engaged contemporary Bengali writers and scholars in discussions about his relevance today, thus continuing the tradition of Shakespeare discourse in Bengal in contemporary times. Such initiatives from a major little magazine obviously helped sustain and grow interest in Shakespeare among new generations in Bengal.

In this third chapter, a critical examination of special issues on Shakespeare published in Bengali little magazines during the 21<sup>st</sup> century is presented. These publications, including the Hamlet issue in *Ebong Mushayera* and special issues in *Alapparba* and *Nandan* little magazines, reveal a profound engagement with Shakespeare's works through localized and innovative interpretations. *Ebong Mushayera's* Hamlet issue stands out as an exemplary work, blending Shakespeare's work with existential angst and political intrigue with contemporary Bengali social and political concerns. Contributors highlight the universality of Hamlet's themes, such as familial conflict and moral dilemmas, while framing them in distinctly Bengali contexts, including the shadow of colonialism and ongoing cultural shifts. *Alapparba* adopts a multidisciplinary approach, featuring contributions from literary scholars. This diversity enriches the understanding of Shakespeare's relevance in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. A common thread across the analyzed magazines is

the role of Shakespeare as a catalyst for intellectual and cultural dialogue. Discussions around his works often branch into broader themes, such as the role of colonialism in shaping modern literary sensibilities, the evolution of Bengali theatre, and the ethics of cross-cultural adaptations. These conversations highlight the interplay between global literary heritage and local cultural identity, positioning Shakespeare as a bridge between the two. By reinterpreting Shakespeare through a Bengali lens, these publications not only enrich the local cultural discourse but also contribute to the global appreciation of Shakespeare's works.

In the digital era, with the technological advancements, the format and medium of little magazines have also evolved. In this fast-tech era, little magazines have embraced online publishing, social media, and e-magazines to reach a wider audience, transcending geographical limitations. This shift has democratized access to literary platforms, enabling contributions from diverse voices and expanding readership. However, the essence of little magazines—promoting non-commercial, experimental, and alternative narratives—still remains steadfast. Little magazines, both in the pre-digital and digital eras, have consistently challenged mainstream literary narratives. However, their modes of operation, readership, and representation have undergone significant transformation in the digital age. In the pre-digital era, little magazines were primarily print-based, limited by demographic space, cost, and distribution. Their representation of Shakespeare often revolved around subversion—questioning his colonial imposition. Shakespeare's representation, in this changed environment, is no longer just a colonial figure to critique but also a malleable figure. They continue to resist mainstream commercialization, providing a space for marginalized voices and independent thought. Despite technological advancements, little magazines still maintain their role as incubators for avant-garde ideas and literary experimentation. *Ebong Mushayera* has adopted digital mediums, including e-magazines and online archives, to expand its reach and remain relevant in an increasingly digital world. This adaptation allows it to connect with a broader, more diverse readership, including younger audiences who prefer digital platforms. Social media has further enabled real-time engagement and interaction, enhancing its community-oriented ethos. Little magazines in the digital era have definitely democratized and diversified the discourse. Despite all these changes, *Ebong Mushayera* still prioritizes non-commercial, thought-provoking content, providing a space for voices often overlooked by mainstream media. By leveraging technology without compromising its commitment to alternative narratives and independent thought, *Ebong Mushayera* demonstrates

how a little magazine can evolve while preserving its identity. It serves as a testament to the resilience of literary countercultures in the digital age. *Ebong Mushayera* is more aligned with a non-elite or popular tradition, focusing on poetry and literary discussions that appeal to a wide audience. It has a more informal and accessible tone, which suggests it aims at a broader readership rather than a select, elite one. Whereas both magazines, *Alapparba* and *Nandan*, are known for their engagement with intellectual and cultural themes, they tend to lean towards the elite. *Nandan* is typically considered a more elite publication, particularly due to its historical significance and the quality of content it featured, including contributions from renowned authors. In fine, all these magazines have played a significant role in the contemporary time in popularizing Shakespeare and continuing the rich heritage of Shakespeare studies in Bengal. This small yet powerful form upholds the tradition of Shakespeare study in Bengal by reimagining his works through different cultural, intellectual, artistic, and local lenses.

## **CHAPTER- 4**

### **Alternative Voices: Bengali Theatre Magazines' Independent Responses to Shakespeare**

#### **4.1 Defining Theatre Magazine:**

A theatre magazine is a specialized periodical that focuses on the art, craft, and business of theatre. These magazines cater to enthusiasts, professionals, and academics, offering a wide range of content that explores various aspects of theatrical production and appreciation. Theatre magazines can be national or regional in focus and may address a general audience or specific niches within the theatre world, such as dramaturgy, stage design, or acting. Theatre magazines typically include a mix of reviews, interviews, essays, and features. These cover productions, playwrights, and other creative professionals. They may also provide insights into trends, innovations, and challenges in the field. One of the core elements is reviews of current productions. These reviews analyze performances, set design, direction, and acting, providing audiences and practitioners with a critical understanding of the show. Articles often delve into the history and theory of theatre. Many magazines provide practical advice for theatre practitioners, including acting tips, directing techniques, and stagecraft. They may also discuss aspects like auditioning, funding, and marketing theatrical productions. High-quality photographs and illustrations are a vital part of theatre magazines. These visuals capture performances, sets, and costumes, offering a rich visual context. The artistic and aesthetic elements of theatre are examined in such articles. Theatre's role as a reflection of society and its influence on culture and politics is a frequent topic. Many magazines explore theatre traditions from around the world, comparing and contrasting them with local practices. Theatre magazines often serve as resources for students, educators, and researchers, offering scholarly articles and archival material. Theatre magazines bridge the gap between practitioners and audiences, fostering a deeper appreciation of this dynamic art form.

Renowned theatre journalist and critic Nripendra Saha<sup>61</sup> pointed out, ‘The role of theater magazines or theater related periodicals isn’t limited to the topics related to theater and drama only. Not only should it elucidate discussion about the theater practice of the particular language community it serves to, but it should also cater to the development of regional culture of that community, embalmed in socio-economic and political environment. However, if we particularize the role of these theater magazines or periodicals for the development of regional culture only, that indicates an incomplete perception and only a part of the reality. (Saha, 1) A well-crafted theatre magazine can significantly contribute to the cultural development of a specific region while also linking it to broader national and global cultural narratives. To achieve this, theatre can inspire the life philosophies and existential challenges faced by ordinary people, emphasizing the interconnectedness of the dramatic arts, the artists, and their audiences. This, ultimately, embodies the genuine purpose of theatre magazines.

## 4.2 History of Theatre Magazines:

No comprehensive directory has documented the historical background and emergence of theatre magazines worldwide. According to *The Cambridge Guide to World Theater*<sup>62</sup>, British drama critic Clement Scott published a periodical called *The Theater*<sup>63</sup> from 1877 until 1890. The roots of drama criticism in Europe trace back to just before the 16th century, focusing on the appreciation of traditional theatre. Politician and critic Joseph Addison, alongside Sir Richard

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<sup>61</sup>Nripendra Saha is a prominent theatre journalist and critic, recognized for his contributions to Indian theatre. He serves on the Communication Committee of the International Theatre Institute, UNESCO, and emphasizes the role of theatre magazines in fostering regional culture and connecting with internationalism. Nripendra Saha served as the editor of the influential theatre magazine *Group Theater* from 1978 to 1990, promoting regional and international theatre discourse. His editorial work significantly contributed to the development of theatre journalism in India, focusing on cultural and socio-political themes within the theatrical landscape.

<sup>62</sup>*The Cambridge Guide to World Theatre*, edited by Martin Banham, is a comprehensive resource covering global theatre history and practice, featuring essays on theatrical developments from Albania to Zimbabwe.

<sup>63</sup>Clement Scott's *The Theater* was a prominent magazine published in London from 1877 to 1890, known for its comprehensive reviews, theatrical news, and biographical sketches. Under Scott's editorship from 1880 to 1889, it became the leading British theatre publication, shaping dramatic taste and sparking controversies within the theatrical community.

Steele, edited *The Spectator*, leading to a proliferation of theatre publications in 18th century Europe that advanced criticism significantly. The history of theatre magazines in Bengal is intertwined with the socio-cultural and political evolution of Bengali theatre itself. The influence of English theatre was evident during colonial times, although traditional forms like jatra and folk theatre existed long before. Sanskrit drama, being foundational to Bengali and other Indian languages, represents the "great tradition." The origins of Bengali theatre in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, marked by Herashim Lebedeff's<sup>64</sup> 1795 productions of translated English plays in Kolkata, laid the groundwork for a vibrant performance culture. The establishment of the Calcutta Theatre in 1775, primarily catering to British expatriates and upper-class Indians, laid the groundwork for modern theatre in Bengal. However, it was the indigenous efforts, such as the Hindu Theatre founded by Prasanna Kumar Tagore in 1831 that truly catalyzed the growth of Bengali theatre. The late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries witnessed theatre becoming a vehicle for nationalist and social reform movements. The 19<sup>th</sup> century was pivotal for Bengali theatre. Michael Madhusudan Dutt's play *Sharmistha*, staged in 1859, introduced a more contemporary and realistic approach, blending Western techniques with Indian narratives. This period also saw the rise of the commercial theatre scene with the Great National Theatre, established by Girish Chandra Ghosh in 1872, which became a landmark institution in professionalizing Bengali theatre. During this time, plays addressing patriotic themes and social issues became increasingly popular, transforming theatre into a tool for awakening national consciousness. For instance, Girish Chandra Ghosh's plays and Dinabandhu Mitra's *Nildarpan* (on indigo farmers' exploitation) generated public discourse, suggesting the existence of platforms for reviews and essays.

Until 1901, India did not have any theatre magazines or periodicals. Several factors contributed to this absence. In 1901, Amarendra Nath Dutta transformed theatrical practice by launching *Rangalaya*, a weekly theatre publication designed to express the experiences, thoughts,

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<sup>64</sup>Herashim Lebedeff, also known as Gerasim Stepanovich Lebedev, was a Russian musician and the pioneer of Bengali theatre in the late 18th century. In 1795, he established Calcutta's first drama theatre, introducing Bengali translations of European plays, notably Molière's *Love is the Best Doctor* and Richard Jodrell's *The Disguise*. Lebedeff's productions featured a mixed cast of male and female actors, breaking cultural norms and significantly influencing modern Indian theatre. His innovative approach included the use of a proscenium stage and Western musical instruments. Despite initial success, his theatre was destroyed by fire, and he faced challenges with British authorities, leading to his departure from India in 1797. Lebedeff continued to contribute to literature on Indian languages until his death in 1817.

and insights of artists regarding their craft. The renowned Panchkori Bandyopadhyay<sup>65</sup> was appointed as the editor, and the publication featured elegant ivory prints accompanied by beautiful illustrations and writings. It enjoyed significant popularity during its two years of regular publication, selling thousands of copies. However, Amarendra Nath struggled to dedicate sufficient time and attention to the magazine due to his commitments to stage shows and drama planning. Despite its brief run, *Rangalaya* was immensely popular. The launch of *Rangalaya* inspired other prominent figures in theatre to create their own publications. One such publication was *Rangabhumi*, which was established in 1901 and published from Minarva Manch, but it did not last long. Notable theatre publications from the early 20th century include: *Rangalaya* – a weekly publication edited by Panchkori Bandyopadhyay. *Rangabhumi* – a weekly published by Minerva Theater, *Rangamanch* – edited by Manilal Bandyopadhyay, *Natyamandir* – also edited by Manilal Bandyopadhyay—are weekly edited by Hemendra Kumar Roy and Premankur Atarhi, *Bango Rangalaya* (1926)—edited by Sailendra Nath Ghosh, etc.

While the aforementioned publications varied in quality, they all aimed to develop the art form and connect the theatre of this region to a global audience. Among these, *Nachghor* gained accolades for its balanced coverage of both entertaining theatrical performances and thoughtful productions with methodical direction. The publication actively supported initiatives led by Rabindranath Tagore, a prominent figure in Bengali theatre, to establish small theaters alongside Sadharan Rangalaya. As previously mentioned, early 20th-century periodicals not only sought to popularize local art but also aspired to give theater a national and international character. They often explored similarities between Indian and European theatre practitioners. While it is uncertain whether they found national pride in labeling Girish Chandra Ghosh as the "Shakespeare of Bengal" or Amarendra Nath as "Garrick," such comparisons reflected a colonial mindset. Any emerging regional culture naturally seeks national and international recognition as it flourishes. Alongside colonial rule in India, World War II brought challenges such as blackouts, black markets, communal riots, struggle for independence, epidemics, and food shortages. Under these circumstances, the public theatre established in 1872 had to halt productions in 1943-44. In the

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<sup>65</sup>Panchkori Bandyopadhyay (1866-1923) was a notable Bengali writer, journalist, and intellectual, closely associated with Rabindranath Tagore. He contributed significantly to Bengali literature and journalism, focusing on social issues and cultural development. His works reflect a deep engagement with contemporary societal themes and the evolution of modern Bengali thought.

meantime, a new form of theatre known as people's theatre emerged in Bengal, which now boasts over 300 branches throughout West Bengal. Thanks to the guiding principles of people's theatre, the drama culture in Bengal has secured a place within mainstream theatre. After independence, some artists from the Indian People's Theatre Association (IPTA) formed a separate theatre group. The push for a democratic culture led to the formation of various theatre groups, with the first being named *Bohurupi*. Today, numerous groups in West Bengal are known as group theatres. The people's theatre movement and these group theatres complemented each other in fostering a democratic cultural revolution. During this period, several notable publications emerged, including *Gananatya*—editor: Salil Chaudhury; *Lokonatya*—editor: Digin Bandyopadhyay; *Padpradip*—editor: Utpal Dutt; *Bohurupi* – Half-yearly publication; editor: Gangapada Basu; Present editor: Kumar Roy; *Proscenium*—monthly publication; editor: Samar Sarkar; *Epic Theater*—editor: Utpal Dutt; Group Theater—quarterly publication; editor: Nripendra Saha.

These publications played a significant role in the development and promotion of theatre during this transformative period. The history of theatre magazines in Bengal is deeply intertwined with the cultural and intellectual movements that shaped the region's theatrical landscape. Bengal, particularly Kolkata, has a rich tradition of theatre, and theatre magazines have played a crucial role in shaping public opinion, fostering critical discourse, and documenting the evolution of the medium. After India's independence in 1947, theatre magazines in Bengal underwent a transformation. The changing political and cultural landscape found its expression in theatre, and magazines became essential for the documentation and critique of this evolving theatre scene. Meanwhile, there was a growing variety in the types of theatre being explored, ranging from classical and folk forms to experimental and modern styles. The magazines provided a space for discourse on the growing number of avant-garde theatre practitioners in Bengal, highlighting new experimental forms, such as *Group Theater*. *Desh* and *Ananda Bazar Patrika* also began to feature theatre sections, reaching a wider audience with interviews, critiques, and stories about the Bengali theatre world. In recent decades, Bengal's theatre magazines have continued to evolve.

In this chapter, the researcher will focus on several theatre magazines that are not the mouthpiece of a specific theatre house and explore how they discuss Shakespeare. The researcher wants to showcase how these independent theatre magazines fit into the broader context of Bengali little magazines.

### **4.3 Can We Consider Theatre Magazines as Little Magazines?**

Bengali little magazines and theatre magazines are both significant components of Bengali literary and cultural discourse, but they differ greatly in terms of their objectives, content, audience, and historical context. The primary aim of Bengali little magazines is to promote avant-garde, experimental, and alternative literary and artistic expressions. On the other hand, theater magazines focus specifically on the theatre arts, covering all aspects of drama, including playwriting, direction, acting, stage design, and theatre criticism. They serve as a platform for discussing both professional and amateur theatre, offering insights into the process of theatrical production. These magazines are more specialized and cater to theatre practitioners, critics, and enthusiasts. They document and critique performances, provide reviews of productions, and delve into the theories and history of theatre. While Bengali little magazines can occasionally include theatre content, theatre magazines are dedicated exclusively to the performing arts. Little magazines in Bengal feature a wide variety of content, including poetry, short stories, essays, critiques, and translations. They are characterized by their experimental form and content, often reflecting a modernist or revolutionary ethos. These magazines are less formal and are often run by small editorial teams or individuals with a passion for literature and cultural movements. Unlike the general and literary content of little magazines, theatre magazines concentrate on the specifics of performance arts and the mechanics of theatre production. The audience for little magazines is usually smaller but highly intellectual, often comprising writers, poets, academics, and young intellectuals. These magazines, though limited in circulation, have a lasting impact on literary culture. Theatre magazines cater specifically to theatre practitioners—such as directors, actors, playwrights, and designers—as well as to theatre critics and enthusiasts. Their content is geared more towards people who are engaged in or interested in performance art rather than the literary community at large. While both Bengali little magazines and theatre magazines contribute significantly to the cultural discourse of Bengal, they differ in their focus, content, and audience. Each has played a unique and important role in the cultural development of Bengal, fostering creativity and intellectual engagement in their respective domain.

To determine whether a theatre magazine can be classified as a little magazine, one must consider its specific features: a) Intent and Content: Is the magazine focused on exploring

innovative or underrepresented ideas in theatre? Does it prioritize artistic expression over commercial success? b) Audience and Circulation: Does it cater to a niche audience with limited distribution? and c) Independence: Is it independent and free from corporate or institutional control? Some theatre magazines, such as those produced by experimental theatre groups or focused on fringe productions, could be considered little magazines. For example, publications from theatre collectives like *The Living Theater*<sup>66</sup> or zines<sup>67</sup> from local drama groups often align with the little magazine ethos. Conversely, mainstream, commercially oriented theatre magazines generally do not. While not all theatre magazines can be classified as little magazines, many grassroots and experimental ones embody the characteristics of little magazines. Their focus on innovation, independence, and community aligns them with the broader goals of little magazines, making them a significant part of the cultural and artistic dialogue.

Theatre magazines, when not serving as mouthpieces for specific theatre groups, can indeed be considered little magazines under certain conditions. The classification depends on the magazine's editorial focus, objectives, and approach to content curation. Little magazines are generally characterized by their emphasis on experimental, non-commercial, and often avant-garde content, traits that some independent theatre magazines may share. Theatre magazines can vary widely in their purpose and audience. For instance, publications like *American Theater*<sup>68</sup> or *The Stage*<sup>69</sup> often cater to a broader audience with reviews, interviews, and industry news. These are generally not little magazines because of their commercial orientation and wider reach. On the other hand, some focus on experimental theater, lesser-known playwrights, or grassroots

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<sup>66</sup>*The Living Theatre*, founded in 1947 by Julian Beck and Judith Malina, is a pioneering American theatre company known for its experimental and avant-garde productions. It emphasizes collaboration and social engagement, challenging traditional theatrical norms and exploring radical themes through innovative performances.

<sup>67</sup>The term "zines" refers to small, self-published magazines that typically feature original or appropriated content. They often cover niche subjects and are produced in limited quantities, emphasizing personal expression and community engagement rather than commercial profit.

<sup>68</sup>*American Theatre* is the only general-circulation magazine dedicated to theatre in the U.S., founded in 1984 by Theatre Communications Group. It covers trends, events, and profiles stage artists, focusing primarily on professional non-profit theatres while also featuring international productions and playwright interviews.

<sup>69</sup>*The Stage*, established in 1880, is a prominent British weekly newspaper focused on theatre and the performing arts. It provides news, reviews, interviews, and job listings, serving as an essential resource for industry professionals and enthusiasts across the UK.

performances. These are more likely to align with the ethos of little magazines. Self-published magazines covering alternative or fringe theatre<sup>70</sup> often epitomize the little magazine spirit. When a theatre magazine is not tied to a specific theatre group and instead aims to explore the broader theatre landscape, it has the potential to function as a little magazine, especially if it adheres to principles of independence, artistic innovation, and niche appeal. Independent theatre magazines that are not affiliated with specific theatre groups often align with the principles of little magazines, particularly if they emphasize experimental content, support emerging voices, and maintain a non-commercial, community-focused approach. These magazines provide valuable platforms for intellectual and artistic exploration in theatre, making them significant contributors to cultural discourse. By highlighting innovative ideas and fostering niche communities, such magazines not only enrich the theatre landscape but also embody the ethos of little magazines. While not all theatre magazines can be classified as little magazines, those that embrace independence and artistic freedom are vital parts of the tradition.

#### **4.4 Independent Theatre Magazines in Bengal:**

While several theatre magazines in Bengal are mouthpieces of specific groups, there exists a rich tradition of independent publications that explore Shakespearean themes from a broader cultural and artistic perspective. A few prominent examples include: *Natya Bhuban* is a Bengali theatre magazine dedicated to the promotion and exploration of theatre arts. Established in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, it has played a significant role in documenting and analyzing the evolution of Bengali theatre. *Natya Bhuban* is not officially affiliated with or a mouthpiece of any specific theatre group. It operates as an independent publication, covering a wide spectrum of theatre-related topics and providing a platform for diverse voices and perspectives within the theatre community. *Epic Theatre* is considered an independent theatre magazine. It is not affiliated with any specific theatre group or organization, making it a platform that provides unbiased and diverse perspectives on the theatre world. Its independence allows it to explore a wide range of topics, including experimental theatre, global trends, and in-depth analyses of classic and contemporary

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<sup>70</sup>Fringe theatre refers to experimental and unconventional performances that exist outside mainstream theatre. It emphasizes innovation, diversity, and often features works by emerging artists, challenging traditional narratives and theatrical norms through unique storytelling and staging approaches.

plays. *Natya Bhabna* is a renowned Bengali theatre magazine established in 1981, dedicated to the promotion and critical discourse of theatre arts. It emerged as a platform to document and analyze contemporary trends, traditional forms, and experimental movements in Bengali and global theatre. Over the decades, *Natya Bhabna* has maintained its independent voice, fostering intellectual discussions and nurturing a community of theatre enthusiasts while significantly contributing to Bengali theatre culture. *Shudrak* is a prominent Bengali theatre magazine, founded in 1961 by the renowned theatre personality Badal Sircar. It is also an independent theatre magazine. It was established to serve as a critical platform for the evolution of modern Bengali theatre. Over the years, several distinguished editors have shaped its content, including Badal Sircar himself. *Shudrak* has been influential in promoting contemporary theatre and fostering discussions around its role in society, making it a key publication for theatre enthusiasts and practitioners. *Natyachinta* is also an independent theatre magazine that has contributed significantly to the discourse around theatre and performance in Bengal. It was first published in 1956 by noted theatre personalities like Badal Sircar and others. The present editor of this theatre magazine is Rathin Chakraborty. Through its insightful editorial and critical reviews, *Natyachinta* contributed significantly to the post-independence Bengali theater scene, shaping both modern and experimental theatre practices. The magazine has remained a respected voice in theatre criticism, offering thought-provoking articles and fostering dialogue within the theatrical community. *Sudhu Theatre* is also an independent Bengali theatre magazine that was first published in 1994, aiming to provide a platform for discussions, critiques, and analysis of the theatre world. Like several other theatre magazines, *Sudhu Theatre* has contributed significantly to the documentation and development of Bengali and Indian theatre, cultivating intellectual discourse around the art form.

#### **4.5 Shakespeare in Independent Theatre Magazine: 450<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Issue of *Natyachinta***

Shakespeare has had a profound influence on Bengali theatre and literature, and his works continue to inspire not only stage productions but also critical discussions in magazines dedicated to Bengali theatre. *Natyachinta* is an independent theatre magazine that serves as a platform for exploring the diverse facets of theatre, including performances, scripts, criticism, and cultural movements. It fosters dialogue among theatre practitioners, enthusiasts, and scholars, promoting

innovation and preserving theatrical traditions. The magazine emphasizes independent voices and experimental approaches. The Shakespeare 450th anniversary issue of *Natyachinta*, edited by Rathin Chakraborty and published in 2014, holds significant value in the world of Bengali theatre and literary discourse. This special issue commemorated the 450<sup>th</sup> birth anniversary of William Shakespeare, highlighting the enduring relevance of the playwright's works across cultures and centuries. Shakespeare's plays have long been a cornerstone of global theatre, and *Natyachinta* took the opportunity to explore their influence on Bengali theatre. The issue explored the complexities of Shakespeare's universal themes—love, power, betrayal, and the human condition—while examining how these themes vibrate within the socio-political and cultural context of Bengal. By doing so, the magazine connected the timeless nature of Shakespeare's works with local theatrical traditions and modern interpretations. The special issue also featured essays, critiques, and analyses from scholars and theatre practitioners, offering diverse perspectives on how Shakespeare's plays have been adapted, performed, and reimagined in Bengali theatre. Chakraborty's editorial vision in this issue was to foster an understanding of Shakespeare's relevance in contemporary theatre, urging readers to reflect on his lasting impact on global and regional performance practices.

In the editorial note, the editor of *Natyachinta*, Shakespeare 450<sup>th</sup> Anniversary issue, 11<sup>th</sup> year, 7-11 Sankhya, May 2014, mentioned:

The 450<sup>th</sup> birth anniversary of William Shakespeare is being celebrated worldwide. This issue of *Natyachinta* theatre magazine is dedicated to him, as a tribute and offering to his legacy. By the time this issue is being published, we have not heard of any notable initiative from the theatre and culture-loving people of west Bengal to honor this great poet. There is no effort, neither governmental nor non-governmental, no programs or events. Admittedly, it has become difficult to navigate partisan politics in any initiative these days, raising doubts about where Shakespeare's legacy will stand. It is worth mentioning that in 2005, *Natyachinta* published an issue titled Shakespeare O Tar Theatre. This issue follows that one. May our theatrical thinking flourish under the light of Shakespeare's brilliance. (5, translated)

In the editorial page, it is also mentioned that when Shakespeare turned 400, how Bengali society and culture welcomed him is not entirely known to us. However, a commemorative volume was published at the time, whose title page was as follows:

Shakespeare Chaturtha Janmoshatabdi Smarok grontho

Editorial Committee

Srikumar Bandopadhyay      Tarashankar Bandopadhyay      Nandagopal Sebgupta

Pulin Bihari Sen              Biram Mukherjee              Dakshinaranjan Basu

Krishna Dhar                      Pallab Sengupta

*Shakespeare Chaturtha Janmoshatabdi Samiti*

72/1 Bagbazar Street, Kolkata-03 (7)

This title page reveals much information. It is also notable that from April 25 to April 28, 1964, a festival was held at Mahajati Sadan. Most members of the editorial committee of that commemorative volume, those great figures, are no longer with us, except for the youngest, Pallab Sengupta. Pallab Sengupta remains with us even during this 450<sup>th</sup> anniversary, as dedicated as ever. It is from him that we received the commemorative volume. The Shakespeare memorials included in that volume have been re-presented here during this 450<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

The first article of this special issue of *Natyachinta* theatre magazine was contributed by one of the brightest intellectuals of Bengal, Prof. Dipendu Chakraborty. His essay “Shakespeare-er Punarnirman: Ekti Vangagorar Khela (‘Reconstructing Shakespeare: A Game of Cultural Translation’) explores the reinterpretation of Shakespeare’s works within a postcolonial and Bengali cultural framework. Written as part of the special issue commemorating Shakespeare’s 450<sup>th</sup> birth anniversary, the essay situates Shakespeare’s plays in a complex, dynamic interplay of deconstruction and cultural reimagination. At the outset, Chakraborty mentions:

The game of breaking and remaking Shakespeare has been ongoing for a long time. Regardless of how much we adore Shakespeare, the efforts made by

England's theatre to adapt his plays to suit contemporary audience tastes were influenced by Shakespeare himself. Many playwrights and directors who attempted to reinterpret his plays to entertain their audiences achieved success, for instance, Devanant, Dryden, and Colley Cibber. However, the most notable was Nahum Tate, who provided a happy ending to King Lear, where Cordelia is united in marriage with Edgar. (151, translated)

Chakraborty begins by acknowledging Shakespeare's enduring global influence, emphasizing how his works have transcended temporal and geographical boundaries. However, the essay critiques the colonial baggage that Shakespeare's works carried into colonized spaces like Bengal. It explores how the Bard, introduced through colonial education, was both revered as a literary icon and contested as a symbol of imperial cultural hegemony. This ambivalence forms the core of what Chakraborty terms 'vanga gorar khela' or the game of deconstruction, where Shakespeare's texts are dismantled and reinterpreted to reflect local contexts and resist colonial dominance. A key argument in the essay is the dialogic relationship between Shakespeare's texts and their reinterpretations. According to Chakraborty,

It goes without saying that such acts of reinterpreting Shakespeare were not met with much enthusiasm in his own country in the last century. Particularly, the scholars who passionately lectured on Shakespeare in classrooms gave little importance to such unorthodox practices. Once, a female Shakespeare scholar delivered a lecture in our English department. When I asked her about Marowitz, she seemed entirely unfamiliar with the name. Perhaps this is why Marowitz, in his book *Recycling Shakespeare*, harshly criticized the so-called academic idolatry of Shakespeare, labelling it as 'harlotary'. (151, translated)

Chakraborty is of the opinion that for a long time in Bengal, the curricula designed for colleges and universities preserved the canonical tradition, turning Shakespeare into an untouchable icon whose texts could not be altered in any way. Behind this, lay the urge to uphold

British colonial values. This tradition of colonial veneration for Shakespeare was carried forward by us for ages. But who could have imagined that within Shakespeare's own country, an internal movement to dismantle this pedestal would one day begin. This shift started with figures like Wesker<sup>71</sup>, Marowitz<sup>72</sup>, and Tom Stoppard. Among them, Ian Scott's<sup>73</sup> contribution must also be acknowledged. The courage to reinterpret Shakespeare in a contemporary context was unprecedented until then, but the changing global political climate made this possible through the bold efforts of several daring playwrights like Ionesco, Edward Bond, and Tom Stoppard. The essay examines how Bengali playwrights and theatre practitioners have engaged with Shakespeare over the years. Chakraborty mentions:

Such a profound internal attack has not been witnessed on the Bengali stage. Utpal Dutt's representation of Shakespeare's plays, did not take on a new face in response to contemporary demands. Suman Mukhopadhyay's *Raja Lear* is a spectacular production, but it does not exhibit any urge to question Shakespeare. Kaushik Sen's adaptation of *Macbeth*, on the other hand, does show some courage in this regard, though it falls short of being entirely convincing. Yet, more important than such evaluations is the fact that Shakespeare's plays are no longer being treated as an unalterable Bible on our stage either. (154, translated)

Chakraborty concludes by reflecting on the relevance of Shakespeare in contemporary times. He argues that the reconstruction of Shakespeare's works is not just a postcolonial endeavor

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<sup>71</sup>Arnold Wesker dismantled Shakespearean tradition in his works by critically reinterpreting characters and themes, particularly in his play *The Merchant*. He challenged the anti-Semitic portrayal of Shylock, presenting him as a nuanced figure rather than a villain. Wesker's adaptations emphasize familial love and relationships, subverting traditional narratives and reflecting contemporary societal issues.

<sup>72</sup>In *Recycling Shakespeare*, Charles Marowitz critiques and reinterprets Shakespearean texts, presenting them as dynamic works that invite contemporary engagement. He challenges traditional interpretations and the authority of the Shakespearean canon, advocating for a vibrant, collaborative theatre that reflects modern societal issues and philosophical questions, thus dismantling established theatrical norms.

<sup>73</sup>Ian Scott is a scholar and author known for his critical examination of Shakespeare's works, particularly in contemporary contexts. His research focuses on how modern interpretations can reshape understanding of Shakespeare's themes and characters, emphasizing relevance to current societal issues and cultural discussions. Ian Scott's book titled *Shakespeare and the Contemporary World* critically examines how Shakespeare's plays can be reinterpreted through modern lenses, addressing contemporary themes and societal issues.

but an ongoing process of cultural engagement. In the hands of Bengali artists and thinkers, Shakespeare becomes a site for continuous reinvention, bridging the past and present, the local and global. In essence, the essay celebrates the fluidity and adaptability of Shakespeare's works while advocating for their critical interrogation. It portrays 'vanga gorar khela' as a creative act of reclaiming and transforming Shakespeare into a voice that is as much Bengali as it is global, ensuring his continued resonance in a postcolonial world.

Bhaskar Sengupta's essay "Bangalir Shakespeare Attikoron" ('How Bengalees Internalized Shakespeare'), published in the special Shakespeare 450<sup>th</sup> anniversary issue of *Natyachinta* (2014), explores the Bengali engagement with Shakespeare's works over time. Sengupta delves into how Shakespeare has been understood, interpreted, and adapted by Bengali audiences, writers, and theatre practitioners, shaping a unique cultural phenomenon in Bengal. Here, Bhaskar Sengupta begins his speech by highlighting an article by Prof. Abhijit Sen. Some excerpts from Prof. Sen's titled essay published in the Jadavpur University journal:

If, for Shakespeare and his generations, the play-text served only as a 'working model' then to create a fresh performance-text out of a received Shakespearean text is always a legitimate engagement... The director is now seen no longer as a mere interpreter of meanings but as a maker of meanings. Shakespeare, it has been felt, is not our contemporary... Shakespeare has to be made our contemporary. He delivers a sixteenth-century English text; this has to be adequately overlaid with a text conducive to our modern articulations. The overemphasis in contemporary Shakespearean productions has been on 'Shakespeare-plus-relevance. (Sen, 31)

Prof. Sen's essay begins with the hope of making Shakespeare contemporary on stage in keeping with the demands of the time but ends on a somewhat disheartened note by addressing the need for critical engagement with Shakespeare in Bengali. Prof. Sen also opines, 'Dutt (Utpal Dutt), noted for his radicalism in non-Shakespearean productions...could have given the Bengal audiences their own Shakespeare, suitably repositioned in the contemporary milieu. Instead, he chose to play 'safe' with Shakespeare and shied away from what he thought would be 'risky' experimentations... (31). Prof. Sen laments that the Bengali stage had rarely achieved a truly

critical interpretation of Shakespeare. His essay primarily focused on the production of *Macbeth*. In 1893, Girish Chandra's *Macbeth* was a direct translation of Shakespeare's original text. In 1954, Utpal Dutt staged *Macbeth* using Jatindranath Sengupta's translation. By 1970, People's Little Theatre presented *Macbeth* in the style of jatra, with Utpal Dutt's own translations. Regarding this production, Prof. Sen remarked,

He (Dutta) revived this in the 1970s during the Emergency period as a political statement against the autocratic rule. Though this revival itself was loaded with political nuances, the production gave no indication of any significant departures from the received text in the interest of specific cultural and / or ideological readings. (32)

With the reference to Prof. Sen's arguments on the reception of Shakespeare's plays in Bengal, Bhaskar Sengupta examines how early Bengali translators and playwrights adapted Shakespeare to fit local context. Sengupta mentions *Rudrapal*, Haralal Roy's adaptation of *Macbeth*, and *Kornobir*, Nagendranath Bose's adaptation published in 1885. In fact, all these adaptations seem to disregard the source text, transforming it into something inherently local within the native context. He also talks about the present adaptations of *Macbeth*. Swapanboron Acharya's translation of *Macbeth* was published in 2007. This production of *Macbeth* was also staged in Kolkata and various other locations in Bengal in 2014. The production of *Mobarok* (a translation of *Macbeth*), directed by Sandip Bhattacharya, is now being staged in different parts of India. All of them localized Shakespearean play *Macbeth* in their own ways to align with Indian aesthetics and sensibilities. These adaptations, according to Sengupta, were less about literal translation and more about cultural reinterpretation, where characters in the play were reimagined through the lens of Bengali ethos. The essay also discusses the rise of modern Bengali theatre, which saw Shakespeare being embraced as a medium to explore contemporary issues. Sengupta argues that Bengali playwrights and directors have used Shakespearean texts as a means of addressing colonial oppression, caste hierarchies, and gender politics. Sengupta highlights specific productions by prominent theatre groups, emphasizing their innovative approaches to staging Shakespeare. He discusses how directors like Sombhu Mitra, Utpal Dutt, and more recently, Bratya Basu have deconstructed Shakespearean texts to engage with postmodern concerns. These

reinterpretations often incorporated multimedia, experimental staging, and non-linear narratives, creating a new idiom for Shakespeare in Bengali theatre.

The essay also acknowledges critiques of Shakespeare's prominence in Bengal. Sengupta notes that some cultural critics argue this obsession with Shakespeare sidelines indigenous literary traditions. However, he counters that Bengali appropriation of Shakespeare is less about mimicry and more about transformation, where Shakespeare is 'made Bengali' through a process of creative negotiation. It is the uniquely Bengali interpretations—rooted in local cultural, political, and artistic traditions—that make this engagement a living, evolving dialogue rather than mere homage. In fine, Bhaskar Sengupta's essay "Bangalir Shakespeare Attikoron" provides a comprehensive overview of how Shakespeare has been indigenized in Bengal.

Rathin Chakraborty's essay "Shakespeare Rahasya" ('Shakespeare Mystery'), published in the *Natyachinta* theatre magazine on the occasion of Shakespeare's 450<sup>th</sup> anniversary, offers a profound exploration of the enduring relevance and mystique of Shakespeare. The essay focuses on the 'riddles' or 'mysteries' surrounding Shakespeare's works, life, and their impact on global literature, art, and thought. Chakraborty begins his statement with this:

It feels intriguing to analyze and identify this subject, even in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, under the name 'Shakespeare Mystery.' A strange sense of enigma arises when we see that not only some stubborn and rigid individuals but also several distinguished scholars, dramatists, and Shakespeare experts are divided into two camps and engage in intense debates, presenting countless logical arguments. One camp is identified as the 'Stratfordians', whose members believe that Shakespeare was indeed Shakespeare. The other group, known as the 'Oxfordians,' firmly believes and concludes that someone else was behind the name Shakespeare. This figure could be Edward de Vere, the 17<sup>th</sup> Earl of Oxford; the eminent philosopher and writer Francis Bacon; or the playwright Christopher Marlowe. It could be any of them—or perhaps none at all. This conflict itself is a mystery. (177, translated)

A significant portion of the essay is dedicated to the authorship debate, which Chakraborty describes as one of the key 'rahasyas' (mysteries) surrounding Shakespeare. He examines the controversies over whether Shakespeare of Stratford-upon-Avon truly authored the plays

attributed to him or if they were the works of a more educated and aristocratic figure. Chakraborty does not take a definitive stance but suggests that the debate itself adds to the allure of Shakespeare's legacy. There are those who believe that Shakespeare's plays were not written by Shakespeare himself, but by others. Among those who subscribe to this view, some have mentioned other names as potential candidates for being the true Shakespeare. These include William Stanley, the Earl of Derby; Ben Jonson; Walter Raleigh; and, quite astonishingly, even Queen Elizabeth I, as she was believed to be a good writer. Additionally, over the past three and a half centuries, a dozen or so names have emerged as possible contenders for the identity of Shakespeare. The argument that Shakespeare was not 'Shakespeare' gained renewed momentum during the 450<sup>th</sup> birth anniversary celebrations in 2014. However, despite all this speculation, no rival to the romantic brilliance of 'Shakespeare' has yet been found. Chakraborty has also mentioned several other perspectives that have emerged on this topic, such as

- i) In Chambers's *Edinburgh*, the August issue of 1848, an anonymous essay titled "Who Wrote Shakespeare" was published. The author argued that Shakespeare had hired "a poet" to write all the plays and poems attributed to him.
- ii) A book with the title "Baycon is Shakespeare" posited that Sir Francis Bacon was the true author of Shakespeare's works. The claim gained support from notable figures such as British politicians Lord Palmerstone and Lord Houghton, poet S. T. Coleridge, and politician John Bright. Bright went so far as to state that anyone who believed William Shakespeare of Stratford wrote *Hamlet* or *King Lear* was ignorant.
- iii) Robert Fraser authored the book "The Silent Shakespeare", thus reviving the Derbyite theory, which suggests that the works attributed to Shakespeare were actually written by William Stanley, the 6<sup>th</sup> Earl of Derby.
- iv) In 1922, an organization named The Shakespeare Fellowship was founded with the mission of uncovering the true identity of Shakespeare. Its prominent members included George Greenwood, J. T. Looney, Colonel B. R. Ward (father of Edward de Vere's biographer), and Lefranc. (179-180, translated)

These theories and debates continue to fuel the ongoing intrigue surrounding Shakespeare's authorship. Additionally, in 1957, the Shakespeare Oxford Society was established, which was

previously known as the Shakespeare Fellowship. In 1995, the Shakespeare Oxford Society began publishing an electronic magazine titled *The Ever Reader*<sup>74</sup>. This magazine has been regularly featuring articles exploring the mysteries surrounding Shakespeare's authorship.

Chakraborty underscores the multiplicity of interpretations that Shakespeare's works invite. He discusses how different eras and cultures have reinterpreted his plays to reflect their socio-political contexts. The essay also focuses on Shakespeare's influence on Indian theatre. Chakraborty explores how Shakespeare's plays were adapted to suit Indian contexts during the colonial and post-colonial eras. Chakraborty also reflects on the role of Shakespeare in the modern world. He argues that Shakespeare remains a lens through which we can examine contemporary issues. In Rathin Chakraborty's essay "Shakespeare Rahasya," Shakespeare is presented as both a historical figure and a timeless enigma. By weaving together the mysteries of his authorship, the adaptability of his works, and his influence on global and Indian theatre, Chakraborty invites readers to engage with Shakespeare not just as a playwright, but as a symbol of human creativity and intellectual curiosity.

Bibhas Chakraborty's essay "Amader Hamlet" ('Our Hamlet') talks about the 2003 production of *Hamlet* and how this production has cemented Chattopadhyay's reputation as a master of adaptation and a visionary director. Bibhas Chattopadhyay is a renowned theater practitioner, director, playwright, and scholar with significant contributions to Bengali theatre. He has been instrumental in pioneering experimental and alternative theatre movements in Bengal, focusing on socially relevant themes and innovative staging techniques. A prolific writer, he has authored critical essays on theatre and directed notable productions that continue to inspire new generations of artists in the Bengali theatre landscape. Chattopadhyay, at the outset, informs us,

In the vast expanse of Shakespeare's ocean, I have managed to collect just one gem—Hamlet—as a treasure at the twilight of life. For centuries, countless chemists and connoisseurs have struggled to decipher the chemical or alchemical

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<sup>74</sup>*The Ever Reader* was the journal of the Shakespeare Oxford Society, published from 1995 to 2000. It featured articles and essays focused on the Shakespeare authorship question, showcasing Oxfordian perspectives and discussions surrounding Edward de Vere as the potential true author of Shakespeare's works.

composition of this Hamlet. Compared to them, I am but a mere drop in the ocean. Yet, since I have dared to present *Hamlet* on the stage for theatre enthusiasts, and for over a year, people from both urban and rural areas have enjoyed its essence—even across the border in neighboring Bangladesh—I cannot simply avoid saying a few words in my own way, however modest my efforts might be. And even if I attempt to shirk the task out of indolence, who could possibly escape the insistence of the editor? (195, translated)

Chakraborty also reminds us,

Recently, I came across a series titled *No Fear Shakespeare*<sup>75</sup>, which means ‘Don’t be afraid, Don’t be afraid,’ reassuring the reader while bringing Shakespeare’s works closer to them. I have read a Bengali translation of *Hamlet*. In my younger days, I used to read Jatindranath Sengupta’s poetic translations in *Shanibarar Chithi*<sup>76</sup> with great interest. I also had the opportunity to read many translations of Shakespeare’s plays published by *Basumati Sahitya Mandir*<sup>77</sup>. Unfortunately, I cannot recall the name of the translator right now. There is also a Bengali translation of *Hamlet* by Ajit Gangopadhyay, as well as one by the renowned Bangladeshi poet Shamsur Rahman. (196)

Indian academicians and scholars often engage in extensive discussions, attempting to understand or explain *Hamlet*. This is their primary task. However, it can be observed that instead of making an effort to understand the play on their own terms, they tend to focus more on what

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<sup>75</sup>*No Fear Shakespeare* is a series by SparkNotes that presents Shakespeare's plays alongside modern English translations. Each volume features the original text on one page and a contemporary interpretation on the opposite page, making Shakespeare's works more accessible for beginners and helping readers understand the plots, characters, and themes without struggling with Early Modern English.

<sup>76</sup>*Shanibarar Chithi* (The Saturday Letter) was a Bengali literary magazine published in Kolkata. It played a crucial role in the literary scene, featuring critiques and discussions, including notable contributions from poet Jibanananda Das, and influencing contemporary Bengali literature during its circulation.

<sup>77</sup>*Basumati Sahitya Mandir*, established in 1881 by Upendranath Mukhopadhyay, is a publishing house in Kolkata. It has produced influential literary works and magazines, contributing greatly to Bengali literature and culture, including the notable *Masik Basumati* magazine.

foreign critics have said about it, basing their analysis on those external interpretations. Just as we adapt foreign plays, the same adaptation occurs in the form of essays, articles, and discussions. In their own way, scholars like Sankha Ghosh have made deep attempts to understand Rabindranath Tagore, and Utpal Dutt has done so with Shakespeare. Similarly, there are only a few teachers or theorists in our theatre who engage in such profound and personal understanding.

Bibhas Chakraborty shares an anecdote in this essay. In August 2003, the editor of *Anya Theatre*<sup>78</sup> Sujit Mukhopadhyay, submitted a proposal to the Ministry of Culture of the Indian government, requesting permission to adapt a play. After the successful performances of *Hamlet* in 2011, Sujit discovered a document file of the proposed play *Hamlet*. According to the rules, the proposal had to include a summary of the play and a draft of the concept for the adaptation. Seeing the document in Sujit's hands, Bibhas Chattopadhyay became reminiscent. The director's note in the proposal read something like this when translated into Bengali: 'On the Bengali stage, we have seen adaptations of Sophocles, Ibsen, Chekhov, Pirandello, Arthur Miller, Brecht, and many other prominent foreign playwrights. However, when it comes to Shakespeare, no one has really taken such an initiative. Sambhu Mitra, Ajitesh Bandopadhyay, Kumar Roy, and Rudraprasad Sengupta—none of them have done this. Utpal Dutt was the only exception... The opportunity to show *Hamlet* was presented with an adaptation based on the British model, following the copybook format for stage presentations. We aimed to make *Hamlet* relevant to our time. The struggle of the Danish prince was not just about the old political system but also mirrored the contemporary social and political struggles, which could relate to any nation's internal conflicts today. (196-197, translated) Besides, Chattopadhyay has been drawn to Asit Basu's *Kolkatar Hamlet*<sup>79</sup>, Anjan Dutta's *Pati*

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<sup>78</sup>*Anya Theatre*, founded in 1985 by Bibhas Chakraborty, is a prominent group in Kolkata's theatre scene. It focuses on innovative productions, often adapting international works for Bengali audiences. Known for its commitment to experimental theatre, *Anya Theatre* has significantly contributed to the evolution of contemporary Bengali drama and cultural discourse.

<sup>79</sup>Asit Basu's *Kolkatar Hamlet*, which premiered in 1973, reinterprets Shakespeare's classic within a contemporary Bengali context. The play intertwines themes of political unrest and personal conflict, reflecting the socio-political landscape of 1970s India. It explores the struggles of youth amidst state repression, challenging traditional narratives through its innovative staging and character development.

*Premier Golpo*<sup>80</sup>, and Bratya Basu's *Hemlat*<sup>81</sup>. These works, with their distinct interpretations and approaches, have captivated him in different ways. In fact, Bibhas Chakraborty's production of *Hamlet* is remembered for its intellectual depth, emotional intensity, and cultural relevance. This production remains a significant milestone in Bengali theatre, exemplifying the fusion of tradition and modern essence in storytelling.

Kaushik Sen's essay "Macbeth Prasange" ('In the Context of Macbeth'), published in *Natyachinta* in 2014, offers an insightful exploration of Shakespeare's *Macbeth* through a contemporary lens. Kaushik Sen, a prominent Bengali theatre practitioner, is celebrated for his innovative direction and powerful performances. As the founder of the theatre group *Swapna Sandhani*<sup>82</sup>, he blends classical and contemporary themes, addressing social and political issues with artistic depth. Sen's production of *Macbeth*, translated by Ujjwal Chattopadhyay and staged by *Swapna Sandhani*, is a remarkable reinterpretation of Shakespeare's classic tragedy through the lens of contemporary Bengali theatre. Sen begins his essay by highlighting the successful production of *Macbeth*:

As soon as 2012 ended, as expected, several invitations for the play *Macbeth* started coming in. More significant than the number of invitations was the enthusiasm and warmth shown by those who invited us, people who genuinely appreciated and supported meaningful theater. Beyond financial considerations,

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<sup>80</sup>Anjan Dutta's *Pati Premier Golpo* is a contemporary Bengali musical that explores the complexities of love and relationships. Through engaging storytelling and melodious songs, the production delves into themes of marital dynamics, emotional struggles, and societal expectations, showcasing Dutta's signature blend of humor and poignancy, appealing to both traditional and modern audiences. The play reflects Dutta's artistic vision, emphasizing the nuances of human connections in today's world.

<sup>81</sup>Bratya Basu's *Hemlat: The Prince of Garanata*, adapted from Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, premiered in 2006. This contemporary reinterpretation relocates the narrative to Kolkata, focusing on local socio-political issues. Basu tones down the grandeur of the original, portraying Hemlat as a character grappling with corruption and familial conflict, ultimately leading to a poignant commentary on societal decay and hope for future generations. The play emphasizes personal struggles amidst a backdrop of urban decay and moral ambiguity.

<sup>82</sup>*Swapna Sandhani* is a renowned Bengali theatre group based in Kolkata, founded on May 29, 1992. The group is celebrated for its innovative productions and adaptations, often blending traditional themes with contemporary issues. Over the years, it has gained acclaim for its artistic contributions to Bengali theatre, fostering a vibrant cultural dialogue.

*Swapna Sandhani* aimed to stage plays in Kolkata in a way that would deeply satisfy the audience while maintaining the artistic standards of city theatre. Even if not entirely possible, the goal was to uphold similar standards in suburban theatres. Despite the actors and actresses giving their best efforts, various shortcomings often posed challenges during performances in suburban areas. We aimed to overcome these obstacles as much as possible, and in this effort, all the organizers were as attentive and supportive as they could be. (253, translated)

Kaushik Sen shares a personal experience about how he began to lose enthusiasm for playing the character of Macbeth. Sen expressed that while he feels highly enthusiastic about directing, he feels equally disinterested when it comes to acting. He had considered stepping away from the lead role of Macbeth but could not do so for two reasons: first, the limited number of capable actors, most of whom were already busy, and second, his own deep desire to portray the character of Macbeth, which ultimately drew him to take on the lead role alongside directing.

The translation done by Ujjwal Chattopadhyay remains faithful to the essence of Shakespeare's language, yet it skillfully adapts the text to resonate with Bengali sensibilities. The dialogues maintain the poetic depth of the original while offering an accessibility that draws in a diverse audience. This balance is crucial in making the play relevant to modern viewers while respecting its classical roots. Sen writes:

It is not difficult to understand that while translating the play, Ujjwal Chattopadhyay must have kept in mind the process of Macbeth's descent into thoughtlessness. During translation, some parts were omitted, while others were adapted. However, when a person completely surrenders to a state of thoughtlessness, the outcome becomes catastrophic. Ujjwal grasped this aspect brilliantly during the translation process, and as a result, it was embedded in the text. (256, translated)

The production of *Macbeth* by *Swapna Sandhani* has attracted attention from eminent personalities for various reasons. It has not only earned praise but has also been enriched with constructive criticism and suggestions. A particularly memorable moment for *Swapna Sandhani* was the sudden visit of Andrew Dickson to Kolkata. He is the theatre editor of *The Guardian* newspaper in England. Travelling around the world to observe various Shakespeare productions,

Dickson happened to see that performance during his visit to Kolkata. After watching the play, Dickson also engaged in discussions with directors, actors, and technicians from other Shakespearean productions staged in Kolkata. He sought to understand how the current generations of Bengali directors perceived Shakespeare in 2013. During the production process, with the extraordinary support of lighting designer Joy Sen, background director Goutam Ghosh, and stage designers Soumik and Piyali, numerous changes were made at different stages. In every line, they could witness multiple possibilities emerging. As a result, translations by stalwarts like Utpal Dutt, Jatindra Sen, Girish Ghosh, and more recently Swapanbaran Acharya have profoundly enriched their understanding. However, what has shaken them the most is time itself. This era has compelled *Swapna Sandhani* to move beyond staying faithful to Shakespeare and delve into the realm of political translation. Sen writes:

The political translation, tradaptation, and adaptation of Shakespeare’s plays have been a topic of ongoing work and debate for a long time. In this discussion, the importance of Shakespeare has never diminished. My country, my state, and my city’s history—along with the present—are all part of the narrative, and it is with these elements that our production seeks to engage. Through our work, we aim to explore and incorporate these layers, making Shakespeare’s plays relevant to our own socio-political context. (259, translated)

Kaushik Sen’s essay “Macbeth Prasange” is undoubtedly an insightful exploration of Shakespeare’s *Macbeth* through a contemporary lens. Sen delves into the psychological and moral dilemmas of the characters and highlights their relevance to modern socio-political contexts. His nuanced analysis underscores how ambition and power dynamics transcend time, resonating with contemporary audiences. The essay also reflects Sen’s deep understanding of theatricality, as he discusses staging challenges and the play’s performative elements. By connecting Shakespearean tragedy with present-day realities, Sen provides a thought-provoking perspective that enriches both academic and artistic interpretations of *Macbeth*.

Chandan Sen, in his essay “Caesar Prasange” (‘In the Context of Caesar’), has highlighted his experiences with the 2002 production of *Caesar* based on Shakespeare’s *Julius Caesar*. Chandan Sen’s 2002 production of *Caesar* marked a significant moment in Bengali theatre, staged

by the Kolkata-based theatre group *Natyanan*. This adaptation brought fresh life to Shakespeare's classic tragedy, blending the essence of Roman politics with contemporary Bengali societal dynamics. Sen, a noted theatre director and actor, emphasized the political undertones of the original text, making them relevant to the socio-political context of early 21st-century Bengal. Based on Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, *Caesar* was created with the collaboration of Peter Brook<sup>83</sup> and Craig Warner<sup>84</sup>. Sen writes:

Indrasish Lahiri liked my initial draft in Bengali. Later, I developed it with input from Peter Brook and Craig Warner. However, Indrasish (my teacher) was initially not fond of deviating even an inch from Shakespeare. He would say that not a single word of Shakespeare should be omitted and that no one has the right to tamper with Shakespeare's works, as it would be equivalent to altering divine creation. But when the production neared completion, he told me, "Alright, I understand your perspective and accept it." Craig Warner has a television series to his credit. While researching various adaptations of *Julius Caesar* and stories about the Roman Empire, I stumbled upon a television series titled *Julius Caesar*. Watching it left me astonished-it felt exactly like what I had envisioned. I tried hard to learn more about Peter Brook and Craig Warner, wanting to understand how authentic their work was. I discovered that they engage in extensive and rigorous research. (298, translated)

The production deviated from a traditional Shakespearean presentation, adopting an innovative approach in language, staging, and performance style. The dialogues were rendered in Bengali, making the text accessible and resonant with the local audience. Sen carefully retained

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<sup>83</sup>Peter Brook (1925-2022) was a renowned British theatre and film director, celebrated for his innovative productions and avant-garde style. His notable works include the groundbreaking play *Marat/Sade* and adaptations like *Lord of the Flies* and *King Lear*. Brook's influence extended globally, as he founded an international theatre company in France, emphasizing simplicity and cultural engagement.

<sup>84</sup>Craig Warner is a distinguished playwright and screenwriter known for his adaptations of classic works, including *The Last of the Hausmans* and *The Woman in White*. His writing often explores complex human emotions and relationships, contributing significantly to contemporary theatre.

the original's poetic intensity while infusing it with colloquial nuances, striking a balance between Shakespeare's universality and the regional cultural context.

Visually, the set design of *Caesar* was minimalist but symbolic, focusing on stark contrasts of light and shadow to underscore the play's themes of betrayal, ambition, and moral conflict. Regarding the costumes, Sen mentions-

I can say that I was quite concerned about one thing—the costumes. I was considering modern costumes, but as I observed the direction the play was taking, Shakespearean costumes seemed more appropriate. However, that was beyond our budget... As for the music, I arranged and composed it in my own way, making some adjustments. (300)

Sen's *Caesar* was more than a retelling of Shakespeare's play; it was a reflection on the nature of power, populism, and resistance, themes that resonated with the political turbulence of the time. The production's success lay in its ability to connect Shakespeare's timeless narrative with local realities, engaging audiences in a dialogue about history, morality, and governance. It remains a landmark in Bengali theater, showcasing the enduring relevance of Shakespeare in Indian cultural discourse.

The 450<sup>th</sup> anniversary issue of *Natyachinta*, an independent theatre magazine, was a landmark in the discourse of Shakespeare Studies in Bengal. Published in 2014 to commemorate Shakespeare's birth anniversary, this issue celebrated his enduring influence on Bengali theatre and culture. This special edition of *Natyachinta* brought together scholars, critics, and theatre practitioners to reflect on Shakespeare's works and their relevance in Bengal. It explored the history of Shakespearean adaptations in Bengali theatre, highlighting their cultural significance. The issue also addressed contemporary adaptations and reinterpretations of Shakespeare in Bengali theatre, illustrating how his plays continue to inspire modern directors and actors. It examined the intersection of Shakespeare's texts with Bengal's political movements, cultural shifts, and evolving theatrical practices, underscoring their continued relevance. As an independent theatre magazine, *Natyachinta* played a unique role in fostering intellectual engagement with Shakespeare's works, free from institutional or commercial constraints. This special issue not only enriched the ongoing discourse on Shakespeare but also inspired new conversations about his legacy in the Bengali theatrical tradition.

#### 4.6 Discussion on Shakespeare in *Epic Theatre Magazine*:

*Epic Theatre* was an influential independent theatre magazine founded by Utpal Dutt, a legendary figure in Indian theatre and cinema. Launched in 1950, the magazine served as a platform for promoting the ideas of Bertolt Brecht's Epic Theatre and Marxist aesthetics, which Dutt passionately advocated. It provided insightful critiques, articles, and translations of Brecht's works, aiming to revolutionize Indian theatre by merging political consciousness with artistic expression. Dutt envisioned *Epic Theatre* as a medium to educate audiences, emphasizing intellectual engagement over emotional immersion. The magazine also featured discussions on contemporary socio-political issues and their representation on stage, shaping a new narrative for theatre in India. Through this initiative, Dutt inspired a generation of theatre practitioners to use the stage as a tool for societal transformation. Despite its limited circulation, *Epic Theater* remains a testament to Dutt's unwavering commitment to progressive art and thought.

In this issue of *Epic Theatre* published in September 2011 and edited by Arup Mukhopadhyay, the researcher will discuss two essays. Both essays focus on the contemporary productions of Shakespeare's plays. Arup Mukhopadhyay, editor of *Epic Theatre*, is a passionate advocate for innovative storytelling. His editorial vision blends tradition with contemporary ideas. Through meticulous curation and dedication, he has transformed the magazine into a platform celebrating creative expression, thought-provoking narratives, and groundbreaking theatrical concepts. The first essay, Dipendu Chakraborty's "Raja Lear Amader Ki Dilo?" ('What Did King Lear Give Us?'), explores the enduring relevance of Shakespeare's tragedy *King Lear* in contemporary context. Published in 2011 in *Epic Theatre*, edited by Arup Mukhopadhyay, the essay delves into the universality of the play's themes and its resonance with Bengali socio-political and literary traditions. In this essay, Dipendu Chakraborty has shared his own observation on Suman Mukhopadhyay's production of *Raja Lear*, starring Soumitra Chatterjee, premiered in 2010. Chakraborty, at the outset, mentions-

Shakespeare, Soumitra Chatterjee, and Suman Mukhopadhyay- this confluence of three is not unnatural. Added to this is the heartfelt desire of Soumitra

Chatterjee, propagated by the media, to perform Lear. As a result, the small theatre Minerva became houseful day after day. I had hoped that Minerva Repertoire Theatre would invite me because I am not only a theatre critic but also taught English literature for forty-one years at the University of Calcutta and have taught *King Lear* for a decade. Finally, with the assistance of one of my former students (Sandipan Sen), I got the opportunity to buy a ticket and watch this much-discussed play. There is no doubt that the stage design, acting, flow, and direction of the play were all impressive. However, I had thought Suman would present *King Lear* to us in a new narrative. Although I liked it, my mind was not entirely satisfied. The realization I came back with was that what the director, trained in theatre arts in America, presented was not something entirely new. (65, translated)

This observation clearly hints at Chakraborty's stance on this production. He also puts his argument- 'In Shakespeare's own country, his plays have undergone countless analyses and examinations, yet no indication of such an approach is noticeable in this production. It seems Suman was somewhat hesitant about Shakespeare. Otherwise, he could have presented this play as a political drama' (65). In spite of all the constructive criticism that this production received, Suman Mukhopadhyay's *Raja Lear* is a Bengali theatrical adaptation of one of the greatest Shakespearean tragedies *King Lear*, is uniquely reimagined within an Indian cultural context. This production is celebrated for Mukhopadhyay's innovative direction. The production has not only deepened the appreciation of Shakespeare's work in Bengal but also demonstrated the adaptability of his themes across cultures and times. With its powerful performances and evocative storytelling, *Raja Lear* remains a significant contribution to contemporary Bengali theatre. In fine, this essay asserts that *King Lear* remains profoundly relevant to the Bengali cultural psyche.

The next article of this issue is Panchu Roy's essay "Ekhon Hamlet Keno?" ('Why Hamlet Now?'). This article also explores the enduring relevance of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* in the contemporary socio-political context. Panchu Roy is a dedicated theatre artist and activist, known for his contributions to Bengali theatre. His performances and direction reflected social awareness, blending creativity with activism. Panchu Roy humbly remarks:

What can a humble theatre practitioner like me say about the world's extraordinary playwright and one of his greatest plays? I can only muster the courage to say this much: *Hamlet* feels like a timelessly modern play. Based on Shakti Biswas's translation, Bibhas Chakraborty, the editor and director of the recent production of *Hamlet* by *Anya Theatre*, has been discussed in this context. (70, translated)

The production of *Hamlet* by Bibhas Chakraborty, based on the translation by Shakti Biswas, is a fascinating reinterpretation of Shakespeare's timeless tragedy through the lens of Bengali theatre. In an interview, Dr. Paromita Chakravarti and Sri Arunava Banerjee asked Bibhas Chakraborty about the production of *Hamlet*. Bibhas Chakraborty said,

I had initially taken Shamsur Rahman's translation of the text, but then I saw that I'd have to make so many changes that it could lead to problems. I have friends in Bangladeshi theatre, who might have taken offense to the changes I would be making. Rahman's text seemed too much like poetry. After this, I went on to use Shakti Biswas' translation of the play. Since this was a relatively lesser-known translation, I could make changes to it and edit it as I liked.

With Bibhas Chakraborty's take on *Hamlet*, let me add Panchu Roy's observation:

Once, I worked extensively on *Darpan*, a play based on *Hamlet*, with my friend from Bangladesh, Ali Zaker. However, the project was abandoned midway. Later, one of the finest poets of Bangladesh, Shamsur Rahman, inspired me. After making some progress with the adaptation and rewriting, I shared it with my friends at *Anya Theatre*. Unfortunately, that work, too, was left incomplete. Years later, quite recently, the desire to revisit the project resurfaced. But by then, I had lost Shamsur Rahman's translation. I had to rely on Shakti Biswas's translation, published by PLT alumni. As the work neared completion, I managed to recover Shamsur Rahman's book. Although the poet was no more by then, his work still contributed to the project. (70, translated)

As for how well the play turned out or how effective its staging was, that judgement is for the discerning audience to make. Throughout the process, Roy highlighted, ‘a few questions constantly circled in my mind:

Why *Hamlet* in this era? Should it have a specific interpretation or perspective? Is Shakespeare’s play just about storytelling, or does it also carry his profound observations and emotions about humanity and life?...I don’t know if these thoughts have been reflected in my work or, if they have, how effectively. The audience will decide that. For me, the effort itself is what matters most’. (70, translated)

However, this production stands out for its ability to connect with a diverse audience, from literature enthusiasts to those experiencing Shakespeare for the first time. By merging Biswas’s literary prowess with his own theatrical expertise, Bibhas Chakraborty creates a version of *Hamlet* that is both a tribute to Shakespeare and a distinctly Bengali cultural artifact. In fine, Panchu Roy’s essay “Ekhon Hamlet Keno?” underscores the timeless appeal and adaptability of *Hamlet*, advocating for its continued relevance in addressing the moral and existential crises of the modern era.

In this chapter, the essays discussed in two independent theatre magazines, *Natyachinta* and *Epic Theatre*, are quite unique in terms of Shakespearean studies in Bengal. Firstly, the two theatre magazines discussed here are independent, not institutionally affiliated, which makes them significant contributors to theatre studies in an unbiased way. The 450<sup>th</sup> anniversary issue of *Natyachinta* celebrated the contributions of legendary theatre practitioners like Bibhas Chakraborty, Kaushik Sen, and Chandan Sen, who had staged Shakespearean plays. This issue analyzed their innovative approaches to adapting Shakespeare for Bengali audiences, shedding light on the enduring relevance of his works in the regional cultural milieu. As a non-mainstream publication, *Epic Theatre* also provided a platform for alternative voices, free from commercial influences, to deeply engage with Shakespeare’s relevance in Bengali theatre and culture. Secondly, since these independent magazines are analyzed under the category of little magazines, they embody the essence of little magazines. They are anti-establishment, self-sufficient, and experimental. They welcome marginalized and alternative voices. In true little magazine tradition, both *Natyachinta* and *Epic Theatre* encouraged diverse voices—scholars, critics, and theatre

practitioners- allowing for alternative interpretations and experimental ideas. In this chapter, through these essays, new perspectives, contexts, and relevance of Shakespearean discussions in contemporary time are beautifully analyzed. While mainstream and theatre group-affiliated magazines discuss theatre with a focus on established norms, these independent theatre magazines, unbound by any allegiance, analyze theatre from their own unique perspectives. This is where the connection to Shakespeare becomes significant in these independent theatre magazines. Similar essays might be scattered across other self-sufficient theatre magazines, but due to the limited scope of this research, they could not be included. It is important to note that these independent theatre magazines are representative and exemplary manifestations of the essence of little magazines. By fostering thoughtful critique and engaging with Shakespeare's legacy in depth, both independent theatre magazines not only fulfilled the intellectual mandate of a little magazine but also enriched an alternative discourse of Shakespeare study in Bengal, emphasizing the importance of localized, grassroots cultural commentary.

## CONCLUSION

### (i) Valuation of the Study:

The intersection of Bengali little magazines and Shakespearean discourse in Bengal in the post-Independence era represents a unique confluence of global literary heritage and local cultural expression. In tracing the trajectory of Shakespearean discourse in Bengal through the Bengali little magazines, this research study has attempted to uncover a vibrant yet underexplored dialogue between Shakespeare and Bengali little magazines. This intersection offers a compelling vantage point from which to understand not only how Shakespeare has been received, interpreted, and transformed in Bengal, but also how little magazines have served as both platforms and catalysts for localized interpretations. The contribution of Bengali little magazines to Shakespeare study in Bengal is profound and multifaceted. The contribution of Bengali little magazines to the realm of non-mainstream Shakespeare discourse in Bengal is significant, as they provide a platform for alternative interpretations, critiques, and engagement with Shakespeare's works that challenge the dominant narratives perpetuated by mainstream literary and cultural institutions. Mainstream discourse often portrays Shakespeare as a universal and timeless figure whose works transcend historical and cultural contexts. However, little magazines in Bengal have consistently challenged this notion by situating Shakespeare within Bengal's socio-political and cultural frameworks. One of the ways in which little magazines challenge mainstream literary discourse is by questioning the hegemonic interpretations of Shakespeare that have been institutionalized by academic and cultural elites. By interrogating his legacy through vernacular, and avant-garde lenses, Kolkata's intellectuals reclaimed cultural agency, transforming a Eurocentric milestone into a manifesto for decolonial modernity. This research work thus situates Bengal's little magazines not just as literary artifacts, but as insurgent archives of global-local dialogue.

The engagement with Shakespeare in Bengal is neither homogeneous nor uncritical. From the colonial period, when Shakespeare was introduced as part of the British educational agenda, to post-independence and contemporary re-readings, Bengali readers have responded to the Bard with a mix of reverence, resistance, and reinvention. What sets the little magazine space apart from mainstream academic space is its capacity for marginal voices to challenge hegemonic readings

and propose alternative cultural frameworks. This research study reveals that the metropolitan response to Shakespeare in Kolkata was deeply intertwined with the city's elite cultural and educational institutions, such as Hindu College (now Presidency University), Calcutta University and Jadavpur University. These institutions, along with literary societies like the Shakespeare Society of Eastern India and academic journals, served as key spaces for fostering critical discourse on Shakespeare. The inclusion of Shakespeare's works in elite educational curricula and the proliferation of discussions in academic and literary circles underscore how familiarity with Shakespeare functioned as a marker of cultural capital. While the metropolitan elite's response was often marked by an intellectual and exclusionary approach, these magazines also provided a platform for subversive and alternative readings of Shakespeare. Kolkata's strong tradition of intellectual dissent and left-leaning ideologies created fertile ground for reinterpreting Shakespeare in ways that challenged rigid, canonical interpretations. Essays discussed in little magazines for this study mostly highlighted tensions between Anglophone elitism and vernacular modernity, revealing how metropolitan writers positioned themselves as mediators between global and local cultural currents.

Bengali little magazines have challenged the mainstream literary discourse by offering alternative narratives and critiques of Shakespeare's works, rooted in the socio-political and cultural realities of Bengal. They have provided unique perspectives on Shakespeare that reflect the diversity of Bengali society, including voices from metropolitan, suburban, and rural regions. In contemporary times, they have continued to engage with Shakespeare in ways that address the pressing issues of the day, ensuring that his works remain relevant and dynamic. Finally, independent theatre magazines, as a subset of little magazines, have played a crucial role in reimagining Shakespearean performance and interpretation in Bengal. Together, these publications have democratized Shakespeare studies in Bengal, making them more inclusive, diverse, and reflective of the pluralistic nature of Bengali culture. Through their commitment to intellectual and artistic freedom, Bengali little magazines have ensured that Shakespeare remains a living and evolving presence in the cultural life of Bengal.

The study of Shakespeare's presence in Bengali little magazines during post-independence West Bengal offers a critical lens to examine the cultural, political, and literary dynamics of a society in transition. As platforms for avant-garde and dissident voices, little magazines became

sites of intellectual resistance and creative experimentation in postcolonial Bengal. By analyzing how Shakespeare, a symbol of colonial education and Western cultural hegemony, was reinterpreted, localized, and critiqued in these publications, this research sheds light on the broader processes of decolonization and cultural redefinition in post-1947 India. Firstly, this research uncovers how Bengali intellectuals and writers negotiated Shakespeare's legacy to assert regional identity while dismantling colonial hierarchies. The Bengalization of his works—through translations, adaptations, and satires—reflects a conscious effort to reclaim cultural agency and subvert the Eurocentric canon. Second, this study highlights the role of little magazines as grassroots literary movements that democratized critical discourse, enabling marginalized voices to engage with Shakespeare in ways that challenged both colonial and nationalist orthodoxies. Academically, this research bridges gaps in postcolonial Shakespeare studies, which have largely focused on Anglophone adaptations, overlooking vernacular reinterpretations. It also contributes to the understudied history of Bengali little magazines, mapping their socio-literary impact during India's nation-building era. Moreover, it interrogates how global icons like Shakespeare are reshaped in localized contexts, offering insights into the interplay between globalization and cultural resistance. Ultimately, this thesis underscores the enduring relevance of Shakespeare as a contested site of cultural memory and the transformative power of regional print cultures in reimagining literary legacies.

## **(ii) Research Findings:**

The findings of the first chapter highlight several key themes. First, the metropolitan response to Shakespeare in Kolkata was deeply influenced by the city's colonial legacy and its status as a center of intellectual and cultural excellence. The elite's engagement with Shakespeare was shaped by a desire to assert their cultural capital and maintain social distinctions, as Bourdieu's concept of 'cultural capital' (1984) suggests. At the same time, the quatercentenary issues of Bengali little magazines reveal a counter-narrative that sought to challenge Eurocentric interpretations of Shakespeare and align his works with local cultural and political contexts. This duality reflects the broader tensions within postcolonial Bengali society, where the legacy of colonialism coexisted with efforts to forge a distinct cultural identity. Second, this chapter underscores the role of little magazines as sites of cultural resistance and intellectual

experimentation. Despite their metropolitan origins, these magazines often embraced the ethos of subversion, challenging dominant narratives and offering alternative perspectives. The quatercentenary issues of *Uttaran*, *Uttarsuri*, and *Parichay* exemplify this trend, as they sought to reinterpret Shakespeare in ways that resonated with indigenous experiences. This suggests that even within the elite cultural space of Kolkata, there was a conscious effort to move beyond Eurocentric frameworks and engage with Shakespeare in a manner that reflected the complexities of postcolonial identity. Third, the chapter reveals the interplay between global and local influences in shaping the metropolitan response to Shakespeare. It is also worth mentioning here that on the occasion of Shakespeare's quatercentenary in 1964, both little magazines and mainstream publications commemorated him, but their editorial stances were markedly different. Mainstream academic publications like Prof. Taraknath Sen's *Shakespeare Commemoration Volume* (1966) celebrated Shakespeare as more of a universal literary deity, whereas editors in little magazines not only worshipped him but also questioned his continued dominance. While the academic world reaffirmed Shakespeare as a global icon, little magazines treated the moment as an opportunity to destabilize that very image. While the quatercentenary celebrations were a global phenomenon, the Bengali little magazines localized these discussions by situating Shakespeare within the specific cultural and political context of Bengal. This localization was evident in the ways writers and critics drew parallels between Shakespeare's works and contemporary social issues, as well as in their efforts to align his plays with indigenous literary and theatrical traditions. This also underscores how little magazines functioned as 'counter-public spheres', challenging mainstream media's commodification of the quatercentenary. Unlike state-sponsored celebrations on Shakespeare's 400<sup>th</sup> birth anniversary, these Bengali little magazines fostered dissent, intellectual rigor, and interdisciplinary dialogue.

The findings in the second chapter underscore the universal appeal of Shakespeare while highlighting the unique regional and cultural inflections that shape his reception in Bengal's provincial spaces. The unique perspectives offered by little magazines on Shakespeare published in metropolitan spaces versus those from suburban or rural regions are particularly noteworthy. Metropolitan little magazines often reflect the views of urban, English-educated elites, who tend to approach Shakespeare from a Eurocentric perspective. In contrast, little magazines from suburban or rural regions often provide a more localized and vernacular engagement with

Shakespeare. One of the key findings is the democratization of Shakespearean discourse through little magazines. Traditionally, Shakespearean studies have been dominated by urban, elite, and English-speaking intellectual circles, often alienating non-metropolitan and non-English-speaking audiences. However, *Ispaater Chithi* and *Natun Disha* have played a pivotal role in breaking these linguistic and cultural barriers. By publishing articles, adaptations, and critiques in Bengali, these magazines have made Shakespeare accessible to a broader audience, including readers from rural and working-class backgrounds. This shift reflects a post-colonial reclamation of Shakespeare, where Bengali readers engage with his works on their own terms, free from the colonial hangover of viewing Shakespeare as a symbol of elite, Western culture. The analysis of *Ispaater Chithi* reveals how Shakespeare's works were contextualized within the socio-economic realities of Raniganj, a small industrial town with a strong working-class culture. The magazine's engagement with themes of labor, social justice, and class struggle demonstrates how Shakespeare's universal themes were adapted to resonate with local experiences. This finding challenges the notion that Shakespeare is solely the preserve of metropolitan elites, highlighting instead his relevance to marginalized communities. The magazine's focus on industrial life and social struggles also underscores the adaptability of Shakespeare's works to diverse cultural and historical contexts, reinforcing his timeless appeal. Similarly, the special issue of *Natun Disha* dedicated to Shakespeare provides a rich tapestry of regional perspectives on his works. The magazine's celebration of Shakespeare's 441st birth anniversary showcases the playwright's enduring popularity in Bengal, even in suburban areas like Dum Dum. The articles in this issue, ranging from adaptations to translations, reveal how Shakespeare's plays were reinterpreted to reflect local cultural and linguistic nuances. This finding emphasizes the fluidity of Shakespeare's works, which can be reimagined to suit the tastes and sensibilities of diverse audiences. It also highlights the role of little magazines in fostering a grassroots literary culture that celebrates Shakespeare as a global yet locally relevant figure. Another significant finding is the role of little magazines in challenging the elitism of mainstream literary discourse. Both *Ispaater Chithi* and *Natun Disha* serve as counter-narratives to the urban-centric literary culture of Kolkata, offering a platform for voices from the margins. By focusing on rural and suburban interpretations of Shakespeare, these magazines have expanded the scope of Shakespearean studies, making it more inclusive and representative of Bengal's diverse cultural landscape. This finding aligns with

the broader legacy of Bengali little magazines, which have historically championed experimental and non-mainstream literary voices.

In the third chapter, the study of *Ebong Mushayera*, *Alapparba*, and *Nandan*, three digital-era Bengali little magazines, reveals how Shakespeare's legacy has been reimagined through the interplay of technology, globalization, and regional identity. These platforms, operating in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, demonstrate a dynamic shift from their print predecessors by leveraging digital tools to democratize, localize, and politicize Shakespeare in ways that reflect contemporary Bengal's socio-cultural ethos. Little magazines, both in the pre-digital and digital eras, have consistently challenged mainstream literary narratives. However, their modes of operation, readership, and representation have undergone significant transformation in the digital age. In the pre-digital era, little magazines were primarily print-based, limited by demographic space, cost, and distribution. Their representation of Shakespeare often revolved around subversion—questioning his colonial imposition. Shakespeare's representation, in the changed environment, is no longer just a colonial figure to critique but also a malleable figure. They continue to resist mainstream commercialization, providing a space for marginalized voices and independent thought. The key findings of this chapter: digital localization, and participatory democratization. The magazines recontextualize Shakespeare using digital-native formats, blending his works with Bengali linguistic and cultural motifs. Digital platforms have democratized engagement with Shakespeare, enabling non-metropolitan voices to literary discourse. The 21<sup>st</sup>- century reincarnation of Bengali little magazines underscores the role of digital media in decolonizing cultural narratives. By merging Shakespeare with grassroots activism and vernacular digital practices, these platforms complicate the Eurocentrism of the 'global Shakespeare' paradigm. The digital little magazines extend the legacy of their 20<sup>th</sup>-century predecessors, proving that regional engagement with Shakespeare remains a potent tool for self-expression and resistance. In doing so, they affirm that Shakespeare's relevance in Bengal lies not in his universality but in his malleability—a figure endlessly reinvented to navigate the paradoxes of tradition and modernity, locality and globality.

The question of what makes an independent theatre magazine qualify as a little magazine is also important in understanding the broader cultural and intellectual significance of these publications. Independent theatre magazines often share the same ethos of intellectual and artistic freedom that characterizes little magazines. The examination of *Natyachinta* and *Epic Theatre*,

two independent theatre magazines, in the fourth chapter of the thesis, explores how Shakespeare's works have been reimagined as tools of artistic subversion, socio-political critique, and cultural innovation in postcolonial Bengal. These publications, operating outside mainstream institutional frameworks, demonstrate a radical departure from both colonial-era reverence and metropolitan elitism, positioning Shakespeare as a catalyst for experimental theatre and grassroots intellectual discourse. The independent ethos of these magazines underscores the role of regional theatre in decolonizing cultural narratives. Their work complicates the binary of 'global vs. local' by situating Shakespeare within hyper-specific Bengali contexts while engaging transnational discourses of resistance. By rejecting commercial and institutional pressures, *Natyachinta* and *Epic Theatre* exemplify how alternative media can preserve artistic autonomy and amplify counter-hegemonic voices. Their legacy lies in redefining Shakespearean performance as a site of radical inclusivity, where classical texts are not merely staged but reclaimed to interrogate power structures.

### **(iii) Limitations of the Study:**

While this research study on Shakespeare's representation in Bengali little magazines of post-independence West Bengal offers critical insights into cultural renegotiation, it is constrained by several limitations:

1. Benagli little magazines often exist in scattered, poorly preserved archives, with many issues lost or incomplete. Access to rare publications is limited to specific libraries or private collections in West Bengal, restricting the comprehensiveness of primary source analysis. Digitization efforts for these magazines remain minimal, exacerbating challenges in constructing a holistic narrative.
2. This study focuses on post-independence West Bengal, excluding pre-1947 colonial-era engagement with Shakespeare, which might have provided deeper context for continuity or rupture.
3. Similarly, this research study does not account for Shakespearean discourse in other Indian languages or regions, limiting comparative analysis of 'Bengalization' as a distinct phenomenon. The analysis relies heavily on Bengali texts, requiring nuanced

understanding of linguistic and cultural subtexts. Non-Bengali speaking scholars might face interpretive barriers.

4. The methodology of this study has a limitation. Since the articles in this thesis have not been analysed within a specific framework, this aspect also falls under its limitations. The thesis focuses on a chapter-wise analysis, emphasizing the unique responses of the articles. The articles have been allowed to ‘speak for themselves’.
5. I had planned to include a chapter based on feedback collected through a questionnaire from readers, editors and writers of little magazines about the discussion of Shakespeare in Bengali little magazines. However, not receiving any substantial feedback has also become a limitation of this study.

#### **(iv) Scope for Further Studies:**

The exploration of Shakespeare in Bengali little magazines during post-independence West Bengal opens avenues for interdisciplinary and transnational research. Future studies could expand this inquiry in the following directions: A comparative analysis of Shakespeare’s reception in little magazines across other Indian languages (e.g., Hindi, Malayalam, or Marathi) could reveal how regional identities shaped diverse “indigenized” responses to colonial cultural icons. This would contextualize Bengal’s unique “Bengalization” within a pan-Indian framework. Investigating pre-1947 Bengali little magazines could trace how Shakespeare’s portrayal evolved from colonial-era reverence to postcolonial reinterpretation. Digitizing fragmented little magazine archives and employing computational tools might uncover overlooked patterns in Shakespearean engagement, such as recurring themes, authors, or ideological trends. Examining 21st-century Bengali little magazines or digital platforms could assess whether post-independence modes of “Bengalization” persist or transform in neoliberal, globalized India. Researching the socio-economic dynamics of little magazine production—editorial policies, funding, censorship, or audience demographics—could illuminate how material conditions shaped Shakespeare’s politicized reinvention. By addressing these gaps, scholars can deepen our understanding of how regional print cultures negotiate global literary legacies, offering fresh insights into decolonization, cultural hybridity, and the enduring fluidity of Shakespeare’s afterlife.

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