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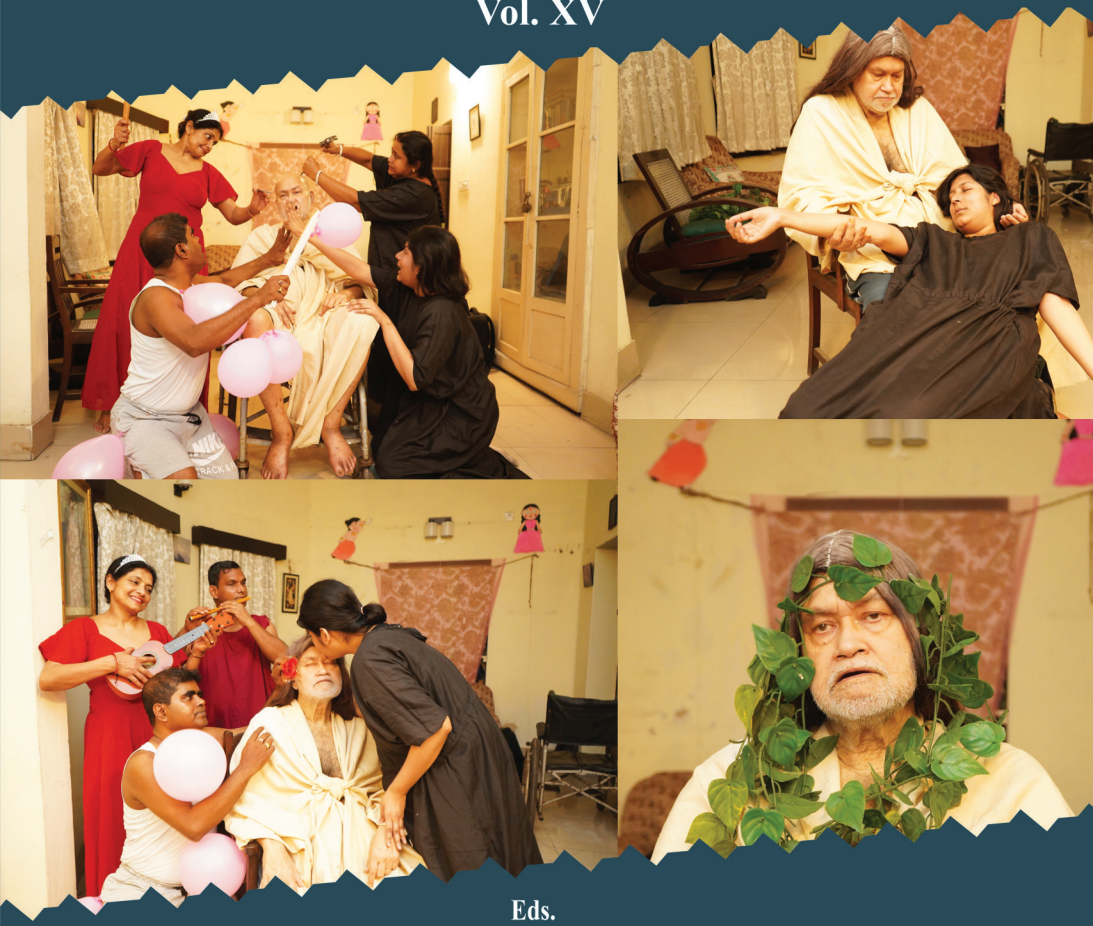

Eds.
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UGC CARE List of Journals (Arts & Humanities) - 2022

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Sr.No.	Journal Title	Publisher	ISSN	E-ISSN	Action
1	Aabru (print only)	Aabru	2456-253X	NA	View
2	Aadhunik Sahitya (print only)	Vishwa Hindi Sahitya Parishad	2277-7083	NA	View
3	Aalochan Drishti (print only)	Aalochan Drishti Prakashan	2455-4219	NA	Discontinued from Jan. 2022
4	Aashwast	Bharati Dalit Sahitya Academy Madhyapradesh	2456-8856	NA	View
5	Aavanam	Journal of the Tamil Nadu Archaeological Society	NA	NA	View
400	Theatre International	Avantgarde Press, Tagore-Gandhi Institute/Shakespeare Society	2278-2036	NA	Vie
401	Think India Journal	Vichar Nyas Foundation	0971-1260	NA	Discontinued from Jan. 2020
402	Thudi	Department of Malayalam, Kannur University	2320-8880	NA	View
403	Tifan (print only)	Tifan	2231-573X	NA	View
404	Trans- Kom: Journal of Translation and Technical Communication Research	Leona Van Vaerenbargh And Klaus Schubert	1867-4844	NA	View

and the local style of performance the themes of racism and Western Imperialism are brought out. Singha argues that such postcolonial performances have successfully transformed cannonical European texts into indigenous ones.

Haritha Fernandez & Dr Shibani Chakraverty Aich turns us back to *Tughlaq* but coupled with Camus' *Caligula*. What they attempt to do is to demonstrate that both plays at their heart are a product of Existentialist philosophy. Existentialism emphasizes the absurdity of human existence and its meaninglessness. Tughlaq wanted to create an Utopian kingdom with every step bringing him closer to God. But everything collapses and ultimately, he surrenders to bewilderness. Caligula wants to regain meaning in life, be godlike and attempts to control fate and human nature; naturally he fails. Fernandez and Aich conclude that both Tughlaq and Caligula finally realize the futility of all actions and lack of logic in this world.

Dr Ashutosh Singh gives an overview of the life and works of Safdar Hashmi, a prominent playwright who was murdered by a political party who opposed his views. He discusses in detail Hashmi's use of traditional Indian techniques in spreading his views and his use of songs and dance. The themes of various plays are discussed giving us a clear idea of Hashmi's ideology. As Singh rightly concludes, Hashmi was a trailblazer in his political ideology and innovative techniques.

Dr. Arnab Chatterje in his paper aims to investigate the introduction of Augusto Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed (TO) as part of the medical studies in India and address the implications of integrating medical issues related to theatre studies. He has explored that experiments with Theatre of the Oppressed have attempted to bridge the gap between the pedagogical aspects of medical science and the lived reality of the patients, doctors, would-be doctors and other health staff and open up a space for dialogic interaction moving away from a model of detached concentration on the signs and symptoms of diseases of the patients and the possible ways of medication.

Happy reading...

Amitava Roy, Subir Dhar,
Sheila T. Cavanagh, Papia Mitra

published twice, the first version in 1835-36, containing thirty six poems of 12,078 verses, and the last in 1849, containing fifty poems of 22,795 verses respectively. The other being, the *Kalevipoeg* of Estonia, written by Friederich Reinhold Kreutzwald in runo style. The final version that appeared in 1862 in Finland has 19,033 lines. The *Kalevipoeg* has not been based on oral singing tradition but draws upon prose narratives, the Estonian myth, legend and folktale. In India's case, there are folk epics told, sung, recited, narrated, dramatized in many places still today. The old oral traditions continue to flourish, people learn from oral traditions and tradition bearers.

Research in oral epics gained momentum in the West especially in the second half of the 20th century. C. M. Bowra, R. M. Dorson, Felix J. Oinas, Milman Parry, Albert B. Lord, Lauri Honko, Anneli Honko, John Miles Foley, and a horde of other scholars have contributed to research and inquiry into this field. Western research in folk/oral epics seems well satiated. But the Indian field of research is still fertile and much can be done by folklorists and scholars. The area covered by oral epics in India's context is massive and formidable in view of the presence of many unexplored wealth of oral epics in their miniature form. Best results can be achieved when such oral epics are properly collected, documented especially by folklorists first, and then they should be discussed at various levels, bringing out their social and cultural contexts, that is, to build the whole spectrum of performance and performative context, which may even extend the study involving different aspects of cultural convergences. Further, such epics as produced by different cultures be made part of the school, college and university curricula. That will prevent the cultural amnesia produced by the colonial Anglophone education system that undermined the native discourses fearing that the latter would challenge the hegemony of Western discourse and historiography. In short, we need to decolonize our education system especially in humanities and social sciences. The establishment of folklore departments in Indian universities should be a major step to preserve, promote and disseminate knowledge stored in folklore. The neglect of folklore as a discipline in India has almost become a pandemic phenomenon because of the Indian intellectual bias against this heritage bequeathed by our forefathers.

Now, to address the problem of Indian oral epics in diverse cultures and languages. This is undoubtedly very vast and amorphous area, and justice cannot be done in view of the vastness of the subcontinent and the wide array of the area covered. India is a vast multilingual and multicultural country with roughly 450 odd languages and dialects spoken by over 136 crores of people with distinctive cultural identities. The wide diversity of languages their speakers, however, can be statistically put as follows: the Indo-Aryan languages, spoken by 78.05% of Indian population, the Dravidian languages, spoken by 19.64% of Indian people, and the Tibeto-Burman languages, spoken by 2.31% of people in India (wikipedia). The twenty two languages included in the Eight Schedule of the Constitution of India do not represent the whole country. The people who speak the unrecognized languages range from a few lakhs to a few hundreds or even less at times. However, the Sahitya Akademi has recognized some languages without having been necessarily included in the Eight Schedule. Recognition by the Sahitya Akademi and inclusion in the Eight Schedule are two different categories. Languages that do not have their script have relatively shown their peculiar situations, but in some Northeastern states Roman script has been widely used, and reportedly Hindi and Assamese have been increasingly adopted by the non-native speakers of these languages for want of their script. Notably, Bodo people use Assamese script, similarly, in Arunachal Pradesh Hindi has recently become a fetish among the writers besides English, as for instance.

It will be difficult to say how many oral epics other than the best known, the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*, are still extant in India. We are not blind to the richness of our folklore in other native cultures in this country. The oral narratives such as folktales, myths, legends, ballads, folksongs, proverbs have been forms and genres of our priceless oral literature through which the age old distilled wisdom and cherished values that have evolved over the millennia a homogenous culture and identity are preserved and transmitted. Experts are of the opinion that over one hundred oral epics still exist in India's different languages and cultures. To name and analyze them all would be next to the impossible. The *Khamba-Thoibi* Manipuri folk epic has grown into a full epic after stages

of growth and development until finally it was during the time of King Chandrakirti (1850-1886) that it had its full flowering. Historical evidence shows that both the characters of the epic Khamba and Thoibi lived in Moirang during the time of King Eewang Puriklai Chingkhu Telheiba (1083-1138)[1]. Both happened to be of noble birth, Thoibi was the princess being the daughter of the Jubaraj Chingkhuba, the younger brother of the King, and Khamba the son of Puremba, a brave fugitive from a neighbouring Khuman Kingdom taking asylum in Moirang. He saved the king by having killed tigers. The great conflict in the epic arises out of Thoibi's firm will to marry Khamba, an obscure orphan much against her father's wish to give her in marriage to Nongban, a nobleman himself but a treacherous villain and adversary of Khamba every inch. Thoibi comes out openly protesting her father's plans to physically remove Khamba, and remains firm and unchanged in her love for Khamba until she is banished by her father. Khamba undergoes ordeals and trials and untold sufferings butin every contest of strength with Nongban he becomes victorious. Following Nongban's machinations he catches a monstrous bull, but falls a prey to the evil design of Chingkhuba and Nongban and is dragged along the market square at dead of night being tied to the foot of an elephant invisible by any soul to save him. He could have lost his life but for the divine intervention of God Thangjing who sends his wife Ayangleima in Thoibi's dream to tell her of Khamba's grave and dying condition at the hands of the adversaries. Like lightening Thoibi arrives on the spot, chases away the enemies and rescues Khamba's life. This precipitates her exile by her irate father, but she marries the person of her choice when his way is cleared after Nongban is killed in the last trial by a tiger but subsequently Khamba kills it. All through Thoibi's voice is heard as anti-patriarchal protest challenging patriarchal sexual politics that tries to silence and keep women in their space of femininity. The epic singers have valorized Thoibi's courage, steadfast will, morals, values, wit, humour and above all her beauty. Both Khamba and Thoibi are the icons of Meitei life and culture who set the highest principles of life and moral for others to emulate them in the society, and for generations they have been able to rivet the attention of bards and minstrels and public unswerving in equal measure. That is the enduring power of the epic to

keep going through generations cherishing the social, cultural values in addition to its other numerous qualities as oral expressive form of art and composite cultural traditions.

Developed in the 11th or 12th century AD centering round the immortal love story of characters of Khamba and Thoibi the *Khamba-Thoibi* Manipuri oral epic has been hailed as the national romantic epic of Manipur[2]. Khamba causes to be the centre of the epic by virtue of his extraordinary heroic qualities, and of being a devotee of truth, strong will and courage. He shows heroic exploits while defeating his mortal enemy, Nongban repeatedly in the wrestling match, Kangjei (Manipuri hockey) match, foot race, escapes the attempt on his life in the arrow shooting ritual, undergoes the ordeal when he is tied to the foot of an elephant and dragged in the market square demanding that he abandon the thought of marrying Thoibi to which he does not yield. He catches the ferocious bull of one hundred men's strength single handedly and without weapons. Next, the tiger that kills the villain Nongban is killed by him in a fight again single handedly. Finally, he marries the heroine Thoibi when no opposition comes his way. In all these actions the epic follows the plot contrived by God Thangjing of Moirang who is the Invisible Will. The epic has been performed by professional singers only under proper social and cultural conventions. Traditionally in the past the epic was sung by professional singers solo primarily to give recreation to an enthusiastic country folk group preferably in the evening after sunset for a session of three to four hours every time when the peasants were relieved of the paddy cultivation work for one or two months. The performance could last a maximum of forty five days at a stretch to finish the epic. However, there is no hard and fast rule as regards the choice of month. Customarily performance anywhere intentionally skips "Khamba Shamu Khongyetpa" (the torture of Khamba being tied to the foot of a moving elephant) and the last scene when Khamba and Thoibi die tragically for fear of the same misfortune befalling the locality or the family where performance is conducted. Except for these the remaining episodes are generally lavishly selected by people. In the Chakpa[3] (original Meiteis) communities the epic is sung on other occasions related to death. In the 19th century during the time of King Chandrakirti the epic attained its present size through the tireless

efforts of royal pena singers, the chief being one Chanambam Bapu Hanjaba. Pena[4] is an ancient musical instrument of the Meiteis to the accompaniment of which the epic has been sung and narrated, although percussion has also been used in another style of performance called Khongjom Parba, originally sung by one Dhobi Leinou in praise of the fallen Meitei heroes in the battle of Khongjom[5], 1891 following which Manipur lost its independence to the British. A notable feature of the *Khamba-Thoibi* appeared in the 20th century when a Manipuri poet, Hijam Anganghal Singh left the written version before his death in 1942, a verbatim reproduction of the same song sung by his guru, royal pena singer, Chunkham Manik Singh every Sunday. Thetask took him one and a half years. By the time he died prematurely he had finished the work which was posthumously published by his son in 1946 under the name, *Khamba Thoibi Sheireng* (the poetry of Khamba Thoibi), a formidable work, containing 34,236 verses in 43 cantos longer than the *Ramayana* (24,000 verses), and the two Greek epics the *Iliad* (12,000 verse) and the *Odyssey* (12,109 verses) put together. This is a stupendous task on the part of poet Anganghal, and the contribution made by him to the Manipuri Meitei identity, culture and history and to Manipuri literature is priceless. When modern Manipuri literature was just born barely one or two decades ago Anganghal's work was a turning point to heighten the spirit of Manipuri renaissance to its zenith. Today, the *Khamba-Thoibi* folk epic of Manipur is the immense storehouse of Manipuri culture, history, folklore, legends, folk customs, traditions, festivals, performing folk arts and literature. It has given expression to the ethos of Manipuri culture, identity and consciousness. The epic is able to draw a line of demarcation between the indigenous culture and the hybrid culture a result of Hindu cultural colonization and historiography that maligned our true self for more than two centuries.Truly speaking, in the entire Northeast there is no oral epic other than the Manipuri *Khamba-Thoibi* which is to be treated on a par with world folk epics.

In the remaining part of the paper I shall make a survey of the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* traditions in the Northeastern region. By the by, how the indigenized and appropriated versions of the Sanskrit epics serve different purposes in a radical way in Northeast is provocative.

The state of Assam had the earliest contact with Hinduism from the 13th century. Among the Assamese Hindus and other tribal communities such as the Rabhas, the Deori, the Hajong, the Bodo, the Dimasa, the Karbi, the Missings, the Tiwas, the Lalungs, who embraced Hinduism partially in the 17th and the 18th centuries the *Ramayana* has dug deep furrows in all walks of life, the social, cultural beliefs, practices, customs, religious functions, oral traditions, performing arts and literature. The epic "contributes the major share to the stock of Assamese language and literature, religion, social rites and observances, culture and festivals of the greater Assamese society" (Biswas 1). As early as the 13th and the 14th centuries the *Ramayana* translation into Assamese verse was done by poets like Sankardeva and his predecessors. Madhva Kandali translated the whole of the *Ramayana* into Assamese verse in the 14th century charged with high poetic flavour. The remarkable influence of the two epics in the early Assamese literature is that they have impinged on it so much so that it is "nothing but the history of the Assamese renderings of the epics and the Puranas into popular verse and … prose" (*ibid.*). Singing the songs from the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* is very common among various communities in Assam. The Karbi *Ramayana* known as *Sabin Alun*, the dramatic performance of the two epics among the Rabha and the Bodo communities are examples of the development of local variants of the Sanskrit epics, which on research level will help in discovering oikotypes of the original texts in Northeast. The importance of this study in folklore research is that when transcultural transmission of the epics takes place how they get assimilated into the local environment can be demonstrated. The question is again not only how they take root, thrive and are accepted in totally new cultural contours, but also how they are able to shape and influence the minds and psychology of the indigenous people of the new place. Alongside the indigenous folklore and oral traditions of Assam there are many ballads, tales, folksongs, myths, proverbs, riddles that have sprung from this confluence of cultures. Assamese life, society and a number of functions and activities are so much remoulded by these epic traditions. The *Ramayana* is very explicit "in their social customs, cultural performances, literary activities" (Purkayastha 2). Among the Rabha community it is believed that Dasaratha

was the follower of sage Rabha. The *Ramayana* characters appear in the Rabha folksongs, mantras and beliefs. All over Assam the marriage songs are sung in which the bride and bridegroom are likened to Sita and Rama, and the names of Ayodhya and Mithila are mythicized that the local belief is that the bride is brought to Rama's place from Mithila. The song connected with the ritual bathing of the bride and the bridegroom is also sung in the Hindu fashion. Assamese folk songs are replete with the banishment of Rama and Sita, the cruelty of Kaikeyi, the sorrows of Dasaratha, the abduction of Sita, and so on. Assamese Durga puja is a manifestation of the many devotional songs sung in praise of Goddess Durga and Rama. The *Ramayana* is turned into Assamese verse. No community in Assam is left untouched by the *Ramayana* tradition. Even the Tai Ahoms have found the impact of the *Ramayana* on their life and culture since long past. *Ojapali* is an art form that is performed by reciting the epic among the Karbi people. Singing, recitation, dramatization of various parts of the *Ramayana* have gained wide currency in Assam. Images of Rama, Sita, Lakshman, Hanuman are found in sculpture, wood-carving, stone carvings, paintings, in clay models in some temples and localities to commemorate the *Ramayana* tradition. In this context, the lamentation of Peter J. Claus in his study of Indian folk epics in *Indian Folklore 1* over lack of focus in research on the Sanskrit epics' "myriad of folk versions of these epics" (Claus 16) in different cultural settings suggests his shortsightedness of phenomenal growth of many folk traditions in Northeast out of the two Sanskrit epics.

About the *Ramayana* tradition in other Northeastern states we can make a mention that in Tripura it is widely believed that PuruSen, the 23rd descendent of Chandra Dynasty "went to Ayodhya to attend the sacrifice performed by King Dasaratha" where he "was duly honoured by king Dasaratha" (Dey 92). In the 19th century Shivesha Dwija composed a Tripura version of *Adhyatma Ramayana* in Sanskrit under the patronage of King Ramaganga Manikya (1814-1825). The publication of the book led to the preaching of Hinduism to the subjects. Very limited information is available on how the *Ramayana* story is treated in Tripura, but on a number of occasions like the Shradha (death) ceremony episodes from the epic have been sung. On some occasions villagers sing folk poetry

based on *Rama Panchalis* at night. In Mizoram too, the *Ramayana* has found a place in the Mizo society in the form of a folktale where a few characters from the epic have been named and all of them except for Rama and Sita have been rechristened, 'Khena' for Lakhsman, 'Hawlawman' for Hanuman, 'Lusariha' for Ravana, etc. Prior to the advent of Christianity in the state, the Mizo priests used the names of Khena and Rama in the invocation related to the ritual of divination. In Meghalaya the elderly people of the Khasi community are known to have narrated the story of the *Ramayana* while sitting around the hearth. In the Jaintia community when twin boys are born the names of Ram and Lakhon are given. Some believe that the Ri-War areas bordering Bangladesh have a lot of good oranges "because of Rama who had brought them from Lanka and dropped in those areas" (Lamare 79). Jeeban Roy Mairom adapted the epic in the form of a booklet in Khasi in 1900. Among the Garos the *Ramayana* is found in three forms - as a tale in oral version, as a short story in a small volume called *Itihasni Kattarang*, and in a translated version done by Redin Momin published posthumously in 1992.

Here I shall not turn a blind eye to the many-sided role of the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* in Manipuri society. The advent of Hinduism in Manipur occurred as an act of cultural aggression in the 18th century when Santidas Goswami, a proselytizing Hindu missionary from Silhet appeared in the royal house of King Pamheiba (1709-1748) in 1716. Soon after his arrival Santidas converted the King to Ramandi faith, and made him renounce his native faith in Sanamahi in public. Through intimidation and coercive means Santidas and Pamheiba, now rechristened Maharaj Garibanwaj, made a successful campaign to convert the Meitei populace to Hinduism. Those who resisted the move were suppressed by the iron hand of the king. The apostate King and Santidas showed no mercy to anybody who was opposed to the tirade against the native religion, they went on the rampage demolishing the shrines of Meitei gods and goddesses known as Umanglais[6] including the temple of God Sanamahi. Not satisfied with this they outrageously burnt as many as 120 old manuscripts, called Meitei Puyas, the archaeology of knowledge on a number of subjects, arts, science, culture, philosophy, including

myths, legends, rituals, customs, astrology, astronomy, architecture, warfare, crafts, and so on. At the instance of the King Santidas wrote a book called *Vijay Panchali* that falsified the Meitei myth, racial history, royal genealogy according to which the Meiteis were descendents of the Mahabharata Arjun who married a fictitious princess Chitrangada, daughter of Manipuri king Chitrabhanu, the great grandson of Ananta, all importations from the Hindu myths and Sastras. Arjuna's son Babrubahana ruled Manipur, and all later kings were his descendants. The Meiteis slept over two hundred years like Lotus Eaters oblivious to their true identity until the 1960s and 1970s when a new wave of renaissance reached its climax awakening them to their true identity, history and culture.

Close on the heel of the changes, one Kshema Singh Moiramba composed a Manipuri *Ramayana* at the behest of King Garibaniwas. The book ushered in the growth of many Rama mandirs in Imphal, thereby the number of Rama worshippers multiplied. Now stories from the *Ramayana* were narrated at religious gatherings, then extensively indomestic ceremonies, birth, marriage, shradha, etc. The devastating changes could be traced down to the successive rulers of Manipur. The success of Hinduism in Manipur was due to the infusion of it in the religious activities and festivals performed in the Meitei society. Largescale telling of the epic stories began during the time of King Bhagyachandra (1759-1761; 1763-1798), the grandson of King Garibanwaj. He was a devotee of Krishna and not Rama. It was he who brought one epic narrator called Jiuram Sharma from Tekhao (Assam) who started to narrate the two epics, the narrative of which has ever been known as *Wari Leeba* (story telling). That was indeed the epoch making moment. Slowly that narrative gained momentum as more and more people professed Hinduism. Now all year round Hindu festivals, religious songs sung by sponsored artistes popularized Hinduism with the names of Rama, Sita, Krishna, Radha, Gouranga Nityananda. Birth, marriage, death had become platforms where such songs and stories were ritualistically sung and narrated. The implication was far reaching that soon the epics could quicken Indianization of Manipur people much more rapidly than ever before. The stories from the epics have been once more home spun in the hands of the individual narrators. Characters like Bhima, Arjuna, Yudhistira, Parikshit, Hanuman,

Sita are dressed in Manipuri customs and traditions for fuller participation of the public. The narrators of the stories know how to captivate the audience. People enjoy such fanciful stories that Hanuman came to Manipur searching for the herb to save the life of Lakshman killed in battle and unable to identify the herb he took the whole hill to Lanka. Many such stories were made by Wari Liba Ojas (narrators) to forge imaginative connections between Manipur and the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*. Such humorous situations in the long run can become agencies of make-believe.

Thus, the net effect of the influx of the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* on the people of Northeast is not simply to leave a legacy of Hinduism over the years through three stages, "Adopt," "Adapt," and "Adeft," but, in the main, to construct pan Indianism and instill a feeling of national integration and unity in diversity, without doubt. There is therefore colonial politics through religion that is to assert cultural hegemony until the native cultural traditions were relegated to the margin. The social, cultural and religious catalytic function of these two epics in the region to bring the people within the fold of Hinduism cannot be exaggerated. However, the dividing line between the conformist and the non-conformist becomes more and more obvious.

Before I conclude my discussion on oral epics of India, I honestly feel that we cannot do justice to one hundred odd oral epics of India within the length of a paper. Many questions cannot be answered, and many more problems are to be rummaged around uncritically against will. The problem is which one is to be touched upon and which one is to be left out without any bias whatsoever. How many oral epics from the states of Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, from the Ladakh region, from Rajasthan, Punjab, Hariyana, Maharastra, Gujarat in many unrecognized languages are yet to be in proper limelight is a difficult question without proper answer. The Tulu *Siri* epic has 15,683 lines; the *Koti and Chennaya* containing 7,000 lines belongs to the untouchable sweeper caste known as Parva caste and is about the twin brothers, Koti and Chennaya, who have a series of violent adventures in one of which they kill the wily minister of the king, who brings them up. In future fights they kill a boar, but after their death in another battle

their spirits become protectors of the land waiting for the time to come back to their devotees. The *Medeswara* epic shows the miracles performed by the hero by which he converts people to his faith in seven adventure cycles. The Telegu epic *Katamaraju*, in the form of loosely connected ballads is devoted to the great battle heroes sung by the outcaste people on the banks of the river Palar. Similarly we have oral epics of Bhospuri, Kalahandi, Ladakh, war ballads dedicated to the iconic heroes, Maharana Pratap and Satrapati Shivaji. Many of these are short and episodic, and can be rendered orally in a short time possible, twenty/thirty minutes. But in the hands of skilled performers they can be made longer. For oral epics the question of time and space is purely the prerogative of the singer performer or narrator.

The real academic flavour of epic studies can be given by performance context analysis. Because in performance the intricate dynamics of social and cultural traditions are involved such as, the performer's particularities, social standing, caste, gender, the audience, specific time of performance, occasions, the performative events, the performer-audience relation, techniques employed by the performer while in performance, his speech, song, movements, dance, high pitch, low pitch, kinesis, multiforms, and so on. At the moment what we need to do in regard to the oral epics in India's languages would be collection, proper field work, documentation, storage, and then to bring them to appropriate platforms for academic discussions. Such epics should be included in the course contents of our school, college and university curricula. Each person in India, who values folklore as the pulse of people and loves folklore as the priceless heritage, has the responsibility to safeguard our ancestral property, protect it, promote it and bring it to the fore as the frontline pillars of our cultural mainstay connecting us with our roots and past.

Notes and References

1. Eewang Puriklai Chingkhu Telheiba (1083-1138) was the 32nd king of Moirang (ref. Ngaingoimacha, Nodiya, ed. *Moirang Ningthourol* (Chronology of Moirang). Moirang: Melei Press, 2009.). Moirang was an ancient independent princely state that came under the yoke of Kanglei King Ningthoukhomba who ruled in Kangleipak from 1432-1467

(ref. *Cheitharol Kumbaba* edited by Singh, L. Ibungohal and Ningthoukhongjam Khelchandra Singh. Imphal: Manipuri Sahitya Parishad, 1967, 1989: 19).

2. Suniti Kumar Chatterji called the *Khamba-Thoibi* the "National Romantic Legend of Manipur" (ref. Chatterji, Suniti Kumar. *Kirata-Jana-Krti*. Calcutta: The Asiatic Society, 1951, 1974: 159.). But it is more than a legend, and by all standards it is a folk epic, and one of the longest of the world folk epics with 34,256 verses and 43 cantos in its written version.

3. Chakpa communities in Manipur were the original people of Manipur least affected by Hinduism. Today, they have become Scheduled Caste, but a sizable number of their population adopt Christianity and Hinduism.

4. Pena is the ancient musical instrument of the Meiteis of Manipur. It is mythologically connected with the Creation Myth of the Meiteis. The *Khamba-Thoibi* folk epic has been sung to the accompaniment of pena but from what time is still a matter of conjecture with no accurate information.

5. The Battle of Khongjom was the Anglo-Manipuri War fought in April 1891 when the British army invaded Manipur from the Burmese (Myanmar) side. The fight at Khongjom was the most bloody in which all the heroes of Kangleipak/Manipur had laid down their lives to save the sovereignty of the independent kingdom. Every year on 23 April the Khongjom Day is observed.

6. Umanglais (forestgods/goddesses) are the shrines dedicated to the Meitei pantheon and the very name suggests that these shrines are in wooded localities in Meitei inhabited areas of Manipur. Besides ritual and religious matters they have immense ecological significance, that the conservation of trees in the Meitei community was a religious necessity from ancient times.

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Bengali Shakespeares: The Dialectics of Translation

Tapu Biswas

Shakespeare's influence on Bengali drama may perhaps be best understood by appreciating the fact that Shakespeare was not introduced to us Bengalis and Indians as being a professional contractual playwright who could not repress his poetic genius and was later glorified into a great poet who just happened to have written plays. It is common knowledge that in contrast to his longer poems, which went into anything up to twelve editions before the posthumous publication of the First Folio, Shakespeare never published his plays as his literary corpus, and that he may have possibly considered his theatrical involvement as disreputable. It would not be an exaggeration to say that in his time Shakespeare was considered a poet by virtue of his sonnets and long poems only, which, apparently, had nothing to do with what he produced as a part of a contract with his theatrical company. In our time, however, few read his epyllions for pleasure while masses crowd the auditoria to watch his plays.

During the Restoration and throughout the eighteenth century, Shakespeare was good material for the theatre; and ostensibly, no one really cared much for the literary texture of his plays. Indeed, 'improvements' on Shakespeare was actually the currency of the day. Dryden, Davenant, Tate, down to Garrick— all 'improved' on the Shakespearean text for the benefit of their audience. The idea that Shakespeare was a great 'Poet' in his plays was largely a contribution of the nineteenth century English ethos, which, plunged in its Romantic ennui, had lost the Elizabethan *joie de vie*. All the great Romantics— Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley, Byron, and Keats — had tried their hand at drama, producing unplayable verbiage that went by the name of 'verse drama.' In the late nineteenth century, Tennyson and Browning were no exception; Hardy's un-stageworthy *The Dynasts* (with its thirty-one Acts

and a hundred-and-nineteen Scenes) would be an apposite instance of a 'drama' divorced from the theatre. Most importantly, the Elizabethan playhouse, where Shakespeare thrived, had disappeared, and together with it, much of the life of Shakespearean drama too.

All this has contributed to our understanding of Shakespeare here in Bengal. We have inherited not the active Elizabethan but the pensive Romantic heritage; and we have reduced Shakespeare to classroom exercises. This happened because Bengal was trained in English language and literature as part of the process of intellectual colonization while Shakespeare was being reduced to a poet in England. Through a pedagogic process, we inevitably absorbed Shakespeare the 'poet' instead of Shakespeare the dramatist. For us, he was "ইংলণ্ডীয় মহাকবি সেক্সপীয়র সাহেব" (Englandio mahakabi Shakespeare sahib) or 'the supreme poet' (*Sangbad Prabhakar*, 26.2.1853). Forty years later Girish Chandra Ghosh, in his translation of *Macbeth* for his stage production, would still mention him as মহাকবি সেক্ষপীয়র (Mahakabi *Sekhapeare*).

By the middle of the nineteenth century an English-educated populace had already sprung up in the Bengal scene. This had begun with the spread of English education in Bengal at the ground level. Teachers early in the nineteenth century had sense enough to help their students appreciate Shakespeare through acting. Scenes from Shakespeare, or whole plays (possibly edited) were acted by students. Even on the English stage in Calcutta, the stupendous acting of Baishnabcharan Adhya as Othello (Sans Souci Theatre, 1849) has become part of Bengal theatre history now.

The thorough training in English literature would in the near future make possible the creation of Nimchand, a character in Dinabandhu Mitra's *Sadhabar Ekadasi* who has defied time to remain alive even in late twentieth century Bengali theatre. The character of Nimchand was crafted for a highly sophisticated audience, since the multiple references to Shakespearean and other English classic texts would have been meaningless without it.

The presence of such a public and the influence of its taste on the rest of the theatregoers encouraged translations of Shakespeare in Bengal from a very early stage. Not all of them were staged; nor were all meant to be. They were often translated as pieces of literature, and encouraged

the idea that actability had little to do with the appreciation of the spirit of the Shakespearean text.

But in the theatre we never bother about the playwright's mental state or makeup when he wrote his dialogues, because he is constantly changing personalities. He is never the same man. He always appears to us as a series of 'someone else'. Therefore, orthodox literary considerations such as the quality of Shakespeare's imagination, or his linguistic habits etc. can never be a matter of theatrical concern. As for Shakespeare the individual, it suffices to mention that we still do not know who Shakespeare actually was. Research has thrown doubt on the material existence of a Bard of Avon, and there has been a deal of literary squabbling over the claim that Bacon wrote the plays – since his pen so frequently foreshadows Shakespearean expressions. There are other claimants too.

From 1805 to 1852, we have only one translation of a Shakespeare play in Bengali, and that too by an Englishman, *The Tempest* by Claude Monckton. But, between 1853 and 1905, there were at least twenty-five renderings: some of them adaptations; others translation:

1. *The Merchant of Venice*
   a. *Bhanumati Chittabilash* (1853), Hara Chandra Ghosh
   b. *Sulata Natak* (1877), Peary Lal Mukherjee
2. *Romeo and Juliet*
   a. *Charumukh Chittahara* (1864), Hara Chandra Ghosh
   b. *Ajaysingha Bilasbati* (1878) Jogendranath Das Ghosh
   c. *Romeo Juliet* (1895) Hemchandra Bandyopadhyay
3. *The Tempest*
   a. *Nalini Basanta* (1868) Hemchandra Bandyopadhyay
   b. *Prakriti Natak* (1882), Charuchandra Mukhopadhyay
4. *Cymbeline*
   a. *Sushila Birsingha Natak* (1868), Satyendranath Tagore
   b. *Kusum Kumari* (1868), Chandrakali Ghosh

5. *The Comedy of Errors*
   a. *Bhrantibilas* (1870), Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar
   b. *Bhrama Kautuk Natak* (1873), Beni Madhav Ghosh
6. *Twelfth Night*
   a. *Sushila Chandraketu* (1872), Kanti Chadra Bandyopadhyay
7. *Hamlet*
   a. *Amarsingha* (1874), Pramatha Nath Basu
   b. *Hamlet* (1894), Chandi Prakash Ghosh
   c. *Hariraj* (1896), Nagendra Nath Chowdhury
8. *Macbeth*
   a. *Rudrapal Natak* (1874), Haralal Roy (adaptation, Great National Theatre 1874)
   b. *Karnabir* (1885), Nagendranath Basu
   c. *Bhramar* (1894), Dhirenddranath Paul
   d. *Macbeth* (1893) Girish Chandra Ghosh
9. *Othello*
   a. *Bhimsingha* (1875), Tarini Charan Paul
   b. *Surasundari* (1891), Surendranath Bhattacharya
   c. *Rudrasen* (1905), Nanilal Bandyopadhyay
10. *A Midsummer Night's Dream*
    a. *Sarat Shashi Natak* (1882), Nilratan Mukhopadhyay
    b. *Jahanara* (1903), Satish Chandra Chatterjee
11. *As You Like It*
    a. *Ananga Rangini* (1897), Annada Prasad Basu
12. *King Lear*
    a. *King Lear* (1902), Jatindranath Ghosh

Of these, only seven had come out between 1853 and 1872—the two decades preceding the establishment of the (reputedly first) Bengali Public Stage. In the next thirty years, the figure rose to eighteen. This suggests that the translators had hopes of having Shakespeare staged; although

such dreams did not always come true. Significantly, those that were staged were adaptations rather than translations. Only *Hamlet, Macbeth,* and *Romeo and Juliet*— all translated at the turn of the century— were translations in any real sense of the term. The first translation to be staged failed miserably on the stage.

A major problem with all these translations was that the authors had been bred on the assumption that Shakespeare was primarily a great poet and only incidentally a *dramatist* — not a script-writer under contract to write for the stage. Yet, Shakespeare was perhaps the greatest professional writer of all time. He wrote to attract and to engage his audience with highly theatrical artifices. He exploited contemporary stage conventions and audience demands to create extraordinarily effective theatrical plays. But the translators (and indeed the contemporary English literati) hardly ever took these factors into account. There were two ways of doing Shakespeare into Bengali: either by adapting him to a garbled pseudo-historical Indian context (the only thing that worked for the stage); the other was to 'do him in' by making a literal translation of his dialogues. Certainly the latter has done the greater harm to the propagation of Shakespeare in Bengal.

Dramatic language is first of all a highly stylised language that, to the mind of the audience, faithfully reflects the rhythms of human speech; and Shakespeare was a master of this language. However, much he might have used unfamiliar expressions and rhetorical artifices, his language was still recognised by his audience as representing actual speech — a medium capable of expressing even the unspoken intent of the speaker. Such a language can be created by a genius writing for his own audience in his native tongue; but it is virtually impossible to transmute it into a different language with a different set of speech - and thought - habits; practically impossible in an Anglicized culture lacking Anglicized theatrical conventions; and especially so in a language that had to still adapt itself to a foreign theatrical mode.

This was a major problem with translating Shakespeare into Bengali. The urban theatre itself was a comparatively recent cultural adjunct, and the stage as well as the playwrights had yet to discover a stable linguistic convention for it: one versatile enough to represent the thought habits of the different classes of the populace, and yet homogenous enough to belong rightfully to a single play. The Porter in *Macbeth* could glibly

speak of professional sinners dancing the primrose way to the everlasting bonfire, and the First Murderer could poetise on the onset of the evening: but Dinabandhu Mitra, writing under the influence of Shakespeare, still could not harmonize the two levels of language belonging to the Bengali upper and lower classes in his epochal *Nildarpan*.

This is only to stress the point that Shakespeare had a language ready at hand that could, in the theatre, still override such dualities, the Bengali theatre lacked it. Girish Chandra took a significant step towards establishing such a language with his *gairish chhanda*, which was derived from Michael Madhusudan's *amitrakshar chhanda*, but was more flexible than Michael's. Technically, it was eminently stageworthy because it allowed the actor to phase out his dialogue into meaningful units and also have the pauses necessary for breathing; but it was inadequate for rendering the often complicated thought processes of the Shakespearean characters.

Bengal had to wait for Tagore to find a stage language both poetic and witty with the ability to express and suggest complex thought-processes: in short, a language capable of transmuting Shakespeare into Bengali. Unfortunately, however, Tagore never translated Shakespeare after his juvenile translation of *Macbeth* (of which only the Witch Scenes survive). But his original plays *Rudrachanda*, *Prakritir Pratishodh, Raja O Rani*, and *Bisharjan* evince considerable influence of Shakespeare. It is not possible to provide detailed analyses here, but it is hard to dispute the fact that by the time he wrote the last two plays, Tagore had mastered a dramatic language comparable to that of Shakespeare:

পাপ পুণ্য কিছু নাই। কেবা ভ্রাতা কেবা *(pap punya kichu nai. keba bhrata keba)*
আত্মপর! কে বলিল হত্যাকাণ্ড পাপ! *(atmapar! ke bolilo hatyakando pap!)*
এ জগৎ মহা হত্যাশালা *(a jagat maha hatyashala)*
…
প্রতি পদে চরণে দলিত শতকীট—*(proti pade charane dalit shotokit)*
তাহারা কী জীবন নহে? রক্তের অক্ষরে *(tahara ki jiban nahe? rakter akshare)*
অবিশ্রাম লিখিতেছে বৃদ্ধ মহাকাল *(abishram likhiteche briddha mahakal)*
বিশ্বপত্রে জীবের ক্ষণিক ইতিহাস *(biswapatre jiber khanik itihas)*
…

হত্যা অকারণে, হত্যার অনিচ্ছাবশে—*(hatya akarane hatyar anichha boshe)*
চলেছে নিখিল বিশ্ব হত্যার তাড়নে *(chaleche nikhil biswa hatyar tarane)*
ঊর্ধ্বশ্বাসে প্রাণপণে, ব্যাঘ্রের আক্রমে *(urdhosashe pranpone baghrer akarome)*
মৃগসম, মুহূর্ত দাঁড়াতে নাহি পারে *(mrigosamo muhurto dnarate nahi pare)*
...
বিশ্বের চৌদিক বেয়েছি রক্তধারা *(bishwer choudik beyechi raktodhara)*
ফেটে পড়িতেছে, নিষ্পেষিত দ্রাক্ষা হতে *(phete pariteche nispeshito drksha hote)*
রসের মতন, অনন্ত খর্পরে ...*(raser moton, anonto khorpore)*

However, Shakespeare translators ignored the lesson. Consequently, we do not hear of great Shakespearean productions on the Bengali stage; at least, not till the second half of the twentieth century. Yet we are practically certain of two things: the influence of Shakespearean drama on Bengali dramaturgy (the Five Acts and multiple scenes convention), and the idea of tragedy. The first of these deserve small attention, since theoretically, any other dramatist might have served the same end. Its real importance lies in the fact that with Shakespeare as an indisputable model before them, the Bengali playwrights could confidently move away from the Indian / Sanskrit model which was anyway unsuitable for the kind of theatre they were writing for.

Yet, they never considered the fact that Shakespeare wrote for a stage and an audience that were closer than they had imagined to both the native pre-proscenium theatre, and the character of the Bengali audience. This is perhaps the reason why Shakespeare has mostly failed (one remembers Girish Chandra's reluctant withdrawal of his *Macbeth*) on the Bengali stage. Also, Shakespeare never wrote for the proscenium—the quality of acting that his language and the dramatic situations demand are actually little suited to the proscenium. What he wrote was a kind of *Jatrapala*. He still succeeds in the West because performing and witnessing Shakespeare plays have a ritual value in western culture. In Bengal such values are missing. Shakespeare has to be theatrically viable in order to be viable at all, and here we have failed mostly due to the factors mentioned above.

We need not go into the exciting but presently unnecessary history of the theatrical involvement of Bengal with Shakespeare; but rather jump ahead a century and more to observe that despite sporadic theatrical presentations of Shakespeare throughout the nineteenth century, despite the fact that a Bengali Shakespeare Company was established at the University Institute at the turn of the century, and despite the Shakespearean involvements of such theatre giants as Sisir Kumar Bhadury and Utpal Dutt in twentieth century Bengal, Shakespeare never quite recovered from the initial setback he had suffered from being considered primarily a poet and only incidentally a playwright. Conventional pedagogy has damaged our mindset permanently: the literal Shakespeare is either a set of quiz questions for the classroom, or a misfit on the native stage.This dichotomy of the classroom Shakespeare vs. stage Shakespeare can be best observed as the translators' struggle to accommodate both in their Bengali renderings of Shakespeare, a process in which grounds were slowly won.

To demonstrate this slow transition from 'poetic' translation to an actable translation that still retains the poetic flavour of the original, we need only juxtapose a few parallel lines of translation from different periods:

Shakespeare: *Macbeth* II,ii. ll.49-63:

> Now, o'er the one half-world
> Nature seems dead, and wicked dreams abuse
> The curtained sleep; witchcraft celebrates
> Pale Hecate's offerings; and withered murder —
> Alarmed by his sentinel, the wolf,
> Whose howl's his watch, thus with his stealthy pace,
> With Tarquin's ravishing strides, towards his design
> Moves like a ghost. Thou sure and firm-set earth,
> Hear not my steps, which way they walk, for fear
> Thy very stones prate of my whereabout,
> And take the present horror from the time,
> Which now suits with it.— Whiles I threat, he lives:
> Words, to the heat of deeds, too cold breath gives.
> A Bell rings

I go, and it is done; the bell invites me.
Hear it not, Duncan, for it is a knell
That summons thee to heaven, or to Hell.

Girish Chandra Ghosh: *Macbeth* (1893)

স্বভাব সুষুপ্ত এবে অর্দ্ধ ধরা পরে–মৃতবৎ; *(sabhab susupto abe ardho dhara pore– mritobat)*
বিকট স্বপন কেহ দেখে দেখে দেখে, *(bikat swapan keho dekhe dekhe dekhe)*
বিকটা ডাকিনীগণে মাতিয়ে শ্মশান, *(bikata dakinigone matiye shamshan)*
দেয় বলি ইষ্টদেবে তুষ্টি হেতু যেন, *(daya boli ishtadebe tushti hetu jeno)*
প্রেম সম, *(prem samo)*
শুষ্ক কায় হত্যা যায় নাশিতে নিদ্রিত জনে—*(sushko kai hatya jai nashite nidrita jone)*
ব্যভিচারী বলাৎকারী যথা ধীরপদে, *(bavichari balatkari jatha dhirpode)*
কভু বা চমকে নিশির প্রহরী, বৃকের বিকট রব শুনি। *(kavu ba chamake nishir prahari, briker bikat rob shuni)*
দৃঢ়কায় কঠিনা মেদিনী, পদশব্দ নাহি শুন, *(drirakai kothina medini, padashabdo nahi shuna)*
যেন প্রতি শিলাখণ্ড তব, *(jeno prati shilakhando tabo)*
ভাবে না প্রকাশে কোথায় গমন মম! *(bhabe na parakashe kothai gamon momo)*
যেন নাহি হরে, *(jeno nahi hare)*
ভয়ঙ্কর সময়-উচিত নিশির নীরব ভাব! *(bhayankar somoi-uchit nishir nirab bhab)*
হেথা করি ভয় প্রদর্শন, জীবিত সে রয়েছে এখন, *(hetha kari bhoi paradorshon, jibito se royeche ekhon)*
বাক্যব্যয়ে করা মাত্র উৎসাহ শিথিল। *(bakyobyaye kara matra utsaha shithil)*
গমনে আমার কার্য্য হবে সমাধান, *(gamone amar karjo habe samadhan)*
ঘণ্টার নিনাদে মোরে করে আহ্বান। *(ghantar ninade more kore ahaban)*
ডনক্যান,— *(doncan)*
শুন না এ রব, মৃত্যু ঘণ্টা রবে এ তোমার *(shun na e rob, mrityu ghonta robe a tomar)*
স্বর্গ তোরে ডাকে কিম্বা নরক দুস্তর। *(swargo tore dake kimba narak dustor)*

One can hardly think of another playscript with “translation” written so prominently all over the text. No wonder the play failed so abjectly

on the stage. In the words of a contemporary theatre goer:"I have been seeing plays for nearly a decade now; but have never been swindled like this" ("আমি প্রায় দশ বৎসর থিয়েটার দেখিতেছি, কিন্তু এমন ঠকান কখনও ঠকি নাই।") (Mitra, 1953, 35).("ami pray das bachar theatre dekhitechi, kintu amon thakan kokhono thaki nai)

It took us sixty years more to reach Jatindranath Sengupta's version which was much closer to spoken Bengali, but still clung to the typical texture of Bengali 'poetic poetry' than to 'dramatic poetry', a feature especially noticeable in its use of 'genteel' (*sadhu*) verbs. The translator had clearly learnt a lot from Tagore, but was still wedded to the heavy, literal style of Girish Chandra.

Jatindranath Sengupta: *Macbeth* (1953)

মৃতপ্রায় অর্ধেক ধরণী, ঘরে ঘরে *(mritoprai ardhek dharani, ghore ghore)*
সুখসুপ্তি দুঃস্বপ্নসঙ্কুল, পিশাচেরা *(sukhsupti duswapnosankul pishachera)*
অর্ঘ্য দেয় চামুণ্ডাচরণে, দিকে দিকে *(argho deye chamundacharane, dike dike)*
সতর্ক শার্দূল প্রহর জানায় হুহুংকারে; *(satarka shardul parahar janai huhungkare)*
তারি মাঝে চলিয়াছে রুদ্ধশ্বাস *(tari majhe chaliache ruddhasas)*
নিঃশব্দচরণ প্রেতসম বিশীর্ণ ঘাতক *(nishabdo charan pretshomo bishirno ghatak)*
হরিতে সুষুপ্তিমগ্ন নিষ্কলঙ্ক প্রাণ। *(harite sushuptimagno nishkalanko pran)*
অয়ি স্থিরা কঠিনা ধরণী, *(ayo sthira kathina dharani)*
শুনো না এ পদধ্বনি গোপনসঞ্চার পথে, *(shunyo na e padadhoni goponsanchar pathe)*
কি জানি মর্মরি উঠি তোমারি পাষাণ *(ki jani mormori uthi tomari pashan)*
যদি ভেঙে দেয় এই নিশীথের *(jodi bhenge deye ai nishither)*
বীভৎস স্তব্ধতা, যদি ব্যর্থ করে দেয় *(bibhotso stabdhota, jadi byartha kore deye)*
এ মহা সুযোগ *(e maha sujog)*
আমার বিলম্বে বাড়ে তারি পরমায়ু, *(amar bilombe barey tari paramayu)*
কর্মে জুড়াইয়া দেয় বৃথাবাক্যবায়ু। *(karmey juraiya deye brithabakyabayu)*
ঘণ্টাধ্বনি *[ghantadhoni]*

যাই, আসিয়াছে ঘণ্টার আহ্বান; *(jai, ashiache ghantar ahaban)*
এ ধ্বনি শুনো না ডানকান, *(a dhoni shuno na Duncan)*
কে বা জানে, স্বর্গে বা নরকে *(ke ba jane, swarge ba narake)*
কোথায় মিলিবে তব স্থান। *(kothai milibe taba sthan)*

Nevertheless this diction represents a much smoother and more actable style than Girish Chandra's, although Jatindranath apparently had not meant it to be enacted on the stage.

Nearly a quarter of a century after this, Utpal Dutta, dissatisfied with Jatindranath's poetic idiom, made his own stageworthy version [claimed by the publisher to be both "ভাষান্তরিত" (*bhasan tarati*) and "ভাবানুবাদ" (*bhabanubad*) at the same time] for his production of *Macbeth* (1975):

Utpal Dutta, *Macbeth* 1975 (Thema, 2009)

এখন অর্ধেক পৃথিবী জুড়ে প্রকৃতি যেন মুমূর্ষু, *(akhon ardhek prithibi jure prakriti jeno mumurshu)*
করাল দুঃস্বপ্নের দল হানা দেয় অবিরত শয্যার শিয়রে—*(karal duswapner dal hana dai abirato sajjar shiore)*
পিশাচেরা আহুতি দেয় পাণ্ডুরবর্ণা মহা ডাকিনীর পায়ে। *(pisachera ahuti deye pandurbarna maha dakinir paye)*
শ্বপদগর্জনে সচকিত শুষ্ক শীর্ণকায় নরঘাতক নিঃশব্দ পদসঞ্চরণে *(swapod gorjone sachakit sushko shirnokai naraghatak nishabda padashancharane)*
নারীধর্ষকের কামাতুর পদক্ষেপে চলেছে প্রেতমূর্তি সম *(naridharsoker kamatur padakhepe choleche pretmurti shamo)*
আপন লক্ষ্যপথে। *(apon lakshapothe)*
হে কঠিন অচলা পৃথ্বী, আমার পদধ্বনি শুনো না তুমি, *(he kothin achala prithbi, amar padadhoni shuno na tumi)*
দেখো না আমার গমনপথ, নইতে তোমার ত্রস্ত পাষাণরাশি *(dekho na amar gamanpath, noite tomar trosto pashanrashi)*
প্রতিধ্বনির কলরবে ভঙ্গ করবে কাল-রাত্রির স্তব্ধতা, *(pratidhwanir kalarobe bhango korbe kal-ratrir stabdhata)*
স্তব্ধ রাত্রি আমার বড়ো প্রয়োজন। রাজা এখনও জীবিত—*(stabdha ratri amar boro proyojon. Raja akhono jibito)*

আমার শুধু রাজহত্যার কল্পনার খেলা—*(amar sudhu rajhatyar kalponar khela)*
ঘুচায় মনের তেজ কথার মেলা। *(ghuchai moner tej kathar mela)*
নেপথ্যে ঘণ্টাধ্বনি *(nepothe ghanta dhoni)*
আমি যাই, কাজ হোক শেষ, আমার ডাক এসেছে—*(ami jai, kaj hok sesh, amar dak eseche)*
ওই সংকেত শুনো না ডানকান, ও এক ভীষণ শমন, *(oi sanket shuno na Duncan, o ak bhison shomon)*
স্বর্গে অথবা নরকে তোমার অমোঘ আমন্ত্রণ। *(sarge athaba noroke tomar amogh amontron)* (p 51-53)

This translation is a crucial instance for several reasons. First, the faltering rhythm of Dutta's translation gestures to his struggle to get out of the typical poetic style of the previous translators on the one hand, and on the other his total failure to instil the Bengali speech rhythm—or any rhythm at all – into the pentametric dialogue of the original. It is, in fact, even less actable than Jatindranath's version, which, by virtue of its fluidity, has a stageworthy style of its own. Jatindranath's artificial 'poetic' style can easily accommodate the unfamiliar words ('তারি মাঝে চলিয়াছে রুদ্ধশ্বাস / নিঃশব্দচরণ প্রেতসম বিশীর্ণ ঘাতক' (*tari majhe choliyache rudhashas/ nishabdocharan pretsomo bishrno ghatak'*) which stick out awkwardly in the overly ambitious and unspeakable 'spoken' style of Utpal Dutta (''শ্বাপদগর্জনে সচকিত শুষ্ক শীর্ণকায় নরঘাতক নিঃশব্দ পদসঞ্চরণে'' *"shapadgorjone sachokito shushko shirnokai naraghatak nishabde padasancharane* etc.).

Secondly, his bookish adherence to the literal Shakespearean text clashes painfully with his attempt to use a spoken style. It also blinded him to the fact that the reference to Tarquin can never mean much to a Bengali audience. Jatindranath in his wisdom had already left Tarquin out of his version, but Dutta brings him back to make his text more uncomfortable of the stage than it needs to be.

Thirdly, Dutta fails to notice that ll.59-60—obvious interpolations—spoil the dramatic tension of the scene and are better omitted; here he follows Jatindranath in retaining them. Dutta's translation is less an advancement on Jatindranath's text than a prose throwback to Girish Chandra's early desperations.

It is interesting to note that none of the above translators tried to find a Bengali equivalent of Shakespeare's blank verse. Some thirty years after this, Dattatreya Dutt finally restored the metrical dignity of the original while retaining both its poetical expressions and spoken tone. This translation was declaredly an 'edited' version, expunging portions of the text that would, on the stage, be either purposeless or tiresome to the contemporary urban Bengali audience. (Incidentally, the theatrical viability of this translation has been attested by productions both in India and abroad.)

Dattatreya Dutt; *Macbeth* (2008)

পৃথিবীর আধখানা জুড়ে *(prithibir adhkhana jure)*

সব যেন মৃত। ক্রূর দুঃস্বপ্ন দুই পায়ে দলে *(sob jeno mrito. krur duswapno dui paye dole)*

আবৃত নিদ্রাকে। শুধু ডাকিনীবিদ্যার জয় রটে *(abrito nidrake. sudhu dakinibidyar joy rote)*

ভৈরবীর অভিচারে। হননের শীর্ণ অপদেব *(bhairobir avichare. hanoner shirno apodeb)*

তার শাস্ত্রী নেকড়ের ডাকে জেগে, প্রেতের মতন *(tar shastri nekrer dake jege, preter moton)*

নিঃসাড়ে পা ফেলে লক্ষ্যমুখে। ...স্থির, অচঞ্চল ধরা, *(nishare pa fele lakshamukhe. ...sthir achanchal dhara)*

পদধ্বনি শুনো না আমার–যেন ধূলিকণারাও *(padadhani shuno na amar-jeno dhulikanarao)*

আমার পথের কথা কারো কাছে অস্ফুটে জানিয়ে *(amar pother katha karo kachey asfute janie)*

শব্দহীন এই বোবা আতঙ্ক না ভেঙে দিতে পারে। *(shobdohin ai boba atanke na bhenge dite pare)*

ঘণ্টাধ্বনি ডাকছে আমায়–আমি যাবো, মিটে যাবে। *(ghantadhoni dakche amay-ami jabo mitey jabe)*

ডানকান, এ শমনের শমন শুনো না—*(Duncan, a shamoner shamon shuno na)*

তোমাকেও ডাকছে সে ঃ স্বর্গে না কি নরকে, জানি না। *(tomakeo dakche se: sorge na ki narake, jani na) p-59*

Altogether, one cannot help thinking that in order to translate Shakespeare successfully, it is also necessary to be a poet. Girish Chandra the great playwright was not really a poet, but an excellent versifier brought up in the musical *Jatra* tradition with remarkable control over rhythm; Jatindranath was a respected poet in his time with little connection with the stage. Utpal Dutta, a playwright like Girish Chandra again, could write verse (one remembers his translation of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*), but was never a poet. Dattatreya Dutt, a theatre director and a poet noted for using colloquial Bengali in complex metric patterns in his poetry, probably comes nearest to bringing Shakespeare's text close to the Bengali speech and thought-habits.

We notice further that Dutt's notes to his translation are concerned mostly with theatrical issues: stage-set, visible actions, and character delineation. The notes appended to Utpal Dutta's version on the other hand (supplied by Samik Bandyopadhyay a year after Dattatreya Dutt's translation came out) still display the critical eye's helpless submersion in the quagmire of literary references: the standard rut of talk-and chalk lectures.

This rather brief overview suggests that the earliest adaptors of Shakespeare were right to decide that Shakespeare could only be brought to the Bengali audience byre-living him in the Indian context. As Hemchandra Bandyopadhyay in his Preface to his Indianized *Romeo and Juliet* wrote:

> আমার ধারণা এই যে, এইরূপ কোনও প্রণালী অবলম্বন না করিলে কোন বিদেশী নাটক বাঙ্গালা সাহিত্যে স্থান লাভ করিতে পারিবে না; এবং তাহা না হইলে বাঙ্গালা সাহিত্যের সম্পূর্ণ পুষ্টিলাভ ও প্রকৃতিগত উন্নতি হইবে না। (*Mitra, 1953, 52) (amar dharana ai je, airup kono pranali abalamban na korile kono bedeshi natak bangla sahitye sthan labh korite paribe na; ebong taha na hoile bangala sahityer sampurno pushtilav o prakritigato unnati hoibe na*)
>
> (I think that no foreign play can find room in Bengali literature unless some such a method is adopted; and unless it happens, Bengali literature will not gain full nourishment and an elevated character.)

Girish Chandra was the first to risk a literal translation on the stage, and the first to fail completely. Later translators, among whom we have sampled Sengupta, Dutta, and Dutt, demonstrate a continuous effort to tie up

Shakespeare's language with the Bengali speech habit, with varying degrees of success. One may even say that the difference between the translations of Girish Chandra Ghosh and Jatindranath Sengupta is faithfully reflected in the difference between Utpal Dutta and Dattatreya Dutt's translations: a movement away from literalness towards theatrical orientation.

This is not the place to enter into an estimation of the comparative merits and demerits of the individual translators; but one can certainly observe that we see in the above process a reflection of the interaction of the elite Bengali ethos and Shakespeare in the mirror of translation — and finally that the success and failure of these translations have depended on the translators' poetic talents and instincts as well as on theirability to visualize Shakespeare on the stage.

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* Phonetic Transcriptions mine.

Performing Disabilities: Body, Communication, and Posthuman Negotiations in Mahesh Dattani's Theatre

Sibendu Chakraborty

Disability as a metaphor foregrounding its materiality is historically, socially, culturally, and linguistically rooted in the dynamics of representation and identity formation. The visibility/invisibility of disabled bodies in social contexts is often a strategic pointer to performative negotiations co-opting the synergy between the actors, audiences, and mise-en-scène. Mahesh Dattani's theatre, more often than not, harnesses this energy to communicate between the bodies and environment in significant ways showing their dysfunctional symbiosis in normative analysis. However, the disjunction between the body and the environment is also theatrically performed to substantiate alternative spaces of empowerment and agency. By looking at Dattani's play, *Tara* (1990) as points and patterns of interactions between Disability Studies and Performance Studies, the proposed paper hopes to deessentialise 'Disability' on the basis of its social, historical, and cultural determinants with a notion of looking at it as a way of communicating with the immediate environment. Perambulating between the 'Social Construction' and the 'Minority' models of understanding the tropes of disability, the performative aspects of Dattani's theatre throws into tension two opposite modes of representations and enactments.

Key words: disability, body, environment, posthuman, performing, deessentialise

> It was clear to all of us- including me with my virgin sense of dramaturgy- that the gun would go off at some point. (Dattani *Me and My Plays* 6)[1]

The abiding relationship that Dattani shares with his theatre through performance was triggered by this moment of anxiety that transfixed the audiences, playing with their sense of fear and apprehension. The rise of Performance Studies as a separate discipline could only be distinctly located in the 1980s when Richard Schechner of New York University founded the Performance Studies Department of the Tisch School of Arts.[2] The impetus and a critical surge of thoughts behind the rise and flourishing of this discipline owe its inspiration to lived realities, theatre, representations and ways of engaging the oncoming changes in life, society and environment with performances and enactments. In other words, Performance Studies seek to locate, invade and question the shared spaces of engagement between the different modes of communication that have developed or have been stunted by functional/ dysfunctional synergy between human beings and her/his immediate environment. Dattani notes: "I believe that theatre is living in the actors, and it's living in the performance, it is a shared experience, and I think it's very important for playwrights to realize you can't write in your head" (Mee "Invisible Issues" 21-22). The latent forms of life that performances bring into circulation are theatrically mediated through lived experiences of- disillusions, love, hope, empathy, physical and mental impairment, ennui and inherent contradictions of existential predicaments.

The tangible impairment of the body of an audience (sitting in the front row) who had been to the theatre to witness the performance acts as an objective correlative to Dattani's understanding of the kindred relationship that theatre has with performance and, by corollary, an impaired body has with the traditional modes of human expectations and categorisations. The performance of disability is an issue fraught with many contradictions and conflicts. To look upon the lived realities of a disabled body both as a scope for performing its concomitant factors of constraints and as a trope of imagined liberation narratives is something that frames its generic performative role. By deconstructing the traditional trope of disability through performative emancipation of its coordinating role, theoretically envisage its enactment in a positive light. Never looking to sever its kindred relationship with traditional theatre studies yet forging a more inclusive range of coordinated experience by extending equal/

non-hierarchical importance to stage props, costumes, music, actors, and light, Performance Studies looks to redefine theatre studies. Mahesh Dattani's engagement with urban issues seems to intensify this performative turn by bringing in the issue of the partial mutilation of the body due to some injury/disease. The partial and total impairment of the characters' bodies are performed through tropes of gender, identity, race and cultural determiners. This essay will look to map these spaces of discomfort and pain that are often stereotyped as negative aspects of the narrative of disability. In other words, Dattani's plays, *Bravely Fought the Queen*, *Tara* and *Brief Candle* can be looked upon as sites where the disabled bodies of Dakhsha, Chandan, Tara, Shanti and Amarinder are performed to disengage disabilities of various types from the narratives of defeatism and failure. While on the one hand, the impaired bodies of Daksha, Tara, Chandan, Shanti, and Amrinder could be seen to perform disability within a society meant for nondisabled people; on the other, they can appropriate for themselves a mutable category performing their new identity self-consciously through socio-linguistic and biotechnological intervention. The paper will investigate these posthuman negotiations as performatively enacted through the technologically-conditioned web of subject constructions and critical engagements with reference to *Tara*.

From 'invisible issues' to 'invisible theatre'?

Dattani's theatre, rooted in urban culture, deals with social issues like homosexuality, patriarchal domination, the breakdown of joint families, an unmitigated sense of loneliness and depression, the problems posed by different forms of disabilities and the like. However, the question of alternative sexuality that has often escaped the critical attention of the masses is reinstated by Dattani in many of his plays, namely, *Bravely Fought the Queen*, *On a Muggy Night in Mumbai* and *Do the Needful*. Dattani's remorse about gay people being married in the conventional sense constitutes the central strand of the "invisible issue" (Mee "Invisible Issues"). Issues that purport to confront tradition have this uncanny propensity to perform their way into theatre through an oblique way of negotiating the notion of performance in everyday living experiences by engaging with disabled/abled bodies. In other words, the issue of disabled

bodies in Performance Studies often maps this fraught trajectory between theatre, society and performance with an eye on the changing courses of appropriations between society and human attempts at deploying her/his body.Disabilities of different kinds and magnitudes find their way into human lives and societies through their performative potential to isolate the so-called 'disabled' in a predominantly 'abled' society. Sandahl and Auslander note:

> As in traditional representation, disability inaugurates the act of interpretation in representation in daily life. In daily life, disabled people can be considered performers and passerby, the audience. Without the distancing effect of a proscenium frame and the actor's distinctness from his or her character, disability becomes one of the most radical forms of performance art, "invisible theatre" at its extremes. (2)[3]

In Mahesh Dattani's theatre, this notion of 'invisibility' is often performed when representation/enactment looks to negotiate between realism and performativity by blurring the distinction between the onstage and off-stage 'event'[4]. Mitchell and Snyder note: "The need to restore a disabled body to some semblance of an originary wholeness is the key to a false recognition: that disabilities extract one from a social norm or average of bodies and their corresponding (social) expectations" (6). In other words, the prosthetic intervention is both material and symbolic in adjusting the degree of disability to meet the desired standards of acceptance. The prosthesis, therefore, serves to erase the differences that marginalise a disabled body in a presumably nondisabled society. Further from being a theoretical abstraction, disability as a form of performance is a real and lived experience for people living with disabilities. Dattani's play, *Tara*, looks to perform disabilities by dissociating them from negative stereotyping and correspondingly opening up the connotative significances of disabilities/impairments as inextricably related to class, caste and gender issues.

The dysfunctional status of the Patel family broaches the issue of disability metaphorically and thereby seeks to perform its relevance and urgency through Mr and Mrs Patel's increasingly growing sense of alienation and conflictual action. Dattani's *Tara* is a play about dizygotic

conjoined twins, Tara and Chandan, who were separated shortly after their birth. Dattani seems to have paraded against medical prognosis when he sought to project Tara and Chandan as lively, bright and brash sixteen-year-olds. The children's energetic and coltish spirit is "contrasted with the family's buckling under years of collective trauma (Mallot 41). The construction of gendered identities that perpetuate hierarchies at the cost of projecting "forced harmony" once again finds its relevance in Dattani's theatre. Here, the notion of disabilities is weighed against that of constructing narratives of normativity.

Tara's relationship with her mother, Bharati, is explored through circles of love, empathy and subterfuges till she can bring herself to realise that "the protestations of Bharati's love for her had a different motivation than a bonding between women" (Prasad 140). Bharati shows her obsession and concern over Tara's health, trying hard to make her bold and strong to combat the world outside. However, Mr Patel's revelation of the long-suppressed secret that "a major part of the blood supply to the third leg (of the conjoined twins) was provided by the girl" and Bharati and her influential father willfully influenced Dr. Thakkar to ignore this medical truth to "risk giving both legs to the boy" (*Tara* 378). The third foot lasted for two days on Chandan's body and was eventually reduced to a "piece of dead flesh" that was amputated in adherence to "natural rejection" (*Tara* 378). The strategic disempowerment of the girl child is performed in conformity with the entrenched gender performativity based on societal constructions of gender. Judith Butler, in the first chapter of *Gender Trouble*, affirms that:

> ...(G)ender is not a noun, but neither is it a free floating attribute, for we have seen that the substantive effect of gender is performatively produced and compelled by the regulatory practices of gender coherence. Hence, within the inherited discourse of the metaphysics of substance gender proves to be performative- that is, constituting the identity it is purported to be. In this sense, gender is always a doing, though not a doing by a subject who may be said to pre-exist the deed. (24-25)

However, since sex and gender can be reinscribed following their constructedness, it constitutes the subject's agency within its law. In

other words, the agency incorporates the potential to subvert the regime/ law against itself to accentuate its factitiousness to political/radical directions. (Butler *Bodies that Matter* 28-29) Tara's disempowerment is constructed through the inscriptions of her gender, only to be subverted by her self-realised agency through the performance of her disabled body. The dead piece of flesh that was amputated from Chandan's body is symbolic of an empty signifier that lost its appeal and significance irretrievably being not allocated to the body it was biologically conditioned to. Tara's loss of a physical body is performatively constituted by her agency motivated towards subverting gender stereotypes and ill-conceived notions of favouring patriarchy.

The multi-level set creates space for the Patel family at the lowest tier. Seen only in memory through a lens possibly placed at the next level (the realistic plane) represents a bedsitter in the London suburb where Chandan/Dan now stays. The highest level is allocated to Dr. Thakkar, who, despite being an objective witness, lends an overarching significance by arbitrating an amalgam of science and implicated narration. This division of the stage into layers and overlapping chunks of different temporalities not only helps the audience to map the inherent divide that human lives are endowed with and the coexistence of the man and the woman in a single self but also the "emotional separation" (Mee "A Note" 319) that was mainly written in the conjoined twins' destiny.

The notion of disability in theatre and performance strikes a point of unrest or commotion. This is partly because the audience's expectation is centred on the societal convention of imagined normativity. Since disability in everyday life incites our interests and titillates the urge to inspect its nature and visibility, it gets represented as unnatural, "out of the ordinary, separate from the everyday and a cause for pause and consideration" (Sandahl and Auslander 2). In Dattani's play, *Tara*, a counterpoint to the disabled twins is worked out through "Roopa the nosey neighbour" (Prasad 142). She is ludicrously presented as offensive, stupid and unreliable despite being framed as 'normal'. She is bribed into the Patels' house by Bharati and looms as a potential threat to the twins' sense of integrity and dignity. Tara's appreciation for Beethoven and Brahm's musical compositions metaphorically dramatises her desire not

be remain constricted by others' "perception of her disability" (Prasad 143). Tara and Chandan's resentment about their freakish bodies is centred around the fact that they are more often than not on the receiving end of uncalled-for stares and oppressive gazes from the neighbours. The performance of disability in theatre is often a conscious act of subverting societal stereotypes to strike new postures with the old limbs and body parts. In other words, disability studies draw their kindred inspiration from Judith Butler's notion of 'performativity" by trying to process and reconstruct the concept of identity formation through the actions it engages in without assuming the presence of an actor/doer beforehand. Therefore, Tara's outbursts to Roopa that it is better to "be one-eyed, one-armed and one-legged than an imbecile...with uneven tits" (*Tara* 369) establishes her growing conviction in shaping her identity in a processual bid to elude any normative categorisation sanctioned by the society.

Angelie Multani notes that "*Tara* provided an instance of how a completely extraneous factor may influence, and indeed change the meaning generated by a performance" ("Staged Realities" 82). Since the tension between Mr and Mrs Patel was underplayed in some of the earlier performances, Patel's act of slapping Bharati towards the end of Act one (during a heated argument over the issue of her desire to donate Tara one of her kidneys) comes as a surprise leaving audiences to figure out the reason behind Patel's violent action. Bharati's desire to donate her disabled daughter a kidney stems from her conscience to compensate for the loss already inflicted upon Tara's physical body. She conspired to rob Tara of her 'natural' foot in confidence with her influential father and scheming Dr. Thakkar. Interestingly enough, in "the later productions, Patel raised his hand, but did not strike Bharati, confusing the basic kernel of the play by creating the illusion of male forbearance and tolerance, when rather than slapping his wife, he chose to turn away" ("Staged Realities" 82). This change in the theatrical gesture is a pointer to the shift in the performative 'event', that is dependent on the mis-en-scene. Since, posthumanism "privileges informational pattern over material instantiation" (Hayles 2), Patel's change in gesture is indicative of a transformative moment in Dattani's play. The corporality of the staged action gives way to a performative 'event' that is more dependent on the

audiences' interaction with the actors and the misen-en-scene without getting restricted by the framed history of the performance.

Conclusion

Tara and Chandan's disabled bodies being enacted employing their limping, unsure movements across space is teleologically challenged by "the social-construction" and "minority model"[5] of negotiating disability studies. In other words, Tara and Chandan create for themselves a space within society meant "for nondisabled people" (Sandahl and Auslander 8). In order to overcome obstacles and hardships that society throws at large while journeying through life, it is also a performative gesture to adopt the minority model of negotiating with their impaired existence. The bond Chandal shares with Tara outlasts their sibling status and is performed through an understanding of their "shared experiences of discrimination" while constituting a "vital subculture" of their own. Tara and Chandan's ultimate rejections of Bharati, Dr. Thakkar, Roopa and Mr. Patel restructure the notion of disability in Dattani's theatre by accentuating the processual nature of performance studies that captures and engages interdisciplinary studies towards creating a self-fashioned empowered mutable category.

Notes

1. See Mahesh Dattani. *Me and My Plays*. Haryana: Penguin Random House, 2014. Print. Dattani recounts his memory elaborating on his childhood days and his negotiations with theatre and performance.

2. According to Shannon Jackson, Schechner's generative interactions with the anthropologist Victor Turner proliferated and expanded performance studies into the studies of carnivals, protest shows, rituals and lived day-to-day experiences as enacted through various enactments and activities. See Shannon Jackson. *Professing Performance: Theatre in the Academy from Philology to Performativity*. Cambridge: Cambridge U P, 2004. Print. Also, see Richard Schechner. *Performance Studies: An Introduction*. London: Routledge, 2002. Print.

3. Sandahl and Auslander talk about the invisibility of performance in day-to-day life as disabled individuals seek to collapse the distance and demarcation between lived reality and performance.

4. 'Performative utterences' help constitute social reality by validating and making it happen as a social event. See Erika Fischer-Lichte. "Explaining concepts: performativity and performance." *The Transformative Power of Performance: A New Aesthetics*. Trans. Saskya Iris Jain. New York: Routledge, 2008. 24-37. Print.

5. These models pertaining to disability studies tend to define disability as fundamentally a social phenomenon. The social construction model interprets disability as a phenomenon within a society meant for nondisabled people. The minority model looks to secure a category of disabled people by crafting a new identity based on disability. See Carrie Sandahl and Philip Auslander. "Introduction: Disability Studies in Commotion with Performance Studies." *Bodies in Commotion: Disability and Performance*. Michigan: U of Michigan P, 2005.7-8. Print.

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Constructing Myth, Dismantling Prefixes: Girish Karnad's *Hayavadana*: A Reading Towards an Anti-essentialist and Genealogical Reorganizing of Feminist Politics

Sujato Ghosh

The position of women, the restraints put on her, and the obstructions in establishing her identity has taken significant positions in Girish Karnad's plays. Karnad explores significant portions of the tapestry of Indian mythology to weave his texts and presents his ontological and feminist perspectives regarding the spiritual, collective and cultural positions of men and women of the society he sees around him. He draws the frame of his plays from ancient myths, interrogate history and creates an alternative narrative to draw his canvas. The spectrum of events taken from myths is vast enough to include highly complicated characters and multifaceted interactions between them. Karnad develops these myths to create his myth, and his female characters present themselves as unique individuals but part of the feminist genealogy and are essentially anti-essentialist. They create their ways of living, interpreting and recreating the traditional norms that attempt to subvert women's progress. The gender inequality and the extreme patriarchal conditions where women are seen as repressed and psychologically persecuted are projected in Karnad's plays through myths. In *Hayavadana,* Padmini acts with a distinct sense of freedom and modernity along with a sense of responsibility and intelligence. She cannot be taken as part of the old set of criteria set by the traditional feminist theorists to establish herself as any woman claiming to fetch her position from the orthodox clutches of patriarchy.

Myth is a literary field where mystical and spiritual symbols together frame a tale that forms meaning relevant to contemporary culture. Myth is associated with ancestries, stories of roots expressed with a purpose linked with transformation and even evolution. Often myths try to

transform and move beyond history, making it ambiguous. Myths may not be dependable facts, but they make us comprehend better what values lay at the core of the society, be it contemporary or ancestral. Myths excite us, make us feel miserable and sometimes inspire us to recreate. In brief, myths may explain the riddle that life is. Mythical characters are not often humans, but they certainly are set in the background of the humans. A myth may even transcend the significance of reality or history in understanding human beings and relationships. Karnad has treated myths in his own way and has reconstructed them to create newer ones. Karnad nicely encounters the tradition with his edition of contemporary theatre that is essentially linked with the Indian mythology. Suresh Awasthi opines in "Theatre of Roots": Encounter with Tradition

> Girish Karnad's famous Hayavadana, inspired by the yakshagana of Karnataka, begins with the prayer 'Jai Gajavadane' - 'Victory to Ganesha', the elephant-headed god - and its innovative and improvisatory production ... with music, mime, and movements heralded the return of Lord Ganesha, the presiding deity of traditional theatre. With this event, we might say, contemporary theatre began its encounter with tradition ("Girish Karnad and an Indian Theatre of Roots", 136).

Myths also shorten to form phrases and theories that have remained colloquially alive through ages. Narratives regarding women as of secondary importance to the 'primary gender' have unfortunately settled in our society for a long time. Legendary authors are known to break such myths and create newer ones to prevail and direct progress in the right direction. Girish Karnad puts forward a new way of looking at gender biases in constructing new myths regarding women. Karnad makes us learn to respect the enormous potential that a woman carries in all aspects of her life, creates a narrative that reflects her as a mortal with responsibilities and fantasies, and considers women an integral part of the 'primary gender'. Karnad's *Hayavadana* motivates us to see women in a different light, breaking the myth of women as subhuman, imperiled by patriarchal conditions, a creature driven and derided by the same values and imaginations as the male.

Gender deconstruction and voicing women's concerns have been among the primordial concerns of the recent feminist theories where gynocriticism challenges the essentialist ideas regarding the division between male and female understandings of social and cultural situations and their positions. Such ideas avoid the complexities regarding women occupying and experiencing different societal positions, thereby encouraging the anti-essentialist ideas to take over. Therefore the genealogical roots of essentialist ideas that surround feminist theories and ideas regarding women have come under the scanner. Uma Narayan opines that several movements in the 'Third World' are fundamentally against the establishment of women's cultural identity. These movements attempt to equate the orthodox ideas associated with women to ideas such as safeguarding culture. Movements of this nature project anything against such practices of this attempt as 'cultural betrayals' (Narayan, 91). Feminism is now well defined as any critical work that includes, standardizes and homogenizes the earlier leading feminist theories and models. This definition also includes the select propensities that those theories propound (Heyes, 161). In the end, essentialism is the primary target of the new feminists. Forming a genealogy regarding women does not necessarily mean that common characteristics regarding women will not remain embedded in it. This heterogeneous complexity among women may be taken into consideration in understanding feminist dynamics. However, the construction of new female genealogy can involve all complicated female histories and past narratives to continue being politically and socially conscious regarding the position of females. From a gender ontology perspective, it is crucial to break the essentialist conventions of putting the entire race together inside some granted parenthesis. Judith Butler offers the scope of reinventing the uniqueness and possibilities of heterogeneity in the feminist genealogy

> Political genealogy of gender ontologies, if it is successful, will deconstruct the substantive appearance of gender into its constitutive acts and locate and account for those acts within the compulsory frames set by the various forces that police the social appearance of gender. To expose the contingent acts that create the appearance of a naturalistic necessity, a move which has been a part of cultural critique at least since Marx, is a task that now takes on the added

> burden of showing how the very notion of the subject, intelligible only through its appearance as gendered, admits of possibilities that have been forcibly foreclosed by the various reifications of gender that have constituted its contingent ontologies. (Butler, 44)

Padmini in Girish Karnad's *Hayavadana* remains divided between her love, responsibility, desires and individual identity. She wavers between her love for her husband and a person who fulfils her satisfaction criteria from all corners, primarily her physical lust. Morality is a fundamental concern here as the conformist principles governing the institution of marriage is involved. The men will not be able to accept her sharing the other's space. Destruction of all three persons, therefore, is inevitable (Raykar, 177). This position makes her case a unique representation of a woman from a new feminist genealogy and therefore her situation cannot be discussed from an essentialist position governing feminist politics and theories. Padmini is part of the heterogeneous complexity that old feminist ideas perhaps have forgotten to include but is rightly pointed out by Judith Butler in different contexts.

Karnad presents the peripheral and the core of the Indian society long deprived of accepting women as a significant component of the society. Women's role as reactionary to the conventional patterns of the male hierarchy has allowed society to think that a revolution on their part can make a significant and positive change in the thought process of the civilized mind. Karnad primarily brings out the two facades of the society on accepting women as the counterpart of the male and the psychological resistance of accommodating them as the same maintaining the hierarchical patterns of the conventional society. Karnad brings history, myth, popular folk cultures, and traditional beliefs to project his ideas, visions, and resistance to the orthodox male hierarchical positions to present his plays as political and socio-economic documents. Women in Karnad's plays engage and comment on numerous occasions regarding women emancipation, women's psychological conflicts and the trauma of living in a male-dominated world. They also present themselves as part of the convention-ridden male society that loves to present women as subordinated and subjugated; this Karnad does to excite consciousness among the readers regarding the position of women in the society. His

plays bring into discussion the position of women through the projections and reactions of the women characters in his plays who present themselves as victims of the male hegemony. *Hayavadana* presents the male figures as mentally and culturally constructed persons whose identity depends on the mind or the physic rather than the mind and the physic.

Padmini in *Hayavadana* appears to occupy the fulcrum of the complex manoeuvres of the patriarchal society around her. Naik opines that her name indicates 'lotus' in which the goddess of prosperity, Lakshmi resides. She is the archetype of womanly beauty as is known from Vatsayana's Kamasutra (M. K. Naik, 139). Padmini's actions after marriage may be considered an insurrection against the structure of repressive power hierarchy of her family where she is brought up. Padmini's satisfaction with her desires indicates her willingness to break the myth of women being controlled, dominated by male power structures. Padmini's intelligence and sense of responsibility concerning her child gradually break the myths of the patriarchal mindset that operates through the repression and marginalization of women. Karnad's adds to the ancient Indian myths when the two stories meet. The story of the horse turning into a Gandharva and the story of Hayavadana meeting Padmini's son merges. Karnad creates a new myth by merging the earlier myths and presenting Padmini to pursue her desires. Hayavadana's appeal is Karnad's design, and in connecting the world of the animal, the human, and the divine, Karnad emerges with a new myth with a new tale of a new woman.

We find Devadatta as one who is more sterile to passions and excitements and Kapila as the more impulsive of the two. The question remains as to who is the perfect fit for Padmini. Karnad does this to project Padmini as the subject who decides between the objects like Devadatta and Kapila. Padmini is a sought after figure of a wealthy family, and she is used to getting anything that she may ask her parents. Her 'blushing' is an acceptance of Kapila's proposal to her to marry Devadatta. This attitude of Padmini shows that she cares little regarding the doubts and queries of her parents and the non-acceptance of the marriage proposal. She has already accepted the proposal of Kapila. However, she goes out to call her mother for a discussion.

Padmini presents herself as a woman who can take decisions independently though she shows her cogness like many women love to present. The two Brahmin families mingle into one. No elaborate narratives regarding this occur, as Karnad himself says in the play that nothing can 'stand in the way of bringing the families together. Readers cannot find the habitual pattern of parental control in the upbringing of the beautiful Padmini. The calling of her mother is a part and pattern of the patriarchal stronghold that she accepts. Readers understand that any adverse reactions by her parents may have created an undesirable space between her and her family. A woman who later proves herself to be highly agile regarding her son's safety and can even go beyond marital bondages to fulfil her desires cannot be contained by patriarchy or orthodoxy. Karnad is sensitive to such issues. Therefore, the breaking of the marital bond is not shown as a great feminist prototype. He presents that the responsibility of keeping a marriage unbroken belongs to both the incumbents and not the females alone.

Padmini is reasonable and astute. She contemplates Devadatta's high upbringing, his intellect and that he belongs to the highest caste. Also, Padmini learns that he is a pundit who knows Vedas well. Kapila describes Devadatta to Padmini as the Indian dream prince of any orthodox Indian family and a prized possession as a bridegroom. Padmini's recognition of such facts may be a part of the thought process that she has leant to nourish and nurture from her childhood days. Padmini's agility is way beyond Devadatta's, and Kapila reveals that Devadatta cannot read her mind. Karnad presents Padmini as a much higher intellect who combines with the grace and beauty of Indian women. Kapila's acceptance of her superiority also points to the fact that he has little problem with Padmini's gender and does not think Padmini is inferior to the menfolk and only the embodiment of physical beauty.

Karnad's primary attack may not be the patriarchy but on the rigid Indian orthodox mindset that acts as a deterrent to Padmini's happiness and fulfilling her desires. Padmini finds herself dejected and refused when she finds that Devadatta is more inclined towards what he loves most – his engagement with plays and poetry. Her desperation to find someone who can give her time and satisfy her physical wants shows that she is unhappy with her marriage. She makes no hesitation regarding

this. However, this desire to go beyond the marital bond enters the tapestry of social acceptance, particularly the 'second gender' entering this realm, which concerns society. Padmini is aware that her approach towards a liberal way of living rather than leading a life of dissatisfaction will not be accepted by society. Karnad possibly did not want to prove that had it been Devadatta or Kapila in this scenario, the society would have accepted such things. However, the 'second gender', Padmini, getting away from such commitments may bring more disaster to her. This Padmini knows very well. Devadatta, in this play, presents himself as the patriarchal authority trying to present his cult, his religious lineage, and his paternal gifts as an image of a pundit and a learned person. His patriarchal hold fails to bring Padmini under his ambit as she uses her charm, her ardour, her power of intellect, along with the physical appearance to keep both Devadatta and Kapila under control.

Padmini proves her agility with the episode of her child when she convinces the hunters, who live in the forest, that Kapila's child must be taken care of as he is one among them. The child must grow up in the cult and ambience of forest life and asks to return the child to the Brahmin family later, persuading them that the child belongs to Devadatta. Woman's emancipation cannot be separated from disapproval of gender biases. Therefore overpowering the male hegemony through quick intelligence to fulfil commitments as a mother can be taken as significant in uplifting the deprived gender. Padmini is also quick in satisfying her sexual and mental impulses. She does what she wants to do. Devadatta proves to her as an intellect without good male libido, and she makes little hesitation in leaving him to satisfy what she deserves as a woman and wife. Kapila satisfies her. 'Lust' may not be the right word, but in this case, Padmini succumbs to the temptation of Kapila's physical powers. However, the dissatisfaction that she suffers not only from the physical and sexual weakness of Devadutta but also the very fact that Devadatta considers her less critical in his life than his poetry and plays is what draws Padmini closer to Kapila. Karnad shows women in the light of creatures having desires and fancies with responsibilities. Padmini's character is a case in point. She shows us the urge of a woman to free herself. Her impulse to have the perfect man in her life sets up the pace

for the play. This impulse drives her to change the dynamics of the relationship. It sets her apart from the orthodox female characters of many Indian plays, which seem like puppets in the hands of their male counterparts. Karnad is gender-conscious, but more than that, he is aware of the responsibilities of both the men and the women folk living in a society that needs more emancipation and improvement. Had Karnad approved Padmini's decisions and activities, he would not have made both male characters suffer, nor would he have made Padmini the subject of suffering. Karnad presents a female character who, in the end, is a mortal and is subjected to impulses and fantasies. Kapila remains Padmini's dream man. She takes every route possible to come closer to him. This post-marital disloyalty rips her apart, and she ends her life torn between her responsibilities and her fantasies. Karnad in *Hayavadana* presents a woman desperately trying to escape the shackles of patriarchal bondage and fulfil her desires, but he does not aim to destroy institutions like marriage. He focuses on the responsibilities of both genders to take care of such sensitive issues as marriage, and it is not only the female's responsibility to hold on to it.

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Assimilation of African Oral Traditions and Practices into the Dramatic Conventions of *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi*

N. Banita Devi

ABSTRACT

The paper proposes that a certain degree of interconnectedness exists between a dramatic text and its theatrical performance though distinctions occur in terms of modes of expression, transmission and reception by readers and audience. By giving stress on 'language', the only common feature of the two art forms, the paper aims at analysing *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi* co-authored by Ngugi wa Thiong'o and Micere Githae Mugo to highlight the dramatists' experiment with the assimilation of African oral traditions and indigenous practices into the western dramatic conventions. Termed as a 'hybrid form' modern African theatre that emerged in the 1960s seemed to be poised precariously between two disparate cultures. However, the paper asserts that the strength of the dramatic text and its performance lies in the deliberate negotiation between these two aspects and styles of theatre practices as well as the usage of both English and indigenous languages—Kiswahili and Gikuyu (reminiscent of African peoples' orature – storytelling, riddles, masks and masquerades, puppet shows and sketches, songs of everyday lives of work and play, of religious nature and revolutionary militant origin) in the drama. The songs and dances to the tune of drumbeats and shouts/cries of the people are employed to re-enact, through mimetic rendition, the Black Man's history of oppression, exploitation and dehumanisation and their resistance against the colonial masters with a special focus on the 1950s phase of "Mau Mau Rebellion", Kimathi being one of its most able leaders. This technique enriches the play's significance though mainly presented through the language of the coloniser, and arrests attention of both readers and audience alike.

KEYWORDS: Oral traditions, Assimilation, Dramatic conventions, Language, Drama, Performance.

INTRODUCTION: DRAMATIC TEXT VERSUS PERFORMANCE

American theatrologist Marvin Carlson states that a "close connection between the written text and the stage performance of it" has existed throughout most of western theatre history, but in "modern times, the dramatic text and the performance or performances of that text have normally quite separate existences" (62). Despite a certain degree of interconnectedness between these two art forms based on the same source, distinctions occur in the modes of expression, transmission and consumption/reception of the text in the different processes of reading and viewing. The acts of reception of the details and interpretation are direct for readers as it is done through the act of negotiation between the dramatist and the reader for meanings and perspectives, whereas it is doubly removed for the audience as mediums of intervention such as director's directions and actors' performative roles serve as screens through which the audience has to decipher meanings meant by the dramatists. There may be times and incidents when the dramatist's and the readers' views may conflate or dissent, but it is still only a two-way traffic where matters are clear when compared to the multidimensional nature of a performance, whether in open air or proscenium theatre.

Theorist Eric Bentley's basic definition of theatre 1965 as "A impersonates B while C looks on" involves two simultaneous acts of imitation and viewing/spectatorship and presupposes a mutually inclusive association of the actors, their performance or impersonation and the audience to create a fictional world which gives the illusion of reality. The 'dramatic illusion' created through the audience's direct visual or auditory or sensory or kinetic participation in the actor's dialogue, body language – gestures, postures, facial expression, movement, differences in tone and stress in speech etc. is crucial in a performance. As the spectator brings about meaning together with the actors and stage directions or instructions at one time and one place, he/she willingly suspends disbelief (to use Coleridge's idea) and lives through the illusion that what is happening on stage at present bears relation to reality as it mirrors life. "The issue of a spectator's

apprehension of the illusion of drama and of drama's relation to reality and life as well as that of the extent of the viewer's participation in the theatrical process has all along been a crucial one in western theory" (Vishwanathan 30). This aspect is also present in other theatre conventions, such as Indian, though absent in the act of reading a text.

DRAMA INSIDE A CLASSROOM:

Inside a classroom teaching-learning process, a dramatic text cannot be experienced and absorbed in terms of acts or scenes, soliloquies or asides, dialogues or monologues uttered and acted on stage wherein the actors' performative roles are exposed to the gaze of the audience for scrutiny, interpretation, knowledge and aesthetic pleasure. The setting, costume, lights, spectacle, music, song, dance, drums or flutes, movement, mime and gestures, voice and other theatrical props cannot be materialised normally, and thus, the performative aspects are absent. Theatre stages have a large impact on the audience's experience of the drama as the moment they set their eyes on it, they absorb everything in and around the acting space itself. Among the eight components of "Drama media" i.e. "costume, masks and make-up, music and sound, lighting, space, set, props, movement, mime and gesture, and voice and language" (Drama media, BBC Bitesize), only 'language' matters in a text while the rest form integral parts of a performance. A sense of "immediacy", of what is happening now, which is integral to drama (Dawson 10), is also non-existent in a text. The above lists some shortcomings in reading and teaching drama inside a classroom. As Sudhakar Marathe puts it, "One of the things that has always puzzled me about the teaching of drama is – how can a teacher go into class merely with the text of a play and some criticism (From other people)?" (186). He suggests certain measures to be adopted as approaches to the teaching of drama and its criticism, one of which is reproduced here, "a text which students have tried to 'see' (i.e., 'read') as theatre happens to be read far more effectively – for it is in that way not only read again and again, but also far more interestingly and intensively than in any other way" (188).How to see/ read a text as theatre is altogether another issue, and people have different ways of reading and understanding a dramatic text, the context of which is not within the purview of the paper.

TEXT AND PERFORMANCE:

While studying a drama, academicians (literary persons) would privilege text over performance, and theatrical persons would assert the primacy of performance over print. However, one must know and acknowledge the difference between "script-alone and script-as-performed" as the modes of transmission and reception differ, and one must not be blinded by one's "temperamental preference" of being a "literary" person or "theatrical" person (Bentley 149). Furthermore, "A good play leads a double existence, and is a complete "personality" in both its lives" (148). S.W. Dawson also maintains:

> Clearly the mere performer, as well as the mere reader, is liable to certain limitations in discussing drama. But the ideal commentator on drama would combine a scrupulous critical concern with the text with a close a concern as possible with the necessities and potentialities of actual performance. (5)

Dawson's view finds a similar ground in Bentley, who observes that to know a play "should be to know it from stage and study, both" (149). Notwithstanding the above observations, it is almost an impossible task for an Indian reader to chance upon a performance of a drama under discussion, *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi*, however high a position Ngugi wa Thiong'o holds in the literature and criticism of postcolonial studies. To make ado with study (or text or print), the paper attempts to analyse the playwrights' incorporation and assimilation of both western dramatic conventions (in a broader sense) and African indigenous oral traditions in the reproduction of Kenyan political history beginning with pre-colonial days through a colonial phase to resistance against colonial masters that culminated into Kenya's "Uhuru" in 1963. The paper's main focus is on the importance of 'language' of the text, which is "dramatic", a language that enacts a situation, as opposed to "narrative" language, which simply describes a situation. For Dawson, dramatic language is compelled from the speaker by the situation, and that "the action is the language, that the language creates the dramatic 'world' of the play," (6). He further contends that the "*language* of a play establishes for the audience what are the criteria of possibility and probability; movement, gesture, properties and scenery are auxiliaries which, ideally speaking, should *grow out of* the

creative language" (7). This statement is crucial when one takes into account the fact that dramatic language is the only common feature between text and performance.

LANGUAGE AND CULTURE:

In *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature*, Ngugi puts forward the argument that language has dual characteristics as "both a means of communication and a carrier of culture" (13). He mentions three aspects/elements of "language as communication" as a link that people establish among themselves and in relation to others, as speech which "imitates the language of real life, that is communication in production", and as 'written signs', the "written word imitates the spoken" (13-14). By giving importance to both spoken and written language, the statement shows the interconnected nature of both. "Written literature and orature are the main means by which a particular language transmits the images of the world contained in the culture it carries" (15). Both a text and its performance are carriers of cultural myths, collective consciousness and the socio-political and historical realities of a people, and these imitate life though through different modes. Referring to Ngugi's concept of "culture" as posited in *Penpoints, Gunpoints, and Dreams*, Dwight Conquergood points out that Ngugi's "concept of "orature" complicates any easy separation between speech and writing, performance and print, and reminds us how these channels of communication constantly overlap, penetrate and mutually produce one another" (151).

MODERN AFRICAN THEATRE AS A HYBRID FORM:

Ngugi's concept of African theatre in Kenya is deeply rooted in the history, tradition, culture and orature of its people, as seen in his "Kamiriithu Community Educational and Cultural Centre" (KCECC) people based projects wherein plays written in Gikuyu like *I will marry when I want* (1977) was produced and performed by locals among whom are former "Kenya Land and Freedom Army" (KLFA) members termed by the British as "Mau Mau Rebellion" rebels, enacted in open space instead of a proscenium theatre. And yet plays written during his Afro-European phase like *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi,* appropriate characteristics of western

dramatic conventions along with employing African oral traditions and present it as a hybrid form. He refuses to term writings by Africans in the English language as 'African literature' and calls it a "hybrid tradition, a tradition in transition, a minority tradition that can only be termed as Afro-European literature" (*Decolonising* 26-27). The text under discussion is an exemplary product of this hybrid form, premiered on 20th October 1976 at Kenya National Theatre (KNT), Nairobi, performed by University students and published the same year. It was also performed for an international audience as an official entry of Kenya in the "Second World Black and African Festival of Arts and Culture" (FESTAC) in Lagos, Nigeria, in 1977. Before the analysis of the text, a brief view on the emergence, properties and features of modern African theatre needs special mention.

EMERGENCE OF MODERN AFRICAN THEATRE AND ITS FEATURES:

One of the most crucial factors in the emergence of the literary theatre in Kenya as in other African countries like Nigeria, Ghana and South Africa, is the formation of a unique, authentic, "an ultimate African identity" (Agovi 67). In the African context, two major viewpoints exist: First, the belief that African theatre would achieve success, to use a critic's view on Nigerian theatre, "when the conceptual and creative approaches [in the literary theatre can] cast off the mental constraints imposed by acquired Euro-American plays" (quoted in Agovi 67); second, the vision of realising the final achievement of African theatre "as a 'synthesis' of African and European ideas and experience" (67). The first view denies the influence of European and American theatre traditions and conventions through its special focus on Africa and its varied cultures. The second sees the emergence of modern African theatre in the 1960s as a culminating point of the interactions between African practices and western theatre traditions and conventions. The latter is what the paper adopts as the basis of examining the text. In this context, it is pertinent to mention Carlson, who sees the spread of colonization across the globe as having carried along with it the western concept of theatre: "Around the world, countries with little theatre tradition in the European sense began to create such theatre, but often blended European methods and plays with indigenous practice and materials to create the huge variety of hybrid forms found today" (22).

Another view maintains that "any critical approach to African drama and theatre should take cognisance of the influence of the indigenous contemporary drama and theatre" (Asagba 87). However, to "deny the enormous influence of western drama and theatre on modern African drama is to underestimate the effects of the colonial period in Africa" (98). Asagba provides the best possible way a modern African playwright can adopt when confronted with the issue of what mode or medium he/she should follow: "If modern African play-wrights and theatre practitioners are to bridge the enormous gulf of present existing between them and their audience, a first step would be to write plays that are relevant to the historical and cultural values of their people" (98). Ngugi and Mugo adopt this path by presenting a nationalist freedom fighter who is endowed with the qualities of a legendary/cultural hero in the text.

ASSIMILATION OF INDIGENOUS ORAL PRACTICES INTO THE TEXT:

In the 'Preface' to the play, Ngugi Wa Thiong'o and Micere Githae Mugo point out that it is about people's refusal to break under the colonial rule and about their "continued determination to resist exploitation, oppression and new forms of enslavement". Presented as a way of contesting and resisting colonial discourse, the playwrights have fused both traditional tools and elements of orature- storytelling, mimes, dance, songs, drum beats etc and its diverse cultures in addition to mixed use of English, Kiswahili and Gikuyu (native languages of bantu origin) and western indoor theatre concept and conventions. Mention may be made of Thomas Metseher's view on modern black African literature in general: "Black African written literature does not simply continue orature, but amalgamates it with elements of a quite different, that is European, ultimately world literary origin" (176-7). He also observes that "modern Black African literature emerges in contact with and under conditions imposed by European literature, emerges in the medium and under the conditions imposed by the colonial languages" (177). *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi* is one exemplary piece that affirms the above statement.

The 'Preliminary Notes' and the 'Opening" are made to serve such dramatic functions as laying bare the atmosphere and mood of the play, the context of which is filled with both apprehension and foreboding,

giving rise to a certain level of tension like a 'dramatic moment' undergone by an audience. Even without seeing its performances reader's imagination is heightened: "The atmosphere is tense and saturated with sadness as if the whole land is in mourning. Events move at a tremendous speed; people act with a general sense of urgency, as if to compete with time which is running ahead of them" (Preliminary Notes).

Using western dramatic conventions and directions, the 'Opening' makes the readers acquainted with the inside of a white man's court where two nations are depicted in such a way through the whites and the blacks as being engaged in a warlike situation, fought along the lines of differences in race, colour and class. The seating arrangements and the space itself are divided into two opposite sides where on one side, the well-dressed, heavily made-up white ladies and gentlemen occupy seats who are there seemingly to witness a spectacle and are allowed to carry guns. On the opposite side, the natives clamour for space and are frisked in the open to check for anything that could be remotely used as a weapon. The hostile environment and positions mirror the colonial nation-state wherein power lies in the hands of the oppressors, and the oppressed are further discriminated against. The 'Opening' reveals a technique deployed by the playwrights to make sure that readers can grasp events as if they are watching a performance, i.e. the use of a medium of instructions and comments, which are regularly interspersed with the proceedings of the trial.

Then the play marks two distinct deviations from western dramatic conventions. First, the structural division is made into "Movement" and "Phases" not acts and scenes, which is a deliberate act to discard the observation of 'unity of time' so that "the barrier between formal and infinite time" (Preliminary Notes) is broken to enable Kenyan past, present and future to merge into a continuous and composite whole. One of the reasons behind this act is to show that Kenyan history, indigenous cultural performances and orature have existed before the colonisers came and still continue to exist after they have left. Second, the play is not simply produced as a theatrical form for entertainment and aesthetic pleasure but designed for presentation as a part of the cultural performance as an official entry for FESTAC,1977, in order to give emphasis on the effective tool of storytelling to change and transform Kenyan political history both

of the perception of its past and present. What Christopher Innes, a Canadian historian of English Arts, observes in the context of Canadian plays is also true in the context of the drama under study, "It is also, of course, a commonplace that to achieve universal significance, literature – and particularly drama – must be grounded in the concrete specificity of "a local habitation"(3).

Cultural performances may be described as "occasions in which as a culture/society we reflect upon and define ourselves, dramatise our collective myths and history, present ourselves with alternatives, and eventually change in some ways while remaining the same in others" (MacAloon 1, quoted in "Performance Studies" 2). The play experiments simultaneously with both the political context of Kenya during the 1950s Mau Mau Rebellion and the Kenya of 1960s and 70s, marked by political unrest, imprisonment, banishment or exile and neo-colonial policies of Jomo Kenyatta's regime. In this respect, the play has incorporated components of cultural performance such as its ability to embody, give a presence and make it transgress several boundaries, the qualities of "embodiment, presence and transgression" (Performance studies). This is achieved through the reconstruction of the Kenyan colonial past in the portrayal of one of its most able rebel leaders Dedan Kimathi whose image is lifted to the level of a legendary and cultural hero who never dies in the collective consciousness and shared memory of the people.

After his capture on 21st October 1956 and the subsequent hanging inside the Kamiti Prison on 18th February 1957, it is said that he was buried by the women detainees of the prison. "But the kimathi of this play does not and cannot die; he lives in the hearts of his people. As a legendary figure, he is imbued with such feats as the ability to disappear at will and communicate with god. His portrait underscores the fact that heroes in African oral traditions, especially the traditional epics, serve as the rallying point for national narratives" (Okunoye 234-235). The play may or may not gain the status of a 'national narrative' but it helps in ensuring the continuity of the oral tradition of kimathi as a legendary hero. The playwrights have cited *Mau Mau From Within*, co-authored by Karari Njama and Donald L. Barnett, as well as oral testimonials and stories, some as facts, some as legends told in person about Kimathi in

karunaini in Nyeri plains as sources of the play. In this context, what the dramatists do is, in the words of Innes, to portray, "the renewal of localized roots, or the search for counter-cultural diversity," as "a necessary artistic tactic to resist the levelling pressures of the global village" (3).

To come back to the use of 'Movements', a deliberate act of dissent the playwrights make, it is quite relevant to point out that the "First Movement" opens in darkness which is filled with distant drumbeats getting louder to culminate into frantic climax. Then twilight is shown, which is once again filled with the loud singing of a crowd of peasants whose voices are both aggressive and determined. The interplay of lights on stage, whether darkness or twilight or day time, with voices first heard offstage and then onstage, is very crucial as it can be used in a "symbolic way". "Lights can be used for defining different locations on the stage, creating mood and atmosphere, highlighting key moments of action and directing the audience's focus" in western dramatic conventions and "it can also be used in an abstract or symbolic way" (Theatre Design, BBC-Bitesize). The playwrights' use of lights together with voices is symbolic as elements of nature itself, such as night time or twilight are made to denote the native's lives during the colonial era, which was filled with darkness, oppression, exploitation, imprisonment and torture in transit and concentration camps and execution both in public and inside prisons and twilight heralding a new dawn full of hope and optimism of people both in the past and the present. Instructions are given that the peasants' song shall be used as a mimetic rendition of Black people's History through the flashback technique. The song in Kiswahili follows like this:

> Tutanyakua
> Mashamba yetu
> Tupiganie
> Uhuru wetu
> . . . . . .

They sing about people's faith in repossessing their lands/countryside back from the colonisers and "uhuru" meaning independence/freedom. One possible reason for introducing songs of freedom and militant songs sung during its most violent phase both in Kiswahili and Gikuyu is to

unsettle the minds of the colonisers who do not understand the local tongues and embarrass them which in term serves to show disrespect as well as contempt for the white men's court and its proceedings. Just as Kimathi defiantly answers back to the judge, "To a criminal judge, in a criminal court, set up by criminal law: the law of oppression. I have no words" (25) in the Second Movement.This same attitude of defiance is seen in the woman's answer and body language to the soldier (Johnnie) questioning and frisking her on the road, whereby he asks for her passbook.

> Women: Ati Pasi?
>
> Johnnie: Ndiyo, passbook. Wapi passbook?
>
> Woman: Sina
>
> Johnnie: Sema Afande
>
> Woman: [*defiance in her tone.*] Afande.
>
> Johnnie: Sina, Afande! (9)

When the woman says that she doesn't have a passbook, she doesn't use the polite form of address, "Afande", meaning Sir or officer and the white soldier is especially concerned about that and reminds her of it while she defiantly acts.

Another song of freedom struggle included in the First Movement is rendered in Gikuyu:

> Bururi uyu witu Andu Airu
>
> Ngai ni aturathimiire
>
> Na akiuga tutikoima kuo. (14)

The same song is used again in Third Movement (81). This freedom song sung inside the courtroom by diverse voices brings discomfort not only to the judge but to other whites too. Songs can be used as an expansion of speech or dialogue especially when one becomes emotionally involved. Songs, flashbacks, and mimes are also a part of western conventions, but the dramatists have employed these to break away from the same traditions as these are rendered both in English and local languages as a way of resisting the official colonial history, which has distorted the facts. For example, the rendition of the four phases of Black Men's History through mimes, first – before the Europeans made

settlements when they indulged in the Trans-Atlantic slave trade, second when the full exploitation of cheap black labour began; third, black labour force toiling in plantations or fields under the eyes of a black overseer while a white master inspects the work (in both native soils and overseas plantations) and fourth the beginning of resistance movements shouting anti-imperialist slogans and singing nationalist songs; serve to discredit the official account of the colonisers whose agendas have been masqueraded as civilising process of the Blacks.

Regarding the dramatist's use of both western techniques and indigenous oral form to project resistance against colonial agendas and the history of Kenya, one may cite Margaret T. Drewal's questions in respect of African performances and African humanists:

> Have African humanists – particularly those engaged in some aspect of performance – successfully inhabited the space of the western episteme in their appropriation of western languages, methods, and modes of performance? And if so, have they reinforced the dominant discourse of the former colonialists, or have they succeeded in contesting, resisting, and/or undermining it? (74)

The dramatists of the text have succeeded in contesting, resisting and undermining certain aspects of colonial discourse specific to Kenya through the deviations they make from western conventions and the assimilation of indigenous oral forms into it. They have also fused "dance, music, and theatre" into a composite cultural performance in the play by negating, to borrow, Drewal's view, "the compartmentalisation of the arts, which forces an arbitrary dissection of performance into disparate media such as dance, music, and theatre" (74).

The dramatists may also have used the fact that Kimathi was the organiser of a theatre group called "Gichamu" made up of youths from the 7 ridges around karunaini who, in his own words, "devised new dances/Talking of the struggle before us/Readying ourselves for the war" (37). The depiction of resistance movement dances through mimes, and the militant songs have references not only to Kimathi's theatre group but also to the overall culture of the natives. This silent act of art in the form of non-verbal communication, which has been a part of prehistoric groups

in oral cultures performed in religious celebrations and mundane activities of life as well serves to bring not only knowledge and awareness to the readers but also acts as a way of honouring the past wherein many have lost their lives for their country's independence. The dances in the form of mimes in the Second Trial of 'Second Movement' showcase three phases of Kenyan history in particular and African history in general, where the first phase depicts dances representing the lives of various ethnic groups living in unity amidst diversity, the second phase shows the lives of people shivering in fear and humiliation once a colonial governor arrives, and the third phase depicts resistance using songs of struggle and militant dances (37). What makes these positioning of the dances particularly meaningful is that these are interspersed with Kimathi's soliloquy, which mirrors the central ideas embodied in the mimetic dances and songs. In the words of Martin Banham, the "play with its imaginative pseudo documentary style, and use of militant song and dance (reminiscent of the subversive use of those elements in the struggle for independence) is one of the major political works of the modern African theatre." Ngugi states that "*The Trial of Dedan Kimathi* stood for as different tradition" and that

> it was affiliated with the culture and aesthetic of resistance developed by the Mau Mau activists as they fought in the mountains; as they resisted in prison and concentration camps and villages; and as they called out for a new Kenya and a new Africa. A good number of the Mau Mau patriotic dances and songs . . . were incorporated both in the text and performance of the play. ("Enactments" 18)

In all three movements, songs in the tune of freedom movement agents, whether in the form of mimes or plain songs accompanied by dance and drumbeats, are inserted to show, as Ngugi observed, that the play stood for a "different tradition." G. Odera Outa explains the reason behind the use of 'Movements' as:

> For Ngugi, the conventional use of acts and scenes is dispensed within the play in favour of movements. Many readers agree that this is part of the author's many attempts to, as it were "decolonise" their form away from sheepish imitation of western canons. Use of movement and phases inject a sense of revolution and in this instance, a historical unfolding of the Kenyan problem. (354)

The act of employing 'Movements', which Outa terms as "revolutionary" is not only limited to the reasons he describes here but also reveals the playwrights' dissent in how a play is to be enacted on the native soil when it is written and performed mainly in English. Outa also maintains that movement one is "replete with didactic/prose as stage directions rather than drama" (354). One may recall that the play had its national premiere and publication in the same year, which means that the playwrights were mindful of and ready for both home audiences and foreign readers.

CONCLUSION:

The Trial of Dedan Kimathi stands as testimony to the dramatists' vision and act of distancing from mere imitation of western dramatic convention in order to project their own dramaturgy in terms of inbuilt African orature and cultural performances. African performing arts such as puppet shows and sketches, masks and masquerades, mimetic dances and songs; etc have been used as mediums of social, cultural, and political commentary, whether through means of "persuasion, manipulation or caricature" for "one of the central functions of the traditional African performing arts was to comment on the events, problems and disputes of the community" (Horn 15). The mixed use of Gikuyu in some of the songs and the rendition of the concluding song accompanied by dance, sung by a soloist and followed by groups, reveal the act of distancing from western conventions and the English language, a move which will culminate into Ngugi's act of reversion to his native Gikuyu/kikuyu for writing. The strength of the text, thus, lies in the deliberate negotiation between the two diverse styles and conventions of western theatre and African oral traditions and the usage of both English and local languages of Gikuyu and Kiswahili.

The ending of the drama wherein the Judge pronounces Kimathi's sentence, to which Kimathi laughs, and the commotion where the Boy and the Girl both announce "Not dead!" (84) is left to the readers and audience's interpretation. It may either mean that the freedom movement continues despite Kimathi's death or that Kimathi does not die, that he becomes a living legend, a part of cultural myth. The dramatists, through the text, have played a part in ensuring that the cultural hero's legend

does not die, that he was not a mere rebel but a man of many qualities and shortcomings just like any other human being who sacrificed his life for the sake of his country.

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Rabindranath Tagore's Politics of Performance and His Idea of Nation Building

Biprajit Bhattacharjee

In the 19th century Bengal, theatre acquired a colonial identity. To the British imperialists theatre became a powerful social and political tool to impose a cultural bearing and to presume that it wasthe superior one. Although Rabindranath was uncompromising in his repudiation of the colonial subjugation, but in his attempt to retrieve the pre-colonial past and to emulsify it with the modern theatrical sensibilities, in every step he was posed with pertaining questions related to the potency or effectiveness of such an endeavour. He realized that he couldn't entirely reject the colonial imposition, as he was living in the epoch of colonialism. So, he had to adapt and blend the colonial tropes albeit in the right spirit as reconstructing the nation's identity without the frames of references used by the colonizers was next to impossible because the methodologies, rhetorical forms, epistemologies were already 'contaminated' and informed by Western ones. Rabindranath's move towards creating an indigenous non-realistic performance aesthetic, while not entirely rejecting the Western theatrical sensibilities, was synonymous with his vision of a new cultural space which would be representative of the contemporary Indian reality – a reality that upholds the past but also honours the present. And in the formation of this new space – built on the artistic, aesthetic, theoretical and philosophical edifice of the nation – he was conscious of the role of theatre and his role as a dramatist. Anchoring on Rabindranath's strong anti-colonial stance, which coincided with his vision of a new nation, it is imperative that we draw our attention to his modes of constructing, imagining and representing this nation. In this regard, the idea of locality or community becomes a pivotal aspect, as it effectively connects the issues of cultural identity and nationhood.

Rabindranath's move to Santiniketan led to a paradigm shift in his theatrical idiom. It not only gave him a window of opportunity to furnish his idea of an alternative/parallel theatre, but also allowed him to experiment with the inhabitants of Santiniketan which in a way triggered a new spirit of community building and cosmopolitanism. Here Rabindranath's idea of *samaj* (society/community), which he hails above everything else,is vital, as it forms the core of his theory of nation and nationalism. In his seminal essay 'Swadeshi Samaj' (1904) he writes, "The core of a nation is where the collective welfare of the people is located. To inflict any damage to this core is to cause injurious harm to the entire nation."[1] In Santiniketan, with the establishment of his *ashram-school,* he was committed to building a community around his idea of *swadeshi samaj* and thrust it towards self-empowerment or *atmasakti.* Partha Chatterjee argues that "the distinctive feature of the local experiment is always that it retains the immediacy of the face-to-face community, and uses its vast resources of deep and dense interpersonal memories to invoke trust and innovate subtle solutions."[2] In this endeavour, perhaps Rabindranath was trying to locate and mould a *self* that was culturally and historically emancipated, liberated from the hegemonic power structures, within the communities and their spaces in Santiniketan– a self that was representative of the spirit of the growing nation. And the growth of this ideal *self*, built within the framework of the lived space, was facilitated through interpersonal bonds, sharing of histories, memories and a holistic approach towards education, practiced in his *ashram-school.* Edward Thompson writes:

> It should be noted first, that the poet planned much more than a school. He sought a home for the spirit of India, distracted and torn in the conflicting storms of the age. The unity of India has been a dream present with some of her greater sons. Here he felt it might begin to be realized with a completeness hitherto unattained.[3]

During his lifetime Rabindranath had gone through several phases where his ideological negotiations with the concept of nation evolved. And it's also very clear that Rabindranath's relationship with nation, in general and of nationalism in India, in particular was very complex but his quest for securing the identity of the individual of this nation never

ceased. And its purpose was to connect the individual consciousness with the universal consciousness which Rabindranath saw as a prerequisite for the discovery of the true self. In his essay "The Relation of the Individual to the Universe" Rabindranath remarks:

> […] to attain our world-consciousness, we have to unite our feeling with this all-pervasive infinite feeling. In fact, the only true human progress is coincident with this widening of the range of feeling. All our poetry, philosophy, science, art, and religion are serving to extend the scope of our consciousness towards higher and larger spheres. Man does not acquire rights through occupation of larger space, nor through external conduct, but his rights extend only so far as he is real, and his reality is measured by the scope of his consciousness.[4]

Now here he adheres strongly to the philosophy of self or *atman*, whose traits are displayed by several characters in his plays – be it the King in *Raja,* or Sanyasi in *Sarodotsav*. *Atman* in the Upanishads is the unchanging, eternal, innermost radiant Self that is unaffected by personality, unvanquished by ego. Atman is something that is ever-free and never-bound – the realized purpose, and the meaning of liberation in life.[5] The resolutions in many of Rabindranath's plays, display a constant urge for the effusion of this belief which is rooted in the philosophy of renunciation. In western philosophy the idea of the *self* revolves around the binary construction of nature and nurture, where the onus is on *becoming*. Whereas in Indian Vedantic philosophy this realization is located within the perception of *being. Being* is the source of potentiality which must be harnessed in order to reach a state of awareness which is essential for self-empowerment or *atmasakti*. And in a sense Rabindranath's idea of the *self* intersects with the motto of Visva-Bharati – "where the world makes its home in a single nest." Some stray examples can be provided to analyse how Rabindranath envisioned his nation. In the play *King of the Dark Chambers*, at the very beginning we find a few wayfarers who have come to the city conversing with a city guard on the street. They ask the city guard to show them the way that leads to the place where the big festivities are going to take place.

CITY GUARD: Where do you want to go?

> THIRD MAN: To where those big festivities are going to be held, you know. Which way do we go?
>
> CITY GUARD: One street is quite as good as another here. Any street will lead you there. Go straight ahead, and you cannot miss the place.
>
> FIRST MAN: Just hear What the fool says: "Any street Will lead you there!" Where, then, would be the sense of having so many streets?
>
> SECOND MAN: You needn't be so awfully put out at that, my man. A country is free to arrange its affairs in its own way. As for roads in our country—well, they are as good as non-existent; narrow and crooked lanes, a labyrinth of ruts and tracks. Our King does not believe in open thoroughfares; he thinks that streets are just so many openings for his subjects to fly away from his kingdom. It is quite the contrary here; nobody stands in your way; nobody objects to your going elsewhere if you like to; and yet the people are far from deserting this kingdom. With such streets our country would certainly have been depopulated in no time.[6]

What appears to be a simple conversation can be interpreted as a profound philosophical critique. This reveals Rabindranath's deeper understanding of Vedantic philosophy and the Upanishads which brings to mind the old adage "all roads lead to Rome". Vedanta asserts that truth comes in numerous shapes and forms, but in search of that truth all roads reach the same goal. The paths are unique but the destination is the same. But the truth can only be reached when true discovery of the *self* is accomplished. Rabindranath's characters from time to time also embark on this journey of revelations from darkness to enlightenment. Road becomes an important and recurring symbol in order to show both inner and outward journey of the individual to realize his/her full potential. But in this quest for truth the characters don't shy away from evaluating or critiquing their steps which Michel Foucault deems essential for individual freedom and the politics of self. According to him, it is a way through which the self can maintain mobility of mind and spirit, avoid the set, stereotypical interpretations of the present that is ever-changing, and maintain a critical awareness. While a critique or anatomization does

not declare truth, it instead analyses, what Foucault explains as, various "discourses of truth".[7] It helps make available one's ability to exert freedom in a civilized world dictated by forces of power. We can see Rabindranath's characters tread similar paths and navigate through these multifarious discourses in search of a realization. Queen Sudarshana from *King of the Dark Chambers* with her soul's trepidations and her quest for love is a perfect example.

Rabindranath, with his strong emphasis on character development, was trying to retrieve and reconfigure a cultural past – contesting established stereotypes and reaffirming the cultural histories and identities – to strengthen his idea of nation. And he was persistent in this effort. In Santiniketan, in his *ashram-school* he took a hands-on approach in the productions of his plays. He himself used to coach his actors, filling their minds with necessary details, to facilitate a sense of cognizance in them, which was both introspective and aesthetic. Sahana Debi (Basu), said that Rabindranath 'opened another world before my eyes – an inner world of beauty and truth'.[8] The rehearsals of his plays would exude a spirit that was akin to Moscow Art Theatre and Abbey Theatre as Rathindranath himself confirms:

> In both of these enterprises, as at Santiniketan, it was not the individual artist so much as the effect produced by the spirit that moved the whole group of actors which impressed the audience and convinced them of the sincerity of the effort and gave them complete artistic satisfaction.[9]

These rehearsals and subsequent theatre productions oiled the wheels of not only Rabindranath's vision of a separate theatre semiology but simultaneously appropriated his ideological move to establish a *swadeshi* model for theatre in India.

While he was demarcating the cultural soil of India with his ideological assumptions of a nation, he was also conjuring up an image of an ideal leader of that nation. For Rabindranath, who has always put his faith in individuals possessing moral strength and spiritual conviction, these strong-willed individuals would lead the nation forward. He emphasizes on this in his essay "The Nation":

> […] I do not put my faith in any new institution, but in the individuals all over the world who think clearly, feel nobly, and act rightly, thus becoming the channels of moral truth. Our moral ideals do not work with chisels and hammers. Like trees, they spread their roots in the soil and their branches in the sky, without consulting any architect for their plans.[10]

Rabindranath's portrayal of Kings in his plays has been profoundly intriguing. As his plays have evolved through time, so have his kings. They have shown prudence, self-control, justice and courage – qualities which are more or less expected from an ideal leader – in stringent circumstances, performing daunting tasks.Although the kings represent the monarchy, but in Rabindranath's world he is still an individual whose moral predisposition aligns with the interest of the common masses. In this vein they are somewhat akin to Plato's concept of the philosopher king – the backbone of his *ideal state*. This idea, discussed assiduously in Plato's book *Republic,* was derived from his belief that the philosopher possessed the intellect, knowledge and training to govern a nation. An ideal leader, according to Plato, is someone who not only safeguards the lives and well-being of his subjects but also transforms them as humas beings. The philosopher ruler was the right person to govern, for he would be less enthused about acquiring power for his own sake. Rabindranath's Kings have also shown similar traits in their governing and treatment of their subjects – with their judgement soused in rationality and dipped in morality. Gobindamanikya from *Visarjan (Sacrifice),* Bijoyaditya from *Sarodotsav (Autumn Festival)*, Raja from *Raja (The King of the Dark Chambers)* are archetypes of rulers displaying such qualities – bordering on the ideal of a sage-king. Rabindranath, in establishing his model leader, like Plato, also sketches contrasting figures in the same plays – a foil to his King – who despite being someone authoritative and powerful, or sometimes even another King, doesn't really possess the attributes needed to rule and impart justice. Raja Pratapaditya of Jessore [now in Bangladesh], in Rabindranath's play *Prayaschitta* (1909), an adaptation of the novel *Bou Thakuranir Hat*, is a controversial figure who shows characteristics of an absolute ruler unrestrained by law. In *Muktodhara,* the despotic king Ranajit who is

blinded by greed and an incessant urge to control Shiv-tarai stands in sharp contrast to his adopted son, the spirited Abhijit. In *Sacrifice*, the weak-willed Nakshatraray who is the younger brother of Gobindamanikya, who under influence plots against his own brother, in *Raja* the imposter King Suvarna, and in *Sarodotsav,* the character of Sompal, are contrasting characters who play huge roles in establishing the necessity of a ruler, who is fair, resolute and whose core concerns rest on duty and responsibility.

Rabindranath's treatment of his male characters has been deeply interesting. In his endeavour to reconfigure the concept of manliness and masculinity as a syncretic space that appreciates and accommodates gender fluidity Rabindranath was, in all likelihood, eyeing for an alternative masculinity that would also imbibe or absorb certain effeminate characteristics. And theatre became an important medium to showcase that. Not only in his dramas, but also in his novels and short stories we have seen that Rabindranath's ideal men never operate in extremes. They are shown as thoughtful, caring, persevering individuals trying to do the right thing in the face of absurdity. And also, at some crucial juncture or moment they exhibit a melancholic helplessness as if they are caught between two worlds enduring the conflict of opposing forces. As the crown prince from *Muktodhara (The Waterfall, 1922),* Abhijit, in a conversation with Sanjay, says: "The pursuit of the hard is for praying the price of the sweet."[11] In the end they emerge from a state of yielding defeat to one of dignified awareness. Perhaps Rabindranath's weaving of his characters was a fervent political exercise – an act of resisting the colonial position.

With the passage of time Rabindranath's creative efforts to contemporize themes of liberation and salvation continued. His theatrical idiom was also evolving. In his later phase as a dramatist, his experimentation with dance dramas encapsulated all that he thought was impossible to be expressed through words or written text. His inclination towards this form is evident when he says that "theatre has to be a kind of dance, the rhythm of which will go hand in hand with the rhythm of the poetic text. There is nothing more ridiculous than the Western style of reciting poetry along with gross realistic imitation of everyday gestures and

postures."[12] Along with the mind the body was also a potential site for the colonial powers to dominate. We have seen that in colonial representation exclusion and suppression can often be seen as 'embodied'. Probably with liberating the mind there was also an attempt from Rabindranath's part to liberate the body. With *Natir Puja* (1926), he introduced dance as a means of theatrical expression which was seen as a radical step by many. Moving forward in his plays we can see several inspirations working simultaneously. From the Japanese Noh and Kabuki theatre to Javanese dance, Rabindranath was deeply enamoured by the Eastern language of dance. Abhijit Sen stresses:

This change in perception was, perhaps, the result of yet another ideological shift, for Rabindranath by now was not only focusing on the East and promoting it as a better alternative to the West, but was putting together a more inclusive concept of internationalism, as a confluence of East and West.[13]

The staging of *Natir Puja* is culturally, historically and aesthetically significant for another reason too. It pronounced the return of women of respectable middle-class families on stage; women of noble birth who were far too long ignored and were not allowed on stage. Rabindranath's effort dismissed the social taboo that was attached with dance and women participating in it, and in a way led to a social reformation as he legitimized and firmly placed this art-form in the heart of the cultural fabric of India. With *Shapmochan*, Rabindranath stretched the boundaries of his theatrical poetics and practice even further. Most of the dramatic communication remained speechless. The story was narrated by the poet himself and the actors mimed in tune with his narration. And in the play, from the beginning to end, there is a ceaseless dance pattern, which is why the poet called it *nritya-abhinaya* (dance enactment).[14] This pattern continued in his final plays –*Chitrangada* (1936), which was a rework of his earlier verse play; *Chandalika* (1938), again a revision of his prose play; and *Shyama* (1939), a version of which we find in *Parishodh* (1936). With his dance dramas, Rabindranath was probably searching for an emancipated Woman who would represent his new nation – women "who challenge conventions and lay claim to greater freedom and decision-making power by exercising their choices in life; who reason, interrogate,

reject, and reconstruct their own identities by struggling against stereotypical roles and mindless adherence to exploitative cultural practices."[15]

Rabindranath's imagination of an emancipated cultural space found coherence with his notion of an egalitarian society as his ideological understandings and negotiations with body, mind and spirit continued. He was going through an intellectual adventure where brewing inside him was this sudden urgency and awareness regarding the unexpected possibilities of theatre and performance. He was convinced that performances can be a comprehensive repository of knowledge and a very potent medium for conveying emotions – his dance dramas reflected this belief thoroughly.

Richard Schechner in his book *Performance Studies* has delineated the seven functions of a performance, which he specifies as the 'seven interlocking spheres of performance'. Quite interestingly Schechner's thought here can very well converge with Rabindranath's theatrical philosophy and praxis. The functions of a performance according to Schechner are: to entertain, to create beauty, to mark or change identity, to make or foster community, to heal, to teach or persuade, to deal with the sacred and the demonic.[16]

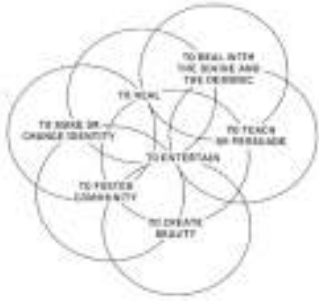

Fig 3.1. The seven interlocking spheres of performance.
Drawing by Richard Schechner.[17]

Rabindranath in his own unique way actually touched on these aspects while prescribing his theory of theatre. His ashram-school at Santiniketan, acted as a theatre laboratory where he could explore and experiment with

various means of theatrical production. Teaching became an integral part of this process. His call for a community living at Sanitniketan was reciprocated by the inhabitants, especially women, who after a point of time willingly participated in his creative endeavours. Thus, the making and fostering of community was also facilitated by Rabindranath's radical practices. At the same time, while envisaging a new nation he was also reconstructing the identity of the people of that nation. In relation to this, his reliance on *atmashakti* and his underscoring of the role of *self* in earning this *atmashakti* is crucial. Also, Rabindranath didn't really adhere to the binary constructs of the divine and the demonic. For him the demonic is a condition during one's journey towards the realization of the divine or the sacred, as he says "For the evil has to pass on, it has to grow into good."[18]

The idea of beauty though is very difficult to define. As Schechner says, "beauty is not equivalent to being "pretty"".[19] Rabindranath's interpretation of beauty has never been about the body, nor the outward appearance, it is about realizing the truth. In his essay "The Realization of Beauty" Rabindranath comments: "Through our sense of truth we realize law in creation, and through our sense of beauty we realize harmony in the universe"[20] In his play *The King of the Dark Chambers* Rabindranath plays with the discourse of beauty. He stresses on the fact that beauty and illusion are two entirely different perspectives. The world that is illusory is far removed from the world of beauty or truth and being influenced or enamoured by it can lead to destruction of the self. Though Rabindranath's plays attempted something beyond entertainment, as they promote a sense of contemplation among the audience, the entertainment value embedded within them cannot be entirely rejected.

Finally with his formulation of a new theatre he was trying to heal a nation that was wounded, that was ravaged by the colonial penetrations, signalling the dawn of a new era in the history of Bengali theatre. A play like *Dakghar (The Post Office)* has a therapeutic effect that transcends the earthly ideas of pain, agony and even death. This is probably why in the face of imminent death Janus Korczak, the Polish writer, educationist, and doctor chose to perform *The Post Office* with 200 children at the Warsaw Ghetto only a month before their death inside the Nazi gas-

chamber. A surviving eyewitness called the performance "a heart-rending experience, the likes of which could never be seen again."[21] After the performance when Koczak was asked why he chose particularly this play, he replied: "One must finally learn to accept the angel of death in peace."[22] Similarly in the 2006 performance of *Dakghar*by Kalakshetra Manipur, directed by Heisnam Kanhailal, the child protagonist Amal was presented as a symbol, with the sixty years old H. Sabitri enacting the role. In that production Amal "signified something else: not just the human spirit but Manipur herself, indoctrinated and languishing in ill health as the doctor prescribes the 'cure' of closing all windows."[23]

Thus, in Rabindranath's theatre we find a perfect accommodation of the aesthetic and political paradigms of his times. His conception of a new semiology for theatre became an intense political act of cultural resurgence, a bold step at reconfiguring the cultural milieu of the country.

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Hamlet's Most Famous Soliloquy In Hindi Mode And Mood

Shamsad Nahar

Perhaps of all Shakespeare's plays *Hamlet* has the most translations across the globe. In 2018 the globally renowned theatre expert Dr. Mark Burnett presented his major research work on Hamlet films and Hamlet inspired films and adaptations across all the languages in the world- from India and the sub-continent and spanning all the continents and countries that have any kind of stage and film tradition. Inspired by Prof. Burnett who participated in a video conference in 2021 with us at the Shakespeare Society site I have chosen Hamlet's most famous soliloquy ('To be or not to be, that is the question') and explore some select Hindi versions including one of my own.

1

I have studied some versions of these soliloquy in a few European languages. For example, in German the opening lines are translated by Goethe as "Seinodernichtsein/Das ist die frage". But my knowledge of European languages being limited I have chosen to focus on the English version in Hindi the translation/transcreation- a language of which I have competent knowledge and control.

In this paper I have first given the original English soliloquy and then followed it up with my own Hindi version. After this I have appended some highly interesting lines of the soliloquy from Vishal Bhardwaj's outstanding film version *Haider* of Shakespeare's play. This film has now become world-famous but the question remains whether this is a play about Kashmir using Shakespeare's *Hamlet* or is it a film version of *Hamlet* using Kashmir as its setting?

The concluding section of the paper includes several Hindi versions of the soliloquy- Sayed Irfan Ali in 2017, Taranga Banerjee in 2020, VishantMiglani in 2020. From these I have taken only some excerpts which appeared to me to be somewhat different from the others.

Shakespeare's plays, specially the tragedies, include a great number of soliloquys which have been called direct 'self-expression' by E. E. Stoll in his *Art and Artifice* in Shakespeare published by C.U.P. (1927). A soliloquy is akin to Dramatic Monologue but in the later we have an implied listener who does not speak (as in Browning's My Last Duchess). In the soliloquy is a verbalised stream of consciousness of the speaker who addresses no one but only unburdens his soul. The audience overhears what the character says. I now give 'to be or not to be' soliloquy in the original.

Soliloquy:

To be, or not to be, that is the question:
Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles
And by opposing end them. To die—to sleep,
No more; and by a sleep to say we end
The heart-ache and the thousand natural shocks
That flesh is heir to: 'tis a consummation
Devoutly to be wish'd. To die, to sleep;
To sleep, perchance to dream—ay, there's the rub:
For in that sleep of death what dreams may come,
When we have shuffled off this mortal coil,
Must give us pause—there's the respect
That makes calamity of so long life.
For who would bear the whips and scorns of time,
Th'oppressor's wrong, the proud man's contumely,
The pangs of dispriz'd love, the law's delay,

The insolence of office, and the spurns
That patient merit of th'unworthy takes,
When he himself might his quietus make
With a bare bodkin? Who would fardelsbear,
To grunt and sweat under a weary life,
But that the dread of something after death,
The undiscovere'd country, from whose bourn
No traveller returns, puzzles the will,
And makes us rather bear those ills we have
Than fly to others that we know not of?
Thus conscience does make cowards of us all,
And thus the native hue of resolution
Is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought,
And enterprises of great pitch and moment
With this regard their currents turn awry
And lose the name of action.

(Act iii, Sc I)

2

I have translated the soliloquy in Hindi version here:

रहना है या फिर नहीं रहना है...
यही तो सवाल है...
आच्छा किया है...!
जालिम तकदीर की नीर की चोट को
मन ही मन सहन करना,
हां फिर, कश्मकश की समुंदर की
खिलप जा कर, हत्यारों को अपनाना,
और पूरी तरह से लड़कर उनका खात्मा करना।

मर जाना...सो जाना
इसके इलाबा जादा कुछ नेही
काश के हम एक निंद लेके
कहे सकते कि सिने भी अब कोई
दर्द नेही...
और नेही वो हज़ार चोट ज़िंदगी की,
जो हाड़ मांस की इस पुतले को बिरासत में मिला है।

निंद में ही खत्म हो जाते हैं
हमारे दिल की दर्द भरी गुंजायशे,
और शरीर की हर वो घाऊ
और फिर यही तो अकमात्र कामना है।

मृत्यु, सो जन; सोना या फिर
सपनों की तले गुम हो जाना...
जी, हां...इसी में ही तो पेच है;
कौन जाने ज़िंदगी की उस गठरी उठ जाने के बाद,
मौत की उस नींद में
ना जाने कैसे कैसे सपने आए;
इसी के डर से ही तो हम खिटक जाते हैं
और झेले जाते है जिंदगी को...
एक लंबी, काली बाला की तरह।

और अगर ऐसा नहीं है तो
जमाने की नफरत को कोधे कोन साहे?
कोन साहे जुल्मी की जुल्म...
घमांडी की गरिमा, कानून की ढिलाई,
हुकुम की तेवर, नालायको की ठोक्कर,

और ना-कमियाब प्यार की तकलीफ और कास्ट को,
जो भी कुछ एक सज्जन इंसान झेलता है
दूसरे अयोग्य लोगो से...
की जरूरत है
जब वो खुद ही
एक नंगी छुरी से अपना हिसाब
बेबक कर सकता है।

थकी, बझिल और पसीना से लतपत
ज़िन्दगी की गटरी कौन धोये...!

अगर मौत की बाद भी कोई
गुमनाम चीज के डर,
इंसान कि होसले को
हिलाकर रख सकता है।

मौत, एक गुमनाम देश
जिसके सरहत से कोई मुसाफिर
कभी वापस नेही लौटा,
और अपने डर की करण
है हम अपनी परेशानी से भाग ने से वजाई
हम उन्हें छेले जाते हैं...
इसीलिये नकी हमें पता नेही
वो दुसरे तकलीफ-ए कैसी होगी...

और सोच-विचार, जी हाँ, यही सोच-विचार
संकल्प की स्वस्त रंग पर अपना पिला पिला
रंग चोर कर,

हम सब को
कायर बना देता है।

और बड़े बड़े काम,
इनहि रयंगिस्तान-ओ में पड़ कर
कुछ इस तरह से भटक जाते हैं कि
कर्मा की संघा भी खो जाते हैं।

Rehna hai ya phir ne hireh na hai..
Yehi to sawal hai…
Accha keya hai..!
Jalim takdeer ki tira ki chot ko
Man hi man sahan karna,
Ya phir, kashmakash ki samundar ki
Khilap ja kar, hatiyar ko apnana,
Aur puri tarah se larkar unka khatma karna.

Mar jana..so jana
Iske ilaba jada kuch nehi
Kash ke hum ek nind leke
Kahe sakte ki…. sine me ab koi
Dard nehi…
Aur nehi wo hajar chot zindegi ki,
Jo har mansa ki is putle ko birasat me mila hai.

Nind me hi khatam ho jate hai
Hamare dil ki dard bhari gunjayeshe,
Aur sarir ki har wo ghaon;
Aur phir yehi to akmatra kamana hai.

Mrityu, so jana; sona ya phir
Swapno ki tale gum ho jana..

Ji, haan..isi me hi to pech hai;
Kon jane zindegi ki us gathri uth jane ke baad,
Mautki us neend me
Na jane kaise kaise sapne aye;
Isi ke darr se hi to hum khitak jate hai
Aur jhele jate hai zindegi ko…
Ek lambi, kali bala ki tarah.

Aur agar aisa nehi hai to
Zamane ki nafrat ki kodhe ko kon sahe?
Kon sahe zulmi ki zulm…
Ghamandi ki garima, kanun ki dhilayi,
Hukkum ki tewar, nalayako ki thokkar,
Aur na-kamiyab pyar ki taklif aur kasta ko,
Jo bhi kuch ek sajjan insaan jhelta hai
Dusre ajogya logo se…
Keya jarurat hai
Jab wo khud hi
Ek nangi churi se apna hisab
Bebak kar sakta hai.

Thaki, bazhil aur paseena se latpat
Zindegi ki gatri kon dhoye….!

Agar maut ki baad bhi koi
Gumnaam cheez ki darr,
Insan ki hosle ko
Hilakar rakh sakta hai.

Maut, ek gumnam desh
Jiske sarhat se koi musafir
Kabhi wapas nehi lauta,
Aur apne is darr ki karan

Hum apni pareshani se vaag ne se wajai
Hum unhe jhele jate hai…..
Isiliye naki humhe pata nehi
Wo dusre taklif-e kaisi hogi…

Aur soch-bichar, ji haan, yehi soch-bichar
Sankalp ki swasta rang par apna pilla pilla
Rang chor kar,
Hum sab ko,
Kayar bana deta hai.

Aur bare bare kaam,
Inhi rengisthan-o me par kar
Kuch is tarah se bhatak jate hai ki
Karma ki sangha bhi kho jate hai.

Vishal Bhardwaj, along with a Kashmiri journalist Basharat Peer has presented an adaptation of Shakespeare's most ambitious play, *Hamlet.* The film is a modern-day reproduction of the tragedy of Hamlet set amidst the insurgency-hit Kashmir of 1995. This paper has tried to compare Hamlet's soliloquy "To be or not to be, that is the question"-with Haiders's monologue "Main rahoon ki main nahi". We listen to these lines from Sahid Kapoor playing the role of Hamlet as Haider.

Shaq pe hai yaqeen to, yaqeen pe hai shaq mujhe
Kiska jhoot jhoot hai, kiske sach mein sach nahi.
Hai ki hai nahi, bas yahi hi sawal hai.
Aur sawaal ka jawaab bhi sawaal hai.
Dil ki agar sunu to hai, dimaag ki hain nahi.
Jaan looj ki jaan doon, main rahoon ki main nahi.

Here I give my English re-translation of the same.

If I am certain about my suspicion, I am also suspicious about the certainty
Whose lies are absolute lies, whose truth has no truth

Does it exist or does it not, that is the only question
And the answer to that is just another question
My heart says it exists, my mind says it does not
Should I take a life or should I take my life,
Should I continue to live or should I just die.

3

Several Hindi versions of the soliloquy of others are included here-

1

SHAKESPEARE HAMLET

SYED IRFAN ALI HINDI AUDIO BOOK

27 JUNE 2017

Zindegi ya maut…
Zinda rahna chahiye ya
Khudkasi karke zindegi ki khatma karna chahiye
……..
……..
Maut ki zindegi ki bare me ilm na hone ki wajah se
Hum buzdil ban jate hai.

2.

HAMLET MONOLOGUE: TO BE OR NOT BE (HINDI)
PERFORMED BY TARANGA BANERJEE
2 JANUARY 2020

Rehna hai ya nehi rahna hai
Yehi sawal hai
……..
……..
Bare bare kaam inhi chakkar me par kar

Registhan me kuch is tarah bhatak jate hai
Ke mano karma ki sangha bhi kho bethte hai.
Rahna hai ya nehi rahna hai..
Yehi sawal hai
Yehi sawal hai.

3.

TO BE OR NOT BE

PERFORMED BY VISHANT MIGLANI

1 APRIL 2020

Rahna hai ya nehi rahna hai
Yehi to sawal hai
Yehi to sawal hai
……..
……..
……..
Aur bare bare kaam
Aur bare bare kaam
Yinhi chakra me parkar
Registhan me kuch is tarah
Kho bethte hai
Ki manab jaise karma ki sangha
Bhi kho bethta hai
Rahna hai ya nehi rahna hai.

In conclusion after going through all these Hindi versions I can say that these reveal how a language and a culture (Hindi and Indian) have responded during the last decade to Shakespeare's most famous soliloquy.

N.B. Shakespeare's English original is taken from the book *Hamlet* by William Shakespeare published in Penguin Popular Classics 1994

Rasa Theory of Indian Aesthetics: The Concepts of *Bhava* and Rasa

Gargi Bhattacharya

Bharatamuni's *Natyasastra* is the earliest treatise on drama available in any civilization. It rivals Aristotle's theory of Catharsis as propounded in Poetics in its scope, its rigorous concepts of the theatrical art, of stagecraft and the role of the spectators. It is especially famous for laying down the cornerstone for Indian aesthetics in the form of the *Rasa* Theory, which is imperative in the understanding and appreciation of all Indian arts, since most follow the rules laid down by the sage even after the passage of centuries. The *Rasa* Theory claims itself as one of the most authentic, original, credible and enduring theories in Oriental arts, and theorists and performers attach immense importance to its merits. Bharata also refers to *bhavas*, the imitations of emotions that the actors perform, and the *rasas* (emotional responses) that they inspire in the audience. To that extent, the eminence of the *Natyasastra* cannot be overstated. The paper looks at the exponents of *bhava* and *rasa*, their definitions, degrees and varying forms in performance, and elucidates the role played by the concepts of *bhava* and *rasa* in both the artistic and the spectatorial arena. It also explains the importance of *Natyasastra* in the evolution of the theory of art and society, and the relation between the *rasas* and *bhavas* as they are made manifest in the secret art of the performer.

In its very first chapter, *The Natyasastra* records the legendary origin of drama which is imperative to the understanding of Indian dramaturgy in the sense that it establishes the antiquity and pre-existence of the art form taking the author's composition date as a reference point. The Gods, led by Indra, went to Brahma, the God of creation, and requested him to create an art form which would dissipate both visual and auditory pleasure. They further urged Brahma to create another *Veda* in the form

of this art which could be made accessible to people of all castes, unlike the four existing *Vedas* which could be sung or recited only by the Brahmins, and were denied to the low-caste Shudras. Thereafter Brahma went onto deep meditation and created the art of drama, taking and combining elements from all four *Vedas*: '*katha'* or '*pathyam'* (recitals) from the *Rigveda*; '*Gitam*' (songs and music) from the *Sama Veda*; '*Abhnaya'* histrionics and gestural representation) from the *Yajur Veda* and finally, '*Rasas*' (translated, though inadequately, as 'sentiments') from the *Atharva Veda*.

Therefore, we find at the very outset. '*Rasa'* being identified as one of the four essential components of the *Natya Veda* which came to be known as the fifth *Veda*. The first chapter gives us three vital informations about the '*Rasas*'. Firstly, by mentioning that the concept of Rasa was already incorporated in one of the earlier of the Vedas, Bharata asserts that the concept was not an accidental invention, but a time-tested phenomeon inextricably linked to the seminal discourse of the Indian philosophical thought—the Vedas. Secondly, since the Vedas are associated with knowledge (*Veda* is derived from the root word '*vid'* in Sanskrit, meaning 'to know') and '*Rasa'* has already been an acknowledged part of one of the *Vedas,* namely *Atharva Veda*, a tacit relationship between the '*Rasas*' with knowledge of some kind is being implied. Only, in *The Natyasastra*, the rasas function in conjunction with the objective knowledge to make it more palatable to the common mind:

> In *kavya*, knowledge is constituted and communicated in a manner different from the *sastras.* "Its organization of *artha* is *sarasa*" (Raja-sekhara, *Kavyamimamsa,* Chapter 9), that is, knowledge is meaning imbued with rasa and therefore pleasurable…This *kavya* achieves by making tranquil peasure, *ananda* (which results from *rasanubhuti*), as its central experience. (Kapoor 101)

Thirdly, by insisting that *Natya Veda* is to be accessible to all the four *varna* (castes), Bharata clarifies that all men are capable of *rasanubhuti* (the felt experience) and that, difference of social status or birth do not exclude or pre-empt the possibility of the rasa-experience. This not only helps us to identify the universality of the rasa-experience but also highlights the principe of equality underlying the Indian art experience. The concept

of rasa, therefore, underlines the fact that the Indian aesthetic framework is not exclusive but inclusive. It cuts across constructed and formulated barriers of caste and class, and propounds the theory of art as a unifying cultural phenomenon, which is the cornerstone of any civilization. It enforces cultural participation from all classes and all corridors of the community, and precludes the possibility of class conflict within the realm of art. Fourth, and most important, is the fact that the association with divinity by virtue of its genealogical descent also sacralises *The Natyasastra*, and therefore removes art from the realm of the mundane to the realm of the divine. It prohibits the commercialization of art, and advocates patronage of artists by royalty, since, as part of his *rajadharma*, the king is obliged to look after the all-round development of his subjects, which includes education through didactic performances. It ensures employment and guarantees sustenance to the artists, who may belong to any caste or class whatsoever.

In the Chapter Six of *The Natyasastra*, Bharata enumerates the eleven elements of drama in the order as follows here:

1. *rasas*
2. *bhavas*
3. *abhinaya*
4. *dharmi*
5. *vrtti*
6. *pravrtti*
7. *siddhi*
8. *svaras*
9. *todya*
10. *gna*
11. *ranga*

It is noteworthy that these elements, when rearranged in an inverted order, represent the development of a theatre-goer's experience which culminates in the production of rasa, also known as *rasanispatti*. Rasa, therefore, is that conducive state to the production of which all human endeavour is aimed. *Rasanispatti* is the very soul of aestheticism. Without

the experience of rasa, no art is deemed successful. It is at once the climactic achievement in artistic excellence as well as the cathartic crest and fall of spectatorial emotions. *Rasanispatti*, in other words, finally unites the art with the artist.

Rasa was originally a chemical term, meaning 'mercury'. *Rasayana*, or the science of rasas, is the Indian equivalent or counterpart of alchemy, which in modern terms came to be known as 'chemistry'. This term rasa, when imported in the culinary domain, came to mean the juice, essence or taste. In the *Vaisesika* philosophy, this rasa or 'relish', is deemed to be one of the twenty-five *gunas*, or attributes, while in context of art experience, it has come to signify a certain poetic sentiment or state of being that is arrived at after undergoing some aesthetic participation, which is elucidated in the Rasa theory of *The Natyasastra*. According to the Rasa theory propounded by Bharata in *The Natyasastra*:

> No [poetic] meaning proceeds from speech without [any kind of] Sentiment. Out of the combination (*samyoga*) of the Determinants (*vibhava*), the Consequents (*anubhava*), and the Transitory Mental States (*vyabhicarin*), the birth of Rasa takes place. (Gnoli, p. 25)

It is evident from this definition, therefore, that to comprehend the implications of the term 'rasa', one needs must necessarily understand the term '*bhava*' as well. In rasa theory, rasa and *bhava* together "constitute a continuum" whence a "*bhava* itself deepens into a rasa or, alternatively, that *bhava* evokes rasa, rasa not coming to being without the *bhava*" (Kapoor, p. 103). While explaining the relation of rasa and *bhava*, Bharata provides a lucid analogy in terms of cooking and tasting (or, as one could also say, relishing) of delicacies:

> …it is said that, as taste (rasa) results from a combination of various spices, vegetables and other articles, and as six[1] tastes are produced by articles such as raw sugar or spices or vegetables, so the Durable Psychological States (*sthayibhava*), when they come together with various other Psychological States, attain the quality of a Sentiment…just as well-disposed persons while eating food cooked with many kinds of spices, enjoy (*asvadayanti*) its tastes, and attain pleasure and satisfaction, so the cultured people taste

> the Durable Psychological States while they see them represented by an expression of the various Psychological States with Words, Gestures and the Sattva, and derive pleasure and satisfaction. (*The Natyasastra*, VI, p. 31)

This complex relationship between *bhava* and *rasa* entails an investigation of the term '*bhava*' and its different forms. The root word for *bhava* is the Sanskrit '*bhu*' which means 'to be'. Therefore '*bhava*' comes to signify that which brings about being (in a particular state of mind):

> *Bhava* is a category in philosophy as well and stands for Being or existence, and also the ultimate meaning. Secondly *bhava* is not in opposition of intellection but a stage in total intellection.. *Bhava* is that which brings about a condition or which gets established (through what happens)…*bhava* means an instrument of being. It may be broadly translated as states of mind or emotional conditions or even emotional consequences of experience...a change in the native state of *mana* (mind). (Kapoor 104-106)

Our experiences consist of these *bhavas* which originate from our interactions with various persons or events. This is where the four-fold cognitive mechanism of *mana* (the heart), *buddhi* (the mind or the intellect), *chitta* (the consciousness) and the *anta:karana* (the soul) comes into play. Through the external senses, the events of the outside world register their presence on us and therefore, whatever happens in life leaves an imprint or impression (*sanskaras*) on our *mana*, *buddhi* and *chitta*. What is evolved in the process is the 'knowing self' or that *chitta* to which the experiences are filtered by our senses, heart and mind, leading to the development of the *anta:karana* or the 'experiening self'. The *chitta* is *niralamban*—it has no definite location. It is that ever cautious part of our consciousness that watches our thoughts and actions. This *chitta* undergoes a meteoric invasion of experiences and in its nature resembles an amorphous, pock-marked bread. These traces of experience (*sanskaras*) that impinge on the *chitta* are those that mould and shape our *bhavas* and therefore are 'being'. The *bhavas* in turn not only determine but are also "further shaped by our responses to *bhavas* (*rasas*), resulting in a continuous tension between experience and being" (Kapoor, 104).

The *rasas* as response to *bhavas* are that which create state of bliss or joyousness (*ananda)* in the audience or the readers. The purpose of the *rasas* is also disseminating knowledge in the sense that they instruct us to control and edit our responses and impulses to various situations and not to let sorrow infiltrate into our consciousness (*chitta vritti nirodha*). The *rasas* make the various forms of *bhavas* (*vibhavas*, *anubhava*, *sattvika,* and *sthayi*) meaningful (*sarthaka*) and in the process, explicates the true essence of *kavya* (*kavyartha*). *Rasobadha* is the ultimate cognition of the meaning of a literary composition through the experience of the dominant poetic sentiments that eventually leads to *jnana* or knowledge.

Although the *rasas* or sentiments are abstract and cannot be seen, we can wi*The Natyasastra* ess their external manifestations in behaviour (known as *anubhava*) which reflect the *manostiti* (state of mind) of the person undergoing the sentiments. The events produce a dominant *bhava*, called the *sthayibhava* which in turn triggers off other auxillary states or *sancharibhavas*. The *sancharibhavas*—also known as *vyabhicharibhavas*—virigate the dominant *bhava* (*sthayi*). The resultant complex mental state is manifested through certain forms of physical demeanour that is acted out, known as *abhinaya*. For instance the dominant or central *bhava* leads to some inevitable physical effects which are involuntarily, intrinsic responses of the body to intense experience, called *sattvikabhavas*. *Sattvikas* are invariant physical responses and do not vary from person to person. It is only *anubhava* or variant physical responses which differ in their mainifestations from one person to the other as they depend on nature or *prakriti* (*uttama-madhyama-nimna* or *sattvika*, *rajasika*, *tamasika*) of the experiencer (*karta*).

The *bhavas* or states are products of a cause, known as *vibhava*. *Uddipana* is the circumstance or context of the *bhavas*, the event or person responsible for them is the *visaya*, while the person in whom the *bhavas* are manifest is known as the *asraya*. The *abhinaya* of *anubhavas*, *sancharibhavas* and *sattvikabhavas* becomes the indicator of the central enunciation of the *sthayibhava*.

There are, according to Bharata, forty-nine *bhavas*, which he describes in details in Chapter VII of *The Natyashastra*. Amongst them, eight (nine,

according to Abhinavagupta) are deemed to be *sthayibhavas*, which are so-called since they are relatively more stable and long lasting. They are generated by strong causes and therefore tend to endure. *Sthayis* are very powerful and are capable of being experienced recurrently by almost everyone. Each *sthayibhava* necessarily corresponds to one of the *rasas*, forming a *rasa-bhava* alliance. The eight *rasas* with their corresponding *bhavas* as explicated by Bharata are:

Rasa	***Bhava***
Sringara (erotic or effulgent)	***Rati*** (love)
Hasya (comic)	***Hasa*** (laughter)
Karuna (compassion)	***Soka*** (sorrow)
Raudra (wrathfulness)	***Krodha*** (anger)
Vira (heroic)	***Utsaha*** (enthusiasm)
Bhayanaka (terrifying)	***Bhaya*** (fear)
Bibhatsa (odium)	***Jugupsa*** (disgust)
Adbhuta (marvellous)	***Vismaya*** (astonishment)

To these existing eight *rasas*, Abhinavagupta added one more—the ***Santa*** *rasa*, which means tranquil or "quietistic"(Gnoli XXXVI), with respective *bhava* of ***Nirveda*** (renunciation or indifference). It is incorrect to suppose, however, that Bharata had not conceived the ***santa*** as a *rasa*. On the contrary, he considered it as the substratum of all other *rasas*. A child is born with an inherent *santa rasa*, and is therefore always at peace. *Santa* is akin to the calmness of the sea. The experience of other *rasas* in one's lifetime are the waves in this unperturbed sea which destroys its sense of abiding peace. The ultimate aim of human life is the recovery of ***santa*** *rasa* and not to yield to the *chitta vrittis*.

Rasa becomes manifest not only through the *sthayi bhavas*, but through an immaculate co-ordination of the *vibhavas*, *anubhava*, sattvika*bhavas* and *sancharibhavas*. Bharata defines eight *sattvikas* or involuntary, immediate physical responses as:

Stambha (paralysis)

Sveda (perspiration)

Romancha (horripilation)

Svarabhanga (change of voice)

Vepathu (trembling)

Vaivaranya (change of colour)

Asru (weeping)

Pralaya (loss of consciousness)

Sattvikabhavas may be temporary and may disappear after a while, but they may also resurface as *anubhavas* in fits, as the nature of the experiencer might demand. Bharata also enumerates thirty-three *sancharibhavas* or ancillary states as:

Nirveda (indifference or impassivity); ***Glani*** (debility); ***Sanka*** (apprehension); ***Asuya*** (envy); ***Mada*** (intoxication of pride); ***Srama*** (weariness); ***Alasya*** (indolence); ***Dainya*** (depression); ***Chinta*** (painful reflecton); ***Moha*** (delusion of mind); ***Smriti*** (recollection); ***Dhrti*** (contentment); ***Vrda*** (shame); ***Capalata*** (insteadiness); ***Harsa*** (joy); ***Avega*** (agitation or flurry); ***Jadata*** (stupefaction); ***Garva*** (arrogance); ***Visada*** (despondency); ***Autsukya*** (impatience); ***Nidra*** (sleep); ***Apasmara*** (dementedness); ***Supta*** (dreaming); ***Vibodha*** (awakening); ***Amarsa*** (animosity or indignation); ***Avahita*** (constraint or dissimulation); ***Ugrata*** (ferocity); ***Mati*** (resolve); ***Vyadhi*** (sickness); ***Unmada*** (madness); ***Marana*** (demise); ***Trasa*** (alarm); ***Vitraka*** (trepidation).

Interestingly, one of the *sancharibhavas*—***Nirveda***—is also the *sthyaibhava* for ***santa rasa.*** Unlike the *sanchar nirveda*, which might be a temporary detachment from worldly concerns, the *sthayi nirveda* must not come from loss or must not be thrust upon the experiencer. This *nirveda* or *udasinata* must develop from a profound insight and wisdom gleaned from the experiences of life. If the *sanchari nirveda* does not disappear but deepens with time, it may be transformed into a *sthayibhava* may ever be turned into a *sancharibhava*, as a central experience cannot be equivalent to a subsidiary one.

Having examined the various kinds of *bhavas* mentioned in *The Natyasastra*, we now turn our attention to the *rasa* once again. A most unique feature of the *rasas* is the almost synaesthetic way a colour has been assigned to each of them according to the nature of the *rasas*. The colours reflet the dominant quality, tone and texture of the *rasas*:

Rasa	***Varnas*** (colours)
Sringara	***Syama*** (Green)
Hasya	***Sita*** (White)
Karuna	***Kapota*** (Dove coloured)
Raudra	***Rakta*** (Red)
Vira	***Gaura*** (Wheatish Brown)
Bhayanaka	***Krsna*** (Black)
Bibhatsa	***Nila*** (Blue)
Adbhuta	***Pita*** (Yellow)

Therefore, categories in opposition are correlated in a definable manner. Colour is something sensory and is usually attributed to something pontifiable or tangible. But here it is related to aesthetic experience in terms of the effect the *rasas* produce in the psyche. Thus, iconography functions here through the instrument of colour, which in turn, makes it comprehensible to readers who would otherwise find it difficult to relate to a complex theoretical structuration that Bharata lends to the *rasas*.

Moreover, the rasas are identified with respective deities whose demeanour or function most aptly convey the mood of the *rasas*, thus crossing categories and forging relations where there do not seem to be any connection:

Rasa	***Deity***
Sringara	***Visnu***
Hasya	***Pramatha***
Karuna	***Yama***
Raudra	***Rudra***

Vira	***Mahendra***
Bhayanaka	***Kala***
Bibhatsa	***Mahakala***
Adbhuta	***Bramha***

The *rasas* are further divided, broadly, into two categories. The four *rasas* of ***Sringara***, ***Raudra***, ***Vira***, ***Bibhatsa*** are designated as the main *rasas* which are the cause of the other *rasas*. This implies that the rest of the *rasas*, namely, ***Hasya, Karuna, Adbhuta*** and ***Bhayanaka*** proceed from the four main *rasas*:

> The imitation of Sringara is termed *Hasya*. The result of the activity of *Raudra* should be known as *Karuna Rasa*, the result of the activity of *Vira* is glorified as *Adbhuta*, the sight of the odious (*Bibhatsa*) transforms into *Bhayanaka* (terrible). (*The Natyasastra*, VI, 39–41)

In the ***Yoga*** philosophy, all the *vrittis* are again divided into two kinds:

(1) '*klista'* or those which destabilize the mind and add to the ignorance and sorrow by fragmenting the consciousness;

(2) '*aklista*' or those which unify the consciousness, integrates the mind and reduces ignorance and sorrow.

Since the *rasas* themselves are *chitta vrittis*, Acharya Ramachandra Shukla, a *Rasa* theorist, has classified the eight *rasas* (in the form of the respective *sthayibhavas*) under the categories mentioned before. If we want to memorise them in a tabular form, they would be represented as follows:

Klista	***Aklista***
Soka	*Rati*
Krodha	*Hasa*
Bhaya	*Utsaha*
Jugupsa	*Vismaya*

Relation between Rasa and *Bhava*

> There is no *Rasa* devoid of *Bhava* nor *Bhava* devoid of *Rasa*. Their effectiveness is mutual in regard to *Abhinaya*.... *Bhavas* and *Rasas* contribute to the mutual development. Just as the tree takes its origin from the seed and the flower and the fruit from the tree, so also the *Rasas* are the root and all the *Bhavas* are stabilized therein. (*The Natyasastra*, VI, 34–38)

By this definition, it is understood that rasa and *bhava* form a bilateral, symbiotic relation with each other. Bharata insists that *bhavas* enable the comprehension of *rasas*, as also *rasas* validate and clarify the existence of the *bhavas*. If *rasa* is the '*mul*' (root), *bhava* is the tree, and *rasa* is again the fruit. Acoording to commentators like Dandin (in the seventh century) and Bhatta Lollata (in the ninth century):

> ...*Rasa* is simply the permanent, mental state (anger, fear, etc) raised to its highest pitch by the combined effect of Determinants, Consequents and Transitory Mental States. (Gnoli XVIII)

But *rasa* is certainly not synonymous to the permanent mental state (or *sthayibhava*) as it is a result of the conjuation of the *sthayibhava* with the *vibhavas*, *sattvikas*, *sancharis* and *anubhavas* (see Fig. 1).

Sankuka argued that *rasa* is an "imitated mental state" (Gnoli XIX) but this contention is rejected by Abhinavagupta on the premise of that merely imitation may lead to merely "laughter and mockery and has no connection with the aesthetic experience. The imitation theory is also clearly contradicted by certain arts—dancing, for example— which obviously do not imitate anything in real life" (Gnoli XX).

Bhatta Nayaka, on the other hand, said that:

> *Rasa* is revealed (*bhavyamana*) by a special power assumed by words in poetry and drama, the power of revelation (*bhavana*)—to be distinguished from the power of denotation (*abidha*)—consisting of action of generalizing determinants, etc. (Gnoli 45)

Although this view does not particularly exempt the *bhavas* from playing a significant role with regard to the production of *rasas* (*rasanispatti*), it does not acknowledge the complex, organic relationship of *bhava* and *rasa*.

Of the three traditional interpretations of *abhivyakti* (manifestation), '*siddhi*' (ripeness or maturity) and *parinati* (transformation), the transfiguration of *rasa* from *bhava* can be best explained by the intermediate process of '*siddhi*', which is the "position of the dominant school represented by Abhinavagupta" which "assumes that *bhava* is *rasa* and *rasa* is *bhava*—there is no *rasa* without *bhava*" (Kapoor 109).

Bharata himself had a clear stand on the *rasa-bhava* relation—that *rasa* establishes the purpose of various elements but is itself arrived at through a *bhava*. This relation maybe represented diagrammatically as in the following Figure 1:

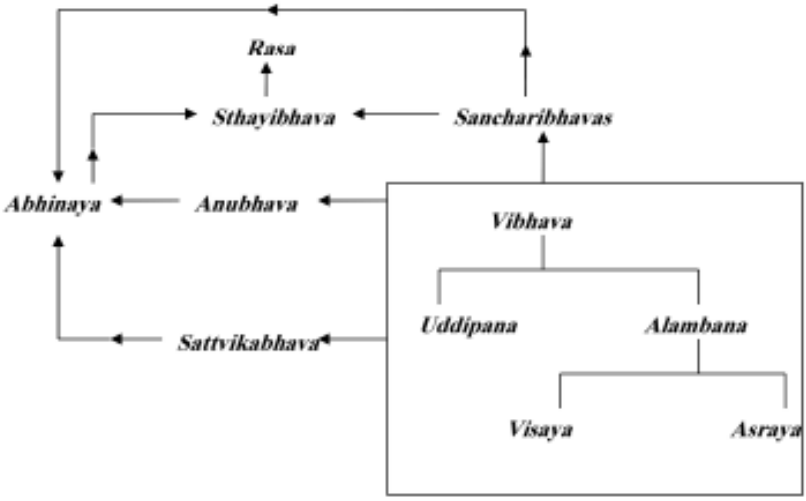

Fig. 1 The flow chart representing the relation and interaction between the rasa and the concurrent *bhavas*.

The *rasa–bhava* relation is further clarified as Bharata meticulously discusses the eight *rasas* and their achievement or attainment through the various *bhavas*.

For instance, in case of ***Karuna rasa***, the following hold true in case of each subsection:

Sthayibhava—*soka* (sorrow)

Vibhavas (determinants)—curse, distress, downfall, calamity, separation from loved ones, suffering of revered ones, loss of wealth, death (or murder), falling on bad times, harsh words, bad tidings, accidents or misfortunes.

Sattvikabhavas (involuntary)—weeping (*asru*), change of voice (*swarabhanga*), pallor (*vaivaranya*), paralysis (*stambha*), loss of consciousness (*pralaya*).

Anubhavas (external behaviour)—tears, lamentation, parched threat, drooping of limits, gasping for breath, beating of breasts, madness, distractedness, loss of memory (variant behaviour).

Sancharibhava (auxiliary states)—indifference (*nirveda*), debility (*glani*), weariness (*srama*), depression (*dainya*), painful reflection (*chinta*), delusion of mind (*moha*), indolence (*alasya*), flurry or agitation (*avega*), stupefaction or immobility (*jarata*), despondency (*visada*), impatience (*autsukya*), alarm (*trasa*), sickness (*vyadhi*), dementedness (*apasmara*), madness (*unmada*), demise (*marana*).

A successful coordination and presentation of the above elements will produce the *Karuna rasa* in the audience wi*The Natyasastra*essing the play or the performance.

And yet, this may not be enough to attain the desired *rasa* since the birth of the *rasa* presupposes not only a flawless performance but also a receptive and sympathetic (*sahridaya*) audience. Not everyone is capable of relishing or tasting the intended *rasa*—a phenomenon known as *rasasvada* in *The Natyasastra*, as described by Bharata—and experiencing the sentiments—something that Bharata refers to as *rasanubhuti*—thereby gaining the knowledge infused within the understanding of the *rasas* through *rasabodha*, which means the final consciousness of the *rasa*. This also means that the *rasa* is not only experienced at an extremely visceral and tactile level but also act the highest state of consciousness. The *rasa* becomes the spectators' only truth at that moment. The moment of the *rasa* experience is sudden, sharp, and intense and liberates the audience from constriction of the self to the enduring state of bliss (*ananda*) which remains and takes shape long after the actual art experience is over.

This *ananda* is the essence, or in other words, the *rasa* of the Indian aesthetic experience. This bliss or *ananda* has been very closely associated by critics to Aristotle's concept of catharsis. In this last section, the comparative relation between the *rasa* theory and the Aristotalian theory of catharsis is to be established briefly.

Aristotle tells us theatre, as tragedy, when it began, was an experience in which the audience participated as if in a ritualistic performance surrounding the Greek god Dionysius, the deity of wine. In the *Poetics*, Aristotle tells us that theatre does not start in Greece as a literary type, but a take-off or development from something called the *dithyramb*, which was a kind of a choric ode performed in the plays of Dionysius who was also called Dithyrambos—a word that figuratively means 'twice born'. The animal that was held sacred to the god was the goat. Traditional worship of the god would involve the ritual sacrifice of a goat, and therefore, we can trace the word tragedy to the Greek term '*tragon oide*', literally meaning 'goat song'. Dionysus was a vegetation deity whose life cycle enacted the annual birth and death in nature. Spring was the season of birth for the god after which, the vegetation gradually reached its fullest, reaching harvest time, which symbolically marked the death of the god. His death, seemingly the fault of the community, had to be atoned for. The goat, which was offered as sacrifice, became the symbolic container of communal sin, so that the god could be appeased. This ritual demanded rigorous communal participation. Thus, tragedy also requires intense emotional participation and involvement, given its sacralised associations to divinity. This idea of participation goes back to the origins of tragedy as a ritual or a religious celebration, which is exactly the way Bharata had intended to portray it—also by ascribing its origins to divinity.

Aristotle also explicates that tragedy must arouse in its spectators the emotions of pity and fear wherewith we experience thereafter a *catharsis of emotions*. He believes these rasas of *Karuna* and *Bhayanaka*, to substitute Bharata's words for pity and fear, are absolutely necessary to us since theatre is meant not only as a performance or entertainment but also as an *experience*. The word 'catharsis' comes from the Greek word *kathoros*, meaning 'pure' or 'clean'. It has been translated variously as purification,

correction, refinement and purgation. The first three are very closely related and seem to suggest that, to some extent, through catharsis, our feelings are being refined and sublimated in some sense. As ordinary human beings, we have a lot of sentiments locked up within us and are channelised towards the characters in a flow of altruistic or nobler feelings. Thereby, our feelings are refined as they are directed towards the sufferers from a neutralised point of view which is devoid of self interest. This idea of catharsis is almost exactly similar to the purgation of feelings that, according to Bharata, *rasanispatti* involves. Both these categories involve a certain amount of release, so that, *rasanubhuti* becomes an outlet or a safety valve for almost all emotions. Both these experiences seek to purge the mind of passions and evince a certain calmness that follows the aesthetic experience. Hence, both the theorists emphasise that theatre involves a qualitative change in emotions as being raised from a level of potentiality to activity. They also underline the morally ennobling quality of art through an emphatic empathy that both *Rasa* theory and catharsis suggest.

In conclusion, the *Rasa* theory not only rivals, but vindicates the most ancient occidental aesthetic theory known to mankind, especially relating to theatre. It is interesting to note that all forms of spectatorial experience can be analysed and interpreted with the help of this potent critical tool. *Rasa* theory has now occasioned new approaches in various relatively younger disciplines such as Film Criticism, Fine Arts and Performing Arts, since one may as easily chart out the *Rasa* experience of a spectator in a movie hall, as one can in an audience beguiled by a cricket match on the television set. Therefore, the ancient conditions prevailing in prehistoric theatricality followed certain theories, conventions, rules and regulations to make the performance as intelligible, interesting and interactive as possible. To our utmost surprise, these conditions still prevail in most aesthetic situations—emphasising the enduring endeavour of man to create and understand art in its total completion.

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(Footnotes)

1. *The six tastes in cooking and medicines are —sweet, salty, sour, bitter, tangy and astringent according to Amarko_a* (1.5.9).

European versus Caribbean Performance: Shakespeare in Derek Walcott's *A Branch of the Blue Nile*

Sourav Singha

In the essay "Anglophone Caribbean Literature", Elaine Savory has argued that Caribbean literature as a whole manifests the experiences "of intense uprooting, separation and isolation from tradition, home and the voices of past" (Savory, 711). She further argues that resistance to oppression and exploitation is the key characteristic of Caribbean society and the literature produced in the archipelago reflects the politics of resistance. The Caribbean experiences of migration and trans-cultural identity continue to shape the discourse of resistance. The form of protest was evident from the time of the Haitian Revolution (1791) against the French colonial rule to the Cuban Revolution (1959) against the US imperialism. Situated at the centre of the Western hemisphere, the Caribbean has played a vital geopolitical role in the Western pursuit of economic dominance but resistance to colonial rule was a part of Caribbean history even in the earlier phase of European colonization. At the same time, the artistic aesthetic of the region prominently features resistance in various forms of visual and verbal arts. Caribbean literature critiques the western representation of history, art as well as culture, and simultaneously celebrates the heterogeneity as the source of their national identity.

Barbadian poet Edward Kamau Brathwaite has always acknowledged Afrocentrism as the natural inheritance of Caribbean poetics. It had survived the Middle Passage and the trauma of colonial oppressions and therefore, it should be privileged but unfortunately, the west had systematically erased the African presence from their racial memory. Brathwaite's commitment to the ancestral heritage of Africa in the post-colonial Caribbean literature is evident from his writings but contrary to

his vision of society, history and literature, St. Lucian poet and playwright, Derek Walcott celebrates multiculturalism in the archipelago. The multiplicity inherent in Caribbean culture and identity questions Brathwaite's Afrocentrism because heterogeneity is the true characteristic of post-colonial Caribbean society and any emphasis on a particular past that poets like Brathwaite propagate, contradicts the discourse of cultural plurality in the region. Patricia Ismond in her "Walcott versus Brathwaite" hailed Brathwaite as the "poet of the people" who "sets out, in his trilogy, to recreate the historical experiences of the Black race in the New World, and to express the various aspects of their condition as a dispossessed people." (Ismond, 55) Afrocentricism is, therefore, the essential aspect of Brathwait's literary aesthetics. Walcott, according to Patricia Ismond, is the "poet of the poets", an artist whose essential endeavour is to explore reality through the world of art. It is not that Walcott has overlooked or devalued Afrocentrism in his oeuvre but European literary tradition has equally shaped his vision and philosophy as an artist.

Revising European canonical texts in the postcolonial Caribbean context, Walcott has not only critiqued the cultural politics of the west but has also disseminated the poetics of resistance throughout his works. Therefore, any intertextual engagement with European literature should be looked upon as the policy of writing back to the empire and such tendency defines the central aspect of Caribbean literary aesthetics. Reed Way Dasenbrock in his "Imitation Versus Contestation: Walcott's Postcolonial Shakespeare" has argued that "A major theme of postcolonial literature has indeed been to "write back" against the European descriptions of the postcolonial world, whether that be Achebe's and other European writers' critique of Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, Coetzee's and other writers' engagement with Daniel Defoe, especially *Robinson Crusoe*, or a variety of Indian reactions against Kipling and Forster" (Dasenbrock, 104) Rewriting ancient European classics and Shakespeare is equally popular a practice among the writers of Africa and the African diaspora. Ania Loomba and Martin Orkin had argued that when Shakespeare was writing plays, colonialism was in its infancy but this infancy has "aggressive ascendancy" and in four hundred years of colonial rule, both Shakespeare and colonialism had left their imprint on global culture.

Shakespeare's plays occupied a central position in the colonial school curriculum and the white teachers used to interpret the bard in a highly conservative way. Thus Shakespeare in the colonial classrooms became the metaphor for imperial authority and "the quintessence of Englishness and a measure of humanity itself." (Loomba and Orkin, 1) The strategy of the empire had always been to marginalize the native on the ground of their racial and cultural inferiority and the natives who had internalized this racial subordination, quite naturally intended to assimilate themselves to the culture of their colonial masters. Reading Shakespeare was a kind of gateway to enter their master's culture and Shakespeare played a crucial role in the formation of colonial ideology that the natives have to respect. Austin Clerk in his *Growing up Stupid under Union Jack* has criticized the ideology of empire which had rendered them stupid because the culture they were taught to affiliate with was ironically absent in the European countries. Hence revising the texts that the white masters had used to imperialize the natives become an essential discourse of Caribbean literary resistance.

Although Shakespeare's plays, in general, had long been performed in the archipelago, Caribbean writers have particularly used *The Tempest* for adaptations and appropriations. Martinican playwright Aimé Césaire's *Une Tempête* (*A Tempest*) is a notable instance in this case because Césaire in this play has explored the cultural and political tension between blacks and whites in the decades of the 60s and 70s which also marked the era of nationalist activities and the anti-colonial struggle for black power movements in Africa, the Caribbean and Latin America. Another significant example of Shakespearean adaptation in the Caribbean archipelago is Barbadian novelist George Lamming's *Water with Berries*, a political allegory based on *The Tempest*. Lamming's *The Pleasures of Exile* also records his position as a postcolonial writer through the experiences of Shakespeare's Caliban. James Anthony Froud, the British Victorian historian, has mentioned that when he had been in the West Indies, he had witnessed the performance of *The Merchant of Venice* in Tobago but according to him, such performance was poor in quality. Froud's statement brings into light that the local armature performances of the bard failed to maintain the European standard of Shakespearean

performance. Tobias Dorin, in his essay "A Brunch of the Blue Nile: Derek Walcott and the Tropic of Shakespeare" has emphasized a different aspect of Shakespearean performance in the West Indies by recording the fact that since the 18th century, the colonial elites in the Caribbean plantocracy had welcomed the English tourist companies in their estates and local armature production of Shakespeare was the means of entertainment for them. He continues that the plantation workers used to produce "a touching effort towards assimilation, where the Shakespearean text provides the roles for blacks to rehearse their progress towards civilization." (Orkin, 16) What Tobias Dorin has highlighted here is that Shakespeare's plays had been used in the archipelago as the European cultural model to civilize and socialize the natives. Frantz Fanon, whom I must mention here, in *Black Skin, White Mask*, has asserted that the racial self is the product of white cultural dominance and the dependency complex that the black Antilleans suffered is the aftermath of their crisis and quest for identity. Internalizing blackness as the source of their racial inferiority, they always tried to find out a viable alternative to upgrade their racial status. Their effort to affiliate with the European culture is somehow caused by the acceptance of their racial subordination. Although the amatuer slave performers tried to perform Shakespeare's characters strictly in the European style, unconsciously they just did not repeat but also recreated Shakespearean performances from a different perspective. According to Tobias Dorin, "every performance does not just repeat but also changes a given text and hence creates the potential for cultural difference." (Orkin, 16) The Caribbean authors, who adapted the plays of Shakespeare, had deliberately made cultural differences and such effort was made to reclaim their cultural identity which their colonial masters had misrepresented. To evaluate all these observations I must refer to what Ania Loomba and Martin Orkin have suggested in the "Introduction" chapter of their book *Post-colonial Shakespeares*:

> Intellectuals and artists from the colonized world responded to such a Shakespeare in a variety of ways: sometimes they mimicked their colonial masters and echoed their praise of Shakespeare; at other times they challenged the cultural authority of both Shakespeare and colonial regimes by turning to their own bards as

> sources of alternative wisdom and beauty. In yet another instances, they appropriated Shakespeare as their comrade in anti-colonial arms by offering new interpretation and adaptation of his works. (Loomba and Okrin, 2)

The endeavour made by the Caribbean authors to appropriate the European versions of the bard had not only created cultural differences but also questioned the authority of the classic European style of performance by offering a completely new meaning to Shakespearean plays. Aimé Césaire's *A Tempest* is an example of such an adaptation that apart from serving as a comrade in the anti-colonial struggle, presents the vision of a future free state. Hence both the colonial era performances and the postcolonial appropriations of the bard challenge the established colonial interpretation of his plays.

Although *A Branch of the Blue Nile* is not a dramatic adaptation of Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*, Walcott uses this Early Modern play as the trope to dramatize the conflict between local, African-based performance and classical performance based on typical European style. According to Edward Baugh, Walcott's *A Branch of the Blue Nile* also captures the mood of anxiety notably addressed in the play in the form of a tension between the use of 'high' language and dialect or creole. Based on Thomas North's 1579 translation of Plutarch's *Bioi parallçloi* (*Parallel Lives*, also called *Lives)*, Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* dramatizes the relationship between Mark Antony, a Roman military leader and triumvir, and the Egyptian queen Cleopatra. The romantic tragedy ends with the death of both lovers during the War of Actium. Unlike Tayed Salih and Aimé Césaire, Derek Walcott has not used the Shakespearean plot as the structure for his play; rather the plot of his play revolves around a group of actors and actresses who are rehearsing *Antony and Cleopatra* in the Port of Spain under the direction of white Harvey. The play addresses some of the critical postcolonial issues like race and colour politics that the performers as well as the people in the West Indies experience even after their independence. Among the critical debates that Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* offers, the ancient (Roman) views of Africa (Egypt) is a significant one and Derek Walcott's *A Bunch of the Blue the Nile* also examines this particular issue from

postcolonial Caribbean perspectives. The ambivalence in the dialogue between the classical world of Europe and ancient Africa had been addressed in Martin Bernal's controversial book *Black Athena: The Afro-Asiatic Roots of Classical Civilization*. Contrary to popular belief, Martin Bernal, a linguist trained in Chinese history, claims that classical civilization had equally been enriched by the ancient African and Asian civilizations. To execute the policy of western imperialism, the European colonizers had developed a contradictory discourse against what Bernal termed the Ancient Model. The Ancient Model of classical civilization, according to Bernal, acknowledges the contribution of Egyptian and Semitic cultures to the development of ancient Greek culture and tradition but in the course of western imperialism, the Ancient Model was replaced by the European Model of classical civilization. In "Unspeakable Things Unspoken: The Afro-American Presence in American Literature", Toni Morrison has criticized the process as well as the motif of fabrication of classical civilization. The agendum behind such practice was the ideology that unless the non-European civilizations were reduced to the state of barbarism, the authority of the empire could not be established. Moreover books like *Before Color Prejudice: The Ancient Views of Blacks* by Frank. M. Snowden, Jr. on the other hand, also raises a similar question about the racial policy of ancient Europe. Including 62 illustrations of the ancient world, this particular book has confirmed that ancient Europeans made no discrimination against the Africans on racial grounds.

If examined in this context, Derek Walcott's *A Branch of the Blue Nile* critiques the western notion of racial discrimination because even the ancient Europeans never showed colour prejudices against the blacks. In the post-colonial Caribbean society, colour prejudice is still maintained and the white Trinidadian director Harvey St Juste who had experience in the London theatre enjoys authority purely on racial grounds. Harvey has returned to his native land with the expectation of establishing a professional company in Trinidad but Harvey is not as competent a director in terms of merit as the forty years old black actor Christopher. Yet Harvey's European colour has granted him superiority on the Caribbean stage but Chris, on the other hand, had never prospered more than what he calls an "ass", or "assistant Master" in western countries. In one of

his speeches, Chris admits that he studied at Queen's Royal College and had scored an 'A' grade in English and had also learnt French. Unfortunately, he could neither prosper as a theatre director nor as an actor in western countries because of racial prejudice. Derek Walcott in this play has portrayed the tragic condition of Trinidadian theatre because all of its amateur members remain busy in some alternative involvements for livelihood and theatre for them is not a full-time assignment. Chris himself is a successful merchant who leads a luxurious lifestyle with a big white house in Maraval, swimming pool, video games, barbecue etc. Sheila on the other hand is a typist and acting for her is a part-time engagement but she is a committed actress. Perhaps it is the reason that despite full potentiality and the knowledge of performance, Chris is not the master on stage and he is aware of this painful fact. In Act I, sc. iii, he playfully admits to Sheila that he could hardly become a Shakespearean tragic hero due to his thick lips which prevent him to pronounce Shakespeare's English. The Caribbean stage that is going to present the Early Modern play *Antony and Cleopatra* becomes a metaphor for the post-colonial Caribbean society where racial prejudice is still a serious issue.

According to Edward Baugh, Sheila Harris is the strongest of all female characters in Walcott's oeuvre and in her "Walcott focuses the idea of theatre as a kind of religion, demanding faith and commitment." (Baugh, 146) Baugh's argument is reinforced when Sheila leaves the theatre and with a similar passionate intensity, she gives herself to church. A typist in the profession, Sheila Harris in Derek Walcott's *A Branch of the Blue Nile* is going to play the role of Cleopatra and in actual life, she loves Chris. As per Baugh's account, "Her [Sheila's] feelings for Chris and her awareness of the imminence of their separation are key factor in her impressive, even if momentary 'possession' of the persona of Cleopatra. At the same time, those feelings contribute to the confusion and frustration that drive her to drop out of the Cleopatra role and out of the company and turn to religion" (Baugh, 144) However, Chris respects Sheila Harris but he never expressed any intention to leave his English wife in Barbados. In Shakespeare's play, Mark Antony had a wife in Rome but his passion and infatuation for the Egyptian queen were his

weakness but Derek Walcott's play shows no such intention to project Chris and Sheila relationship in the Shakespearean term. Of course, the analogy between Antony-Cleopatra and Chris-Sheila enriches the dramatic potentiality of the play and in Act I, scene i, when Sheila is playing the role of Cleopatra mourning over the corps of Antony, it appears that she is feeling sexual hesitation toward the dead triumvir. Harvey then suggests that she must take Chris as Mark Antony and herself as Cleopatra. In the third scene of the first act of the play, Chris acknowledges his responsibility as a husband and a father but Sheila appears to feel embarrassing and awkward in such a situation. Finally, the argument developed dramatically into a statement of proposal when Sheila says to Chris: "I loved you Antony." Every amateur member of the group had an acquaintance with the affair between Chris and Sheila but Walcott has maintained a sharp distinction between Antony-Cleopatra and Sheila-Chris relation.

Edward Baugh has argued that the primary concern of Walcott's *A Branch of the Blue Nile* is the problematic about the relationship between role-playing and reality. Here in the play, Derek Walcott has addressed the relationship between theatre and reality as well as the relationship between art and reality. In Baugh's observation, "one set of tension notably addressed in *Branch* is that between local, African-based performance style and classical, European style, between 'classical and creole', between 'high' language and dialect or creole, as such had been played out comically in *Pantomime*. (Baugh, 143) Walcott's *A Branch of the Blue Nile* presents the story of the performance of Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* by an amateur group of actors and actresses in the Port of Spain and the performance itself creates problem. The white director Harvey's determination to maintain the European style of role-playing is contradicted by Chris and Gavin's emphasis on the creole style of performance. The verbal clash that occurred between Harvey and Chris in Act IV, scene iv foregrounds the latter's advocacy for the local Caribbean style of performance. Critically admitting his Trinidadian accent, which presents his Caribbean self and being, Chris argues that Shakespeare, Racine and Chekhov had nothing to do in the Caribbean. He further violently protests against Harvey's dictatorship regarding the rehearsal of an Early Modern play in colonial style and argues as a director that Harvey had no right

to impose the European style of performance on the Caribbean performers. Chris himself is a playwright and director, and he had written a dialect play. Chris's vision of Shakespeare's adaptation is an appropriation that not just repeats a colonial text but also recreates a local version. Performing Shakespeare's play in the Caribbean archipelago is a challenge in itself because the agents of the colonial education system still strictly plead for the colonial method of performance but people like Chris with their "sound colonial education" always question the relevance of such Europeanized performance.

Another significant character in the play is Gavin and referring to Joyce Green MacDonald's argument, I must explain the realization of his racial looks from Fanon's point of view. He had tried his luck as a successful West Indian actor on the New York Stage but his experience as a 'nigger' has disillusioned his vision:

> At first off, I didn't see myself in the mirror. I just plain refused what they wanted me to see, which was a black man looking back in my face and muttering: "How you going han'le this, nigger?
>
> …
>
> I saw me; Then the mirror changed on me, the way you hate your passport picture. I saw a number under it like a prison picture, a mug shot in a post office, and I began to believe what I saw in the mirror because that's how they wanted me to look. I reduced that reflection to acceptance, babe, against my mother-fucking will, accept the odds, accept the definition, accept the roles
>
> …
>
> So I gave into the mirror, I melted right into it, and I despised myself, because I gave no trouble and I got work
>
> (Walcott, 225-26)

Yet Gavin had not given up his aspiration as a New World artist and accepted his racial as well as hybrid identity. According to Joyce Green MacDonald, "Gavin's looks at himself, looks in which his own reflection curiously vanishes and is replaced by what (white) others see in him, reiterate Frantz Fanon's identification of blackness as social spectacle." (MacDonald, 195) Referring to Fanon's observation he further proclaims

that black subjects enter their social identity through the operation of a white racial gaze. The colonial-era social setting had rendered the blacks as "other" even within their comfortable cultural zone and thus they entered into their racial subjectivity. As per Fanon's idea of blackness suggests, Gavin was forced to look at himself as black by the dominating white eyes. One of the primary preoccupations of Derek Walcott in this play is to show how theatrical apparatus determines racial identity in postcolonial performance. Sheila's feelings of estrangement, on the other hand, stem from her passionate involvement in role playing because the crisis of love that she suffers in her personal life finds fulfillment when Chris plays the role of Antony in the play. But in real life, she could hardly expect the love and affection that Antony (Chris) felt for Cleopatra. Her choice of shifting from the branch of Nile to the branch of Jordan shows her preference for the life of the church but by moving from theatre she has not successfully concentrated on the work of the church. Moreover, when Chris returned to the theatre, her illusion of self-discovery in the religious world is collapsed. Consequently, Marylin had played the role of Cleopatra and during the time of her performance of the farewell speech of the queen, a hilarious disaster took place.

According to Derek Walcott, originality and authenticity of performance are not possible in the Caribbean archipelago. Since the time of Columbus's arrival in the region, no authentic indigenous culture had survived. The play critiques the white director Harvey's attempt to maintain the purity and originality of the European style of performance. Apart from *Antony and Cleopatra*, the troupe of performers is also rehearsing a dialect play named *A Brunch of the Blue Nile*. However, during the time of public performance when Marylin/Cleopatra is asking for her robe and crown, a stagehand named Wilfred mistakenly places a cutout of a banana or fig tree behind her. Despite Marylin's mounting anger and Harvey's offstage instructions to move the "fucking banana", Wilfred keeps them onstage and leaves. Thus Harvey's effort to maintain the purity of the performance of a canonical text ironically failed and according to Walcott, this is a predestined fact. The immediate reaction was made by Brother John in the subsequent scene but the violent attack was made in a newspaper review headlined "BARDS GOES BANANA". The reviewer at first seems

to praise Harvey's effort to indigenize Shakespeare's performance but he then criticizes the white director's endeavour to indigenize because such effort included only a branch of bananas during the farewell speech of the queen. Though the scene appears comical, the playwright has introduced here the notion of mimicry and mimesis. Rei Terada, the author of *Derek Walcott's Poetry: American Mimicry*, interprets his poems in terms of mimicry. She defines mimicry as the imitation of an original work where the original piece is valued more than the imitated one. Mimicry is usually defined in terms of negative effort but in the Caribbean cultural and literary context, mimicry is an integral component. Postcolonial Caribbean writers are well acquainted with the phenomenon of mimicry and in one of his essays, "The Caribbean: Culture or Mimicry?", Walcott argues that mimicry is a positive endeavour in the archipelago. But Harvey's attempt can in no way be justified as mimicry in a positive sense because for him mimicry violates the originality of a literary work and hence his attempt to follow strictly the colonial style of performance had failed.

The role of the artist thus becomes essential in developing the literary sensibility of the archipelago. In the play, Chris is the author of a dialect play and his vision of indigenizing a performance is in stark contrast with Harvey. In Barbados, Chris has written a dialect play called *A Branch of the Blue Nile* and when Sheila has returned to the theatre, she witnessed that the members of the company are rehearsing Chris's play.This play is about the scenes presented at the beginning of this play but a distance between the real and the atrical world has been maintained. Tobias Doring in "A Branch of the Blue Nile: Derek Walcott and the Tropic of Shakespeare", records that the classical world staged in *Antony and Cleopatra* presents itself as "a world divided between 'Rome' and 'Egypt', a division which can all too easily be viewed through familiar binary oppositions." (Doring, 20) Derek Walcott's play implies the same binary opposition when the comparison is made between Egypt and Trinidad, as well as between Rome and England. Egypt and Nile in classical imagination represented the mystery and enigma of an undiscovered world and Herodotus's account of Egypt added fuel to western fantasies. However, Christopher Columbus's arrival to the Caribbean world represents the beginning of culture in the archipelago and metaphorically, Christopher

or Christo-ferus or Chris is the author of a new Caribbean style of play. The transformation from *Antony and Cleopatra*, a Shakespearean play to *A Branch of the Blue Nile*, a creole version of the former one, signifies cultural transformation from authenticity and originality to imitation. Significantly Chris, whose name echoes the name of Christopher Columbus, has introduced this pioneering effort to celebrate cultural plurality in the Caribbean archipelago. In his Nobel Lecture, Derek Walcott exclaims Froud's history as an instance of colonial misrepresentation, and rectification is, therefore, a natural endeavour in the region. The rhetoric of comparison that features Froud's history of the archipelago refers to Herodotus's method of historiography, because he has converted the Caribbean archipelago into the New World Aegean.

As the title implies, contradiction and binary opposition between the colonial and local styles of performance is the chief preoccupation of this article. The advent of theatrical tradition in the archipelago bore testimony to the fact that the plantation owners in the colonial era introduced European plays for their entertainment as well as for the moral and ethical improvements of the slaves. In a way, Shakespeare's plays were strategically used to marginalize the blacks in racial terms but rewriting his plays from a completely different angle, had provided the Caribbean authors with the potential to critique the cultural politics of the colonizers. Including dialectical variation and African accent, the Caribbean authors had widened the dimension to adaptation in local style. Though Brathwaite had completely relied on the African elements, he too had used European literary tradition in his plays and poems. Similarly, Derek Walcott's recurrent use of European literary framework does not imply the fact that his oeuvre shows no conviction toward African elements. The post-colonial Caribbean context, the literary figures have extensively used both the European and African elements because this is the predicament of a multi-cultural nation. Whereas the colonial era theatrical productions showed compulsion towards European masters' tradition, the post-colonial performances have imbibed a Caribbean spirit by transforming canonical text into a creolized one.

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The Existential Attitude in *Tughlaq* and *Caligula*

Haritha Fernandez & Shibani Chakraverty Aich

A man loses his umbrella, and he searches desperately for it all day, but he loses himself - and he does not even notice. - Kierkegaard

Abstract: Girish Karnad and Albert Camus are writers separated by continents, time period, culture and influences yet, they seem to have been intrigued by the universality of the absurd nature of human existence at all time periods in history. These writers drew tragic characters from history who were multi-dimensional when it came to the expression of their character, both *Tughlaq* and *Caligula* seem to be a grand tale of men torn between the absurd and the logic, they are what they are despite what they know. Absurdism seems to be the order of the day when existentialism looms over the lives of these men, a deep perusal shows how Caligula and Tughlaq are searching for the impossible while they painfully realize that the world is beating them at a race that does not exist. This study focuses on the existential attitude of the two tragic characters, the source of this attitude and how it culminates in absurdity.

Key words: Absurdism, Existentialism, tragedy, existential attitude

Introduction

Existentialism is essentially a realization that the 'self' has been existing in a broken world, condemned to its cruelties. From Sartre to Camus, definitions and elaborations vary but they have unanimously accepted that the core of existential philosophy is its focus on man trapped in an absurd setting with the self-awareness that everything amounts to nothing more than confusion and alienation. Absurdism, alienation and madness resulting from disillusionment with the world/reality around, are branches that come out of Existentialism, as evident in the core texts taken up for

study. Tughlaq and Caligula are noble men who seem to echo Shakespeare's famous sentiment, "Uneasy lies the head that wears the crown", as they try to exist, torn between their self and the world. Tughlaq tries to walk through a very thin line that separates the ideal and the real, eventually stumbling onto a state of existential crisis that those around him reads as madness, Caligula is shown the absurdity of his life through the death of his lover and is thrown into an abyss of self-realization, making him seem acting out of madness for the people around him. Thus, madness is a significant object by which existentialism is expressed in these texts, and it helps evaluate the threads of absurdism as is spread out in the texts studied.

What makes a tragedy? Is it simply, a human being with ample graceful characteristics sans one trait that will push him/her to the depths of destruction through self-annihilation, in a grand setting that evokes pity and terror in equal parts? What can be so alluring about these tragic characters from different continents separated by centuries, that they still live in the golden pages of classic Literature never to be erased from the public memory. The soul of such narratives, that holds a bewitching pull over the reader or spectator, is nothing greater or lesser than the tragedy of human life, life caught between tragic choices, life caught in the current of a fate in spate or rather just the tragedy of existence.

Fate and character conspiring together to make a tragic hero has been explored in ample measure, along withthe strains of existentialism are that throw these men into a whirlpool of absurdity and disorder that chokes the life out of them. A day after another, a teachery after another, life turns into a tale of deceit and failures deprived of meaning for the tragic heroes, unable to find an anchor that holds them amidst the storms that life throw in their path. It is nothing different from the pertinent question posed by the tragic Prince of Denmark, "To be or not to be", the fine line often missed between being and nothingness. Existentialism birthed in the soul of the tragic hero fighting the mind nurtured by the world, elevates the narrative of an individual to a classic tragedy of human character; it is not just the tragedy of one man but of humanity as a whole.

Men in the throes of absurdity

Tughlaq reigns supreme as a masterpiece in fiction as well as in the darker pages of history, bearing the shades of a ruler who wanted to do so much and yet ended up as a traitor to his people, the tragedy of Muhammad Tughlaq lies in his self as M.K. Naik says, "the curious contradictions in the complex personality of the Sultan, who was at once a dreamer and a man of action, benevolent and cruel, devout and callous.", such is the state of the Sultan who is torn between all his knowledge and the reality slapped onto his soul. Tughlaq who is cowered down by the weight of his actions with each passing minute. Tughlaq is accused of fratricide and patricide and must live out his days as a power-hungry ruler, his name completely besmirched in the eyes of his people only for them to forever view his action with contempt and distrust. Caligula, on the surface, is more of a tyrannical ruler with no intention of hiding his cruelty, he freely practices cruelty and revels in it; or rather that is how a disoriented man trying to take control of his life by making choices that the logic of the world he lives in, denies him, is looked at by the world around him. He is wrung into the absurdity of reality as he has to deal with the death of his lover helplessly, from that moment, he is a tortured soul violently searching for the logic, that eludes him, through bloodshed and a reversal of perceived order. Caligula painfully paints his absurd world as "an abyss of silence, a pool of stagnant water, rotting weeds." (45). Existentialism becomes the order of every passing day for the tragic heroes as they grow detached from the realities growing up to slowly devour them, finally undoing their life's doing and their lives.

Caligula and Tughlaq have an existentialist attitude that projects the self onto everything and tries to create logic from the absurdity of this projection, Robert C. Solomon feels, "The Existential attitude finds itself in syndromes, interpreting a feeling as a mark of identity, converting an insight about oneself into an interpretation of the world, resolving self-doubt by exaggerating the self in everything."(xiii). Caligula feels a craving for the impossible, to carve logic out of the uncertain world around him, as a consequence of which he wants to possess the moon and takes on the role of an omnipotent and omniscient ruler who wants control of everyone and everything, "I wish men to live by the light of truth. And

I've the power to make them do so. For I know what they need and haven't got. They're without understanding and they need a teacher; someone who knows what he's talking about." (19). This feeling of an exaggerated self often makes them alienated from the world they are trying to control and as with everything else that can't be understood, the incomprehensible world is seen as a threat by them, so begins their journey to fight the world and its threats, to restore meaning which leads to a state of awareness by which they realize that the threats of the world are as meaningless as the world they come from. It is from this attempt to control the meaningless that they become self-righteous guardians of the world or rather mad tyrants from the perspective of their subjects. Tughlaq appears as a well-learned Sultan whose intellectual borders are as limitless as the borders of the country he ruled over, his idealism and craftiness springs from the same source creating a man torn between the self and the absurdity, his exaggerated self brings him to introduce new policies that backfire, his introduction of copper coins, shifting the capital, secular tax rules, mandatory prayer in the kingdom etc, alienates the world as much as he tries to embrace it, his quest to create meaning brings him to an abyss of failures and earns him the title 'mad Muhammad'. Tughlaq goes from, "Let's be darkness and cover up the boundaries of nations. Come! I am waiting to embrace you all!" (10) to not knowing what logic and justice is, surrounded by the dead, "I don't know if I am pursuing a mirage or fleeing a shadow" (85), this is where his madness, or rather his quest for logic takes him.

Both of these phenomenal tragic men constantly fight the limitations of being a human, if indicative of anything, it is merely an attempt to separate themselves from the absence of logic or meaning in human lives. They shun sleep, one prays to God to take away his sleep and later bans prayer itself, the other promises himself not to give in to sleep as he is waiting for someone to give him the moon, which is but a symbol of his craving for the humanely impossible, even more significantly, it is an extension of his realization that what he searches for can never be obtained, so his struggle against the absurd is no more different than the futile task of Sisyphus. Caligula's attempt to regain meaning or logic starts by him declaring "Ah, now at last I'm going to live, really live" (27) to him slowly realizing "I won't have the moon. Never, never,

never! But how bitter it is to know all, and to have to go through to the consummation!" (79). Caligula aims to 'tamper with the scheme of things' and so wishes to be God-like in a world that, he believes, even God has abandoned, "what is a God that I should wish to be his equal? No, it's something higher, far above the gods, that I'm aiming at, longing for with all my heart and soul. I am taking over a kingdom where the impossible is king." (26) Going further in his quest to control fate or life's outcome, he creates a list of noblemen, putting them in a certain order by which they will be put to death, he also orders to close the granaries and creates famine. Tughlaq is far more complex when it comes to his relationship with prayer and God, he wanted "every act in my kingdom to become a prayer" (45) and wished every step to lead him closer to God, yet the same man is said to have killed his father and brother during prayer time, and as he treads along the existential path discovering the absurd state of affairs and his own disillusionment, he finds prayers infested with the disease of the world and bans prayer in his kingdom. This self-contradictory expression of the self comes from a collision with the realities of a world, far removed from the logic and meaning that sustains the individual, Tughlaq is unable to pray even if he wants to, "I was trying to pray-but I could only find words learned by rote, which left no echo in the heart" (68), this is what became of a man who was drunk on the ideals of secularism, far-sighted enough to see tomorrow with today's eyes, savoured poetry and chess in the same breath and wanted God to be with him in every step of the way. This is exactly what it means to exist in an existential attitude, one is always at war with one half of the self, there is always the temptation to turn away from the principles to the concrete- to simply believe in one's attitudes and act on emotions, this creates an unhinged moral system, one is not able to put faith in passing feelings of love, loyalty, happiness and such. Hence, one is forced to create an order in life whereby it has no order. Tughlaq had multiple dimensions on looking at his complex chasm of a character, even when he was at the pinnacle of his idealistic efforts to build a world he dreamed of, he felt that something of the nature of a rootedness was missing from his life, "But then how can I spread my branches in the stars while the roots have yet to find their hold in the Earth?" (11), thus it can be assumed that Muhammad Tughlaq

was a contradictory character who reeled in the pain of being unable to find a thread of similarity between the world he dreamt of at the age of nineteen, and the world he confronted after growing into reality. The chaos that both Tughlaq and Caligula creates around them is a result of the self-awareness springing from the existential attitudecreated by the disorderly world they are forced to confront and exist in, they are men who rebelled against the absurd and became what they 'understood' the world to be, finally resigning themselves to the anxiety and delirium of the world.

Conclusion

Caligula perhaps comes as an answer to Tughlaq, in the sense that Caligula is perfectly aware of why he is the way that he is, unlike Tughlaq who fumbles around in the darkness created by his own self. While Caligula understands the source of his misery, Tughlaq finds the world and everything in it incomprehensible, or he was trying to make sense of it by pretending to not see the absurd. It is the existential attitude in them that drove them to the verge of annihilation, making them tyrants, they tried to play God by unleashing blood-shed all around them, and finally they came to the realization that even their attempts to find logic or meaning were futile with no relevance, like the Underground man of Dostoevsky or Nietzsche's Zarathustra or Camus' Sisyphus. The loneliness, spitefulness, alienation and absurdity felt by all these characters owe their fate to the self-awareness created by the existential attitude that consumes a man despite what he knows, which is why Tughlaq and Caligula are both what they are despite what they know of the world and its cracks and crevices. If so, the only conclusion that one may give as an answer to what really is the existential attitude is that it is merely a problem of having to 'exist' when one wants to 'live'.

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Street Theatre and Safdar Hashmi: Tracing Social Change and Political Struggle in his Select Plays

Ashutosh Singh

Abstract:

The paper explores the role of Safdar Hashmi's plays in reflecting and commenting on the social and political issues of his time. Hashmi was a prominent Indian playwright and activist who used theatre as a tool to raise awareness about the struggles of the marginalized and oppressed sections of society. Through an analysis of his plays, the paper highlights the themes of social inequality, political corruption, communalism, and the need for collective action. The paper argues that Hashmi's plays not only represent the socio-political context of his time but also inspire political activism and resistance. The study provides a critical analysis of Hashmi's selected works, highlighting their relevance in contemporary times and their contribution to the larger discourse on political and social change.

Keywords: Social Change, Political Struggle, Theatre, Migrants, JNM

Safdar Hashmi was a prominent Indian playwright, actor, and director known for his politically charged street plays that addressed issues of social justice, human rights, and the struggles of marginalized communities. He was born in 1954 in Delhi, India and went on to become one of the most important figures in the Indian theatre scene. His plays reflected the social and political issues of his time, and his activism extended beyond the theatre to broader social and political issues. He was a founding member of the Jana Natya Manch (People's Theatre Front), a street theatre group that used theatre as a tool for social and political change. This is also popular as JANAM in short form. He believed that theatre

should be used as a medium to raise awareness about the struggles of the marginalized and oppressed sections of society. The Jana Natya Manch was a unique experiment in theatre, as it aimed to take theatre to the people, using the streets as its stage. This form of theatre was a departure from the conventional theatre practices of the time, and it became a popular medium for social and political activism.

His contribution to Indian theatre was immense. He wrote plays that were relevant to the social and political issues of his time, and he used theatre to engage people in discussions about these issues. His plays were not just a form of entertainment; they were also a means of political education. He believed that theatre should be used to create social awareness and to promote social change. One of Hashmi's most significant contributions to Indian theatre was his use of street theatre as a tool for political activism. He believed that theatre should be accessible to all, and street theatre was the perfect medium to achieve this goal. He used street theatre to reach out to people in the streets and marketplaces, where they could watch and participate in the plays. This form of theatre was a powerful means of political communication, as it helped to create awareness about the struggles of the marginalized and oppressed sections of society. The plays of Hashmi reflect the social and political issues of his time. He wrote plays about the struggles of workers, peasants, and women. His plays also addressed the issue of communalism, which was a significant problem in India at the time. His plays like "Machine," and "Halla Bol" exposed the politics of division and hatred that were used to maintain power, and the violence that was unleashed on innocent people as a result. He believed that theatre should be used to promote unity and solidarity among people, and his plays were a reflection of this belief. He was a social and political activist who believed in the power of collective action. He fought for the rights of workers, peasants, and women, and he used his plays to raise awareness about these issues. He was also an active member of the Communist Party of India (Marxist), and he used his activism to fight against political corruption and communalism. He used theatre as a tool for social and political change, and he believed in the power of collective action to achieve this change. His plays were a reflection of the social and political issues of his time, and they continue

to be relevant today. His legacy continues to inspire generations of theatre practitioners and activists, and his use of street theatre as a medium for political activism remains a powerful example of the potential of theatre to promote social change.

Safdar's works have been the subject of numerous publications, including academic papers, books, and articles. M. K. Raghavendra through his paper "Theatre in India: Some Perspectives on Safdar Hashmi" (1994) focuses on Hashmi's commitment to using street theatre as a tool for social and political change. Raghavendra argues that Hashmi's plays were notable for their use of humor and satire, as well as their focus on issues of class and caste oppression. Moloyashree Hashmi, his wife and fellow theatre practitioner, provides a comprehensive account of Hashmi's life and work, drawing on personal anecdotes, interviews with colleagues and collaborators, and archival research. The book, "Safdar Hashmi: A Life in Theatre" (2008) includes detailed descriptions and analyses of many of Hasmi's plays, as well as photographs and other visual materials. Anjali Gera Roy in "Street Theatre and the Public Sphere: The Case of Safdar Hashmi's Jana Natya Manch" (2004) and Javed Malick in "Safdar Hashmi's Street Theatre: A Revolutionary Performance" (2017) explore Hasmi's work in the context of broader debates about the role of theatre in public life, and highlight the ways in which his plays were able to engage and mobilize audiences around issues of social and political significance. Schechner, a prominent theatre scholar, provides an overview of the development of street theatre in India and its impact on Indian culture and politics. He devotes a section of the article to an analysis of Hasmi's work, noting the ways in which his plays spoke to the experiences and concerns of ordinary people. In "Safdar Hashmi's Street Theatre: A Study of His Plays", Sinha provides a close reading of several of Hasmi's plays, situating them within the broader context of Indian theatre and politics. He argues that Hasmi's plays were characterized by a deep commitment to social justice and a willingness to engage with controversial topics. Bharucha, another prominent theatre scholar, provides a detailed analysis of Hasmi's approach to theatre and the political context in which his plays were produced. He notes the ways in which Hasmi's work challenged the dominant narratives of Indian nationalism and offered a

more inclusive vision of Indian society. Kanekar examines the role of Hasmi's street theatre group, the Jana Natya Manch, in the broader context of Indian political and cultural history. She argues that the group's performances were a form of political resistance that challenged the dominant narratives of the state and offered an alternative vision of India's future. Hennessy explores the political and cultural context in which Hasmi's street plays were produced, and argues that his work was part of a larger movement of cultural resistance to state oppression and cultural hegemony. Deshpande, a member of the Jana Natya Manch, provides a first-hand account of the group's work and its impact on Indian society. He argues that Hasmi's street plays were an important tool for engaging with ordinary people and empowering them to participate in the political process. Bhatia examines the ways in which Hasmi's plays represented and resisted violence, particularly violence directed at marginalized communities. She argues that Hasmi'swork was an important example of political theatre that sought to address the social and economic roots of violence in Indian society. Ravi Chaturvedi offers a detailed analysis of Hasmi's use of language, form, and performance in his street plays. He argues that Hasmi's work was characterized by a complex interplay of political and aesthetic elements that challenged conventional notions of theatre and its relationship to social and political change. These publications demonstrate the wide range of perspectives on Safdar Hasmi and his street plays. They reflect the ongoing relevance of his work for scholars and practitioners of theatre, as well as its significance for broader discussions of culture, politics, and social change in India and beyond. In nutshell, the literature on Safdar Hashmi's street plays reflects the profound impact of his work on Indian theatre and on broader discussions of politics, culture, and social change. His legacy continues to be celebrated by theatre practitioners and scholars around the world, and his plays remain an important touchstone for those seeking to engage with the pressing issues of our time.

Jana Natya Manch (JNM) is a renowned street theatre group that has played a crucial role in shaping the Indian theatre movement. Founded in 1973 by a group of progressive theatre enthusiasts, JNM's primary objective was to bring theatre to the masses and use it as a medium to

educate and mobilize people on social and political issues. JNM's early performances were often staged on the streets and in public spaces, making it accessible to a wider audience, including those who were unable to afford or access traditional theatre. The group's focus on creating performances that were relevant to contemporary issues affecting ordinary people garnered it a loyal following, and JNM quickly became a household name in the Indian theatre circuit. The group's performances were characterized by their use of satire, humor, and a deep understanding of the socio-political landscape in India. JNM's actors often improvised their lines and performances, which allowed them to engage more directly with their audience and respond to their reactions in real-time. Over the years, JNM has performed numerous plays, ranging from issues such as caste discrimination, communalism, gender discrimination, and workers' rights. One of the most famous plays produced by the group was 'Machine', which tells the story of a worker's struggle against the exploitation of capitalists in the textile industry. The play's stark portrayal of the plight of workers in India struck a chord with audiences across the country and contributed to the group's growing popularity. Their political ideology is rooted in Marxist principles, and the group has been associated with the Communist Party of India (Marxist) since its inception. This ideological stance has been reflected in many of their performances, which often criticize the capitalist system and the ruling classes in India.

In addition to performing plays, JNM has also played an active role in training and nurturing young talent in the Indian theatre scene. The group conducts workshops and training sessions on various aspects of theatre, including acting, stage design, and playwriting. Many prominent theatre practitioners in India have had their early training in theatre through JNM's workshops. Despite facing opposition and censorship from the Indian government at times, JNM has continued to produce and perform plays that are relevant to contemporary issues in India. The group's commitment to using theatre as a tool for social and political change has made it an inspiration for many theatre groups in India and around the world. Today, JNM is recognized as one of the most important and influential theatre groups in India, and its legacy continues to inspire new generations of theatre practitioners.

Safdar Hashmi's street plays were an effective medium for raising awareness about social and political issues, and for engaging with the public. Hashmi used street theatre to break down the barriers between the performer and the audience, and to bring the theatre to the people. In this analysis, we will examine some of the key elements of Hashmi's street plays and their significance in the context of Indian theatre. One of the most striking features of Hashmi's street plays is their simplicity. The plays were designed to be performed in public spaces, using minimal sets, props, and costumes. The focus was on the message of the play, rather than the aesthetics of the performance. The plays were also interactive, with the actors often breaking the fourth wall and engaging with the audience directly. This made the plays more immediate and effective in conveying their message. Another key element of Hashmi's street plays was their focus on social and political issues. The plays addressed a range of issues, including workers' rights, women's empowerment, and communalism. The plays often took a critical view of the political establishment and the status quo, highlighting the struggles of the marginalized and oppressed sections of society. The plays were not just a form of entertainment; they were a means of political education and activism.

Hashmi's street plays were also notable for their use of music and song. The plays often featured original songs and music, which added to the emotional impact of the performance. The songs were often in the form of protest songs, with lyrics that reflected the themes of the play. The use of music and song was an effective way of engaging the audience, as it added an extra dimension to the performance. The songs used in Janam's performances were often written in a folk style, drawing on traditional Indian musical forms and instruments. He believed that the use of these forms helped to connect with audiences on a deeper level, as they were familiar and accessible to many people. The lyrics of the songs were also an important component, as they were used to convey important social and political messages. One of Hashmi's most famous plays, "Halla Bol", features a number of songs that are still popular in Indian political and cultural circles today. The play tells the story of a group of workers who stage a strike against their exploitative employer,

and the songs are used to convey the workers' feelings of frustration, anger, and hope. The use of the songs in "Halla Bol" helped to create a powerful emotional connection between the performers and the audience, and they were often sung along by audience members, making them an integral part of the performance.

The use of songs in Janam's performances was also a way of bypassing government censorship, which was common in India at the time. By using folk forms and lyrics that were seemingly innocent, Janam was able to sneak in subversive messages about social and political issues that would have otherwise been censored or banned. This use of art as a means of social and political resistance was a hallmark of Hashmi's work, and it continues to inspire artists and activists around the world. In addition to their use in performances, Janam's songs were also recorded and distributed on cassette tapes, making them available to a wider audience. This helped to spread the group's message even further, and it helped to cement their place in the Indian cultural and political landscape. The songs continue to be celebrated and performed today, a testament to their enduring power and the impact of Hashmi's work.In this way, we may say that the use of songs was an important component of his street plays, and it helped to make his message of social and political change accessible to a wider audience. By using traditional Indian musical forms and lyrics that convey important messages about justice and equality, Hashmi was able to create a powerful emotional connection with his audience and promote his ideas in a way that bypassed government censorship. His work continues to inspire artists and activists today, and his legacy as a pioneering artist and social justice advocate is secure.The other most important aspect of his street plays was their accessibility. The plays were performed in public spaces, making them available to everyone, regardless of their social or economic status. The plays were also performed in a language that was easily understood by the audience. This accessibility was an important aspect of the plays, as it allowed them to reach a wide audience and to have a real impact on the community.

Hashmi's street plays were a significant contribution to Indian theatre. They were a powerful tool for social and political activism, and they helped to create awareness about important issues. The plays were simple,

interactive, and accessible, making them a popular medium for engaging with the public. The plays also showcased the power of theatre as a means of social and political change, and they continue to inspire theatre practitioners and activists today.

Safdar Hashmi's play "Halla Bol" is a powerful and poignant portrayal of the struggles of the working class against the oppressive forces of capitalism and communalism in India. The play explores the lives of a group of workers who are struggling to make ends meet in a society that has little regard for their basic human rights. One of the most compelling aspects of the play is its well-crafted and multifaceted characters. Each character has a unique perspective and voice, which contributes to the play's overall message of social justice and resistance. For example, the character of Ram Lal, the union leader, is a symbol of hope and resilience for the workers. He is depicted as a selfless leader who is willing to risk his own life to fight for the rights of his fellow workers. In one scene, he declares, "We don't want alms. We want our rights" (Hashmi, 1989). In the same way, the character of Kamla, a female worker, represents the struggles of working-class women in a patriarchal society. She is shown as a strong and determined woman who is fighting not only for her own rights but also for the rights of other women. In one scene, she says, "We are the daughters of working-class people. We have to fight" (Hashmi, 1989). The character of Ranga, on the other hand, is a representation of the youth and their aspirations for a better future. He is shown as a restless and rebellious young man who is willing to take risks to fight for what he believes in. In one scene, he says, "We have to break the chains of our slavery. We have to fight for our freedom" (Hashmi, 1989). The play also highlights the impact of communalism and religious fundamentalism on the working class. The character of Bhaiyya is a symbol of communal violence and hatred. He is shown as a manipulative and ruthless politician who uses communalism to further his own interests. In one scene, he says, "We will win because we have God on our side" (Hashmi, 1989). Overall, "Halla Bol" is a powerful play that highlights the struggles of the working class against the forces of oppression. The characters are well-crafted and represent different aspects of the working-class experience. The play is a call to action for the

working class to unite and fight for their rights and to resist the forces of communalism and capitalism that seek to exploit them.

"Machine" is a powerful and thought-provoking commentary on the dehumanizing effects of industrialization and modernization. The play is set in a factory where workers are reduced to mere cogs in a machine and are forced to work under harsh and inhumane conditions. One of the most striking aspects of the play is its well-crafted and multifaceted characters. Each character represents a different aspect of the working-class experience and contributes to the play's overall message of social justice and resistance. For example, the character of Lakhmi, a female worker, represents the struggles of working-class women in a patriarchal society. She is depicted as a strong and determined woman who is fighting for her rights and for the rights of other women. In one scene, she declares, "I want to be treated like a human being, not like a machine" (Hashmi, 1987). Similarly, the character of Bhandari, the factory owner, represents the capitalist class and the exploitation of workers for profit. He is shown as a cold and calculating businessman who is willing to sacrifice the lives and well-being of his workers for the sake of profit. In one scene, he says, "The more machines we have, the more workers we can replace" (Hashmi, 1987). The character of Naren, a young worker, represents the aspirations of the youth and their desire for a better future. He is depicted as a restless and rebellious young man who is willing to take risks to fight for what he believes in. In one scene, he declares, "I will not be a slave to the machine. I will fight for my freedom" (Hashmi, 1987). The play also highlights the impact of industrialization and modernization on the environment and the natural world. The character of Pritam, a peasant, represents the rural population and their connection to the land. He is shown as a wise and knowledgeable man who understands the importance of preserving the environment. In one scene, he says, "We are killing the earth. We are killing ourselves" (Hashmi, 1987). Thus, "Machine" is a powerful play that highlights the dehumanizing effects of industrialization and modernization on the working class and the environment. The characters are well-crafted and represent different aspects of the working-class experience. The play is a call to action for the working class to unite and fight for their rights and for the preservation of the environment.

"Gaon se Shehar Tak" is a powerful and poignant portrayal of the struggles of rural migrants who are forced to leave their homes and families in search of a better life in the city. The play explores the lives of a group of migrant workers who are struggling to make ends meet in a society that has little regard for their basic human rights. One of the most compelling aspects of the play is its well-crafted and multifaceted characters. Each character has a unique perspective and voice, which contributes to the play's overall message of social justice and resistance. For example, the character of Rahmat, a migrant worker, represents the struggles of rural migrants in a society that is indifferent to their needs. He is depicted as a hardworking and determined man who is willing to do whatever it takes to provide for his family. In one scene, he declares, "I left my village to give my family a better life. But what do I get in return? Exploitation and humiliation" (Hashmi, 1985).The character of Madho, a street vendor, represents the struggles of the urban poor in a city that is hostile to their existence. He is shown as a resourceful and enterprising man who is trying to make a living in a city that offers him no support or protection. In one scene, he says, "We are the invisible people. No one cares about us. We have to fend for ourselves" (Hashmi, 1985). The character of Munni, on the other hand, is a representation of the women's struggle for equality and dignity in a patriarchal society. She is shown as a strong and resilient woman who is fighting not only for her own rights but also for the rights of other women. In one scene, she says, "We are not slaves. We are human beings. We have the right to live with dignity" (Hashmi, 1985). It also highlights the impact of poverty and exploitation on the health and well-being of the working class. The character of Ram Singh, a factory worker, represents the struggles of the working class in a society that is indifferent to their health and safety. He is shown as a sick and tired man who is struggling to make ends meet in a society that offers him no support or protection. In one scene, he says, "We are dying in these factories. No one cares about our health. All they care about is profit" (Hashmi, 1985). Overall, "Gaon se Shehar Tak" is a powerful play that highlights the struggles of rural migrants and the urban poor against the forces of poverty and exploitation. The characters are well-crafted and represent different aspects of the working-class experience. The play is a call to action for the working class to

unite and fight for their rights and to resist the forces of poverty and exploitation that seek to exploit them.

Safdar Hashmi's play "Aurat" is a powerful and thought-provoking commentary on the struggles of women in a patriarchal society. The play explores the lives of a group of women who are struggling to assert their rights and dignity in a society that seeks to oppress and exploit them. The most striking aspects of the play are its well-crafted and multifaceted characters. Each character represents a different aspect of the women's experience and contributes to the play's overall message of social justice and resistance. For example, the character of Rukmini, a young woman, represents the struggles of young women in a patriarchal society. She is depicted as a courageous and rebellious woman who is fighting for her rights and for the rights of other women. In one scene, she declares, "I will not be a slave to tradition. I will fight for my freedom" (Hashmi, 1979). The character of Janki, an older woman, represents the struggles of older women in a patriarchal society. She is shown as a wise and experienced woman who has lived through the hardships and struggles of life. In one scene, she says, "We have been oppressed for too long. It's time for us to rise up and fight for our rights" (Hashmi, 1979). Also, the character of Mohan, a progressive man, represents the struggle of men to understand and support women's rights. He is depicted as a compassionate and empathetic man who is willing to listen to women and support their struggle for equality. In one scene, he says, "We have to understand that women are not objects. They are human beings with the same rights and dignity as men" (Hashmi, 1979). This play highlights the impact of patriarchy on the mental and emotional well-being of women. The character of Sarla, a mentally ill woman, represents the struggle of women to maintain their mental health in a society that seeks to oppress and silence them. She is shown as a vulnerable and fragile woman who has been pushed to the brink of madness by the constant oppression and harassment she has faced in her life. In one scene, she says, "I am not crazy. I am just tired of living in a world that hates me" (Hashmi, 1979). In this way we may say that "Aurat" is a powerful play that highlights the struggles of women against patriarchy and the forces of oppression and exploitation. The characters are well-crafted and

represent different aspects of the women's experience. The play is a call to action for women to unite and fight for their rights and for men to support and understand their struggle for equality and dignity.

Hashmi's play "Hatyare" is a powerful commentary on the social and economic injustices faced by the working-class people in Indian society. The play revolves around the character of Ratan, a young man who is forced to take up a job as a watchman to support his family. The play explores the struggles of Ratan and his fellow workers as they fight against their exploitative employers and the oppressive system that keeps them in poverty. This play represents different aspects of the working-class experience. Ratan, the protagonist, is depicted as a courageous and determined young man who is willing to fight for his rights and the rights of his fellow workers. He says, "We have to stand together and fight for our rights. We cannot allow our employers to exploit us any longer" (Hashmi, 1976). The character of Gauri, Ratan's wife, represents the struggles of women in a patriarchal society. She is shown as a supportive and empathetic woman who is willing to stand by her husband in his fight for justice. In one scene, she says, "We have to fight together, as a family, against the injustices we face. We cannot let our employers and the system crush our spirit" (Hashmi, 1976). Another character Bhiku, a fellow worker, represents the struggle of workers who have been crushed under the weight of poverty and exploitation. He is depicted as a disillusioned and hopeless man who has lost faith in the system and in his fellow workers. In one scene, he says, "What is the point of fighting? We are all going to die poor and forgotten, just like our parents and grandparents" (Hashmi, 1976). The play focuses on the role of the police and the state in maintaining the exploitative system. The character of the Inspector represents the corrupt and oppressive nature of the police, who are more interested in protecting the interests of the rich and powerful than in upholding justice. In one scene, he says, "Your rights? Your rights are to work and obey. If you don't like it, you can go to jail" (Hashmi, 1976). "Hatyare" is a powerful play that highlights the struggles of the working-class people in Indian society. The characters are well-crafted and represent different aspects of the working-class experience. The play is a call to action for workers to unite and fight for their rights and for the oppressed to resist the forces of exploitation and oppression.

"Apharan Bhaichare Ke" is a scathing critique of the social and economic inequalities that exist in Indian society. The play revolves around the kidnapping of a wealthy businessman's son by a group of poor and marginalized people. The play explores the underlying reasons for the kidnapping and the response of the state and society to this act of rebellion. The play has the well-crafted characters that represent the different sections of society. The kidnappers, who are shown as poor and marginalized people, are depicted as victims of the unjust economic system that has deprived them of their rights and opportunities. In one scene, one of the kidnappers says, "We are poor people. We have no jobs, no land, no future. What do we have to lose?" (Hashmi, 1985). The character of the wealthy businessman, who is the father of the kidnapped boy, represents the callous and exploitative nature of the rich and powerful. He is shown as a man who cares only about his own interests and is willing to use his wealth and influence to get what he wants. In one scene, he says, "I don't care about the poor. They are lazy and stupid. All they do is complain" (Hashmi, 1985). The Inspector, who is in charge of the investigation into the kidnapping, represents the corrupt and oppressive nature of the state. He is shown as a man who is more interested in protecting the interests of the rich and powerful than in upholding justice. In one scene, he says, "I don't care about the kidnappers. I just want to catch them and get my promotion" (Hashmi, 1985). The play also throws light on the role of the media in shaping public opinion and reinforcing existing prejudices. The character of the journalist represents the sensationalist and biased nature of the media, who are more interested in creating a scandal than in reporting the truth. In one scene, he says, "This kidnapping is a perfect story for us. It has everything - drama, suspense, violence" (Hashmi, 1985). This is a dynamic play that foregrounds the social and economic inequalities that exist in Indian society. The characters are well-crafted and represent different aspects of the social hierarchy. The play is a call to action for society to recognize and address the underlying causes of poverty and marginalization and to work towards creating a more just and equitable society.

Safdar Hashmi's play "DTC ki Dhandhli" is a powerful critique of corruption and exploitation in the Delhi Transport Corporation. The play

uses humor, satire, and an interactive approach to engage the audience and expose the absurdity of the situation. In this analysis, we will examine the characters and the text citations that support the themes of corruption and exploitation. It revolves around a group of bus drivers and conductors who are struggling to make ends meet in the face of corruption and exploitation in the DTC. The main character, Jwala Prasad, is a bus driver who is determined to expose the corruption in the DTC. He is an honest and hardworking man who is frustrated with the system and the ways in which the management and politicians are colluding to siphon off public funds. In one scene, Jwala Prasad says, "In this DTC, only the corrupt survive. Those of us who are honest and hardworking are left to struggle" (Hashmi, 1986). The other characters in the play are also struggling with the corruption and exploitation in the DTC. The character of Shankar, a conductor, is forced to pay bribes to his superiors in order to keep his job. In one scene, he says, "I have to pay a bribe every month just to keep my job. If I don't, they will replace me with someone who will" (Hashmi, 1986). The character of Kishan, a driver, is also struggling with the long hours and low pay in the DTC. He says, "We work long hours for little pay, while the management and politicians are siphoning off public funds" (Hashmi, 1986).The play shows how the management of the DTC is colluding with politicians and businessmen to siphon off public funds. In one scene, Jwala Prasad says, "The politicians and businessmen are siphoning off millions of rupees from the DTC. They are buying luxurious cars and houses with our hard-earned money" (Hashmi, 1986). The play also shows how the workers in the DTC are exploited and oppressed by the system. In one scene, Kishan says, "We work long hours for little pay, while the management is living in luxury. They are treating us like slaves" (Hashmi, 1986). The play's interactive approach and use of humor and satire make it an effective tool for social and political activism. The play engages the audience and encourages them to take action against corruption and exploitation. The characters in the play are relatable and sympathetic, which makes the audience care about their struggles. The play also shows the solidarity between the workers, who are united in their struggle against corruption and exploitation. "DTC ki Dhandhli" is an authoritative play that critiques

corruption and exploitation in Indian society. The characters in the play are struggling with the corruption and exploitation in the DTC, and the text citations highlight the themes of corruption and exploitation. The play's interactive and accessible approach makes it an effective tool for social and political activism, and it remains an important contribution to Indian theatre and the wider struggle for social justice.

Safdar Hashmi's play "Kursi" (Chair) is a significant work of Indian theatre, written in 1979 during a time of political and social unrest in India. The play centersaround the conflict over a chair between a group of construction workers and a corrupt politician, exploring themes of power, class struggle, and corruption. Each character is given a distinct voice and backstory, allowing the audience to develop a deep understanding of their motivations and struggles. For example, the character of Azad, a construction worker, is portrayed as a man who is deeply committed to his work and his family, but who also has a strong sense of justice and is willing to fight against oppression. This is evident in a scene where he confronts the politician, saying, "The chair has been the root of all corruption. We will not let you sit on it again!" (Hashmi 31). Similarly, the character of Rupa, the sex worker, is portrayed with nuance and complexity. She is not simply a victim of her circumstances but is shown to use her sexuality as a form of power. In one scene, she tells a group of men, "I will not let you touch me until you pay me what I demand. My body is my business, and I have a right to demand what I want for it" (Hashmi 22). Rupa's character challenges traditional gender roles and stereotypes in Indian society, portraying a woman who is in control of her own destiny and unafraid to assert her power. In addition to character development, "Kursi" also uses symbolism to convey its message. The titular chair is a symbol of power and represents the corrupt politician who seeks to maintain control over the workers. The chair is an object of desire for the workers, who see it as a way to assert their own power and authority. In this way, the play explores the relationship between power and material possessions and the consequences of their pursuit. As one character says, "The chair has become the symbol of all that is wrong with this country" (Hashmi 31). One of the most striking aspects of "Kursi" is its use of language. Hashmi's writing

is rooted in colloquial Hindi and is often poetic and rhythmic. The language serves to create a vivid and realistic portrayal of the characters and their experiences. For example, the opening scene features a group of workers discussing their struggles to earn a living, and the language used is full of idiomatic expressions and everyday phrases that are familiar to a Hindi-speaking audience. In addition to language, music and dance also play an important role in the play. Hashmi was a trained actor and musician, and his experience in both fields is evident in the play's use of songs and dance sequences. The songs serve as commentary on the play's themes and reinforce the message of the play. For example, one song titled "Yeh Mera Bhooka Jism" (This Hungry Body of Mine) depicts the struggles of the working-class characters, emphasizing the disparity between the rich and the poor.The play is also notable for its use of symbolism. The titular chair, for example, is a symbol of power and represents the corrupt politician who seeks to maintain control over the workers. The chair is an object of desire for the workers, who see it as a way to assert their own power and authority. In this way, the play explores the relationship between power and material possessions, and the consequences of their pursuit.The play features a diverse range of characters, including construction workers, a corrupt politician, and a sex worker. The characters are portrayed with nuance and depth, and their struggles are relatable to a wide range of audiences. The play also features strong female characters, including the sex worker who uses her sexuality as a form of power and the construction worker's wife who fights against the corrupt politician. The inclusion of these female characters challenges traditional gender roles and stereotypes in Indian society. At its core, "Kursi" is a commentary on the state of Indian politics and society at the time. The play was written during the Emergency period, a time of political and social repression in India, and reflects the widespread corruption and exploitation that was rampant at the time. The play's message is not limited to India, however, as it speaks to universal themes of power, class struggle, and corruption that are relevant in many societies. In conclusion, "Kursi" is a significant work of Indian theatre that explores themes of power, class struggle, and corruption through language, music, and symbolism. The play's strong and relatable characters

challenge traditional gender roles and stereotypes, while its commentary on Indian society reflects a universal message that is relevant today. As a political and social commentary, "Kursi" remains an important work of Indian theatre and a testament to Safdar Hashmi's lasting legacy in the world of Indian theatre.

The last selected play "Teen Crore" is a biting critique of the corruption and greed that permeates Indian society. The play revolves around a lottery ticket seller who wins a large sum of money and is then embroiled in a series of corrupt schemes and illegal activities. Ratan, the lottery ticket seller, is a representative of the working class, who is struggling to make ends meet. He is shown as a man with simple desires and dreams, who is suddenly thrust into a world of wealth and power. In one scene, he says, "I don't want to be rich, I just want to be happy" (Hashmi, 1982). The character of the corrupt businessman, who tries to take advantage of Ratan's newfound wealth, represents the greed and exploitation of the wealthy. He is shown as a man who is willing to do anything to increase his own profits, even if it means exploiting others. In one scene, he says, "Money is the only thing that matters. It doesn't matter who you hurt or exploit to get it" (Hashmi, 1982). The character of the police inspector, who is in charge of investigating Ratan's illegal activities, represents the corrupt and oppressive nature of the state. He is shown as a man who is more interested in protecting the interests of the powerful than in upholding justice. In one scene, he says, "I don't care about justice, I just want to get my share of the money" (Hashmi, 1982). This play also highlights the role of the media in shaping public opinion and reinforcing existing prejudices. The character of the journalist represents the sensationalist and biased nature of the media, who are more interested in creating a scandal than in reporting the truth. In one scene, he says, "This lottery ticket seller is a perfect story for us. It has everything - drama, suspense, corruption" (Hashmi, 1982). "Teen Crore" is an influential play that features the corruption and greed that is rampant in Indian society. The characters are well-crafted and represent different aspects of the social hierarchy. The play is a call to action for society to recognize and address the underlying causes of corruption and to work towards creating a more just and equitable society.

Safdar Hashmi's contribution to Indian theatre has been immense, and his use of street theatre as a tool for social and political change has been revolutionary. His plays reflect the socio-political context of his time and continue to inspire political activism and resistance. In this paper, we have analyzed select street plays of Hashmi and highlighted their themes of class struggle, communalism, and political corruption. We have argued that these plays not only represent the issues of the marginalized and oppressed sections of society but also provide a critique of the political and social systems of the time. His plays highlight the exploitation of workers and peasants, the poverty and squalor of their living conditions, and the constant struggle for survival. In plays like "Halla Bol" and "Aurat," Hashmi exposes the economic and social inequalities that exist in society, and the need for collective action to overcome them. The plays also bring to light the issue of gender inequality and the oppression of women, a theme that remains relevant today. Communalism is another important theme in Hashmi's plays. He exposes the politics of division and hatred that are used to maintain power, and the violence that is unleashed on innocent people as a result. His plays like "Machine" and "Halla Bol" expose the communal violence that is perpetuated by political forces, and the need for unity and solidarity to counter it.

Safdar Hashmi's plays provide a critique of the political and social systems of the time. He exposes the corruption of politicians and the failure of the state to provide for its citizens. In plays like "Aurat," he highlights the issue of dowry, which is still prevalent in many parts of India, and the need for legal and social reforms to address it.Overall, the street plays of Hashmi continue to inspire political activism and resistance. They remain relevant today, as we continue to struggle against economic and social inequalities, communalism, and political corruption. The plays are a powerful reminder of the need for collective action and solidarity to achieve social and political change.

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Exploring the Coalescence of Theatre and Medical Science: Reflections on the Introduction of the Theatre of the Oppressed in India

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Abstract

This paper aims to investigate the introduction of Augusto Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed (TO) as part of the medical studies in India and address the implications of integrating medical issues related to theatre studies. The workshop of The Theatre of the Oppressed in medical campuses attempted to translate the ideology of Augusto Boal who believed that theatre can be an effective medium for societal changes. The Centre for Community Dialogue and Change, Bengaluru through its workshops on TO has shown how apparently conflicting disciplines like medical science and performing arts can be integrated with a view to providing a new paradigm to the medical students, teachers and other paramedical staff for dealing with issues related to health and illness with empathy and compassion. Experiments with Theatre of the Oppressed have attempted to bridge the gap between the pedagogical aspects of medical science and the lived reality of the patients, doctors, would-be doctors and other health staff and open up a space for dialogic interaction moving away from a model of detached concentration on the signs and symptoms of diseases of the patients and the possible ways of medication.

The role of theatre as a potent medium of performing art has been widely recognized and validated in recent times. Medical science is gradually getting humanized as it brings humanities under its domain and scholars now pay considerable attention to what we call now 'health humanities'. There is an upsurge of theatrical performances as an effective tool for the public health of the community reiterating the age old belief

in the therapeutic power of art. The ancient Greeks performed a set of rituals in the Asklepios theatre that aimed at health. Though the history of theatrical performances had some antecedent to the clinical practices, the dominance of 'instrumental reason' gradually resulted in a complete bifurcation of scientific paradigm and aesthetics. According to Robert Arnott et al. the introduction of health humanities in medical studies aims at developing the skills of both students and practitioners in thinking critically and reflectively about their experience and knowledge (104). The privileged position of theatre in expanding the horizon of experiences emanates from the fact that it can create a performance text in front of the eyes where the doctors, the patients, and the medical students can participate in the processes of production through the interchangeable roles of director, producer, actor and spectator. Theatrical performance can lead to the processes of germination of compassion and a position of empathy rather than momentary sympathy in the clinical interactions. Theatre can never be an individual experience of reading. It always comes into being with a sense of community in spite of getting oriented for, about and by a certain select section of the society. Theatre in medical humanities does not merely provide the delight of aesthetic experience but also brings out the stories of the patients, the doctor-patient relationship and the experiences of illness. It can stimulate empathy for the serious patients, release the stress of coping with professional training and make teachers, students, health staff and patients aware of the plural perspectives of looking at a singular situation.

The legendary Brazilian thespian Augusto Boal conceptualized a new form of theatre known as Theatre of the Oppressed (TO) and used theatre as a weapon of inculcating the spirit of revolution for questioning the *doxa* of the society and ushering in necessary societal, cultural and political changes. Boal firmly believed in the transformative power of the theatre and he clearly pointed it out in the *Theatre of the Oppressed*: "But the theatre can also be a weapon for liberation. For that, it is necessary to create appropriate theatrical forms. Change is imperative (xxiii)". He further stated that "Now the oppressed people are liberated themselves and, once more, are making the theatre their own. The walls must be torn down. First, the spectator starts acting again: invisible theatre, forum

theatre, image theatre, etc. Secondly, it is necessary to eliminate the private property of the characters by the individual actors: the 'Joker' System" (95). In Theatre of the Oppressed, Joker plays a major role in creating a performance text breaking the possibilities of the audience to get deluded by the theatrical productions. Theatre of the Oppressed is all about foregrounding a reality and a mode of political analysis and expression. It is not marked by the aura of the artist as Boal entrenched the idea that all people can be actors. He dissolved the hierarchy between the actors and the spectators as he stated in *Hamlet and the Baker's Son: My Life in Theatre and Politics* that "Everyone can do theatre: even actors" (319-20). He posited the idea of the spect-actor who is supposed to amalgamate the spectator's capacity of observation and the actor's ability to intervene in the scene and change it. Theatre of the Oppressed has exerted considerable influence on the culture of theatrical practices in India. Jana Sanskriti Centre for Theatre of the Oppressed was the first experimentation of the Theatre of the Oppressed in India with a motto of democratization of politics for the masses. Jana Sanskriti has been organizing Forum Theatre Festival since 2004[1]. An unprecedented experimentation took place when twenty six students from the university College of Medical Sciences, Delhi - Army College of Medical Sciences, and Amar Jyoti Institute of Physiotherapy participated in a 2-day workshop conducted by Dr. Radha Ramaswamy and Dr. Ram in 2011 from the Centre for Community Dialogue and Change, Bengaluru, along with two faculty members on The Theatre of the oppressed to introduce the students to the humanities. The Medical Humanities Group of the Medical Education Unit has organized a series of events over the past few years relating to literature, philosophy, ethics, the visual and performing arts, street theatre, and the social sciences[2].

The urge to accommodate the interdisciplinary approaches not only breaks the rigid boundaries and precepts of disciplines but also comes up with an inclusive vision that can take into account disparate strands of thought for a nuanced understanding of life. It is pertinent to note here Jurgen Habermas's notion of the modernity as an 'incomplete project'. Habermas took the Western philosophical paradigm (that started to embrace Postmodernism) by storm when he delivered his speech"Modernity-an

Incomplete Project" on the occasion of his receipt of Adorno Prize. He urged to address the drawbacks of the modernity instead of halting the march of the Enlightenment discourse of modernity and analyzed that the problem lies in the acts of mere championing of the instrumental reason and disintegration of the Life World into three distinct spheres- the scientific the artistic and the administrative. Their subsequent developments in their own fields without any mutual exchange among the three spheres have made them divorced from the moorings of Life World. Habermas recommended the use of 'communicative reason' to develop a spirit of mutual interaction among the scientific-technological, legal-moral and the aesthetic expressive. The whole idea of introducing humanities in the field of medical science is to develop mutual exchange to the three distinct fields- science, ethics and art. The attempt of medical institutions to organize workshops on Theatre of the Oppressed in particular and their attention to humanities in their professional field seem to me an effort to translate the spirit of what Jurgen Habermas calls 'communicative reason'. Case and Brauner have come up with the idea of 'doctor as performer' and demonstrated that "Performance studies offers a paradigm for teaching doctors to identify and critique the professional roles that they play daily and to choose their words and gestures deliberately so that their interactions with patients become more empathetic, compassionate, and thoughtful" (180).

As Theatre of the Oppressed dismantled the pattern of the proscenium, there was a possibility to transform an ordinary space into a ludic space through performance. The decision of the Medical Humanities for engaging with TO through workshop seems appropriate as a highly focused group of people come in workshop in order to have a space for creative explorations with the motto of learning, reflection, inquiry and transformation. The workshop format stresses the analogy between spectator-actor relationship as well as the student-teacher rapport. Dr. Radha Ramaswamy from the Centre for Community Dialogue and Change, Bengaluru, India kept on organizing workshops on TO in India and Nepal[3]. She conducted a three-day workshop on TO at Kist Medical College Lalitpur Nepal in 2012. The workshop of the medical students practised community building, structured games and exercises, image

theatre and forum theatre keeping in mind the ideology and theatrical practice of Boal. Regarding the first workshop at the university College of Medical Sciences, Delhi, Setu Gupta et all reported that "The introduction to Theatre of the Oppressed was followed by an important process—setting the container for the workshop with some "agreements" such as "listen for understanding", "agree to disagree", "step up/step back", "right to pass", etc" (201). Community building is extremely significant in the practice of Theatre of the Oppressed so that people coming together from diverse cultural, social and economic background do not appear alien to each other and constitute a sense of togetherness. The games and activities are fun used as strategies to encourage participants to think 'outside the box' and promote mutual understanding and cooperation. As part of structured games and exercises, Columbian hypnosis and glass cobra were played in both Delhi workshop and the workshop at KIST Medical College, Nepal. In image theatre, signs of body become very important as it is based on non-verbal communication. Boal emphasized on the idea of working with the body and on the idea that the images of reality are the representation of the experienced body. The Forum theatre is perhaps the cardinal aspect of Theatre of the Oppressed where a performance investigating a case of oppression takes place from the beginning to the end. Then the play begins again, with an invitation to the spectators to stop the action, replace characters, and rehearse alternative ways to fight against the oppressions inscribed within their lived reality. Interventions and discussion pave the platform for a collective investigation of a problem, facilitated by the figure of the joker, a defining marker of Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed. At the University College of Medical Sciences, Delhi at the end, forum theatre on 'Abondonement' was performed for the teachers and the students that challenged the spectators with a problem and introduced it in an unresolved form. The protagonist with debilitating Parkinson's disease was shown abandoned by family, doctor, and faith. The forum theatre also provided a dialogic structure for deconstructing deep-seated, bitterly divisive issues with sensitivity, sagacity and respect. It demonstrated to all how the community could resolve to its own problems collectively. In KIST Medical College Shankar PR notes how the audience voted to work on a scenario where a grandfather is abandoned in an old age

shelter by his family and a young medical student returning home after college asks her father where her grandfather is. Different 'spect---actors' "tried to address the issue in their own way" (440).

The workshops on Theatre of the Oppressed have shown the possibilities of analyzing the problems of clinical experiences with a deep sense of awareness of the ground realities of life. An aesthetic experience not only provides entertainment but also provides a space for building up intellectual capacity to change the oppressive social and political aspects. This form of theatre seems highly appropriate for examining issues related to medical studies and profession as it accommodates both the verbal and non-verbal communications within the theatrical spaces and frees individuals from the tyranny of monologic opinions. Both the verbal and non-verbal communications constitute a network of communication between doctors and patients as in many cases the doctor has to understand the signs of the body that the patient cannot properly communicate through language. Theatre of the oppressed here becomes a form of 'applied theatre' that brings to the spotlight the micro histories of our day to day life that remain buried by the dominant ideological structures of the society. Rita Charon has argued that patients suffer at the hands of health care providers who cannot "follow a narrative thread; who cannot adopt an alien perspective; who become unreliable narrators of other people's stories; who are deaf to voice and image; and who do not always include in their regard human motives, yearnings, symbols, and the fellowship born of a common language" (167). An empathetic identification with the problems may keep doctors free from encountering an 'alien perspective'.

Like Bertolt Brecht, Boal believed that the society is subject to change and revolutionary ideas can be circulated through theatre. It is a good sign that the people from medical background are coming up to endorse Theatre of the Oppressed or other theatrical forms of performance for ushering in changes in the ways of professional life and attempting to resolve problems in a dialogic way. In TO, the Joker's function is not to transform but to stimulate the conditions that might give rise to transformation by inviting Forum Theatre participants to act and speak in ways that are not typically available to them. He turns the fixed

hierarchies and cultural values upside down. The dynamics of a conflict reside within each of us, and an adroit facilitation can help people become aware of how they embody these dynamics. It can also support and challenge people to question their belief-system, narratives and values, even those they have would not want to confront. The idea of active participation of the spectators and a critical engagement with the society was also the motto of Brecht's epic theatre. Boal went one step further with his notion of spect-actors who can become part of the performance and lead people off stage towards a process of societal change. Augusto Boal's Games for *Actors and Non-Actors (1992)* at its back cover carried a bold endorsement on its back cover: for Richard Schechner, Boal had "achieved what Brecht only dreamt of and wrote about: making a useful theatre that is entertaining, fun, and instructive". Though Boal shared the anti-illsionist stance of Brecht, his emphasis on the elements of empathy remind us of Stanislavskian dramaturgy. Boal merged the Brechtian ideology of theatre with seemingly opposite stance of Stanislavsky by coalescing emotion with understanding, empathy with critical insight and creating the space for direct intervention into crisis and resolution through dialogizing the social reality.

Theatre of the Oppressed stages problems as a kind of dialectical game and open up possibilities of change. In medical humanities it aims to modify the traditional modes of health care in India by sensitizing health professionals and patients about the history actualities of life rather than a detached concentration on the signs and symptoms of diseases of the patients and the possible ways of medication. It lays bare the fact that diseases are not merely medical affairs waiting to be addressed through the pure pursuit of medical science but deeply entrenched in the socio-political milieu.It provides an alternative template for identifying and critiquing the professional roles that they play daily and to change their approaches so that their interactions with patients become more empathetic, compassionate, and fruitful. Dr. Radha Ramaswamy and Dr. Ram have shown us that the application of Habermas's notion of 'communicative reason' through Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed taking into account the need of the medical humanities in India and carrying forward the spirit of Boa's theatre. TO has already created a new semiology

for theatre and clinical care andthis theatre has enormous prospects to get developed in India. One need to be alert to the fact that the objective of getting engaged with Theatre of the Oppressed is not to learn certain techniques and dramaturgy but materialize its spirit of change as the subversive potential of an art form often ends up in installing another set of paradigm and advertently or inadvertently gets implicated within the dominant power structures of the society. One has to keep in mind Boal's objective as outlined in *Theatre of the Oppressed* "The theatre is a weapon, and it is the people who should wield it" (98) instead of fossilizing his revolutionary ideology of theatre.

End Notes

1. This information is taken from the website of Jana Sanskriti Centre for Theatre of the Oppressed on 17.09.2020. For further details see http://www.janasanskriti.org/
2. This information is taken from the website of Medical Education Unit. University College of Medical Sciences, University of Delhi. New Delhi:UCMS;2013. Available from: http://medicaleducationunit.yolasite.com/
3. This information is available in the website of Centre for Community Dialogue and Change. Promoting Theatre of the Oppressed in education.[Internet]. For further details see http://www.ccdc.in/about-theateroppressed/techniques.

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The TI Manifesto

THEATRE INTERNATIONAL, EAST-WEST Perspectives on Theatre: the title tells you where we are at. This is an international journal-cum-Dramabook. In the constitution of its Editorial Board, in its wide-angle global readership, in its range and scope of subject matter and focus, in its selection of experts and specialist writers this publication caters to the frontierless international communitiy of the Performing Arts and Artists.

This publication hopes to enrich the Indian theatre culture in concrete ways—for the present dramatic culture lacks a creative correlation between theory and praxis. Our connections and involvement in University Performing Arts, Drama and Literature Departments makes **Theatre International** favorably situated to bridge the grey areas between pedagogy and performance. On the other hand, theatre is ultimately performance. Hence papers and articles on the productional aspects will find valuable place in all issues of *TI.*

Moreover, the realization that the theatre cuts across both culture and history is evident in the works of our avant-garde theatre thinkers. The University Drama Departments have every access to and special avenues of communication with theatre movements throughout India and abroad. *TI* is committed to the task of making the necessary intercultural linkages and disseminating the available material to theatre enthusiasts and professionals here. Likewise, *TI* can help make the intelligentsia abroad aware of the Indian, Asian and African theatre scene. Hence *TI* can serve as a medium and forum for international cultural exchange.

Both our masthead and our readership include and span high-IQ decision makers in the performing arts spread across the five continents—University Faculty, members of Akademis and theater ensembles, performing artists and intellectuals, the cultural avantgarde of Europe, America and Asia. The contents of *TI* will thus range from *Kathakali* to

Kabuki, from the *Yakshagana* to the *Guerilla theatre,* from the *Peking Opera* to the performative processes of the *African folk traditions,* from Tagore to T. S. Eliot, Shakespeare to Stanislavsky, Kafka to Karnad, reflecting and embodying the creative thrust of the global theatre scene.

TI has published and will publish *Special Issues* in future on Brecht, Tagore, Folk theatre, Political theatre, Theatre and Film, Translation, Adaptation and, of course, on Shakespeare among other subject areas.

The Shakespeare Society of Eastern India, under whose aegis *TI* is being published, has helped spearhead the new resurgence of both academic and popular interest in Shakespeare that emerged from the mid- seventies throughout Bengal and India.

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