
**Ph.D
Dissertation**

**Influence of Shakespeare on Bengali Literature:
The Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries**



Ph.D Dissertation

Researcher

Golam Rabbani

Session: 2001-2002

**Influence of Shakespeare on Bengali Literature:
The Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries**
Golam Rabbani

**Institute of Bangladesh Studies
University of Rajshahi**

**June
2009**

June 2009

CERTIFICATE

It is with great pleasure we would like to certify that the dissertation entitled **Influence of Shakespeare on Bengali Literature: The Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries** submitted by Golam Rabbani to the Institute of Bangladesh Studies, University of Rajshahi, Bangladesh, for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English is an original research study done under our joint supervision, guidance and collaboration. To the best of our knowledge this dissertation was not previously submitted for any degree/ diploma/ fellowship to any other university/ institute. Materials obtained from other sources have been duly acknowledged in the thesis.

The dissertation is forwarded with recommendation to the University of Rajshahi through the Institute of Bangladesh Studies for the necessary steps for its acceptance in partial fulfillment for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English.

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Declaration

I do hereby declare that the dissertation entitled **Influence of Shakespeare on Bengali Literature: The Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries** submitted to the Institute of Bangladesh Studies, University of Rajshahi, as part of the requirements for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English is my original work. It has not been submitted earlier partly or wholly to any other university or institute for any degree or diploma or for other similar purposes.

Handwritten signature of Golam Rabbani in black ink, with the date 29.06.89 written below it.

Golam Rabbani

Institute of Bangladesh Studies
University of Rajshahi

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Acknowledgement

Learning is the greatest earning for a man when Shakespeare says, *'Ignorance is the curse of God and knowledge the wing where with to fly to heaven'*.

The completion of this work reminds me of the celestial blessings of the Almighty God, the most merciful, and the affectionate touch of my learned supervisors whose constant instructions helped me to work at day and night. When I was trying utmost with indefatigable spirit and rigorous efforts for the final copy of this dissertation, my moments were filled with worries and torments as any success is sure to be the out come of a long endeavour but I humbly say I am not convinced although I have made a lot of effort with the standard I have attained. Betray of eye sight may beget printing errors despite my repeated perusal there may be some unintentional errors.

The fixed date of the submission expedited my faculties working with all the means and measures along with hope and fear and to have produced and matured the dissertation to the satisfaction or up to the mark I am supposed to have no stone left unturned. Although I have attempted to explore a vast literary field, which I could not possibly hope to cover duly and to touch on a great many issues, on which I claim to have few qualifications to illustrate. At the out set I would like to say with pride that I have been inspired to do my research at IBS is a tremendous success in my career which resulted in the final submission of the thesis under the scholarly supervision and prudent guidance of my reverend supervisors Professor M. Enamul Haque, Department of English (R.U.) and Professor Dr. Fakrul Alam as Co-supervisor, Department of English D.U. and their sagacious and worthy contributions, words of deep affection and valuable comments, relevant suggestions, views of optimistic inspirations have sprouted the seeds of endless impetus and enthusiastic spirit in my heart that acted as the panacea for me in flourishing my research career no doubt. Both the esteemed supervisors without whose instructions, guidance, ideal manners, constant co-operation, directions of constructive counseling with note worthy references and enlightened teaching and suggestions that have invigorated my present study and without which my present study would not have come into existence at the final stage, had they not been generous and benevolent to keep me active and particular about the study with all their intellectual information and mental support I would have been really helpless.

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to follow the wisest, accordingly; I have tried to glean the sources of Shakespeare anywhere I have found within my range and means as suggested and advised with provident outlook by my kind supervisors.

Of course, I never claim to have presented a work attaining the zenith of success and obviously it is not wise to be pleased with any completion when we are not absolute, but the efforts made and knowledge exerted for such a meticulous work have paved me the way to undergo the rigorous and tiresome studies on Shakespeare and search materials related to dissertation with an inquisitive faculty furrowing only to know the unknown and to see the unseen.

At IBS I have enjoyed almost all the programs and seminars and proud to say that the skills of presenting research methodology, the impetus received from the classes on various fields conducted by all learned IBS faculties have invigorated my energy and stamina to set me to the task of completing this dissertation. Amongst them the honorable Professor Dr. Mahbubur Rahman, Director of IBS and faculty members late Professor Dr. Priti Kumar Mitra, Professor Dr. Zainul Abedin and the previous Directors of IBS during the course work. My respect and thanks are due to Dr. Mostafa Kamal Dr. Swarochish Sarker, who have helped me beyond the class room teaching which widened my knowledge as well as matured the research methodological approach as applied to my thesis. The juvenile IBC campus, seminars full of informative and creative sources, open discussions on various presentations have added newer and wider views to my understanding on seminar paper presentation and have grown awareness of the qualities a researcher deserves. Library facilities of Rajshahi University, IBS library, Dhaka University Library, Seminar library of the Department of English, University of Dhaka, Varendra Research Museum and the books written by the renowned professors have helped me a lot. The old materials of Seminar of the Department of English and various journals and studies of Dhaka University on Shakespeare and their ratiocinative knowledge have provided me with ample source of knowledge about the works Shakespeare. The written or unpublished materials conveyed by my teacher Professor Dr. Fakrul Alam, Professor Dr. Khandakar Rezaul Rahman Vice-Chancellor of IBAIS University, Dhaka along with the close touch and conversation held with two Shakespeare researchers of Kallyani University of India and modern Bengali poet and dramatist Sayed Shamsul Haque have immensely enhanced my observations on Shakespeare.

I am also extremely benefited by the book entitled *Bangadeshe Shakespeare* [Shakespeare in Bengal] which was cited by my teacher and supervisor Professor Dr. Fakrul Alam I do claim to have learnt many things from him whose eyes were enough to grow the spirit and tempest of pursuit of learning and the studying impetus in me at the

same time his words of profound affection used to grow the enthusiastic spirit in me to study the unstudied with further curiosity.

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The idea of doing a comprehensive work on Shakespeare demands a continuous process which claims its unending venues focusing newer approaches to Shakespeare unceasingly day by day; accordingly, it was felt that IBS authority should take up the task of patronizing a research based on international demand which, in fact, started with me.

But as a humble researcher I found the title of the study too long and wide which used to grow panic in me while reaching the target of this mammoth task, but that was over come when I received the kind permission of my respectable teacher Professor Dr. Fakrul Alam who, without hesitating stretched his generous hands towards me to propel the wings of my faculties with his solemn blessings of sagacity and I always enjoyd being fortunate to have received his kind approval for allowing me to do the research under his pedantic guidance and constant counseling, for which, I am fortunate to have learnt a lot from him as a student and claim to have been guided as a fellow that helped me start endeavoring to go ahead in reaching the goal with newer researches of gargantuan target.

All the professors of IBS acted as the guide, guardian and patronizer for me. In case of the long period of composition and completion of the work several noteworthy changes took place after having scrutinized by my reverend supervisors. They have taken special care to see me active and have inspired me, although for acute familial crises caused by the sudden death of my mother and other official hazards, I was not able to be at IBS to work smoothly. In view of the importance of the subject matter I have endeavored to touch every point linked with the aspects of the Shakespearean influence on the renowned dramatists, poets, essayists, novelists and critics of Shakespeare of both the Bengali and English literature for which I have met my reverend teachers who helped me with their genial interpretations and valuable knowledge in enriching my task to go ahead. Special gratitude goes to Dr. Professor Shahidullah and Professor Jahurul Islam who graced my seminar held at IBS premise with their kind presence and with gratitude to say that the spontaneous speech of Professor Dr. Shahidullah in appreciation of my presentation still scintillates my flair of being inspired to furrow to the last. Professor Dr. Khandaker Forhad Hossain of the department of Bengali (R.U.) deserves my personal thanks for his interpretations of literary evaluation and informal discussion on the literary trend of Bengali literature.

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Attempts have been made to make materials title worthy and full of relevant focus. It is hardly necessary to recapitulate the difficulties which are inherent in a work of this kind to explain the principles adopted in the preparation of this study. Such inconsistencies may sometimes be a little inconvenient for the smooth perusal. With references, footnotes, bibliographical sketch and appendixes, contributions of all are acknowledged with due setting and the exactness of sources attached to the ending part of the study.

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There is nothing to be satisfied with the completion of any research work when a researcher is said to initiate his or her start of innovation from the end of the completion of a doctoral thesis referring to the statement 'End of the one is the beginning of the

other'. At Rajshahi I happened to associate with so many well wishers whom I recall with honour.

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Golam Rabbani

Abstract

The nineteenth century Bengali literature appeared to be the inception of modernity blended with the spirit of flourishing its widespread impact. With the dominance of the British rule all over the world the English perhaps carry and cherish their Shakespeare with them which they never contemplated of using for any imperial or colonial aptitude. Shakespeare is to be gleaned and sought in Bengali drama, translation and criticism with meticulous introspection of his plays and it has become indispensable to find out the subsistence of Shakespeare so as to measure how much and to what extent Shakespeare holds his image and influence on us or how much accessible he is in Bengali drama alias Bengali literature.

Shakespeare is a matter of real contribution as he is the greatest dramatist of the world certified by many scholars and the critics around the world obviously deem Shakespeare as the greatest dramatist for his tremendous appeal and acceptability irrespective of the collapse of time, space, race and cultural ambit. Accordingly, the national as well as the cultural growth or revival of Bengali drama is to be ventilated through the projection of accepting him on the basis of his imitation and influence working in the dramatic presentation of the Bengali dramatists. Immense possibility of Shakespeare and the limitations of Bengali literature do not appear to be measured in the same formula.

Educated Bengalis since the beginning of the nineteenth century happened to be in close touch with Shakespeare which still works fervently. The juxtaposition of the present condition of both the Bengali and English literature can be measured as the aftermath of the rapid growth of contact and comparative studies contributed by both the two. Gradual progress and development of Bengali literature has come to be recognized as the input of the literary contributors with a chorological ladder. Literature appears to be the prolific and most ancient branch of knowledge manifesting the aspects of life and nature related to human beings. From Rabindranath to Shamsur Rahman or from Girish Chandra to Syed Shamsul Haque, most of the nineteenth and twentieth century legendary literary contributors are thought to have been impressed by Shakespeare. In fact, Shakespeare has not only fulfilled the demands and interests of English literature but also filled up the gap held by the distinct branch in the context of dramatic products of world literature. Genius of Shakespeare has been institutionalized although he did not have any scope to have institutional certificates. England, if glories in her literature, has none but her Shakespeare

to proclaim her image positively. There is a need of Shakespeare in every nation's literature. Hence, Shakespeare has been structured as the 'Icon standard' for the contributors of literature of the whole world. Bengali drama is the most significant chapter of Bengali literature which embraced Shakespeare earlier with the inception of the British cultural programs or theatrical presentation in west Bengal.

Shakespeare came to be a dramatic personality and a genus of dramatic literature and a set of traditions had developed under the inevitable impact of the same. The same tradition provided his existence which was followed by the Bengali playwrights for the basic materials with which to work, perhaps, the growth and studies of Bengali literature, in particular, dramatic literature has marked the impressive evolution which seems to have thwarted the rise of Shakespearean drama and its vehement theatrical presentation throughout all the levels of the country. In the year 1854 Parimothon Basu had arranged the historical play *Julius Caesar* of Shakespeare which was acted at a school located at Jorashako, Kolkata.

There was spontaneous spread of Shakespeare which perhaps is measured as a credit to nascent England and as the evidence of historical obligation that Shakespeare was a Renaissance man. Human genius can never remain furtive and suffocated when there is the tendency of volcanic eruption in the growth of creative faculties of the genius. Genius attracts the genius in the way the magnet attracts the iron. There is no way to be prejudiced about the genius of a literary artist Shakespeare when there are reasons to be impressed by the radiance of the genius. Shakespeare of English literature influenced Rabindranath of Bengali literature. So the communion and contact between nations, geniuses, poets or playwrights are a psycho-scientific phenomenon which can never be examined as an isolated component. Even Shakespeare had the evidence of being influenced by his predecessors so it has been proved scientifically true that knowledge begets knowledge and the present follows the past with a view to making progress.

During the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century Shakespearean influence started to work in Bengal when there began to grow an impetus among the Bengali intelligentsia, Bengali playwrights or writers in creating original works of Bengali dramatic literature. Indeed, there was none available but Shakespeare before them and he appeared to be a model for the growth of the individual skills of the playwrights representing the scenario of the Bengali dramatic literature. The Bengali literary personalities accepted Shakespeare greatly in borrowing ideas about dramatic styles and

techniques, stagecraft, creation of characters in the mode of imitation, adaptation, modification as and through the way of Indianisation of Shakespeare's plays and were spontaneous in receiving Shakespeare. Depth of Shakespeare's plays impressed the Bengali literati with a tremendous effect on their minds of absorbing Shakespearean tradition as an inevitable aftermath as quoted by I. Habib who thinks for any one to escape Shakespearean influence is a difficult task with reference to the case of Shakespeare studies where the accretions of four centuries are bound to leave some impress even on the most original mind.

But the rise and demand of Shakespeare have not been able to create awareness of the same among the Bengali mind as expected to be. Perusal of the original plays or reading of his translated plays, studies of the playwrights would open the milieu of newer vision and pave the way of proper study of Shakespeare for both the general and English educated readers with more of the efforts and enterprises of Bengali talent which can represent and reach the products of Shakespearean contribution to the commoners of the Bengali community. The tendency of showing any inertia of being far from Shakespeare is obsolete now – a days as the global net work and the impact of Shakespeare upon the whole world would never keep the Bengalis remaining untouched from the vicinity of Shakespeare. So to be influenced or affected by Shakespeare is not an uncommon incident but a mark of the flow of spontaneity and naturalness emerging from an Institutional Shakespeare not an Individual Shakespeare. The growth of the genius has every reason to entertain and accept every one as it's an inherent pursuit of being spread among those coming into the contact with the genius like Shakespeare.

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Chapter 1

Introduction and outline of the study with review of literature

Introduction

Of all the branches of learning, influence of literature holds generating force that elevates human mind. Of all the contributions the British has bestowed upon the world, Shakespeare, the 17th century genius, holds the supreme position as one of the most influential precursors in dramatic and theatrical literature.

During the nineteenth century, two cultures, each with long history as Bengali literature had the glorious tradition of rich cultural heritage and historical grandeur. On the other hand, English literature had enjoyed its Anglo-Saxon genesis with rich traditions interacted in Bengal.¹

Literature of any nation or race, when adorned with universal appeal, appears to overcome all the barriers of time, space, cultural or geographical variations. A great change was said to have occurred in Bengali literature for external influence that was supposed to have come from its contact with the literary forms and ideas of the west. Differences between the two could not prevent the communication of influences upon each other.

It is natural that there may be so many differences between the nations, but due to progress and enlightenment, scientific achievement and intellectual development, differences between man and man by facilitating contact and by promoting mutual intercourse among themselves, but those differences were going to be eradicated in a greater extent, in the west itself. It is found that in spite of the geographical barriers England, France and Germany were in practice of exchanging ideas from each other freely and the philosophical, literary and political ideas of these countries were penetrated into their cultural history. Far from being viewed with suspicion and distrust, their exchange of ideas and thoughts is held to be generally productive of good results when a literature seeks to get hold of fresh strength and this access of new vigour is sure to come to it through contact with some other literature, preferably for the generations to come.²

¹ M. Bamuer, Rachel Van (ed.). *Aspects of Bengali History and Society*. Hawaii: The University Press of Hawaii, USA, 1975.p. 99.

² Priyaranjan Sen, *Western Influence in Bengali Literature* (Kolkata: Academic Publishers, 1966), p. 38.

In the proposed study I would like to explore the Shakespearean impact on Bengali literature and there is perhaps no research or study in the field mentioned as far as the knowledge of mine goes. In this context as a researcher at the cost of continuous study and perseverance I have the desire to explore the new field of Shakespeare in the aspects of Bengali literature.

Foreign elements of literature may get infused in a national literature in a number of ways, in a number of occasions. Accordingly, it is only natural that great literature of any nation should transcend its national frontiers and exert an influence on the literatures of the other lands, distant or near in time or in space.³

Shakespeare represents English literature with the best of his faculty on the reflection of the aspects of human nature replete with the psychological torments and the external forces of nature affecting both the instincts of the inner abode of human psyche and human society. The arrival of Shakespeare as an institution in India, in particular, Bengal came to be a revolutionary phenomenon. The name Shakespeare has become a paradigm as to his dramatic effusion, but it was natural for him to hold immense influence on when there had been the dearth of literary progress and cultural flamboyance during the nineteenth and twentieth century Bengali literature, as if, it had felt the appearance of a literary icon and the Bengalis had the opportunity to study Shakespeare, the Bard, they had been longing to see as the model for them. The year 1831 appears to be significant in the history of Shakespeare performance in Bengal for a theatre troupe coming from England, especially to stage Shakespeare's plays and it was formed by Prasanna Kumar Tagore. The troupe staged *Julius Caesar* on January 7, 1832. In 1833, some scenes from *Two Gentlemen of Verona* and *Othello* were staged. One of the actors was Ramtono Lahiri. In 1834, Madhusudan Dutta (a boy of ten at that time) played the *Duke of Gloucester* from *Henry IV* and the trial scene of Part II was enacted again in 1837. Performances in 1838 included the soliloquies of *Henry V*, *Richard III* and *Hamlet* recited by Shyamcharan Basu.⁴

Triumph, my Britain,
Thou hast one to show
To whom all scenes of Europe homage owe
He was not of an age but of all time⁵

³ Kabir Chowdhury, "Foreign Influence on A National Literature" *Journal of the Faculty of Arts, Dacca University Studies*, Dacca, June, 1980, p. 115.

⁴ Nazmul Ahsan, *Shakespeare Translations in Nineteenth-Century Bengal Theatre* (Dhaka: Bangla Academy, 1995), pp. 16-17.

⁵ M.H. Abraham (ed.), *Norton Anthology of English Literature*, Vol. 1, 6th Edition (USA: Norton & Company, Inc., 1993), p. 803. literature

William J. Long highlights detailed explanation regarding Shakespearean tragedies that are said to be the most studied plays. His meticulous observation exhibits:

To study nature in his works like exploring a new and beautiful country; to study man in his works is like going into a great city, viewing the motley crowd as one views a great masquerade in which past and present mingle freely and familiarly, as if, the dead were all living again. And the marvellous thing, in this masquerade of all sorts and conditions of men, is that Shakespeare lifts the mask from every face, lets see the man as he is in his own soul, and shows us in each one some germ of good some "soul of goodness" even in things evil.⁶

Historical perspective in view of the arrival of Theatrical Shakespeare on the Indian stage needs to be discussed here. Accordingly, I have presented in this study a historical background which reveals the arrival of Shakespeare in India particularly in Bengal. Influence of Shakespeare acted as the source of inspiration and orientation for the Bengali playwrights. Shakespeare was deemed to be the model among the Bengali intellectuals in producing their dramatic literature. Shakespeare seems to grow their pursuits in modern Bengali dramatic literature in theatre came to be a matter of imitation, adaptation transformation during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. As a result it contributed to the creation of the original plays for the playwrights of Bengal.⁷

He has been portrayed as the 'Icon of standard' or a model for all the educated readers who, in course of time, get affected by the positive aspects of Shakespeare and his ideas as manifested by him in his work.

Shakespearean flavour with a taste of novelty worked in the minds of the distinguished playwrights of Bengal like Hara Chandra Ghosh whose translations and adaptations of Shakespearean themes marked direct influence of Shakespeare. *Vanumati Chittabilash* by Hara Chandra Ghosh in 1852 was admittedly an adaptation of *The Merchant of Venice* which was said to be designed as a Bengali *Natok*, written much after the manner of an English play.

⁶ William J. Long, *English Literature: Its History and its Significance for the Life of English Speaking World* (Delhi: A.I.T.B.S Publishers and Distributors, 2004), p. 154.

⁷ Nazmul Ahsan, *op.cit.*, p. 83.

It was the first endeavor of the author in dramatic composition which was said to be a literal translation. Having been progressed, it gradually turned into an independent and original product.⁸ There are many to assume that there was no existence of ‘*natok*’ (Drama) before the British rule in India rather ‘*yatra*’ was available.⁹ In order to introduce Bengali *natok* and dramatic presentation, Shakespearean influence was also evident among the Bengali playwrights. Afterwards, the play written by *Hara Chandra Ghosh* was also a translation and it was named *Charumukh Chittahara* which was rendered into Bengali from *Romeo and Juliet* and was published in 1865. The similar stylistic features as observed in the preceding play are presented there – *anka* for an act, *anga* for a scene, for example, slight additions and alterations have been introduced to adapt the play to the “original dress” and to suit the tastes of the *audience* of the country.¹⁰

⁸ P.R. Sen, *op.cit.*, p. 164.

⁹ Lutfar Rahman, *Natyk Bishayak Prabandha* (Essays on Drama) (Dhaka: Bangla Academy, 2001), p. 11.

¹⁰ Nazmul Ahsan, *op.cit.*, p. 32.

Inception of Shakespeare's works in India particularly in Bengali mind and literature

The Statesmen of 22 October 1905 published a piece of information that Shakespeare's plays might have been staged in Calcutta even before 1780. According to this newspaper, in 1751, the young writers of John Company happened to establish a playhouse in Kolkata named the *Old Playhouse*.¹¹ No document of the plays staged in this playhouse is available for the lack of newspaper at that time.

Nowadays, however, we have come to know that all the actors here were male.

David Garrick, a famous Shakespearean actor of the time, used to guide the actors. In response to the request of the officials of the East India Company, Garrick sent his disciple Bernard Mesink to Calcutta with necessary instructions and guidance. Mr. Mesink gave special instructions for the performances of *Richard III* and *Hamlet*. Garrick was then gifted with two flutes for his assistance in the performance of Shakespeare in so distant a land.¹²

No accurate date of entrance of Shakespeare's works in India could be ascertained. As history suggests, Shakespeare's works reached India with the British East India Company. Evidently Shakespeare's arrival was found in the Southern part of India, instead of the Northern or Western parts in 1719 and names of a few plays of Shakespeare were instituted in the booklist of the library of the Saint George fort in Madras.¹³ But an advertisement published by the 49th issue of the *Bengal Gazette* between 20 to 30 December, 1780 revealed the fact that Shakespeare's works arrived in India in 1780:

The Managers of the theatre having generously offered to give a benefit to Mr. Soubise, towards the completion of his management, Mr. Soubise will appear on that night in the character of Othello.¹⁴

¹¹ Shafi Ahmed, *Bangadeshe Shakespeare*, p. 2.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

Shakespeare on Kolkata stage

Reading of Shakespeare's dramas, recitations and enacting of scenes from them were practiced and encouraged in the early nineteenth century educational institutions of Kolkata.¹⁵ Bengali theatre in Kolkata from 1800 to 1850 was mainly a direct offshoot of the English theatre in the city. There is no doubt that the city's English theatre influenced the sponsors of Calcutta. They brought with them the plays of William Shakespeare from 1800 to 1850. The English took an active part on the stage of Calcutta and they frequently staged the plays of Shakespeare. The Bengalis also took similar initiatives but their efforts did not prove successful till the middle of the nineteenth century when the English educated Banglalees acquired the capability and expertise in that field.¹⁶

The Old Playhouse emerged as the institution for the performance of Shakespeare in Kolkata¹⁷. The Old Playhouse run for a short time and was closed during the turmoil of the *Battle of Plassey* in 1757. In 1775 a second play house was established in Kolkata and was named as second Kolkata Theatre. It was commonly known as the New Playhouse.¹⁸ Within five years of the establishment of the New Playhouse, the *Bengal Gazette* and *Hickey's Gazette of Calcutta General Advertiser* were available (1780.) These newspapers started patronizing the New Playhouse by getting the advertisements published with the reviews of different plays. According to *Hickey's Gazette*, a good number of Shakespeare's plays including *Richard III*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *Macbeth*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *King Lear*, *Henry IV* were successfully staged at this only playhouse in Kolkata. All the actors there were English officials of the East India Company and the male actors had to perform the roles of the female characters.¹⁹ Some C.D. tried to prove that Shakespeare was a matchless sovereign poet. It may be cited that Sir William Jones in his '*Essay on the Poetry of Eastern Nations*' set a comparative study of the poems written by Shakespeare and poet Hafeez of Iran.²⁰

Shakespeare's presence was traced in the *Bengal Gazette* of 18 December 1781 through the famous lines, although a bit distorted, of *Macbeth*:

¹⁵ Nazmul Ahsan, *op.cit.*, p. 11.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ Sanatkumar Mitra, *Shakespeare O Bangla Notoke* (Calcutta: Pustak Biponi, 1390 Bongabdo), citing Amalendu Bose (ed.), *Calcutta Essays on Shakespeare* (Calcutta, 1966), p. 12.

¹⁸ Shafi Ahmed, *op.cit.*, p. 3.

¹⁹ Sanatkumar Mitra, *op.cit.*, p. 13.

²⁰ Shafi Ahmed, *op.cit.*, p. 4.

It is tale
Told by an idiot, full of sound
Spite and fury, signifying No – thing.²¹

At this time Dr. Francis Rendell, a physician, working for the East India Company and a follower of Garrick, became the key figure in the arena of Calcutta theatre. Rendell was the first to have introduced as actress on Kolkata stage. On 23 April 1784 with the stage performance of *Hamlet*, Shakespeare's popularity in Kolkata grew stronger than the performance of *Romeo and Juliet* on 23 August the same year. *The Merchant of Venice* was presented on 18 October, which made Shakespeare even more popular among the Bengali audience *than earlier*.

While speaking about the aim of the magazine, in the convocation issue of the Calcutta Gazette (24 February 1785), the editor quoted Hamlet:

To hold the mirror up to nature: to show virtue her own
feature, scorn her own image, and the very age and body of
the time, his form and pressure.²²

On 1 May 1789 Mrs. Bristow, a famous actress, established a private theatre in Kolkata commonly known as Bristow Theatre. The speciality of this theatre was that actresses not only began to come into view on stage for the first time but also played male roles. Mrs. Bristow herself played an extraordinary part as *Lucius* in *Julius Ceasar*. Shakespeare became so popular with and familiar to the people of Calcutta that a market was named after him. Ahmed quotes from the April 1798 issue of the *Calcutta Monthly Journal* with the following advertisement:

A violent fire broke out on Sunday evening, the 25th ultimo
in the market known by the name of Shakespeare's bazaar,
at the corner of Durromtollah, which consumed a great
number of huts and destroyed considerable property.²³

Afterwards, on 21 February 1797 another theatre was established in Calcutta — the Whaler *Palace* Theatre. Although it was reported to have inaugurated with much

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *Ibid.*

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

enthusiasm, this theatre could not *continue* its performance for long. The 1st November 1808, issue of *The Calcutta Gazette* the New playhouse was advertised for sale which resulted in the closing of *The New Playhouse* in the end.

Later on Mr. Morris came to establish the *Atheneum Theatre* on 30 March 1812. Despite several failures, this theatre was remarkable for staging famous plays like *Hamlet* and *Macbeth*. However, this theatre also could not continue for long. In the long run it was closed down on 19 November 1814. Meanwhile, *Chourangi Theatre* was established on 25 November 1813. Professor D. L. Richardson of the Hindu College; Captain George Fitz Clearance; Prince Dwarkanath Tagore; J. H. Stokeler and H. M. Parker were among the patrons and directors of the said theatre. But this reputed theatre underwent the same fate like the previous ones. The following comments published in the *Calcutta Monthly Journal* in the year 1828 are worth mentioning:

I have to remark the singular phenomenon of Kissen Chunder Dutt Only a fourteen year of age his correct pronunciation and in the character of shylock drew forth the most enthusiastic admiration of the whole audience.²⁴

People of all walks appreciated the success of *Dramund Academy* which inspired the other scholars to perform Shakespeare's plays. Shibnath Shastri wrote how *Kallidasha* studies were replaced by Shakespeare in those days by the young students. Educated class of Bengal received the works of Shakespeare through the academic inclusion of Shakespeare in the syllabuses at educational institutions. It helped present the complete expansion of Shakespeare and the following comments made by one *Shapan Majumdar* that deserve certain significance:

In fact, we have discovered Shakespeare not on stage rather through the pages of the books. Besides Shakespeare being included in the syllabuses of the schools and colleges individual interests of the readers also contributed to the establishment of Shakespeare in the arena of literature of this country. So to assess the true picture of Shakespeare studies mostly, we are to depend on the relevant studies of

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

varied references of Shakespeare studies and the reasons of the success or failure are to be evaluated in the origins.²⁵

On 18 February 1829, students of Hindu college arranged a cultural function and they performed recitation and acting from *Julius Caesar*, *Troilus and Cressida*, *Cymbeline*, *Henry VI*, *Hamlet* of Shakespeare. On 13 March 1830, students of School Society performed some parts of *Julius Caesar*. On 12 February 1831, the first act of *The Merchant of Venice* was performed at the Town Hall. In 1833 some parts of *The Two Gentle men of Verona* and *Othello* were performed by the students of Hindu college. Thus theatrical Shakespeare was established in the dramatic arena of Bengal.

While the *Chourangi Theatre* was running, another theatre was launched in Kolkata named *Baithakkhana Theatre* on 24 May 1824. But this theatre also failed to carry on for long. In spite of the stellar performances of actresses like Mrs. Francis and Mrs. Cohen, the *Baithakkhana Theatre* could not manage to compete with the *Chourangi Theatre*. Afterwards, *Sans Souci Theatre* was established on 21 August 1839 by some patrons and famous actors and actresses of the *Chourangi Theatre*, like Mrs. Leech and this theatre became popular. Its own large building on Park Street where *Macbeth* and some other plays were dexterously staged that facilitated its reputation historically. The theatre staged *The Merchant of Venice* on 2 November 1843 with much splendor. Spectators highly amused at the stage performances of the players in the role of *Shylock* and *Portia*. But accidentally, Mrs. Leech's set of clothes caught fire from an oil lamp on the stage. Leech was seriously burned and died afterwards on 18 November. The tragic death of Mrs. Leech, Sans Souci Theatre's activities gradually dimmed, but a production of *Othello* on 17 August 1848 significantly drew the notice of the people of Kolkata²⁶.

Sanskrit plays seemed to be departing. The culture and lifestyle conveyed in the said plays survived through the stratum of creative writing. On the other hand, Shakespearean and other European plays reflected a foreign culture and life style, with norms and standards far different from those existing in India. As a result of which, translations whether from Sanskrit or from Shakespeare did not have much appeal as they did not relate to the existing lifestyle of the people. Even the play performed on the stage did not leave any lasting impact on the viewers fond of innovation.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

But the translations, whether of Sanskrit or of Shakespeare proved useful. The form, style, structure and technique of European dramatic literature, especially Shakespearean, were mingled with the Sanskrit dramatic practice and helped produce original plays based on Bengali traditions, custom and native culture²⁷.

It is pertinent that Bengali drama was *considerably enriched with Shakespearean* influence. It is observed that the influence, with its entire enormity, has always been on the surface. It was exterior in nature and never went deep. Bengali transcriptions of the first phase of mid-nineteenth century clearly exhibit this lack of depth and their failure to modify the inner nature of the Bengali drama. The reason, may be, that the external physical world of Elizabethan England that clothed the inner world of Shakespeare was of a particular time and place which were totally alien to *the* nineteenth century Bengali way of life.²⁸

In the context of linguistic developments, Bengali belongs to the Indo-European family of languages like the other language of northern India²⁹ In spite of Europe's diversity of languages, customs and practices, Shakespearean Europe had a cultural, religious, moral and ethical unity which helped him blend the- two worlds - the inner and the outer - into such an artistic whole that the one refuses to be dissociated from the other. But it was impossible tasks for the Bengali playwrights to transplant the Shakespearean plots on Indian soil and the attempt could not see the light of success. The translations of Shakespearean plays into Bengali failed to blend the European ethos of Shakespeare with the lifestyle of nineteenth century Bengal. Consequently, their attempts ended in imitations of the appearance in isolation. As a result of assimilating Shakespeare into the texture of Bengali drama became more difficult for them. In this respect, Rabindranath Tagore observed that, by and large, Shakespeare has been a wrong model for Bengali writers and that imitations of Shakespeare had apparently been useless. He also noted that the waste of literary energy involved in these imitations might have been avoided, if the ethos of Bengal could have shaped for itself a formal structure that would give it the most natural expression.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ Nazmul Ahsan, *op.cit*, p. 70.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

British rule and the spread of western education along with Shakespeare are said to be interwoven in the same ambit. Generally the British are known to be recognised as a people very much fond of theatre. A theatre going nation, the British carried their interest in the theatre and their imperialistic attitude wherever they went. Combination of the establishment of academic institutions by the British rulers opened the inclusion of Shakespeare's plays into the syllabuses for the students in India.

This effort resulted in the introduction of the Academic Shakespeare and opening of English Theatre by the English officials. Consequently, the role of the rulers promoted the spread of Theatrical Shakespeare as a mark of their interest in dramatic performance helped contribute to the beginning of the perpetual impact of Shakespeare upon the minds of the Indian natives.

Under the British rule, the light of western education *continued* spreading in the undivided Bengal. When the *Bengalees* became interested in Shakespeare, many people translated Shakespeare's drama into Bengali in various ways with their individual skills, techniques and styles of presentation. The translators are too many to be named in this dissertation. At present, Shakespeare appears to be one of the most popularly studied literary personalities both in Bangladesh and West Bengal. Among the personalities, name of Dwijendralal Roy (1863-1913) appears to be worth mentioning. He was the fond follower of the dramatic art and techniques presented by Shakespeare. The Nineteenth century Bengali intellectuals studied Shakespeare as a genius enlightened with potentials. Influence of Shakespeare started working among the *Bengalis* in the aspects of literary, academic and theatrical transmissions, which inspired the then Bengali dramatists to think of a theatre of modern taste and staging. The educated Bengali middle class happened to be in close contact with the British people and thus they found a means of empowering themselves in the quest for intellectual and social powers in the days to come.³⁰ Dwijendralal Roy (1863-1913) claims to have followed Shakespeare in the way of imitation as he says 'I started writing plays by imitating Shakespeare's blank verse'.³¹

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³⁰ Syed Manzoorul Islam, "Shakespeare in India: Writing at the Edge", *The Independent*, June 15, 2002, p. 12.

³¹ Shafi Ahmed, *op.cit.*, p. 99.

Shakespearean interpretations played significant role to present Shakespeare. When the theatre was able to meet the demand and interest of the public, the *Bengalis* were interested to learn English in Calcutta to become *bhadralok* (literally, a gentleman, educated class) and carried out an Indo-English association in India. The establishment of the Hindu College on January 20, 1817 paved the way for them in flourishing a new era, in which, students of English schools and colleges, and consequently, Bengali students gradually got entangled in dramatic performances of Shakespearean literature.

H.H. Wilson and D.L. Richardson, two Englishmen associated with dramatic activities in Calcutta, were renowned professors of the Hindu College. However, even before these two Englishmen came to Hindu College, some Calcutta schoolboys had already made their first appearance in the recreational stage as a mark of their talents in theatrical involvements.³²

David Lester(D.L.) Richardson came to be recognised as a renowned scholar, who excelled in teaching Shakespeare at that time. An impressive personality professor Richardson was able to draw the kind notice of Thomas Babington *Macaulay* who told Richardson about his extra-ordinary performance in reciting Shakespearean verses or dialogues. It expressed the evidence of the teaching skills and strong command in presenting Shakespeare artistically of Richardson before the audience or students as Maculay says "*I can forget everything of India but not your reading of Shakespeare*"³³

It is said that Michael Madhusudan Datta was fond of Shakespeare since the young stage of his life. Professor Richardson had the direct contribution to make him interested in the study of the same.

The British, being aware of their imperialistic attitude and dominion, took the initiative in introducing their education policy for making a class of people of certain competence as quoted in the following way:

... it was impossible to educate the body of the people. Endeavours should be made to form a class of persons "*Indian in blood and colour, but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals and in intellect.*"³⁴

³² Nazmul Ahsan, *op.cit.*, p. 15.

³³ Mobaser Ali, *Michael Madhusudan Datta: Engreji Gadya Rachana O Smriti Katha* [Michael Madhusudan Datta: English Prose Writings and Memories] (Dhaka: Bangla Academy, February 1998), pp. 151-152.

³⁴ H.H. Dodwell, MA & R.R. Sethi (eds.), *Introduction of the Cambridge History of India*, Vol. VI (Delhi: S. Chand & Co., nd), p. 111.

It was expected to refine the vernaculars and enrich them with western terms of science and render them by degrees, bit vehicles for conveying knowledge to the great mass of the population. A sense of nationalism inspired by the unsuccessful Sepoy Mutiny of 1857, started growing in the minds of the Bengali intelligentsia, they happened to experience an impetus to create original works in the Bengali language and literature, and there was no better model available for them than 'Shakespeare that paved for them the way of borrowing ideas, techniques and stagecraft from Shakespeare, which were supposed to have superimposed on the original themes of Bengali works. But the earlier understanding of imitating or adapting Shakespearean plays was, in reality, a kind of *Bengalization* of Shakespearean plays. The Bengali playwrights were not successful in attaining any achievement on the stage or in the field of publications; at last, the Bengali theatre activists came to learn various techniques and elements of modern European stage. The foreign experts who came to paint scenes of the drama, design costumes of the actors or actresses and provide make-up were duly imitated and copied, and the foreign experts did their work in connection with Shakespearean plays produced in English. Afterwards, their styles and techniques were noticed and studied by the Bengali theatre activists of the time and they managed to adapt the same according to the necessity of the play in the original Bengali dramas. Accordingly, it can be stated with certainty that Shakespeare was the genuine basis for the encouragement that led the Bengali dramatic works to *get* and made the leading dramatic personalities fond of the expansion of Bengali dramatic literature as well as Bengali dramatic art. The Bengali translations of Shakespeare's plays, during the nineteenth century, were not meant to be really literal translations but adaptations, imitations, cultural translations and *Indianisation* of the works of Shakespeare.

It is important that not only in dramatic literature Shakespeare had made an impression on Bengali mind; but also inspired the novelists and followers of other forms of literature to assess the brilliance of their characterisations against a Shakespearean creation which were said to be a decisive factor for the Bengali playwrights.³⁵

³⁵ Nazmul Ahsan, *op.cit.*, p. 91.

Access of Shakespeare to Academic Syllabus

During the middle of the nineteenth century, the officials of the East India Company began to institute a number of educational institutions in the subcontinent. Obviously, Shakespeare didn't remain unincluded or untouched in the syllabuses of these schools. This addition took place in a three fold way: through the easier prose form of chosen portions and songs of Shakespeare's plays; through the introduction of the students to Shakespeare's most important plays; through prose forms and through the recitals of selected parts from Shakespeare's plays; which had positive impact and students felt encouraged to recite from Shakespeare.

For the teaching of Shakespeare in prose form, Charles and Mary lamb's *Tales from Shakespeare* used to be treated as one of the most significant contributing factors to the study of Shakespeare during that time. In the Drummond Academy recitation from Shakespeare was a regular aspect.

In 1800 the establishment of Fort William College and the Srirampur Mission in Kolkata was a remarkable incident in the history of educational developments. The Fort William College and the Srirampur Mission historically had an outstanding performance for the first translation of Shakespeare in Bengali. Charles Monckton, who was responsible for that Historical attempt, was a student of Hindu college. At the opening, access to the Fort William College was limited only to the English, which resulted in the rise of the awareness of the rich and learned Hindus to attain the standards of the European education and eventually they established Hindu College with the help of some broadminded English people. Naturally, Shakespeare was included in the syllabus of the Hindu College.

It was the Hindu College that played the most significant role in the undying establishment of Shakespeare in the Bengali mind. Professor David Lester Richardson of this college earned wide reputation and ample command in the study of Shakespeare. His teaching, lively recitation and wonderful lectures preoccupied his students for long. One of his students, Mr. Bholanath Chandra wrote:

How shall I describe that reading?... If I now look into either Shakespeare or Pope, the accentuation with which he used to read 'To be or not to be' in *Hamlet*; 'it is the cause; it the cause my soul' in *Othello*; 'is this a dagger which I see before me' in *Macbeth*;... seems yet to ring in my ears.³⁶

After Richardson, Harrington Hugh Melville Percival, commonly recognized as H. M. Percival earned much recognition for his great contribution to the reading of Shakespeare. He taught in the Presidency College for thirty – one years and gradually became a renowned figure. One of his students Professor P. C. Ghose, earned also wide reputation as a Shakespeare scholar who wrote:

What shall I say of his interpretation of poetry and specially of Shakespeare! It revealed to us a new world of beauty and thought into which the profane herd of critics were never allowed to intrude...

A philosopher in outlook, he perhaps overemphasize the ethical import of Shakespeare's plays but in his interpretations he often hit the mark nearer than many of the present day critics to whom only the play is the thing and everything else nothing.³⁷

It is found that up to the Independence of India (1947); the following plays of Shakespeare were included in the syllabuses of the universities: *Macbeth*, *Hamlet*, *King Lear*, *Othello*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Julius Caesar*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *King John*, *Henry III*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *The Tempest*, *Richard II* and *As you Like It*.

It is obvious that for the spread and concentration of the nationalist movement against the British, the primary interest and zeal in the study of Shakespeare gradually decreased, but the enthusiasm of nationalism could never grow any sentiment against Shakespeare.

His position remained perennial in the Bengali minds. In course of time, his image attained stability through the practice of culture of translation, adaptation and

³⁶ Shafi Ahmed, *Bangadeshe Shakespeare*, p. 5, Cited *Recollections of D.L.R. Calcutta University Magazine*. Vol. 1, No. 7 (Calcutta, July 1894).

³⁷ Ahmed, *op.cit.*, p. 5, p. 182.

theatrical performance and study of his plays. It is also witnessed that the recitation and staging performances from Shakespeare in the prize giving ceremonies of different schools were reported in the journals of the then time. The reference to one of such programmes held in Drummond's Academy was found in the *India Gazette* of 31 December 1822:

The English recitations from different authors were extremely meritorious and reflect great credit upon the scholars and the teachers. A boy of the name Derozio gave a good conception of Shylock.³⁸

Derozio (1809-1831) later became a dominant Shakespeare lecturer of the Hindu College. Derozio's stay in the Hindu college, as a member of the teaching staff, was not for long.³⁹ In his wonderful teaching career, Derozio played a significant role in germinating the perpetual interest in Shakespeare among his students. *The Calcutta Gazette* of 1 February 1827 reported the staging of *Julius Caesar* at Hindu College. The students of this college, all of them Indians [a Bengali], staged the court scene of *The Merchant of Venice* in the Government House on 12 January, 1828. This was illustrated as follows:

Surely then this may be called remarkable epoch in the history of India, seeing as we do, the native youth of Bengal cultivating the dramatic literature of the West, and even encountering the difficulties of theatrical representations.⁴⁰

The success of Drummond Academy influenced other schools and the culture and study of Shakespeare was expanded among the schools of the native students. Swapan Majumder's words in this respect are worth mentioning:

In the true sense we did not discover Shakespeare on the stage, rather in books. Besides the compulsory syllabus, Shakespeare was established in the literary world of this country through personal affection...⁴¹

The students of Hindu College continued arranging programmes one after another. In the Government House on 18 February 1829 and they recited selected portions from

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

³⁹ P.R. Sen *op.cit.*, p. 59.

⁴⁰ Shafi Ahmed, *op.cit.*, p. 17.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

different plays of Shakespeare such as: *Julius Caesar*, *Macbeth*, *Troilus and Cressida*, *Cymbeline*, *2 Henry IV* and *Hamlet*. On 13 March 1830, students of the free school society prepared an annual programme where they enacted selected parts from *Julius Caesar*. This performance was deemed better than those of the students of Hindu College. But the Hindu College students were not far behind. They also staged the first scene of the third act of *The Merchant of Venice* in their annual function held on 12 February 1831 displaying a wonderful presentation.

With reference to historical evidence, it can be deduced from the existing tendency of the time that in many contemporary colleges, following the Hindu College tradition, staging of Shakespeare became a regular feature. *The Merchant of Venice* was staged by the initiative of the students of the David Hare Academy twice in 1853. A newspaper of that day commented on the performance in the following way:

In the evening of last Wednesday the students of the school named the Hare Academy pleased a number of people by showing again *The Merchant of Venice* of the great poet English poet Shakespeare. At that time around 600 to 700 learned and gentlemen were present in the school building; all of them highly praised the students.⁴²

The Merchant of Venice seemed to be a favorite one for the students, which was enacted twice in 1854 by the students of the Oriental Seminary. The second performance of the said play is worth mentioning for a special reason; an English woman named Mrs. Greg, was cast in the role of Portia. *Henry IV* was staged on 15 February, 1955. *Julius Caesar* was enacted on 27 January 1899 at the University Institute, Calcutta. It was arranged by the joint endeavor of the students of some colleges. Gradually this group organized into a prominent theatre group whose name was “Shakespeare company”.

They performed *Macbeth* (1900), *Twelfth Night* (1905), and *Julius Caesar* (1906) at the said University Institute. The students of the General Assemblies staged *Julius Caesar* in 1908 and in 1909 *The Merchant of Venice* was staged at Hindu college.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 20.

Shakespeare, who was limited in the curriculum of the schools and colleges, but was not limited to the students and the elite. But this ambit crossed towards the end of the eighteenth century through the newspapers, and later on by the stage performance of his plays in the Bengali theatres, which were open to all.

Shakespeare is said to have maintained the tide of his age by following others, especially he invented few of the plots or stories, upon which, his chief dramas are founded. He is said to have borrowed the sources freely from other sources that were available within the reach of his means.⁴³ The whole tradition of the nineteenth century Bengali drama owed an immense debt to Shakespeare. In fact, there was none to escape certain unease when one considered how the western tradition of drama that Bengali playwrights began to adapt for the stage which resulted in the withdrawal of patronage from the local and indigenous dramatic traditions, like the *yatra*,⁴⁴ an open air presentation furnished with stylised acting, song, dance and clowning. *Yatra* was said to be the only theatrical presentation before the *Bengalis* who had the mind in viewing Shakespeare's plays on the stage. However, the imitation of Shakespearean dramas was recognised as the effect of western impact as result of which there emerged the gradual decay of *yatra* tradition.

Learning English early helped the *Bengalis* to early comprehend the cultural aptitude of the British and their literary achievements as a matter of their close contact with the English people. The *Bengalis* quickly learnt English; indeed mastered it. Their command of the language helped them find jobs with the administration. What appeared disturbing, however, was that the images of such *Bengalis* who settled quietly into the larger fictional framework of even such great writers as Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay and Rabindranath Tagore, evoking, at best, laughter or a jeer at the imbalanced status but did not openly disapprove.

Alam refers to that to be the sign of cultural transformation of a sociological phenomenon that Edward said in his epoch making book *Orientalism* considered a pointer to the West's establishment of cultural hegemony over the East; "the idea of European identity as a superior one in comparison with all the non-European peoples and cultures,"

⁴³ William J. Long, *op.cit.*, p. 150.

⁴⁴ Syed Manzoorul Islam, "Yatra is one kind of folk cultural dramatic presentation generally held in the rural areas of Bangladesh".

was, thus, deeply engraved in the faculties of the educated Bengali middle class by the late nineteenth century.⁴⁵

Shakespeare was well-versed in writing comedy, tragedy, romance, or even sonnets. In characterising the male personalities, he seems to have projected signs of his inward farsightedness. In the same way, his female characters display the evidence of the uncommon sentimental life. Shakespeare did not have any hard and fast rule in writing the plays or starting the plots, rather he was blessed with the adroitness of portraying his profound imaginative power. He journeyed various branches of life with the wings of his creative faculties. He was a multi-dimensional genius in creating characters may be of history or imagination. He was able to make them alive in a befitting manner before the audience or readers.

Mr. Monckton's excellent job as a student of Hindu Collage happened to appear as the first effort to make contribution in translating the play *The Tempest* into Bengali. It had significant historical importance and the sources of which, were written in the resolution of the activities related to the annual prize ceremony of the College as informed by Roebuck, the writer of the History of the collage as he says-

Another enterprise... has distinguished the collegiate exercises of this year, Mr. Monckton has undertaken, and has been able to execute, a translation into Bengali, of Shakespeare's tragedy of *The Tempest*. The difficulty of rendering a work of that peculiar stamp, into the language of a nation whose idiom and manners have so little affinity either to the genius of the author or to the times and people for which he wrote, may be easily appreciated. That Mr. Monckton has triumphed over these obstacles and has achieved his singular labour bears sufficient testimony both to his knowledge and command of a language which he has been able to bind to so arduous a purpose.⁴⁶

In the style of characterization and instruments, Madhusudan seems to have followed Shakespeare. Even in one of his dramas the role of 'finger ring', Madhusudan followed the dramatic technique of Shakespeare as Shakespeare has presented the role of 'finger ring' in his plays like *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, *All's Well That Ends Well*,

⁴⁵ Fakrul Alam, 'New Historicism and The Polotization of Shakespeare', *Dhaka university*, Vol. 52:2, Journal of Faculties of Arts, University of Dhaka, Dhaka, December 1999, p.11.

⁴⁶ T. Roebuck, *Annals of the College of Fort William* (Calcutta: 1819), p. 187.

Cymbeline'. In his play *Kissan Kumary*, Madhusudan has presented the role of a ring which may be said to have been imitated from Shakespeare.

The nineteenth century India particularly Bengal was witnessing a progressive age full of intellectual and literary enlightenment. The educated class had the farsightedness to realize the need of learning and they started setting up educational institutions in order to build the bridge of intellect and knowledge based contact with the western thoughts so that the natives might enjoy leading lives of better standard of ideas and studies. The introduction of English education was deemed to be the opening door or the inception of receiving the perpetual impact of Shakespeare on Bengali mind.⁴⁷ On 10 December 1834, the directors informed Bentinck's government that every effort must be made to enable natives of India to compete for the public service with fair chance of success, whether by conferring on them the advantage of education or by dispersing on them the treasures of science, knowledge and moral culture.⁴⁸ Since the introduction of English Education, Shakespeare was also deemed to have started creating perpetual base of impact on the intellectual trend of this sub-continent as well as the literary genres of Bengali life and culture. Influence of Shakespeare on Bengali literature in undivided Bengal i.e. West Bengal and Bangladesh cannot be overlooked. But still a good number of great poets, authors and playwrights were said to be highly influenced and inspired by Shakespeare.⁴⁹

The study of Shakespeare was taken up vigorously with the establishment of Hindu College. The invisible access of Shakespeare to different schools and colleges through the syllabic inclusion of his tragedies, in particular, appeared to be a past significant event. India has had a long fascination for Shakespeare *where* many events took place including seminars, workshops and staging of original and translated plays of Shakespeare.

This exhibited the focus of newer approaches to Shakespeare studies. A round table was held in Bangalore in May 2002 exclusively with the topic *Shakespeare in India*. The discussion was dealt with particular study on the Nineteenth century which was said to have

⁴⁷ Syed Manzoorul Islam, *op.cit.*, p. 12.

⁴⁸ H.H. Dodwell, MA & R.R. Sethi (eds.), *op.cit.*, p. 111.

⁴⁹ William J. Long, *op.cit.*, p. 154.

discovered Shakespeare *to his entirety*.⁵⁰ When most of the nations of the world consider Shakespeare as a man of their own and feel satisfied with their relationship with the world famous genius then there is least scope to be indecisive considering him as the own of the *Bengali literature* despite esteeming him as a great poet of alien culture.⁵¹ Bengali writers, poets, authors, actors, producers and dramatists have been undoubtedly influenced by Shakespeare.

A current observation among a section of scholars is that Bengali drama is a combination of western influence, western dramatic techniques like stage-craft, lighting and sound, the idea of tragedy, tragi-comic scenes, five-act division of Elizabethan and Shakespearean plays, and use of music, all imported into Bengali drama. This view suggests that Bengali drama has continuity and at the same time an idiosyncratic characteristic. Its distinctiveness lies in its mingling with the traditional cultural forms and European dramatic techniques.⁵²

Shakespeare has had a strong hold on Bengali literature. Bengali literature seems to be embracing all literary, theatrical and dramatic aspects of Shakespeare. In short, influence of Shakespeare appears to be a mixture of different types of reflections of Shakespearean styles or imitations of his dramatic techniques followed and practised by the Bengali playwrights.

The influence of existing translated works of Shakespeare began to motivate the local play-wrights to accept an autonomous idea for the conception of producing original Bengali plays. This influence gave them the idea of the new forms, styles and faculties that owed much to Shakespeare. Original dramatic creation in Bengali was not a rapid incident; it was a gradual progress of a sort of a process, in which, the imitation and adaptation of two or three plays of the playwright Shakespeare were found that were stimulated others to espouse the form, style and techniques.

⁵⁰ Syed Manzoorul Islam, *op.cit.*, p. 12.

⁵¹ William Shakespeare, *Othello*, Sunil Kumar Chattopadhyay (tr.) (Kolkata: Shahitya Academy, 1967), p. 14 (Preface).

⁵² Nazmul Ahsan, *op.cit.*, p. 3.

In creating original themes and plots, the Bengali playwrights learnt a lot which was already obvious in the first stage or the mid-nineteenth century Bengali drama. The same fashion sustained into the late nineteenth century and even at the stage of the early twentieth century.⁵³

The conscious efforts as a mark of the influence of Shakespeare had also its manifestation in the works of the legendary literary genius like Rabindranath Tagore, Michael Madhusudan Dutta, Isshar Chandra Viddhaya Sagore, Bankim Chandra, Dina Bandhu Mitra, Girish Chandra Gosh, Dwijendralal Roy, Jotindranath Tagore, Monuier Chudhuri, Sayed Shamsul Haque and they were highly influenced by Shakespeare.

Rabindranath Tagore did not deny or decry the influence of Shakespeare for he had the strength to go beyond the same and open out new phases of creative possibilities. Bengali literature took a new turn along with its idea of drama which felt the touch of modernism having greatly nurtured by Shakespearean dramatic approach.

The most notable contribution of Shakespeare to the Bengali literature is manifested through the projection of an astonishing variety of moods and concepts of psychological image of human nature that are culturally penetrated into the hearts of the Bengali mind. It is necessary to bear this context in mind about understanding Shakespeare and the whole deeper reading may reach a reader greater understanding as to be overwhelmed by the bountiful liveliness and abundant strength that flows from every line of Shakespearean plays.

Shakespeare's attachment to world literature has now become an integral part of studying his influence upon the rest of the world. The reactions and newer views centring round him have also been focused by the sources of the critics on Shakespeare. If Shakespeare is to be considered in the native stage then there is a fact to be accepted that although Shakespeare was established in the arena of a country for more than a couple of years, staging of Shakespearean plays of the *Bengalis* extends the interest among the people.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 69.

The role of translation of Shakespearean plays would attract the audience. There is a rich and a long tradition of Bengali drama, particularly the *yatra*. This was based on folk legend and the audience is largely the rural people leading simple life. The educated class of people achieved themselves from this particular trend. Some selected dramas were, however, patronised by the educated class, but these areas were confined to a particular class of people. However, performance of Shakespeare plays can be an extensive media to broaden the aspects of Shakespearean ideas sprouted in the Bengali minds. The Bengali translators of the nineteenth century were largely traditional. Although their English education for the most part gave them an idea of independence of choice and expression, still they were, hindered by limitations of national customs and traditions. As a result, whenever they were confronted with any idea that they felt would be considered as adverse to the time and age. They abandoned it or altered it or adapted it in a new shape. Shakespeare became a part of Bengali tradition and culture through cultural translations, a way of *Indianization* with a Bengali surroundings and setting. These cultural translations did not have an effect on the culture of the Bengali intelligentsia, but gave inducement to Bengali playwrights to create original plays in Bengali. Cultural translation is also measured to be a kind of 'influence', which indirectly worked on authors. Since 1852 when plays of Shakespeare began to be translated in the way of cultural manner into Bengali, G. C. Gupta was stirred with faculties writing an original drama in Bengali in the same year. His *Kirtibilas* was modelled after *Hamlet*. While the process of translation and cultural translations was going on, staging of Shakespeare's plays in English was introduced both by the English residents of Calcutta. The studies by Bengali students of schools and colleges continued side by side, and thus Shakespeare continued to influence the attitude of the educated upper class.⁵⁴

Post liberation dramas deal with particular social concern but Shakespeare's plays highlight the permanent theatres as drama is an art and also as a form of popular entertainment. In the real sense, it is said to have emerged after 1971 in the context of Bangladesh. The liberation was at the centre of experience, drama, through various experiments in technique, has occupied a prominent status in the sector of the cultural activities.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 83.

Although there is a notice of healthy competition in the field of dramatic performance, it cannot be denied that Shakespeare is not, in any way, converted with the main stream. An awareness of a new tradition grew during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The present growth of Bengali drama obviously owes much to Shakespeare in the context of a great many experiments. Innovations were made by the earlier dramatists who acted as the pioneers in making a great contribution in the field of dramatic presentation. It can be emphatically stated that, according to Ahsan, Shakespeare played the prime role model and a source of inspiration for the progress of modern Bengali dramatic art of Bengal.⁵⁵

Most of the dramatists of the post-liberation period were comparatively young. They are thought to be more influenced by the European drama and *absurd theatre*. This sort of tendency of the dramatists may be, due to the fact, that Shakespeare's plays deal with perennial themes, and do not have the scope to get mingled with any particular social problems or readjustment of values which seem to be the immediate concern, and therefore, Shakespeare is quite remote from the expression of life in view of the simplicities of Bengali sentiments and the crucial realities of the Elizabethan socio-economic projection of life could not match their sentiments. It is true that there were *no developments* to set up a rich tradition of drama but it appears gratifying to note that quite a few plays of Shakespeare *were* staged during the recent years in Bengali version. *The theatre* drama group staged several plays during 1981-82 including *Othello* which was jointly translated by Munier Chowdhury and Kabir Chowdhury. *Othello* is indeed a bold experiment on the stage made by the *Dhaka Theatre*. Although the translation cannot claim to be the prospect or appear as successful as the Bengali version of *The Taming of the Shrew*, it was well-received by the audience mainly because of the successful acting on the stage.

Shakespeare's plays are generally believed to be of three classes i.e. tragedies, comedies and historical plays, although the drama is supposed to contain only two divisions tragedy and comedy and they might be equipped with various subordinate forms of tragedy-comedy, melodrama lyric drama (opera), farce etc. A tragedy is a drama, in which, it is brought into being that the principal characters involved in frantic circumstances or governed by different overwhelming passions.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 92.

Tragedy is thought to be invariably serious and dignified in presentation with form and structure of an unhappy ending".⁵⁶ There is always a stately movement and rapid growth of action as it approaches the climax. Consequently, the end becomes disastrous to be resulted in death or dire misfortune to the principal characters. On the other hand, a comedy is a drama in which the characters may be said to be placed in more or less humorous situations. There remain the light and often mirthful movements indicating the end with happiness and goodwill. The historical drama aims at presenting some historical age or personalities.

It may be either a comedy or a tragedy. Shakespeare appears successful in presenting his tragedies. The appeal of his tragedies has touched the hearts of the readers and audience of his plays throughout the world. The dialogues of comedy and his tragedies have had a universal impact as cited by T.S Eliot as he says-

For Shakespeare is one of the rarest of dramatic poets, in that each of his characters is most nearly adequate both to the requirements of the real world and to those of the poet's world.⁵⁷

It is evident that influence of Shakespeare has worked consciously or unconsciously upon the contributors of Bengali literature. But no work has distinctly and independently measured the influence of Shakespeare on Bengali literature. *It is believed that* this research study would be the first work that attempted to segregate the influence on Bengali literature. Shakespeare studies indicated the effect or influence of Shakespeare on the writings of the Bengali intellectuals as well as the reactions of the intellectuals to Shakespeare, which are presented in their views and evaluations as the aftermath of his impact on the distinguished writers of Bengali literature.

It also indicates the opinions, criticism, interpretations about Shakespeare studies of the intellectuals, poets, and dramatists of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries of the undivided Bengal (West Bengal and Bangladesh).

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 151.

⁵⁷ Wilson Knight, *The Wheel of Fire* (London and New York: Routledge Classics, 2001), p. xxi.

Shakespeare is sure to have been influenced by his predecessors also. There are reasons to believe that 'influence' invisibly transmits into the generations after generations, if there are claims of the origin of the writings of the next generations. It was natural for Shakespeare to have been influenced. Perhaps it appeared as an integral part of his way to follow the distinguished writers of the then time. Both Marlowe and Kyed created positive image in writing plays as he was supposed to be directly influenced by the said two. He received inspirations from these two learned playwrights as they were popular and able to reach the people of his time. It is really a matter of uniqueness in Shakespeare that he extended his skills beyond the Elizabethan age and audience.

Shakespeare hid behind his creation although great poets and authors displayed their inner identities reflected through their writings indirectly or directly remaining invisible, but it appeared really difficult for the readers to discover which the dialogues of Shakespeare were his own or of his characters did not appear to be easily apparent before the readers.⁵⁸ English education was deemed to be the 'golden wand' touching the life of the Bengalis. It is viewed from this empirical study that 'Shakespeare and English education' came to be introduced as the integral part of each other in the life of Bengal and Bengali literature as Bishnu De, Sudhin Datta, Buddhadeva Basu and others are supposed to have been influenced by T.S. Eliot who is recognized as the very soul of modern Bengali poetry. In the same way, Shakespeare appeared as the institution as well as the 'theatrical icon' for the Bengali playwrights, their interests in Shakespeare resulted in the sprouting of the life into the dormant spirit of Bengali literature and the beneficial effect of the western was introduced during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ Shamsur Rahman (trs.), *Hamlet: A Drama of Shakespeare* (Dhaka: Bangla Academy, Culture and Journal Division, 1995), pp. 11-17.

⁵⁹ P.R. Sen, *op.cit.*, pp. 296 -297.

Conceptual explanations of *influence*

1. The power or ability to affect someone's beliefs or actions.⁶⁰
2. A person or thing with such ability or power.
3. The power arising out of status, or wealth.
4. Noun: ascendancy, authority, control, direction, dominance, effect, guidance, hold, impact, leverage, power, pressure, pull, sway, weight.
5. Verb: affect, bias, change, control, direct, dominate, exert influence on, guide, impinge on, impress, manipulate, modify, motivate, move, persuade, prejudice, prompt, put pressure on, stir, sway, inspire etc.

The above cited words, in all their forms, convey the interpretations of Shakespearean influence appearing to be abstract in nature but acted like a force for the works of literature among not only the Bengali literary personalities but also the intelligentsia of the whole world.

Conceptual evaluation of *Shakespearean influence*

Influence of Shakespeare refers to a lot of elements but it does not appear to be a doctrine of Shakespeare penetrated into the literary works of the Bengali intellectuals represented by the poets, dramatists, writers, essayists, novelists or critics of Bengali literature. Influence of Shakespeare may be termed as a source of inspiration for the Bengali intellectuals, with the manifestation of their elements of literary imitation, projection of Shakespearean characters, Shakespearean themes in the productions of the Bengali playwrights, depiction of Shakespeare's characters in the plays of Bengali literature, thematic and structural presentation of Shakespearean style and dramatic techniques introduced in their Bengali plays. Influence of Shakespeare also refers to a lot of ideas as introduced in the study. It refers to the perennial impact of Shakespeare, with a continuous process of bestowing positive effect, upon the inner faculties of the readers, critics, audience of all sectors concerned with Shakespearean work. Influence of Shakespeare also denotes the unending interest of the people in him as he appeared to be the 'Icon' of standard for all the time to come for his literary contribution. It worked enormously with strong effect upon the mind of the Bengali people.

⁶⁰ Catherine Soanes, *The Oxford Paperback Dictionary, Thesaurus, and Word Power Guide* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 463.

Imitation of Shakespeare highlights the apparent influence among the writers, playwrights or poets following him out and out. There was a mark of citation of the praiseworthy dialogues of Shakespeare of universal human psychology reflecting human nature, of human society, invisible psychological aspects of human mind, personal anguish still are of great appeal to the intellectuals of the world. It indicates the sustainability of Shakespeare as the 'life force' for advancing the wheels of world literature. Shakespeare worked as a source of ideas, as a multi-dimensional talent in choosing varieties of themes. He has been established as a perfect genius, as a symbol of objectivity Shakespeare's position is believed to be an influential perennially universally as T.S Eliot says-

The work of Shakespeare is like life itself something to be lived through. If we lived it completely we should need no interpretation; but on our plan of appearances our interpretations themselves are a part of our living.⁶¹

India holds a pride of place with a long fascination for Shakespeare. The existence of Shakespeare was apparent and still English literature studies don't move on the completion of the academic syllabus of a university without the inclusion of Shakespeare's plays. Many events took place including various seminars, workshops and staging of his original or translated plays and the nineteenth century Bengal appeared as a landmark in history. Shakespeare was deemed to be an image of awakening among the elite for his plays which were being staged and read with vigorous effect upon the then Indians or people of Bengal particularly Bengali audiences.⁶² The 19th century is studied here as to glean the historical background of the influence of the Bard and the 20th century appears to be a study of investigation in exploring the influence of Shakespeare. The nineteenth century may be treated as the historical background of the influence of Shakespeare on Bengali literature and the twentieth century of the same is a period to be measured as to investigate the influence. The nineteenth century India, particularly, Bengal had an experience as a revival in art, literature and society that could be compared to the Renaissance in Europe. The Bengal Renaissance had a pronounced epistemological agenda with its own empowering strategies and value systems.⁶³

⁶¹ Wilson Knight, *op.cit.*, p. xxii.

⁶² Syed Manzoorul Islam, *op.cit.*, p. 12.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

More missionaries representing various societies opened more schools. David Hare persuaded Sir Hyde East, Chief Justice and other leading Europeans and Indians with a view to establishing a college for the tuition of the sons of "respectable" Hindu parents in the English and Indian languages and in Indian European and Asiatic science and literature. The college was first known as the Vidyalaya (home of learning), and afterwards, as the Hindu College; finally it became The Presidency College.⁶⁴

Shakespeare appeared first in the southern India although Kolkata (Calcutta) was the centre of the British rulers. In the Library of Saint George at Madras in India, there had been a list of books in the year 1719. Some plays of Shakespeare were included with the religious books along with other books in the Library. The year 1800 was very significant for the development of education in India. Fort William College and Sreerampur Mission along with the Hindu College, and Kolkata Theatre played significant role in popularising Shakespeare.⁶⁵

Combination of English theatre and English education was said to be at the same trend to promote Shakespeare studies as English theatre at Calcutta began in 1775. English education introduced with the establishment of the Fort William College in 1800. These two came to be recognised as the landmarks in helping to rouse the Bengali mind and intelligentsia for the pursuit of a new dramatic literature in Bengali. Establishment of the Hindu College in 1817 was meant to have created new conditions for a change among the Bengali students whose attempts towards the progress of Bengali culture provided the impetus in leading the Bengali intellectuals finally to the development of a unique Bengali dramatic literature.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ H.H. Dodwell, R.R. Sethi, *op.cit.*, p. 104

⁶⁵ Shafi Ahmed, *op.cit.*, pp. 1, 3, 10.

⁶⁶ Nazmul Ahsan, *op.cit.*, p. 69.

Broader Objective

Determining the objectives is the corner stone of any kind of research study. A research work advances with the setting of its objectives. This study proceeds with the aims of evaluating and exploring Shakespearean influence on Bengali literature. Objectives may be specific as to cover the study. Specification of objectives limits the unnecessary expansion of any study. Influence of Shakespeare on Bengali literature generally demands a high profile of work.

But how the nature of influence of Shakespeare has worked or in how many ways the Bengalis were affected is the speculation of the study. There is also an aim to find out the difference of the ways the Bengalis have entertained and accepted Shakespeare. The research also aims at giving comparative evaluation of Shakespeare in the context of the Bengali contributors to the growth of dramatic, theatrical and literary genre of Bengali literature.

The objectives do not investigate all the venues of literature covered by Shakespeare in the context of Bengali literature. So the broader and specific objectives are stated below to provide evaluation of some distinct literary personalities of Bengali literature and their few works displaying Shakespearean contact with Bengali literature and dramatic art.

William Shakespeare's occupation as a great poet in world literature and it is he who has dimensionally been dedicated to contemplate human conflicts with different points of culmination of psychological aspects of life in profound and intensive phenomenon by bringing contrast of feelings for metaphorical representation and reflections of factual events, which are generally escaped by the common viewers⁶⁷.

The proposed study of this research is intended to explore and aims at gleaning how literary works of Shakespeare have influenced the Bengali literary world with special reference to a good number of renowned Bengali poets, dramatists, authors and the intellectual personalities of Bengali literature. Bengali literature is thought to have been adorned with the impact of Shakespeare to help the readers and the learners as well as the intellectuals of the modern Bengali literature to realize human nature in the light of literary views projected by Shakespeare's transcendent order and to attain certain standards of literature of their own.

⁶⁷ Kh. Atiar Rahman, "Shakespeare's Poems", *Observer Magazine*, July 19, 2002, pp. 7-9.

Specific objectives

The broader objective is discussed above and the specific objectives of the proposal are as follows:

- To explore Shakespearean influence on Bengali literature.
- To evaluate the role of Shakespeare on the growth of Bengal Renaissance
- To explore and evaluate the reactions of Bengali intellectuals to Shakespeare.
- To highlight Shakespearean influence on the poet Rabindranath Tagore.
- To illustrate the works of Shakespeare in Bengali translation.
- To analyse the impact of Shakespeare on Bengali drama.
- To demonstrate a brief overview on Shakespeare studies in Bangladesh perspective.

Discussion

In the ending part of the sixteenth century, Queen Elizabeth happened to give a group of merchants her approval to continue their mercantile activities in India and gradually that group of merchants were recognised as the British East India Company. Under the influence and interference of that company, the British rulers in India were supposed to be guided and dominated. As a result, their tendency in interfering the administrative and business policy of the British rule in India, Shakespeare was thought to have been carried by the British rulers as the outcome of their fascination for their literary, cultural and theatrical recreational media. Generally, present is said to be affected by the past as illustrated by T.S. Eliot in his book '*The Tradition and Individual Talent*'. Anything great of the past exhibits its quality to be a symbol of standard which is appreciated by others; especially, by the later generations. Shakespearean impact started growing in the Bengali mind since the inception of the productions of his plays. The present study also exhibits the arrival of Shakespeare in India to be treated not only as an individual borne by the British vehicle but also by his books or plays of Shakespeare which came to be prescribed as texts and later on appeared as the inevitable performance of staging of the dramas of Shakespeare on the stage or theatre. The students of the colleges, schools and the audience of his drama discovered the unknown but immense store of creative faculties lying in the manifestations of the characters and dialogues of universal themes of the plays of Shakespeare. In history, legend and story, Shakespeare found the materials for nearly all his dramas: and so they are often divided into three classes called historical plays like *Richard III* and *Henry V*. Legendary or partly historical plays like *Macbeth*, *King Lear* and *Julius Caesar* and fictional plays like *Romeo and Juliet* and *The Merchant of Venice*.

William J. Long highlights Shakespeare as poet only comparable to the two poets as he says;

Two poets only, Homer and Dante, have been named with him: but each of these wrote within narrow limits, while Shakespeare's genius included all the world of nature and of men. In a word, he is the universal poet.⁶⁸

⁶⁸ William J. Long, *op.cit.*, p. 155.

Here is referred the statement of Madhusudan about his profound devotion to the works of Shakespeare. Michael Madhusudan Datta (1824-73) writes to his friend Keshab Ganguli to look at the splendid Shakespearean drama.⁶⁹ It is also a matter of reference to the source place where from Madhusudan learnt about Shakespeare mostly from the study of English literature taught by Richardson and that at Hindu College.⁷⁰

Double plots of Shakespeare were followed by Madhusudan

Shakespeare has introduced double plots in many of his plays like *The Two Gentleman of Verona*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *As You Like It* etc. In the same way Madhusudan did not follow the straight forward trend of presenting drama rather he has presented a mixture of various events based on double plots along with the disguise method. To present characters in the disguise was introduced by Madhusudan as applied by Shakespeare in the plays like *As You like It*, *Measure for Measure*. In this context, Madhusudan's way of presenting a play in Shakespeare's style marked the evidences of reference of the direct imitation of Shakespeare as found in Madhusudan's own statement written to his friend Keshab Ganguli, may be cited in the following way,-

As the play is a tragedy, I have not thought it proper to begin any scene with the determination of being comic; in my humble opinion such a thing would not be keeping with the nature of the play. But whenever in the course of the dialogue a pleasant remark has suggested itself I have not neglected. The only piece of criticism I shall venture upon, is this; - never strive to be comic in a tragedy; but if an opportunity presents itself unsought to be gay, do not neglect it in the less important scenes, so as to have an agreeable variety. This I believe to be Shakespeare's plan.⁷¹

In awakening the spirit among the Indians, Madhusudan cited the message of Shakespeare. It was measured to be a sign of contribution to the development of self-evaluation and ideas to be gleaned from Shakespeare. He simply has sought the character 'Hamlet' the prince of Denmark as the example of showing no reactions to his mother from a son like Hamlet in the play, but Madhusudan desired the Hindu regenerated with a new hope and enthusiasm, which was supposed to have been borrowed from Shakespeare

⁶⁹ Mobaser Ali, *Madhusudaner Bishwa* [The World of Madhusudan] (Dhaka: Bangla Academy, June 1997), pp. 43-44.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 152.

⁷¹ Mobasher Ali, *op.cit.*, p. 45.

and Madhusudan claims to have been influenced by Shakespearean ideas. Modhusudan's attitude to Shakespeare appears both realistic and idealistic by which, he desired his nation to be spirited and regenerated with the masterpiece of Bard, William Shakespeare. Theoretically he centred his objective on the values and ideas projected by Shakespeare as Modhusudan quotes,-

Let us, now turn for a moment from this magnificent picture-the master-piece of Nature! Let us now turn for a moment from the contemplation of the splendour and the richness of its colourings, the delicacy, the beauty, and the symmetry of its proportions-to another far inferior, to be sure, but not altogether destitute of interest. When Hamlet saw the picture of his royal father and of his despicable guilty, and hated uncle in the chamber of his erring and queenly mother, he indignantly pointed them out to her and exclaimed in a tone of withering contempt- "Look on this picture and that!". Now-we shall not imitate the prince of Denmark-we shall not point that finger of scorn towards the Hindu. No. Fallen, obscured as he is-shorn of his beams, he does not deserve it. Men do not gaze on the ruins of Babylon with contempt; nor ridicule the massy, the blackened, the huge, the shapeless things, which were once towers and temples and palaces in the imperial city of Caesar, the mistress of the world of her days! The faithless Volney sat by the ruins of Empires and wept-for the thought of the instability of human grandeur, the vanity of human glory! We have seen the Anglo-Saxon, crowned and sceptered and seated on his throne, let us now look at the millions, who kneel before him.⁷²

The above statement clearly shows the evidence of his keen and fervent attitude and profound devotion to Shakespeare with what Modhusudan sought and thought to raise the spirit of the Indians, specially, *Bengalis* though the message of Shakespearean values to regenerate his countrymen in the way of renaissance enlightenment.

⁷² Michael Madhusudan Datta, *Engreji Gadya Rachana O Smritikatha* [English Writings & Memoirs of Madhusudan], Mobasher Ali (tr, ed.) (Dhaka: Bangla Academy, First Edition, June 1998), pp. 298-299.

Shakespeare was an ideal for Madhusudan

Madhusudan again wrote to Keshab Ganguli about the elements of tragi-comedy presentation in the play and in this context. Shakespeare was an ideal for him. Madhusudan said in ascertaining the admixture of two different elements as to advocate the combination of tragedy and comedy as he terms it to be 'The most beautiful plays in the world are combination of tragedy and comedy'.⁷³

It was Michael who introduced Blank Verse in Bengali thereby vastly extending the scope, power and range of Bengali poetry. Michael seemed to revolutionize Bengali drama too. *Padmavati* (1860) was largely based on a Greek Legend but he still adheres to some conventions of Sanskrit drama. However the smooth flow of stately grace and expressive qualities of English Blank Verse greatly influenced Michael and he started using blank verse in his dramatic works. Blank Verse is said to have been borrowed from Shakespeare as the same appealed to him as a unique style. In a letter written to his friend Jatindranath Tagore Michael wrote: 'I should like very much to see Blank Verse gradually introduced in our dramatic literature. I am inclined to believe, at first, it should be introduced with great caution and judgement. Where the sentiment is elevated or idea is poetical there only should short and smooth flowing passages blank verse be attempted, so that the audience may be beguiled into the belief they are hearing the self same prose to which they are accustomed.'⁷⁴

Michael's experimentation, in blank verse in *Padmavati*, was however, not very successful, although in his another play *Tilottoma Shamvava Kavya* (1860), he obtained a considerable success. Initially he rather coldly received, perhaps because of various signs of foreign influences. It gradually elicited admiration from many quarters. As Michael himself wrote to Ranjanarain Bose,

"You will be pleased to hear the Pundits coming round regarding *Tilottoma*. The renowned Vidysagar has at last condescended to see 'great merit' in it and the Someorakash has spoken out in a favourable manner. The book is growing popular."⁷⁵

⁷³ Mobasher Ali, *op.cit.*, p. 142.

⁷⁴ Kabir Chowdhury, "Foreign Influence on A National Literature", *Dacca University Studies*, Journal of the Faculty of Arts, Dacca, June, 1980, p. 116.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 117.

Tagore's Success in Creating Characters

Influence of Shakespeare worked on the greatest poets, writers, playwrights, novelists of Bengali literature. Shakespeare's influence worked upon them like a thread interweaving the literary personalities of world literature beyond the hurdles or ambit of geography, language, caste, political credence, religious culture.

Tagore's sources also convey the information that since his childhood Shakespeare became a favourite subject of teaching for the Bengali teachers interested in Shakespeare. The teachers of his time used to emphasize the reading, study of Shakespeare.

It is known to all that Rabindranath translated *Macbeth* in his very boyhood days. In the nineteenth century, Shakespeare had strong familiarity with the young generation that during school education Rabindranath Tagore was highly impressed by the magic spell emerged from Shakespeare. Rabindranath says in his own words that at that time Shakespeare was deemed to be the 'god of literature' along with Byron, Milton. The thing that stirred Tagore was his teacher Akkhay Chowdhury Mohashoy who used to tell the story of *Romeo and Juliet*, when Rabindranath Tagore listened to him with rapt attention, as if, he were passionately mingled with the happenings of the of *Romeo and Juliet*. The shocked mind of *King Lear*, in which, agonies of lamentation used to exist, the burning fire of an agonised mind caused by the burning of jealousy in *Othello* etc. all these grew excitement in the tender mind of Rabindranath.

Rabindranath Tagore was one of the greatest literary personalities, who demonstrated the direct influence of Shakespeare by expressing his own views. Shakespeare was deemed to be the model for Bengali dramatists. Shakespeare remained objective in their works. There was no way to introduce any idea or doctrine in his plays to be ventilated for Shakespeare. Through the staging of the plays or curtains of the stage performance which appears to be measured as an impersonal attitude of Shakespeare drawing everyone's attention to the aspects of his plays free from religious persuasions and recondite philosophy of life.⁷⁶

⁷⁶ Shafi Ahmed, *op.cit.*, pp. 7-9

Both Tagore and Shakespeare appear to have attributed no efforts made in philosophising any of their doctrines through the manifestations of their characters. Their impersonal approach is evident when their commitment and adherence to the creation of characters have established their novelty without being affected by the demands or interests of their individual liking and disliking. Tagore's success in creating characters in his short stories and Shakespeare's adherence to negative capability reflect their respective faculties.

Influence of Shakespeare upon Bengali Dramatists

It was natural that Shakespeare who was given priority over other writers, in the syllabuses of the newly set up academic institutions and his being staged in the original in Kolkata should exert the most dominant influence on the growth and development of Bengali drama.⁷⁷

The influence of western drama was already apparent in Michael's play *Sharmishttha*, but in respect of treatment, technique and form, he mostly followed the western tradition, although he retained some aspects of the Sanskrit school, too. The 'Pundits' of the day, however, did not like that. In fact, Michael had to undergo considerable pressure for rewriting the plays in accordance with the accepted principles of Sanskrit drama, but he firmly withstood all such pressures. In a letter to his friend Goura Das Basaka he wrote:

I shall either stand or fall by myself I am aware, my dear fellow, that there will be just and glowing the plot interesting, characters well-maintained, what care you if there be a foreign air about the thing⁷⁸

Michael was perfectly aware that he was borrowing certain things from foreign literature as far as forms and techniques were concerned, but his basic materials were indigenous. He was not unduly worried by the criticism of orthodox section.

However, even in *Sharmishttha*, he had not completely abjured the traditional features of Sanskrit drama. He had written to his friend Goura, "*In matters literary, old boy, I am too proud to stand before the world in borrowed clothes. I may borrow necktie,*

⁷⁷ Serajul Islam Choudhury, *Bengali Translations of Shakespeare: Homage to Shakespeare* (Dacca: Department of English, Dacca University, 1965), p. 40.

⁷⁸ Kabir Chowdhury, *op.cit.*, pp. 117.

or even a waist-cost, but not the whole suit. Do not let the soul be perturbed, old clock, for I promise you a play that will astonish the old rascals in the shape of Pundits.” In his play *Krishnakumari* (1961), Michael clearly came into his own, completely released from the restraints of Sanskrit tradition. In *Pandmavati*, he had turned a fundamentally tragic Greek theme into a comedy with reconciliation and union at the end, but in *Krtishnakumari*, he did not permit himself any such, compromise. This earned the feature being the first tragedy in Bengali literature. The impact of western literature on Michael in this play can be seen not merely in form and technique, but also in the art of characterization.

Here Shakespeare’s influence is noticeable not only in the tragic scene of the death of a daughter, but also in Madanika’s disguise as a young man. A point of resemblance between 'Dhanadas' and 'Iago' is found in this play.⁷⁹

It was, however, *Bidhaba Bibaho* (1856) that introduced the true essence of tragedy in Bengali drama for the first time. And this, like *Kirtivilas*, was also influenced by Shakespeare. Ashutosh Bhattacharya says:

... this is the first drama in Bengali to follow some scene or character of Shakespeare directly. The insane character in this play is the result of the influence of Shakespeare’s mad characters. In past Shakespeare’s plays had been translated, but no attempt so far was made to search for the materials in Bengali life by closely following Shakespeare’s characters, this play attempts it for the first time.⁸⁰

Umeshchandra Mitra said about this play that it “is the first attempt to introduce the regular tragedy into Bengali drama.” Michael Madhusudan Dutt (1824–1873), who acted as a student in amateur performances, is the most prominent figure who exerted Shakespearean influence on Bengali drama. But there is hardly any doubt that Madhusudan was instinctively influenced by Shakespeare’s plays. The use of 'blank verse' in Bengali literature that he brought into practice resulted from the Shakespearean as well as Miltonic influence upon him.⁸¹

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 117.

⁸⁰ Ahmed, *op.cit.*, pp. 30-31.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 33.

Ashutosh Bhattacharya says, "One cannot ignore the extent of Shakespeare's influence on Madhusudhn's language and his character portrayal."⁸² Some maintain that the first scene of Madhusudan's *Sharmishtha* (1859), a play divided into acts and scenes was based on following the structure of English plays and the said drama refers to the thematic similarity with Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. According to many critics while creating 'Shachi' of *Padmabati* (1860), his next play, Madhusudan might have thought of 'Lady Macbeth'. Critics also think that the comparison between the characters of 'Falstaff' and 'Bidushok' is certainly appropriate.

But the most obvious thematic replication of Shakespeare is Madhusudan's *Krishnokumary* (1860). Shafi Ahmed says that several characters of this play are portrayed by means of imitating Shakespeare.⁸³ The Shakespearean device of disguise, too, has been used in *Krisnakumary*. Madanika's putting on man's disguise reminds any reader of Shakespearean plays as Shafi Ahmed cites:

The influence of some Shakespearean heroines is noticeable on Madanika's character... when Madanika came to Udaypur, she hoodwinked Dhana Das into believing that she was a man like Portia and Nerisssa of *Merchant of Venice*, Julia of *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, Helena of *Alls Well that Ends Well*, Viola of *Twelfth Night*. Madanika is as bright as some of the heroines of Shakespearean comedies; her dialogue is as humorous as theirs.⁸⁴

Deenbandhu Mitra (1830–1873) and Madhusudan Dutt were contemporaries. Although in *Neeldarpan* (1860), the most famous drama of Mitra, in which, no Shakespearean influence is marked. His second drama *Navin Tapaswini* (1863) was an imitation of Shakespeare's *Merry Wives of Windsor*. There are some sporadic similarities between *Navin Tapaswini* and some other Shakespearean plays also. It is not difficult to find likeness between this play *Navin Tapaswini* and *Comedy of Errors*. The thematic structure of the play resembles that of *The Winter's Tale*. Some Dialogues of this play, according to Sanatkumar Mitra, can be taken as the literal translations of some Shakespearean dialogues.

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 36.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 38.

At this point Sanatkumar Mitra compares Deenbandhu's speech with Shakespeare's "What's in a name? That which we call a rose/By any other name would smell as so sweet".⁸⁵ Some also have found Shakespearean influence on Deenbandhu Mitra's another satire *Bie Pagla Budo* (1866). Mitra made plentiful use of many of Shakespeare's dialogues, in another of his famous satires *Sadhbar Ekadoshi* (1866). In the dialogues of this play, Shakespeare has been quoted twenty-six times. Mitra followed Shakespeare in his *Leelabaty* (1867), too, especially in its plot. The love-affair of Lalit and Lalita is much like that of *Romeo and Juliet*. *Jamai Barik* (1872), another satire by Mitra, was based on the typical Bengali society.

But its main character *Kamini* resembles Shakespeare's *Katharine* of *The Taming of the Shrew*. Both of them are haughty, bad-tempered, and quarrelsome. In the epigraph of his last play, *Kamole Kamini* (1873) Deenbandhu Mitra quotes *Macbeth*. The play's association with *Macbeth* is extended more in its dialogues and action. For example, the famous 'sleep-walking scene' where Lady Macbeth's maid says:

Since his majesty went into field, I have seen her rise from
her bed, throw her night-gown upon her, unlock her closet,
take forth paper, fold it, write upon't, read it, afterwards
seal it and again return to bed; yet all this while in a most
fast sleep.

(4-8, V, 1)

On the basis of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* Girischandra Ghosh (1844-1912) who, was unhesitant in borrowing from Shakespeare, had the first Bengali play in the light of Shakespeare published in the year 1852. Hence, in his writings influence of Shakespeare is obviously found. Absorption of different Shakespearean characters is traced in the title character of his play *Jona* (1894). Similarity between *Jona* and *Margaret* (*Richard III*) is pointed out by many critics. *Jona*'s words expressing her vindictiveness to *Arjun* bears almost literal affinity with the words of *Margaret*. Besides this, critics have also traced the shadow of *Coriolanus* in *Jona*. *Virgillia* in *Coriolanus* and *Madanmanjuri* in *Jona*, both, being scared of war, are unwilling to let their husbands go and both also are rebuked for such womanish fearfulness by their mothers-in-law, *Volumnia* and *Jona* respectively.

⁸⁵ Sanatkumar Mitra, *op.cit.*, p. 88.

Praphulla (1889) is another play in which Girishchandra tried to integrate the Shakespearean tragic essence into Bengali drama. Though there is no parallel between 'Yogesh', the protagonist of *Praphulla*, and *Othello*'s Cassio. There is similarity between them in respect of their speeches. Shakespeare's influence on Girishchandra is evident specially in Girishchandra's later play *Sirajuddaula* (1906). Some are of the opinion that Girishchandra found *King Richard* as *Sirajuddaula*'s Shakespearean counterpart. Shafi Ahmed says:

Both Sirajuddaula and Richard were extravagant, imaginative, emotional, not skilled at the diplomacy of kingship, but desirous of the crown and prone to royal luxury. Both had to meet a miserable end for lacking the practical wisdom and intelligence needed to safeguard their thrones.⁸⁶

The character of *Henry V* also shed a shadow on the characterization of *Sirajuddaula*. Besides these, in other plays of Girishchandra as well, Shakespearean influence can be, now and then, discerned. In his plays, the idea of disguise was obviously taken from Shakespeare although it was adopted by Madhusudan and Deenbandhu too.. Girishchandra himself admitted his debt to Shakespeare, "*The great poet Shakespeare is my model, I am following his footsteps.*"⁸⁷ The influence of Shakespeare was not lacking also in the works of Jyotirindranath Tagore (1849–1925), who made an amazing translation of Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* published in 1907. Besides this, as Shafi Ahmed opines that at least two of his original works bear the influence of Shakespeare. The first one is *Asrumoty* (1879), influenced by *Othello* in structure and characterization, and the second one, *Punarbasant* (1899) was influenced in its title, plot and atmosphere by *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Following Girishchandra, Dwijendralal Roy (1863–1913) is another specific example of the extent to which Shakespeare is supposed to have enriched and influenced Bengali drama. DL Roy seemed to follow Shakespeare directly and indirectly mainly in his historical plays. His *Tarabaii* (1903) resembles *Macbeth*. In *Macbeth* both Macbeth and Lady Macbeth, as a result of their spurring ambition of usurping the throne *by regicide*, at the cost of drawing a tragic end to the life of a king. Similarly, the protagonist of *Tarabaii*, Suryomal, spurred by his wife *Tamasa* becomes a prey to uncontrollable high ambition of becoming the King of Mebar.

⁸⁶ Ahmed, *op.cit.*, pp. 59,100.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 66.

This couple, like Macbeth and his wife Lady Macbeth, ends up miserably because of this mountainous to enjoy royal power. To a great extent they are the power mongers. In *Tarabaii* Tamasa persuades Suryomal in a way similar to that in which Lady Macbeth persuades Macbeth. Suryomal forbids his wife to utter the words again, but as soon as she leaves, we hear him speak to himself. Ambition stands for sin and sin leads to death is an idea gleaned from Shakespeare which was taken by Dwijendralal Roy. Macbeth was tempted by the wearied sisters, so is Suryomal by the oracle of the Charoni-temple. Dwijendralal Roy thought of Shakespeare's *Cleopatra* while portraying the title character of *Nurjahan* (1908), even though there is no similarity between the plots of the two plays. The character of *Nurjahan* also has a shadow of *Lady Macbeth*. In (V. 3) Khadija speaks to Nurjahan which can be compared with the famous sleep-walking scene of *Macbeth*: she is leaving her bed in sleep, wearing her sleeping-gown, taking a piece of paper, folding it, writing something on it, putting it into an envelope, then going back to bed, and doing it all while asleep. In the same scene Lady Macbeth says:

The Thane of Fife and a wife: where is she now? – What, will these hands will ne'er be clean?... Wash your hands, put on your night-gown; look not so pale. – I tell you again, Banquo's buried:... To bed, to bed: there's knocking at the gate. Come, come, come, come, give me your hand. What's done cannot be undone.⁸⁸

(42–65, V, I)

Another character of *King Lear*, the *Fool*, influenced the making of the character of Dildar in *Shajahan*. According to one critic: “Dwijendralal was not only a discerning reader of western plays, he, for a long time, tried to apply Shakespearean techniques to Bengali plays.”⁸⁹ Influence of Shakespeare's Iago is marked on the title character of Dwijendralal's next play *Chandragupta* (1911). *Sylon Bijoy* (1915), which is thought to be his last play, also contain similarities with *The Tempest* and *Cymbeline*. Like other Bengali dramatists, Rabindranath Tagore (1861–1941) also could not avoid the influence of Shakespeare. Many critics trace Shakespearean influence on Tagore's *Raja Rani*. The overwhelming and uncontrollable love between King Bikramdev and Queen Sumitra, defying all worldly affairs, reminds one of Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 90.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

One fact that emerges from the study of this influence is that it was thought to be the cultivation of Shakespeare that Bengali drama came into being. Besides this, the effect of this influence is also evident in the subject matters of Bengali drama. The technical and structural sides — like the use of soliloquies and the division of plays into acts and scenes — too, are thought to have been influenced by Shakespeare. It is to be noted that this influence is no longer felt as strongly as it was felt in the second half of the nineteenth century and in the beginning of the twentieth century, nevertheless, Shakespeare is proved to be an indispensable part of Bengali drama. In this study there has been traced the general background of Shakespearean emergence in India.

Justification of the Research

Shakespeare has got a fertile ground in Bengal where there is no denying the fact that his impact is deep and permanent in literature. He is expected to continue to survive through influencing on Bengali poets and writers in the days to come. His influence seems to be working also as long as English language has any hold on the intellectuals of this country. The study of Shakespeare in Bangladesh is enlightened with the long time tradition and radiance. The renaissance of the nineteenth century is followed by several reasons. The studies of Shakespearean literature appear to be one of the vital and inherent reasons acting behind the infrastructure of renaissance which is deemed to be historically true. But for various reasons the trend of Shakespearean studies is supposed to be halted.⁹⁰

The study is expected to fill the knowledge gap

Indeed, literature entertains the reflections of human life for all peoples irrespective of geographical and cultural barriers of time and space. The study of the research work would fill up the knowledge-gap and add newer information to the proper evaluation of Shakespeare rendering his influence on Bengali literature. The present research will also explore the attitude and remarks of the distinguished intellectuals like poets, writers, playwrights, critics like Rabindranath Tagore, Michael Madhusudan Datta, Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay, Dinabandhu Mitra (1829–1873),

⁹⁰ Milan Datta, *Prem O Rahashye Shakespeare* [Shakespeare in Love and Mystery] (Kolkata: Universal Book Depot, 2001); Cited in the preface of the book.

Girish Chandra Ghosh (1844–1912), Amritalal Basu (1853–1930), Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar, Dwijendralal Roy (1863–1913), Sukumar Sen, Sirazul Islam Chowdhury, Shafi Ahmed, Kabir Chowdhury, Sajjad Husain, Munier Chowdhury, Shafi Ahmed, Dr. Syed Manzoorul Islam, Dr. Fakrul Alam, Syed Shamul Haque and some others who have worked on Shakespeare giving their personal views. Justification of the research work lies in the field of intellect, art and culture as reflected in the writings of the Bengali intellectuals as a result of their being influenced by Shakespearean interest.

The present study is also expected to be contribution to Shakespeare studies

To study Shakespeare is to enter the vast realm of thoughts conveyed by Shakespeare. The research in Bangladesh would be of much contribution to inspire those who would like to be benefited by the portrayal of the events of life and characters as reflected in Shakespearean products. Certainly the *Bengalis* have not stopped admiring, but nationalistic sentiments have taken newer, more broad based turns; education has created more distance between the colonizer and the colonized because of the newer configurations in the political and social scenes that Shakespeare could possibly ever gap. The 21st century, with the computer network and global interest in Shakespeare will again pick up.⁹¹ The world of English language and literature seems to remain in the dark to one who remains far from the study of Shakespeare. In Bangladesh there are all sorts of reasons to believe and support the study of Shakespeare which may be enhanced by the interactions and comparison of the Bengali intellectuals and his views. For the justification of this proposed study the elements like utility of the study, review of literature, and feasibility are illustrated duly.

⁹¹ Syed Manzoorul Islam, *op.cit.*, p. 12.

Utility of the Study

When there raises more criticism there grows more importance of the phenomenon criticised. Utility of any literary output remains to be discussed with an unending effect. English literature without Shakespeare is the same as Bengali literature appears without Rabindranath Tagore. Shakespeare's application crosses the ambit of the entire literary horizon.

Shakespeare has become an institution of endless faculties providing the world with the positive interpretations of life from which world literature has got enormous appeal to establish a sustainable Shakespeare as he would continue to survive to contribute to the intellectuals to be imbibed with unending interpretations of human life and nature projected in his plays accordingly T.S. Eliot says-

But I dare say that if one was as great a poet as Shakespeare, and was also his 'spiritual heir', one would feel no need to interpret him; interpretation is necessary perhaps only in so far as one is passive, not creative, oneself.⁹²

The British rule all over the world is over but the kingdom of Shakespeare exists and spreads all over the world with an unending effect. Shakespeare is said to be the globally renowned dramatist and poet. The quality of his literary product is universal. People of all nations and countries irrespective of their caste and colour, geographical or colonial strain would find pleasure enjoying the manifestation of the mystery of human mind as embodied in the products of Shakespeare.⁹³ If anybody remains ignorant of Shakespeare it appears that he is sure to remain bereft of enjoying the taste of the deepest psychology and unventured abode of the mind of man as reflected and portrayed by Shakespeare in his plays.

⁹² Wilson knight, *op.cit.*, p. xix.

⁹³ Sahyapriasad Sengupta, *Galpe Shakespeare* [Stories from Shakespeare] (Dhaka: Published by Muktaadhara, Fourth Edition, May 1982), p. Preface.

English language and literature owe much to Shakespeare

The present thriving state of English as the international language may be said to be the gift of the widespread impact of the Shakespearean literature as Shakespeare is believed to have had the vital role in popularising the command of the dramatic and theatrical aspects from a country making every effort in extending the use of English language and literature across the world doesn't appear to be a matter of indulging any exaggeration when the Influence of Shakespeare acted on most of the literary personalities of Bengali literature. The utility of the study of Shakespeare will help understand the basic instincts of human psychology reflected in the light of the characters of universal appeal shown in his plays.

As Shakespeare appears inevitable in the syllabus of the universities and colleges of Bangladesh, the proposed research work may be able to fulfil the requirements of the learners as well as the intellectuals working in the field of Shakespeare.

Both the wings of language and literature are thought to be appealing in the context of the literary products rendered by Shakespeare all over the world along with Bangladesh. There is the tendency to remain objective as a matter of individual talent as defined by T.S. Eliot which is thought to be duly highlighted by Shakespeare, as he does not apply any instructive philosophy rather has presented the trend of life of man and his society on the basis of both the negative and positive instincts of human psychology and nature that are presented very naturally with an air of unnatural portrayal of the events of life and human nature with the culmination of their height based on realistic and disinterested methodologies of the globally recognised playwright Shakespeare.

Review of Literature

Reviewing literature helps the researcher to get acquainted with the knowledge gap in that field and enables him to proceed onward. Review of literature is considered as one of the essential components for any social science or literary discipline aimed at discussing the cardinal features and the precise overview of the trends providing for more research as a guideline to the researcher in order to seek more information and find newer sources of idea to add to the existing knowledge of the study. This study appears to be a virgin field in the light of searching of Shakespeare's influence on Bengali literature and there is not enough literature in this area. But some of the areas of Shakespeare studies or translations have been studied at the same time there are various venues being studied and have been discussed abroad. But however, some of the small portion of the said work is reviewed here.

For a constructive and innovative research and for the proper evaluation of a researcher I have reviewed a good number of books as the review of literature what I think to be a must guiding the researcher to find out the knowledge gap.

The following writers and their opinions about Shakespeare are discussed as to find out the proper evaluation of the dramatist and poet Shakespeare and his influence that was supposed to work among the great personalities of Bengali literature of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Shafi Ahmed (1988)

Shafi Ahmed in his resourceful book titled⁹⁴ *Bangadeshe Shakespeare*, which is said to be a master piece of Shakespeare research with unique presentation and lucidity, [Shakespeare in Bengal] has illustrated the study of Shakespeare by giving his valuable comments of different famous poets and dramatists of Bengali literature about Shakespearean dramas. He has also depicted the historical background of the entrance of the versatile genius like Shakespeare in West Bengal. The literary personalities of the past of West Bengal and Bangladesh with their works on Shakespeare have been elaborately discussed in the said book full of documentary explanations. The said book is also informative and contains prudent sources for any kind of Shakespearean research study as the book is written in Bengali. Any analysis of Shakespeare with the current and past

⁹⁴ Shafi Ahmed, *op.cit.*, p. 230.

literary personalities of Bangladesh highlighting the proper evaluation of their critical analyses of Shakespearean influence on the intellectuals of Bengali literature could be expected as the source of great contribution of the author as he has presented the book at the cost of his rigorous job and untiring efforts in manifesting the detailed Shakespeare studies in Bengali with references to the works of Bengali literary and dramatic personalities.

Shafi Ahmed, with his informative evaluation as illustrated in the said book, has added his individuality in analysing the differences of the nature of Shakespeare studies in the way of Bengali translation and literary criticism.

With deliberate historical chronology and gradual progress of the studies on Shakespeare, the author has never forgotten to emphasize the efforts of the translators despite their limitations and barriers for an easy and presentable translation of Shakespeare. With lucid interpretations and vividness of his critical evaluation the book stands as a historical documentation in the field of Shakespeare studies both in West Bengal and Bangladesh perspectives. Shafi Ahmed deserves due credit to his achievement of his great creative and critical evaluation on the Bard Shakespeare which has enriched the present study of the researcher with every source of information and enlightenment replete with qualitative and foundational framework of gleaning influence of Shakespeare on Bengali literature.

Ghosh (1948)

In his book⁹⁵ the author has presented the historical references in the light of the performances of Bengali dramas staged after the establishment of an English theatre which was built in the year 1756. But he has not illustrated the impact of Shakespearean drama and stage techniques followed by the then Bengali dramatists. The researcher wishes to explore the impact of Shakespeare on Bengali literature especially on the writings and opinions of the poets, writers, dramatists or critics and their criticism of Bengali literature through the proposed research work. So the researcher attempts to explore Shakespearean impact in the fields remaining untouched by the above-mentioned esteemed writer in the book mentioned.

Sen (1960)

⁹⁵ J.C. Ghosh, *Bengali Literature* (London: Curzon Press, 1948), pp. 125, 148, 150.

In his book⁹⁶ the author has presented how the dramatists of the later part of the nineteenth century in Bengal were influenced by Shakespeare. But he has not taken into account the poets and modern dramatists whether they have accepted or avoided Shakespeare in their writings. The present researcher intends to project the same in his work with more detailed illustrations.

Chowdhury (1978)

In the preface of the Bengali translation of *Antony and Cleopatra*⁹⁷ Professor Serajul Islam Chowdhury has given his comments on the study of Shakespeare in Bangladesh in the light of socio-political and literary outlook as a critic. He has told with much regret that Shakespeare is not properly studied in Bangladesh rather he is memorised. He has also criticised against the class view of the people. He emphasizes the exact translation of Shakespeare, with a focus on the impact of Shakespeare on Bengali drama and criticism. But he has not properly cited the actual limitations of the study of Shakespeare prevailing in Bangladesh. Here the researcher will find the limitations in the field of Shakespeare studies in Bengali literature and would like to show the positive impact or influence of the globally recognised genius on the literary aspects of Bengali literature as mentioned above.

Siddiqui (1982)

The author in his book⁹⁸ has presented his personal view in the context of Bengali literature but has not discussed much regarding the influence of Shakespeare upon the literary personalities of Bengali literature. He has compared the tragic catastrophe of Bangabandhu Sheikh Muzibur Rahman with the tragic heroes of Shakespeare. The researcher views that the author has not cited the heroes of Bengali literature. The said book holds subjective resolution more than its objectives in analysing Shakespeare as a playwright. Accordingly, the researcher is expected to reflect more of the influence of Shakespearean literary works on Bengali literature.

Dutta (1987)

⁹⁶ Sukumar Sen, *History of Bengali Literature* (New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, January, 1960), pp. 175-177.

⁹⁷ Serajul Islam Chowdhury, *Antony and Cleopatra* (Dhaka: Bangla Academy, 1978), p. Preface.

⁹⁸ Zillur Rahman Siddiqui, *Literature of Bangladesh and Other Essays* (Dhaka: Bangladesh Books International Ltd., 1982), p. 83.

naturalness and realities of life is not discussed by any comparison of his characters or though a comparative study with those of the world literature. The researcher would like to explore this area by analysing the styles of the literary personalities of Bengali literature compared to those of the world literature with reference to Shakespeare studies in particular.

Feasibility of the Study

There remains nothing of an art but criticism when flourished with the balanced scale of the negative and positive aspects of the art or artist criticized, although constructive criticism is entertained for the due purpose of the objectivity of the same meticulously. I hope to cherish the desire to complete the research work within the time scheduled although there may arise lots of issues. Without being too ambitious it was assumed that I would like to have fulfilled the demands of the study within the manageable limit by pursuing Ph.D. program with the guidance of the learned supervisors and co-operation offered by IBS authority. Literatures linked with the proposal are available and the same to be obtained with due study and sincere efforts. Profound study of Shakespeare is sure to contain and contribute necessary information of knowledge gap. I have the mind to overcome all the limitations and complete the research work of the proposed study within due means by searching and pondering over the subject and using all the sources available within my study done at home and abroad.

Scope of the Study

To study Shakespeare is not an easy task when the greatest personalities of Bengali literature seem to have been influenced by him and borrowed lots of aspects of literature from him. The scope of the proposed study covers the thoughts and views projected by the enlightened personalities of Bengali literature about Shakespeare. The thesis is expected to manifest the works of Shakespeare influencing the critics, the dramatists, the poets, authors of Bengal. Internet programmes, books of different libraries, films, statements and criticism published and unpublished materials, interviews of the researchers related to Shakespeare have also worked as the source of immense information and contribution for the researcher.

Methodology

For any kind of research, methodology of the study plays vital role in serving the demand of the objectives as stated above. Any scientific investigation requires one or more research methods, which enable a researcher to conduct the study systematically.

Research is no doubt a disinterested or unbiased search for knowledge.¹⁰¹ It is a careful inquiry or examination to discover new information or relationships and to expand and to verify existing knowledge.¹⁰² It also means “manipulation of things, concept, or symbols for the purpose of generalizing and to extent, correct or verify knowledge, whether that knowledge aids in the construction of a theory or in the practice of an art.”¹⁰³ “It actually evolves from a genuine desire to know rather than a wish to prove a point of view. This research has to be done through a method, which is the mode of doing something. However, methodology plays an important role in any scientific or social research, but the methods in practical uses somehow differ from one research to another. The present study attempts to apply the documentary method blended with the evaluation, comparisons and analytical approaches to progress with empirical and historical references¹⁰⁴. This is defined as” an attempt to find out what has happened in the course of time and to correlate the events, within the limits of finding available materials on the one hand and of the researcher’s intelligence and understanding on the other, into a meaningful sequence.¹⁰⁵ The methodological structure acts as the panacea in searching the sources as well as in presenting the work in the garb of documented resolution. Research methodology has got no alternative. Methodology contains certain pattern based on the total frame work of the dissertation. The main body of the paper is usually separated into well-defined divisions, such as parts, chapters, sections, and subsections. Accordingly Kate L. Turabian designed the manual as a guide to suitable style for the presentation of theses, and dissertations.¹⁰⁶ The word ‘method’ comes from the Greek words ‘meta’ and ‘hodos’ meaning a way (Geddie, 1965). Broadly, a method or methodology is “the underlying principles and rules of organization of a philosophical system or inquiry procedure” (Urdong, 1968). A method involves a process or a technique in which various

¹⁰¹ M. Zainul Abedin, *A Handbook Research for the Fellows of M.Phil. and Ph.D Programmes* (Dhaka: Book Syndicate, 1996), p. 11.

¹⁰² Francis Rummel, *An Introduction to Research Procedure in Education*, 2nd ed. (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1964), p. 2.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, pp. 2-3.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 170.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 164.

¹⁰⁶ Kate L. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1987), p. vii.

stages or steps of collecting data/ information are explained and the analytical techniques are defined.

A dictionary of social science observes “Methodology is the systematic and logical study of the principles guiding scientific investigation” (Gould and Kolb, 1964).¹⁰⁷ Methodology is a vital item in conducting a research work with a view to obtaining the desired result of a successful research work.

Secondary sources appear to be conducive to the present study

I have undertaken the study based on the materials of secondary sources for evaluation and analysis of the views portraying the greatest genius Shakespeare. Researchers are generally believed to adopt different ways of methodologies, and accordingly, the present study needs to apply both the descriptive and content analysis methods to comply with the demands of the objectives of the research through the presentation of an empirical study.

The present study is also designed as an evaluation study of historical and analytical methods

I am also interested to explore Shakespearean impact on Bengali literature on the basis of an evaluative study with historical method and analytical illustration. Generally a researcher is believed to follow certain mechanism or methodology for gleaning information or data to process and analyse them to prepare a report. Whatever may be the nature of study, a researcher is to use some specific methods, which are sure to provide him with necessary output. Historical methodological approach and textual analysis suited to the nature and purpose of the study have also the place of opportunity to be adopted in this research work.

Sources

In the context of structural methodology sources play vital role for an informative thesis. Without source a research work cannot be imagined. Sources act as the life blood of a research study. The lack of the source begets the lack of significance of a thesis. In this work, I have sought both the primary and secondary sources in order to attain not the evanescent but the perennial effectiveness of the present study.

¹⁰⁷ M. Zainul Abedin, *op.cit.*, p. 52.

But there is no way to claim and it is the humble of even a dedicated researcher to bear in mind that sources compiled and incorporated into this work would be worth receiving the best and most effective resolutions when a research tends to be mending and unending. A good researcher is a good searcher in collecting the materials required for the perfection of the study. But it can be stated with humble expression in the presentation of my study that I am convinced or satisfied with the sources already added to this work. Bengali books, Bengali translations of Shakespeare plays, comments of the critics, interpretations of various poets, playwrights, essayists, novelists, articles, internet sources etc. in the field of English and Bengali literature have contributed a lot to help me enhance and analyse the sources of this study. Although I humbly acknowledge that they do not appear to be sufficient and I claim to have firm belief that researchers on Shakespeare have ample scope to search the unsearched and to venture the unventured of the great genius Shakespeare in the days to come.

Both primary and secondary data, information, studies are considerable for the present study

There is no claim to be satisfied with the collection of the sources when the same is not collocated as per the demand of the study, but the collection of the sources of the present study is followed by its area of the title when 'research' refers itself to a continuous study as the title demands. However, the sources of data can be classified into primary and secondary types. Original books written by Shakespeare are to be considered as the primary sources of data for the research. The writings, reported materials including books, journals, editorials, research reports, comments of different scholars, criticism, articles, official printed documents, theses, dissertations, essays, translations of Shakespeare's plays etc. are to be considered as the secondary sources for this study. Authentic sources of opinions and criticism of different critics are also taken for proper evaluation of the present research.

Here I would like to make studious inquiry into the criticism and the opinions centering round Shakespearean works as the secondary sources that are to be collected from the printed materials. Studies of the original books and texts also provide relevant information for this study.

In order to frame the research methodology and to study scholarly the depth of the proposed study, I am expected to collect various data from the original texts or books written by Shakespeare which may be defined as the primary sources based on the direct study and efforts to be made to get immediately associated with the subject of the study related to the proposal, for which I, as a humble researcher, claim to be convinced with full satisfaction that I have left no stone unturned to have ventured every branch of study available within my means related to the influential nature of the works of Shakespeare.

Writings and remarks, reactions, interpretations and translations of Bengali intellectuals contribute much to the present study

Writings and remarks of different Bengali poets, dramatists, as well as of the critics would be measured as the secondary sources which have been duly highlighted. Internet sources, newspapers, magazines, histories of both Bengali and English literature are expected to enrich the secondary sources of data and references required for the successful completion of the research proposal are furnished with proper footnotes and citations. All the necessary data and information needed for the purpose have been sought. The works done on Shakespeare that are thought to be available in London, New York, West Bengal and Bangladesh have been sought from various libraries and information desks, books or publications or internet sources and they are duly referred to my dissertation with footnotes or references in the bibliography.

Methods of data collection

Since the proposed study chiefly centers round the primary and secondary data I am sure to have reviewed the references, reports, books and research works based on Shakespeare both from Bangladesh and West Bengal sources empirically. I have myself collected the materials on Shakespeare from different places that are analysed by using some analytical and illustrative methods or through empirical approach to this dissertation. Comparison, rational arguments, social and literary history of writing and stage dramas of Bengal have also been carefully employed to reach points discussed above even by my personal contact with the critics on Shakespeare or Shakespeare scholars who are concerned with Shakespeare studies at present have also been maintained in this with due relevance.

The original texts of William Shakespeare are deemed as the primary sources. Any published material like magazines, journals, books providing any information or reference or discussion on Shakespeare have also been considered as the secondary sources. The collected data are supposed to be a rigorous process of classification which for the better resolution needs to be ventured as much analytically as possible has also been taken into consideration. The proposed research has also been conducted through both the descriptive and content analysis methodologies along with interpretive methodology in determining the logical sequence.

Expected Results

I, as a researcher, would like to explore the efforts to fill up the missing avenues and gaps of Shakespearean studies that are already made by the Bengali intellectuals, playwrights or authors. Shakespeare is a literary genius who appears to have revealed and comprehended universal psychology of man. Life and culture projected in the views of his dramatic and literary portrayals are presented in his plays; in fact, cover the real scenario of this human planet on earth. As a dramatic genius Shakespeare has introduced styles and views begotten by him as well as his imitation of alien sources were also adopted. His dramatic literature is reflected with the characters facing both the internal and external conflicts and contrasts. Keeping this importance in view, Shakespeare appears to be unique in presenting the characters of different senses of human conflicts that are the basic strategies centring round human life, obviously, that is not uncommon, unrealistic and as a result of which, his writings have duly stirred the hearts of the readers with keen objectivity. In view of its beauty of truth and the expansion of the maximum human problems and its wide spread solutions, the unexplored corners of Shakespearean impact on Bengali literary personalities need to be explored. Shakespeare *sonnets*, one hundred and fifty-four in number, are the only direct expression of the poet's own feelings.¹⁰⁸ Thus the present researcher aims at scrutinizing and searching the untouched faculties of literary views and feelings of illustrations centring round Shakespeare as reflected in Bengali literature.

¹⁰⁸ William J. Long, *op.cit.*, p. 153.

Bangladesh is a country of long history and glory whose tradition, culture and literature are rich. In order to trace the literary trends of Bangladesh and to highlight the impact, the study of Shakespeare would be of immense importance. The study is supposed to reflect the literary richness of Bangladesh and present Shakespeare as a universal poet sprouting interest and intellectual curiosity in the hearts of the educated *Bengalis*. A bridge of communion and internal communication between Bengali literature and world literature through the introspection of Shakespeare would be built forever. A.C. Bradley, in his *Shakespearean Tragedy* highlights Shakespearean personality as an appropriate contribution:

'It was indeed, more appropriate to an age in which many people believed that a strong, just, and gifted hero-a superman-could right the wrongs of the world and ameliorate its suffering'.¹⁰⁹

Study of Shakespeare requires a collection of vast information influencing the literary personalities of the Bengali literature. The study of the universal poet requires profound thought and creativity that might be the milestone for Shakespeare studies in the arena of education in Bangladesh. There is a rich and glorious tradition of Bengali literature, which is likely to be manifested in world literature, if compared to the works of the globally accepted genius like Shakespeare. The scenario of the English language and literature appears to be in great demand at present in the world and this phenomenon may be said to be one of the contributing factors rendered even by Shakespeare in the broader aspects. Since the taste of literature is the life blood of a language and Shakespeare holds the invisible current of English literature and also acts as the gate way of English language throughout the world for the present framework and for the days to come when the greatest of Bengali poets and dramatists were sure to be influenced. So the expected result of the protagonist of the said study would flourish the hidden potentiality of the learners of Bangladesh as well as the Bengali and English literature by the constructive evaluation and comparative study of the said genius Shakespeare would enjoy a simultaneous tie of both the literatures.

¹⁰⁹ A.C. Bradley, *Shakespearean Tragedy*, 3rd ed. (Hong Kong: Published, Macmillan, 1992), p. xvi.

Projected Thesis Structure

- Chapter : 1 Introduction and outline of the study with review of literature
- Chapter : 2 Influence of Shakespeare on Bengal Renaissance
- Chapter : 3 Influence of Shakespeare on Bengali Literature.
- Chapter : 4 Influence of Shakespeare on Bengali playwrights and Bengali Drama
- Chapter : 5 Reactions of Bengali intellectuals to Shakespeare as exhibited in their criticism of Shakespeare
- Chapter : 6 Shakespeare and Rabindranath Tagore
- Chapter : 7 Shakespeare in Bengali translation
- Chapter : 8 The Literary Presentation of Shakespeare Studies and his Acceptability and Prospects in Bangladesh Context.
- Chapter : 9 Conclusion
Bibliography

Chapter Scheme

Chapter 1

Chapter: *Introduction* includes a review of brief introduction, statement of the problem, objectives of the study, review of literature, justification of the study, scope and limitations of the study, methodology and definition of the key terms. It also displays the projected thesis structure with its brief contents. There is also a pen picture of the historical back ground exhibiting the emergence of Shakespearean influence upon the literati of Bengali literature. Chapter 1 also displays the summary of the dissertation touching every point of the total study.

Chapter 2

Chapter: *Influence of Shakespeare on Bengal Renaissance* is a comprehensive study of the intellectual progress ignited by Shakespearean contribution in flourishing the Bengali mind. How Shakespeare as a renaissance spirit emerged in the revolutionary young Bengal with the influence of the then teachers like David Hare (1775–1842) D.H. Richardson, the Shakespearean scholars working at Hindu College, students of Hindu College, students of Richardson, Henry Louis Vivian Derozio (1809–1931) whose influence was known as Derozian impact, stage show of Shakespearean dramas, Shakespeare studies and translations of Shakespearean plays begot a sense of cosmopolitan aptitude that worked as an intellectual life-force among the educated *Bengalis* and Bengali intelligentsia who enhanced the inner structure of the renaissance Bengali life, culture and literature. This chapter sketches out a frame work of understanding the influence of Shakespeare on Bengal renaissance which is supposed to be an aptitude of thoughts, views and enlightened outlook.

Chapter 3

Chapter: *Influence of Shakespeare on Bengali literature* highlights the nature of influence of Shakespeare on Bengali literature. It is not possible to have searched the same in all the writings of Bengali literature but the notable Bengali poets, dramatists, critics, authors and audience, in particular, who were influenced by Shakespeare, the evidence of the same to be evaluated in the way of finding aspects of Shakespeare in their writing. Influence of Shakespeare acted as the standard of perfection for the Bengali playwrights, poets, authors, critics who had the close contact with the plays of Shakespeare. Drama acted as

the opening curtain for the Bengali playwrights who viewed Shakespeare as the fulcrum of their standard and functions by which they fermented the spirit and impetus to overcome their limitations and the way to promote the means to attain perfection, as a result of which Bengali playwrights were said to be regenerated with the dexterity of producing better dramas of their own based on the art of characterization, dramatic techniques in which they were interested to imitate and follow Shakespeare referring him to be model for them.

Chapter 4

Chapter: *Influence of Shakespeare on Bengali Drama and Bengali playwrights* conveys Bengali plays and its linkage with the plays of Shakespeare. Doubtless to say that the Bengali playwrights used to treat Shakespeare as their model in producing Bengali plays. The comparative study of Shakespeare and the renowned Bengali playwrights is analyzed in this study. The study also provides a detailed picture of the dramatic techniques, art of characterization, theatrical presentations, plot construction, disguise device, thematic aspects of Shakespeare that are followed by the Bengali playwrights in the manner of imitation, modification, transformation, and translation or even in changing of the names of characters or themes or titles of Shakespearean plays in their productions.

Drama is the most effective branch of literature which manifests the reflection of human life and nature of a society. Shakespearean influence on Bengali drama and the dramatists is not anything new. Bengali playwrights since the nineteenth century have been treating Shakespeare with no hesitation as the model for them and their standard of attaining the perfection as well as their plays display Shakespearean attachment. Renowned translators and their large volume of translations have shown the proof of their extreme interest in Shakespeare.

Most of the critics estimate translations of Shakespeare to be recondite to have an easy and smooth access to Shakespeare texts. Even the modifiers, followers of Shakespeare as the playwrights and Shakespeare scholars of his land had tried to show their 'present Shakespeare' in the way they liked and thought easy and acceptable to the demands and interests of their audiences. Bengali translators also exerted the methodology and started having Shakespeare employed in the same way, accordingly, they made efforts to modify, change or adopt the scopes in their works to present Shakespeare in their translations as the British translators of 'English Shakespeare' did in the past in their age.

Chapter 5

Chapter: *Reactions of Bengali Intellectuals to Shakespeare as exhibited in their criticism of Shakespeare* has dealt with the reactions and responses of the Bengali plays and playwrights to Shakespeare. Comments and views of the intellectuals as exhibited in the Bengali criticism or their evaluations, imitation of playwrights with their attachments to Shakespeare in the form of appreciation or comparison of which seldom convey any negative impression of the Bengali playwrights towards Shakespeare.

Those who claim to remain unaffected from the dramatic technique of Shakespeare or claim to keep themselves aloof from Shakespearean touch; they forget that their individualistic notion to remain far from the thought, study and knowledge of Shakespeare have grown a spirit in them to be, at least, distinct with a view to producing something different from others as well as to enhance their creative faculties which, doubtless to say, are the direct result of the impact of the aftermath of Shakespearean contribution.

Naturally there raises the sense that had they not gained command over Shakespearean studies, they would not have cherished any idea of creating something quite new or individualistic, dissimilar to others.

So to keep aloof from being affected by the contact of Shakespeare or not to follow Shakespeare doesn't show any credit for anyone to be a person of any worth of appreciation. The sense of remaining untouched by Shakespeare is supposed to have helped him grow the spirit of his growing an individual evaluation which mechanized the sense of attaining individualistic genre in him. Hence, doubtless to say that one's perfect knowledge of Shakespeare can help him flourish and individualize his own progress. The critics of Bengal have accepted Shakespeare is sure to be stated with proper evaluation in the study. It is also noteworthy that the Bengali poets, authors, novelists, playwrights appear to have been termed as the critics of Shakespeare in the said chapter.

Chapter 6

Chapter: *Shakespeare and Rabindranath Tagore* reflects a brief study of the two legends with no scope to measure each other's superiority or inferiority as Tagore holds distinct

position in Bengali literature; he represents a gigantic image of the Bengali community in reflecting their views of life and nature. So this chapter displays how Tagore was influenced by Shakespeare and how he viewed Shakespeare in respect of literary and critical evaluation as to show in which form of literature Shakespeare differs from Tagore. In the way of their standards both the poets are discussed with their similarities and dissimilarities. Tagore's appreciation about Shakespeare and how much he was influenced by Shakespearean dramatic techniques have been elaborately depicted. The mingling of Tagorean impact and Shakespearean influence acted as the contributing factors for the materials of the new generation to be added to the creation of the same remaining different from them by the poets of thirties like Buddhadev Bose, Sudhindranath Dutta, Amio Chakrabarti, Bishnu De Jibananda Das etc.

They were much influenced by the thoughts and views of the English genius. But they created a new genre in the field of Bengali Literature furnished with a new trend and gradually came to be recognized as a group distinct from the Tagorean influence indeed.

Both Tagore and Shakespeare, poet and playwright of two different centuries and literatures, appeared to be the symbols of standard and perfection for both of their native followers that grew a new paradigm for the next generations to come. But to be influenced by the genius of the past for the present generation doesn't appear to be unnatural and degrading, rather geniuses are said to be mirrored through one another's reflections or emergence referring to the same goal they consequently reach.

Tagorean appreciation about Shakespearean genius is the indication of that influence in the way of the one's penetration into the other that opens the unending venues for the next generations to beget with the projections of more of their faculties. Tagore has written plays, short stories and novels, in which, he seems to have exercised Shakespearean essence.

Both Shakespeare and Tagore appear to have been imbibed with the impersonal projections of life and nature in their literary products keeping themselves away from their being entangled with subjective presentations.

Chapter 7

Chapter: *Shakespeare in Bengali translation* explores an overview of Shakespeare in Bengali translation with a detailed analysis and evaluation on the nature of translation, methods of translation of Shakespeare, modification in the translation of various plays of Shakespeare, problems and difficulties of Shakespeare translation, problems of Bengali translators with a message of optimism that the efforts of Shakespeare translation should be encouraged is to be taken as a part of Shakespeare studies. The wide spreading utility and ability of Bengali language to digest and devour Shakespearean plays as a near one with a view to approaching him for Bengali mind is expected to uphold the linguistic mastery of Bengali language and literature over world literature.

Shakespeare translation has been popular no doubt, but there is the dearth of interest in the same field, if Shakespeare's original texts are not included into the syllabus of the academic institutes. There may not be expected to be of any growth and maturity in translation of Shakespeare, if Shakespeare translation in Bengali literature remains ignored. The study encourages translating skills of the Bengali translators although their limitations are discussed. There is no way to avoid Shakespeare whose work has been focused to the needs of the common readers by means of translation.

In fact, interest in Shakespeare is the precondition to the need of Bengali translation of Shakespeare, in other words academic Shakespeare is the predecessor to the translated Shakespeare. As translation relates to modification, change of language with reference to the original texts and to translate Shakespeare in the light of Bengali language and literary taste representing the socio-economic culture blended with native flavour of Bengal displays Shakespeare's easy access to the Bengali mind, naturally translators can enjoy liberty in making Shakespeare agreeable for the Bengali educated readers and the commoners of the Bengali community which cannot be denied.

Even the common Bengali audience may have the opportunity to digest Shakespeare through the stage show of the translated plays of Shakespeare and through the Bengali translations of the original plays of Shakespeare reflecting their own choice of people and nature on the stage in an understandable manner.

Chapter 8

Chapter: *The literary presentation of Shakespeare studies and his acceptability and prospects in Bangladesh* summarizes the major findings of the study and offers some options along with the concluding comments. In addition, the chapter has located the untapped areas in which further research may be expected with more informative venues and branches of literary contributions. Shakespeare is a living genius of literature never to have any ending in view of the versatility and universalization of the themes as projected by him in his dramas for the audiences of the whole world.

The study states the prospects of the acceptability of Shakespeare, whose contact with the Bengali life, culture and literary aspects simultaneously heightens and ascertain the indication of the beacon of the rays of Bengali language and literature sustaining in us with more appealable taste. In fact, acceptability of Shakespeare of the *Bengalis* simultaneously heightens the acceptability of the rise and glories of Bengali language and literature too.

Shakespeare and Bengali literature seem to have bridged the gap with the English and the educated *Bengali*. The arrival of the British rule in India determined the arrival of Shakespeare when the English educated *Bengalis* embraced the genius very positively even the hasty departure of the imperialist from Bengal never entertained any distance of Shakespeare from the Bengali mind. Shakespeare born in England but appears as the literary monarch with no match for him in the field of dramatic literature throughout the world.

The study emphasizes the easy and smooth attachment of the *Bengalis* to Shakespeare and encourages the appeal of Shakespeare whose contribution and literary discussions inspire the knowledge of impersonal, neutral and universal tone of ideals and attitude of life. Hence, Shakespeare is to be measured as the close one adorning Bengali life with similar taste of experience heading the glories of Bengali language and literature with better evaluation of standard in the world literature.

Conclusion

The aim of literature is to do good to mankind by reflecting the pictures of life and society. The study of Shakespeare in relation to *Bengalis* and Bengali literature is intended to show the nature of the *Bengalis* to accept and appreciate a highly valuable western literary culture, and to use it in their own literature. This is how Bengali literature has tremendously developed under the influence of western literature, particularly English literature. Shakespeare is one of the most important personalities flourished with the dominating image of English literature exercising his influence on Bengali literature and thus directing its course with an unending appeal for the people full of literary appetite. The absorption of the influence of Shakespeare by Bengali literature indicates that the aim of literature all over the world does not differ, i.e., literature aims at doing good to mankind.

The rapport between *orientalist* and Bengali not only facilitated the transmission of new cultural attitudes from *orientalist* to Indian but helped shape a new intellectual tradition in Bengal.¹¹⁰

There remains nothing but the unending essence of interpretations when no researcher seems to be pleased with the goal he achieves. However, the study of Shakespeare in view of Bengali language or literature has been a rigorous task, but it would open up a new horizon in Shakespeare studies. The proposed study would also help the researcher to examine how the great personalities of Bengal reacted to the illustration of the deeper world of human psychology as manifested by Shakespeare in his works. A poet and dramatist of global stature, Shakespeare has acted on the hearts of the intellectuals of Bengal arousing deep admiration for him. Bangladesh possesses a strong, progressive cultural heritage, which has entertained the studies of Shakespeare forever in order to benefit the Bengali poets, writers and intellectuals who have learnt a lot from him. This gives the researcher an opportunity to show the differences, opinions, reactions of Bengali literati to Shakespeare that sustained in the nineteenth century and those of the twentieth century Bengal. So influence of Shakespeare is not to be measured as a mode of imitating Shakespeare only rather it seems to reach all the senses of a man's faculties that worked in Shakespeare. Hence, the unending impact of Shakespeare based on several aspects and the sources of various impressions, in the light of the above, influence of Shakespeare worked

¹¹⁰ David Kopf, *British Orientalism and the Bengal Renaissance: The Dynamics of Indian Modernization 1773-1835* (Kolkata: Firma K. L. Mukhopadhyay, 1969), pp. 192-193.

on the Bengali intelligentsia as a spirit, as a life force, as an impetus, as an inspiration, as a model, as a 'Standard Icon', as a power of motivation, as the source of stimulation, as a boost, as a study of comparison, as an original to be followed by the next generations with unending measures. Influence of Shakespeare acted as the media of cultural and literary penetration into the Bengali mind and life establishing the recognition of standard of Bengali literature to have the reciprocal exchange of views with the mode of world literature.

There is no way to remain bereft of enjoying Shakespearean association when getting in close touch with English literature as William J. Long says,- 'Even those who read no Shakespeare are still unconsciously guided by him, for his thought and expression have so pervaded our life and literature that it is impossible, so long as one speaks the English language, to escape his influence.'¹¹¹ The next chapter highlights how Bengali renaissance worked in making the Bengali literature imbued with the influence of Shakespeare.

¹¹¹ William J. Long, *op.cit.*, p. 154.

Chapter 2

Influence of Shakespeare on Bengal Renaissance

Introduction

Barriers of time were conquered by Shakespeare due to his art of characterisation blended with renaissance elements available in his plays having established him as a universal genius beyond his age and time. Even the incomparable Shakespeare (1564–1616) liberally borrowed his themes from foreign sources. Foreign literatures can influence a national literature in the matter of themes, attitudes, points of views as well as in respect of techniques, i.e. in structure, similes, metaphors, symbols etc. In the late 19th and the early 20th centuries, Bengali literature was clearly influenced by the English romantics and other western writers, directly or indirectly produced by the European Renaissance. In fact, what is known as the Bengal Renaissance of the 19th century was largely a product of the western influence. During the first couple of decades of the 20th century we notice certain definite influences. Shafi Ahmed in his *Bangadeshe Shakespeare* has stated that Shakespeare has arrived on Bengal stage and in the arena of Bengali literature by dint of his own qualities. Shakespeare was not the target of any dispute and despite the limitations; the readers and audience of Bengal have accepted Shakespeare.

A national literature is often enriched when influences of foreign literary works permeate through the sensitive awareness of its own creative writers. For a substantiation of this statement one can look, in the case of English Literature, to Chaucer, Milton, Dryden and Keats, to name only four. In the case of these writers, the influence of French and Greek literary works is a well-established fact. In the case of Bengali literature it is clear in the Middle Bengali period, Persian literature had exercised a remarkable influence on its growth and development. Alaol (1597–1673), the greatest Bengali poet of the 17th century, translated his *Tohfa* and *Hafta Paikar* from Persian. For his best-known and most finished work *Padmavati*, he went to Malik Muhammad Jaisi's Hindi *Padmavait*. In the modern Bengali period Michael Madhusudan Dutt (1824–1873) was greatly influenced by English, Greek and Italian literatures as well as by Sanskrit literature. Before Michael there was no epic in Bengali. Influences of both Homer and Milton are clearly perceptible in his *Meghnada Vadha Kavya* (1961), not only in its epic structure and Homeric similes but also in characterization.¹¹²

¹¹² Kabir Chowdhury, "Foreign Influence on A National Literature", *Dacca University Studies*, Journal of the Faculty of Arts, Dacca, June, 1980, p. 116.

In this study, Shakespeare has been presented as a playwright full of renaissance elements projected in his plays and how those elements generated the spirits of the Bengalis to widen their minds suppressing the local barriers as well as prejudiced notions of the time and how helped them in widening their outlook that promoted the growth of their originality in Bengali literature has been discussed elaborately. I have tried to highlight the background of Bengal renaissance in the historical aspects as the contributing factors for the growth of dramatic literature of Bengal is illustrated in the previous study in chapter two. I have also attempted to analyse the renaissance elements of Shakespeare by gleaning the spirits of the influence of Shakespeare how the same had penetrated into the hearts of the educated Bengalis through the plays of Shakespeare as a whole. I have also tried to project the development of Shakespearean influence on Bengali literature simultaneously suggesting the discussion of the background of the educational progress of the English language and literature. This chapter also highlights the trends of Bengali playwrights with their individual craftsmanship. Role of Derozian interpretations on Shakespeare, role of Hindu College, Young Bengal Movement, Bengali Intelligentsia, Shakespeare scholars like David Hare, David Lester Richardson in bringing about intellectual changes and literary outlook among the educated Bengalis in heightening the spirits of renaissance has been widely discussed in this study. The purpose of this dissertation is to find out the general features of the Bengali literature in comparison to the western literature. To discuss the materials on which influence of Shakespeare has worked and how the thoughts and expressions or ideas of the west filled the national mind or acted as the 'gate way' or 'channels'¹¹³ should be explored. This analytical investigation may provide an idea and unfold views about the growth of Bengali literature under the influence of western literature represented by Shakespearean plays and studies.

'The seventeenth century ... it is the century of greatness a century that opens with William Shakespeare and closes with Isaac Newton'¹¹⁴ and it is very interesting to note that Indian soil opens her trading venues for the British merchants with the ending of the sixteenth century which gets established and consequently the said traders that came into being as *The East India Company* which paved the way for the emergence of the British rulers at the same time the other British Bard Shakespeare not as a ruler or as a bane of the

¹¹³ Nazmul Ahsan, *Shakespeare Translation in Nineteenth Century: Bengal Theatre* (Dhaka: Bangla Academy, 1995), pp. 4-5.

¹¹⁴ Bertolt Brecht, *Mother Courage and Her Children* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1985), p. preface-1.

traders but as a monarch of the heart of the people invisibly happened to be borne by them in course of time.¹¹⁵

Renascimento, Renascari, Renascita

The term renaissance Italian *Renascimento*, Latin *Renascari* in the sense, in which, is used now, is of comparatively recent origin. In the sixteenth century writings there is said to have the evidence for anyone to come across the *renascita* of art.

Renaissance in the sense attributes to the liberation of human mind from the *trammels* of medievalism, of the outburst of individualism, of the freedom of thought and action, of the establishment of Man as the arbiter of his own destiny. The Renaissance in Bengal was an elitist affair. The leaders mainly addressed the middle class western educated elite who hardly exceeded a few thousands towards the last quarter of the nineteenth century and were mainly concentrated in Kolkata.¹¹⁶ However, about the origin of the term renaissance historians now do not accept Renaissance to be a distinct historical period completely isolated from the norms and practice of medieval life and society.

Shakespearean flavour on Bengal renaissance

Freedom of thoughts and views is inevitable for a critic in real sense of the term in reviewing Shakespearean impact upon Bengal renaissance. The renaissance in Bengal was said to be an elitist phenomenon. The middle class western educated elite had the opportunity to respond to Shakespeare as they were said to have linked with the literary and cultural aspects of life and Kolkata concentrated them on the issues stated from the last quarter of the Nineteenth century.

The history and trend of drama during Shakespeare were rich because of enjoying freedom which appears vital for a perfect criticism. People then collapsed the medieval chain and religious taboo and feudalism. Man declared his victory with high voice and revealed valour to win the universe. Man then cherished the hope that they would occupy the knowledge of God only to match his power. Inherently Shakespeare had the

¹¹⁵ Shafi Ahmed, *Bangadeshe Shakespeare* (Dhaka: Bangla Academy, 1988), p. 1.

¹¹⁶ Ali Anwar, *Renaissance in Bengal: The Question of Identity and Central Conceptual Reconsiderations*, cited in David Kopf & Safiuddin Joarder (eds.), *Reflections on The Bengal Renaissance* (Rajshahi: Institute of Bangladesh Studies, 1977), p. 156.

opportunity to have lived in a land which never remained controlled or ruled by others. Renaissance is the aftermath of that sort of freedom and Shakespeare is the proudest mechanism that facilitated the result of that freedom. His nationalism emerged not from his antagonistic attitude towards the ruler but from the courage of being independent of the same. The English people were never dependent and confined to the chain of being ruled rather the English or British defeated the naval force of Spain and showed the spirit of never being the subjects of other rulers. In that free environment of free will and head high Shakespeare happened to write dramas one after another. So Shakespeare was favoured by his contemporary history and freedom of culture during which without having any touch of the negative impact of imperialism or the subjugation of foreigners or intruders. They enjoyed executing independent innovation or creativity in flourishing the genius. But the middle class people in the context of the then Bengal were not free rather subject to the interests of the ruler and the trend in renaissance of Bengal invigorated them to uphold the enthusiasm to be in close contact with the ruler as a result *Bengalis* and the British were in close touch showing the rapport of the ruler and the ruled.

If the *Bengalis* are influenced by the British in India; they are sure to be influenced by Shakespeare through the penetration of literary and cultural aspects of his plays. Bengal is the name given to the eastern province of British India stretching from the Himalayas in the north to the Bay of Bengal in the south, and from the Brahmaputra, the Kangsa, the Surma, and the Sajjuk rivers in the east to the Nagar, the Barakar, and the lower reaches of the Suvarnarekha in the west.¹¹⁷ European traders came to India by the overland route, and the contribution made by this commerce to the flowering of the Italian Renaissance could not have been insignificant.¹¹⁸ Before Asia is in a position to co-operate with the culture of Europe, she must base her own structure on a synthesis of all the different novelties of cultures which she has, when, taking her stand on such a culture, she seems to turn toward the West, she is supposed to take, with a confident sense of mental salvation, her own view of truth, from her own vantage ground, and open a new vista of thought to the world. Otherwise first as personified by David Cope in his *British Orientalism and the Bengal Renaissance*:

¹¹⁷ R.C. Majumdar, *The History of Bengal*, Vol. 1, *Hindu Period* (Dhaka: The University of Dhaka, nd), p. chapter-1.

¹¹⁸ Ketaki Kushari Dyson (tr.), *Rabindranath Tagore, I Won't Let You Go Selected Poems* (London: UBSPD UBS Publishers' Distributors Ltd., 1992), p. 16.

- i) *She will allow her priceless inheritance to crumble into dust;*
- ii) *And will try to replace it clumsily with feeble imitations of the West;*
- iii) *And will make herself superfluous, cheap and ludicrous.*

If she thus loses her individuality and her specific power to *exist*, If the whole world grows at last into an exaggerated West, then such an illimitable parody of the modern age will die, crushed beneath its own absurdity!¹¹⁹ Before starting research on the genesis of the Bengal renaissance the meaning of which is to be heightened and ascertained by the interpretations of various people living at different times. Through the Derozian image followed by Richardson, David Hare and other great Shakespeare scholars who acted as the spokesmen to represent Shakespeare in Bengal. There are many factors that worked behind the evolution of Bengal renaissance and Shakespearean impact had started working inwardly. It is to be remembered that there can't be imagined the concrete shape of renaissance or Shakespearean influence as both the components appear to have a conceptual input into the mind of the Bengali people. But Shakespeare's role continued to work like the ingredients of awareness in growing the sense of universal acceptability of transmitting a message of promising faculties for world literature. Renaissance is said to be a disinterested development scenario adorned with the progress of intellectuality attributing to be the harvest of literature as all the branches of literature are groomed to manifest human potentialities and man's inner psychology. Literature, indeed, helps attain enlightenment of a man, of a nation, in particular, moulds a nation's positive outlook as a whole which claims to have a linkage with the works of Shakespeare. It is to be measured that Bengal renaissance was the contribution of education and cultural growth which was supposed to be the inevitable apparatus of the groundwork of the intellectual revival of the Bengali. The influence of the West exerted on Bengali literature by western models represented by Shakespeare.¹²⁰ 'Interest in Shakespeare and western literature came to be a component of great source of influence working among the educated Bengalis' commented by professor Serajul Islam Chowdhury¹²¹ who viewed Shakespeare's arrival as a cultural penetration into Bengali life, education and literature and very positively marks his inevitable contact with the emergence of Bengal renaissance. The acceptance of Shakespearean essence devoured by the Bengali intellectual community indicates Shakespeare to be a socio-cultural institution for the

¹¹⁹ David Kopf, *op.cit.*, p. 274.

¹²⁰ Priyaranjan Sen, *Western Influence in Bengali Literature* (Kolkata: Academic Publishers, 1966), p. 118.

¹²¹ Serajul Islam Chowdhury, *Sreeni Samay O Shahitya* [Class, Age and literature] (Dhaka: Mukhtadhara, 1986), p. 66.

growth of their educative progress that can spread its impact upon those connecting people and their life. So Shakespeare's influence developed through the stage show of his drama, recitation, oral practice of his dialogues; public speech, discussions, happened to enrich the cultural taste of the Bengalis who felt the need of Shakespearean representation morally and intellectually. There is felt the need of a Shakespeare as literature dominates culture or in other sense culture is dominated by the branches of literature and the juxtaposition of culture and literature is interdependent and mingled with each other as a result of which the impact of Bengal renaissance may easily be comprehended by the recipients for the impersonal penetration and unimperialistic approach to literary contribution of Shakespearean influence which is sure to have affected the educated Bengalis represented by the young Bengali learners, Bengali Intelligentsia, Bengali poets, playwrights, essayists, critics and Bengali translators or the commoners of Bengal society since the beginning of the Nineteenth century. Through the translation during the Nineteenth and Twentieth centuries most of the Bengali intellectuals of informative and creative genius seemed to have enhanced the growth of Bengal renaissance invisibly by following Shakespeare as an institution who had began beaming over the Bengali life with his renascent radiance since the beginning of the Bengal renaissance on the surface of the Bengal soil.

Social and political causes were certain factors that motivated the Bengalis to adopt Shakespeare in the curriculum as well as in their cultural activities to educate the *Bengalis* and, to change their religious beliefs and social attitudes. The motive might have been to keep the *Bengalis* loyal to the British and they thought that such activities would be effective for strengthening of the colonial administration. These cultural and educational activities of the British inspired the Bengalis to imitate Shakespeare in Bengali versions of his plays. But the psychological conflict caused by the intrusion of alien ideology, customs, manners, social mores and religion made them conscious about their national identity.¹²²

Shakespeare studies have been recognized as an representative institution from which various branches of learning have filled up the faculties of the Bengali intellectuals to a great extent with massive inquisitiveness contributed by the sources of the European impact or western standard and 'Indian response' at a juncture of accumulating and spreading as the key

¹²² Nazmul Ahsan, *op.cit.*, p. 72.

institutions for generating what has come to be known as Bengal renaissance. The centre for training British servants in India known as the College of Fort William had the positive role in spreading western education. Besides the rail way system, the civil service, the game of cricket, and host of other aspects of Indian life at present, the British also bestowed upon the Indians the aspiration for creating literature in the English language. The other British endowments acquired Indian reincarnations without much effort or delay but creative writing in English by Indians has had to struggle long and hard to have been recognised as a separate identity indicating the signs of a new era.¹²³

An obvious basis as well as result of the Bengal Renaissance was the growth of the Bengali language and literature and its phenomenal spread to a wider public than was ever achieved before in history. In spite of the language controversy, and the triumph of English in that controversy as an essence of linguistic imperialism, the cultivation of Bangla continued to deepen and widen. It must be remembered, in this context, that Bangla was not among the rivals of English in the language controversy. Great renaissance personalities from Rammohan through the Young Bengal, the Brahmos, Vidyasagar, Madhusudan, even Hindu revivalists like Bankim Chandra and Vivekananda to Rabindranath and Muslim rejuvenators like Mir Mosharraf Hussain and Begum Rokeya, all were immortal architects of the proud edifice of our language and literature. This unprecedented achievement in language alone is enough to show the inseparability of the Bengal Renaissance and our Bangladesh replete with language-nationalism. A more sublime expression of the noble sentiment of humanism is to be found in the nineteenth-century Bengali literature. This is not a place for a detailed account. But the intense humanism in the writings of Rammohan, the *Young Bengals*, Vidyasagar, Dinabandhu, Madhusudan, Bankim Chandra and Begum Rokeya is too explicit to be lost sight of. Like the great European Renaissance, the Bengal Renaissance also witnessed an unprecedented enthusiasm in the pursuit of knowledge and learning in all possible directions. An urge for scientific and secular education was prominent among the Renaissance personalities.¹²⁴

¹²³ Sujit Mukherjee, *Translation as Discovery: and Other Essays on Indian Literature in English Translation* (Hyderabad: Orient Longman Ltd., 1994), p. 3.

¹²⁴ Priti Kumar Mitra, "Relevance of the Bengal Renaissance Today in Bangladesh", in David Kopf & Safiuddin Joarder (eds.), *Reflections on the Bengal Renaissance* (Rajshahi: Institute of Bangladesh Studies, Rajshahi University, 1977), pp. 170-171.

If the impact of Shakespeare on Bengal renaissance is to be analysed properly an in-depth study of the same is to be historically illustrated as the term penetrates into a relevant context of analytical studies with historical chronology.

Role of Fort William College and Its Objectives

Macaulay felt that contemporary English culture and knowledge were the zenith of civilization and that westernization was the only true form of modernization.¹²⁵ The British attitude indicated to the Bengalis that the only way India could purge herself of the so-called backwardness, corruption, and idolatry of medieval Hindu civilization was the wholesale adoption of British culture.

The sociological situation was hardly of a desirable kind, but the cultural consequences, nonetheless, were extraordinarily fruitful. The new values, ideas, insights and disciplines which came from the west stimulated in the education sectors. Established beliefs, practices and traditions were subjected to critical examination by a new intelligentsia.¹²⁶ Twenty Schools were established by Church of England missionaries. In December 1823 he happened to overview the increasing tendency to imitate the English in anything leading to important results and would lead to still more important results in futures. Many wealthy Indians were said to start speaking English fluently and were tolerably read in English literature.¹²⁷ English education enjoyed rapid advance and growth among the literary and professional castes of Hindus. Cheaper voyages to England and easier and venture some youths began to finish their studies in that country resulting in the positive mark in the trend of intellectual regeneration and revival of learning.

On 10 December 1834, the directors informed Bentinck (1828 William Cavendish 1835) government that every effort must be made to enable natives of India to be competent for the public service with fair chance of success whether by conferring on them the advantages of education or by diffusing on them the treasures of science,

¹²⁵ David Kopf, *op.cit.*, pp. 111 & 118.

¹²⁶ Sibnarayan Ray and Marian Maddern (eds.), *I Have Seen Bengal's Face: A Selection of Modern Bengali Poetry in English Translation* (Kolkata: Editions Indian, 1974), p. 9.

¹²⁷ R.C. Majumdar, *op.cit.*, p. 344.

knowledge and moral culture. English rulers thought of offering proper education with a view to spreading the same for greater purpose.¹²⁸

The British rulers felt the endeavours to be made to create a class of people... *Indians in blood and colour but English in tastes in opinions in morals and in intellect.* Very few imperial administrators could assess with any farsightedness that was evident in Macaulay's momentous Minute of 1835 with his recommendations by England's imperialists were made to initiate a project of enlisting natives to root themselves by the attempts in the process as to form a class who might be interpreters between the rulers and the ruled they governed.¹²⁹ These were expected to refine the vernaculars enrich them with westerns of science and render them by degrees fit vehicles for conveying knowledge to the great mass of the population.¹³⁰

Fort William College was established in 1800 which came to be the institutional setting for the studies of British India interaction. The said college was believed to be the first European institution of providing high learning in south Asia to hire Indians as faculty members and to promote the facilities for intellectual communication and contact between Europeans and south Asians by recruiting qualified *orientalist* linguists and scholars to enrich its educational affairs. Fort William College also influenced the famed Asiatic Society of Bengal and William Carey's Serampore Mission to initiate programmes suitable and furnished with the objectives of revitalizing of an Indian culture.

It is found that young Bengali actors were trained in western methods, but suitable plays composed in the vernacular were not yet forthcoming. As there was hardly any Bengali translation of Shakespeare in this period, some Bengali scholars tried to translate some plays of Shakespeare. In addition to Bengali scholars, it is found from the records of Fort William College that Shakespeare's *The Tempest* had been translated into Bengali by a student named Claude Monkton of the college in 1805, but no copy of this work has been found or described anywhere as yet. After forty-three years of this translation, the first translation of a Shakespearean work attempted by a Bengali was *Romeo and Juliet* from Lamb's *Tales from Shakespeare* rendered into

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 111, 339.

¹²⁹ Fakrul Alam, *Imperial Entanglements and Literature in English* (Dhaka: Writers. ink, 2007), pp. 2, 386.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 111.

Bengali prose form in 1848 by Gurudas Hazra. Another translator *Muktaram Bidyabagish* who was also a Sanskrit scholar translated some more Shakespearean tales from Lamb's *Tales from Shakespeare* with the title of *Opurba Upakhyan* at about the same time. That these early translators chose to base themselves on simplified children's version of Shakespeare's text rather than the original version merely testifies to the caution and seriousness with which the Bengali writers approached the difficult task of converting the profound works of the great genius into the rhythms and accents of their own cultural lives.¹³¹

The scenario of Renaissance analysis in the light of Shakespearean influence

The nineteenth-century Bengal humanists were actually aware of the blind spots in the traditional norms. The ethical message they derived from their Western education implied a rejection of the vices and a desire to imitate English ways.¹³²

Renaissance, in brief, means revival or revolution. It sounds interesting to note that Shakespearean influence and Bengal renaissance appear to be attached to each other. In fact, influence of Shakespeare came to be recognised as the gate way of Bengal renaissance. The term renaissance may be interpreted in the following way linked with the factors as Renaissance denotes a lot of aspects like revival, reformation, education, newness adventures in thinking or intellect of man, it helps systematise scientific discourse or attitude, capacity to promote human faculties highlighting rationality and rationalistic thoughts and activities conducive to reformation. Reformation is a synonym for regeneration. Education and enlightenment coexist with educational light that doesn't appear to remain unfocused and renaissance broadens the prospects of education and paves the way of enlightenment among the society of educated sector and there can't be any sort of renaissance without education. Newness or novelty also conveys same sort of meaning which is the aftermath of renaissance essence upholding the norms and practices of newer thoughts and ideas sustaining among the people. Renaissance proliferates adventure in the thinking of the people with the effective and applied consequence nourishing advent and advancement of the ideas and views of the thinkers of the society contributing exclusively in the field level with the proper applications of the ideas incorporated

¹³¹ Nazmul Ahsan, *op.cit.*, pp. 21-22.

¹³² Speech by Tagore quoted in Raja Rammohun Roy, "Progressive Movements in India", J.K. Majumdar (ed.) (Calcutta: 1941), pp. 438-439. Cited by Rachel Van M. Baumer, *Aspects of Bengali a History and Society* (USA: Asian Studies at Hawaii University Press, Hawii, 1975), p. 22.

and assimilated into them. Intellect or intelligence appears to be the synonymous factors consolidating the consonance of the thoughts and ideas of the society suitable to progressive measures. Renaissance turns people into a force and institution from a mere individual establishing his survival with fruitful system. It helps systematize the trends and proceedings with specification and speculation of the support of the people. Scientific discoveries, instruments and scientists can be the contributors to the uplift of the backdrop of renaissance, it is also a matter of excellence for Shakespeare to have been estimated as the literary personality who has been addressed as a man of science through the B.B.C Television in the year 2004. Renaissance also indicates the separation of the bondage, conflicts, taboos, dogmatism and racism of superstition and prejudice which has been revealed in his play *As You Like It*. Reasonability is the precondition to possess the scientific approach towards life which has been duly exercised by Shakespeare specially exhibited by his application of the negative capability invigorating the scientific attitude and thinking of the people. Scientific approach towards life is the essence of the renaissance and Shakespearean influence is conducive to the same approach. Human capacity is enhanced by renaissance elements when people are of immense sources of promises and potentialities without the mechanism and measures to capacitate them the same sort of power remaining inactive and collapsed. So renaissance strengthens the capacity of man to endeavour more and more in enhancing his capacity to be spirited with the calculative form and setting as Desdemona happened to be regenerated with the power to face her father Brabantio when telling that she belonged to Othello and she was to her husband as her mother was to him indicating change or transformation of ideas and outlook. The translations of Shakespearean plays into Bengali failed to bring together the European ethos of Shakespeare with the way of life of the Nineteenth century Bengal. As a result, these attempts ended in imitations of the appearance in isolation. Consequently assimilating Shakespeare into the consistency of Bengali drama became more difficult.¹³³ In this respect, Madhusudan remarked that, by and large, Shakespeare has been measured as the masterpiece in generating the sense of universalization for the Bengali writers. He also implied that the waste of literary energy involved in these imitations might have been avoided if the ethos of Bengal could have shaped for itself a formal structure that would give it the most natural expression. Madhusudan highlights the representation of

¹³³ Nazmul Ahsan, *op.cit.*, p. 90.

Shakespeare as the inner lifeblood of the pervading spirit furnished with the intellectual progress of the Bengalis as he says,-

Let us, now for a moment from this magnificent picture- the master-piece of Nature! Let us now turn for a moment from the contemplation of the splendour and the richness of its colourings, the delicacy, the beauty, and the symmetry of its proportions-to another-far inferior, to be sure, but not altogether destitute of interest. When Hamlet saw the picture of his royal father and of his despicable guilty and hated uncle in the chamber of his erring and queenly mother, he indignantly pointed them out to her and exclaimed in a tone of withering contempt- "Look on this picture and that!" Now-we shall not imitate the prince of Denmark-we shall not point that finger of scorn towards the Hindu. No. Fallen, obscured as he is-shorn of his beams.¹³⁴

The above statement of Madhusudan displays the firm devotion to Shakespeare replete with the essence of the influence of Shakespeare who raised the screen of shadow from the eyes of the sub-continental people specially of the *Bengalis* by infusing the faculties into the hearts of the same to be inspired to proceed onward.

Undoubtedly renaissance is a positive consequence of the thoughts and views upholding the supremacy of man as a being of dignity and sensitive and responsible character remaining free from the bondage of limitations and prejudices which are doubtlessly proclaimed by Shakespeare among the persons on the stage influencing through the manifestation of the real characters of the human society. The reasonability of man may be heightened when he gets entangled with the aspects of Shakespeare's characters who are presented as the components of reason and logistic views failure of which may cause the decline of man and where from readers or audience can have the learning what is to be done and what is not to be done through the reflections of their own in Shakespeare's plays. But these were preceded by Rammohan Roy, who is called the Father of Modernity. He realised early that the country needed modern education to equal the Europeans as he could realize the significance of education and the educated Indians had the farsightedness in viewing the ideas of the intellectuals of the world. Shakespeare as the dramatist of universal nature had the fertile environment to enter into the world of the Bengali intelligentsia as the symbol of modern and progressive component of Bengal renaissance. Bengali culture blossomed into a renaissance under the impact of English culture coming in the wake of English

¹³⁴ Mobaser Ali, *Michael Madhusudan Dutta: Engreji Gadya Rachana o Smriti Katha* [English Writings & Memories of Madhusudan] (trans. & ed.) (Dhaka: Bangla Academy, 1998), p. 299.

education and its greatest flower was said to be the poet Rabindranath Tagore. Like Dante with Italian, he lifted Bengali to the status of a world language. Tagore himself contributed much to the development of Bengali poetry. Different aspects will be seen in the representative selection from his works.¹³⁵

Shakespeare as a Renaissance playwright and Renaissance man to be measured by the analysis and the background of his acceptance enhanced by his plays. Shakespearean influence through English education and performances of Shakespeare plays in the original texts had deep relation which encouraged and made the Bengalis seeking their inspirations more from the western literary works than in the indigenous and Indian native materials. Gradually the motivation of the English towards making or adopting of Shakespeare in the curriculum as well as in their cultural activities in order to have the Bengalis loyal to them. The social and political causes behind changing their outlook and social attitudes the motivation of the British among the Bengalis to was get them able to be associated with the English with their changed outlook. The purpose was supposed to strengthen their being benefited in the sector of colonial administration and the British inspired the Bengalis through their cultural and educative activities with a view to motivating the Bengalis in imitating Shakespeare in the Bengali versions of his plays.¹³⁶

Shakespeare's characters are embodied with the spirits and ideas of common human psychology displaying the inner abode of man on earth facing the realities of life:

What a piece of work is a man: how noble in reasons, how infinite in faculty; in form and moving how express and admirable in action; how like an angel; in apprehension how like a god; the beauty of the world, the paragon of animals-Hamlet.¹³⁷

The above statement of Hamlet from *Hamlet* has been measured as one of the great English description of renaissance humanism, a statement of the distinction of man against the sobriety of medieval misanthropy. Hamlet's words on man are generally meant to be illustrating the inclination of mind as quoted above. People are said to cherish still the notion of the age of Elizabeth to be a secular period remaining in the middle of two

¹³⁵ Oneil Biswas, *A Book of Bengali Verse* (New York: A Writers Workshop Publication, 1990), p. 50.

¹³⁶ Nazmul Ahsan, *op.cit.*, pp. 90-91.

¹³⁷ Cited in *Hamlet* by Shakespeare and spoken by Hamlet the Prince of Denmark.

out breaks of Protestantism which is supposed to be a period of religious fervour to be a dominating factor to allow the new humanism in determining literature that was also said to convey that quite was unstable and that the puritans had no awareness. But their stress was thought to be laid on the voyages of innovation and the luminous externals of Elizabethan life. In fact, the circumstances demonstrate the purest medieval convention. Shakespeare's version of the conventional encomia of what man is said to have been created to be in God's image which was like in his pre laps Arian state and of what man in an ideal world he is still competent of being. It also displays Shakespeare introducing man in the usual celestial surroundings between the angels and the beasts. It was what the theologians had been saying for centuries. But the renaissance idea of man is to present man neither a beast and nor an angel but a being between the two which has to be evolved. It is interesting to note that Shakespeare himself enjoyed an age of renaissance humanism to silhouette literature at the same time the reflection of the image of his age is expected to have been projected though the manifestation of his characters of universal appeal like a man of facing ordeals as result of his being a victim of procrastination through the projection of a character Hamlet of the play *Hamlet*. The subjugation of the British rule in India kept the Bengalis also suffocated but Shakespearean plays and the stage show of his characters evoked a sense of revolutionary spirit which was supposed to act as the source of their keeping head high.

Shakespeare's attitude towards man appears to be manifested through the creation of *Hamlet* which is supposed to be moulded by his deep and accurate science in mental philosophy as man is worth being centred round in Shakespeare. Shakespeare has shown how man is different from the brute animals in proportion as thought prevails over sense and also shows how a man is oscillated between the internal and external organs or objects of human life. Shakespeare's demonstration of a complete man is apparent in *Hamlet* as the reflection of moral and logical being which is sure to grow the seeds of renaissance as it is meant to be. Indeed, Hamlet as a man is said to have been acceptable in most of the world that Shakespeare's character particularly *Hamlet* must have some connection with the common fundamental laws of nature which may be assumed from the fact that *Hamlet* has been the darling of every country in which the literature of England has been fostered. In order to understand him it is essential that he should be reflected on the constitution of human mind. Man appears different from the beasts and animals in

proportion of this thought and rationale prevailing over sense: but in the healthy process of the mind, a balance is relentlessly maintained between the impressions from outer objects and the inward operations of the intellect, for if, there be an over balance in the contemplative faculty of man thereby becomes the creator of contemplation and loses his natural power of action. Now one of Shakespeare's modes of creating characters is to visualize anyone's intellectual or moral faculty in morbid access and then to place himself, Shakespeare, there mutilated or diseased, under given circumstances. In *Hamlet* he seems to have wished to typify the moral necessity of a due balance between the responsiveness of the people of the objects to the senses and in the meditation on the workings of mind and balance between the real and the imaginary works. Bengal renaissance is deemed to be the contribution of both the aspects of languages represented by Derozian enthusiasm of Shakespeare and the western influence as well as the rich tradition and values enlightened by the Bengali intelligentsia. Efforts of both the recipients of the two languages, though different from one another, play remarkable role in heightening the escalation of Bengal renaissance and Shakespearean impact acted as the concealed tendency in the growth of the same. The renaissance and the British *Orientalists* between 1800 and 1830 in Kolkata, the Bengali intelligentsia constituted an uncertain but hopeful group of individuals selecting alien values and ideas to reform indigenous traditions. They established relationship with the British both for material gain and to use them as windows to the West. It was their good fortune that the aloofness between London and Kolkata was vast and the *Orientalists* with whom they related had already become sufficiently "Indianized". The Bengali's view of the West during the sympathetic *Orientalist* period helped to maintain good understanding and good will between the representatives of the two civilizations.¹³⁸ Annadashankar Roy opines that contribution of both the languages like Bengali and English appears to be the source of Bengal renaissance as cited in his book *Banglar Renaissance*.¹³⁹ What is true of *Hamlet* on man is in the main truth of the Elizabethan modes of thought in general. The puritans and the countries were said to be more united by a widespread theological bondage than they were divided by principled disagreements. They had in common a mass of fundamental ideas about the world, which they never kept undecided and whose importance varied unanimously with the very inadequacy of controversy.

¹³⁸ Devid Kopf, *Reflections on the Bengal Renaissance*, p. 8.

¹³⁹ Annadashankar Roy, *Banglar Renaissance*, p. 115.

A genius is sure to influence others if he or she lives in human society which is thought to be a common law of nature. So a man with profound mastermind like Shakespeare very rationally claims his hold and strong influence upon the people of any human society beyond his own as he dealt with the norms and views of human nature. Shakespeare's scientific spirit is also conducive to his renaissance characteristics of presentation of the characters as S.T. Coleridge quotes '*I believe the character of Hamlet may be traced to Shakespeare's deep and accurate science in mental philosophy.*' In this context, T.S. Eliot's comments have the exact reference in establishing the relation and rapport of historical sense continuing through out the generations of various ages as he says, - '*A large part of any poet's 'inspiration' must come from his reading and from his knowledge of history*' (T.S. Eliot, To-Day, September 1919). He further states that the historical sense compels a man to write not merely with his own generation in his bones, but with a feeling that the whole of the literature of Europe from and within it the whole of the literature of his own country has a simultaneous existence and composes a simultaneous order.¹⁴⁰

Shakespeare's adherence to placing man between the opulence of passion and realisation of the reason is reflected through the *Hamletian* complex and *Othelloan* suspicion as both the characters are to be set to highlight man's efforts of struggle to reach a point which is sure to convey certain escape or salvation from the chaotic situation of life to reveal the truth and justice. Those who claim to be aware of the middle age, now assume, humanism and a belief in the present scenario of life, were supposed to be powerful by the twelfth century.

Renaissance in England came to be a saviour for men to relieve from conflicts. It is measured to be an era to assume that with renaissance the belief in the present life is supposed to have gained a definitive victory. Indeed from Augustine himself through the Elizabethans to Donne and Milton, the old arguments persisted the Duke's exhortation to Claudio in *Measure for Measure* "*Be absolute for death*" is said to be an epitome of mediaeval homilies on the contempt of the world.¹⁴¹

¹⁴⁰ B.C. Southam, *A Guide to The Selected Poems of T.S. Eliot* (London: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1994), p. 1.

¹⁴¹ E.M.W. Tillyard, *Shakespeare's Criticism: Reflections of Renaissance Elements in Shakespeare Characters* (England: Penguin Books, 1943), pp. 33-34.

Caliban is said to be regarded bestial, strong too in fancy, in which according to one renaissance theory a beast is supposed to have excelled man. Prospero is at the apex of humanity with his magic power and his decision to spread and enlarge what remains to be the reflection of his deliberation. Caliban shows himself incapable of obtaining human power of education. Prospero too gets acquainted with his own lesson of life. Prospero fails to go beyond the terms of his humanity and consequently acknowledges Caliban-

The thing of darkness, mine: Man for all his striving
towards the angels can never be quite utterly of the bestial
or to grow Calibanism or a Caliban within himself.¹⁴²

The position of man was the most interesting point of all, so among the correspondences highlighting the rapport of man with the cosmos was said to be the most famous and most exciting.¹⁴³ Caliban symbolises the Middle age containing tabooed situation of life where Prospero represented the renaissance spirit that instigated him to be established in life or to save his survival at the cost of his own efforts and strategy furnished with certain conclusion of the victory of man's efforts for peace and reconciliation.

There is a significant presentation of renaissance elements shown through *King Lear's* stormy passions convey man's inner renaissance profile as Lear in the storm conveys the greatest of all examples screening the commonest of all correspondences in poetry which is to be viewed in the storms and earth quakes of the great world and the stormy passions of man that seem to be lying in his inner world of consciousness. The dialogue is thought to be a beautiful piece of document of the early English renaissance adorned with light and sweetness. The said statement gives an account of the practical and meditative life and law of nature, political theory and the state of contemporary England as Shakespeare says, 'In the very torrent, tempest and (as I may say) the whirlwind of passion, you must acquire and beget a temperance that may give it smoothness.'¹⁴⁴

Shakespeare as a man of renaissance nature and playwright of introducing newer moods in his plays had been able to triumph over the hurdles of his time and age that

¹⁴² E.M.W. Tillyard, *Shakespeare's Criticism: The Chain of Being* (England: Penguin Books, 1943), p. 75.

¹⁴³ E.M.W. Tillyard, *Shakespeare's Criticism: Man to be the Protagonist of Renaissance Forever in Shakespeare* (England: Penguin Books, 1943), pp. 41-44.

¹⁴⁴ Dr. S. Sajjad Husain, *Engraji Shahityer Itihash* [History of English Literature in Bengali] (Dhaka: Friends Book Corner, 1999), p. 65.

seemed to favour him for his stubborn will and strength of spirit. His working environment in restricted conditions and with many things laid down for him by the unfavourable state of affairs of his company and rate of public taste Shakespeare triumphantly surmounted these disabilities and turned them to optimistic advantages.¹⁴⁵

Renaissance elements are available in Shakespeare's plots and characters as there are the elements of fairy tale, dream, and myths. Iago is all reality, an everyday life phenomenon. Othello belongs to a different world, the world of the exotic that ranges from the adventures of Ulysses to the expeditions of renaissance sailors or navigators or mariners or voyages as Othello talks to Desdemona:

... of the cannibals, that each other eat.
The anthropophagi, and men whose heads
Do grow beneath their shoulders.
With Othello, the bare¹⁴⁶

Works have appeared on *Arab renaissance*, social awakening in Iran, *Hebrew renaissance*, *Greek renaissance*, *the black renaissance of colonial Africa* or *black renaissance in America*, *Turkish renaissance*, *Chinese renaissance* and of course last but not least *Bengal renaissance*. It is said that people are sure to have sought a new trend of individuality in the modern world the Non-western intelligentsia, the European model or models to fit their own self-perception as a community or nation. The notion of a "Bengal renaissance" was not to be measured as the contraption of the Twentieth century Indian historians evaluating their Nineteenth century heritage. Though it is unknown to many a man or one has no way of knowing when renaissance was first introduced in the Nineteenth century Calcutta- Rammohun Roy is generally said to have conceived proceedings in Bengal as being corresponding to the European renaissance and renovation.¹⁴⁷

Rammohun allegedly told Alexander Duff; *'I began to think that something similar to the European renaissance might have taken place here in India.'*¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁵ M.C. Bradbrook, *Shakespeare and Elizabethan Poetry* (London: Penguin Books, 1951), p. 16.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁷ For partial list on third world renaissance the details can be found: D. Kopf, *British Orientalism and the Bengal Renaissance*, p. 280.

¹⁴⁸ G. Smith, *Life of Alexander Duff* (New York: A. C. Armstrong and Sons, 1879), pp. 1, 118; Details can be found for example, B. Grothuysen, "Renaissance" in the *Encyclopaedia of the Social Science*, Edwin R. A. Seligan (ed.) (New York: Macmillan Co., 1934).

Unitarianism had immense influence upon Raja Ram Mohun Roy who had no faith in the multiplicity of *Gods of Hinduism* and in the doctrine of incarnation or *Avatarvada*. *Unitarianism* was also a progressive non-conformist movement of Europe. It did not acknowledge the miracle of trinity and did not regard Jesus as the son of God. It was uncompromisingly monotheistic. Shakespeare plays do not have any projection of any concrete existence of God or *advocacy for religion*, although the character Shylock is believed to have shown some sort of antagonism against the Christian religion and found his *Jewishness* low-spirited in *The Merchant of Venice* it didn't get water, in Shakespeare plays there is nothing of any advocacy for the same sort of beliefs or there does not exist any favour for religion rather reasonability and rationality have occupied the place of his religion in the plays he has written. Indian people or Bengali audience in the 19th and 20th centuries had the experience of religious rituals but had Shakespeare been biased by any kind of subjectivity displaying his favour for any kind of credence in the manifestation of his characters in any of his plays the Bengalis would not have been the fans and followers of his plays which really was remarkable in inspiring the Bengali playwrights. Shakespeare has placed man as to be godly. His focus on no religious doctrine, perhaps, created a sense of *universalisation* which might have broadened the renaissance spirit among the Bengal intelligentsia coming in close contact of Shakespeare through his plays.

There was supposed to rise three social classes in Bengal. The first two gave rise to a new landed class; and the third led to the spreading out of the middle class. As a result social leadership passed from the landed upper classes to the newly evolving middle class. The new class exhibited themselves with the image of belligerent, self-conscious and restless aspects of rationalism. Michael Madhusudan Dutta is thought to be the representative of this class. Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyaya was one of the first graduates of the Kolkata University which was established in 1857.¹⁴⁹

On 11 December 1823 he wrote a letter on English education to the then Governor-General, Lord Amherst: 'The Sanskrit system of education would keep this country in the realm of darkness. As the improvement of the native population is the

¹⁴⁹ Oneil Biswas, *op.cit.*, p. 50.

object of the Government, it is expected to promote a more liberal and enlightened system of instruction embracing useful sciences.¹⁵⁰

Rammohun Roy had imbibed the Impact of Renaissance education and happened to arrive as the representative of modern Bengal. But these two were supposed to be preceded by Rammohun Roy, who is said to be the Father of Modernity. He realized early that the country needed modern education to equal the ongoing progress of the Europeans.

Shakespeare and Bengal Renaissance

When the British left, the writers of West Bengal who were mainly concentrated in Kolkata and were mostly from Hindu community, felt a sense of natural elation in the country's obtaining its freedom, but apart from that the roots of their literary tradition remained more or less undisturbed.¹⁵¹ The Bengal novelist Bankim Chandra Chatterji repeatedly used renaissance either in referring to the development of Bengali language and literature or as the up-dated and revitalised form of Hinduism. In the year 1894 Aurobindo Ghose in his essays published as *Bankim Chandra Chatterji* in which he pointed with great pride to the renaissance of the previous generation exposed by the great Bengali novelists and contemporary intellectuals and creative geniuses who were said to have enjoyed the contact of the Shakespearean dramas as a whole at the same time *Memories of my life and times*, an autobiographical essay by Bipin Chandrapal was said to have conveyed the positive impact on the Nineteenth century Bengal as a creative age for the perceptible sources of renaissance.

Historically many Asians and Africans are prone to view renaissance in their regions or nations as a matter of the aftermath of certain evolution periods between the break down of the conventional societies and the rise of national realization or temperament of nationalism on the one hand and modern awareness or modernization scintillating the luminosity of educational values taught and learnt at that said institution on the other hand. Historians of Bengal renaissance stressed the reforms of modernity; historians of different beliefs on renaissance in Bengal during Pre-liberation days tend to

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁵¹ Kabir Chowdhury, *The Big Big Sea: An anthology of Contemporary Poetry of East Pakistan* (Dhaka: Bureau of National Reconstruction, 1969), p. Introduction-ii.

equate the elements and events of renaissance with those of nationalism or separatism at the same time confusing the issue with references to modernism.¹⁵²

Renaissance is a term to be measured as an outcome of culture-pattern which seems to be closely mingled with changes of the chronological trends. Bengal renaissance is undoubtedly indebted to Shakespeare who is inevitable in any English educated class of the world. So the idea of renaissance in European historiography or when applied outside Europe are considered afresh as blended with the reflections of life and culture projected through the stage show of Shakespeare plays.

David Kopf is said to have made a research on the juncture lying between European impact and Indian response which came to be estimated as a norm from which his research in London and Calcutta made him comprehensible to appreciate that the key institutions for generating the background of the Bengal renaissance was the *College of Fort William* that was known to be generally a centre for training for promoting the British servants in India.

In this way it can be estimated that in a duration of seventy years or so between the last quarter of the eighteenth century and the first half of nineteenth century, there happened to be a strong development of theatrical interest among the population of Calcutta and that is reflected in both the copious and multiple dramatic activities that took place as well as in the establishment of no less than nine major playhouses in the city of assorted commercial and amateur varieties, catering to both Englishmen and Bengalis and these activities are said to exhibit that this was a Shakespearean contribution to the commencement of Bengali drama and theatre.¹⁵³

Calcutta was the centre of British authority in India and the second most important city, after London, in the British Empire. *The Tagores* had become active participants in the intellectual and artistic reawakening which was rapidly gaining impetus and approaching its high noon.¹⁵⁴ Universalism as measured to be a characteristic of the renaissance spirit and

¹⁵² M.A. Khan, *Muslim Struggle for Freedom in Bengal* (Dhaka: Bureau of National Reconstruction, East Pakistan, 1960), Quoted in David Kopf Introduction, p. 5.

¹⁵³ Nazmul Ahsan, *op.cit.*, pp. 20-21.

¹⁵⁴ Ketaki Kushari Dyson (tr.), *op.cit.*, p. 18.

thought was an intellectual consequence of East-West contact in Calcutta. At that time the city was a lively pivot for acculturating India's most progressive intelligentsia in modernizing impulses from Western Europe.¹⁵⁵

British Missionaries at Serampore

There occurred another noticeable change due to the British missionaries at Serampore. Their contributions to the Bengali language and literature were enormous.¹⁵⁶ They, in fact, were committed enough to spreading their values and ideals through the means of education as the caravan on their voyage.

Influence of Shakespeare highlights the command and power of the drama of Shakespeare in reflecting realities of life that are generally actuated before the people with direct or indirect appeal on the stage before the spectators or while reading his plays. The *orientalists* are said to have been shaped by the eighteenth century values of rationalism, nationalism, classicism and cosmopolitanism. The concept "intelligentsia" is useful analytically to grab the intricacies of Western impact and Asian accommodation during the age of Western colonialism and imperialism. The term itself is said to be originated from a Russian word representing educated and expressive intellectuals.

Renaissance and resurgence are thought to be represented as the significant phenomena during the Nineteenth and Twentieth century history of Bengal. People cherishing the ideas of renaissance are mostly educated. Many of them have visited England with a view to attaining experience and social life of the same. They maintained a rapport with the contemporary thoughts and views and they came into contact with the external or global institutions and were highly inspired with the enlightened and enlarged vision of life. Education broadened their knowledge of realization to enhance ties and share the views beyond their individual and communal ambits of life and society; they came to realize that they had much to glean, to take and to give. East and West aren't to be isolated or separated from each other. They are interdependent. Old and new are integrated and proceed as the substitutes to each other and renaissance outside of Bengal is deemed to be an integral part of the Bengal renaissance. Renaissance emphasizes the individual spirit and

¹⁵⁵ Rachel Van Baumer, *Aspects of Bengali History and Society* (USA: The University Press of Hawaii, 1975), p. 44.

¹⁵⁶ Oneil Biswas, *op.cit.*, p. 423.

from an individual there emerge new ideas, philosophies, inspirations, messages, intellectual backing and leadership. New thoughts and views which are of immense value and inspiration contribute to help form a revolutionary change. In this way *Gautum Buddha* or *Jesus Christ*, *Homer* or *Kalidash*, *Confucius* or *Plato*, *Avishena* or *Galileo*, *Socrates* or *Shami Vivekananda*, *Michael Angelo* or *Shakespeare*, *Voltaire* or *Frayed* or like wise deserve the renaissance qualities to have spread among their own nations or they are attributed to bringing certain change among the people or their followers. In the same way Shakespeare contributed to forming the seeds of new ideas and thoughts that were penetrated into the hearts of the Bengali intelligentsia.¹⁵⁷

In this context John Russel Brown's comments may be referred to the multifarious studies of Shakespeare that illustrate the varieties of taste and purpose of the readers of the world. "*Shakespeare's plays are studied today in many ways....*"¹⁵⁸

AC Bradley viewed in this way; *Shakespeare's Tragedies become plays about exceptional individuals who are of more significance than the society in which they live whose sublimity beggars the critic of means to define it closely.*

Bengal renaissance had its informative and creative pulses from England as it was deemed to be modern. Bengal renaissance looked at England and that's modern England and not Greece.¹⁵⁹

Influence of Shakespeare is very apparent in the modern world for its variety of reasons and inherent current of ventilating continuous sources of recognition. There lies a continuous process in the context of breeding the seeds of renaissance elements meant for a particular escalation of intellectual mentality.

Poet Rabindranath Tagore says in his essay *Nationalism*,-

The most important fact of the present age is that all the different races of the world have come close together. And

¹⁵⁷ Annadashankar Roy, *op.cit.*, pp. 94-96.

¹⁵⁸ A.C. Bradley, *op.cit.*, p. xxii.

¹⁵⁹ Annadashankar Roy, *op.cit.*, p. 17.

again we are confronted with two alternatives. The problem is whether the different groups of peoples shall go on fighting with one another or find out some true basis of reconciliation and mutual help; whether it will be interminable competition or cooperation.¹⁶⁰

Education is the aftermath of renaissance which perhaps constituted the growth of the creative forces of the Tagorean genius. The intensely temporal kind of education of Tagore was imbibed with the renaissance spirit which was the life-breath of Tagore's master spirit. If the world at large, and his institution, have not come up to his expectations, its value exists, Tagore has pointed to inner faculties, perhaps too fine to be nature's daily food, being a part of the aesthetic learning of the child that appears the father of man in the days to come. Bengali life without the touch of Tagore appears to be lacking something.¹⁶¹ Tagores were pioneers of Bengal renaissance. They are said to have been greatly influenced and inspired by the mingling of the Indian tradition and culture with the western ideas.¹⁶² The historian Will Durant once referred to Rabindranath Tagore as "*the most impressive of all men now on the earth.*" Tagore as poet, dramatist, novelist, essayist, actor, musician, composer, artist, philosopher, lecturer, educator, humanist, reformer, mystic and internationalist— is most known among the English-speaking world as the 1913 winner of the Nobel Prize for literature and for his influence on the poetry of William Butler Yeats.¹⁶³ Rabindranath Tagore (1861–1941) appears to be the greatest modern poet and the most brilliant creative genius of the Indian Renaissance. His life\span was roughly coeval with that of British imperial rule in India, his birth coming within three years of its formal commencement and his death just six years before its dissolution.

The scene of many cultural confrontations since the earliest times India became, in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth centuries, the ground of an East-west encounter on a grand scale, generating more than one movement which could be called a renaissance, the ripples of which seem to be still travelling outwards today. The European enlightenment's discovery of India's ancient history, languages, religious traditions, and

¹⁶⁰ Rachel Van M. Baumer, *Aspects of Bengali a History and Society* (USA: Asian Studies at Hawaii University Press, Hawii, 1975), p. 43.

¹⁶¹ Sisirkumar Ghose, *Rabindranath Tagore* (New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 1986), p. 110.

¹⁶² Kshitish Ray, *Rabindranath Tagore Life Story*, Lila Ray (tr.) (Delhi: Publication Division, 1961), pp. 9-13.

¹⁶³ Henn Katherine, *Rabindranath Tagore: A Bibliography* (London: Metuchen & N.J, 1985), p. xv.

cultural heritage in general, the discovery that there was such a thing as an Indo-European family of language Bengali, led to the emergence of Europe's modern Oriental scholarship, the growth of relative studies in philology, mythology, and religion, altering Europe's intellectual perspective for all times, directing eyes beyond the Judaeo-Christian framework and opening doors to the liberal thinking of the people of modern times. Corresponding to that, there grew an idea of viewing an Indian discovery of western contemplation and erudition, starting with the reactions of the Bengali intelligentsia to Western education. As a result of these two events working together, there appeared a significant intellectual ferment and cultural reinforcement in India, beginning in Bengal and spreading to rest of the subcontinent, some of the movements and personalities associated with this re-awakening have had world-wide impact.¹⁶⁴

Shakespeare's representation as 'The Icon of English Literature and Western education

Shakespeare holds by general acclamation, the foremost place in the world's literature, and his overwhelming greatness rendering it to be difficult to criticise or even to praise him. Shakespeare's sonnets, one hundred and fifty-four (154) in number, are the only direct expression of the poet's own failings that people possess.¹⁶⁵

Professor A. M. Chowdhury in his essay on *Aspects of ancient Bengal society and socio-religious attitudes: Tradition and continuity* states that pre-Aryan Bengal possessed a "highly organised and civilised way of life" and developed a spirit of broad-mindedness which had survived through ages, he has mentioned about the unchanging state of life-pattern in thousand years and unending aspects of life, i.e. economically the villages have not changed. He has also argued that free-thinking humanistic personality of ancient Bengal fostered by Buddhist humanism had developed a rational spirit and thought which further refined during the medieval period and under the influence of Christianity and western education that gave rise to what is known as "Bengal Renaissance" and that this liberal tradition and its stability is a reality in the Bengal society.

¹⁶⁴ Ketaki Kushari Dyson, *op.cit.*, pp. 16-17.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

It should be admitted that Professor A. M. Chowdhury has tried to establish his 'postulation' and create a traditional link between pre-Aryan people with those of modern-westernised, it is to be pointed out that certain state of things, process of integration and forces that were at work which had been stated, worked as the component forces for the said stream.¹⁶⁶

Shakespeare's linkage with the sources of the past

Relation with the past appears to be the bridge to commune with the tide of the existing generations. Since gleaning the aspects of the positive sources of the past is a normal observable fact there are replete with sufficient reasons to believe that Shakespeare's absorption for the past sources of his plays does not appear to be unlikely.

Shakespeare is said to have maintained the tide of his age by following others, specially his invention of few of the plots or stories upon his chief dramas are said to be structured. He is said to have borrowed the sources freely which were obtainable within the reach of his means and efforts.¹⁶⁷

Shakespeare responded to the trends of gleaning sources from the past or alien sources for his creation but that never decayed his individual imagination or talent or his individuality, in fact, he managed to spread the drops of the colours as an artist but remained free from being affected by the focus of his individual philosophy what has been officially appreciated by S.T. Coleridge and T. S. Eliot who have conveyed their appreciations accordingly.

Interest in Shakespeare among the Bengali people is said to be the source of their interest in the European culture and literature. Shakespeare is one of the glorious issues of the English people whose cultural influence has affected in various aspects of life of the Bengali people. The influence acted in both the inner and external elements of life like in language, dress or etiquette, furniture, values and ideals, outlook or even thoughts and

¹⁶⁶ K.M. Mohsin, "Aspect of Ancient Bengal Society and Socio-religious Attitudes: Tradition and Continuity", *The Dhaka University Studies*, Vol. XXXVIII, Part-A (June, 1983), p. 84.

¹⁶⁷ William J. Long, *op.cit.*, pp. 153-154.

views. It is not unfair to take for granted the position of the bourgeois where they have reached by identifying the position of Shakespeare that has been established:

The Nineteenth century India particularly Bengal witnessing a movement in art, literature and society that could be compared to the renaissance in Europe. The Bengal renaissance had a pronounced epistemological agenda, with its own empowering strategies and value systems.¹⁶⁸

Nationalistic spirit and Shakespeare

Bengal renaissance is said to have promoted the intellectual contribution to the nationalistic spirit favouring the real freedom as a nation, the influence of Shakespeare is said to have acted as a channel through which foreign influences penetrated into the native culture. The Bengali intellectuals learned English and their education made them interested in knowing the elements of their real identity.

The 19th century educated Bengali people found Shakespeare as a new world of possibilities blended with his imaginative and creative epistemological and dramatic elements. Dramas of Shakespeare drew the attention of the people with immense appeal, which bestowed positive impact upon the instincts of wider range of thinking faculties of the Bengali audience.

Bengali Intelligentsia and the role of the College of Fort William

It is found that the western influence coming to Bengali mainly through the medium of English and by means of spreading education, popular news-papers, busy law courts, even through environment, which came to be used as the channels of communication.¹⁶⁹ Pre-renaissance environment of the Bengal renaissance was thought to be contributed by the emerging socioeconomic status enjoyed by the educated Bengali natives as for those Bengali intelligentsia who desired to find approbation for their scholarly work, the College of Fort William, with its peripheral and satellite institutions, provided a source of literary patronage for the natives in enhancing their appetite for western education.

The groundwork of Fort William Collage, Calcutta in 1800 established the pedigree for the later flowering of modern Bengali literature. Bengali pundits were

¹⁶⁸ Serajul Islam Choudhury, "Bengali Translations of Shakespeare", pp. 66-77.

¹⁶⁹ Priyaranjan Sen, *op.cit.*, p. 38.

appointed as instructors, who were also asked to write books on various subjects. Many schools for the natives were established and Western education was encouraged.¹⁷⁰

Education, in fact, brought Shakespeare closer to be Bengalis. The kind of literati attracted to Fort William, appeared to be more intellectuals or scholarly than their counterparts who were said to have drawn to the bureaucracy, the agency house, or the law court. Although, in addition to its literary backing, the college also offered Bengalis a training centre for professionalisation, the learned professions themselves were insignificant sectors of the Bengal economy. The learned Indians who entered the service of the collegiate institution in 1801 with his store of traditional learning could develop himself into a teacher, prose stylist, philosopher or linguist, compositor, printer, publisher or librarian. English education was the body in which Shakespearean ideas were deemed to be the standard of choice and taste for the *Bengalis* that acted as the soul of the said body.

Command of the language favoured sources of more earning for the Bengalis. An educated person earns more even though his income compared unfavourably with that of his educated counterparts closer to the market place, he managed to better than his peers who taught in indigenous institutions and who lived in a condition of genteel poverty.¹⁷¹

Bengali people started accepting Shakespeare with a new taste as it created the atmosphere. Adorned with the projection of the varieties of thoughts and views touching the inner appeal of their hearts, they developed their positive attitude towards Shakespeare. English education gave them the ideas of bettering the standard of life for the Bengalis but inwardly they concentrated on Shakespeare to view the introspection of human life and nature of human psychology when they move for theatrical purpose as to adjust with their mental makeup or with the sentinels of pleasure and sorrow derived from watching the stage show of the plays or as audience and readers of the texts of Shakespeare.

¹⁷⁰ Dipali Ghosh, *Translations of Bengali Works into English* (London & New York: Manshell Publishing Limited, 1986), p. 9.

¹⁷¹ David Kopf, *British Orientalism and the Bengal Renaissance*, p. 109.

Shakespearean scholars, H.L.V. Derozio (180–1831), The Young Bengal Movement and Bengal renaissance

Shakespearean scholars and education in India became the forerunners of his message and manifestation and the learners were the recipients of the same. Western liberal and radical ideas began to spread amongst the students of the Calcutta Hindu College who, inspired by the great Eurasian Teacher *Henry Louis Vivian Derozio* (1809–1831), initiated what came to be known as the *Young Bengal movement*.¹⁷²

Derozio was an influential personality no doubt but his art of teaching was so dexterous and captivating that he exerted all his convincing powers and analytical approaches to the appreciation and interpretations of Shakespeare. A man of progressive thoughts and views mingled with renaissance characteristics was highly suited to spreading Shakespearean influence and ideas among the young generation of Bengal.

To say that Derozio had a key role in originating a secular wing of the intellectual elite among the Bengali community is not exaggerated as it may seem.¹⁷³

Environment and the emergence of a modern intelligentsia in Bengal appeared to be of great significance in the context of gleaning the impact of Shakespeare. Confronted by the speedy drying up of the normal sources of backing, many literati flocked to Calcutta in search of a livelihood. In almost all cases, those, without adequate private means, sought careers in association with the Englishmen. However, a few men independently well-to-do by birth, such as Radhakant Deb, avoided professional or business-related contact with English men. Others, such as Rammohun Roy, achieved this self-determination at middle age after spending advantageous alliance with the English.¹⁷⁴

Role of Derozio had immense contribution to the maturity of Bengal renaissance after 1827 Derozio's dissemination of the eighteenth century view of universal progress was represented to students at Hindu college the institute which was measured to be the

¹⁷² A.F. Salauddin Ahmed, "The Bengal Renaissance and the Muslim Community", *Reflections on the Bengal Renaissance*, David Kopf, Safiuddin Joarder (eds.) (Rajshahi: Institute of Bangladesh Studies (IBS), Rajshahi University, 1984, p. 35.

¹⁷³ David Kopf, *Reflection on the Bengal Renaissance*, p. 253.

¹⁷⁴ Radhakant Deb was said to be the adopted son of Gopimohon Deb, son of the fabulously wealthy Naba Krishna Deb cited in *British Orientalism and the Bengal Renaissance*, p. 108.

final facet of renaissance under the *orientalists*.¹⁷⁵ Analysing the Bengal renaissance as a process is not too simple. In a sense the Bengali intelligentsia, who chose to re-illustrate their past in an effort to change the present, were as modernists as the early Derozians who chose the alternative of westernization at the cost of alienation.¹⁷⁶

Shakespeare plays are the sources of the cultural penetration into the Bengali mind

A play by Shakespeare is read as the source of a structure of the cultural signification, the plays of Shakespeare appear to be the part of a larger culture treating the same as a device of being in command of which is said to be the case with the new historicists and they too share an interest in contextualizing power relations at the same time the historicists cherish the idea of examining like the exponent on the basis of the power politics and power relations which seemed to become their chief concern.

Shakespeare evaluation perhaps continued as the means of searching expressionism in Shakespeare and the exterior surroundings linked with the socio-economic apparatus of life of the Bengalis.¹⁷⁷ Power which is anonymous in its origins and is employed and exercised through a netlike organisation, individuals circulate between its threads, they are always in a position of simultaneously undergoing and exercising power.

Greenblatt and others in viewing improvisation of power in Shakespeare

The French thinkers are said to be interested in the early modern history favouring an account for the new historicist fabrication with Renaissance and with Shakespeare.¹⁷⁸ Green's essays on *Othello* in Renaissance of Green's fashioning is titled "the improvisation of power" or that the master improviser of the play for him is Iago. But it is really surprising about Green's representation of Iago as the highest manoeuvring of Othello in the play *othello* in the aspects of Spanish colonial history. Repeating a story about the manner in which some natives of Hispaniola were first deluded and then decimated by some Spanish adventurers before getting the touch of Shakespeare's play, Greenblatt comments on the first point to be made about the plot:

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

¹⁷⁷ Fakrul Alam, "New Historicism and the Politicisation of Shakespeare", *The Dhaka University Studies*, Vol. 56, No. 2, Journal of the Faculty of Arts, Dhaka, December, 1999, p. 5.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

What is essential is the European's ability again and again to insinuate themselves into the pre-existing political, religious, even psychic structures of the natives and to turn these structures to their advantages.¹⁷⁹

To see the plot in perspectives then Iago's success in manipulating Othello is a recurrence of the attainment innumerable western colonizers had before him because of their skills in role-playing and exploiting the reliability of other races through dramatic inventions.

Bengal Renaissance and Shakespearean influence

Renaissance may be defined as a paradigm of a great change in outlook centring round the life and society of the people which may be illustrated in the eye of David *Kopf* that it may be argued that until 1860's Brahmo reformers were virtually most of the members of the western educated intelligentsia. The impact of renaissance touched all the communities belonging to nationalist or universalist, conservative or radical. They were supposed to have shared a common exposure to an anglicized education through the English language, while most of them were extremely sophisticated about Unitarian efforts in the west at social reform.¹⁸⁰

Shakespeare penetrated through the educated intelligentsia

It may be stated with no hesitation that Shakespeare was entertained by the educated intelligentsia who were the recipients of Shakespeare primarily and consequently their intermingled ideas derived from Shakespeare and penetrated into the succeeding generations for ages.

Tagorean impact on the emergence of Bengal renaissance that was said to be inspired by Shakespeare:

It is also exciting to note with pride that the Bengalis were the first to work in partnership with the British for their positive endeavours in the field of education, learning, culture, literature and other recreational activities that took place notably in Kolkata the gate way for the Bengalis to uphold their values, ideas, culture and literature. Kolkata and Bengalis share the juxtaposition of ties in exchanging mutual views between the natives and the British enhancing the cultural rapport between the ruler and the ruled beyond their formal

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 43.

course of action. Rabindranath Tagore conveys the invisible communion lying between the past and the present which acted as the bridge connecting the trends of intellectual mobility that were sure to grow awareness among the people of different ages ascertaining the harvest of renaissance as the poet Tagore viewed the relation between past and present to be an ongoing process to march forward and the ties between the two generated the evaluation of efforts for the progress of the future to come which were the seeds of making another study of thoughts as he said in his own words, -

There are some who are exclusively modern, who believe that the past is the bankrupt time, leaving no assets for us, but only a legacy of debts. They refuse to believe that the army which is marching forward can be fed from the rear. It is well to remind such persons that the great ages of renaissance in history were those when man suddenly discovered the seeds of thought in the granary of the past.¹⁸¹

A new life, and with it a new literature was born in Nineteenth century Bengal, as in England of the sixteenth: and Bengali prose, like English prose in the corresponding period, was new born. The rapid progress of Bengali prose as well as the growth and development of Bengali language and literature appear to be midwifed by Rammohan Roy, nursed by Isharchandra Vidyasagar, baptized, so to say, by the morning-memorable (as said in Bengali) Serampore missionaries, the infant thrived, and after a arduous and radiant adolescence in Bankimchandra and Kaliprasanna Sinha, came to ages in Rabindranath. It is no wonder that, compared to modern European languages, Bengali, so far, is the poorest in speculative prose. Rabindranath, still deserves to be the greatest writer in this branch of literature as in any other, had (at least it seems so) enjoyed a benefit over his contemporaries in that he could think on an abstract subject without recurrent reference to European words which, if one or two grew persistent, he could as well turn to Bengali from familiar Sanskrit roots.¹⁸² Rabindranath enjoyed a smooth and easy access to Sanskrit from Bengali that resulted in the indication of his command of using both the two. Rabindranath Tagore was also a maker of the modern Indian mind and

¹⁸¹ David Kopf, *op.cit.*, p. 215.

¹⁸² Buddhadeva Bose, *An Acre of Green Grass: A Review of Modern Bengali Literature* (Kolkata: Papyrus India, 1948), pp. 72-73.

civilization. A Renaissance figure, Rabindranath has been called a *Complete Man* which refers the following qualities to Tagore.¹⁸³

- i) *Rabindranath Tagore is a Renaissance man*
- ii) *A Renaissance Figure*
- iii) *A poet of poets*
- iv) *An enlightened soul.*

The outgoing universalism of Rabindranath Tagore, which is relatively well known among Western scholars, was perhaps the single most significant idea to emerge from the Bengal renaissance. This renaissance of which Tagore is often held to be both the finest and the final expression occurred largely in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and was characterized by a remarkable creative outburst of literary, artistic, and ideological achievements.¹⁸⁴

Rabindranath Tagore and the spirit of Bengal Renaissance

The juxtaposition of English literature and William Shakespeare and the same of Bengali literature and Rabindranath Tagore seem to have created a literary diameter in the frame of world literature.

It was said of Byron that '*he took the English spirit on pilgrimage through Europe.*' Rabindranath happened to take the Indian spirit on pilgrimage through the whole civilized world, and in his own person brought that world back to India.¹⁸⁵ The spirit of the Bengal Renaissance is typified by Rabindranath Tagore. Critics may argue that Rabindranath was a monotheist and a mystic but they can not deny that he found the truth in Man and not in the temple or scriptures, in images or symbols. '*The truth of the universe is human truth*' he (Rabindranath) cited. He said to the Scientist Professor Albert Einstein *The entire universe is a human universe.* Professor Einstein exclaimed at the statement of the poet. *Then I am more religious than you are;* Rabindranath Tagore

¹⁸³ Sisirkumar Ghose, *Makers of Indian Literature: Rabindranath Tagore*, p. 114.

¹⁸⁴ Rachel Van M. Baumer, *op.cit.*, p. 43.

¹⁸⁵ Edward Thompson, *Rabindranath Tagore Poet and Dramatist* (London: Oxford University Press, 1948), p. 273.

defended his point of view and referred to his Herbert Lectures *This has been the subject of my Herbert Lectures which I have called The Religion of Man.*¹⁸⁶

Historically, Rabindranath Tagore is thought to be the Elizabethan Renaissance rather than the Romantic storm or Tennysonian clam: he discovers Europe for Bengalis and becomes, in the process, Pound's 'new Greece'. In comedies he is a sophisticated man of the world: in stories, of a tenderness so pure that it melts into humour; in song an Ariel, and appears more ethereal than Shakespeare's, and a Prospero in intellect, a Prospero inspired not by any revenge, but by the desire to serve his own community and his language his own literature. This Elizabethan multiplicity is unified by what may be called, in the deepest sense, his inherent religious feeling. He 'knows life': in truth, and he knows it well enough to know that knowledge is useless, and writes plays like *The Post Office* where, instead of the definite and limited world of realistic drama, there is the eternal flow. Rabindranath is learned, and so learned that his learning never shows land in his essays and criticism, thought and feeling become one and the same.¹⁸⁷

Poet Rabindranath undoubtedly had the touch of humanism and rationalistic views towards life and man and his *religion of man* is said to have been invigorated by the manifestation of Shakespearean reflections and Shakespeare's negative capability having no advocating policy for good or bad or no favour of any religious faith which captivated the Bengal intelligentsia and Tagore was exception to the same trend.

Role of intelligentsia and Bengal Renaissance

A bridge of communion between Bengali intelligentsia and British *Orientalist* was going to be established as the harvest of renaissance. The renaissance, in a broader perspective concerns with the term Bengal Renaissance, is said to be the product of interactions between the Bengali intelligentsia and the British *Orientalists* between 1800 and 1830 in Calcutta and the Bengali intelligentsia constituted an uncertain but hopeful group of individuals selecting alien values and ideas to reform indigenous traditions. They happened

¹⁸⁶ A Conversation held between Rabindranath Tagore and Professor Albert Ernestine on July 14, 1930 at the Professor's residence in Kaputh (Rabindranath Tagore *The Religion of Man*, Appendix II) in Ramendranath Ghose *Secularist Heritage of Renaissance*.

¹⁸⁷ Buddhadeva Bose, *op.cit.*, pp. 22-23.

to establish relationship with the British both for the sources of material gain and to use them as the windows to the west.

It was their good fortune that the distance between London and Calcutta was vast and the *orientalists* with whom they associated had already become sufficiently "Indianized". The Bengalis' view of the west during the sympathetic *orientalist* period helped to maintain good rapport and goodwill between the representatives of the two civilizations of two different geographical perspectives.

One of the most important findings was that the *Orientalists* in Bengal were deemed to be the modernizers of the Indian tradition. Long before Derozio and the young Bengal movement, long before Bentinck and Macaulay appeared on the Calcutta scene, a renaissance was said to have started in Bengal, a modernistic movement, shaped initially by *orientalists* who believed that imitation of the west was not meant the only passport to modernity for India. Shakespeare held as the wing of western education or European outlook to widen thinking of the Indians as well as Bengali people remaining untouched from the avenues of mental philosophy as found in Shakespeare. The role of the *orientalists* is remarkable. The *orientalists* served as the avenues linking the regional elite with the dynamic trends of civilisation of contemporary Europe. Their efforts were made to contribute to the formation of a new Indian middle class, and assisted in the professionalization of the Bengali intelligentsia. Academic viability created the fertile atmosphere to welcome the smooth arrival of Shakespeare at the syllabic point of intuitions. They started establishing the institutions of academic viability like schools, systematised languages, brought printing and publishing to India and encouraged the proliferation of books, journals, news papers, and other sources of media of communication which inwardly kept working as the essence of renaissance. Their impact happened to be acting as urban and secular. They built the first modern scientific laboratories of India, and taught prescriptions of European medicine. They were neither static, classicist nor aversive to the media of progress. They both historicized the Indian past and stimulated a consciousness of history in the Indian intellectual. It was they who transmitted a new sense of identity to Bengalis that enlarged what Robert Bellah has called

the capacity for rational goal setting 'an instrumental process in the development of a modern outlook'. In this final section the genesis of Bengal renaissance will be treated as pattern, period, and encouraged to process to show how in the last analysis, it was characterized chiefly by dynamic classicism and historic features. Suggested within the conceptual frame work is an explanation why Bengali Muslims could not participate at this early stage of renaissance conveyed and patronized by Shakespeare radiance and radiation.¹⁸⁸

Renaissance aspects of various institutions and personalities

T.S. Eliot, the critic rather than the poet, states his emphasis on the significance and utility of tradition in literature making some of the much modernized poets conscious that they have to find a place in the continuous tradition of literature thence Bengali poetry that they have to write with their whole past literature in their bones. But it doesn't appear to find any approach to the wing of Bengali literature when English literature though the studies of academic institutes has established its position and Bengali literature has conditioned them and fashioned their choice and attitude or aptitude of life of the Bengali minds. However, in view of finding the factors or working tools of conveying influence of English literature alias Shakespearean influence upon the Bengali mind finds the inner thread to have got interweaving with each other. From the point of view of the sociology of the renaissance, there was neither a single father of renascent India. Nor any single charismatic individual adorned with the revolutionary speech of personality who appears to have promoted his revitalization scheme apart from some association of likeminded individuals. Behind William Jones and Henry Colebrook stood the Asiatic society; behind Rammohun, the Calcutta Unitarian committee and the Brabmo Sabha; behind Mrytanjay Vidylankar, the college of Fort William; behind Derozio, the Hindu College and behind William Carey both Fort William College and the Serampore Mission. For a somewhat later generation there might be reasons to add that it was the Calcutta Sanskrit College which produced Vidyasagar and not inconceivably the Calcutta Madrassah which produced Abdul Latif.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

Bengal Renaissance and the role of Calcutta

The Bengal Renaissance was the offspring of eighteenth century universalism and pragmatic British policy reflecting the need for an intellectually acculturated civil service class.¹⁹⁰ Calcutta was never meant to be the sign originally neither for Hindu nor Muslim rather proved to be the city of those who availed themselves of the opportunity for wealth and fame by being in close contact with the British.¹⁹¹

Historical Background

In the middle of the Twentieth century, mankind is dwelling in a time of confusion. The spectre of freedom is seen haunting the ministries of the communist states. Technology has advanced and material things are being better organized and ever more polished. But in large areas of the world the life of the citizens seems to have reverted to conditions long thought extinct. Modern vehicle can carry man from one country to another in minutes and from one continent to another in hours.

Aspects of Economics and Politics in Bengal Renaissance

Shakespeare appears to be established as the institution of dramatic literature and perhaps he best be reflected in his plays and similarly play or drama is the most ancient genre of literature in which human life and society are best and most viewed from a close up distance. In case of poetry or poems or reading story or essays or novels there doesn't come the projection of life and nature and the readers are to depend on their own wing of imagination but in the context of drama there is ample scope for the audience to view their own mirrored and acted or limited before their eyes when they get mingled with the sentiments of the characters with their acting or get attached to the same sort of expression of their sentiments and inner world, as projected through the living or live show of real life, and audience find better opportunity to diagnose the best and worst of the presentations. In this context, Mark Van Doren says, 'With each new line a play of Shakespeare's lights its own recesses, deepens its original hue, echoes, supports, and authenticates itself. The renaissance stirred the new generation writers and dramatists to hunt for nationalistic ancestry in the earliest and still living Sanskritik dramatic

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

convention. However, aspects of preservation could not be assimilated, and this challenge subdued them. Besides, Shakespeare's plays were ethnically alien, and their version became increasingly self-conscious of this alienness. Consequently, the inclination of translating Shakespearean plays did not last long. Instead, the concoction of new ideas, forms and styles helped the development in the direction of original creation of Bengali plays.¹⁹²

Economic success not only leads to higher living standards for the people at large and ensures social progress; it also acts as the essential element for consolidating the developing countries. Political independence and promoting their role on the international scene, and gaining economic independence, the efforts of the peoples and countries concerned are of decisive importance.¹⁹³

Aspects of economic and political viabilities favored by renaissance background the middle class Bengalis, in fact, provided the chief capital of positive welcome to accept and respond to the psycho cultural relations as cited by David Kopf in his book *British orientalism* and Bengal renaissance. The Quest for New Perspectives referring to the Nineteenth century historical literature that dealt with the Transmission of ideas in a colonial setting without a through analysis of the psycho- cultural relations between the native elite and the alien overlord seems to be absurd but the evidence appears to suggest emphatically that Bengalis responded well to foreign ideas and customs when introduced by the sympathetic or kind- hearted Europeans or the *Orientalists* who were thought to be prone to be in close contact with the Bengalis. Shakespeare, in fact, was thought to be well entertained by the middle class Bengalis that were very particular about showing resistance to cultural changes as well as entertain Shakespeare with impartial mood.

¹⁹² Nazmul Ahsan, *op.cit.*, p. 69.

¹⁹³ G. Krasonv, *A Chehutov, Delrelopess Countries: Problems of Foreign Economic Relations* (Moscow: Novosti Press Agency, 1975), p. 10.

Projection of Renaissance humanism through Shakespeare and the Bengal stage

Actually it happens to exist in the purest medieval tradition. Shakespeare's version of the orthodox encomium of what man, created in God's image, was like in his *pre lapidarian* state and of what ideally he appears still capable of being. It also reveals Shakespeare placing man in the traditional cosmic setting between the angels and the beasts.¹⁹⁴

Educated Indians and political aspects of Shakespeare

Educated Indians on the contrary happened to see a promise of new opportunities and of partnership in governance of British India. If these men perceived the flows of colonial rule they nevertheless sought consultation. Preferring its modification rather than its removal loyalty, not sedition, was the watch ward of political India.¹⁹⁵

... Therefore when the rising middle class of Indians began to demand political reform and when the British govt. began to consider how best to give effect to this demand neither side could turn for guidance to oriental political experience and were compelled to base their plans on the alien ideas of the west.¹⁹⁶

Political aspects of Shakespeare can be referred here to the fact that there are lots of pictures of good governance in the socio political systems as stated in the plays of Shakespeare which perhaps contributed to the growth of nationalistic spirit and rationality in exploiting one's own rights. *Duties of a king, limitations of court life, image of a reasonable king, execution of royal power, distribution of possession or property, familial disputes regarding hereditary, inheritance crises, dethronement of king, and the conflicts and chaos in the administration or in the familial affairs or domestic life of a king or a ruler, betrayal, palace intrigue, back biting, conspiracy, power politics, diplomacy, wars and battles, loyalty to the will and oath, all the pictures of court life and accountability of 'kingship'* are portrayed in the plays of Shakespeare which are best manifested to be quite true to life and there are reasons to be spirited from the characters, personalities as depicted by Shakespeare in his plays for reviewing life and sharing the senses as mirrored therein. Shakespeare created much as the mark of his image of influence that he was

¹⁹⁴ E.M.W. Tillyard, *Reflections of Renaissance Elements in Shakespeare Characters*, pp. 49-45.

¹⁹⁵ H.H. Dodwell, MA & R.R. Sethi (eds.), *op.cit.*, pp. 121-123.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 313.

deemed to be symbol of prudence, taste and standard choice for the intellectuals who cherished positive notion towards Shakespeare.

The annual examination of Hindu college held on February 20, 1830, was attended by Lady William Bentinck, Hon'ble Lady Grey, Hon'ble Mr. Baiely, Sir Edward Ryan, Holt Mackenzie and a number of other European ladies and gentlemen. The Chief examiner was Mr. Wilson and the handwriting and paintings of the students were placed on a table before Lady William Bentinck. The recitations from Shakespeare by the students were highly praised indicating the evidence of regular practice of the oral Shakespeare of the students.¹⁹⁷

So did Captain D.L. Richardson, the well-known Shakespearean scholar whose teaching of the great English dramatist, as has been already referred to, Macaulay still remembered on his return to far-off England, and who was an adroit in the art of elocution. He infused into the hearts of his students an ardent love for English drama, to attend the theatre, and procured free tickets for them by indulging them in Shakespearean fervour.¹⁹⁸

It was found that missionaries representing various societies, opened more schools. David Hare persuaded Sir Hyde East, chief Justice and other leading Europeans and Indians to establish a college for the tuition of sons of "respectable" Hindu Parents in the English and Indian Languages and in European and Asiatic science and literature. The college was first known as Vidyalaya (Home of learning) and after wards as the Hindu College finally it became The Presidency College. Role of education and missions contributed to the growth of awareness as history refers to the following comments:

... were the results of dense and wide spread ignorance among the people and could be removed only by education first of all by education in English a key which would open to the people "a world of new ideas."¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 41, 43, 45.

¹⁹⁸ Priyaranjan Sen, *op.cit.*, p. 157.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 104.

Political ideology of the Hindu college students was said to be germinated in the second and fructified in the third quarter of the 19th century.²⁰⁰

The influence of Shakespeare refers to the concept of composing of plays, depicting characters, projecting psychological aspects of man, manifesting inner conflicts of life, encouraging imitation of Shakespearean styles, presentation and comparative study of Bengali poets and writers with reference to the plots, themes, characterization and dialogues of Shakespeare and the reactions of Bengali intellectuals to the art of his characterizations of the plays enlightened with the spirit of Shakespeare to think and measure him as the 'standard icon' to reach the zenith of agreeable and acceptable products of literature which undoubtedly ascertain the affinity lying between Bengali and English literature as a whole, with the following points, can be analyzed the way to glean the aspects of influence of Shakespeare working among the intellectuals of Bengali literature and the Bengali critics of the post Shakespearean phenomenon:

- i) *Common characteristics of the modern dramatists.*
- ii) *Love in the presentation of the dramas of Shakespeare.*
- iii) *Other hyperbolical or aggravated characters of some other characteristics.*
- iv) *Characters or heroes of Shakespeare.*
- v) *Characteristics of the presentation of other characters of Shakespeare.*
- vi) *Presentation of human nature by Shakespeare.*
- vii) *Shakespeare's drama is the mirror of life.*
- viii) *Shakespeare always makes nature or character over accident.*
- ix) *There is naturalness in the presentation of the characters in Shakespeare.*
- x) *Psychological commotion of man*
- xi) *Shakespeare's plays are not in the rigorous and critical sense either tragedies or comedies but compositions of a distinct kind exhibiting the real state of sublunary nature.*²⁰¹

The contact with English literature, and through it, with that of other western countries may be regarded as one of the

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁰¹ Serajul Islam Choudhury, *Sreeni Samay O Shahyitya*, pp. 66-77.

greatest contributing factors to the renaissance in India in the Nineteenth century.²⁰²

For it revolutionised the attitude of English-knowing Indians to life and literature and inaugurated an altogether new phase in Indian Literature. As a matter of fact it would be hardly an exaggeration to say that the modern Indian literatures are mostly the products of the Western impact. Like English education the new development began and then flowed to other parts of India.²⁰³

Contribution of English Education and English Teaching to renaissance breeding

Shakespeare arrived in India not as an individual but as an institution carried by the British chariot but by his books which came to be prescribed as texts and later as the staging of his dramas on the stage or by theatrical presentation of his plays. The students of the college, school and the audience of his drama discovered the faculties lying in the manifestation of his characters of universal theme in his plays. There took place many incidents related to the growth of education and academic environment. Grant advised the establishment by government of free schools for teaching English in various parts of the province and the substitution of English for Persians in Judicial proceedings in the administration of the revenue and other business. He discussed political objections to his suggestions and ended with the assertion that the English language was the best channel for the spread of general enlightenment.²⁰⁴

Shakespeare: an awakening among the elite

India holds a long fascination for Shakespeare thus the existence of Shakespeare was apparent in many events that took place including various seminars, workshops and staging of his original and translated plays. The Nineteenth century Bengal appeared as a landmark in history.

Shakespeare was deemed to be an awakening among the elite for his plays which were being staged and read with vigorous effect upon the then Indians, particularly Bengali audience, as result of which, there grew immense fascination for Shakespeare in the Bengali mind.

²⁰² R.C. Majumdar, *op.cit.*, p. 175.

²⁰³ R.C. Majumdar, *Ibid.*, p. 175.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 97.

Negative and Positive effects of English education

Reference has already been made to the good results of English education. But to begin with it begot both good and bad effects. Among the former, prominence must be given to the growth of nationalism and freedom of thought, two of the great characteristics of Modern age which annihilated blind faith and inveterate habit of following traditional ways that marked the sceneries of the mediaeval age.²⁰⁵ But during the process of transformation a small section of English-educated Bengali youths was carried away by a strong tide very much anglicized and had inordinate fondness for everything English. They adopted western ideas and habits, dresses and mannerisms, customs and usage and openly indicated their repugnance to everything India. They spoke in English, thought in English, and as humorously remarked by Bhudeb Mukhopadhyaya probably even dreamed in English. They had a sneering contempt for almost everything India. Fascination for the taste and choice for English culture and literature made them a bit averse to anything based on nativity of India. The evils grew with the spread of English education and in course of time a small group of westernized people formed a distinct section within the Indian community.²⁰⁶

English education and the emergence of nationalism

The Hindu College was held chiefly responsible for this state of things. An extreme instance of such mentality is given in a contemporary Bengali periodical. A student of the Hindu college was taken by his father to the temple of *the goddess kali* at Kalighat. When asked to bow down to the feet of the statue of the goddess, the boy simply raised his hand and said, "*Good morning, Madam*". But fortunately a reaction against the sweeping flow of western influence was not long in coming. It seems to have manifested itself in the growth of an intense nationalism during the third quarter of the Nineteenth century.

It may be truly said that if rationalism was the watch word of the first generation of English educated Bengalis that of the second generation was nationalism. Hence it may be marked that rationalism is the root cause of the nationalism in other words nationalism emerged from the core of the rationalism and developed among the Bengalis.²⁰⁷

²⁰⁵ R.C. Majumder, *Renasant India*, First Phase (Kolkata: G. Bharadwaj & Co., 1976), p. 184.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 185-186.

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 184-185.

Four factors are to be illustrated as the chief causes working behind the growth of the nationalism of Bengal as well as of Indians in the third quarter of the 19th century. They are as follows:

- i) Historical knowledge and awareness of the past glories of Indian cultural heritage and rich tradition akin to those of the Greek and Italy.
- ii) Among the factors contributing to it an important place must be given to the growing knowledge of the glory and greatness of the ancient Hindus.

When the Indians first began to learn English little was known of their ancient history and even the comprehensive and standard history of India written by James Mill in 1818, unhesitatingly expressed the view that Hindus had never been in the same wretched condition in which the British found them in the eighteenth century. The very poor knowledge that the Indians themselves had about their own past history is shown by the history of the Hindu kings written by Mrityunjay Bhattacharya, a pandit of the Fort William College in Calcutta in the year, A.D. 1808.²⁰⁸

Role of English scholars and intellectuals

The works of early oriental scholars like Sir William Jones, Prinsep Bohtlink and other Europeans gradually changed the views in this respect. But the regular archeological explorations and excavations commencing in A.D. 1861 under the personal supervision of Alexander Cunningham and the writings of Max Muller, Wilson Fergusson, Rajendralal Mitra and others in a more popular form brought home to the educated Indians a very vivid picture of the past glory and greatness of ancient India which placed her on the same pedestal as Greece or Rome.

David Kopf's remarks may be referred to this occurrence that a socio-intellectual revolution had taken place in India with an emphasis on social action and every effort was made to reach the local elite. Policy was designed to favour *Orientalists* and *Bengalis* to work together for common objectives. Establishment of new organisations to achieve the same goals and to manipulate the very purpose was said to be initiated by Hindu college meant for media participation aiming at intuitive mobility or liberating a man for his native

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 186-188.

self ... in shaping himself a different personality with which he was born was said to be a outcome of Bengal Renaissance meant in brief, for the intellectual growth of a man with progressive attitude for modern civilization as projected through the above.²⁰⁹ Establishment of more missionaries paved the easy way to exploring western education along with the spread of the leadership in the same sector of other leading Europeans.

Growing of the sense of the glorious past: spirit of self confidence

The Hindus were inspired with a sense of their rich heritage from the past and the leading party once played as a great nation in the history of the world. It necessarily generated in their minds a spirit of self-confidence and held out before them a bright vision of their future destiny. The views promulgated by European scholars that the forefathers of the Hindus belonged to the same group of mankind from which were derived all the nations of Europe famous in ancient and modern times that the Vedas. The sacred literature of the Hindus were said to be the oldest literary works in the world, that the Upanishads contained the most profound philosophical speculations that human mind has even conceived that emperor Asoka united the whole of India and Afghanistan under one rule as testified to by his own records engraved on stone more than two thousand years ago and that thanks mainly to his efforts Buddhism got originated in India played a great role in civilizing a large portion of the population of the world, so much so that even today one fifth of the human race still professed that faith all these could not fail to stimulate deeply the hearts of the Hindus with the result that they were imbued with a spirit of nationalism and ardent patriotism.²¹⁰

The revelation of India's past was built and gave it that stamp of Hindu character which made its influence felt in many ways at different stages of political evolution in Indian influence of the rise of the nationalistic ideas and emergence of the story growth of nationalism among the Europeans.

Foreign Influence on the growth of nationalism

There may raise the question whether Shakespeare accommodated the nationalistic spirit through the projection of his characters or not. Before answering that question it has to be

²⁰⁹ David Kopf, *British Orientalism and the Bengal Renaissance: The Dynamics of Indian Modernization 1773-1835*, p. 178.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*

ascertained that his influence grew in the hearts of the educated Bengalis and started working in them for not to find anyone matching him before them. Shakespeare was an 'icon' for them. The 'Kings' and 'Clowns' of Shakespeare gave them the ideas about the differences of the ruled and the ruler both of whom are the characters of Shakespeare showing the world of realities which are duly mirrored in his plays. But reasonability and justice prevail in his depiction of the characters, kings, or clowns, queens or subjects all appear to be affected by their vulnerable points of nature although Shakespeare plays do not have the direct claim of its being adorned with any philosophical views or doctrines as T.S. Eliot says,

And that when a poet like Shakespeare, who has no 'philosophy' and apparently no design upon the amelioration of our behaviour, sets forth his experience and reading of life, he is forthwith saddled with a 'philosophy' of his own and some esoteric hints towards conduct. So we kick against those who wish to guide us, and insist on being guided by those who only aim to show us a vision, a dream if you like, which is beyond good and evil in the common sense.²¹¹

But Shakespeare has projected the world a sense of justice, reason, rights for rights, power and politics, prudence, vile instincts like jealousy, high ambition, that can be measured as the sources of growing the awareness of the nationalistic spirit when thoughts of the characters with positive spirit portrayed by Shakespeare reflected among the Bengalis with the realistic aspects like greed for power along with the reconciliation, love and affection as the human power, examples of gratitude, brother hood, humanity etc.

Another factor that must have stimulated the growth of nationalism in India was the strong current of nationalist ideas which passed over first half of the Nineteenth century. The educated Bengalis also received ideas and events culminating in the struggles for freedom in different regions of Europe in 1830 and 1848 and the stories of heroic resistance and world of suffering community associated with them made a profound impression upon the English educated Indians.²¹²

²¹¹ Wilson Knight, *op.cit.*, p. xxi.

²¹² *Ibid.*, p. 187.

From the historical evidence, it is clear that the name of Shakespeare used to grow an excitement of prudence, there grew one kind of sense of thrilling as soon as the name of Shakespeare was cited. The utterance was a matter of glowing matured explanation of the taste and rich choice of life and society. There remained nothing but Shakespeare recitation even at the court while the proceedings of prosecution was on, people used to cherish the strength to endure the realities which ease and appease the crucial aspects of life and lessen the severity and intensity in interpreting the harshness of life with the empathy of naturalness.

In particular the liberation from foreign yoke of Greek and Italy, two ancient centers of culture like India and the struggle for freedom by the Irish subject to servitude under a common master deeply happen to have stirred the emotion of the Indians to Europe in increasing numbers contributed to the same end by making them familiar with the working of the free political institutions of Europe.

Renascent India in the 19th Century

The British at first anchored at Kolkata. To discover Kolkata is to discover the Bengalis. The British, no doubt, owes much to Kolkata as their adventures in the field of trade and commerce still mark the survival of their dominance at the same time Kolkata gave them the comfortable position in initiating everything. Their close touch with Kolkata or the Bengalis extended the sense of understanding the Bengali people with all their possibilities and merits as well as limitations.

The nature of Renaissance in India in the Nineteenth century and this renaissance began in Bengal and gradually spread over the rest of India. It may be said without much exaggeration that the Renaissance had brought about the growth of literatures of India in one century such as was not witnessed even in the preceding one thousand years. Further the Renaissance has brought about great changes, though of lesser importance in religion, society, art and political ideas and organisation in different parts of India which can not be fully comprehended without knowledge of at least the local languages included in the English schedule of the constitution of India.

Impact of English Education in Bengal alias India

It would be easy to have a good understanding of the time when Bengali literature suffered from great limitations in its subject matter, spirit, style of writing, literary form.²¹³ In the last chapter it is marked that regarding the impact of English education in India as the commencement of the 19th century. It underwent a remarkable transformation. These are as follows:

- i) There grew up a high standard of rational thinking leading to religious and social reforms which regenerated the whole of India.
- ii) It developed an intellectual eminence which was at once the envy and despair of the rest of India.
- iii) It created a literature both in prose and poetry which has taken its rank with the most developed literature of the modern world.
- iv) It awakened a sense of Indian nationality and deep patriotic feelings such as Indians knew before.
- v) Finally it developed those political organizations which led by natural process of evolution to the freedom of the motherland of the *Bengalis*.

In short, Bengal passed in the course of single century from the Medieval to the Modern age by her own exertions and enabled the rest of India to do the same by her example and percept and perhaps for that reason once Netagi Shuvash Chanda Basu said '*What Bengal thinks today India thinks tomorrow*', thus proves the evidence of historical importance of Kolkata as the root venue of spreading the seeds of renaissance to be moved towards the whole of India.²¹⁴

Background of the reasons that caused the great changes and establishment Hindu college learning

There can be noted it without any hesitation to point out to the introduction of English education and the western ideas which flowed along with it and formed the basic foundation of all the wonderful progress that is witnessed in Bengal during the Nineteenth century.²¹⁵

²¹³ Priyaranjan Sen, *Western Influence in Bengali Literature* (Kolkata: Academic Publishers, 1966), p. 14.

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 29.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*

The influence of the first factors may be illustrated by the Hindu College, the premier institution for English education which may be measured as one of the gate ways to introduce the interest of Shakespeare plays to the Indian audience.²¹⁶

As mentioned above, the Christian missionaries made a very significant contribution to the growth of English education, especially in Bengal by the establishment of educational institutions for both boys and girls.²¹⁷

But whatever might have been the motive, there is not denying the fact that they had substantially contributed to the propagation of English education in Bengal which must be regarded as the most important single factor that formed the basis of renaissance in Bengal.²¹⁸

"The excitement" Duff wrote at the time for western education continued unabated. They pursued the Bengalis along the streets; they threw open the door of the palanquins: they poured in their supplications with a pitiful earnestness of continuance which might have softened a heart of stone.²¹⁹

They unanimously expressed the view about the liberal characters and the high cultural values of English education which are also fully supported by what had come to be known to be the achievements of the students of those days.

For this purpose a thesis account of the Hindu college may be stated here that the premier institutions of those days and the only one of which possessed some detailed information. In order to form an idea of the liberal character of education imparted in the Hindu college, it appears necessary to read its history for the first thirty years and the subsequent career of its brilliant alumni.

Shakespeare and Vivian Derozians

The memory of the Hindu College is said to be indissolubly bound up with its most famous teacher Louis Henry Vivian Derozio (L.H.V.D) a half caste Portuguese living in Calcutta. He died at the age of 23 and served in the Hindu college for a period of five years only.²²⁰

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 30.

²¹⁹ Andrews and Mookerji, *The Rise and Growth of Congress*, pp. 70-71.

²²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 52.

Another fact that must have stimulated the growth of nationalism in India was the strong current of nationalist ideas which passed over the whole of Europe during the first half of the Nineteenth century. The ideas and events cultivating in the struggles for freedom in different regions of Europe in 1830 and 1848 and the stories of heroic resistance and untold suffering corroded with them had a profound impression upon the English educated Indians. In particular the liberation from foreign yoke of Greece and Italy, two ancient centers of culture like India and the struggle for freedom by the Irish, subject to servitude under a common master deeply stirred the emotion of the Indians and evoked feelings of nationalism of the same type.²²¹

Michael Modhusudan Dutt (1824–73) was greatly influenced by the teaching skills of Professor Richardson who was interested in presenting Shakespearean plays. Modhusudan was a star pupil of Hindu college, embarked on his illustrations of the literary career and he wrote in English.

Modhusudan, well-read and a linguistic magician, was fond of Shakespearean characters, dialogues, psychological aspects of human nature as projected by Shakespeare in his plays drew upon his Indian literary heritage as well as elements of Occidental literature to produce something original and at the same time of his own tradition later poets and some of the emerging fiction writers, seduced by what they read in English, tended to imitate more than they innovate.²²²

Most of these countries are former British territories

People came to know of Shakespeare through the English Language background as there was no opportunity to understand Shakespeare by any translated scripts. So Shakespeare happened to be acquainted with the educated readers and, in fact, the educated intellectuals thought of conveying the plays of Shakespeare through the vernacular presentation to the common readers.

People happened to be in close contact of Shakespeare through the English background as there was no opportunity to understand Shakespeare in the native language but he came to be known to the educated readers and in fact, the educated intellectuals

²²¹ R.C. Majumdar, *op.cit.*, p. 186.

²²² Clinton B. Seely, *A Poet Apart: A Literary Biography of the Bengali Poet Jibanananda Das (1899-1954)* (Kolkata: Rabindra Baharati University, 1999), p. 37.

thought of rendering the plays of Shakespeare through the vernacular means of presentation to the general readers. Despite the association of the English language with the former colonial rulers, it has been retained for pragmatic reasons; where no other native language is generally acceptable, at least at the national level for administrative and legal functions; and as an international language for science and technology it is desirable to be used for higher education. English is an official language in countries of such divergent backgrounds as India, Nigeria and Liberia ahead in numerous other countries (Burma, Thailand, South Korea and some Middle Eastern Countries) it is used for higher education as an official language; indeed, as a result of the increase in secondary education more people today learn English there than at any time during the colonial period. It has been estimated that English is a second language for all over 300 million people: the number of native speakers may soon exceed the number of native speakers of it has not done so already.²²³

Dominating status of the Bengali in higher education in Bengal

British policy seemed to have favoured at least the way of English education, which resulted in the bases of the seedlings of the impact of English education upon the growth of education in Bengal alias India. The universities, it was said had supplied reliable tests and stimulated educational institutions. In higher education Bengal stood first. The largest number and the best specimens of colleges and schools were to be found there.²²⁴

Shakespeare's place and Influence

To study nature in his works is like exploring a new and beautiful country, viewing the motley crowd as one viewing a great masquerade in which past and present mingle freely and familiarity as if the dead were all living again. And the marvellous thing in this masquerade of all sorts and conditions of men is that Shakespeare lifts the mask from every face let us see the man as he is in his own soul and shows us in each one some germ of good some soul of goodness in things evil. [William J Long].²²⁵

²²³ Randolph Quirk Sidney Granbaum, Geoffrey Leech Jan Svartvik, *A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language* (England: Longman Group Ltd., 1985), p. 4.

²²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 339.

²²⁵ William J. Long, *op.cit.*, pp. 70-80.

In the writings of Shakespeare there appears the reflection of human life and society of the past with the same showing affinity of the existing life and society.

Many great distinguished intellectuals have opined that the idea of the Renaissance introduced in the country as a source of the entrance of the Renaissance in the last century in Bengal and that idea came into being as a matter of revival in the later part of the same century. Many critics are also in the opinion that revival is another term specially meant for renaissance and had our renaissance not been compared to that of Italy then nobody would have termed the same revival otherwise.²²⁶

Spread of Renaissance

At the initial stage the renaissance centred round Calcutta and gradually that migrated into Dhaka at the secondary phase.

In Dhaka there was a trend of revival among the Moslem intellectuals which was named as freedom of intellectual movement [*Buddhir Mukti Andolon*] and it was supposed to be raised by the young Muslim intellectuals like Abul Hossain, Kazi Abdul Wadud who were said to be the harbingers of the said movement.²²⁷

Nirad Chandra Chaudhuri, in fact, has estimated the British rule in India in the positive way to be enlightened with the positive impact of education, achievements of values contributed by the British rule in India but at the same time in most of his writings he celebrated the glorious days of Bengal renaissance when this region happened to see the birth of a centre of a new era. He also revealed the pride to be the part of a people who had begotten the literary geniuses like Madhusudan, Bankim and Rabindranath, perhaps, his reluctance at the ending part of his life to show his disliking attitude towards the English rulers was enhanced by his being acquainted with the past glories and renaissance prospects of Bengal.²²⁸

²²⁶ Anandashanker Roy, *op.cit.*, p. 1.

²²⁷ *Ibid.*

²²⁸ Fakrul Alam, *Imperial Entanglements and Literature in English* (Dhaka: Writers. ink, 2007), p. 136.

Conclusion

Renaissance is said to be a term denoting to heighten a sense of progress and prosperity making people uphold the supremacy of the standard of life and intellect they cherish and remain dedicated to adhering to the process of *universalization* of their individual taboos of the society. Accordingly, the demand of renaissance keeps a man to value the values of life beyond their prejudicial practice. The nineteenth-century Bengali humanists were actually aware of the blind spots in the traditional forms that rather grew a trend receiving the best from the western literature²²⁹ mostly represented by Shakespeare and as a parallel trend, the tendency of transformations with the influence of a particular playwright through adaptations and cultural rendition of Shakespeare's plays in the mid and late nineteenth century had a flow of continuity²³⁰ but the ethical message derived by them from western education and literature implied a rejection of the vices and a desire in imitating 'English ways'.

Rabindranath is not a Hindu who was said to be baptized with the multi-god credence rather his monotheistic sense to believe in the single God appearing to be known as the 'Brahmma'. Rabindranath is the sole Bengali representative poet from the Bengali community in the world of great poets if Rammohun Roy is thought to be the forefather of Bengal renaissance. But in the context of communal perspective he is not a communal Hindu or if he is not counted as the fore father of the Bengal renaissance and measured to be the fore father of the Reformation then 'Derozio' is to be considered as the fore father of renaissance. But his means of thinking covers the English language not Bengali or, in brief, he represents the English language. But it sounds interesting to note that for historical reference, the role of both the languages contribute to the maturity of the Bengal renaissance hence, the contribution of Derozio can not be connived as to interpret Shakespearean projection and he may be defined as the invisible pioneer in penetrating Shakespearean influence into the hearts of young Bengal generation. The contributing factors conveyed through both the languages or the combination of the ties of Bengali and English as the linguistic media grew the seeds of Bengal Renaissance which was

²²⁹ M. Bamuer, Rachel Van (ed.), *Aspects of Bengali History and Society* (Hawaii, USA: The University Press of Hawaii, 1975), p. 22.

²³⁰ Nazmul Ahsan, *Shakespeare Translations in Nineteenth-Century Bengal Theatre* (Dhaka: Bangla Academy, 1995), p. 84.

applicable to Rammohun Roy, Michael, Bankim and even Viddaya Sagore who wrote in English or who used English as the media of their communications. In such interpretations the importance of the land signifies as a whole.²³¹

When English language and literature and culture have gone to any country Shakespeare has been accepted better than all. The chief reason acting behind that is his pioneering role in Renaissance, which is the revival and that it is stated to be its voyage beginning in the fourteenth century and flourishing culture, life style, literature scientific discoveries and innovations, industrial progress spread all over Europe.

In the abode of human heart the poets, artists, authors, novelists, playwrights also acted as the contributors in searching the light to venture the unknown. The characters in literature are gifted with will force, indomitable spirit, richness of aesthetic sense, humanitarian outlook that are vigorously enlightened by the renaissance genius Shakespeare whose literary products represent the existence of newer worlds of thoughts and views.²³²

Hence, Bengal renaissance has got no scope to hide the legendary playwright Shakespeare who worked inwardly and invisibly as the intellectual and literary representation of western influence and literature that acted as the inevitable component in enhancing the escalation and spirit of Bengali literary advancement as well as changing Bengali mind with the essence of being widened imbibing Shakespearean values and English education in the context of broader perspectives when Bengalis suffered the dearth of intellectual and mental enlightenment. Shakespeare as the 'icon' of literary standard appeared as the manifestation of newer worlds of man's inner psychology when he himself was greatly influenced by the renaissance of England. So Shakespeare Studies has added the scintillating effect to the discovery of the inner psychology of man providing him the impetus to be wide, cosmopolitan and uncommunal.

²³¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 112-113.

²³² Kabir Chowdhury, *Shakespeare: Tar Jibon o Kal* [His life and age, essay] (Dhaka: Bangla Academy, 1983), p. 1.

Chapter 3

Influence of Shakespeare on Bengali Literature

Bengali literature still claims to be recognised as one of the most significant branches of world literature. Influence of Shakespeare works on the greatest of Bengali literature in the field of drama, in particular. The chief dominating branch of English literature of Shakespeare was drama. His art of characterization, presentation of his plot and dialogue, dramatic technique, universal themes based on the inner conflicts of human mind, basic instincts of man, which have tremendously affected the Bengali poets and dramatists engaged in writing poetry and drama, are supposed to have been demonstrated in their own writing in the way of following Shakespeare. Shakespeare's art of characterization, dramatic techniques, imitation of his plots and dialogues, modifying his themes, changing the names of the characters, translating his plays into Bengali or adaptations of his plays were the chief concerns of the Bengali playwrights. So Shakespeare's influence has penetrated into the faculties of Bengali literature in the various ways of inspiration, imitation, modification, evaluation, comparison, depiction, appreciation, recitation, translation and *Bengalization* of the projection of his characters, themes, plots and dialogues, dramatic techniques of his plays as followed by the great playwrights, poets in their plays and literary products and intellectuals through their writings of Bengali literature. When Sanskrit plays were being translated into Bengali, Shakespeare's plays were also continuing to be rendered into Bengali. In addition, Shakespeare's plays had continuous trend to be read and performed in academic circles in Calcutta and this influence developed wider than that of Sanskrit plays because the activity of Shakespeare began among Bangalis in educational institutions not on the stage.

The present study is intended to explore the nature of influence of Shakespeare as projected in the writing of Bengali literature and it also highlights the Bengali playwrights that are influenced by Shakespeare. I would also like to evaluate Shakespearean influence upon the Bengali people how they exerted the same as the means of gradual procedure in changing their outlook. I have also endeavoured to analyze the features of the characters of Shakespeare's plays that are supposed to be modified and imitated by the playwrights of Bengali literature. I have also tried to make efforts in reviewing the nature of influence of Shakespeare as projected in the writings of Bengali literature. I have also highlighted the

Bengali playwrights that were influenced by Shakespeare with the illustration and evaluation of Shakespearean influence upon the educated Bengali people and the change of their out look.

To catalogue Shakespeare's largest gifts is almost an absurdity: where begin, where end? He wrote the best poetry and the best prose in English, or perhaps in any Western language.¹ Shakespeare arrived in India, may be stated symbolically for the ruled borne by the ruler. The ruled and not the ruler upheld Shakespeare in India. Borne by the British East India Company Shakespeare seemed to arrive at Calcutta in the year 1780.²

Bengal and England - the interplay of their tendencies and currents of thought together, the latter influencing the former - present a curious thought for the critic and student of culture.³

The name "Bengal" does not exist politically for more than half a century. But the areas of west Bengal of India and Bangladesh which together are known to have formed (mainly) the province of Bengal in British India are linguistically and culturally so much connected with each other for centuries and from an age much earlier than that of the inception of the British rule that they can be considered as unit for study of the history of the south Asian subcontinent. Hence academically "Bengal" is a living concept of tradition, region and history for the *Bengalis* of both Bangladesh and West Bengal of India.⁴

Bengali is one of the major languages, which was born of the Indo-European language family through Sanskrit and Latin. Though the languages have branched out intricately, Bengali as a language is the far removed relative of German and English. Bengali is the youngest in this family of languages. Considering it to be a thousand years old, barring a few patches here and there in the intermediate centuries, Bengali has really flowered in the last three centuries and by far has surpassed most of the other Indian languages in its opulence. Kolkata had been the power centre of the British and the Bengalis were exposed to the modern world through English.

¹ Harold Bloom, *Shakespeare the Invention of the Human* (New York: Riverhead Books, 1998), p. xviii.

² Shafi Ahmed, *Bangadeshe Shakespeare* (Dhaka: Bangla Academy, 1988), p. 2.

³ Priyaranjan Sen, *Western Influence in Bengali Literature*, p. 1.

⁴ Enamul Haque (ed.), *Journal of Bangladesh*.

At the nascent stage, apart from the osmotic inputs of modernism, it grew under the tutelage of such gargantuan genius as Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay, who had accumulated the best from both Sanskrit and English. And immediately afterwards Rabindranath emerged as the rising sun not only in poetry, but demonstrated amazing virtuosity in short stories, novels, plays, essays, and songs too. These two had taken Bengali literature to such a height that this was a remarkable obligation on their successors to maintain it.⁵

Practice of the English language as a helping media happened to create a positive impact upon English literature as English is spoken as a native language by more than 300 million people, most of them living in North America, the British Isles, Australia, New Zealand, the Caribbean and South Africa. In about twenty five countries English has been legally designated as an official language. Emergence of a strong interest in Shakespeare literature and performance of the plays of the same playwright was found in Kolkata in the 19th century.⁶

The nineteenth century Bengal had a tremendous arrival as the Bengali intellectuals were in a positive background to ascertain the poetical genius of Rabindranath who initiated the seeds of a new form of awakening among the *Bengalis*. The stage was thus set for the appearance of the most enlightened star in the firmament of Bengali literature- Rabindranath Tagore (1861–1941) whose life almost appears co-extensive with the last half of the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth century when he made his debut in Bengali literature in the eighties of the 19th century. There is hardly any branch of Bengali literature which remained untouched, and almost everything he touched, adorned and enriched by his own contributions. Poems, songs, novels, short stories, dramas, both tragic and satirical, autobiography and essays of all kinds-religious, social, political, educational and literary-in every field he left his extraordinary performance. Bengali literature became richer than he found it. He may be regarded as the pioneer in lyric poems, songs of the modern type, and above all, short stories.

⁵ Prabal Kumar Basu, *Sign Posts: Bengali Poetry since Independence* (New Delhi: Rupa Co., 2002), p. xix.

⁶ Amritlal Bala, *Macbeth Bikkhon* [An observation on Macbeth] (Rajshahi: Hamida Book Corporation, 1998), pp. 215-216.

His voluminous contributions in all the branches of literature mentioned above seem to be marking the beginning of a new age in the history of Bengali literature.

Before concluding it is necessary to emphasize the fact that the wonderful development of Bengali literature occurred largely due to the inspiration emerged from the branches of English literature and western ideas. There lies the reference to the view that the introduction of English education in India abstracted the attention of the people from the vernacular which consequently suffered a great deal. Rather the contrary view seems to be true if contrasted with the progress of vernacular literature in Bengal with that in Bombay, Madras and other parts of British India were the main streams as in Bengal. An informative analysis may be made to illustrate the review of the progress of some of these vernaculars. Western ideas or education or the inception of English education appeared as a reviewing tendency replete with the manifestation of mood and sentiment of the *Bengalis*.

Beginning of Internationalization of Bengali literature and Broadened outlook of Bengal

‘Our interest in Shakespeare at the same time European cultural aspects influences us’ stated by professor Dr. Serajul Islam Chowdhury. The prominent names at least may be referred without difficulty to the present study are David Hare, Henry Louis Vivian Derozio and Captain David Lester Richardson-men by whom Shakespeare was one of the earliest to be read and admired in Bengal. The celebrated Shakespeare scholars made a lot of efforts to popularize English literature-in the purer or more accurate sense-among the students of Bengal, and to whose readings of the great dramatist even Macaulay listened with appreciation, delighted in teaching Shakespeare’s plays to his students.⁷ Shakespeare scholars with their disinterested labour, by their love of teaching and by means of their masterful personality contributed in no small degree to the importance and glory of the Hindu College and helped it to be the great force which it was in the life and thought of Young Bengal.

⁷ Priyaranjan Sen, *op.cit.*, p. 104.

Educational reforms with an international outlook began to develop and it supplanted ultimately the narrow parochialism of casteism by a liberal outlook and through English education this strain has become more and more outstanding. In other words, English education has been a boon to Indians, especially to the *Bengalis*.⁸

Only Bengal absorbed Europe with mobility and diligence that should be marked as a record in human relation. This has been deplored by some in Bengal as a cultural conquest, and capitalized by some of the British as proof of the white man's superiority: two sides of the same illusory shield. By that time, the map of Bengal's transformation could clearly be seen: soil of Bengal had drunk the juice of the literature, the essence of England, and a new literature was born.⁹

Shakespeare, Shelley and Blake, the literature of the English tongue, this, for the beginning, is what England has meant to specify certain section of *Bengalis*, and in the politically disanglicized future, would mean to increasingly large numbers. This has been stimulation in the literal sense: Bengali literature was in-spirited and renascent.¹⁰

In the nineteenth century, poets like Henry Louis Vivian Derozio and Michael Madhusudan Dutta found their desire to give vice to their Indian sentiments smothered by the influence of the British Romantics.¹¹

Shakespearean influence upon post-Shakespearean literature

Shakespeare's characters are roles for actors, and also they are considerably more than that: their influence upon life has been very nearly as enormous as their effect upon post-Shakespearean literature. No world author rivals Shakespeare in the apparent creation of personality.¹²

A genius like Shakespeare could not be confined to the geographical periphery or ethnic identity. Middle class Bengali Community contributed to the acceptability of Shakespeare in the dramatic and theatrical sector of Bengali literature. English educated

⁸ Oneil Biswas, *A Book of Bengali Verse* (New York: A Writers Workshop Publication, 1990), p. 53.

⁹ Buddhadeva Bose, *An Acre of Green Grass: A Review of Modern Bengali Literature* (Kolkata: Papyrus India, 1948), pp. 72-73.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ Francis Robinson (ed.), *The Cambridge Encyclopaedia of India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bhutan and the Maldives* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 417.

¹² Harold Bloom, *Shakespeare the Invention of the Human* (New York: Riverhead Books, 1998), p. xviii.

learners have accepted Shakespeare without showing any complexity of attitude. In the year 1869 Ishwarchandra Bidhyashagor in the introduction of his translated play “*Bhrantibilash*” of Shakespeare’s *Comedy of Errors* spoke highly of Shakespeare as an unparalleled poet not only of England but of the entire world. It was Bankimchandra who initiated Shakespeare criticism in the Bengali language. Bankim made the characters of his novel replete with self agonized conflicts and external encounters which seemed to represent Shakespearean flavour and appeal in the art of characterization. Mohitlal Mojumdar in his *Bankimchandrér Upannash* (Novels of Bankimchandra) highlighted that Bankimchandra might be said to have followed Shakespeare mostly in two ways that are (i) inevitability of fate and nature in between which there lay the helpless surrender of the protagonist and the tragic catastrophe and depth could be measured as the intimation of Shakespearean style by Bankim. So through *Kapalkundala* it could be easily ascertained that how much influenced Bankim has been by Shakespearean attitude. In a comparative study of the *Tempest* and *Othello* Bankim introduced Shakespeare criticism in Bengali.¹³

In fact, Shakespeare is a literary monarch for which his influence as a man of literature is undoubtedly actable and appreciable or acceptable among the intelligentsia of any race or nation of the world. It is very natural on the part of the readers or audience of his dramas to be influenced as Shakespeare has presented the crucial realities of life both in the social and familial aspects of life. The relationships among the characters of his plays do not appear to be unknown to the readers as the readers or audiences find the reflections of their own in the lives of the characters presented or staged before them. There are reasons to believe the unavoidable impact of the playwright Shakespeare upon the mind and intellect of the readers. In this context, the readers or audience of the plays of Shakespeare do not have the scope to remain uninfluenced. The influence of English on Bengali literature was very strong. The outpouring of literature during the nineteenth century had a profound influence on the modernization of Bengal, affecting all aspects of life and culture.¹⁴ The influence of English literature is thought to have exerted much of its influence on different speakers of the languages of the world. In the same way the influence of English literature represented by Shakespeare has had its influence on

¹³ Shafi Ahmed, *Bangadeshe Shakespeare* (Dhaka: Bangla Academy, 1988), pp. 195-196.

¹⁴ Dipali Ghosh, *op.cit.*, p. x.

Bengali drama and dramatists, poets, authors, essayists, intellectuals, story writers as well as the Bengali people as a whole. The influence of English literature and language has spread its influence on the Bengali language and literature with both deep and varied impact. Bengali literature is supposed to have obtained many of the forms and concepts by its acquaintance and contact with English literature which is to be significantly analyzed.¹⁵

Influence of Shakespeare on growth of Bengali Literature

The stage is thought to be a world and the player's real men and women. Shakespeare was in many ways ahead of his time. He had psychological depth that is only in his century beginning to be fully understood. A universally acknowledged genius Shakespeare has reached the zenith of success in the history of world literature because of his perennial appeal. Shakespeare may be said to be the most studied literary personality influencing the post renaissance poets, dramatists and authors of the world as T.S. Eliot says that to receive the whole Shakespearian vision within the intellectual consciousness demands a certain and very definite act of mind.¹⁶ To a large extent Shakespeare appears to be a playwright equipped with the mastery and wonderful power of giving life to unpromising subjects.¹⁷ Shakespeare (1564–1616) recognized in much of human behaviour through portrayals of a wide variety of characters and aspects of life. His projection of poetic and dramatic means to create a unified aesthetic effect out of a multiplicity of vocal expressions and actions is recognized as a singular achievement, and his presentation of poetry within his plays to express the deepest levels of human motivation in individual, social, and universal situations full of various incidents with realistic approach to life and nature is considered to be one of the greatest accomplishments in literary history.¹⁸

Dinabandhu in his play *Lilaboti* followed Shakespeare's style of plot. Two central characters of *Lilaboti* named Lalit and Lalita appear to similar to *Romeo and Juliet* of Shakespeare. But nevertheless Dinabandhu never put touch the depth and passionate loving feelings portrayed by Shakespeare. In other parts of the same play we find Shakespearean

¹⁵ Ruby Chatterji, *Mother Courage and Her Children: Introduction and Notes* (India: Oxford University Press, 1985), p. 15.

¹⁶ Wilson Knight, *op.cit.*, p. 3.

¹⁷ A.C. Bradley, *op.cit.*, p. 45.

¹⁸ A. Kent Hieatt, *Microsoft Encarta Encyclopaedia 2002* (USA: Microsoft Corporation, 1993-2002).

influence. Shakespeare's comedy based play *Merry Wive's of Windsor* was also followed by Dinabandhu Mitra in his play *Nabin Tahsyini*. Shakespearean influence acted as a mode of imitating his dramatic art as presented in his plays. It is nothing difficult to find other similarities lying between *Comedy of Errors* even with *Nabin Tapashyini*. Dinabandhu Mitra and Michael Madhusudan Dutt were the students of Hindu College which sustained Shakespearean influence in the representation and cultivation of Shakespeare academically and theatrically. The characters of *Shadhobar Ekadhashi* are very young in age and educated. So in an unsound state of mind they happen to utter Shakespearean dialogues 26 times.¹⁹

Modhusudan Dutt imitated Shakespeare out and out in his play *Krisnakumari* (Kissenkumari) which was said to have been composed following some of Shakespeare's characters. There is an introduction of Shakespearean couple and characters introduced in the play who exert their deception, dishonesty and tactfulness or by speaking ill of others as a means of poisonous whispering that appears to be reflected from Shakespeare's plays. Many have found the reflection of *Iago* of the play *Othello* in the character *Dhandas* of *Kissenkumari* by Madhusudan. Dinabandhu Mitra in his famous farcical play *Shadhobar Ekadaship* displayed Shakespearean influence in presenting different dialogues of Shakespeare's plays unhesitatingly published in 1866. That sort introduction of Shakespearean dialogues in the play created a humorous presentation with an anti-climax edition to some extent but Dinabandhu Mitra very carefully created a distance from the idealistic manifestation of Shakespearean comedy. Dinabandhu Mitra also tried to create an indulgence of humorous presentation which made him use Shakespearean dialogue abundantly. In the play *Shadhobah Ekadashi* we find the following comments of Othello:

“O thou, invisible spirit of wine
If thou hast no name to be known by.
Let us the call thee devil.”

Madhusudan Dutta and Dinabandhu Mitra have neither translated nor adapted the plays of Shakespeare but at many places, similarities with the diction, tone, style, spirit, verse, form and language of the above mentioned plays of Shakespeare do not escape notice. The similarities were often a matter of the dramatist's classical grounding and thorough their

¹⁹ Shafi Ahmed, *op.cit.*, pp. 42, 44, 39.

exploitation of an anthology of imagery and linguistic constructions that were common to the western classical tradition. But sometimes these similarities were deliberate showing the influence of Shakespeare at work. Their plays are original in the sense that they are written in a different language for a different audience but the similarity between the acts and scenes, the plots and the stories of those plays shows a kind of distant translation characterised by the influence of Shakespearean themes and techniques. This is a maturer form and the trend established in these works is an influential idea prone to adaptation but not based on the Meaning of a particular lay. The adaptation of this kind of trend inspired the playwrights to write modern Bengali drama of the nineteenth century.

It is generally acknowledged that the year 1852 is an important landmark in the study of the western influence of Bengali drama, specially the influence of Shakespeare²⁰

In fact, relation between history and literature can not be connived as one's growth drags the other. Impact of the one over the other affects both the factors working simultaneously as both the wings are mingled with life and nature. T.S. Eliot's emphasis on the significance of tradition in literature has made some of the modernised poets' conscious that they have to find a place in the incessant tradition of Bengali poetry, that they have to write with the aspects of their whole past literature in their bones, reminding of the invisible bridge lying between the past and present which acts as the measurement scale of weighing the yardstick of the intellectuals belonging to two different genres of world literature.²¹

One distinguished literary historian of Bengali literature has commented that the foundation of Bengali literature was laid down during the age of Fort William College.²²

As the nineteenth century Bengal is remarkable for its revival, Bengali intellectuals got flourished during this century. Bengali literature progressed strongly. The cardinal features of Bengali literature may be characterised by some distinctive specializations as follows:

²⁰ Nazmul Ahsan, *op.cit.*, pp. 31-32.

²¹ Rafiqul Islam (ed.), *Kazi Nazrul Islam a New Anthology* (Dhaka: Bangla Academy, 1990), p. 120.

²² Ghulam Murshid, *Kalantare Bengla Gadya: Transformation of Bengali Prose during Colonial Rule* (Kolkata: Ananda Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 1399 Bengali Calendar), p. 13; J.C Ghose, *Bengali Literature* (Reprints; London: Curzon Press, 1976), p. 100.

- a) Creation of strong prose literature and its uncommon exposition.
- b) Influence of the Sanskrit scholars upon the first 50 years of Bengali prose literature.
- c) Bengali literature happens to get entangled with world literature and with the modern views of the world during the age.
- d) Creation of various subject based literature.
- e) Creation of contemporary literature.
- f) Introduction of 'spoken Bangla' appears and the standard Bengali seems to have attained literary stage and starts creating impact upon the later drift of literature.
- g) Unique progress of poetic literature.
- h) Creation of the ideals and values of universal, perennial and sovereign literature irrespective of the diversity of caste, country, cultural barriers or geographical aloofness, race or nation.

Acquaintance with English education alias English language and literature laid concrete on the way of the modern age. Bengali intelligentsia happened to be close with the European education and culture. From the medieval period to the modern period the social and cultural revolution that took place in the Bengal areas that came to be known as Bengal renaissance by the historians. The harvest of the renaissance contributed to the growth of humanism, the development of prose literature began, and inception of the publications of the periodicals also came to be available.

The growth of drama proclaims the most influential progress in Bengali literature as drama is the vital part of any literature as to exert its plea to the audience and readers. Shakespeare's plays created a rapid curiosity in the Bengali playwrights as well as the audience for making them interested in theatrical contact of Shakespeare directly and indirectly and helped them to thrive every aspect of structure of Bengali literature.

The tendency of imitating and assimilating Shakespeare into Bengali literary and dramatic culture and tradition appeared to start from 1852 that helped modernise Bengali drama.²³

Inception of Bengali historical dramas was initiated by Dwijendralal Roy. He showed his dexterity in satirical and social dramas. His *Nurzahan* (1908) and *Sajahan* (1909) appear to have shaped in the embodiment of *King Lear* of Shakespeare.²⁴

²³ Nazmul Ahsan, *Shakespeare Translations in Nineteenth-Century Bengal Theatre* (Dhaka: Bangla Academy, 1995), p. 84.

Studies of Shakespeare claim its existence, which are adorned with bright tradition, full impact on Bengali literature in the nineteenth century renaissance. Shakespeare studies contributed a lot which are historically proved. There are many reasons that are responsible for the shadowy mark of studies of Shakespeare nowadays. But *Dr. Milan Datta* anticipates that studies on Shakespeare have to be reached to the common readers and audiences and measures to be taken accordingly for wider perspectives.²⁵

The influence of English literature has had on the Bengali language is both deep and varied. The number of forms and concepts that Bengali Literature has acquired from its association and contact with English Literature is not significant. Bengali drama, as known to all it today did not exist before a Russian, Geranium Lebedeff, staged the translation of an English dramatic piece in 1796. That he was a foreigner is not without meaning, for modern Bengali drama owes its origin to the deliberate imitation of the European plays that were staged in this country during the later eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. True, Sanskrit writers had practised a form of dramatic writing but it was much too distant and different from modern Bengali drama to have any bearing on it. Nor could the popular tradition of musical performances called '*yatra*', made any important contribution to the growth of the theatre in Bengali; in fact, the modern stage grew up independently of all native forms.

Bengal was ready for a spiritual renewal which, at that moment of time, only an impact with the West could produce. The alert Bengali mind, fretting to get out of the furrow of its native chauvinism and limitations, was quick to discern the fire of ideas behind the smoke of guns, and it seemed as if the minds of the two peoples, the Bengali and the English, moved to the same rhythmic pattern.²⁶

Influence of Shakespeare on Bengali literature appears to be an abstract phenomenon but the keen observation in the context of research study and documentary evidence there remains the proof that the Bengali poet Tagore holds the impact of Shakespeare as an active representation in the field of Bengali literature. Influence of

²⁴ Sirajul Islam (ed.), *Banglapedia*, Vol. 6 (Dhaka: Bangladesh Asiatic Society, 2003), pp. 348-374.

²⁵ Milan Datta, *Prem O Rahshye Shakespeare* [Shakespeare in Love and Mystery] (Kolkata: Sahitya Academy, 1987), pp. 1-2.

²⁶ Buddhadeva Bose, *op.cit.*, p. 71.

Shakespeare penetrated into the literary genre in various forms existing in Bengali literature:

- I. Through translation of Shakespearean plays,*
- II. Through syllabic studies of Shakespeare,*
- III. Through staging of Shakespearean plays,*
- IV. Through dialogues of Shakespearean plays,*
- V. Through imitating Shakespearean characters*

The legendary image of Shakespeare, along with all the positive image of globally recognised playwright and the patronizing collaboration of the British education in India, and along with the efforts of the renowned Shakespearean scholars, contributed to be the gate way to various faculties of Bengali literature which acted as the inherent-gradients working behind the gradual but smooth access of Shakespeare to the world of Bengali intellectuals.

Evidence of interest in translation of Shakespeare plays in the form of popular Bengali romance novels had been advertised by L.M. Das & Co. of Dhaka, to be printed from Armanitola press, under the series title (Uponnyash Kushum). The translator's name was listed as G.G.Dey.

Shakespeare is deemed to be the standard of reference

Perhaps there grows no exaggeration when the great contributors of Bengali literature were influenced by Shakespeare known to be the greatest of English literature. Bengali literature without Rabindranath is like English literature without Shakespeare. Without Shakespeare English literature seems to be incomplete, in the same way Rabindranath Tagore holds the equal status in Bengali literature. The versatility of the one can't be compared to that of the other, at the same time one doesn't appear to be inferior or superior to other. But what unites them in the same arena is the ingenuity or brilliance they have exhibited on human life and nature in their literary products. Both the faculties of their writings resonate the pulse beat of the common humanity.

Rabindranath Tagore is one of the outstanding literary figures of all times. Tagore was fortunate in both the time and the place of his birth. The advent of the West had disturbed the placid waters of Indian life and a new awakening was sweeping throughout

the land. Its initial impact had dazzled the Indian mind and made many of the early reformers blind imitators of the West. The first uncritical admiration was wearing off when Tagore was born, but the ideals brought by the West were still active and strong. At the same time, there was growing recognition of the values of India's own heritage. The time was therefore opportune for the emergence of a genius who could unite in himself Eastern and Western values. It was not only the time but also the place which was opportune, Bengal had felt the impact of the West more vividly than perhaps any other party of India. In Bengal the new stirrings of life were most marked in Kolkata. The circumstances of Tagore's family also helped in the flowering of Tagore's genius.²⁷ Ashutosh Bhattacharya says that having followed Shakespearean dramatic literature meanwhile attained certain shape in his own writing and in the same way following the characters of Shakespeare perhaps the Bengali playwrights introduced their individual dexterity.²⁸

Various labels to show the progression of Bengali poetry

The labels or names indicate different strains constituting his poetry. In *Romeo and Juliet* Shakespeare dismissed categorization altogether: 'what's in name? That which we call a rose/ By any other name would smell as sweet' (II.ii.43). But names have evocative value in poetry. That's why they are specially emphasized. In the evolution of Bengali poetry three ages have been marked by the terms as follows:

- I. *Early,*
- II. *Medieval and*
- III. *Modern*

Their contents are broadly expressed by spirituality, reality and humanity. There is a rapport between modernity and infidelity, poetry to be great, must be redolent of the human as Wordsworth's or Tagore's poetry is. Modernity, according to Tagore, relates to ideas, not to time. Herein, reality asserts its own individuality: the object tries to become subject as it were.²⁹

Kabir Chowdhury provides the trend of Bengali drama with reference to his diagnosis highlighting the Bengali playwrights who treated Shakespearean plays as the

²⁷ Humayun Kabir, *One Hundred and One Poems* (New Delhi: Shahyta Academy, 2003), p. xx.

²⁸ Shafi Ahmed, *Bangadeshe Shakespeare* (Dhaka: Bangla Academy, 1988), pp. 30-31.

²⁹ Oneil Biswas, *op.cit.*, p. 51.

standard before them to write, mould, shape and create their characters and design the plots of their drama being held as the prime and effective branch of literature.

Shakespeare and G.C. Ghosh

It was consequently, natural that Shakespeare who was given priority over other writers in the syllabuses of the newly set up academic institutions and stage in the original in Calcutta should exert the most dominant influence on the growth and development of Bengali drama. It was he who taught Bengali writers the form as well as the concept of tragedy. When J.C. Ghosh wrote what is now regarded as the first tragedy in Bengali he quoted Shakespeare in support of his thesis that tragedy, contrary to popular opinion, depresses the audience.

J.C. Ghosh knew how difficult it would be for his readers to accept this wholly new kind of writing of which they had no previous experience what so ever Sanskrit aesthetics, for one thing, would not permit the plays to have unhappy endings. But more significant was the fact that the attitude, central to the tragic vision of accepting this world as an end in itself was alien to the religious beliefs cherished in this soil. The idea that the ordeals one endures here is a punishment justly awarded for what one did in a previous life and that what one suffers here will be adequately compensated for after death is not quite compatible with the tragic sense.

For writers who had not known Shakespeare and for readers even after they had read him it was difficult, if not impossible, to conceive life as a tragedy and despite J.C. Ghosh's strong advocacy of tragedies and the attempts of other writers to promote them, tragedy in Bengal did not flourish as well as the other kinds of drama. Until Bankimchandra the celebrated novelist came to the field. Bengali literature had not developed a conception of tragedy strange to itself; whatever elements of tragedy are noticed in plays and poems before him were nothing more than western ideas coast in a Bengali mould.³⁰

Modelling himself on the Elizabethans, Marlowe and Shakespeare Brecht treats history in Chronicle fashion by taking liberties with facts, events and chronology, his

³⁰ Kabir Chowdhury (ed.), *The Bangala Academy Journal*, Vol. I (Dhaka: East Pakistan, April 1970), p. 1.

intension being to provide imaginative human truth as well as a particular view of history.

People still think of the Age of Elizabeth as a secular period. The Age of Elizabeth is popularly known to be an age of a secular period between two sectors of doctrines related to Protestantism in which religious enthusiasm was sufficiently dormant to allow the new humanism to shape Bengali literature.³¹

Tragedy is not a matter to be regarded as something to grow any sort of depression. But Shakespeare was the first among the foreign writers to create the concept of tragedy among the Bengali playwrights. It was consequently a matter of priority of Shakespeare who was given special emphasis on the formation and inclusion of the demand of syllabus in the context of literary and pragmatic view.

Shakespeare was thought to be also a demand of natural consequence that assured of his priority in the syllabubs of the newly set up academic institutions and the staging of drama of the same in the original in Calcutta should exert the most dominant influence on the growth and development of Bengali drama. He was thought to be the pioneer in forming the concept of tragedy, which was supported by the renowned the then dramatist J.C. Ghosh who treated tragedy not to be a matter of any depression for the Bengali audience. Shakespeare is mostly known to the world for his tragedies namely Hamlet, King Lear, Macbeth and Othello which have given him a place of glory, pride and reputation throughout the world. His tragedies were the sources from which Bengali playwrights gleaned the most from Shakespeare who appeared as the dramatist of the dramatists for the Bengali playwrights.

Girish Chandra followed the styles of Shakespeare

Influence of Shakespeare is fully bestowed upon Girish Chandra which is reflected in his later play 'Sirajaddaulla' (1906). 'The great poet Shakespeare is my model I am following his foot steps' stated by Girish Chandra Ghosh (1844–1912)³² however didn't prove himself to be unhesitant in borrowing or imitating from Shakespeare. Hence in his writings the obvious influence of Shakespeare is found. Some also have found Shakespearean influence on Deenabandhu Mitra's another satire *Bie pagla Badu* (1866)

³¹ E.M.W. Tillyard, E.M.W. Tillyard, *The Elizabethan World Picture* (London: Penguin Books, 1968), p. 11.

³² Shafi Ahmed, *Bangadeshe Shakespeare*, p. 66.

had Shakespearean flavour. It was natural for Shakespeare to have been given precedence over other writers in the syllabuses of the newly set up academic institutions and staged in the original in Calcutta should exert the most dominant influence on the growth and development of Bengali drama.³³

Girish Chandra imitated the expression of various passions with their original conflicts. Shakespeare with the indomitable spirit and dauntless outlet of writings revealed the mysterious abode of human psychology. He has painted all kinds of corruption, injustice prevailing in the social life. Girish Chandra has presented the evils of human life like conspiracy, jealousy, deception, adultery, killing, envy and vile acts of the characters in his plays.³⁴

Although arrival of Shakespeare was thought to be a threat to the prevailing trends of the drama of the subcontinent as Shakespearean plays were deemed to be furnished with the European influence quite dissimilar and align to the sentiments of the Bengali audiences and the ways or styles of the socio-economic infrastructure of the country. In the ending part of the 19th century a certain class of critics considered the spread of Shakespearean radiation to be a threat to those of the Bengali drama.³⁵

Another renowned dramatist of Bengal Dizendralal also expressed his reactions with thankfulness to Shakespeare for his great debt of contribution as he said-

Having returned from England. I used to read Words and Shakespeare repeatedly and the parts of the poems and the plays of the latter writer were pleasant to me, I used to memorize them.³⁶

The characters, events, sequence, verses, comic trends, dialogues of his drama like *Tarabye*, *Nurjahan*, *Shajahan* etc. are supposed to have been modelled on the infrastructure and influence of Shakespearean plays. Shakespeare's influence has also

³³ Serajul Islam Chaudhury, *Bengali Translations of Shakespeare: Homage to Shakespeare* (Dacca: Department of English, Dacca University, 1965), p. 40.

³⁴ Shafi Ahmed, *op.cit.*, p. 49

³⁵ Syed Manzoorul Islam, *op.cit.*, pp. 89-90.

³⁶ Azit Kumar Gosh, *Bangla Natoker Itihash* [History of Bengali Drama] (Kolkata: General Printers and Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 1985), p. 158.

worked on Rabindranath who deemed Shakespeare as the model for his plays also specially his tragedies in making Bengali drama a success.

By following the comedies of Shakespeare, Rabindranath composed *Chira Kumar Shava* and *Shesh Rakkah*. A mind of different living aspects of dramatic scenario in the field of drama as was introduced by Rabindranath who had worked with the influence of Shakespeare.

In the studies of the history of Bengali drama and the emergence of the Bengali drama during the period of Rabindranath are illustrated with detailed aspects of the plays having the positive impact of Shakespeare and has contributed to the Bengali Literature as well as the Bengali drama. That sort of impact gave a different dimension in the trends of Bengali literature; a living branch of the dramatic literature was thought to have been discovered by the *Bengalis* through the views of Shakespeare. It can be stated without doubt that the subject matter, characterization, events, comic sequence, plot, climax of Bengali plays are thought to be the aftermath of the long-term effect or inherent influence of Shakespearean plays.

For the influence of Shakespearean plays, plots, sub-plots, acts of many Bengali plays are supposed to be imitated from Shakespeare by the Bengali playwrights. The second phase of the 19th century enjoyed the warmth of Shakespearean influence but gradually that was decaying and historically the name Shakespeare was appearing to be inseparable from the history of the Bengali drama.³⁷

‘The Bengali modernists adopted the free verse mainly from the west. But there was no blind imitation.’³⁸

Remarkable significance was the introduction of blank verse or verse without rhyme. Michael Madhu Sudan deserved the credit as he was trained in the school of western poets in general and English poets in particular, he thought that blank verse should be a medium to follow in attempts at writing verse; at least it was so in his case.

³⁷ Shafi Ahmed, *op.cit.*, pp. 115-116.

³⁸ Ron D.K Banerjee (trs.), *Poetry from Bengal* (London: Forst Books/UNESCO, 1989), p. xiii.

He was induced to make the first attempts half in jest, half in earnest, when in course of a change conversation with Jotindra Mohan Tagore, a well-known patron of literature and a judicious critic, he insisted that until blank verse came to its help, Bengali literature would not be able to make much headway.³⁹

So Shakespeare's influence basically was apparent in the field of theatrical aspects of Bengali literature. Rabindranath Tagore in his play *Raja and Rani* revealed Shakespearean flavour. Even to present psychological novel Shakespeare roused the flow of the characters full of psychological perturbation, psycho-diagnosis, inner ordeals of man, his relation with external world which may cause the agonies, pains glow in the abode of human heart are supposed to have influenced the then Bengali novelists as there came the existence of psychological aspects in the manifestation of the characters of the novels in Bengali literature which are thought to be emerged from the tragedies of Shakespeare. In the context of poetry Shakespeare didn't have any cope to convey direct impact upon the mind of the Bengali poets but his thematic ideas, art of characterization, objectivity full of negative capability seem to have affected the modern Bengali poets in their poetry Shakespeare's sonnets might be the apparent examples in this aspect. Bengali playwrights took Shakespeare as the standard of maturity of their perfection which was exposed in moulding, and following Shakespeare's plays.

Shakespeare and Bengali playwrights

Shakespeare has been followed by the Bengali playwrights in several ways. He appears to have been the model for them. In using the disguise device, the role of supernatural elements, in producing a five-act drama, the admixture of tragic-comedy, in the art of characterization or even in heightening the tragic appeal Shakespeare sharpened their craftsmanship. Accordingly, the use of the supernatural in drama, particularly in tragedy, is to be examined with reference to the romantic playwrights of Elizabethan England. Their plays vividly exhibit the function of the supernatural in tragedy.⁴⁰

It was he (Shakespeare) who taught Bengali writers the form as well as the concept of tragedy. When J.C. Ghosh wrote what is now regarded as the first tragedy in

³⁹ Priyaranjan Sen, *Western Influence in Bengali Literature*, p. 129.

⁴⁰ Kalyannath Dutta, *Some Aspects of the Study of Literature* (Kolkata: Sribhumi Publishing Company, 1999), p. 141.

Bengali he quoted Shakespeare in support of his thesis that tragedy does not, contrary to popular opinion, depresses the audience.⁴¹

It is assumed that Shakespeare happened to arrive in India in the year 1719 in the list of the books of the library of the saint George Fort in Madras. It is also noticed that along with religious books some of the plays of Shakespeare were found and Shakespeare was said to have reached Calcutta by the year 1780 in this context *The Bengal Gazette* (the 49th vol. 23rd-30th December 1780) can be named as the reference to show the evidence of the arrival of Shakespeare in Calcutta which was said to be the gate way of the studies of the Bard as quoted in the following statement:-

The managers to the Theatre having generously offered to give benefit Play to Mr. Soubise, towards the completion of his management, Mr. Soubise will appear on that night in the character of Othello.

But many guessed that the plays of Shakespeare were said to be staged in Calcutta in the year 1751.⁴²

The said magazine also has conveyed the same source of the staging of Shakespearean plays in Calcutta that in the year 1751 a stage named *Young Writers of John Company* was established which in the long run came to be known as Old Play house but there is no evidence of staging any play there on. It is conjectured that some parts of Shakespeare's plays or a full play of the playwright was said to have been staged there on which was reflected in the statement of Mr. Pallabsen Sen. We can best conjecture that the Britons of David Garrick's age did not forget their Shakespeare in far Calcutta.⁴³

But the Old Play House was very short-lived as there raised a deteriorating trend in the relationship between the Ruler (Nowab) of Bengal *Sirajuddaulla* and the *British East India Company* and consequently the activities of the stage were collapsed which

⁴¹ Serajul Islam Choudhury, "Bengali Translations of Shakespeare", *Dhaka University Studies*, Dhaka University, Department of English, 1965, pp. 40-42.

⁴² The Statesman, Calcutta, October 22, 1905, The Calcutta Stage; Some chapters from its Early History (1); Cited by Shafi Ahmed, *Bangadeshe Shakespeare* [Shakespeare in Bengal] (Dhaka: Bangla Academy, 1988), pp. 2-3.

⁴³ Amalendu Bose (ed.), *Pallab Sengupta in Calcutta Essays on Shakespeare* (Kolkata: 1966), p. 196 cited by Shafi Ahmed, *op.cit.*, pp. 2-3.

after the *Battle of Palasy* came to be recognised as the New Play House in the year 1775. It is assumed from the documents that at the request of the employees of the John Company David Garrick sent one of his students to Calcutta and he managed to stage the plays like *Richard III* and *Hamlet* as a result of the success of staging plays of Shakespeare David Garrick was sent a bundle of two gifts like the flutes named Madeira.⁴⁴ There established the fashion of advertisements of drawing the notice of the people to watch the plays of Shakespeare even in the newspapers and Bengal gazette and Hickey's Gazette within the establishment of the New Play House in Calcutta as the form of drama. Bengal Gazette played a vital role in establishing Shakespeare in the hearts of the Bengali people by means of drawing their attention and analytical or critical comments on Shakespeare as it is viewed in the same year 1780 on 14th December referring to the famous quotation of Shakespeare from *Macbeth*-

It is a Tale
Told by an idiot, full of sound
Spite and fury, signifying Nothing

At that time a physician named Francis Rendel employed and engaged in the service of the company also played the key role in staging the plays of Shakespeare in Calcutta and he was said to be the true follower and disciple of Mr. David Garrick. The staging of Shakespeare's plays came to have the increasing trend and in the year 1784 on 23rd April *Hamlet* and within after staging of the said play there happened the staging of Shakespeare's another play *Romeo and Juliet* on the 23rd August in 1784 which resulted in the increasing popularity of Shakespeare in Calcutta among the *Bengalis*.⁴⁵ In the Calcutta Gazette published in 11th November 1784, a piece of quotations from *Hamlet* as a piece of evidence to have performed the staging of Shakespeare's play being mentioned with a view to having a wonderful news-

We hear the tragedy of Hamlet will be performed in the course of next week; but the managers have thought proper to omit the farce of the Mock Doctor.

⁴⁴ *Desh*, 2nd May 1964 episode; Mr Simpson, The Librarian of The Royal Commonwealth Society gave the above information at the display of Shakespeare and the Commonwealth Countries held in London in the month of April 1964; Shafi Ahmed, *op.cit.*, pp. 2-3.

⁴⁵ Shafi Ahmed, *op.cit.*, pp. 2-3.

Reactions of the critics and criticism of Shakespeare

In fact, Shakespeare is not discovered in the pages of books but on the stage. Individual interest in the plays of Shakespeare gave him the establishment in the literary scenario of this subcontinent beyond the academic syllabus of the same. Naturally the critics are to depend on the varieties of interpretations and criticism in order to search the nature of study about Shakespeare. Failure as well as success of the same lies in the origin of the character⁴⁶

Shakespeare's outlook was modern. There was simultaneously the practice of the elements of renaissance and also the reflection of ancient thoughts and ideas, manners and etiquette, beliefs and prejudice in his writings despite Shakespeare's being the modern in the real sense of the term.

The modernity of Shakespeare came to enlighten and enrich the nineteenth century Bengali literature. There are many playwrights who are thought to have deemed Shakespeare as their model and followed him out and out. Girish Chandra Ghosh is thought to be a playwright of this movement.⁴⁷

Shafi Ahmed in his *Shakespeare in Bengal* has presented the evidence of the influence of Shakespeare on Bengali drama from the beginning of the said sector. With the inclusion of Shakespeare plays in the syllabus of different schools and colleges Shakespeare happened to get time-honored in the hearts of the *Bengalis*. The translation of Shakespearean plays and poems, modification and presentation of the plays of Shakespeare in the theatre strengthened his plays to be of the qualities and the playwright to be a model for the Bengali playwrights.

Shivnath Shastri in his "*Ram Tanu Lahiri O Tatkalin Bangashamaj* [Ramtanu Lahiri and the Contemporary Bengali Society] has written how Shakespeare was placed in the hearts of the young generation instead of Kalidasha.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Shwapon Majumdar, "Biddayanik Shakespeare", *Jadavpur Journal of Comparative Literatures*, Vols. 20-21, 1982-1983, p. 94.

⁴⁷ Kamrul Bandhu Sen, *Girish Chandra Nattya Shahitya* (Kolkata: nd), p. 38.

⁴⁸ Shafi Ahmed, *op.cit.* pp. 16-18.

Universal Influence of Shakespeare

William Shakespeare, the first name in English Literature is that of an Elizabethan poet and dramatist whose skill in transforming human character and action into art created a world of unforgettable people and phrases.⁴⁹

From the beginning of the 19th century in Calcutta, staging and popularity of Shakespearean plays began to enhance. Dramas of Shakespeare and the staging of the same were not only watched by the European elite even the Bengali audience interested to please and accompany them also enjoyed dramas of Shakespeare similarly. The middle class Bengali had the opportunity to enjoy the same. In this way Shakespeare became the attention of the increasing number of the audience that paved the Bard in receipt of an individual scenario in the theatrical arena in the context of the studies of Shakespeare in Bangladesh.⁵⁰

Rabindranath considered Shakespeare as the model

When Shakespearean plays began to be translated into Bengali, they were also being performed in the original language on different stages in Calcutta. These stages were founded by rich men of Calcutta, and their patronage inaugurated the age of private theatres in Bengal. From 1850 to 1972, a number of private theatres were set up and patrons were interested in continuing the practice of staging plays according to the rules of Sanskrit dramaturgy.⁵¹

Poet Rabindranath Tagore considered Shakespeare as the model of the plays of the Bengali playwrights. His varied survival in different branches of life and the conflicts of the same have occupied Bengali's hearts.⁵² He has further illustrated that the 16th century great poet Shakespeare in the history of the literature his acceptance took place spontaneously linked with the hearts, language and even the manners prevailing in the Bengali society. Rabindranath considered Shakespeare as the model for the plays of the Bengali playwrights.⁵³

⁴⁹ A Watt Homer and W. Watt William, *A Dictionary of English Literature* (New York: Barnes and Noble, Inc., 1957), p. 249.

⁵⁰ Shafi Ahmed, *op.cit.*, pp. 21-22.

⁵¹ Nazmul Ahsan, *op.cit.*, p. 23.

⁵² Cited in the introduction of the play *Malini* which is said to be the expression of the recognition of Shakespeare by Rabindranath Tagore.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

Dr. Syed Manzoorul Islam has made comments about the trends of the critics that seemed to go against Shakespeare although Shakespeare was going to be praised and worshipped, on the other hand he was criticised. Attack on Shakespeare centred round the dissimilarities or the opposite convention of dramas existing in Bengal. The sub-continental trend of drama followed the own and individualistic style and the constituent part of the plays of the playwrights who appeared to remain unaffected, and were said to be original like the tradition of Kalidasha. Shakespeare was thought to be a threat to the prevailing streams of the plays of the subcontinent as Shakespearean plays were deemed to be the European influence quite dissimilar and align to the sentiments of the Bengali audiences and the socio-economic communications of the country. In the ending part of the 19th century a certain class of critics deemed Shakespearean fashions to be a threat to those of the Bengali drama.⁵⁴

Shakespeare: The inception and emergence as a playwright

Shakespeare started making efforts to write plays suitable for acting on the stage for which he had to take the liability of modifying, changing, editing, including alternating or excluding the writings of others and subsequently there grew the tendency of writing plays suitable for the audience of the time. His strength of mind and devotion to the efforts made to write plays strengthened his confidence. In 1589, in the light of Latin comedy, Shakespeare first wrote a play named *The Comedy of Errors*, and in the year 1591 he composed *Henry the sixth* based on the victory of Armada which was a milestone in the history of England and consequently in 1592, he came to be known as the playwright in the dramatic society of England. As a result he entangled his life with the theatre and staging of the plays for 25 years. Theatre or stage without Shakespeare or Shakespeare without theatre or staging of the play never could be imagined in the period of the then time. Shakespeare had to get his plays recognized for there remained the depth of the feelings for the humanity in his writings. He was able to establish that sort of inner improvement through the manifestation of his art of characterization.⁵⁵ Doubtless to say that Shakespeare's influence cannot be measured by the amount of productions of his translated and modified plays on the Bengali stage. It went much deeper, and it would be

⁵⁴ Syed Manzoorul Islam, *Bangladeshe Shakespeare Charcha*, pp. 89-91.

⁵⁵ Shital Ghosh, *Engrezi Shahitter Etihash* (Kolkata: Barnali, 3rd Edition, 1993), p. 78.

no way of magnification to say that the promising playwrights and critics of renascent Bengal had their commencement in dramaturgy from Shakespeare. It was from the plays of Shakespeare that they became acquainted with the consciousness of tragedy, the meaning of conflict, the art of characterisation, orchestration of characters, in short, the knowledge of how to make a drama a lively expression of life in its severest moments of catastrophe, conflict and tragedy. To the playmaker no less than to the specialist, Shakespeare was the yardstick of value.⁵⁶

In short, the theatre was no longer amateur but professional and this organ of western influence, this medium of delight, was at last guaranteed of a secure and lasting footing. This was in 1872, and the year that marks, as has been said, a exact progress of western influence in Bengal. The builders of the stage in the years that were to follow were, almost all of them, agreed on the scheme and objective on doing as best as they could in their attempts for the growth of the drama. The machinery of the stage and the main dramatic forms were as has been observed, taken up already and it remains now to trace its further development under western, in particular, Shakespearean influence through the next forty years, 1872–1912.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ Nazmul Ahsan, *op.cit.*, p. 83.

⁵⁷ Priyaranjan Sen, *Western Influence in Bengali Literature*, p. 194.

Conclusion

Shafi Ahmed has concluded his book *Bangadeshe Shakespeare* with the view of cherishing the growing aptitude for the knowledge and the unlimited study of Shakespeare to be the only way for us to pay the greatest tribute to him from us.⁵⁸

When Shakespeare studies appears to be vital to enter into the realm of English literature then there is the least scope for anyone to remain isolated enjoying the Bard who is to be treated as one's neighbour as one's own. There is no bar to literature which is supposed to be the gate way to ventilate the undiscovered chapters of life as literature of a nation is prone to be similar to that of the other. Hence, Bengali literature for its wider and comprehensive aspects deserves to have the mutual exchange of its affinity and prospects with any branch of world literature. So the great literary genius William Shakespeare of the English language and literature appeals for its world wide impact. The *Bengalis* of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries had the fertile and progressive background in diagnosing and imbibing the Bard with all the genesis as the Bengalis were prone to be entangled with anything good from others, in which, they do not hesitate to get mingled with others which reminds us of the remarks of William J. Long as he says, '*His (Shakespeare) influence upon our own language and thought is beyond calculation*'.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ Shafi Ahmed, *Bangadeshe Shakespeare* (Dhaka: Bangla Academy, 1988), p. 228.

⁵⁹ William J. Long, *op.cit.*, p. 154.

Chapter 4

Influence of Shakespeare on Bengali Drama and Bengali Playwrights

Introduction

Theatrical performance or stage performance was said to be one of the chief means of amusements in Bengal and an educated Bangalee was supposed to take some interest in the dramatic works of distinguished Bengali authors and their representation on the boards of recognised national theatres.¹

Bengali drama was also greatly influenced by foreign literatures. However, the impact of western literature could be clearly seen in their plays, sometimes in the art of characterisation, sometimes in the nature of the irony and humour, sometimes in the pattern of their plot construction and sometimes in the witty brilliant dialogues of their characters.² *Kirti Bilash* (1852) is said to be the earliest dramatic creation composed by G.C. Gupta and it came into focus as the original tragic play under the influence of western literature and the chief ideal of the western trend was said to be represented by Shakespeare.³ Original dramatic creation under the influence of Shakespeare's plays was developed due to transformation or portrayal of the plays thorough the presentation of dramatic materials and ideas into interesting new forms by the Bengali playwrights. The exciting new mutations that the passionate love of *Rumeo and Juliet*, the helplessness of the *King Lear* and his lamentations, the jealousy of *Othello*, ambitious and greedy belonging for power in *Macbeth*, conflicts of *Hamlet* entered into Bengali dramatic literature and crucial aspects of life presented by Shakespeare inspired the Bengali playwrights to compose tragedies in Bengali.⁴

Efforts have been made in this study by exploring the influence of Shakespeare on Bengali drama and Bengali playwrights. How Shakespearean influence on Bengali audience worked and how the impact helped Bengali out look turn into attaining a

¹ Priyaranjan Sen, *Western Influence in Bengali Literature* (Kolkata: Academic Publishers, 1966), p. 149.

² Kabir Chowdhury, "Foreign Influence on A National Literature", *Dacca University Studies*, Journal of the Faculty of Arts, Dacca, June, 1980, p. 114.

³ Shafi Ahmed, *Bangadeshe Shakespeare* (Dhaka: Bangla Academy, 1988), p. 29.

⁴ Nazmul Ahsan, *Shakespeare Translations in Nineteenth-Century Bengal Theatre* (Dhaka: Bangla Academy, 1995), p. 80.

matured global vision. I have also highlighted the limitations of the Bengali playwrights regarding their approaches to Shakespearean plays by examining the styles of presentation of Shakespeare characters, plots, dialogues, and structural themes into the Bengali language through composing dramas. This chapter also shows a comparative analysis of Shakespeare and Bengali playwrights. I have presented an evaluation of Shakespeare as a dramatist and his impact upon the Bengali playwrights with references to the composition and production of Bengali drama. Gradual emergence of Bengali playwrights, modification and transmission of the plays of Shakespeare with a little modification and little adaptation, imitation of Shakespearean characters, plots, dialogues, scenes, and acts by the Bengali playwrights are also discussed in this chapter. The year 1852 appears to be significant for the beginning of this tendency of imitating and assimilating Shakespeare into Bengali culture and tradition which helped modernize Bengali drama and trend of literal translation initiated into Bengali dramatic literature and simultaneously this tendency of translations with the influence of a definite playwright through adaptations and cultural translations of Shakespeare plays continued.⁵

Any question related to dramatic literature displays Shakespearean contact and mention of his plays. No dramatic discussion reaches the pivotal point without the rapport of Shakespeare. The branches of all literature bow down to 'drama' which is said to be the most effective and dominating piece of literary genre.

Bengali dramatic literature has been endowed with rich traditional values and taste of heritage and Shakespearean influence that first started working in the hearts of the Bengali playwrights who consequently projected the same in their dramas. Through the ways of modification, transformation, thematic transmission Shakespeare's influence remained active in the productions of the Bengali playwrights. Shakespeare himself enjoyed freedom in composing his plays and sought to shape his tragedies or comedies with the sources of various modes of culture, race or nation and perhaps Bengali playwrights didn't have hesitation to glean or choose the thematic, structural and dramatic techniques applied to the mechanism by Shakespeare in their own productions in the way they liked and exerted their liberty in following Shakespeare who was said to be the

⁵ Nazmul Ahsan, *op.cit.*, p. 84.

model of Bengali drama. The Bengali playwrights felt Shakespeare as a great source of exercising their dramatic faculties in adorning the characters and events of their plays.⁶

Actually, modern Bengali drama is based on the influence of Western dramatic literature which was developed in the second half of the nineteenth century. Plays written from 1850 to 1872 were mostly translations from Sanskrit and Shakespeare's plays. A few plays inspired by Shakespeare's themes and ideas also encouraged translators to initiate a new dramatic dimension for the creation of a dramatic literature in Bengali, grasping their own conventional form, e.g. 'yatra', and classical modes and rules of Sanskrit plays. It can thus be reasonably evaluated that almost known and anonymous playwrights were thus directly or indirectly influenced by Sanskrit and English plays and Shakespeare, to many, was the model for their literary judgement. P.R. Sen in his *Western Influence in Bengali Literature* pictures the stage of the time was one of the chief means of entertainment in Bengal in those days and an educated Bengali was naturally expected to take some interest in the dramatic works of the distinguished Bengali writers and their representation on the boards of national theatre, however, educated Bengalis were the theatre goers in particular of that time.

A number of plays by Shakespeare were translated into Bengali with Indian adaptations. The plays variously translated and adapted from the plays of Shakespeare were examples of a new style of Bengali dramatic literature enriched with new ideas and technologies imitated from the English Theatre without losing its conventional individuality. Before the translations began the practice of staging or play reading of Shakespeare among students had continued.⁷

Translation is now-a-days looked on as a manifestation *par excellence* of literary craftsmanship. It enjoys a paradoxical kind of independence though it depends on the original in respect of subject-matter and contents and a 'translation' is to be understood in terms of language.⁸

⁶ Priyaranjan Sen, *Western Influence in Bengali Literature*, pp. 99-100.

⁷ Nazmul Ahsan, *op.cit.*, p. 31.

⁸ Oneil Biswas, *A Book of Bengali Verse* (New York: A Writers Workshop Publication, 1990), pp. 52-53.

Amritlal Bala upholds the dramatic genius of Shakespeare in his book entitled *Macbeth Bikkhon* and Bala says that there is no drama in the world and there is no stage on which Shakespearean influence has not worked.⁹

The year 1852 is said to be an important landmark in the study of the western influence on Bengali drama. In the same year a notable attempt was made to introduce the new model by a play composed in the Bengali language. It is not known to set up a literary standard. The name of the book was *Bhadrarjun* published, as has been said, in 1852 and written by Tara Charan Sikdar. The lack of a drama in the vernacular language was keenly felt at that time.¹⁰ The explosion of interest in Shakespearean drama occurred in Calcutta in the nineteenth century. Shakespearean dramatic presentation by *The Tempest's* translation into Bengali by Claude Monkton of Fort William College in 1805, was significant not just for the history of modern Bengali drama into which it quickly merged, but also for marking the initial form of Shakespearean cultural penetration into the faculties of the *Bangalee* of Bengal. As several modern Bengali literary historians have pointed out the vernacular dramatic compositions to be initially tentative but increasingly more experimental, innovative and adaptive in character and at the same time the said compositions were thought to have conceived in conscious emulation of both the practice as well as the substance of Shakespeare's plays.¹¹

A story is told of an old Brahmin renowned for scholarship that, not knowing a word of English, took the trouble of having one or two of Shakespeare's tragedies verbally translated for him. 'This is what drama should be!' was the judgment of a man who, in all his life, had studied nothing but Sanskrit. This predisposition, which might be called, was nowhere more manifest than in literature: When the western wind first blew, it was so hard that Michael Madhusudan Dutta made a lot of efforts to become a European but withdrew himself from that track to be only potentially a great Bengali poet. Personalities with the Brahmo reformation, Isharchandra Vidyasagar with his great soul,

⁹ Quoted in Dr. Amrita Lal Bala, *Macbeth Bikkhon* [An Observation on Macbeth] (Rajshahi: Hamida Book Corporation, 1998), p. 47; Azit Kumar Gosh, *Bangla Natoker Itihash*, Vol. 7 (Kolkata: General Printers and Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 1985), pp. 25-26.

¹⁰ Priyaranjan Sen, *Western Influence in Bengali Literature*, p. 162.

¹¹ Cited in *Dhaka University Studies* [Dhaka: Department of English, University of Dhaka]; For more Ajit Kumar Ghose, pp. 22-45, and Rudroprasad Sen Gupta, *Bangla Natoker Shakespearear Provab* (The Influence of Shakespeare on Bengali Drama) in *Porichoy* (May 1964), p. 355; Amal Mitra, *Kolkatay Bideshi Rangaloy* [Foreign Drama in Kolkata] (Kolkata: Prokash Bhavan, 1967), pp. 7-21.

and Vivekananda's organ voice, rose to stem the declamatory enthusiasms of Derozio's disciples; and as a result of which *Bangalee* came to the opening years of the present century, when Rabindranath so far a master of the European spirit as to be able to write:

To day the west has opened its doors, and many are the
bringers of gifts. They will give and take, they will mingle
and commingle: we shall not send them back from the
universal shores of India (*Translation Buddha deva*).¹²

Rise of the play houses in Kolkata indicates the evidence of the interest of the people in the theatrical productions and dramatic presentations in the nineteenth century. Amrita Lal Bala also cites the same sort of remarks in his book *Macbeth Bikkhon* published in the year 1998 in which he has displayed the appreciations as the interest of the *Bangalee* in Shakespearean plays as quoted in his book:

i. The success of the play shows therefore a forgone conclusion when Babu Girish Chuander Ghose under took the leading character. The part of Lady Macbeth is always one of great difficulty even in the hands of accomplished actresses and it is not much of a surprise if it is not so well done as might have been desired. The other actors sustained their parts fairly well and the witch scene was full of mystic terrors that impressed themselves deeply upon the audience.¹³

ii. There were flashes of historic talents in the display of Macbeth's Character while Lady Macbeth must have made an impression of the assembly.¹⁴

iii. A Bengali Thane of Cawder is a living suggestion of incongruity but the reality is an astonishing reproduction of the standard convention of the English Stage.¹⁵

The impact of Shakespeare's plays helped translators to transform Shakespearean theme and idea into Bengali mind and a good number of transformed works in Bengali appeared in the mid nineteenth century, both on the stage and in literature. Performance of tragic plays of

¹² Buddhadeva Bose, *An Acre of Green Grass: A Review of Modern Bengali Literature* (Kolkata: Papyrus, 1948), pp. 71-72.

¹³ Dr. Amrita Lal Bala, *Macbeth Bikkhon* [An Observation on Macbeth] (Rajshahi: Hamida Book Corporation, 1998), pp. 215-216.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

Shakespeare at residential theatres was a great prohibition. Women of the house thought it to be a curse in disguise and patrons could not go against the whims of their ladies.¹⁶

The nineteenth century Bengal enlightened with the spirit of renaissance flourished in various branches of philosophy and aesthetic progress. The productions of drama or staging of dramas were the consequence of that awareness contributed by the renaissance spirit. In the past, people used to enjoy the taste of drama from the source of 'yatra', folk song which used to be staged in the way of acting. But that sort of acting was beyond the choice of the educated people and was meant for common people and since the beginning of the 19th century the educated Bengali had the contact of the western notion about the idea of Shakespeare dramas. The stages, theatres established by the English people and the audiences of Bengal became aware of the points and aspects of the acting and presenting drama on the stage. The history of the origin of Drama of Bengal displays information of the theatres established by the English people may be assessed in the following way:

- i. In the ending part of 18th century a Russian adventurer Mr. H. Lebedeff the theatre named 'Bengally Theatre' he managed his pundit named Goloknath Das to get *Disguise, Love is the best Doctor* translated for the purpose of acting.
- ii. In fact, the plays staged and directed by the English people between the years 1858 and 1871 but their efforts were not successful.¹⁷

Hara Chandra Ghosh of Hughli, was Superintendent of Excise at Maldah at the time of its publication and more suggestions came from some scholars of maturer years as a result Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* became the subject of his attempt for a task of translation. *Bhanumati* refers to the Bengali rendering of *Portia* of Shakespeare and the translation of *The Merchant of Venice* which has been named *Bhanumati-Chittavilas*. It is learnt that it was designed as 'A Bengali Natok, though written much after the manner of an English play.' It is also observed that it was the first venture of the author in dramatic

¹⁶ Darsan Chowdhury, *Unish Shataker Natya Bishoy* (on Theatre and Drama in the Nineteenth Century) (Kolkata: Siri Hari Printers, 1985), p. 117. And Nazmul Ahsan, *Shakespeare Translations in Nineteenth-Century Bengal Theatre* (Dhaka: Bangla Academy, 1995), p. 44.

¹⁷ Priyaranjan Sen, *Western Influence in Bengali Literature* (Kolkata: Academic Publishers, 1966), p. 155.

composition and though it was introduced as a literal translation and grew more and more independent of its original as the work progressed.¹⁸

Shakespearean influence upon the dramatic presentation of Dinabhandhu

Dinabhandhu was a contemporary playwright of Madhusudan as they were both students of Hindu college a centre of preaching Shakespearean themes and ideas. So 'Dinabhandhu' had the way to have the touch of Shakespearean craze prevailing at Hindu college even after two years of the departure of Professor Richardson who contributed to the growth of the sense and the change of taste to understand and study Shakespeare at Hindu college, 'Dinabhandhu' was also greatly influenced by Shakespeare but his famous drama *Nil Darpon* remained untouched from the influence of Shakespeare as Ashutosh Bhatta Chariya says that there is no entrance of the seeds of the downfall of a hero entering the tragic life through the hole of human weaknesses-which result in the inevitable tragic consequence appearing nowhere in the play *Nil Darpan* because there is no heroic character. So *Nil Darpan* doesn't appear to have any Shakespearean influence.¹⁹

Shakespeare doesn't exist in *Nil Darpan* but there is a full touch of imitation of Shakespeare in some of his other plays like *Nobin Tapasshini* which is said to be a direct imitation of the play *Merry Wives of Windsor* of Shakespeare.

Another play of 'Dinabhandhu' named *Bea Pagol Buro* is treated to be an embodiment of Shakespeare's play named *Macbeth*. The play *Shadabar Akadoshi* published in the year 1866 appears to have been written with a good number of dialogues of the plays from Shakespeare. Dinabhandhu has used the dialogues of the play *Othello* as follows:

O thou, invisible spirit of wine
If thou hast no name to be known by
Let us call thee devil [act-iii]

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 154.

¹⁹ Shafi Ahmed, *op.cit.*, p. 51.

The characters of the play *Shadobar Akadoshi* appears to be the English educated persons who are young and have uttered the dialogues of Shakespeare. There is the mention of the dialogues of Shakespeare for 26 times. Dinabhandhu Mitra has followed Shakespeare's style in his play *Lilabati* specially in framing plot construction of the play *Lolit's Lolita* are the embodiment of the characters of *Romeo and Juliet*. But 'Dinabhandhu' was not able to heighten the depth of Shakespeare in setting the love story.

In the year 1872 there published *Jamai Barik* as the picture of the socio-economic setting of Bengali society but the character 'Kamini' resembles Shakespearean character 'Catherina' in the play *The Taming of The Shrew*. Both the characters 'Kamini' and 'Catherina' are of boastful nature and they appear to be rude natured, quarrel some and harsh tongued ladies.²⁰

In his another play *Komole Kamini* (1873) Dinabhandhu tried to follow Shakespearean style and in the ending part of the said play Dinabhandhu wanted to have the lofty and passionate heroism but that was beyond his command to pervade. But in depicting the character 'Ghandhari' Dinabhandhu happened to project the basic instincts and hidden nature of Lady Macbeth as presented by Shakespeare in his play *Macbeth*. 'Ghandhari' represents 'Lady Macbeth' successfully portrayed by Dinabhandhu. Lady Macbeth instigated her husband in killing king Duncan who was the guest king, in the same way 'Ghandhari' conspired to get her step son murdered for mere materialistic attainment. She suffered her whole life for the sin committed. She appears to have lost her balance of mind and finds no solace to compensate for the loss of peace of mind caused by the crime accompliced by her. Dinabhandhu owes much to Shakespeare for imitating the characters *Lady Macbeth* as she happened to turn into the tragic victim of death that terminated the pangs of suffering. Affinities or similarities lying between 'Ghandhari' and 'Lady Macbeth' coincide with each other on a point of their punishment followed by crimes although 'Ghandhari' didn't die as a result of her sinful act like *Lady Macbeth*. But a sinner must suffer which seems to have been embodied by both the characters.

²⁰ Shafi Ahmed, *op.cit.*, pp. 39-45.

The remarkable scene of the play *Macbeth* 'To walk in sleep' is significantly worthy of detailed analysis. 'Doctor arrives when Lady Macbeth utters-

Since his Majesty went into field
I have seen her arise from her bed,
Throw her night-gown upon her
Unlock her closet,
Take forth paper, fold it, write upon't read it,
Afterwards seal it and again return to bed
Yet all this while in a most fast sleep.²¹

In the play 'Kamole kamini' same expression is noticed when the King (Raja) says:

Aki voyanak badhi; Mohishi nidrita ki jagrata nirnoy kora
jay na. Mohishir sokh khokon ummilito khokon mukulito.
nidrita abosthay vromon koren, nidrita abosthay jagrater
nay kotha kon.'

King: 'What a terrible disease; the queen whether in sleep or wake can't be determined. The eyes of the lady are some times open or some times close, walks while sleeping, talks like the awake while she is asleep.

In fact, Dinabhandhu followed Shakespeare throughout his career as a dramatist. He was greatly influenced by Shakespeare who was of immense inspiration to him and he cherished Shakespeare in his mind as the perennial source of impetus for him.²² In 1860 or thereabouts, the prominent figure in the field of Bengali drama was Dinabhandhu Mitra (1829-1873) whose *Nil-Darpan* (1860) acquired almost an recognized reputation on account of its intrinsic merits as for the heartrending pathos of the story and its implications.

Lilavati has three citations from Shakespeare, *Elihu*, *Burritt* and *Cotlins* on the evils of wine. That appears to be inimitable creation of Dina Bandhu, *Nime Datta*, the central character in *Sadhabar Ekadashi*, in his moments of exhilaration due to the use of spirits, quotes lines from Dryden, Milto, Pope and Shakespeare.

But there is a point of still more interest from the point of view in *Nabin-Tapasvini*. Ratikanta is deceived in Act-II, Scene-I as a Shakespearean husband. The

²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 46-47.

²² Shafi Ahmed, *op.cit.*, pp. 39-48.

Hondol-Kut-Kutey incident is an imitation of *Sir John Falstaff's* fate in Shakespeare's *Merry Wives of Windsor*, especially when the valiant and gallant minister is decoyed by *Malati* and *Mallika* (Act IV, Sc. III). This might be compared to Act III, Scene IV, of the English play where Mrs Ford and Mrs Page make the knight go into a basket, covering him with foul linen. But in Shakespeare's play the husbands are not in the confidence of their wives at the outset; and the fairy scene *Dinabhandhu* does not even attempt to reproduce. The character of *Jagadamaba*, again appears without a parallel in the British dramatist Shakespeare however, there are occasional verbal similarities, but they do not amount too much.²³

Madhusudan treated Shakespeare not only as a model for his dramatic presentation but also an image for his creative and intellectual genius. Madhusudan told his friend Keshab Ganguli to look at the splendid Shakespearean drama. Madhusudan was well versed in understanding the trend of European theatrical and dramatic progress as he writes in a letter to Keshab Ganguli.

In the great European Drama there are the stern realities of life, lofty passion, and heroism of sentiment with all the softness, all romance, the world of reality and dream of fairylands keep the readers away from the crucial world. The genius of the Drama has not yet received even a moderate degree of development in this country. Ours are dramatic poems; and even Wilson, the great foreign admirer of our ancient language, has been compelled to admit this.²⁴

Crucial hard realities of life, extreme emotion, and excess of feelings are the dominant features of western dramatic art but the features sustaining in the dramatic techniques of Bengali literature appear to be replete with imagination, middle class crisis and are linked with unreal events which do not come to be appreciated as the standard of Bengali drama. In this context, Madhusudan has illustrated the limitations of Bengali drama which perhaps convinced him to be interested in European alias western literature for sources to exert his talents in the mode of borrowing the elements required for the

²³ Priyaranjan Sen, *Western Influence in Bengali Literature*, pp. 177-178.

²⁴ Wilson Hores Heman (1786-1860), a learned Sanskrit British Pundit who translated *Mekhdud*, *Musschakotic*, *Maloti Madove*, *Uttam Charit*, *Bikramoboshrihi*, *Ratnaboli*, *Mudrakkah of Kalidas* into English. His another book *Theaters of Hindus* is a valuable masterpiece (Cited in *Madhusudaner Bishwa* by Mobaser Ali. Published by Selina Hossain, director, Textbook Division, Bangla Academy, Dhaka-1000. First Edition June 1997).

perfection of Bengali drama but gradually he managed to adhere to his original trend of the Bengali literature although the external beauties captured his mind even he avoided referring to Hindu mythological legends and took shelter in the aspects of the Greek mythology as he says 'It is my ambition to engraft the exquisite graces of the Greek mythology on our own in the present poem.'

Madhusudan was a student of Hindu College and a young Bengal activist. He was a follower of Derozio who was said to be their 'image god' in the context of intellect, knowledge and modern outlook and spirited with renaissance attitude toward life and society. He used to treat England as the land of Milton and Shakespeare; Madhusudan had the belief that great poets like them begotten by such a land might produce great poets who are adorned with her flavour.²⁵

Madhusudan had the opinion that due to the renaissance in Europe the playwrights avoided following Greek or Senecan style. Naturally Shakespeare was not influenced by them. Shakespeare introduced newer stricture and structure of composing plays consisting of more than five acts that were used to be generally maintained by the Greek playwright. Shakespeare also avoided Greek element in his plays.

His dramatic story appears complex and most of his plays are characterized with double plots which are not available in Greek plays. The *Two Gentle Men of Verona* is the story in which two plots of different events run paralally. In his another play *Much Ado About Nothing* there exist two stories. There are also two stories or plots in *Measure for Measure*. Madhusudan has also introduced double plots or two stories in his plays like *Krishna Kumari* and *Bilashboli Dhanadas Madonika* it is undeniable that Madhusudan was greatly influenced by Shakespeare as the following statement conveys:

Shakespeare is globally acknowledged for his tragedies which have unhappy ending but his comedies have happy ending which has been duly maintain by Madhusudan as he 'As the play is a tragedy, I have not thought it proper to being comic; in my humble opinion such a thing would not be keeping with the nature of the play. But whenever in the course of the dialogue a pleasant remark has suggested itself I have not neglected. The only piece of criticism I

²⁵ Mobaser Ali, *Madhusudaner Bishwa*, pp. 42-45.

shall venture upon, is this; - never strive to be comic in a tragedy; but if an opportunity presents itself unsought to be gay, do not neglect it in the less important Scene so as to have an agreeable variety. This I believe to be Shakespeare's plan.²⁶

Shakespeare's disguised method is introduced into Modushuna's plays as Madhusudan used to say that Shakespeare could reach Newton and match Newtonic scientific knowledge easily but for Newton it would not be possible to touch Shakespearean depth. Influence of Shakespeare was vivid in the depiction of the characters of his plays even Shakespearean language style was imitated by Madhusudan. Profound feelings for Shakespearean plays were easily comprehended in a letter written to one of his friends that shows the evidence- '*Please send me that volume of your Shakespeare which contains his Othello and Hamlet*'.²⁷ He has followed Shakespeare out and out which is said to be one of the remarkable features of his plays. In *As you Like It*, *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *Love's Labour Lost*, *Measure for Measure* where Shakespeare has introduced his disguised methodology in most of his comedies as cited above. Madhusudan was greatly impressed by this unique quality of Shakespeare in heightening his dramatic art.

Combination of tragi-comedy elements in the play was introduced by Madhusudan who was greatly influenced by European trend of dramatic presentation. Madhusudan had to face adverse comments and reactions of the Bengali critics while writing *Kissen Cumari*. Bengali critics should not forget that Shakespeare and Madhusudan have created their individual ways of presentation. Being influenced by Shakespeare Madhusudan adhered to his novelty in presenting drama. Even in producing tragedy like Shakespeare Madhusudan introduced tragi - comedy elements in his plays, with reference to Shakespeare's plays like *Hamlet Macbeth*, *King Lear*, in which Shakespeare even presented some comic elements, do not appear to suggest any limitation of Shakespeare in Madhusudan.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 44-45

²⁷ Shafi Ahmed, *op.cit.*, p. 33.

As Madhusudan says-

'I have certain I have certain Dramatic notions of my own, which I follow invariably. Some of my friends - and I fancy you are among them as soon as they see a drama of mine begin to apply the cannons of criticism that have been given forth by the master pieces of William Shakespeare. Our social and moral developments are of a different character. We are no doubt actuated by the same passions, but in us those passions assume a milder shape.'²⁸

Kissen Cumari although a tragedy had the suggestion to present a comic tone as Shakespeare has presented the guard of Macbeth, the grave diggers in the play *Hamlet* as Madhusudan says, 'We must have a face with the tragedy'. Accordingly in *Kissen Cumari* he has introduced *Dhanodas* and *Maduniaka* plot which conveyed certain touch of comic aspects in his tragedy showing the evidence of his tragi - comedy elements as Shakespeare did.²⁹

Bengali playwright Munir Chowdhury found similarities and affinities between Shakespeare and Michael Madhusudan as Shakespeare chose the language of the living people of the society at same time he had the command of blank verse duly introduced in his plays which were also exercised by Madhusudan. In fact, he was greatly influenced by Shakespeare and followed him without hesitation that never thwarted his originality.³⁰

The word drama comes from Greek and in today's English it has two separate ideas though connected with meaning, when it is spoken of a drama as a countable noun it is meant to be a play for theatre or readers when it is used as it as an uncountable noun it is meant to be the composition, presentation and performance of such plays when discussed as a drama to be a literary form it is used as the word in the second meaning.

There is a lot of scope to be conversed with the various stages of the dramatic composition, production and presentation on the stage. Yet as readers of literature people are expected to be more concerned with the actual text of the plays than an average theatre goer or a listener is. Drama alone among all the literary forms calls upon skills and artists who are not writers.³¹

²⁸ Mobaser Ali, *Madhusudaner Bishwa*, p. 141.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 45.

³⁰ Dr. Mohammad Zainddin, *Munir Chowdhurir Shaityakarma* [The Literary Works of Munir Chowdhury] (Dhaka: Bangla Academy, 1998), p. 190.

³¹ Inari Hossain, *A Hand Book of English Literature* (Dhaka: University of Dhaka, 1985), p. 35.

It is very interesting to note that Shakespeare has exerted his artistic skills in reflecting the mind of his character more than his body.³²

A playwright composes or writes a play but after that, it becomes the business of a theatrical company of actors, the director, musicians, make up man and various other people concerned to produce and perform the play. On the stage or radio on the TV and drama is the one literary form that presupposes the presence of an audience. A play performed in an empty theatre is not a drama in the truest sense of the term.

The audience is the necessary receptive component without which the productive part of the actors, art would be wasted. There seems to be a general agreement that drama as an art form has risen from the universal human instinct for imitation. People learn much of what is being done by the elders, teachers, friends or peers; sometimes consciously, at other times subconsciously. Drama seems to have its origins in some kind of communal enactment of the yearly or seasonal events or of a single significant event of the individuals. In agricultural societies such enactments used to show to imitate the actions of sowing and reaping or the changes in seasons. The agriculturally dead season is linked with the process of rebirth and growth since the seed is sown when nature appears dormant or dead. In the history of mankind men got the idea that these processes were rebirth and regeneration could be helped by the performance of certain rituals. These rituals had the impact of creating called white or benevolent magic in them. The performers mime the death of the old year and the beginning of the new. In these numeric or imitative acts there had the beginnings of drama. Drama can therefore be said to have its origins from the sacred rituals or religion. With the passage of time the mimetic action has come to cover a large section of human activities.

Therefore, Shakespeare's plays convey the display of the imitation of the individuals with the projection of their external and inner aspects. People discovered that only sacred things could be imitated but that pleasure could be derived from the imitation of all human life.³³

³² Sisirkumar Ghose, *Rabindranath Tagore*, pp. 130-104.

³³ Inari Hossain, *op.cit.*, p. 35.

It is referred to Orient Longman Drama Classics Yashdip S Bavis that since the Restoration, most producers and directors of Shakespeare have treated Shakespeare as a great poet who used to have unusual insights into human nature but his language and his order of scenes they rewrote and changed the scripts boldly in the 18th century to bring Shakespeare up to the rigid and inflexible standard of the Neoclassical Age. With the passing of time the change of taste and choice of taste rather claim additional treatment of the playwrights to Shakespearean plays. A review of the stage history of the play reveals that criticism and performance have a symbolic relationship to the advantage of both.

Hence Shakespeare as an observer of his society developed the realistic attitude to exhibit the inner and external aspects of life and society. The audiences feel comfortable to claim their own reflections mirrored in the plays of Shakespeare 20th century performances have been guided by a sensuous search for a *Way to do Shakespeare*. In other words Shakespeare has to be made possible to an audience with ease. However, there has been found a new trend and idea as well as freedom of the playwrights and directors, now-a-days it is evident that they, keeping Shakespeare original as the texts of his plays display, appear to be fond of including, arranging, setting newer styles in bringing Shakespeare as their own. Accordingly, audience find the opportunity to expect their full faculties and achieve the feeling of fullest satisfaction of the presentation of the events and characters sustaining their own demand of interests and mind in the performance. A director's specific setting and costumes are supposed to frame the play in an understandable style for the audience.³⁴

Influence of Shakespeare on Bengali Original Drama

In different original plays of Bengali literature the nature of human psychology, subject matter, gradual events, characterization, structural views in which there lies the influence of Shakespeare remarkably. There are three categories found in the Bengali plays which may be classified as legendary or mythological plays, social plays and historical plays but the influence of Shakespeare worked mostly in the historical romantic plays of Bengal because the grave atmosphere of the plays of Shakespeare, the manly firmness in the

³⁴ Yashdip S Bains (ed.), *Orient Long Man Drama Classics: The First Part of Henry the Fourth* (Hyderabad: Orient Longman Ltd., 2001), pp. xxxiv-xxxviii.

characters, the climax, the catastrophe, the rise and fall of Shakespeare's plays undoubtedly inspired the playwrights of Bengal to work under his dominating influence.³⁵

Bengali drama originated from home-grown elements and gradual transformation occurred to turn them from verse to prose, from prose to 'yatra' and then into modern Bengali drama by admixture with European drama as well as Shakespearean dramatic form, language, ideas and characters.

In the first quarter of the nineteenth century, a number of educational institutions in Calcutta including the celebrated Hindu College began to organize play reading and performances of vignettes from Shakespearean. Among the male participants were many who grew into distinguished personalities in the intellectual history of Bengal.

Generally, English theatres in Calcutta followed the model of the London theatres and the sponsors of the early English theatres in Calcutta got advice, direction and substantial help from David Garrick, London's greatest actor of the time. To the new educated class, that is, the English educated Bengalis of Calcutta, London provided the ideals not only in literary and dramatic tastes, but other fields as well.

Bengali theatre in Calcutta from 1800 to 1850 was mainly a direct offshoot of the English theatre in the city. There is no doubt that the city's English theatre influenced the sponsors of the native theatre in the first phase. When the English came to Calcutta, they brought with them the plays of William Shakespeare³⁶. Like many of his contemporaries Shakespeare learned his historical narratives from writers like Edward Hall.³⁷

Raphael Holinshed states that Shakespeare has introduced various aspects of dramatic presentation which he willingly or unwillingly presented for the sake of the interest of the audience. (*The Chronicles of England Scotland and Ireland*, 3 Vols., 1987), and Samuel Daniel (*The First Four Books of the Civil Wars 1595*) In the accounts of the past, he found existing characters and situations which could be dramatized for the edification and amusement of the public. He used the events in the chronicles as starting

³⁵ Azit Kumar Gosh, *Bangla Natoker Itihash*, p. 31.

³⁶ Nazmul Ahsan, *op.cit.*, pp. 8-12.

³⁷ The Union of the two Noble and lustre families of Lancaster and York 1548.

points and altered them around to reflect his views on history and his sense of the dramatic plot.

Shakespeare himself had the mind to change and modify his plays gleaned the aspects of the historical sources and with his own freedom he happened to share his contribution as a mark of his own modification of the strength and character of his plays, in which, he never was concerned with the territorial and ethnic bars of his sources. In the same way Bengali playwrights have also gleaned their dramatic sources and borrowed techniques in their plays by modifying Shakespeare plays.

It is said that the study of Shakespeare's imagery specially of the tragedies draw the attention of the readers with full appreciation of his organic pattern adorned with individual nature which perhaps has attracted the interest of the Bengali playwrights who have presented their translations for the stage show both to captivate the audience as well as manifest the exactness of Shakespearean originality.

A study of the imagery in Shakespeare's tragedies helps us to appreciate them as an organism in which all the parts are interrelated and mutually attuned. Each tragedy has its own unmistakable individual nature, its own colour; it has its own landscape, its own atmosphere, its own diction.³⁸

There is a distinction between Hamlet's problems and the problems of *Hamlet*. He has been called the best of men and the worst of men.³⁹

Influence of Shakespeare penetrated into the products of the Bengali playwrights who even were motivated by Shakespearean phrases and theories. Bengali readers and audiences were used to reciting and citing Shakespeare's dialogues which had permanent influence upon the mind of the people. As a dramatist Shakespeare is expected to be measured as an inevitable element in the context of staging. His dramas are to be staged as he is mainly a dramatist, a playwright. The original Shakespeare is not meant for the commoners but the English educated people who are a bit callous to the origin of their identity and culture and are apt to showing lack of interest in order to be particular about the traditional beliefs and sequence of the past glories generally they are believed to see

³⁸ Clifford Leech, *Shakespeare: The Tragedies: A Collection of Critical Essays* (Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press, 1965), p. 153.

³⁹ Mark Van Doren, *Shakespeare* (New York: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1953), p. 162.

the acting of the plays of Shakespeare. But Shakespeare is not acted or played beyond that circle containing the least of the audiences. It appears frightening to note the thing that that sort of class of people never appear to be interested in an in-depth study of Shakespeare consequently reach the negative impact without any valuable result. Here illustrates the lack of contribution of the upper class of people in enriching the life of culture and literature.

So the thing appears that Shakespeare is sometimes acted or memorized or culminated by or modified for the middle class people by the playwrights of new trend who differed from the directors of Shakespeare in the past. Shakespeare is acted in the English educated people with unmentionable appeal, which have got no everlasting appeal at all. John Dryden in his essay *Preface Containing the Grounds of Criticism in Tragedy* in which he maintains that Shakespeare should not be measured to be the cause of one's limitations in the field of one's own productions. The whole world has viewed Shakespeare as its own. The Bengali dramatists have made attempts to digest Shakespeare as a result of their regular studies of the same Sunil Kumar Chattapaddhaya emphasizes the practice of nativity in interpreting Shakespeare he does not encourage the nature of criticism on Shakespeare of the English critics to be followed by the Bengali critics as Clifford leech states.

Therefore, let not Shakespeare suffer for our sakes; 'tis our fault, who succeed him in an age which is more refined, if we imitate him so ill, that we copy his failings only, and make a virtue of that in our writings which in his was an imperfection.⁴⁰

To memorize Shakespeare or to be influenced by Shakespeare is not the same. Oral expression or exercise exists in the lips and does not touch the heart which is supposed to be ornamental and of certain captivating effect but got no fruitful and effective impact on its ostentatious usage and in the same way memorization of Shakespeare did not show any productive consequence. So Shakespeare plays on the stage or acting of Shakespeare plays in the films provide the audiences the senses of the deepest of the realisation with additional opportunities.

⁴⁰ Clifford Leech, *op.cit.*, p. 8.

An overview of the image of Shakespeare and the translation of his dramas appear to show the increasing interest of the Bengali playwrights as well the demand of the translation of Shakespearean plays in Bangladesh. It is said that the syllabic Shakespeare has led the way to both the theoretical presentation of Shakespearean plays in the vernacular and to serious efforts made to expedite the translation proceedings. Translation of Munier Chowdhury received strong appreciation as to be nominated as the most successful work on the stage. Television show of the play also drew the notice of the common audiences of the time.⁴¹

Shakespeare has to be gleaned and sought in Bengali dramas, translations and criticism and it is necessary to find out the existence of Shakespeare there in. So as to measure how much Shakespeare holds his image or influence or how much available he appears in Bengali drama or how much of the translation of his work has been done and what sort of excellence has been achieved or how much has been contributed to the criticism of Shakespeare etc. that are to be analysed with a focus on the approach and attitude of *Bengalis* to Shakespeare. They are supposed to be of three parts but the main context centres round Shakespeare and the fundamental subject is how much Shakespeare has been accepted that is the point to be mentioned or discussed in view of the theatrical presentation of Shakespeare plays as Mark Van Doren highlights in his book Shakespeare;

It is literally true that while we read a play of Shakespeare's we are in it. He conditions us to a particular world before we are aware that it exists; then he absorbs us in its particulars. The great world is not forgotten-Shakespeare indeed knows best how to keep us remained of its greatness.⁴²

Jotindranath Tagore (1849–1925), although not famous as a dramatist, some of his plays attained popularity. He translated *Julius Caesar* of Shakespeare. But he was greatly influenced by Shakespearean art of composing the original drama.⁴³ His drama *Ascrumoti* which was dedicated to Rabindranath Tagore and was published in the year 1879, and the said drama is supposed to have been altercated by Rabindranath Tagore. The structure and plot construction of this play are presented with the features of *Othello*. The character

⁴¹ Imtiaz Habib, *The Colours of Butterfly: A Discourse on the Problematics and Issues of the Shakespearean Presence in Bangladesh (1858-1988)* (Dhaka: Department of English, University of Dhaka).

⁴² Mark Van Doren, *op.cit.*, p. xiv.

⁴³ Shafi Ahmed, *op.cit.*, pp. 67-68.

'Selim' contains the image of 'Othello' whose 'anger' 'jealousy', sentiments find their reflections in 'Selim'. So the character 'Othello' of Shakespeare influenced Jotindranath Tagore a great deal even the dialogues used by Shakespeare in *Othello* containing similarity in the dialogues of *Ascrumoti* presented by Jotindranath Tagore. Because of jealousy and mental conflicts as a result of the suspicion grown in the heart of Othello, he entered the room of Desdemona and determined Othello now appears as a killer of his beloved as to appease his anger and executes his revenge motive stimulated by his harsh jealousy. In the play of Jotindranath a 'letter' is used instead of a 'Handkerchief' as the 'embryo' of the burning poisonous seeds of jealousy that resulted in the tragic murder of Desdemona in the play *Othello* and 'Selim in the play *Ascrumoti* embraced the same fate as 'Othello' and Selilm had to suffer same tragedy. 'Iago' in *Othello* and 'Farid khan' in *Ascrumati* are featured with similar sort of traits to misguide, conspire and entrap their targets by the application of their evil mechanism. So 'Jotindranath' followed Shakespeare even in manifesting the themes and characters of his play blended with the manifestation of the Shakespearean psychology in his tragedies. Jotidranath himself was a dramatist as a result of which he was aware of the necessity of a play. He presented blank verse in the light of Shakespeare by which he was able to translate and follow Shakespearean influence is also evident in his drama named '*Purna Bashanta*' composed in the light of Shakespeare. Despite the influence of Shakespeare in the form of imitation of the plots or theme Jotndranath was able to produce his novelty and originality in his own play.⁴⁴

Dijendralal Roy was greatly influenced by Shakespearean aspects, characters, dialogues, plots, construction of the plays themes, stories which he acknowledged in his own life. If Bengali drama may have actually come into being in the period 1852-72, then the following years saw its further progress in the course of its popularity, influence and technique. D.L. Roy happened to be the worthy successor to Girish Chandrasen. Dijendralal Roy had the opportunity to have visited England that opened occasions for him to watch a good number of plays and consequently he excelled in historical plays in which he followed Shakespeare and introduced Shakespearean style of presentation in his play *Nurjahan*. Shadow of Shakespeare's characters and plots is reflected in his play

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 69-70.

which has been highly appreciated by Subad Chandra Sen Gupta. Shafi Ahmed discussed a lot in this regard in his *Bangadeshe Shakespeare* [Shakespeare in Bengal].⁴⁵

The period is marked by the writings of many authors of distinction-Girish Chandra, Amrita Lal, Kshirod Prasad Vidyavinod, Dwijendra Lal, Rabindra Nath, with many others of a lesser note. Apart from the fact that the drama is in itself a western institution, originally speaking, and that the stage machinery is an imported item in the list of our entertainments, the writings of most are characterized by elements contributed more or less by foreign mode, and they should provide interesting objects of study.

His translation of *Macbeth* was a remarkable production, a distinct contribution to Bengali literature, and seems to be claiming admiration for its naturalness in its version of Shakespeare. The influence of Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* may be seen in his *Satnam* and *Visha*, while for his frequent introduction of a woman in man's dress he may have been largely indebted to the Elizabethans.

Dwijendralal Roy made the freest as well as the finest use of characters and a good many theatrical devices were considerably influenced by Shakespeare. D.L. Roy started his dramatic career by writing *Tarabai* in blank verse reminiscent of Shakespearean blank verse. After much reconsideration, he discarded the blank verse in favour of prose. The poetic flavour in his later prose dramas was due mainly to his earlier experiments in Shakespearean verse form. For dramatic material, D.L. Roy had constant recourse to Shakespeare. Small situations were taken up and readily assimilated into his dramatic texture. The theatrical structure in *Tarabai* is an unabashed imitation of *Macbeth*. The character of Lear must have been his grate favorite, for he has often invested his central characters with Lear-like passion. Next to *Lear*, *Hamlet* fascinated D.L. Roy most. In some plays, he has derived most of his central characters from Shakespeare. In *Shahjahan*, the emperor's character, with its grandeur, irascibility and elemental passion provoked by filial ingratitude are reminiscent of Lear's agony.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 71-100.

⁴⁶ Nazmul Ahsan, *op.cit.*, p. 78.

Dwijendra Lal Ray (1863–1913) had arrested the imagination of the public in Bengal for a few years with a hold which seemed to reach his aim as the greatest dramatist of the country, but the years have again reversed this opinion and restored the proper perspective to a very great extent. He appears no longer as the author who had cast his competitors completely into shade. He knew *Manfred* by heart; the best passages of Shakespeare, which were repeatedly read and recited by him with ease. Before going to England, he had seen Addison's *Cato* and Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* on the stage; in England he attended many plays, and thus his fondness for the theatre grew more and more. Shakespeare blank verse was his regular practice. He began to write plays in blank verse after Shakespeare, and his opera *Shorab-Rustam* was modeled on Shelley. Much foreign influence lies in his tunes and harmonies, in his chorus songs, in the anglicized expressions of his speech. His remarkable persistence in the use of prose in preference to verse as the medium of speech in his dramas, and the detailed stage-direction became characteristic of him as to be a mannerism, point also to a foreign model.

The writer, we may add, not long ago visited Europe, and though fond of English scenes and the English people, his Anglican partiality has not made him so unpatriotic as to abjure his national language and the habits and customs of the country of his birth. He is culling honey from foreign flowers to enrich his home, but is quite national in his tone and feeling.⁴⁷

Tara bye of Dwijendra Lal Roy (D.L. Roy) appears to show the presentation of Macbethan climax. *Macbeth* demonstrates the vile nature of high ambition which result in the tragic end of both 'Macbeth' and his wife 'lady Macbeth' in the same way the play *Tarabye* highlights the tragic end of the central character 'Surzamol' who was high ambitious and resolved to supersede all only to occupy the top most rank or position or in other words to subdue or suppress others and become the sole authority to have command over others and in the efforts to serve the high ambition 'Surzamol' was aided by his wife 'Tamasha' who like lady Macbeth assisted her husband to share the output of the same sort of instinctual desire in *Macbeth*.

⁴⁷ Priyaranjan Sen, *Western Influence in Bengali Literature*, pp. 194-203.

Both 'Surzamol' and 'Macbeth' suffer from the pangs of the inner conflicts before they commit their crimes and the expressions of both the tragic heroes have the same tragic flow as stated below:

Macbeth says	Surzamol says
He's here in double trust: First as I am his kinsman and his subject Strong both against the deed: then, as his host, Who should against his murderer shut the door Not bear the knife himself.	"Nā, Mā, Koribóna āmi Heno heen heyo kārjo! Bivot'so prostāb! Jār Anno Khāi, tār bipokkhe tulibo Kharag? Tobe ke kāhāre koribe biswāsh?"

Dwijendra Lal Roy in another play demonstrates Shakespearean choice. There are psychological torments, mental agonies, ordeals, inner conflicts which are duly depicted by Dwijendra Lal Roy in his play. Subod Chandra Sen Gupta illustrates regarding Shakespearean influence upon the dramas of the plays of Dwijendra Lal in the flowing way:

There exists the reflection of Shakespeare in the dramas of Dwijendra Roy like other playwrights of Bengali literature. But *Nurjahan* the play composed by him highly exhibits Shakespearean influence and whether that claims success or not, appears obviously to be an adventurous task no doubt.⁴⁸

Singhol Bejoy is the last product of the Dwijendra Lal blended with the Shakespearean style. There is a touch of Shakespearean impact in the play published in the year 1915. There is a legendary story of the victory and adventures of *Bijoy Sinho* which are reflected in the play. Historical background is evident in the play. A keen study of the play is sure to expose Shakespearean presence in the said play. *Chandra Gupta* is said to be imitated from Shakespeare's *Othello* which was written after a couple of years of *Shajahan* by Dwijendra Lal and he stated *Chandra Gupta* to be a character similar to Machiavellian personality. In fact, there is the reflection of Shakespeare's *Iago*.⁴⁹

Another remarkable member of the early group of actors and dramatists was Amritlal Basu (1853–1929) who first began his career on the Bengali stage as an actor

⁴⁸ Shafi Ahmed, *op.cit.*, p. 75.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 91.

and had extreme interest in Shakespeare, coming out next as an author of some minor farces, and later rising to be the manager of the Star Theatre. When he was too young to realize Shakespeare, he listened in raptures to his father's recitations from the English dramatist. During his stay in youth at Benares, he had the opportunity to be acquainted with the history and literature of France and England, through his close association with Raj Chandra Sanyal, a college librarian he acknowledged the influence of Shakespeare and received endless inspiration from his very boyhood as his father was fond of Shakespeare so hereditary he was imbibed with the close touch of Shakespeare studies.⁵⁰

How far Shakespeare has been accepted is a matter of real consideration as Shakespeare appears to be the greatest dramatist of the world so if greatness of Shakespeare fails to overcome the limitations of the prejudiced notion of the *Bengalis* with a bit reluctance to treat him a foreign essence then Bengali literature would be faced with the same sort of prejudiced wall created by other races of the world which will interrupt the smooth progress of the beauty and rich tradition of Bengali literature. Accordingly the national and cultural growth or riches are sure to be ventilated on the basis of accepting him. It is also to be noted that there is no hard and fast rule or canons that have to be entertained or influenced by him as there should be a compulsion in choosing Shakespeare but for an enlightened society or where people appear to be aware of the surrounding situation and where audiences are not indifferent to trends of time and culture having ardent interest in him, and the audiences gate way to study Shakespeare by heart although can't digest or imbibe him. There is supposed to be an immense source of possibilities of Shakespeare and the limitations of the audience dwelling there are not to be ignored. Critics or researchers interested in Shakespeare are to be given special attention and their efforts made to attain him are not to be kept away from observations. Failure or success in the studies of Shakespeare does not matter there when anything good is asked to be sought from even the foe.

The recognised playwright Sayed Shamsul Haque holds the view of presenting Shakespeare as per the demand of the existing society or the choice of a Shakespeare

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 114-116.

directors to be determined on basis of their own liking and disliking his emphasis on the modification and amendment or inclusion of newer attributes to the image of the characters adhering to the originality unaltered and unchanged, is note worthy which he opines as the way of the tools of his sources in composing plays.

Girish Chandra as a dramatist upheld the taste of the audience as his attachment to the theatre brought him close to the choice and demand of the spectators of the day. He emphasizes the liking of the people and Girish Chandra shaped his plays with the Shakespearean influence. He accepted the styles of presentation of Shakespeare. Girish Chandra never showed any lack of interest in Shakespeare as he used to consider Shakespeare as his model to follow. His translation of Shakespeare appears to be literal, meaning based, and to a great extent, he has implied Shakespeare's characters out and out in his own plays. Azitkumar Ghush says that Girish Chandra was the first to present Shakespeare before the common audiences. He introduced the beauty and unique magnitude of Shakespearean plays at the theatres which opened a new era of glorious chapter in the history of dramatic literature.⁵¹ Girish Chandra took the sources of his play *Jona* from *Coriolanus* of Shakespeare. Some critics find the touch of the play *King Lear* in the play *Jana*. There is a tendency of the playwrights of Bengal to imitate Shakespearean characters from different plays as much as suitable to the stories they could arrange but they could not hide the existence of Shakespearean flavour in the art of creating their characters and dialogues.

'Casio' a character in the play *Othello* was poisoned and instigated by Iago. Iago knew the art of convincing others to serve his vile machinery but Iago's victim or target people could never imagine that he was going to be exploited by others, as in the play *Profulla* a character Romesh happened to instigate 'Jogesh' and consequently brought his down fall. Iago and Romesh are, entangled with the evils of mind and pursued by jealousy, using them (Othello and Jogesh) attain their (Iago and Romesh) goals but of no safe ends waiting for them. The plays of Girish Chandra also highlight the presence of Shakespearean features as in *Mayaboshan* the comic scenes of the said play resembles the ludicrous scenes of the play *Merry Wives of Windsor*.⁵²

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 181.

⁵² *Ibid.*, pp. 49-50.

Hemendranath Das Gupta states that Shakespeare, with reference to his real experience and observation of the society, chose a living personality named 'Tarlton' who was short sized, and bulky and was a man of humorous character. He was also expert in the skills of making people laugh. His comic appearance made him favourite to all present even at the palace of Queen Elizabeth. It is said that sometimes Queen Elizabeth happened to enjoy his comedies or comic gestures to relieve her worries. However, this real character in his own life became the centre of his creation of so many comic characters in his plays.

Characters like 'Birbal', 'Gopal Var' are expected to be available in Bengali plays but in a country ruled under others didn't have the scope to avail that. But the dexterous playwright Girish Chandra was capable of creating characters like Falstaff in his plays. Dijendralal had had appreciation of his dramatic presentation on the stages to a great extent, which reminds of the glories of the past, related to the Minerva Theatre as published in the year 1893 in the *Hindu Patriot*- as it says;

The representation of Macbeth in the Minerva theatre on Saturday last, as the opening piece marks a new departure in the dramatic history of Bengal... Banu Girish Chunder Ghose, the father of the modern Stage of Bengal had the whole of the work under his personal supervision, commencing with translation of the masterpiece and including the scenery and dresses which were as correct and effective as might be desired.⁵³

Girish Chandra Ghose played the role of Macbeth which impressed all the audience with utmost beauty of the Shakespearean presentation at the time. *Amrita Bazar Patrika* is another journal in which Macbeth's presentation by the actor was said to have made great impression. *Englishman* is another journal in which Girish Chandra was highly appreciated as the Bengali *Thane of Cawder* and his acting and presentation of the total play *Macbeth* was said to have reproduced the standard of convention of the English stage as *Englishman* says 'A Bengali Thane of Cawder is a living suggestion of incongruity but the reality is an astonishing reproduction of the standard convention of the English stage.

⁵³ Cited in *Macbeth Bikkhon* Amreta by Dr. Amritlal Lal Bala (Rajshahi: Hamida Book Corporation, 1998), p. 47 (The Hindu Patriot, January 30, 1893, The Amrita Bazar Patrika, January 30, 1893, The Englishman February 8, 1893).

To present dramatic effect or to show dramatic presentation or to stage the mysterious scenes or characters the disguise technique acts as the extra dramatic strategy introduced by Shakespeare. Disguise style of Shakespeare was followed by Girish Chandra. Girish is said to have adopted 'the disguise methodology' from Shakespearean artistic presentation as Rudra Prosad Sen Gupta highlights the acknowledgement revealing the debt Girish Chandra owes to Shakespeare in the following manner as he says;

Girish Chandra's dramatic language was turned after Shakespeare, specially his use of prose as the medium for coarse and common characters. In spite of different between Girish measure and Shakespeare blank years, the inspiration at the back of both was basically the same, to bring out the fullest dramatic capability of a language. Regarding dramatic material, Girish Chandra used Shakespeare in a way similar to that of Shakespeare's use of Plutarch or Cinthio or Hollinshed. Sometimes he imitated the entire setting, sometimes he borrowed the thematic structured and assimilated into the garb of some national mould. Regarding transplantations of isolated situations from Shakespeare to his own dramas, Girish Chandra seldom missed the opportunity. His characterization was no less influenced by Shakespeare than by his themes.⁵⁴

Shakespeare as a playwright came to be recognized as the standard of composing plays for the Bengali playwrights. In the statement given by Girish Chandra there raises the acknowledgement that Shakespeare was deemed to be the model for the Bengali playwrights as Girish Chandra said to his friend Kumudbandhu Sen 'Shakespeare is my model. I am going to follow his steps'.⁵⁵

Syed Haque in his preface to *Ganannayak* says that this is not the translation of *Julius Creaser* but obviously, he adds that most of the elements and the art of characterization have been imitated and modelled in Bangladesh perspectives. He appears to be influenced by the image and contribution of the characters suitable to the heroic

⁵⁴ Shafi Ahmed, *op.cit.*, p. 66.

⁵⁵ Amritlal Bala, *Macbeth Bikkhon*, p. 49.

image of a legendary personality linked with the history of Bangladesh liberation presented in his drama *Ganannayak*.

Shakespeare is imitated, remodelled, followed and modified by the Bengali playwrights. Now a days Shakespeare plays are filmed in the UK and USA. But in Bangladesh there has not grown any tendency to make the plays of Shakespeare popular as the conflicts of Shakespeare are reflected in his plays which don't appear to have an easy entrance or access to the hearts of the audiences of Bangladesh, which may be defined as one of the reasons of his being not so much popular through out Bangladesh.

Shakespeare has been estimated as the model of Bengali dramatists of the modern drama but the translation and criticism of his drama appear to be done negligently and with little appeal to the depth of the studies much fewer than expected to be which acted as the reason for the lack of progress in the studies of Shakespeare, as a whole, in Bangladesh.

The agonies of *Macbeth*, the conflicts of *Hamlet* or the agonized mentality of *Hamlet* are reflected in the characters of the plays of many great Bengali dramatists as they contain the styles of presentation of Shakespearean ideas as projected through his characters. Aorangzeb suffers, agonies, inner ordeals as suffered by the characters like *Hamlet* and *Macbeth* of Shakespeare.⁵⁶

There are a good number of similarities or affinities that are found equal to the sentiments and sequence of the plays of Shakespeare, the prison scenes of *Shajahan* possesses similarities in its reflection through the caves of *Timon* of Shakespeare. The garden of the *King of Kashmir* appears similar to the amorous sights of the palace of *Antony and Cleopatra*.

In fact, the elements of Shakespeare as observed in the play *Shajahan* by *Dejendralal* do not over shine the glamour, beauty and appeal of the play as far as the evidence of similarities is noticed with Shakespeare, rather the play *Shajahan* claims its

⁵⁶ Shafi Ahmed, *op.cit.*, p. 72.

fullest satisfaction of the audience of Bengal and highlights his dexterous skills ascertaining the influence of Shakespeare on his production.⁵⁷

Shakespeare's influence penetrated into the hearts of the Bengali playwrights as a way of imitation and modification as told earlier. The playwrights of Bengali inherited much from Shakespeare with an exception to the fewer playwrights who adhered to the maximum level of originality as upheld by dramatic rules, the translated plays come to be the sources of the playwrights to have the inspirations in bringing newer strategies in the art of modifying with a view to conveying Shakespeare agreeable to the audiences.

Another play *Chandragupta* was composed in the year 1913 after two years of the publication of the play *Shajahan* Dejednralal seemed to follow the same trends as he did in his other plays. The imitation of Shakespeare came to act in him as a result of the influence as well as influence acted as the evidence of his imitation of Shakespeare. But *Dejednralal* shaped his character *Chandragupta* in the light of 'Iago' of the play *Othello* although *Dejednralal* claims the character *Chandragupta* to have been presented as a model of Machiavellian personality but *Chandragupta* appears akin to 'Iago' in most of his features. Both 'Iago' and *Chandragupta* exert their vile mechanism in serving their motifs. Both are equipped with the same traits to exploit their victims and 'Iago' is said to be the most villainous character Shakespeare has produced 'Iago', a talented villain, who targets and exploits his victim in a most gentle manner never used to be exposed before he attains his success or reaches his goal.

Conspiracy and poisonous whispers are the capital tools for both Iago and *Chandragupta* who are always guided by their beastly instincts and justify their ends by unfair means. Iago burns within the burning fire of ordeal as he thinks to have been rejected or insulted him for not to be in the position he longed to attain.⁵⁸

Sirajuddaula is a drama composed in the ending part of his life when 'Girish Chandra' happened to get entangled his drama with historical and natural sentiments of

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 85-91.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 91-92.

the day. But 'Girish Chandra' could not remain free from the influence of Shakespeare which is apparent in this drama. It is assumed that Girish Chandra followed Shakespearean style in presenting rival to *Sirajuddaula* as Shakespeare created his rival to the central character of his own plays. The dramatist presented *King Richard* image in moulding the personality of *Sirajuddaula*. Both the characters are luxurious in their mental, emotional sentimental, touchy image and were not skilled in the diplomatic means in governing the stately affairs as the heads of the states. But both of them are interested in power but at the same time they possess the desire to enjoy the royal blessings and delights.⁵⁹

Some of the critics also find affinity between *Sirajuddaula* and *Hamlet* as both of them are enthroned at the young stage of life when they are believed to have no diplomatic experience or they were quite new to handle to exploit the royal powers like the expert kings which are said to have resulted in their exposure to be the greenhorns in the eyes of their rivals using negative means against them.

So both *Sirajuddaula* and *King Richard* appear to have no pragmatic dexterity in governing the country which can be the safeguard to their ranks and powers but both the characters had to face the tragic end of their life and the soliloquy of *King Richard* reflects the agonies, frustration in dark room of 'Pomfrate' castle as *King Richard* says, in the same way the soliloquy of *Sirajuddaula* represents the agonies of life and bitter frustration when Siraj says-

'Siraj! Such is the dark little room, but seems to be full of hundreds of people and the assembly was not crowded in such a way. They were once under my control scared of my punishment: trembling with fear. Now they are over me to show their threats with hundreds of tongues and waiting to see me punished'.

Statue built in the darkness as if mingled with the dark, what a horror! Where is the statue of Lutfunnessa! 've not seen her! Where is Meer Madan? Where that girl is that never arrives to be kissed addressing me 'Janab'!

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 59-62.

In Bangla with transliteration

Sirāj! Ai jānā shunna tanmoy khudra griho. Kintu jeno shato shato bakti, - darbāre emon shamagam hoy nāi! Takhon jārā clānto voye kompito hoye abosthān koreche, tārāi ekhon- shato gibhbāy āmār danda bidhān korche Andharar Nirmito murti. Ake ake andho kare Mishche. Ki bivishika! Koi Lutfunnessar Murti to akbaro dheghi nai- koi Meer Mādān to ār āshenā,- koi shei bālīkā to ekbār ‘Janab’ bole chumban ashay upasthit hoy nā!”	“I have been staying how I may compare This prison where I live unto the world, And, for because the world is populous And here is not a creature but myself I cannot do it. Thoughts tending to emotion, they do plot Unlikely wonders how these vain weak nails May tear a passage through the flinty ribs Of this hard world, my ragged prison walls:”
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Both the characters can be realized on the basis of their tragic sequence and presentation which are full of the expressions of their inner ordeals and acute pains. The glories of the past of their lives are reflected in their soliloquies.⁶⁰

Girish Chandra was greatly influenced by Shakespeare in writing his plays full of the art of characterization as introduced by Shakespeare here lies the evidence that ‘Girish Chandra’ followed the styles of Shakespeare and imitated his techniques. *The Merchant of Venice* also could not escape the eyes of *Dejendralal* as he was supposed to be influenced by the dialogues of ‘Shylock’, the villain full of cunning machinery and vile instincts to suffocate his victim trapped and had in a befitting manner. The remarkable self diagnosis of Shylock, perhaps with perennial appeal, touched the dramatic faculties of *Dejendralal* as Shylock says-

Chandragupta: ...‘Shudrāni’, Shudra mānush nohe? tār ki khatrio-er moto hasto pad nai? mostisko nāi? ridoy nāi? eto ghrinā! uttam!	Shylock: ...I am a Jew. Hath not a Jew hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions fed with the same food, hurt with the same weapons, subject to the same diseases, healed by the same means warmed and cooled by the same winter and summer as a Christian is?⁶¹
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⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 59-60.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 95-96.

But *Chandragupta* reflects shylockian mentality as to express his resentment towards racial conflicts.

The above statement of Shylock is of same expression conveyed by 'Mura' a character the drama *Chandra Gupta* as stated below:

Mura: Is the milk of 'Shudrani' is less tasty than that of 'Khatriani'?

Is affection of 'Shudrani' less radiant than that of 'Khatriani'?

When or the same view, referring to the dialogues of 'Shudrani', is reflected in the words of *Chandragupta* himself or as *Chandragupta* says-

'Shudrani- Shudra manush nohe? Tar-ki 'Khatrier moto hosta pad-nai? Mohtihko nai? Ridoy nai? Ato-ghrina! Uttam [act 1-scene 4]⁶²

In fact, *Dejendralal* modified his characters and events of his drama but the dialogues of the characters, manifestation of the inner world of the characters blended with Shakespearean flavour, remained active and evident in his dramatic presentation. Shakespeare's character found their inner reflections in the characters of *Chandragupta*. Concise or short dialogues of Shakespeare also of much attraction for Girish Chandra as viewed in the context of the drama *Sirazuddaula*. Some critics of Bengal also view *King Henry V* of Shakespeare to have been reflected in the character of *Sirazuddaula* as to show the similarity of youthful vigour, desperate attitude toward life, liking for wine exhibiting a young ruler's image as found both in the same stature in *Henry V* and *Sirazuddaula*.

Most of the dramas composed by 'Girish Chandra' provide the existence of Shakespearean influence. Indeed, *Julius Caesar* and *The Merchant of Venice* and 'Portia' in both the plays of Shakespeare was the favourite choice of the audiences during the 19th and 20th centuries in the dramatic genre. Both plays are said to have attained highest popularity. Both Girish Chandra and Dejendra Lal appear to have demonstrated the brightest of the evidence of Shakespearean influence on Bengali drama as explored above.⁶³

⁶² *Ibid.*, pp. 95-96.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, pp. 49-77.

There are several reasons why Shakespeare is not much evaluated, followed or touched in the context of translation and staging his plays in Bangladesh. The main reason is that drama is said to be the weakest chapter in our literature which is too weak to accept Shakespeare in the truest sense of the term.

Macbeth faces the grim tragic end of his life. Nothing could save him from the execution of the prophecy as uttered by the witches but the super natural mechanism was not the liable instrument to bring the tragic down fall of *Macbeth*, which rather mechanised by the abnormal ambition and greed for power, when Macbeth's measures were of no value as A.C. Bradley illustrates that such exceptional suffering and calamity, then affecting the hero, and- we must now add- generally extending far and wide beyond him, so as to make the whole scene a scene of woe are an essential ingredient in tragedy, and a chief source of the tragic emotion, and especially of pity.⁶⁴ Shakespeare has displayed the juxtaposition of pity and fear culminating the consequence of the characters in his plays with acute helplessness. The similarities and sameness of the characters of Shakespeare and those of the Bengali literature exhibit the presence of Shakespearean image working in the faculties of the Bengali playwrights.

Drama is said to be the weakest branch of Bengali literature where it is impossible to find the acceptability of Shakespeare in a proper resolution. There comes or arises another question why dramatic literature is weak is also followed by a lot of reasons to be noted. The causes are mainly cultural, social and economic behind the weak dramatic literature in Bangladesh as to ascertain the true image of Shakespeare as he deserves.

Staging of dramas requires a lot of defrayal or expenses. Once staging dramas was confined to the gardens of the Zamindars, then it came to the clubs and consequently enters the luxurious stages in the present days.

Common people remain aloof from the touch of stage drama; they are not available at the theatre or stage show of the dramas. They don't come to see the acting of the characters of the dramas consequently the writers or dramatists are not flourished or increased as expected to be. Writing of drama is not rich as there is the lack of demand of

⁶⁴ Amritlal Bala, *op.cit.*, p. 110.

the same which may be a reason but that is not the chief reason. The main reason has to be discovered from the sources of the middle class people however, lack of people's interest won't favour the staging drama.

Drama of all forms of art is most immediately affected by material circumstances. The poet or the novelist can wait for recognition, perhaps for years, but a dramatist and especially one who is also a sharer in the play house and company producing his plays can not afford a failure. He must please his public or he will go bankrupt.

He appeals, not to future ages, but to the audience of the afternoon for a particular time. His plays therefore must be written to suit the stage on which they will be performed, the company which is to act them and the audience which will pay to see them. So there is a question of investment and capitalistic approach to make the production economically viable and acceptable to the audience.

Demand of the audience determines the production factors of staging a play which can't be overlooked. If the audiences deviate from the interest in the stage drama becomes a threat to the people concerned with production. There is a 'cause and effect' psychology in the fact that production of stage show of any drama demands early defrayal efforts for a successful performance of a stage show; naturally it affects both the audience and the people concerned with the production.

We can see ourselves in Shakespeare.⁶⁵ Stage history emphatically has established the fact that a second rate production does no more than exhaust and bore an audience; but a first-rate production appears to be one of the most memorable of experiences in the theatre.⁶⁶ It is a matter of regret that theatre going culture hasn't developed among the *Bengalis*, at the same time the progress in science and technology has opened a variety of tools for reaching Shakespeare. DVD, VCD. Cell phone culture, film studios, internet browsing have enlarged the sources of digesting Shakespearean plays; people now a days are fond of remaining busy at office, business centres or at home but find no time to enjoy going to theatre as the people were used to doing in the past.

⁶⁵ Richard Gill, *Mastering Shakespeare* (London: Macmillan, 1998), p. xvi.

⁶⁶ J.K. Lowers and James (eds.), *Cliff's Notes, King Lear* (1968), p. 10.

At this point it is pertinent to review the tradition of dramatic form that had been established before Shakespeare began writing. Drama in England sprang at the outset from the miracle and morality plays of the medieval guilds, which dramatised Bible stories increasingly, became less religious as time proceeded on ward until finally they fell into disrepute. The next development was based on writing of the interludes that varied in character but often came to be accused of introducing elements of bawdy farce. With the arrival of the Renaissance, England appeared to be a gathering force and consequently Roman drama began to be revived at the schools and at the Inns of Court. Before long English playwrights were found borrowing plots and conventions wholesale from the classic drama, the Italian model was the most fashionable and was said to be consequently adopted but many features of the old interludes still persisted especially in the plays written for the public theatres.

With the progress among the mobility of a taste for the theatre a higher quality of work came into demand. Few of the very early plays survived. The reason was said to be the plays written or printed not for reading as the plays were not meant to be read; no one considered there worth the trouble.

A play was strung together with frantic haste, out of a set of stock characters and situations. Often by as many as different men who were said to have worked on plays did not regard their writing activity to be of chief importance as they were primarily actors. With the cultivation of taste for better plays emerged the idea that the work of a playwright was an effort demanding special adroitness. The audiences with high born status and interests were fond of the plays and they themselves began to include editions of their favourite plays in their libraries.

With that demand and zeal for the printed copies of the plays the conception of the dramatist as an artist with a different zeal and notion in his own right whether or not he acted himself as most of them did. By 1592 Shakespeare came to be a personality of growing reputation as a dramatist and a set of traditions had developed and the same tradition provided him the basic materials with which to work.

Shakespeare used the method in his plays specially in the comedies adorned with the delicately patterned artificiality of speech and the dialogues were studied with

complicated references to Latin and Italian literature that had been contributed by Renaissance. Shakespeare was experienced and wrote much that each nothing more than conventional later on with the maturity and development of his style his writing became integral with and indispensable to the play and no longer appears artificial as a result artificiality was overcome.

The main distinguishing characteristic of a drama is said to be its real performance on the stage or appearance in front of its audience that may be defined as the visual program before the onlookers. The problem is that when plays are studied for examinations they are usually gone through or read from a printed text or book or written materials as are poems and novels but right from the start the readers are in a false position if he or she treats drama in the same way as poetry or prose. Drama is generally believed to be or meant to be seen and heard not read and the text or book of a drama is to be based on the performance as the same needs to be enlivened by a vivid visual acting of imagination.⁶⁷

The critics or readers or researchers interested in Shakespearean plays are to be particular about reading a play or he or she needs to be seeing a performance of it in his or her mind even if a reader has seen a performance in the live theatre, the cinema or on television of the dangers are still there. Each production of a play has its own individual interpretation and feeling and having seen one production the audience can have his or her mental horizons hammered in by that memory and see the play purely in terms of the one production he or she has witnessed.

Shakespeare's plays present perhaps more problems than many others because readers only have the words and very little insight as to have Shakespeare desired them performed. This applies to many dramatists, the general rule being that the more modern a play the more the author will give specific instructions on how he wants his work staged, acted and presented (1856–1950) before the audiences gave the most vivid possible instructions as to how he wished his plays to be staged and the lines to be spoken and the preface to his plays is often nearly as long as the play itself.

⁶⁷ Martin Stephen, *English Literature* (Malaysia: Pearson Education Ltd., 2000), pp. 75-104.

Stage production is a different scenario as a playwright it was not possible for Shakespeare as a man to go and direct the producers and directors of his plays to be acted on the stage as he might have desired but his instructions although insufficient but as a playwright he did not have any way playing further role to play but as a playwright he didn't have further role to play in that context.

Shakespeare's plays provide a lot of questions to be asked from the audience but they seem to remain unanswered. It may be a common dramatic technique for a playwright to keep these questions unanswered as to place the audience in a position to exert their own faculties in finding out the solutions they feel to have answered from their own brain storming. Shakespearean plays are imposed upon the audience and are supposed to have the trait worthy to make him distinct in the world of dramatic literature.

A great deal happens between the remark and the realization that the Macbeths have no children and in the theatre the audience has neither the time nor the inclination to dwell on the conflicting statements. Even if they are apparent simple answers are available, the simplest of all being that Lady Macbeth's child died in infancy. The hurry and excitement of a dramatic performance can bulldoze its way over details such as this so that they simply do not cross the audience mind. It won't find the light to evict the darkness created by the audience if they indulge this tendency having nothing to do with the text.

Dramatization ascertains the extra-ordinary effect of the playwrights, when telling Shakespeare plays for its real presentation of the sentiments and expressions, with making no defence as told by Shakespeare, are worth proper acting with out of which the art of characterization and themes would be beyond the realization of the audience of common intellect. It also seeks the production of the dramas of Shakespeare on stage with easier and concrete effects made by the directors concerned. Modern playwrights or modifiers of Shakespearean plays appear to be applying modern tools, technology theatrical inventions lighting equipment to focus on the effects of characterization and themes for the greater and better understanding of the audience with newer appeal of pleasure.

Shakespeare's image is universal for his literary products as an artist of creating characters full of universal psychology of man. He seems to have influenced the Bengali playwrights. Bankim Chandra was also greatly influenced by Shakespearean art in creating his Characters although he excelled in presenting his novels like *Bisha Brikkah*, *Kapal Kuldala*, *Krinsha Kanter* will in which he has shown Shakespearean pattern. It ascertains special dexterity of Shakespeare as a playwright that his strong influence has worked on the novelists of Bengali literature, Bankim Chandra has applied

'Love at first sight' of Shakespeare in his love theme manifested through his characters in the novels as stated earlier. In Bengali *love at first sight* is called '*Rupajamoh*' which is said to have been borrowed and imitated from Shakespeare. Bankim Chandra seems to have applied the tragic theme as a combination of Shakespearean tragedy and Greek tragic flow which is said to be constituted by radical defect and destiny or fate. In Shakespeare's tragedy his tragic heroes suffer both inwardly and externally faced with tormenting psychology acutely finding no remedy and the termination of the tragic character of Shakespeare indicating death to be the only means to escape from the agonies of life. Modern tragic views suggest that tragic characters of modern novels or plays embrace agonies of life and they do not shelter in death as the means to escape from the hazards of life. There is no death in modern tragedy which is found in the dramas like *Nurzahan Shajahan* of Dizindralal Roy the protagonists or tragic heroes suffer inwardly.⁶⁸

A simple plot with limited settings and characters may not just be the product of a modern writer's desire to focus on characterization and themes. A modern writer or playwright wishing to tell the story of *Antony and Cleopatra* would probably go to the film studios or cine-theatres not the live theatre. However, there are hints that a modern writer may be telling an old story in the allegorical form.⁶⁹

The audience of Bengal are now gifted with the power of judging and analyzing the aspects of various plays of Shakespeare specially the educated audience having knowledge of English literature although very few in number. The playwrights are to be aware of the presentation of the characters as imagined by them while reading the plays

⁶⁸ Dr. Sarwar Jahan, *Bankim Chandrer Upannash: Mullayoner Palabadal* [Novels of Bankim Chandra: Evaluation Changes] (Dhaka: Bangla Academy), p. 1st chapter.

⁶⁹ Martin Stephen, *op.cit.*, p. 78.

of Shakespeare. They would like to see the same sort of presentation as depicted in the imagination. But audiences of different countries and languages or tastes receive the tragic flow of Shakespeare when they mingle them with the happenings they face in their own lives and witness the same surrounding their societies. Aristotle's statement focuses that sort of view as referred by Pope to highlight Shakespearean plays as he says "*To judge Shakespeare by Aristotle's rules,*" said Pope, "*is like trying a man by the laws of one country who acted under those of another*"⁷⁰

Presentation of subplots as displayed in the plays of Shakespeare, with a view to making Shakespeare easy and comprehensible before the common readers not concerned with scholarly studies of Shakespeare, doesn't appear to be a smooth job for the directors. Now the responsibility lies with the directors and actors or actresses of Shakespeare, whose combination and mutual understanding may result in an effective staging performance, is a matter to be duly assessed according to the demand and interests of the audience.

- A. Tragedy in the eye of the Greeks appears to be linked with the presupposition of defiance and resistance.
- B. The Greeks conceived tragedy to be presupposed as defiance and resistance linked with the protagonist.
- C. When one is to submit to the inexorable forces constituting quietly or under compulsion to the inexorable forces is supposed to constitute Destiny or Fate which is thought to be personified as the aftermath of any painful consequence is not to be termed or called tragedy.
- D. It is doubtless to say that pain or suffering is an inevitable element in tragedy and death is a vital mechanism in drawing the tragic tone in Shakespeare.
- E. The process or the way defiance is exercised or shown appears to be of certain pain.
- F. Even the idea of defiance originated in one's mind also appears to be inspired by a sense of pain and suffering.⁷¹ A.C. Bradley says, 'Shakespeare's tragedies fall into two distinct groups, and these groups are separated by a considerable interval.

⁷⁰ Mark Van Doren, *op.cit.*, p. 204.

⁷¹ Syed Sazzad Husain, *Othello: Mixed Grill* (Dhaka: Department of English, Dhaka University), pp. 95-102.

Bengali literature welcomes the arrival of drama after long days of the dominance of Bengali poetry. During the middle of the eighteenth century there established some English stages at Kolkata of which can be mentioned the names like, The Play House, Calcutta theatre and Mrs Bristor Theatre. On these theatres there acted the British and Anglo Indians and audience also belonged to the same class. Some of the moneyed men also had the touch with the productions acted on the said stages. In the year 1854 the historical play of Shakespeare *Julius Creaser* was acted in the original text of Shakespeare. In the year 1858 Baishnab Chand Addyah acted in the play *Othello* of Shakespeare and his acting as a Bengali earned him much reputation.

In fact, it was an age of Sanskrit Drama and dramatist but western influence specially Shakespearean influence drew the attention of the audience and they were extremely interested to enjoy Shakespearean plays. The playwrights of the then time were very much particular about the demands and interests of their audiences.

Vadrajun 1852 written by Tara Saran and *Vanu Moti Chitto Bilash* written by Haran Chandra Gosh which was translated from *The Merchant Of Venice* of Shakespeare. The playwrights were highly motivated and influenced by Shakespeare. Madhusudan was greatly influenced by Shakespeare. Bankim Chandra also had profound study on Shakespeare he made comments of significant interpretations of Shakespeare's influence upon Dinabhandhu as he cites,-

The serious plot is poor enough but the other story is worked out in an irresistibly comic manner. The character of Jaladhar though doubtless taken in part from Shakespeare's Falstaff is life like and consistent and Mallika with her love of mischief and fun and inexhaustible fertility of resource is Dinabondhu's best female character. Jaladhar's ugly and jealous wife is excellently drawn and tickles the reader's fancy with her firm persuasion that her corpulent old husband is sighed after and inveigled by all young women about the place.

In the field of drama Shakespearean influence is apparent specially in his dramatic quality and plot thematically Shakespeare has been followed by the Bengali playwrights highlighting Shakespearean impact.⁷²

The idea of presenting the tragedies penetrated in to the trends of the Bengali playwrights as the Bengali 'yatra' tradition basically was centered round by historical and legendary dramas with their tragic flow but Shakespearean tradition appeared as the presentation of both the happy and unhappy ending of the plays or blending of the two were introduced by them. Before writing of *Othello*, Shakespeare was said to have usually conceived tragedy as a pyramid of rising and falling action corresponding more or less to the full turn of Fortune's wheel in medieval tragically story telling. For several years he had conceived tragedy in no other form. This pyramidal form of tragedy tends to make half of the action the hero's ascending and half his decline and fall. It was in the use of this pyramidal form that Shakespeare found himself as a writer of tragedy. When writing *Othello*, he turned to a new form, which may be regarded as a development from that which he had given to *Richard II* an early tragedy. *Richard II* displays the fall of its hero at beginning of the opening of the play and undergoing acceleration near the middle at a point marked by an awareness of agonized instinct on the hero's part that ruin and death press upon him. It also shows the rise of a rival as concurrent as Richard falls from the kingship, Bolingbroke mounts toward it and when Richard is murdered Bolingbroke established himself in the throne and it is seen that a man whirled down from the top of fortune's wheel at the same time that another is whirled up to the top.

The discussion for the exploring the inner reason of tragic decline as it appears in *Othello* and *King Lear* requires a brief analysis. In each of these plays the hero is at first placed for a brief moment in prosperity. Even at this point forces are shown which are to bring about his ruin. Then, in the generous space allotted to the working of his fall, catastrophe is brought to pass by subtle gradations.

Actors of Shakespeare are to be mingled with the sentiments of the characters as depicted by Shakespeare in his plays to be presented on the stage while acting. Shakespeare plays may not have the easy access to the common audiences when they are

⁷² Kabir Choudhuri, *Pronshanga Natouc* [Drama perspective] (Dhaka: Bangladesh Shilpakola Academy, 1388 Bengali Calendar), pp. 170-189.

acted or presented by Shakespeare which demands an easy presentation with less projection of the crucial relations of life that seem to appear difficult for them to sustain as they are not used to. In this context *Othello* actor, although he enjoys at the outset of his career full of valour, youth and conjugal happiness but appears to get affected by the poisonous bite of Iago which, needless to say, claims rapid growth of knowledge to procure sentiments as sought by the audience, need be readily imbibed with the Shakespearean reflection which is not easy for every actor.

But the essential point is that the poet, dramatist Shakespeare had reached the height of his powers as a tragic writer when he wrote the tragedy of *King Lear*. Lear is a child again in his madness. There are reasons to be exquisitely pathetic, safeguard only by Shakespeare's masterful technique from the bathos of comedy.⁷³

A play is fundamentally a unit of theatre. It is not a thing but an occasion taking place in real time and occupying authentic space. It is identified by some sort of title and it has a recognisable order of presentation which is calculated to engage the attention of an audience. It is through the play that audience experience. The theatre plays are customarily classified in two ways by duration and by genre⁷⁴.

Tagore has been hailed as the father of modern Indian stagecraft (*Svakiya natyadarshan o, manchabhavana*). The plays may be conveniently classified into eight groups, which may sometime overlap: musical, verse, poetic, symbolic, prose, comedies nature and dance-drama.⁷⁵

The structure of the stage considerably affected plays. On the apron stage the actor came forward right into the midst of his audience, and was therefore in the clandestine probable contact. He was not close that there was no need for him to shout so that the greatest subtlety of voice, gesture and expression was possible. There was apparently no scenery and plays that were acted in day light. The Elizabethan actor was thus without the

⁷³ Cliffs Notes, *Jones K. Lowers Linkon Nebrakn*.

⁷⁴ E.F.W Tillyard, *Shakespeare's Historical Plays* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1962), pp. 98-99.

⁷⁵ Sisirkumar Ghose, *op.cit.*, p. 57.

effects produced on the modern stage by lighting scenery realistic or symbolic and elaborate orchestral effects.⁷⁶

In their place he gained his effects by a direct assault on the emotions and the imagination of the spectators. Poetry was a spontaneous medium for dramatic speech, especially at exalted moments and a good actor could carry his audience with him by the emotional effect of rhetoric.

Theatrical practice was a common affair for the Shakespearean audiences and actors concerned. Shakespeare's characters are embodiments of states of mind. The exact quality of grief, despair, pride, can be most delicately rendered, but the particular embodiment of it is not enmeshed in environment and need not sustain that particular role for long. The mingling of the good and evil appears to be attractive and the good triumphs as inevitably as fate. Though language seems to be coarse despite that the language of the age one belongs to the other can not remain unaffected from the influence of the language. Shakespeare appears far above the contemporaries he lives in the society.⁷⁷

Shakespeare had due craftsmanship in manipulating history and legend to form unforgettable plots and uncommon characters. His historic sense adorned with dramatic technique placed him distinct from other playwrights of his time.

In history legend and story Shakespeare found the material for nearly all his dramas; and so they are often divided into three classes called historical plays like *Richard III* *Henry* *Legendary* or purely historical plays like *Macbeth*, *King Lear* and *Julius Caesar* and fictional plays. Shakespeare's dramas generally believed to be of three classes i.e. tragedies, comedies and historical plays as though the drama is supposed to contain only two divisions tragedy and comedy and they might be equipped with various subordinate forms of tragedy comedy, melo-drama lyric drama (opera), farce etc.

A tragedy is a drama in which we find the principal characters involved in desperate circumstances or governed by different overwhelming passions. Tragedy is thought to be invariably serious and dignified. There is always a stately movement but grows more and more rapid in action as it approaches the climax and consequently the end becomes

⁷⁶ G.B. Harrison, *op.cit.*, pp. 99-100.

⁷⁷ William.J. Long, *op.cit.*, p. 156.

calamitous to be resulted in death a dire misfortune to the principal characters. On the other hand a comedy is a drama in which the characters may be said to be placed in more or less humorous situations. There lies the light and often mirthful movement indicating the end with happiness and good will. The historical drama aims at presenting some historical age or personality and may be either a tragedy or a comedy.⁷⁸ In history, legend and story, Shakespeare found the material for nearly all his dramas; and so they are often divided into three classes called historical plays like *Richard III* and *Henry V*; legendary or partly historical plays like *Macbeth*, *King Lear* and *Julius Caesar* and fictional plays like *Romeo and Juliet* and *The Merchant of Venice*. Combination of tragi-comedy elements in the play was introduced by Madhusudan who was greatly influenced by the European trend of dramatic presentation. Madhusudan had to face adverse comments and reactions of the Bengali critics while writing *Kissen Cumari*. Bengali critics should not forget that Shakespeare and Madhusudan have created their individual ways of presentation. Being influenced by Shakespeare Madhusudan adhered to his novelty in presenting drama. Even in tragedy like Shakespeare, Madhusudan introduced tragi - comedy elements in his plays, with reference to Shakespeare's plays like *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, *King Lear*, in which Shakespeare even presented some comic elements which do not appear to suggest any limitation of Shakespeare.

As Madhusudan says:

I have certain I have certain Dramatic notions of my own, which I follow invariably. Some of my friends - and I fancy you are among them as soon as they see a drama of mine begin to apply the cannons of criticism that have been given forth by the masterpieces of William Shakespeare. Our social and moral developments are of a different character. We are no doubt actuated by the same passions, but in us those passions assume a milder shape.⁷⁹

Kissen Cumari although a tragedy had the suggestion to present a comic tone as Shakespeare has presented the guard of *Macbeth*, the grave diggers in the play *Hamlet* as Madhusudan says, 'We must have a face with the tragedy'. Accordingly in *Kissen Cumari* he has introduced Dhanodas and Maduniaka plot which conveyed certain touch of comic aspects in his tragedy showing the evidence of his tragi - comedy elements as Shakespeare did in his plays.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 150-151.

⁷⁹ Mobaser Ali, *op.cit.*, p. 141.

Reasons behind the lack of studies of Shakespeare in Bangladesh

1. Shakespeare remains readable among the educated people.
2. Decline of the standard of education.
3. Shakespeare has been the elements of reading of the readers belonging to the middle class society.
4. Original Shakespeare is not meant for the common people or commoners.
5. The appeal or significance of Shakespeare dramas only limited within the educated people of the upper class society.
6. Shakespeare studies are also far away from the common people.
7. Shakespeare is not treated to be a compulsory syllabus for the learners.

Shakespeare's achievement depends before all else on the power, range, and strength of his use of words. It is well known that his vocabulary was about ten times that of the average man of today. One of the difficulties of reading him with an eye to what the immediate effect must have been is that many words which to us are quite familiar would have jumped out at an Elizabethan as new and startling. The whole language was expanding at a prodigious rate and Shakespeare not only coined, but borrowed, adapted, and wrested words to suit his own masterful will.⁸⁰

The discussion of Shakespeare and the cultivation of Shakespearean literature and drama in the region Bangladesh is indubitably linked with the social and cultural development of that region and with the linkage and parallelism. Strong interest in Shakespeare literature and performance in Kolkata in the nineteenth century has to be seen and interpreted in the light of both, a strong spate of transitional activity in the vernacular medium and in the rise of amateur and professional playhouse in Kolkata from then the arrival and prevalence of Shakespearean literature in Bangladesh is also to be sought on such indirect but related social and literary levels. From about the middle of the nineteenth century Bangladesh, with its rural population, its fewer schools and colleges and its different relatively less sophisticated literary tastes also came to know Shakespeare, but this was a Shakespeare culturally mediated by Kolkata conditioned by the arrangements of the uneven civic and intellectual development of its only urban centre

⁸⁰ M.C. Bradbrook, *Shakespeare and Elizabethan Poetry*, p. 74.

Dhaka in Bangladesh and absorbed into its academic and social life in a manner that was more sporadic and discontinuous than that of Kolkata.

Between 1858 and the present time Shakespeare was known in Bangladesh in the original and in vernacular traditions among coterie circles and in popular levels, in the class room and on the stage. There are times when no evidence of this work remains and when syllabic or curricular evidence is not matched by anything on the social or non academic level.

The distinguishing feature of drama is that it is designed for performance in front of its audience (end).⁸¹

Blending or mingling of folk elements of the 'yatra' with classical Sanskrit drama and remaining unaware of modern problems his (Tagore's) evolving idiom is a fascinating study which is little spread out side Bengal.⁸²

Mingling of folk elements of the 'yatra' and classical Sanskrit drama formed the infrastructure of Bengali modern drama.

Conclusion

The influence of Shakespeare has had its tremendous effect upon the style, presentation, structure, acting, direction, characterisation, dialogues, use of acts, use of soliloquies, stage direction etc. of the playwrights. The evident instance of Shakespearean influence lying in the field of Bengali literature has been highly marked in every sort of newness of its literary genres that seem to have been gleaned from Shakespeare which was supposed to have emerged from various Shakespeare interpretations as conveyed by Professor Richardson who endeavoured to spread the image of Shakespeare among the young generation of Bengal. Shakespeare plays have inspired the *Bengalis* which, it can be said, also have initiated the emergence of new Bengali drama. Had there not been the arrival of Shakespearean plays, Bengali stages would not have been flourished in the field of theatre. Bengali drama and its dramatic technique started getting enriched with the touch of Shakespearean flavour.

⁸¹ Martin Stephen, *op.cit.*, pp. 75-104.

⁸² Sisirkumar Ghose, *op.cit.*, p. 57.

Shakespeare must have known what would happen within the minds of the readers and auditors to such a diaphanous and ethereal thing. Life, as he had long since discovered, reveals as much of herself to any man as he brings to her-and no two bring the same.⁸³

Professor Serajul Islam Chowdhury says in the context of cultural contact of the playwright Shakespeare that '*Besides, anything good is to be accepted if that is found even from the foe*'⁸⁴ accordingly, the greatest playwright Shakespeare has the reasons to sustain and survive for his own qualifications as to have produced plays based on various themes and ideas related to human life and society centring round the basic human psychology with an impersonal but universal appeal never to have any ending. Most of the stages of the world have entertained Shakespeare with his original and translated plays so Bengali drama and playwrights have ample scope to digest Shakespeare. There is no way to escape from the influence of the dramatic genius Shakespeare who has excelled in the art of exerting his tremendous and literary versatility in the said branch of literature. Drama is the manifest of life and society which even mirrors the reflections of the inner world of human nature of a man. For the progress and growth of any literature, drama holds the strong effect to convince or motivate people for which it carries the ancient methodology in interpreting the consequence or end of one's means.

An actor is to be pleased with the excellence of his performance on the stage satisfying the demand and interest of the audience looking at him, the producer cares the best to arrange the equipment behind the screen for a successful stage show, the director is to be particular about the acting, gesture, dialogue presentation of all the characters, over all success of the play seem to depend on him but as a playwright Shakespeare had to think of all. Not only the role of the director, producer or actor keeping the playwright busy but the psychological presentation, sentiment of the audience or anything concerned with the play and as a playwright Shakespeare, by his extra-ordinary dexterity, thought of the audience of all the time, all races, nations which have given him the rank rare to be attained by others. It has become evident now that the playwrights of Bengali dramatic literature undoubtedly followed Shakespeare the playwrights and translators who made

⁸³ Harold C Goodard, *The Meaning of Shakespeare*, Vol. II (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1961), p. 290.

⁸⁴ Serajul Islam Chowdhury *Sreni, Samay O Shahitya*, pp. 66-76.

suitable adaptations in begetting their own creations or innovating individual skills helped develop modern Bengali drama⁸⁵ as Shakespearean genius is sure to leave none uninfluenced even the most original talent for influence-tracing is a difficult and often unrewarding business and notoriously so in the case of Shakespeare studies where the accretions of four centuries are bound to leave some impress on even the most original mind.⁸⁶

Through drama Shakespeare has had his dominating image and the command of influence over world literature in the same way the Bengali playwrights had no way but to glean the aspects of presenting their plays from Shakespeare whose wide range of dramatic faculty had surely helped spread of Bengali dramatic literature and simultaneously conveyed the widest message of keeping peace with others to proceed onward with the same fervour for all the time to come.

⁸⁵ Nazmul Ahsan, *Shakespeare Translations in Nineteenth-Century Bengal Theatre* (Dhaka: Bangla Academy, 1995), pp. 91-92.

⁸⁶ I.H. Habib, "G. Wilson Knight's Shakespeare Criticism: An Estimate", *Dacca University Studies*, Journal of the Faculty of Arts, Dacca, December, 1985, p. 50.

Chapter 5

Reactions of Bengali Intellectuals to Shakespeare as Exhibited in their Criticism of Shakespeare

Introduction

Of all critics in the field of Shakespeare criticism, Dr. Johnson best conveys the singularity of Shakespeare. Dr. Johnson first observed and said where Shakespeare's distinction was located: in a diversity of persons. No one, before or since Shakespeare, made so many separate selves.⁸⁷

The proper evaluation of Shakespeare deserves a new approach of historical analysis which is the outcome of the new historicism to be a branch of a different observation. Shakespeare's influence appeared to be inculcated among the intellectuals of Bengal who were supposed to be the appropriate recipients of imbibing Shakespeare with profound curiosity. The Nineteenth century Bengali literature appeared to have spread in different branches with philosophical and aesthetic thoughts for the Bengali educated class and the activities of the people ardent for staging and watching plays resulted in the emergence of Bengali plays and formation of more theatres and stages with a view to enhancing the taste of the Bengali audience. The changeability of critical taste notwithstanding, the third decade of the twentieth century marks a clear shift in attitudes to Shakespeare.⁸⁸

I have analysed about the reactions of the Bengali intellectuals to Shakespeare as exhibited in their criticism of Shakespeare in this study. Comparative study of Shakespeare and Bengali playwrights with reference to their comments on the characters, plots of Shakespeare and those of the Bengali playwrights are illustrated in this chapter.

I have tried to illustrate and examine the nature of comments and criticism of the Bengali critics on the art of characterisation, dramatic techniques, plots, dialogues and themes of Shakespeare. There is also presented a brief evaluation of Shakespearean works in light of the poets, playwrights, authors of Bengali literature.

⁸⁷ Harold Bloom, *Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human* (New York: Riverhead, 1998), p. XVII.

⁸⁸ I. H. Habib, "G. Wilson Knight's Shakespeare Criticism: An Estimate", p. 30.

Shakespeare's criticism has certain positive impact as the tradition of criticism has not got flourished in Bengali literary venues although criticism appears to be one of the vital schools of literary genre. Criticism appeared to be a matured stage or growth of intellectual analysis during the nineteenth century Bengal. Bengali literature was getting into a shape of modernity when the great contributions of Bengali literature began to revive. Shakespeare criticism has turned into various schools of thoughts and views in European and English speaking countries of the world that exercised the opportunity to embrace or respond to Shakespeare with the emergence of his being evolved as a playwright of increasing popularity. However, in England Shakespeare happened to draw the notice of the critics like Green and those of the university wits when he was alive but in other parts of world Shakespeare received gradual response from the critics other than his native critics. However, *Bengalis* received Shakespeare whole heartedly and their response and criticism appear to indicate their sense of appreciation of Shakespeare and his plays.

To have some idea about Shakespeare one requires profound knowledge about his products. Shakespeare criticism seems to have no ending when the number of readers or audiences increases with the passing of time. Bengali critics of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries appear to have conveyed eulogistic approach to Shakespeare who was a dramatic model and an image worthy of being imitated or followed by the Bengali playwrights in attaining the status of perfection to meet the demands and interests of the audiences who, mean while, developed special fascination for Shakespeare's plays by being the regular goers to the theatres. Comments of the Bengali playwrights on Shakespeare had a positive value in the mind of the readers and audience and they didn't have any scope to measure Shakespeare as an alien to them and for themselves to be measured otherwise.

Significance of honest criticism in comparative study, of at least two literary personalities, appears to have certain recognition as Wilson Knight says in the following way:

To receive the whole Shakespearean vision within the intellectual consciousness demands a certain and very definite act of mind. One must be prepared to see the whole play of Shakespeare in space as well as in time.⁸⁹

⁸⁹ Wilson Knight, *The Wheel of Fire*, p. 3.

Shakespeare and history of the Elizabethans seem to have a coextensive factor. Elizabethan history provides extensive study of Shakespeare which is also acknowledged by its impact upon the socio-economic structure in which Shakespeare as a genius came to be evaluated and identified. So views of the critics concerning the historical analysis of the dramatist focus the factors responsible for the creation of the famous playwright.⁹⁰

Honest criticism and comparative study rather help reach a proper evaluation and obtain a resolution of the recognition of the aspects as presented by an author as poet T.S. Eliot in his famous *Tradition and The Individual Talent* focuses his view in the following way;

No poet, no artist of any art has his complete meaning alone. His significance, his appreciation is the appreciation of his relation to the dead poets and artists and comparison among the dead.

He further says that it is a judgment, a comparison in which two things are measured by each other.⁹¹

In other sense Shakespeare represents the ruler. His literary contribution may be discussed other wise which may lead the critics to have an access to misinterpretations of his plays showing the characters holding and representing power and politics but they do not have the background to be interpreted with any negative notion when Shakespeare displays the inner world and the psychology of man.

Initially, the thrust for an English Empire came from the commercial-political needs of the English but their writers were always at the forefront of their colonial ventures.⁹²

The first generation of Bengali literature wrote in English but they were not successful and men like Modhusudan Dutt and Bomkim Chandra Chatterji soon shifted to their mother tongue and the English language continued to thrive in the post colonial era.

⁹⁰ E.M.W. Tillyard, *Shakespeare's Criticism: Reflections of Renaissance Elements in Shakespeare Characters*, p. 1.

⁹¹ D.J. Enright & Ernst Dechickepesa (eds.), *English Critical Texts* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1962), pp. 294-295.

⁹² Fakrul Alam, *Imperial Entanglements and Literature* (Dhaka: Writers Ink, 2007), p. 1.

The dire aftermath of colonial dominations and the continuing exploitation by monopoly capitalism doom the developing countries to an unequal status in the world capitalist economy and widen the economic gap between them and the advanced capitalist states.⁹³

Nature and trends of Shakespeare criticism

*'Criticism grows desperate from time to time and denies their existence.'*⁹⁴

But Shakespeare criticism and the reactions of Bengal to Shakespeare originated in the context of the comparative study and judgement linked with the taste of studies of Kalidas. There was profound interest in Kalidas for his exquisite potentials that existed among the intelligentsia of Bengal. The educated *Bengalis* had emotional attachment to Kalidas and there was a sense of nostalgia and fondness of the *Bengalis* which was not to be affected by the studies of Shakespeare but Viddaya Sagore did not consider Kalidas as an inevitable measurement in the context of the studies of Shakespeare. Besides, there were many readers and writers who with their rational attitude highlighted the supremacy of Shakespeare and his extra ordinary literary genius.⁹⁵

The attitude of the scholar is that Shakespeare was an Elizabethan with the advantage and limitations of his age. His plays were subject to the conditions of his time. He was, in short, a man who provided the plays for particular company actors. It is some kind of study revealing much and vastly increasing the enjoyment of a play. Scholarship can be misled if the scholar merely regards Shakespeare as intensity and forgets that he was not much more than a man who wrote plays for an Elizabethan theatre, it is the business of the critic and producer to correct that impression.

He also proceeds to view *'The plays of Shakespeare are the ideals of drama to us'*. But suffers the lack of proper translation and his criticism appears to be very beady which is a matter of great question as the critic makes the comments,

⁹³ G. Krasnov, A. Chekhutov, *Developing Countries: Problems of Foreign Economic Relations* (Moscow: Novosti Press Agency Publishing House, 1973), p. 53.

⁹⁴ Mark Van Doren, *Shakespeare* (New York: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1953), p. xiii.

⁹⁵ Amritlal Bala, *Macbeth Bikkhon* [An observation on Macbeth] (Rajshahi: Hamida Book Corporation, 1998), p. 52.

I had to find my own strategy and methodology. Instead of a dry-as-dust catalogue or chronology, the account is strictly selective.⁹⁶

Evaluation of Shakespeare by his contemporary critics and the impact of the same on Bengali critics

- i) The first name in English Literature who is recognised as an Elizabethan poet and dramatist whose skill in transforming human character and action into art has placed him in the matchless status for the world literature.
- ii) Shakespeare's professional activity is revealed best by the succession of poems and plays that have made him an immortal in literature.⁹⁷
- iii) But Shakespeare is best known not as a lyricist but as a dramatic poet.
- iv) In his lifetime his reputation was high and in the past two centuries it has increased steadily. Because Shakespeare's adroitness as an actor and producer would keep him a model not only for the playwrights of Bengali literature but also for the word literature. He had little concern with the printing of his dramas and fewer than half of those in the "canon" were published before the folio edition of his collected plays that appeared seven years after his death.
- v) Shakespeare continued to write comedies throughout his career, his great tragedies are the work of his maturity.
- vi) His characters are true to life and consistently developed. He mixed the elements of tragedy and comedy in his plays as they are mixed in life. Essentially he was a romanticist but with his romanticism he compounded realism. He knew the formulas of the classical critics and could follow them when he wished; but he was too natural an artist to be bound by rules for composition. He knew life first and knew how to present it in lively action. and fellow dramatist Ben Jonson who could write in praise of him: 'He was not of an age but for all time.'⁹⁸
- vii) 'Shakespeare is the most original of dramatists. The patterns of his plots are sometimes intricate but always clearly woven.

⁹⁶ *The Modern Approach Method of Criticism* (London: Penguin Books, Great Britain 1963), pp. 59-61.

⁹⁷ A Watt Homer and W. Watt William, *A Dictionary of English Literature Barnes and Noble* (New York: 1957), p. 247.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 249.

- viii) Shakespeare is a savage with sparks of genius which shine in a dreadful darkness of night. —Voltaire⁹⁹
- ix) I remember, the players have often mentioned it as an honour to Shakespeare, that in his writing (whatsoever he penn'd) he never blotted out a line. My answer hath been, would he had blotted out a thousand. —Ben Johnson.¹⁰⁰
- x) What needs my Shakespeare for his honour'd bones,
The labour of an age in piled stones,
Or that his hallow'd reliques should be hid
Under a star-y pointing pyramid. —Milton.¹⁰¹
- xi) Shakespeare (whom you and every playhouse bill
Style the divine! The matchless! What you will)
For gain, not glory, wing'd his roving flight,
And grew immortal in his own despite. —Pope¹⁰²
- xii) Others abide our question. Thou art free,
We ask and ask; Thou smilest and art still
Out-topping knowledge, —Mathew Arnold¹⁰³

Difference of attitudes on views and methodologies of the old historicists and new historicism came to be a source of comparative study on Shakespeare studies. It is really very hard for the readers or audiences to understand the personality of Shakespeare as he remained untouchable in his literary works. He is objective rather than subjective. Although greatness of writers remains hidden and some of their attributes are evident in their works but in his 37 plays Shakespeare has presented so many dialogues or statements which of them conveys Shakespeare's own or his character's appears to be a question.¹⁰⁴

⁹⁹ Milan Datta, *Prem O Rahashye Shakespeare* [Shakespeare in Love and Mystery] (Kolkata: Universal Book Depot, 2001), p. 1.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴ Shamsur Rahman (trs.), *Hamlet: A Drama of Shakespeare* (Dhaka: Bangla Academy, Culture and Journal Division, 1995), pp. 8-9.

Shakespeare's objective as an artist seems to be without any contact of subjectivity as it is a marked trend of an artist that he enjoys conforming to the fetters of his art. Shakespeare seems to have recognized instinctively that it was his function as dramatist to represent not to recommend or condemn, his characters are not to be concerned with how the crowd might take them, except to the extent of interesting it.¹⁰⁵

The understanding of the new historicism is to find the same way in the context of the twentieth century critical movement and perspectives. In the 1920s the dominant mode of criticism that began to be centred round the historical interpretation of literature. The old historicists are said to have seen a straight forward unproblematic way of relation lying between history and literature against the backdrop of history which, appearing to them to be of grand overwhelming events and styles and clearly discernible patterns. Methodologically the old historicists appear to have tended to make sweeping connections between the author and his life and times. There is found the cardinal difference between the old historicists and the new historicists. Both convey their statements on the basis of historical elements but the new historicists gave emphasis on the critical movements highlighting historical interpretations of literature not mainly about the life and times of the author. Shakespeare has created characters but none of them represents Shakespeare's personality of his own.¹⁰⁶

Qualities of a critic to possess also come while studying Shakespeare duties of Shakespeare Scholars are imbued with some attributes by which Shakespeare might be easily comprehended.

The great contention of criticism is to find the faults of the moderns and the beauties of the ancients while an author is yet living we estimate his powers by his worst performance and when he is dead, we rate them by his best¹⁰⁷

Shakespeare's plays survive as printed texts. The conditions of publication are therefore replete with importance. The scholar must study the history of a play's script and how Elizabethan plays were, in fact, written. He must examine the earliest texts to see whether there are traces of revision or collaboration. In fact, Shakespeare had the mind to

¹⁰⁵ Horold C. Goddard, *The Meaning of Shakespeare*, Vol. 11 (Chicago: Phoenix Books, 1961), p. 3.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷ D. J. Enright & Ernst De Chicken, *op.cit.*, p. 40.

be particular about setting the plots of his plays as to meet the demands and interests of his audience. There are other factors relevant but not so immediate. All dramatists appear to be concerned with interesting and pleasing their audiences, and all the projection of the drama directly or indirectly reflects the taste and ideas of its own time. The enactings great or small that were happening around Shakespeare are therefore directly or indirectly treated to be the part of his material. The scholar should have the information of knowing something of current notions and topics, of wars, excitements, depressions, revolutions, of passing feelings and literary fashions, for fashions in literature changed even more quickly in Shakespeare's time than today. It appears incumbent upon the critic to be familiar with the current ideas of the times of literary criticism, science, psychology, history, morals, religion all these affected Shakespeare immediately. All the elements of the above criticism appear to be important for an intelligent study of Shakespeare and there may have the scope for the Shakespeare scholars to have some knowledge of them as a result there can't be any way to fully understand and so appreciate the plays of Shakespeare or his plays.

A sense of proper understanding of the environment of Shakespeare provides the extra-ordinary or additional information for a critic which is supposed to be essential to have a proper resolution of his criticism. In the same way the humorous man in Shakespeare as English was not the appearance of a funny man of the party but the melancholic, the eccentric.¹⁰⁸

Various approaches of criticism to Shakespeare

Today people are interested mainly in three kinds of study which radiate from the plays of Shakespeare. An intensive study of any kind of criticism may bring readers nearer understanding or farther away as they are used and followed. These kinds of study may be labelled as follows:

- (a) *Scholarly*
- (b) *Literary*
- (c) *Dramatic*¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁸ G.B. Harrison, *Introducing Shakespeare* (London: Penguin Books, 1939), p. 108.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 109.

Modern diagnoses in interpreting Shakespeare

The scholar says in effect-

This Shakespeare has been dead for *more* than three hundred years. Times, manners, and ideas have changed yearly. To understand him therefore we must know his environment and examine his plays in the conditions of their original composition.

The producer and the actor again says- 'Our business is with the theatre of today, its customs and conventions, its staging and its audience. Therefore, it is obligatory to act Shakespeare's plays in a manner which will be understood by a modern audience of mixed interests, knowledge and appreciation that at them can be a great source for all modern scholars, in studying Shakespeare's environment is concerned with a wide variety of interests, which may be subdivided into three main branches of study.

Homage and tribute to Shakespeare

It may be mentioned in this connection that in 1965 a collection of articles on Shakespeare was published which is the solitary example of the study of Shakespeare in English on the 400th birth anniversary of Shakespeare. This collection of essays entitled *Homage to Shakespeare* was published which was edited by Dr. S. Sajjad Husain, Professor of the Department of English, University of Dhaka. There were ten articles included in this book which were written mostly with the analytical interpretations on Shakespeare contributed by the teachers of the department of English. Dr. Serajul Islam Chowdhury's article on *Bengali translation of Shakespeare* and Dr. Enamul Karim's article on *The East in Shakespeare's Tragedy* reflect the views on the native response to Shakespeare. Dr. Serajul Islam Chowdhury has elaborately dealt with the tradition of the translation of Shakespeare in Bengali and an interesting study of Shakespeare's major characters conveyed by Dr. Enamul Karim like *Othello* and *Cleopatra* taken from the East demonstrating prudent investigation of their own in evaluating Shakespearean style of presentation which came to be a the masterpiece to study Shakespeare.

Jiban Kumar Mukapaddaya on Shakespeare

Jiban Kumar Mukapaddaya remarks that in the 19th century the Bengali people learnt the philosophy of materialism as a result of western influence. Western civilization and philosophical views taught *Bengalis* to be materialistic and aware of the struggle of life and consequently the *Bengalis* developed awareness in the context of loss and gain, frustration and expectations, failure and success, happiness and sorrow, pair and

suffering. Learning of English or through the English language Bengal became well acquainted with the tragedies of western literature, Shakespeare plays became their constant company, elements of their acting. Thus the tragedies emerged from western literature touched the hearts of the *Bengalis* and it is interesting to note that the tragedy which was not so remarkable confiscated in Sanskrit and the sense of tragedy which was a bit dim and introvert that sort of tragic consciousness or idea of tragedy came to be vividly reflected. The tragic sense of the *Bengalis* seemed to be scintillated by the pain of western tragedy contributed by Shakespeare plays.¹¹⁰

Michael Madhusudan Dutt on Shakespeare

Michael Madhusudan Datta was the first to reveal Shakespearean influence in the field of Bengali literature a learned poet and educationist who was thought to be established as an image representing the educated Bengali intellectuals by following Shakespeare's dramatic art as to introduce foreign influence on Bengali drama. Besides following Shakespearean style in his plays Modhusudan even is said to have introduced his own style as to represent the mark of his revolt as well as originality. He was the supporter and a member of young Bengal and disciple of professor David Lister Richardson who used to be extremely passionate while reading and teaching Shakespeare. There was no alternative to Shakespeare and there was no match to the writing of Shakespeare which came to be ingrained in his heart, others were also affected with same sort of conception. Shakespeare, Milton, Byron were the everyday quotations in their speeches. In such an environment Shakespeare was imitated by him didn't appear to be uncommon of the then time. But in spite of being influenced by Shakespeare, Madhusudan remained aware of enjoying the Indian tune and the inner essence of Greek tragedy. Madhusudan confidently entangled himself with arguments and used to establish the supremacy of Shakespeare as he states, -

‘Shakespeare as a great poet was superior to the scientist NEWTON.’¹¹¹

¹¹⁰ Jiban Kumar Mukapaddaya, *Rabindranather Tragedy-Cetona* (Kolkata: Awareness of Tragic Sense of Rabindranath, 1973), p. 8.

¹¹¹ Jogindranath Basu, *Michael Madhusudan Dattar Jibon Sarit* [Characteristics of Michael Madhusudan's Life] (Kolkata: 1978), pp. 38-39.

Rabindranath's views on Shakespeare

Shakespeare was a genius and matchless icon' for no theory or criticism can keep him within the framework of any defined methodology. '*Shakespeare was not given to theory*'¹¹²

When in the year 1940 poet Rabindranath declared Shakespeare to be the model of drama in writing plays for the Bengali playwrights and influence of Shakespeare won the heart of the people, there raised the question of dispute regarding the western playwright Shakespeare. Some of the critics of Bengal were concerned with the sound Indian and individual trend of writing plays which even are ancient with their same ingenuity of the legendary poet Kalidas which emerged the inconsistency between the trend of Kalidas and Shakespeare style, in particular, the dramatic style of the European methodology. In the ending part of the 16th century some critics of Bengal treated the arrival of Shakespearean style as a threat to the existing dramatic ways of writing for the local playwrights.¹¹³

Tagore's faith in the unity of man and nature informed everything he did. Dwelling on Shakespeare's 'great power as a dramatic poet', there was in him a gulf between the lively aspects of nature and human nature owing to the tradition of his race and time. It cannot be said that beauty of nature is ignored in his writings; only that he fails to recognize in them the truth of the interpenetrations of human life with the cosmic life of the world.¹¹⁴

Undoubtedly Rabindranath was fond of Shakespeare who was said to be the model for him. But with his prudent approach he viewed Shakespeare specially his characters to be different from the characters of the Bengali plays. Rabindranath has also had the views of a critic as he has criticised the limitations of Shakespearean characters in the following way as referred to Dijendralal Roy, 'Kalidash' and *Vabavuti* a collection of essays by Dizendra in which he states. Balendranath Tagore set a comparative study in viewing the writings of Shakespeare and how far Shakespeare has been mingled with the

¹¹² M.C. Bradbrook, *Shakespeare and Elizabethan Poetry*, p. 79.

¹¹³ Syed Manzoorul Islam, *Bangladeshe Shakespeare Charcha: Shakespeare Stories in Bengal* [Essays] (Dhaka: Bangala Academy, 1983), pp. 89-90.

¹¹⁴ Krisna Dutta and Andrew Robinson, *Rabindranath Tagore: An Anthology* (London: Picador, 1997), p. Introduction-7.

aspects of nature. He observed that since the inception of the Sanskrit literature there had been the influence of the aspects of nature in Indian literary scenario. Nature has entangled the lives of the Indians so profoundly that the every day aspect of life has appeared as the reflections of their lives with liveliness and integral part. But it is hardly found in Shakespeare. Balendranath further illustrates that sort of failure to portray the reflection of the opulent aspects of nature to be a limitation of Shakespeare. He further says that while reading the plays of Shakespeare seems to love nature wholeheartedly but nature doesn't appear to have developed any cordial relationship with Shakespeare. The aspects of nature surrounding his characters and their lives seem to affect them like a shadow giving no perennial impact upon them.¹¹⁵ In this context, Here can be cited the remarks of the dramatist Dwijendra Lal Roy who happened to follow Shakespeare through his career but his comments may also explore his interpretations of a different critic as to highlight his attitude towards Shakespeare when he says,-

The subject matters of his (Shakespeare's) best plays are no doubt great but his heroes do not have any special quality. In *Hamlet* there is a quality of devotion to his father, but through out the play he has hesitated.¹¹⁶

King Lear is said to be a mad. He would like to remain pleased only with the oral expression of his daughters' sweet words of satisfaction as the proof of being loyal to him. Othello in the same way, out of jealousy, kills his wife. In *Macbeth*, Macbeth's betrayal expresses his ingratitude. However, Shakespeare has dealt with the abnormal issues of life centring round the basic instincts that act as the background of human miseries. It is to be cited that the invisible mechanism of human nature is the root cause of all the tragedies which are duly manifested through the art of characterization of Shakespeare in his plays.

Shakespeare and Nazrul Islam

It might be a source of immense astonishment to find similarities and dissimilarities of the one belonging to the 20th century and the other who belonged to the 16th century. Poet Shakespeare of English literature remaining very far from the subcontinent and the other

¹¹⁵ Shafi Ahmed, *op.cit.*, p. 201.

¹¹⁶ Dwijendra Lal Roy, *Kalidash o Vabovuti: Dwijendra Rachana Sangragh*, 2nd Vol. (Kolkata: 1975), p. 9. Cited by Shafi Ahmed, *Bangadeshe Shakespeare* [Shakespeare in Bengal] (Dhaka: Bangla Academy, 1988), p. 212.

poet Nazrul being aloof from the eastern wing of the world from Bengali literature appear to be on the same line. But a genius holds the image of being a universally acknowledged phenomenon which evicts the bridge of gap and constitutes a bridge of eternal communion beyond the ambit of all limitations. When Shakespeare is measured to be the standard not only for England or European belt in the way of Nazrul's existence acquires a sense of standard when compared to the poets of the other race, nations, language or culture. There exists immense oneness of Nazrul of Bengali Literature with the Bard Shakespeare of English literature.

Buddha Deb Bose acknowledges the importance of the role of Nazrul in the introduction of modernism into Bengali poet.

Tagore's rise in poetry was so overpowering it took Bengal three or four decades to get over the surprise and wonder of it. It's the spell lasted until Nazrul Islam stormed in, waving, on high the flag of rebellion. For the first time Tagore's charm failed to work ... Nazrul was the first poet of original genius after Tagore ... and Nazrul came at a time when Tagore's influence was at its height, tearing himself free from bondage to it was an almost impossible feat. He escaped from Tagore by the strength of his own personality and infused Bengali poetry with new vigour, new blood. He awakened aspirations and longings which, in their turn, inspired a widespread restless seeking. They demanded fulfillment. The hour of turning had struck for Bengali literature.¹¹⁷

Poets are not the creators of poetry only they are the messengers of universal song, universal theme of life. They are not meant for a particular region or country or class of people when Rabindranath enjoyed the zenith of success at the mature stage of life and poetic refulgence. Nazrul is then a young enthusiast in spite of all the differences of mood, sentiments, social or familial aspects, religious or literary combination. They are tied to each other with the thread of poetic net. Nazrul Islam is said to be a puzzling phenomenon. A poet with humanitarian outlook dedicated his poems for the humanity as a revolutionary image to break all the barriers of time, caste, political suffocation hindering the cause of the depressed as he says;

¹¹⁷ Rafiqul Islam (ed.), *Kazi Nazrul Islam: A New Anthology* (Dhaka: Bangla Academy, 1990), p. 12.

“I am a poet of the present and not a prophet of the future.”
At the turn of the century I may survive, I
May not but I should not care.”¹¹⁸

Unqualified statements like these indicate that he had an enormous amount of self-confidence and conviction in the justness of his case.¹¹⁹

Professor Syed Sajjad Husain in his essay *Nazrul Islam: An Assessment* in which he says with reference to Shakespeare's contributions to the world of literature and Shakespeare of whose life suggests an exceptional affinity with the life of the poet Nazrul Islam who had to face a lot of struggles for his survival and as an extra-ordinary literary genius, despite his being afflicted with immense crisis of life in the same way Shakespeare had to struggle and strive for the crucial realities of life displaying similar scenarios of their penurious ordeals of their lives. However, Bengali critics have accepted Shakespeare as to place him in measuring one another's literary command and contribution to world literature. Shakespeare has been treated as the scale of perfection as professor Syed Sajjad Husain illustrates that he seems to have possessed like many famous writers, of whom the best known is Shakespeare. The capacity to absorb and assimilate knowledge from hearsay or the environment although some assume that he did not belong to a working class family, courteous poverty, it is said, obliged him to abandon school life even before he could finish his secondary learning. But he height of way of life he renders, the values he held were not those of an uneducated man. What makes this mystery the more puzzling is the fact that whereas the greater part of Shakespeare's life wrapped up in an impassable mist on the other hand a great deal about Nazrul Islam.¹²⁰

Comparative study of Shakespeare and Kalidas

Educated *Bengalis* had fascination for Kalidas who had immense impact upon the mind of the Bengali people. They never wanted to set a comparative study of Shakespeare and Kalidas. Keeping the popularity of Kalidas unhurt Bengali people desired to uphold the image of Shakespeare.¹²¹ In this sort of situation whether to remain aloof from Shakespearean touch or to follow his style inspired Puranchandra Bose to write an essay in the year 1896 in which he treated Shakespearean image to be a foe to Kalidas as to

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁹ Mohammad Nurul Huda, *Nazrul: An Evaluation* (Dhaka: Nazrul Institute, 1997), p. 69.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 123.

¹²¹ Shafi Ahmed, *op.cit.*, p. 195.

receive the views of Shakespeare tragedy to be really venomous, harmful for the Bengal playwrights. In his view he bears the opinion that to place Shakespeare in place of Kalidas indicates the neglecting attitude of the Bengali intellectuals towards the native or local dramatic techniques at the same time gradually great poets or playwrights like Kalidas would be obliterated from the memory of the *Bengalis* into oblivion which cannot be over looked.

Reactions and criticism of Bengali Intellectuals to Shakespeare are the emergence of his profound impact upon them that acted as the expression of certain evaluation about Shakespearean works. The excellence and beauty of Shakespearean dialogues captivate the Bengali readers as well as audience with taste of novelty.

The excellence and beauty of Shakespearean plays are the dialogues which may be called 'brilliant dialogues'. The dialogues composed several hundred years ago appear to be scintillating brilliance and they do not seem to be old fashioned.¹²²

Educated *Bengalis* had the opportunity to study Shakespearean plays. Having command of English appears to be the precondition for the natives to understand Shakespeare. Bengali intelligentsia, educated *Bengalis*, students and teachers or the learning class engaged in the study of Shakespearean studies as prescribed in the syllabus, actors, directors of stage performers of Shakespeare plays are the persons specially committed and known to appreciate or evaluate Shakespeare but the fact is that only the printed comments, analysis, criticism of the Bengali playwrights, critics, poets, appear to be worthy of being added to the studies of Shakespeare to a great extent. Observations of the *Bengalis* on Shakespeare have marked as the expression of their appreciation and evaluation in the attire of their criticism on Shakespeare. Birth of a new intellectual class and Bengali Intelligentsia became the source of contribution to the growth of knowledge and outlook of the Bengali people.

A result was found that a new intellectual class was born. This class is said to have now engaged in carrying on the torch of civilization and culture in a global perspective.

¹²² Jahanara Imam, *Cirayata Shāhiya* [Universal Literature], *Shakespearean Tragedy* (Dhaka: Academic Publishers, 1989), p. 6. Cited in the preface by Kabir Chowdhury.

Middle class people are the appropriate sector to entertain and accept Shakespeare. Middle class people are afraid of climax but climax is supposed to be the lifeblood of a drama. Middle class people are prone to react to the authority of the rulers. They are not independent as the socio-economic infrastructure keeps them in the position to be ruled by others but they revolt against the ruler at the same time they indulge in reconciliation with the same. Shakespeare renaissance and the growth of Bengali awareness seems to be an ongoing process for the Bengali literary community. Particular texts and plays are chosen by the critics of Bangladesh to highlight views and opinions with innovative presentation. There is a touch of newness in diagnosing Shakespeare and his plays with the modern contexts. The contemporary issues also have occupied in their ways of criticism to evaluate Shakespeare with the elements of creating a new taste for the Shakespeare scholars and researches. The contemporary issues having universal appeal are of special attention for the thinkers of Bangladesh as stated by Rebecca Haque in the following way;¹²³ She says that gender issue has been stated as the gender politics and has been reissued as the major issue at present which has been more succinctly and pointedly reflected than in the plays of Shakespeare with special effect in the romantic comedies of Shakespeare.

Bishnu De on Shakespeare

The genius of Shakespeare seems to be sparkling through words and dialogues but not from the necessity of a play or from the necessity of a character. A critic like Bishnu De has illustrated the necessity and excellence of the dialogues and words used by Shakespeare showing the utility of his plays to be furnished with the individual styles as possessed by Shakespeare. Tolstoy was as a great prose writer as well as in writing plays or even novels and who does not know Shakespeare was chiefly a poet and the monarch of the kingdom of the poets and playwrights a genius of Shakespeare seems to be sparkling through words and dialogues. Bishnu De has acknowledged the appeal of his dialogues to be witty which seems to have grown confidence in the hearts of the Bengali playwrights with the same to appreciate him as the best playwright dialogued plays in the word.¹²⁴

¹²³ Rebecca Haque, "The Politics of Marriage in Shakespeare's: A Midsummer Night's Dreams", *Dhaka University Studies*, Vol. 56:1, Journal of the Faculty of Arts, Dhaka, 2003, pp. 1-9.

¹²⁴ William Shakespeare, *Othello*, Sunil Kumar Chattopadhyay (tr.) (Kolkata: Shahitya Academy, 1967), p. 8.

Dr. Fakrul Alam on New Historicism and the Politicization of Shakespeare

Dr. Fakul Alam in his analytical approach to the evaluation of Shakespearean criticism in his essay *New Historicism and the Politicization of Shakespeare* highlights emphasis on the aspects of the literary interpretations over historical analysis when delving into the aspects of Shakespeare. In view of the relationship between history and literature, his essay ascertains his attempts to focus on a literary work solely for its reflection of history, in which he defines the way of understanding new historicism to see in the light of twentieth century critical movements that are known to be the new way of politicized interpretations of Shakespeare as he says,-

... the critical movement called new historicism and the way it has politicized the interpretation of Shakespeare, but I do not think it is fair for me to assume that here in Bangladesh we know a great deal about the movement or its politics.¹²⁵

He exhibits new historicism to be categorised in the following aspects as it attributes to the new way of viewing aspects of literature and Shakespeare evaluation Dr. Alam focuses the following observations in view of the approach of the new way of criticism as follows:

1. The old historicists used to apply the straight-forward and unproblematic relation between history and literature.
2. They used to view literature against the backdrop of history.
3. But the new historicist views criticism appearing to be the fashion of interpreting the work of literature without worrying about its contexts.¹²⁶

However, this study would convey the nature of criticism as applied to Shakespeare by the Bengali critics and intellectuals.

Rebecca Haque on Shakespeare

Rebecca Haque finds the touch of the reflection of the complex and mixed socio-political problems as addressed by the thinkers and writers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries that centred round the institution of marriage it self as much as on the

¹²⁵ Dr. Fakrul Alam, "New Historicism and The Politicization of Shakespeare", *Dhaka University Studies*, Vol. 52:2, Journal of Faculties of Arts, University of Dhaka, Dhaka, December 1999, pp. 1-11.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

relationship of men and women within marriage. She also illustrates a comparative study of the romantic conflicts between the two pairs of young lovers revolving around the issue of the choice of a mate and this central action is itself framed by and connected to the impending marriage of the king of Athens which teaches us with his *Amazonian queen Hippolyta*.¹²⁷

Shakespeare is supposed to have chosen to weave into the fabric of the drama a number of issues of major concern to the audience of the Elizabethan period. Patriarchal power and its influence on the family are of special significance as noted in the analyses of the economic biases of the period. In addition to the reinforcement of patriarchal power within the family, the economic biases of the period effectively turned the majority of marital unions into a political alliance between families, since the outcome of such alliances had important repercussions upon the entire body politic. Individual liking of mate was involved in the love or sexual attraction was measured in a society to be undesirable. There comes the role of the contemporary authors and protestant preachers deliberately campaigning to raise the norms and therefore that was found in their moral tracts and insistent emphasis not only on filial loyalty but also on the need of parental consent to temper what they thought to be rash and reckless prompting of youthful vigour and desires, which is supposed to be reflected in the play *Othello* and mostly in *Romeo and Juliet*. Social relationship played vital role in intermingling the relationship of men and women during Shakespeare's time. Sayed Shamsul Haque doesn't think *The Tempest* to be a mark of Shakespeare's great faculty rather he defines the play as a story full a magic and spell working abnormally over the people. He states the play to be a study of super natural taste having no deep morals of Shakespeare.

Reactions of the Middle class people of Bengal

The middle class people of Bengal appeared to have received the coincidence of their liking and disliking in the plays of Shakespeare as the events and characters focused their views and norms of the social, familial bondage of the time. In spite of the developing and progressive education system, the Bengali audience remained unaffected from the bondage of socio-religious ambit, prejudice as a result they accepted Shakespeare as the congenial and viable inspiration in their everyday recreation. The father as the chief

¹²⁷ Rebecea Hague, *op.cit.*, p. 5.

person to control the familial ties and command the subordinates to work under his supernatural spell Shakespeare portrays the sources of the foundation of familial kinship which depicts the socio-familial affinity of the Bengali parents with the parents of England. A trend of new criticism with the light and airs of local, political and socioeconomic perspectives have emerged in the eyes of the critics of Bengal with an essence derived from Shakespeare studies.¹²⁸

Batool Sarwar on Shakespeare's power and Politics: Effect of power and politics in Shakespeare

Shakespeare appears to be the mirror of reflecting a lot of elements involving power, politics, constitutional bondage with the social, political, familial or religious institutions, the relationship between the ruler and the ruled and subsequently the impact of the same upon the aspects linked with. It is to be cited that the power in Shakespearean plays is said to work in the society but not in the individual.

Factors of economic power and manipulation of the same

The working methodology of power is also glanced in the criticism as stated that *Measure for Measure* is in many ways a deeply subversive play for it demystifies the working of power by exposing to the eyes of the common people., *Measure for Measure* also shows the manipulation and misuse of authority by Angelo and the far more subtle manipulation of Angelo by the Duke. With contemporary history of England Batool Sarwar highlights how the manipulation of power is exercised and the subjects of the ruler are exploited by the same as he states the success of the Duke's manipulation to be attributed to the complexity between Church and state.¹²⁹

The cultivation of Shakespearean discussion

Shakespearean discussion on language and literature demonstrates the emergence of strong interest in Shakespearean literature and performance in Kolkata in the nineteenth century is a matter of a strong spate of transactional activity in the vernacular medium and in the rise of amateur and professional play houses in Kolkata from about the middle of the century.

¹²⁸ Batool Saswar, "Power and Politics in Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure*", Journal of the Faculty of Arts, *The Dhaka University Studies*, Dhaka, 2002, pp. 65-66.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*

Mingling of religion and social power in Measure for Measure

The process by which the medieval church came to abandon this original disdain for materialism and became one of the most corrupt and oppressive force subjugation is profoundly ironic and created in Christian society a profound sense of uncertainty and disorientation in the attitudes of the subjects of the state. *Measure for Measure* reflects a society where religious and secular powers are dangerously intermingled to frighten the subjects into obedience and docility to the power of the state.¹³⁰ *A Midsummer Nights Dream* is said to have celebrated love within marriage. It also denotes in pitying father against his daughter, husband against his wife and at the same time friend against friend. This play exhibits human behaviour and raises disturbing questions about the rapport of men towards women. Shakespeare's plays show the reflection of his own society as well as the societies of the other nations are pictured in his plays in the context of projecting the inner psychology of human being related to the external aspects of the society. Shakespeare was himself a man of theatre: he experienced the playing of parts in a repertory company, and knew that the successful performance depends upon harmony and co-operation between the performers, that is, upon mutual and manifold relations within a group of actors and on the relation of the group to their auditory.¹³¹ In *Othello* there is a mark of the rights of women as Desdemona, after having eloped with Othello; happened to face her father Brabantio. Desdemona deserved the status as a wife of Othello but not as a daughter to her father she enjoys Daughterly love different from that of her husband. She raised her voice citing her mother's relation with her father as an example as her father was to her mother in the same way in which marriage relation was the pivotal in the same way Othello to her and she to Othello as a married wife who does not like to be treated with daughterly attitude by her father so she reminds her father of the relation he maintains with her mother. In brief, she would like to have meant that as a married wife she should be guided and controlled by her husband Othello not by her father as the marital legislation of the status afforded by her relation of marriage with Othello.

Shakespeare's plays and sonnets and their relation to the poetry and life of his age come to be a subject which can claim to interest many who are not literary specialists.¹³²

¹³⁰ Serajul Islam Chuwdhuri, *Politics and Culture Essays*, Fakrul Alam & Ferdous Azim (ed.) (Dhaka: Department of English, Dhaka University, 2002).

¹³¹ M.C. Bradbrook, *op.cit.*, pp. 82-83.

¹³² *Ibid.*, p. 7.

Mixture of secular and religious power in Measure for Measure

The role the medieval church happened to abandon the original disdain for the components of materialism and became one of the factors to be the most corrupt and oppressive force of subjugation is profoundly ironic and created in Christian society a profound sense of uncertainty and disorientation in the attitudes of the subjects of the state. *Measure for Measure* reflects a society where religious and secular powers dangerously intermingled to keep the subjects into obedience and docility to the power of the state.¹³³

Shakespeare's words and images to reveal thoughts of his plays

There is a light of cause and effect formula in the aspects of the art of characterization in Shakespeare perhaps he has emphasized 'the effect' more than 'the cause.'

Shakespeare's words and dialogues used in the plays highlight his objective to present the characters with the manifestation of their inner psychology. To produce a villain, without other reason greater than a natural inclination to villainy, is, in poetry, to produce an effect without a cause; and to make him more a villain than he has just reason to be, is to make an effect which is stronger than the cause.¹³⁴

King Lear appears to be a hot-headed personality. His poor judgement makes his choleric disposition break out in 'inconstant stars'. The father in him as a king was vanquished by his dominating image of a King. There the behaviour of the King, especially in the initial action, shows an extraordinary irascibility. On this fundamental trait Shakespeare based the whole character.¹³⁵

Shakespeare has fared in Bangladesh is also the question how Bangladesh has fared with Shakespeare, which in turn means how Asian, India or Bengali have been able to make Shakespeare of their own? If, on the other hand, they ascribe more stability and historical definition to the former, then the question becomes how Shakespearean have *Bengalis* managed to become?¹³⁶

¹³³ Sirazul Islam Chuwdhuri, *op.cit.*

¹³⁴ Clifford Leech, *Shakespeare: The Tragedies: A Collection of Critical Essays* (Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press, 1965), p. 4.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

¹³⁶ Sitangsu Moitro, *Porichoy* (Kolkata: 1958), pp. 311-323.

Domestication of Shakespeare and European Shakespeare

There were tendencies in making Shakespeare domesticated. There were also other efforts made to struggle with European Shakespeare.

It is observed that the late nineteenth century data seem to show that theatrically Bengali tried to domesticate Shakespeare whereas in the 1940's it seemed that they struggled with a European Shakespeare. The articles that appeared in the pages of the Calcutta journal (*Porichoy*) in 1985, the issue was exclusively about Shakespeare and Sitangsu Moitro in his article in *Porichoy* titled (Cultivating Shakespeare in Bengali), with reference to the literary scenes in West Bengal in the past 100 years that are relevant for the purposes of the people, argues that Shakespeare has not come to Bengal, implicitly using the yardstick of whether Bengalis were able to become Shakespearean. He has quoted Michael Madhusudhan and Rabindranath Tagore's comments about the distinction and inaptness of inherent Shakespearean elements to the Bengali soil and temper, *Moitro* states with arguments that Shakespeares's arrival in any intrinsic sense at Bengal is not possible until the sentimentality of the Bengali spirit reaches the wholeness and passion of Shakespeare.¹³⁷ In similar fashion, Sajjad Husain, in his introductory article in the collection of essays on Shakespeare published by the English department on the quadric centennial of Shakespeare's birth in 1964, decrying any such thing as 'Eastern' angle on Shakespeare says-

... the only angle from which Shakespeare must be approached is the aesthetic angle. There is always something suspicious about literature that bases its claim to attention on criteria other than literary or aesthetic...¹³⁸

The essay in this book does not proceed the theory that Shakespeare must be comprehended by the people of Bengal for the light Shakespeare casts on anything of the Eastern.

Bankim Chandra introduced the style of comparative study in the evolution of Shakespeare with any one related to his genius. In 1892 Hirendranath Dutta initiated the interpretation of Shakespeare and Kalidas without any way of the comparative study but

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*

¹³⁸ Sajjad Husain, *Homage to Shakespeare* (Dhaka: Department of English, Dhaka University, 1965), also found in Utpal Dutta's *Shakespeare's Shomaj Chetona* (Shakespeare's Social Thinking) (Kolkata: M.C. Sarkar and Sons Pvt. Ltd., 1379 Bengali Calendar).

on the basis of philosophical analysis. Both the legendary poets of two different literary genres Hirendranath presented his own views as he says that.

First the question to be realized what beauty is and then who is beautiful? The universe is endless and infinite creation of immense varieties. Are all things or the world appearing beautiful? The sun burnt trees of the forests, the torn huts, do they appear beautiful? The ugly creature child; Caliban, witches, do they appear beautiful?

The good producer begins by assuming that Shakespeare knew his business as a writer of good plays, and not merely of fine speeches, and therefore that the production must be a competent rendering of score.¹³⁹

Shakespeare: the actor

The actors and actresses are expected to be aware of the presentation as Shakespeare did himself. AC Bradley perhaps has viewed that theme. The Bengali playwrights are supposed to have had the art of characterisation based on the basic instincts of human nature. The effect and behaviour contributed by the inner problems of man like jealousy, greed, high ambition, rivalry, emotion, revenge motif, lust etc. are reflected to be the dominant studies of the Bengal playwrights as Madhusudan illustrates the points in the following way:

*Kissen Kumary*¹⁴⁰ [Peasant virgin] is one of the famous plays written by Madhusudan who believed that the mingling of tragic-comedy elements might heighten the appeal of a tragedy. In his *Kissan Kumary* he has followed Shakespeare as Shakespeare has presented combination of the aspects of humour and tragic tone in his plays like *Hamlet*, *Macbeth* etc. In this regard the statement of Madhasudan is very significant.

I have certain Dramatic notions of my own, which I follow invariably. Some of my friends-and fancy you are among them as soon as they see a Drama of mine begin to apply the canons of criticism that have been given forth by the master pieces of William Shakespeare. Our social and

¹³⁹ G.B. Harrison, *op.cit.*, pp. 65-68.

¹⁴⁰ A Drama written by Michael Madhusudan Dutta.

moral developments are of a different character. We are no doubt actuated by the same passions, but in us those passions assume a milder shape.¹⁴¹

Puran Chandra on Shakespeare

The above criticism raised in the 19th century might have contributed in the rise of Indian nationalism does not go undiscussed. There might be the touch of pragmatic interpretations but the above statements of Puran Chandra Bose lacks prudence, farsightedness and practical appeal. Doubtless to say that there Kalidas remains as Kalidas on the other hand Shakespeare is Shakespeare. There can not be any comparative study between them as they are not rivals to each other or there is no scope of raising the question of being superior or inferior. It does not raise any question of keeping two swords in the same frame or two kings in the same kingdom. So there can not be any conflicts in measuring the status of the genius in the context of world literature. There can not be any question of comparison between the two poets belonging to two different zones adorned with their distinguished contributions and versatile genius. It is unwise to think that to follow one is to go against the other or to remember the one is to forget the other in view of literary contribution this sort of tendency in literature is quite obsolete. But Vidya Sagore in the preface to his translated book '*Vranti Bilash*' of *The Comedy of Errors* of Shakespeare has upheld the supremacy of Shakespeare over Kalidas. If we accept this there is no problem. Uthpal Dutta who is the successful translator, critic and actor of Shakespearean plays has stated the opinion, philosophy on the ideals of Shakespeare to be the uncompromising and exhibited vehement opposition to the Bourgeois in the context of socio economic evaluation. So the criticism and unreasonable statement of Puran Chandra Bose appear to be fruitless and lack pragmatic values in real sense.¹⁴²

Reactions and responses of the students to Shakespeare and the effect of the study of the texts and criticism of the Bard

Disliking attitude of Bangladeshi students towards the studies of Shakespeare is found in the following statement of one of the Professors of the University of Dhaka that he has

¹⁴¹ Mobaser Ali, *Madhusudaner Bishwa* [The World of Madhusudan] (Dhaka: Bangla Academy, June 1997), p. 141.

¹⁴² Uthpal Dutta, *Shakespearer Somaj Cetana* [The Social Awareness of Shakespeare] (Kolkata: M.C. Sarker and Sompot Pvt., 1379 Bangla), p. 60.

not been able to find Shakespearean craze among the students through out his teaching career as a teacher.

In the course of my career as a teacher of English extending over three decades I have not come across a single student who did not say that he liked Shakespeare. 'Like' is too mild a word to convey a proper idea of our students' preference for Shakespeare; I would rather say that they love Shakespeare and regard him as their very own.¹⁴³

However, there grows interest of the students in Shakespeare which mean while he has started working in them to have sound study of the profound genius of Shakespeare. Students claim of the reflections of their psychology in those elements of Shakespeare and profound interest in Shakespearean plays and his excellence and greatness did not get ignored.

It would not be correct to say that the students of the country are drawn to Shakespeare by the strong interest of his plays. They become acquainted with the stories before they come to the plays and so they miss the excitement and thrill of a new story or plot which men in Shakespeare's own days experienced. As it is known to all that the greatness of Shakespeare does not depend upon the novelty of his plots but upon his power to handle plots and stories that already existed. Shakespeare who can not be claimed to be the original but the changes he brought in these plots and stories with a dramatic skill full of extra-ordinary tools of modification that is the wonder and admiration and each time that whenever anyone happens to view his plays he gets enriched and the wonderful thing about the characters of Shakespeare is that one cannot quite make up one's mind about them and the last word on how to take these characters will perhaps always remain unsaid.

The spell of Shakespeare's poetry and thoughtful words and most of the students having an ear for music and a sense of beauty are bewitched by the poetry in Shakespeare's plays. To hold the image of the world's greatest dramatist who also appears to be the world's greatest poet. Shakespeare has such an ability over words that he has no difficulty finding the suitable words or phrases words for his thoughts. His characters speak in a language that is instinct with imagination and music and is in

¹⁴³ *Dhaka University Studies*, p. 35.

keeping with their status in life and with the occasion itself. So great is the spell exercised by Shakespeare's poetry on men's minds.

Student psychology doesn't appear to be encouraging when studying Shakespeare as Shakespeare requires profound study of thoughts dealing with human psychology and the inner world of man. It is interesting to note that Tagore's songs do not appear to be comfortable to the young generation in the same way Shakespeare seems to be a difficult subject for them. Without having a through study they indulge in his appreciation what may be termed as a positive bias affecting them with an anticipated view.

Shakespeare appears to be of much interest but remains unfocused by the readers for their anticipated ideas germinated previously before they started studying him. Students are encouraged to have proper study of the texts and make their own criticism before being influenced by the quotations or remarks of the learned critics.

Students attitude towards criticism and Studies of Shakespeare

Real influence of Shakespeare is to be sought otherwise. He has to be searched in the Bengali criticism. It is obligatory and necessary to assess so far Shakespeare has had his hold in his translation and to what extent and in what excellence as well as how far our contributions to the acceptability of Shakespeare are the note worthy aspects in the field of Shakespeare criticism. The aspects of Shakespeare criticism are different but they centre round the same purpose of a subject which has three different aspects. The cardinal point is how far Shakespeare has been able to be accepted, the acceptability of Shakespeare appears to be a considerable matter as Shakespeare is the greatest playwright of the world. So to what extent Shakespeare has accepted claims self realization although the cultural life of the *Bengalis* with its internal focus may be flourished by Shakespeare. It also refers to the point of no emergency that Shakespeare has to be devoured but a society which is not at all indifferent to Shakespeare and whose interest carries immense weight, who is recited and memorized regularly and with all the positive qualities he has survived and would survive.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴⁴ Serajul Islam Chowdhury, *Sreni, Samay O Sahitya*, pp. 66-77.

As it has been pointed out already that students are apt to neglecting the texts of Shakespeare's plays. Very few of them appear to read the text thoroughly with the help of a glossary. Most of them have the idea that at the Honors and M.A. levels it is beneath their dignity to feel the need of using a glossary. They are prone to forget that in Shakespeare there are numerous words and phrases which do not have the modern usage and that even students whose mother tongue is English and the best of scholars feel the need of a glossary to understand him. If one can not understand the text one will miss the play's meaning and get very little out of it and the time that one devotes to criticism will be time wastage. After any one has made an honest effort to understand the play, he will be in a position to weigh the criticism on it and be truly benefited by the same. Criticism, studies are to be avoided when texts are not properly studied as originality of the text is to be ascertained for a proper evaluation of Shakespeare.

Shakespeare is not a historian but a dramatist

Shakespeare first has to be assessed as the dramatist then as the historian. Readers are believed to look for the general ideas behind these history plays and are impressed by the picture of England that Shakespeare draws in them. Shakespeare is undoubtedly first the dramatist and then the historian but he never really falsifies history, though occasionally he deviates from it. Shakespeare's tragedy seemed to be mere skill and comedy to be the instinct. Shakespeare's comedies are a source of perennial pleasure and delight to the young generation. It is said that Elizabethan psychology had an ethical aim, and attempted to expound to the readers the primary moral problem of human life providing him with the requisite means to meet it.¹⁴⁵

Ben Jonson appears to be the first who had to account both for his own and his generation's appreciation of Shakespeare, and for his critical impatience, resulting from a literary genius and an attitude to literature, especially to drama:

His excellencies came and were not sought,
His words like casual Atoms made a thought;
Drew up themselves in Rank and File, and writ,
He wondering how the Devil it were such wit.

¹⁴⁵ M.C. Bradbrook, *op.cit.*, p. 89.

This may or may not be Dryden's verse, but it does express one of the opinions also expressed in his *Essay of Dramatick Poisie* (1668):

Coleridge & Keats on Shakespearean powers of judgment

Shakespeare as a conscious artist as great is the significance of Coleridge and evaluation of Keats on Shakespeare as Coleridge's lectures on Shakespeare had been delivered before Hazlitt's book appeared:

What is inadequate about "French Shakespeare" I hardly that it is not "English Shakespeare," let alone Jewish, Christian, or Islamic Shakespeare: most simply, it is just not Shakespeare, who does not fit very easily into Foucault's "archives" and whose energies were not primarily "social." You can bring absolutely anything to Shakespeare.¹⁴⁶

Both Keats and Coleridge appreciated the application of Negative capability that worked in Shakespeare vehemently.

Shakespeare criticism in Bengali literature

Criticism of Shakespeare in Bengali does not appear to be significant for some reasons, as Bengali criticism, in spite of its being a vital genre of Bengali literature, does not appear to be rich as a result of which Shakespeare criticism has not been able to be enriched. The other reason is that the educated class studying Shakespeare holds him through the means of recitation, memorization and acting or reading and undoubtedly they have not developed any faculty of criticizing Shakespeare.¹⁴⁷

Bankim Chandra and Shakespeare

Bankim Chandra has not studied English literature but his comments and reviews on drama appear to have given the inner projection of human psychology which has been possible due to his strong imaginative faculty.

Serajul Islam Chowdhury has opined that Bengali educated middle class has honoured and appreciated Shakespeare but they have not been able to accept Shakespeare fully. Serajul Islam Chowdhury has also viewed that various venues of climax and conflicts of class awareness appear to be the reasons for which Shakespeare could not be

¹⁴⁶ Harold Bloom, *Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human* (New York: Riverhead Books, 1998), p. 9.

¹⁴⁷ Serajul Islam Chowdhury, *Sreni, Somay O Sahitya*, pp. 66-77.

measured as a living and influential figure although he was able to be the model for the *Bengalis*. The Socio-psychological evaluation on Shakespeare by Prof. Chowdhury gives a very different analysis in the context of Shakespeare criticism.

Chowdhury cites the reference to his evaluation in finding affinity with the status and reactions of the middle class people of Shakespeare's age. The Elizabethan middle class was not meant for Shakespeare plays as they did not have any scope to enjoy Shakespeare's dramas at the theatres, Shakespeare did not seem to write his plays for the middle class people of England, as a result in the ending part of the 18th century Shakespeare tragedies did not find proper appreciation when middle class people started emerging as a strong force of the society. Bankim Chandra was the first to initiate literary criticism. It is said that without having any direct contact with the study of English literature, he happened to be greatly influenced by Shakespearean plays.

His *Kopal Kundala* displays Shakespearean style as *Kopal Kundala* happened to go to the forest alone where disguised as a male character Moti Bibi gave a token of writing to *Kopal Kundala*, which she brought keeping the same inside her hair but that was dropped on the floor and that became the seed of doubt and suspicion of disbelief as her husband Nabin Chandra started doubting her character and chastity as a result to have seen the piece of writing. The above story highlights similar event and background of husband's doubt regarding his wife in the play *Othello* of Shakespeare.

So Shakespeare used handkerchief as the cause of husband's misunderstanding about his beloved wife Desdemona. In the same way Bankim Chandra used a token of writing or a piece of writing to grow the germs of disbelief in the mind of Nabin Chandra as Shakespeare has used the little handkerchief to be the root cause of Othello's misunderstanding about Desdemona's Character: In the same way Bankim followed Shakespeare's disguise-style which was used in his play *As you like it*. It is clear that Bengali playwrights followed Shakespeare directly or indirectly in the way of modification and transformation of Shakespeare's characters, themes, plots, dialogues and other dramatic techniques as applied by Shakespeare.

Anti-Shakespearean Theories

For the lack of proper study about Shakespeare many educated people, having no literary background or achievement of Shakespeare, become the victims of so called rumour but in

this subcontinent Bengali intellectuals didn't have any scope to blur on the versatile genius like Shakespeare who rather commonly quoted for his universal dialogues. It is also interesting to interpret the nature on the criticism Shakespeare of the Bengali critics that Shakespeare is least discussed regarding his family and personal life rather the trend of a true literary critic is prone to be interested in his textual discussion

Conclusion

Serajul Islam Chowdhury says, 'of all the things in which the English takes pride Shakespeare holds the most glorious image'. Reactions of the *Bengalis* had never been positive, if Shakespeare had penetrated into Bengali literature as an imperial agent but the globally recognised Bard Shakespeare perhaps the glorious product of England demands naturally to remain perennial with the increasing appeal and the impact of his literature would not keep others remaining far from his close contact as Serajul Islam Chowdhury says

However, there may be the declining scenario at present but Shakespeare holds his image strong among the educated people. There would be no person having higher education who appears to be unacquainted with Shakespeare. A highly educated person is sure to be a Shakespeare reader, but it's a matter of surprise that the number of higher educated people has increased more than the past in both the Bengals, Bengali readers of Shakespeare appear to be same.¹⁴⁸

However, it can be stated that Shakespeare is of much more curiosity to the *Bengalis* than any of the authors, poets or dramatists of the world. The increasing interest in Shakespeare won't take any interval. Reactions and responses to Shakespeare have become the everyday concern in the field of academic discussion for the learners as well as Shakespeare scholars as they seem to have measured Shakespeare as the symbol of standard or an 'icon' for analysing a comparative study of the native literary personalities of similar genius compared to Shakespeare to measure the standard attained by them in the context of universal appeal and talent.

Anything good, reasonable and impersonally presented with the aspects of human life is sure to receive positive attitude what happened to Shakespeare. His image as the symbol of

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

perfection and naturalness of the expressions of the basic instincts of man has inherent but growing sustainability. *Bengalis* by nature welcome the farsighted views of life and their close association with Shakespeare who has provided them with a sense of balance and comparison to diagnose their own limitations and imbibe the prospects of Shakespeare related to their socio-cultural arena of life.

The unaffected Bengali mind mingled with simplicity, profundity, cordiality keeps approaching them to Shakespeare with positive notion when to accept Shakespeare is deemed to be the way to welcome the spread of mutual ties as literature opens the door and broadens horizon of mental and intellectual ambit as the greatest of Bengali literature Rabindranath Tagore addressed him 'O Poet O Sun' so like the 'Sun' there is no way for any land to remain untouched or unmasked from its sunshine. Simultaneously Shakespeare would be beaming over the world literature with an unending vision.

Chapter 6

Shakespeare and Rabindranath Tagore

Introduction

Shakespeare and Rabindranath; East and West; Bengali and English; past and present appear to have concentrated on the unanimous focus of world literature representing from two different centuries and both may claim to have contributed to the imaginative growth and contributions in the context of their literary contributions for the enlightenment of the whole mankind. Rabindranath and Shakespeare have become institutions for the native speakers of both the languages. If Shakespeare represents the past Rabindranath refers to the present and the invisible relation or comparative study between the legendary geniuses undoubtedly bridges the stream of influence of the past on the present. Present is the emergence of the past displaying the evidence of interrelationship. The present is sure to be influenced by the past which has been duly referred to the analytical definition of the *Tradition and Individual Talent* by T. S. Eliot. Whatever aspects of philosophy, science, history of life Rabindranath discovered in Shakespeare explored the individual belief and test of the composer like Shakespeare. Rabindranath Tagore tried to universalize his deep *orientalism* for the need of the time yet he could not take western realities of life easily. In the context of Shakespearean attitude Rabindranath found same expression as - 'Aesthetic sense, compassion, and love we cherish in our heart and we obtain them by ourselves and there is no lack of pleasure in enduring the sorrows and sufferings lying behind this. But any hatred or cruelty due to horrible imagination dismay us and spontaneous liberal trend of our heart becomes repulsive to them. For this we have got no pleasure in those instincts. *Othello* of Shakespeare represents aesthetic sense and love and Rabindranath seems to be shocked due to the relation between these two things of the play *Othello* of Shakespeare.¹

In this study I have presented the apperception of Shakespeare by Rabindranath Tagore. This chapter also displays the comparative study of the two legendary poets. I have also discussed how Rabindranath treated Shakespeare as his model with references to the distinct characteristics of Shakespeare. I have ventured to explore Shakespearean

¹ Shafi Ahmed, *Bangadeshe Shakespeare* [Shakespeare in Bengal] (Dhaka: Bangla Academy, 1988), pp. 201-202.

influence on Rabindranath Tagore. I have also tried to delineate the similarities and dissimilarities lying between Shakespeare and Rabindranath. A comparative study of Shakespearean plays and Bengali dramas of Rabindranath Tagore with a brief analytical evaluation in the context of Bengali and English literature has been illustrated in this chapter.

Poet Shakespeare and Rabindranath Tagore appear to be the representatives belonging to two different areas of history, life, language and nature. In spite of their differences of time, culture or literary trends both of them seem to be making an invisible bridge of communication represented by the elements of the western and eastern reconciliation. Born during the British colonial rule in India, Rabindranath Tagore happened to pass his life-span of eighty years full of multidimensional productions of literature; this dynamic personality emerged as the most acclaimed man of letters in this part of the world. The contemporary world of Rabindranath was full of many important national and international events. And Rabindranath, always preternaturally sensitive, responded to such events from time to time, and proclaimed his stand for the salvation of mankind through his writings and speeches. Rabindranath had always in his writings sought to revitalize and regenerate the thinking of his nation and mobilize them towards the freedom of their souls through several critiques of the West. No wonder then that Rabindranath's works in general tend to defy western categorization of thought, and seek to institute a new frame of learning and thinking for the people of India.²

In spite of being influenced by western or Shakespearean essence Rabindranath created an image of distinct authorship and individual presentation in the field of literature. If Shakespeare's reputation had depended upon his capacity to translate himself into *French* or *Latin*, he might have had a tough time getting recognised and Shakespeare had been very lucky in that the language in which he wrote was subsequently disseminated and spread through out the world by the British Empire and large numbers of people all over the world are able to read him in the original language. The extraordinary demand made on Tagore that he translated himself into English for the sake of publication in the West, was possible only in the colonial context. He was a busy man,

² Masuduzzaman, "Rabindranath and Decolonization", *The Dhaka University Studies*, Vol. 52:2, Journal of the Faculty of Arts, University of Dhaka, Dhaka, 1999, p. 137.

busy writing new things and doing new things all the time he was badly advised and badly taken care of by those who took charge of his publicity in the English-speaking world. They did not look after his real and long-term interests. One English edition which has been available for a long time does not even mention that the contents are translations, and there is no name of any translator given anywhere in book. No wonder that recently an academic happened to come from Britain visiting Tagore's university at Santiniketan, who thought that Tagore actually wrote his poems in English.³

Although the presentation of the views of anti-colonial discourse or his vehement opposition to the ideas of *orientalism* and colonialism Rabindranath Tagore under the British colonial rule in India had possessed profound veneration for the Elizabethan Bard William Shakespeare who contributed to the mingling of the informative and creative genius of the poet Rabindranath Tagore.

Blending of the classical and Sanskrit presentation constituted the structure of modern drama and Tagorean impact acted here as the standard giving no scope to the alien interference. Blending folk elements of the 'yatra' with classical Sanskrit drama, and not unaware of modern problems, his evolving idiom is a fascinating study, little known outside Bengal.⁴

Not merely a marker of modern Indian literature, Tagore belongs to world literature. His peers are to be found across distant seas and lands. In the aesthetic education of man there are sources to find him indispensable. Some of his single phrases and insights are capable of infinite annotations. He is of course less a philosopher and more a visionary. The problem, is unavoidable, is that *Englised Tagore* is not the same as the Bengali Rabindranath. The *Englised Gitanjali* is not the Bengali book with the same title. Some of the things are meant to say to apply more to his work in translation than in the original.

³ Ketaki Kushari Dyson (tr.), *Rabindranath Tagore, I Won't Let You Go: Selected Poems* (London: UBSPD UBS Publishers' Distributors Ltd., 1992), pp. 32-33.

⁴ Sisirkumar Gosh, *Marks of Indian Literature Rabindranath Tagore*, p. 57.

A Book of Homage to Shakespeare

When by the far-away sea your fiery disk appeared from
behind the unseen, O poet, O Sun: England's horizon felt
you near her breast, and took you to be her own.

She kissed your forehead, caught you in the arms of her
forest branches, hid you behind her mist mantle, and
watched you in the green sward where fairies love to play
among meadow flowers.

A few early birds sang your hymn of praise while the rest of
woodland choir were asleep.

Then at the silent beckoning of the Eternal you rose higher
till you reached the mid sky, making all quarters of heaven
your own.

Therefore at this moment after the end of centuries, the
palm groves by the Indian seas raise their tremulous
branches to the sky murmuring your praise.⁵

Rabindranath Tagore on Shakespeare

Bengalis claim that Rabindranath is one of the world's greatest poets of sorrow. The claim is not unfounded. The pathos of men's days, striving wasted lives, expression of the sacrifice and loneliness of women's days have found, since time began, few more profoundly moved spectators.⁶

The stage was thus set for the appearance of the most brilliant star in the firmament of Bengali literature - Rabindranath Tagore (1861–1941) whose life is almost co-extensive with the last half of the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth century. He made his debut in Bengali literature in the eighties of the 19th century. There is hardly any branch of Bengali literature which he has not ventured, and almost everything he touched he adorned and enriched by his own contributions. Poems, songs, novels, short stories, dramas, novels, both tragic and satirical, autobiography and essays of all kinds—religious, social, political, educational and literary, – in every field he left Bengali literature much richer than he found it. He may be regarded as the pioneer in lyric poems, songs of the modern type, and above all, short stories. His voluminous achievements in

⁵ Rabindranath Tagore, *A Sonnet Composed as Piece of Homage Paid to Shakespeare, Shabuj Pātrā* (Green Leaves, 1926), cited in Shafi Ahmed, *Bangadeshe Shakespeare* [Shakespeare in Bengal] (Dhaka: Bangla Academy, 1988), pp. 186-187.

⁶ Edward Thompson (ed.), *Rabindranath Tagore Poet and Dramatist* (London: Oxford University Press, 1926), p. 50.

all the branches of literature mentioned above, mark the inception of a new era in the history of Bengali literature as Buddhadeva Bose views;

RABINDRANATH, I have said, made Bengal a part of Europe, and the *Bengalis* citizens of the world. To be precise, Rabindranath is the culminating point in a process started long ago, with the stabilization of British power in the country. His was the kingdom, but the major battles were already won by Rammohan Roy and Isvarchandra Vidyasagar, the two builders of the new Bengal, diverse and to some extent mutually exclusive.⁷

In the eye of Rabindranath Tagore Shakespeare appears to be an adroit artist in portraying the characters of real sense based on humanity and generosity by shaking the *Bengalis* as he said-

We get Shakespeare as a man for us for all the time – a man of real sense- we get Shakespeare not as facial man. Shakespeare has manifested humanity with his generosity by shaking man till the last. His tears of eyes roll down over the cheeks but never get dried by the touch of handkerchief, his smile touches his lips but never exposes the teeth but nature is shedding in plenty, enthusiastic nature is out bursting like the sportive festival. Shakespeare has got the apex of high philosophy wherefrom human nature is mostly and widely viewed.⁸

In every product of history, science and philosophy of life in the writings of Shakespeare, Rabindranath discovered, were reproduced with the individual taste and belief of the composer irrespective of time and geographical space. Rabindranath Tagore was an *orientalist* and was fond of manifesting the appeal of *universalization* of his own traditional culture what made him at certain moment a bit intolerant of the western realities of life in the life history of the poet Rabindranath it is observed that Shakespeare was studied in the boyhood days of Rabindranath Tagore when the products of Shakespeare, Byron, Milton were the syllabus based study at the early period of his career. Rabindranath Tagore was fond of receiving inspiration from Shakespeare in composing his drama but gradually Rabindranath Tagore with his newness and individual art of presentation saved himself from Shakespearean circle because of his profound respect and feelings cherished by him

⁷ Buddhadeva Bose, *An Acre of Green Grass: A Review of Modern Bengali Literature* (Kolkata: Papyrus India, 1948), p. 70.

⁸ Shafi Ahmed, *op.cit.*, pp. 204-205.

for his native country and traditional life. So Rabindranath Tagore was able to show his own-ness and individuality in composing drama. In this context, the statement of Ashutos Battacharia may be deliberately illustrated as he viewed the trend of life and events have been the bases of Shakespearean plays. The appeal of human soul in the touch of life and the evil machinery has been analysed in his plays. Shakespearean dramas are of intellect and witty structure but the plays of Rabindranath Tagore are of the structure based on feelings and realization of life. Rabindranath never forgets the context and circumstances of his own country. Bengali drama needed a different outlet which was filled up by Rabindranath Tagore.⁹

Rabindranath believed that a writer remaining involved in writing over a period of time should be judged historically and temporally. He himself maintains that whatever ideas he has developed about 'state politics' have not originated definitively and completely from a monotheistic theory or source, but have evolved and changed over time.¹⁰

Tagore's negative capability and Shakespeare's negative compatibility are not the same as they are based on different insights imposed upon their characters. The present writer, however, feels that this study would be incomplete without reference to Tagore's success in creating characters in his short stories that are based on the following:

- i) *An acute insight into character*
- ii) *A wide range of interest*
- iii) *An interest to reach the end that remains emended*
- iv) *An impersonal approach and realistic method*

His short stories are distinguished by an acute insight into character, a wide range of interest and an impersonal approach and a naturalistic method: it may not be too fanciful to say that these reveal a 'negative capability' not incomparable to that attributed to Shakespeare.

- i) *Tagore's inmate lyricism*
- ii) *The creation of concrete character*
- iii) *Shakespearean vividness is found in Rabindranath*

⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 101-102.

¹⁰ Masuduzzaman, *op.cit.*, p. 140.

- iv) *Tagore's short stories are free from any philosophical view that resembles Shakespeare.*

It is as if only in this area that Tagore's inmate lyricism could also accommodate the objective which one believes is associated with the creation of concrete character. Shakespeare's touch in Tagore, despite the limitations, imposed by the short-story from a character like Chandara in the story '*Shasti*' (Punishment) the condemned woman refusing to say the word that would save her from the gallows-attains a vividness that may be described as Shakespearean. For a period of nearly ten years (1891–1901) – the period to which interestingly enough the main body of Tagore's Shakespearean criticism belongs – a number of short stories were written, memorable for wealth and complexity of their characters. The degree of the objectivity attained in the short stories is shown by the fact, that they are more or less free from any philosophy.¹¹

Favourable familial background and cultural environment

Rathindranath Tagore, son of Rabindranath Tagore also had the opportunity to have the close touch of Shakespeare within the atmosphere of academic and theatrical ground. It was perhaps Tagore who initiated the presence of Shakespeare within the familial ambit as Rathindranath Tagore says:

I was equally fortunate in having Mohit Chandra Sen as my teacher of English. After we had gone through *A Mid-Summer Night's Dream*, Mohit Babu wanted this play to be staged at Santiniketan. Undaunted by the paucity of talents equal to producing a play in English and one of Shakespeare's at that, we made preparations there and then.¹²

Rabindranath enjoyed favourable familial background and cultural environment in uplifting his literary genius as he had the opportunity to hold the staging of the drama composed by themselves or his family members which he revealed in a letter written to Dijendralal and Rabindranath never felt that sort of performance to be appearing as self advertising.¹³

¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 110-121.

¹² Rathindranath Tagore, *On the Edges of Time* (Kolkata: Visva-Bharati, 1958), p. 147.

¹³ Meera Chattopadhyay, *Rabindra Rachanar Ingreji Anubad: Itibritta* [The Background of English Translation of the Essays of Rabindranath (Kolkata: Sreeguru Prokashon, 1993), pp. 10-11.

Ezra pound and Rabindranath

The close touch of Ezra pound and her great appreciation of the poet Rabindranath Tagore came to be recognized a treat event in the context his of life Rabindranath obtained the close touch of English education having visited England physically for several times and Ezra pound being overwhelmed with the beauty of (the poetry) song of offerings as she remarked in the following as -

She viewed Tagore's poetry as a mark of milestone for the western critics to have enjoyed a new gravity.

The appearance of the poems of Rabindranath Tagore, translated by himself from Bengali into English, is an event in the history of English poetry and of world poetry.... I speak with all gravity when I say that world fellowship is nearer for the visit of Rabindranath Tagore to London.

So came the *Gitanjali* phase and the poet rose to world stature. The Nobel Prize award followed in 1913. That award, however, was only a step toward the splendours that lay ahead. The Great War and its aftermath seemed the beginning of the end of civilized living in the West. The shadow of impending doom brought fear and desperation. At that point the hilarious message of Rabindranath Tagore's poetry cut the thick darkness with intimations of a new radiant hope.¹⁴

Education of London was enjoyed by Rabindranath

Rabindranath happened to reach London for the first time in 1878.

In poetry many will have found the richest of the year's sheaves to be the introduction, through his own translations, of the poems of the Indian mystic, Mr. Rabindranath Tagore.

Meera Chattopadhyay refers above statement, in view of the extraordinary adroitness of Tagore's translating skills, to have won an international sequence.¹⁵

¹⁴ Bhabani Bhattacharya (tr.), *Rabindranath Tagore's the Golden Boat* (Calcutta: Jaico Publishing House, 1999), p. vii.

¹⁵ Meera Chattopadhyay, *op.cit.*, p. 38.

Tagore also started doing the translation work out of his own interest and had the command of the English language

Rabindranath Tagore's own statement about song of offerings refers to the beginning of his writing in English as he says-

I composed them in solitude during my sorrow without any idea of publication. These were written for myself; but since I found them to spiritual help to others, I consented to publish them in Bengali. At a later time, on my voyage to England, when I was convalescent after serious illness, I began to translate them into very halting English.

Tagore dominates poetry and Shakespeare dominates tragedy

Shakespeare poems seldom appear to be perfect as told by Bhabani Bhattacharya. He further comments that the songs that shoot like stars across his plays appear to be the most dazzling at the beginning and often burn out before the end. Few of his sonnets are known to be powerful at the finish and neither of his narrative poems that mastered its stanza. Bhabani adds that Rabindranath seems to have been without interest in the relatively unimportant matter of mechanical form or in the poetical frame work. Shakespeare's tragedies dominate his literary command over his sonnets. It may be noted that his less interest in poetry was responsible for his immense contribution to the plays on the other hand Rabindranath Tagore's poetic genius remains superior to his dramatic genius although he himself had the experience in acting on the stage. Tagore's poetry is much more discussed and translated into English than his drama.¹⁶

Themes of Tagorian poems and Shakespearean characters and phrases

William Shakespeare the first name in English Literature is that of an Elizabethan poet and dramatist whose skill in transforming human character and action into art created a world of unforgettable people and phrases.¹⁷

Poems and plays are the dominating aspects of any literature. Poems appear to be more subjective in its presentation than that of the plays and this seems to be quite applicable to poet t Rabindranath who manifests his personality more vividly as the number

¹⁶ Bhabani Bhattacharya, *op.cit.*, p. vii.

¹⁷ Homer A. Watt & William W. Watt, *A Dictionary of English Literature* (New York: Barnes & Noble, Inc., 1957), p. 246.

of poems supersedes that of his dramas but in spite of all attempts to understand a genius of such a personality remains elusive and beyond the yardstick of any measurement that is same to Shakespeare and it does not appear to be easy to measure man of genius.¹⁸

Most of the speeches of the poet contain the following themes which may be cited as the inner appeal of his poetry. The themes are as follows:

- A) *The Relation of the individual to the universe:*
- B) *Soul consciousness: self realisation*
- C) *The problem of Evil: realisation of sense*
- D) *The problem of self: self problems*
- E) *Realisation in love is to have profound devotion*
- F) *Realisation in action is to be active in action*
- G) *The Realisation of Beauty is to have the aesthetic sense of beauty*
- H) *The Realisation of the infinity is to feel the sense of the infinite being*

The poet revealed in the preface of *Sadhana* (Meditation)-

The meaning of the living worlds that came out of the experiences of great hearts can never be exhausted by anyone's system of logical interpretations. They have to be endlessly explained by the commentaries of individual lives and they gain an added mystery in each revelation.¹⁹

Translation worked as a positive way for both the poets: Shakespeare and Rabindranath

Translation is sure to have created a gate way for the writers and poets of global notice and literary genius as happened in both cases for Rabindranath and Shakespeare. Rabindranath was well grounded in the Sanskrit classics, in Bengali literature and in English literature, and also familiar with a range of Continental European literature in translation. He could read some French, translated English and French lyrics in his youth, and made enough progress in German to read *Heine* and go through Goethe's *Faust*.²⁰ Like the other language of northern India, Bengali belongs to the Indo-European family of languages.²¹

¹⁸ Rabindranath Tagore, *On the Edges of Time* (Kolkata: Visva-Bharati, 1958), p. 148.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 74-75.

²⁰ Ketaki Kushari Dyson, *op.cit.*, p. 23.

²¹ *Ibid.*

Remarkable status enjoyed both by Shakespeare and Rabindranath

Remarkable status enjoyed both by Shakespeare and Rabindranath as quoted in the following:

Among modern writers, Rabindranath has been one of the most widely translated. Owing to religious reasons, the *Hebrew Bible* is unquestionable the most translated book in the world.

The great writers of humanity are believed to appear to have also been honoured by being translated into a variety of languages. Shakespeare is one of such writers of world literature; and there are the great personalities of thought and literature in ancient and modern Europe whose products are available in scores of languages. A representative section of Rabindranath's works is similarly available, now in all the advanced world. In most cases, they have been translated from the English versions, which either he himself made or which were made by others. In a good number of instances however, these translations were made direct from the original Bengali into a variety of foreign languages, like for example, English, French, German, Italian, Russian, Czech, Chinese, Japanese and Persian: and of course into Indian languages into most of them. As time passes and his influence grows, such translations will be available in other languages also in the days to come. Tagore straddles both the nineteenth and the present century and far outshines the stars in the firmament. He has been, therefore, fittingly assigned a separate niche.²²

Comments of Nirad C. Chaudhuri on Rabindranath with reference to Shakespeare

Nirad C. Chaudhuri views that Tagore appears to have developed considerable confidence in its suitability. When metrical renderings of two poems in *Gitanjali* were sent to him in 1918, he wrote: '*I think one should frankly give up the attempt at reproducing in a translation the lyrical suggestions of the original verse and substitute in their place some new quality inherent in the new vehicle of expression*' (Quoted by Nirad C. Chaudhuri in an article on 27 Sept., 1974). Theoretically this is an acceptable view. But there are local problems in writing prose poems in English. Just as Shakespeare has made the writing of new verse drama almost impossible, so the authorized version of the Bible has prevented the prose poem.²³

²² Lila Ray, 'General Introduction' *20th Century Bengali Poetry*, Vol. One, Samer De & Abhijit Ghose (eds.) (Kolkata: Firma. K.L. Mukhopadhyay, 1973), p. iv.

²³ William Radice, *Tagore's Poetry in English Translation* (Cited in the *Visva Bharati Quarterly*, May-Oct. 1976), p. 11.

Throughout his life Tagore maintained a strong connection with the performance arts. His creation is the product of his very own genre of dance drama, a unique mixture of dance, drama, and song. His pen not only furrowed his plays rather he, also directed and produced them, even acted in them. He not only composed some two thousand songs, but could also read his poetry out to large audiences very effectively.²⁴

Rebati, This passion will not last for ever!
Bikram, (Kneeling by Sumitra's body.)
Goddess, I was not worthy of thy love.
Wouldst thou not pardon therefore? Hast thou gone,
Holding me fast in guilt for evermore?

The above is an example of displaying melodramatic style of drama, and badly melodramatic draw. But so often is the Elizabethan drama, which was thought to be the Indian poet's model. But the passage attains also in some of its lines prevailing the essence of the Elizabethan passion and burning rhetoric.²⁵

Translation of Tagore helped him obtain a permanent place Tagore's translation has helped him obtain a permanent recognition all over the educated world as occurred in the life of Shakespeare. There can not be expected to have a comparison of the two as both the genius are gifted with faculties of immense contribution to display human life and nature but translation paved their ways onward.

Tagore translated his own literary products

Many works of Rabindranath are said to remain un-translated into English or thence into other western and eastern languages. Translations of the music suggestiveness, the indefinable associations clustering round Bengali words and phrases, and the aroma of Bengal and India of the original appears to have lost, the translations of the poet Rabindranath are mostly done by the poet himself. The same is supposed to have obtained indirectness in the beauty and sublimity of simplicity and in the music and strength belonging to the English or other languages of the translations. To measure the genius of Rabindranath it is necessary to have profound idea about the arbitration of his own and his original English works like personality, *Sadhana* and the religion of man. Tagore was well educated or self educated personality having profound study of human nature and

²⁴ Ketaki Kushari Dyson, *op.cit.*, p. 24.

²⁵ Edward Thompson, *op.cit.*, p. 91.

philosophy which was said to convey him to glean an in depth translating skills of his own. Tagore translated his own literary products but Shakespeare did not have that sort of opportunity.²⁶

Shakespeare and Tagore in their Excellencies

Rabindranath excelled in different branches of art and literature but Shakespeare excelled in dramas and sonnets in particular Rabindranath Tagore has brought the short story when it was hardly known in England, and introduced the psychological novel, his two prose comedies are said to have imbibed with the early-Shakespeare in temper, are yet without a third: his criticism appears profuse and fundamental, his satire occasional and brilliant. His sermons are prose poems; his controversy may be compared to Marvell's garden where one must tread on flowers: his travel-diaries are rich in both observation and contemplation as they are presented picturesquely. He has made innovative method in the presentation of a new form of the prose play: has written on philosophy, education, politics, and science: on prosody, music and the peasantry: on every question of the day. Among best of his works are adorned with his autobiographies and certain collections of letters: he is the author of the best Bengali primer. This list seems long without having omissions. He has done all, all that can be done with the written world. And all these are parts of, and contribute to, an inner harmony which his variety or his abundance never disturbs. His command of presenting verse and prose, his fiction, drama and song, his poetry and his humour are mutually mingled and dependent: one is beautiful with the other's aid: his greatness is the greatness of the whole Tagore, a man of genius touching every art of life.²⁷

Rabindranath had the opportunity to exert his talent and potentials in various branches of art and literature like music, painting, art etc. The music of his verse and prose appear to be filling the outer ear as the echo of the inner harmony of humanity and the universe. His imaginative powers are supposed to be at heart of things containing the music of the spheres. They represent real life and colour having motion and variety. His hymns and sermons seem to be related to the close touch of the King of the kings and His presence appears to have communion with the poet as his hymns and writings convey spiritual vain acting with the healing effect to many an afflicted soul. Through insight and

²⁶ Jahanara Imam, *Inregi Shahittayer Itibitta* [History of English literature (Dhaka)], p. 143.

²⁷ Buddhadeva Bose, *op.cit.*, pp. 14-15.

imagination transmit his magic words by whose power he roams where he will and lead his readers thither, too. In his works Bengali literature has outgrown its provincial character and has become fit to fraternize with the current of world literature. Universal stream of thought and spirituality have flowed into Bengal through his writings.

Tagore's thoughts and views are thought to have been furnished with the tide of universal ideas that were supposed to have manipulated the common readers.

Common aspects of Nature in the plays of Shakespeare and Rabindranath

Pity and fear to be measured as the common aspects in Shakespearean plays as A. C. Bradley says 'Pity and fear which are stirred by the tragic story seem to unite with and even to merge in, a profound sense of sadness and mystery which is due to the impression of waste.' But Rabindranath Tagore moves in his drama through prose, song and dance, separately and together. Naturally themes and techniques find the way to be changed. His work as a dramatist covers the elements of grave classical adaptations and moving dialogues, down to earth comedies, there are also the elements of ebullient, *Edenic Nature and Seasonal plays*.²⁸

The stage presentation of the plays of Shakespeare require extra ordinary efforts of the producer and the same to be executed to display the aspects of nature as to heighten the force of nature showing the inner battle and tormented psychology of the characters. As in the play *The Tempest* demonstration of the storm scene is the expression of the afflicted heart of a father King having no shelter which has been symbolically presented by Shakespeare. The same sort of presentation has been exhibited in the play *Sajahan* composed by Dizendralal. Rabindranath Tagore, like Shakespeare's emphasis on both human nature and the aspects of nature, has displayed the external aspects of nature in order to reveal the inner world of human psychology. Tagorean sensibility is too subtle and individual to be human nature's daily food. His nature plays are another story. Blending myth with reality and helped by Santiniketan and its environment, he was able to create a wholly individual style of drama. He had always believed in a harmony of man and Nature, their bond and contact with common life, which, he has expressed in his

²⁸ Sisirkumar Ghose, *Rabindranath Tagore*, p. 117.

poetry appears often. In *Gitanjali* he is heard to say that: "the same stream of life that runs through my veins runs through the world."²⁹

Nature is said to be the reflection of human heart. The ample aspects of nature, without which no literary product is possible in literature whatever form it holds, provide immense source of faculties and mental food. In landscapes the important formative influences on Tagore were environments where nature was in close proximity to humanity. Tagore's attitude to nature was shaped essentially by peasants India. The villages overlooking the Ganges in western Bengal, where he spent holidays with Jyotirindranath and Kadambari Devi, the bungalow by the Ganges, in the heart of the northern Indian Gangetic plain, the landscape of rural eastern Bengal, now in Bangladesh he went up and down the rivers by boat, western Bengal, where his school was founded, university, and centre for rural reconstruction, and all have left their mark on him and were the areas where working humanity had close touch with the natural environment. His keen alliance with the world of nature seems to have bestowed upon a matured and profound love for the aspects of the landscape of the nature of Bengalis.³⁰

Allegorical presentation and use of symbolism in Shakespeare and Rabindranath

Allegory and symbolism work as the inherent tools for any literary piece of production. The presentation of the same heightens the appeal of a work in which the author or novelist or a playwright uses this as a mechanism to exhibit the hidden motive for the recipients. Both Rabindranath Tagore and Shakespeare have used them successfully. This approach demands the exploitation of the creative faculties of the readers and audience as the playwrights or poets or novelist or any literary talent displays his work with no direct or apparent method for the audience or readers to understand the theme directly. It appears obscure but adds more beauty and appears to the readers and audience. Shakespeare here, as in his other symbols, speaks out own language. But in these matters Shakespeare speaks almost the same language as people do, and ethical terms, though they must frequently occur in interpretation, must only be allowed in so far as they are

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 68.

³⁰ Ketaki Kushari Dyson, *op.cit.*, p. 27.

used in absolute obedience to the dramatic and aesthetic significance: in which case they cease to be ethical in the usual sense.³¹

Suggestive symbol throughout *Macbeth* or *King Lear* radiates inwards from the play's circumference to the burning central core without knowledge of which there is a possibility to miss their relevance and necessity: they relate primarily, not directly to each other not directly to each other, not to the normal appearances of human life, but to this crucial reality alone.³²

Philosophy of religion and humanity

In philosophy Tagore does not appear to be a system builder. He may be estimated to be possessed with the line of the ancient religious philosophical teachers or scholars whose religion and philosophy are supposed to be fused comments of one's whole poetry and prose of Rabindranath conveys his philosophy and his prose work in English being the Religion of man. But Shakespeare's objective is implied in the projection of his plays as M.C. Bradbrook's comments are referred to this view as he says regarding Shakespeare's aim of philosophy as stated below,

Literature also had an ethical aim: it held the mirror up to Nature, and thereby enabled the children of Nature to correct their natural imperfections. Nature was plastic and could be moulded. Art was even more plastic than nature.³³

Philosophy of religion and humanity both worked in Rabindranath but Shakespeare himself was saved from any doctrine. In fact, Shakespeare's philosophy, if anybody claims, is similar to that of literature.

Shakespeare was influenced by the demands and desires of his own society

Shakespeare was favoured by the undercurrent of the tide of his society as his society was fond of plays or acting and showing. Rabindranath remains above a simple literary thinker rather his writing as an author for foreigners appears to be worth meaning of the Bengali language for his writings. It does not in the least detract from his work as a musician but he does not appear to be an expert in music as the time is generally believed

³¹ Wilson Knight, *The Wheel of Fire*, p. 9.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 11.

³³ M.C. Bradbrook, *Shakespeare and Elizabethan Poetry*, p. 89.

to exist in common patience. This is illustrated not in favour of the reference only to the memories, his one sided approach literature only hymns, patriotic songs or the tunes to which he was himself set to his thrilling, sweet, soulful and rapt singing in different periods of his life but also in connection with what he has contributed for absolute music. He doesn't seem to be deemed to be the author of the words of his songs possessed of rare depth of meaning and suggestiveness and power of inspiration only but also estimated as the creator of new airs and tunes. He is also possessed with a patriotic zeal and love for his mother land. His profound and penetrating study of insight into the history of India and greater India is sure to have strengthened that love for nature and life here.

Rabindranath was appreciated during his life time

It is said that Rabindranath got his writings translated in various languages when he was alive but Shakespeare didn't have that sort of prompt approach to the foreigners in the way of translation into other languages of the world. Shakespeare was appreciated and familiar as a playwright during his lifetime but Rabindranath got recognised and secured his appreciation both locally and globally when he was alive and both are in endless appreciations now to continue their invisible current to proceed ahead in the days to come with same sort of dignity subject to the sustainability of the languages remaining alive. Rabindranath was appreciated when he was alive but Shakespeare started being appreciated after his death.

Gradual and slow reactions of the audiences to Shakespeare

Prompt and immediate reactions of the readers to Rabindranath but slow and gradual reactions of the readers to Shakespeare who has occupied the hearts of the readers or audiences not very promptly but gradually and with the clear conception of the characters that were similar to the human beings of the real world. There was an act of slow motion in penetrating the hearts of the readers with perpetual impression and the audience of Shakespeare are also not prompt to show their reactions to the plays staged before them. The audiences of Shakespeare are of slow nature as they ponder over the affairs or happenings and also exert their reasons and rationality to justify the characters according to their background and focus of the human psychology. Comparative study of the two doesn't come to be judged by a sense of criticism but both are the standards to each other and esteemed in their respective fields of contribution. But there is a need of measuring

standard as a whole. 'So in the productions of genius, nothing can be styled excellent till it has been compared with other works of the same kind.'³⁴

Supremacy of Shakespeare over other dramatists

Shakespeare has no heroes; his scenes are occupied only by men, who act and speak as the reader thinks that he should himself have spoken or acted on the same occasion; even where the agency is super natural the dialogue is adorned with the reflections of life. Shakespeare approximates the remote and familiarizes the wonderful.³⁵

The Manchester Guardian Knowledgeably suggested that in a work, Rabindra Nath seems to be an Oriental profoundly influenced by European thought, but not in the least disorientated by the influence; it would be rather said that the European influence has been completely reinitialised in him. The old and distinguished family has enjoyed a long tradition of English scholarship, and of interest not only in Indian but Anglo Indian affairs and it seems unavoidable to see in this some fusion of western thought with Eastern. The East maintains its alert sense of what is behind life, but the West brings its vivid sense of immediate value of life itself. Rabindranath is thus carefully categorized, put in the European tradition of great art and robbed of his Indian ness. 'The European influence has been completely orientalised in him.' The best of East, it is implied, was derived from the West, though the best of East is somewhat inferior when compared with that of the West. This inferiority of the East is systemic.³⁶

Ethics, morals, values in Shakespeare and Rabindranath Tagore

Both the poets represent humanitarian aspects in their literary products. They convey morals or values with the mechanism of manifesting individual manner in which both of them have tried to display their objectivity in the style of negative capability, as Rabindranath Tagore, son of Rabindranath speaks-

An ordinary mind functions within the narrow limits of work-a-day existence. A genius, on the other hand, transcends the limits of mundane facts. He lives in a world

³⁴ D.J. Enright & Ernst Dechickepesa (eds.), *English Critical Texts*, p. 132.

³⁵ Humayun Kabir, *One Hundred and One Poems* (New Delhi: Sahitya Academy, 1953), p. xxxi.

³⁶ Kalyan Kundu, Sakti Bhattacharya, Kalyan Sircar (Eds.), *Imagining Tagore: Rabindranath and the British Press (1912-1941)* (Kolkata: Shishu Sahitya Samsad Pvt. Ltd., January, 2000), p. xvi.

which is not always governed by physical laws. This is perhaps true of all creative artists, and it is particularly true of my father. He had so many facets to his genius; he combined in himself the minds of a poet, a scientist, a philosopher and a seer. In spite of all attempts to understand a genius of this type, the personality of the man remains elusive, and beyond the yardstick of any measurement.³⁷

Ethics suffer from conflicts when get entangled with the realities of life but Rabindranath presented the elements as an art of life in his literature which have to be presented or modified in a new artistic form. A new artistic ethic echoing the peculiar nature of art is sure to have a sound morality that is based on the nature of man. Learned contemporaries of Shakespeare, Chapman and Johnson, were said to be great theorizers of his time. But Shakespeare with his individualistic approach preserved a negative capability, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason which keeps the heart of his mystery still a secret.³⁸

Rabindranath's realisation of Shakespeare's appeal

The vast literary products of Rabindranath Tagore are supposed to have enjoyed Shakespearean touch as he devotedly realised the profound appeal of Shakespeare to life and literature for the mankind. Rabindranath Tagore gave a new dimension in the task of translating Shakespeare. In a letter written to Lokindranath Palit in 1892 Rabindranath Tagore conveyed a brief criticism of Shakespeare in which Rabindranath Tagore had interpreted that Shakespeare enlivened the characters of his plays in his own life. He drank them inner juice of heart and then his characters enlivened as human beings otherwise they would have been essays only. So in a sense the literary products of Shakespeare are the expressions of his own but of grand and multifarious mixtures. This key point of Shakespearean poetry illustrates an incorporeal expression where his whole philosophy of life appears sparkling like the simple lights with various colourful flames surrounding him with the knowledge of his philosophy, science, history, passion, fascination, anger, faith, and experience wherefrom antipathy towards Iago, sympathy to Othello, love to Desdemona, humorous friendship of Falstaff,

³⁷ Rabindranath Tagore, *op.cit.*, p. 147.

³⁸ M.C. Bradebrook, *op.cit.*, p. 80.

respectful mercy towards *King Lear*, deep affection for Cordelia have been transparent before the viewers and have reflected the human heart of William Shakespeare forever.³⁹

Psychological aspects in Shakespeare and Rabindranath

The persons of Shakespeare have been analysed carefully in point of psychological realism, yet in giving so detailed and prolix a care to any one element of the poet's expression.

Beginning with historical romances *Bou-Thakuranir Hat (Rajarshi)*, more romance than history, Tagore moved to the psychological novel of frank social realism blended with little or no hint of romance.⁴⁰

A. C. Bradley's appreciation about Shakespeare's hold of the subject

A. C. Bradley knew that the immense majority of his audience were incapable of distinguishing between rough and finished work. He often felt the degradation of having to live by pleasing them. Probably in hours of depression he was quite indifferent to fame and perhaps in another mood the whole business of play writing seemed to him a little thing. None of these thoughts and feelings influenced him when his subject had caught hold of him.⁴¹

Functions of a dramatist according to Shakespeare

Rabindranath is our Chaucer and Shakespeare, our Dryden, and our equivalent of the English translators of the Bible.⁴²

Modernization of Shakespeare and the historical critics

Modernization of Shakespeare is not entertained by the historical critics as they considered the modification and change of historical context as a matter of distorting the historical aptness. Modernisation of Shakespeare is not acceptable to the historical critics. Historical critics complain of those who "modernize" Shakespeare.⁴³ There is a common allegation against Shakespeare that he has done injustice to women. He has not presented

³⁹ Shafi Ahmed, *op.cit.*, pp. 204-205, p. 35.

⁴⁰ Sisirkumar Ghose, *Makers of Indian Literature Rabindranath Tagore*, p. 118.

⁴¹ A.C. Bradley, *Shakespearean Tragedy*, p. 61.

⁴² Buddhadeva Bose, *op.cit.*, p. 15.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 29.

the female characters equal to the male. But Shakespeare seems to have met the demands of the audiences belonging to his age. Art of characterization appears to be a significant feature in Shakespearean dramas. Some critics have evaluated the female characters to be dominated by the male characters in the world of Shakespeare.

The Elizabethan audience and Shakespeare

The Elizabethan audiences were used to watching the female characters to be adorned with the qualities as manifested by Shakespeare and doubt less to say that Shakespeare tried his best to satisfy them.⁴⁴ In fact, manipulation of power politics is reflected with the garb of historical reference as Shakespeare tried his best to adhere to the limit of history so that his audience might not be affected by any misunderstanding caused by the sense of finding no historical affinity with the characters and events portrayed in his plays.⁴⁵

Rabindranath had an *orientalist* trend of universalization

However, whatever products of history science and philosophy of life in the writing of Shakespeare Rabindranath discovered, were reflected with the individual taste and belief of the composer irrespective of the limits of time, culture and geographical space.

- A) A purely literary view may not be appropriate to do him justice. The author of the national anthems, of two countries, a feat not to be matched in a hurry, was more than a literary lion. He was believed to be a culture hero.
- B) Perhaps there is not one Tagore but many, nana Rabindranath, as he himself says, Not merely a maker of modern Indian literature, Tagore belongs to world literature. His peers are to be found across distant seas and lands. In the aesthetic education of man we shall find him indispensable.⁴⁶

Characters of Shakespeare and the art of his soliloquy

Here can be referred the statement of Clifford Leech who was a renowned critic on Shakespeare. He places Shakespeare as distinct in presenting his characters as he says-

'If Shakespeare be allowed, as I think he must, to have made his characters distinct'.⁴⁷

⁴⁴ Shafi Ahmed, *Shakespeare's Nari* [Women of Shakespeare] (Dhaka: Academic Publishers, 1994), p. 7.

⁴⁵ Fakrul Alam, "New Historicism and the politicisation of Shakespeare", *Journal of the Faculty of Arts*, Vol. 56, No. 2, *The Dhaka University Studies*, Dhaka, December, 1999, pp. 12-13.

⁴⁶ Sisirkumar Ghose, *Rabindranath Tagore*, p. 6.

Shakespeare's characters reflect even the inner movements of the characters beyond their external gestures. Shakespeare seems to have exhibited special adroitness in the art of *soliloquization* conveying the inner world of the psychology of a man. His presentation of the character and the dialogues uttered by the same highlight what is lying beyond the apparent movements of the characters as noted by G.B. Harrison.

Rabindranath depicted the crucial realities of life in his short stories covering the specific core of human psychology and the tiny incidents of life. He attempted to glorify and highlighted the minor characters of the society with significant appeal and his characters are not Shakespeare's specially his short story characters do not show the royal grandeur or image of power and ambition as *Macbeth* or *King Lear* but his characters like Kabliwala, post master, Haimanti, Bolai, Balika Ratan of postmaster display profound psychological perturbation full of melancholic and tragic flow. Rabindranath Tagore's intellectual vision passed him the way to establish the light of education in a broader sense and he thought of institutionalising the concept of the total man as the essence of humanism. He also thought of upholding the native culture and views to be totally different from the purposes Shakespeare.

Humanism in Rabindranath

Sisir Kumar Ghose highlights more of the appeal of Tagore's humanism in the context of humanitarian aspects:

Tagorean humanism was based on the concept of the Total Man. Our universities are not rooted in the native soil and have been productive by and large of a class of parasites pretending to be elites. True education must be related to the problems of the people as well as the national environment. Tagore was an ecologist long before the phase was heard of. His idea of a total intellectually and internationally cooperative community he called the *Visva Bharati*, another of his splendid phrases [Rabindranath].⁴⁸

The Religion of Man appears to be the philosophic Tagore whose art got flourished on the structure of human beings and humanity centring round the life and society of the *Bangalees*.

⁴⁷ Clifford Leech, *Shakespeare: The Tragedies: A Collection of Critical Essays* (Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press, 1965), p. 5.

⁴⁸ Sisirkumar Ghose, *op.cit.*, p. 107.

Rabindranath on Othello and its criticism on the justification of art

Rabindranath Tagore was an *orientalist* and was fond of *universalization* of his own traditional culture and it made him a bit intolerant of western realities of life. Hence Rabindranath Tagore expressed his view of Shakespeare in the following way –

We obtain others through ourselves with the hearty feelings of kindness, beauty, love – this is why there is no lack of pleasure in their sorrow and suffering. But hatred or atrocity or cruelty, emerged from the imaginative violence caused by the sickness of imagination makes us averse to, the free movement of our hearts then gets obstructed, this is because we don't have any pleasure in those instincts. The sympathy as much as possessed by Othello attracts us as our feelings but in the concluding part the play turns me from Othello because of the cruelty that seems to be above the limit of art.⁴⁹

The above statement of Rabindranath Tagore has presented the context of *Othello* highlighting his sense of beauty and love. The ending part of *Othello* has shocked the poet Rabindranath Tagore and he has deemed the same to be above the artistic limit. Any kind of cruelty or atrocity is unexpected but sometimes anyone may become the victims of the grim reality. Then the question arises whether life is free from the contact of those realities. Art has got its own way of presentation and many things are to be kept apart from it. Anything unaffected, use of excessive imagination, unregulated envy etc should be kept beyond that limit, but when human heart becomes the victim of cruel fate due to extreme enjoyment and emotion, desperation finds one kind of naturalness and from that source humanitarian qualities turn into the negative instincts and beastly impulses or tendencies consequently become the violent and agonized expressions doing no harm the art.

Rabindranath on Antony and Cleopatra

Rabindranath Tagore spoke highly of the play like *Antony and Cleopatra* of Shakespeare in the context of discussing the mutual relationship between history and literature published in the essay *Historical Novel*.⁵⁰ When historical subject takes shelter in the pages of literature with the sense of artistic juice and environment then in the eye of subtle judgement that

⁴⁹ Shafi Ahmed, *Bangadeshe Shakespeare*, p. 205. & cited in Cinno Potrabali [Torn Letters], p.12. September 1894.

⁵⁰ *Ibid*.

may appear to be unhistorical but there is no scope of harming the interest of history. In this regard the observation of Rabindranath Tagore appears to be very much significant as he viewed that the main theme of the play *Antony and Cleopatra* of Shakespeare is a matter of experimented fact and familiar truth in our everyday life of the world. Many unknown and insignificant personalities lose their earthly life and peace of the next world for the illusion created by the mechanism of the evils of women. This sort of mere event of greatness and humanity has filled the path of this sordid life. However, Shakespeare's art of historical presentation is superior to the appeal of History no doubt.

Shakespeare's art of presentation

As Shakespeare cannot be measured only by *As You Like It* or *Hamlet*, or the sonnets, though his essence is in all three, in the same way it won't be sufficient to measure him or Rabindranath cannot be gauged only by *Gitanjali* or the *Post Office* or *The Religion of Man*.⁵¹

Shakespeare has presented the common male and female characters under the shadow of adoring love based on historical play magnificently. The ostentatious external revolution is the result of the revolution occurred in the heart, the conflict of love caused by the revolution resulted in war in the luxurious palace of Cleopatra where lyre was being played and the trumpet of war was emerging from the seas creating harmony with the sound of the lyre. In the mingling of a melodious and tragic tune Shakespeare has enlivened a historical incident with the heart exploring distance and greatness. The well-versed intellectuals may find faults or historical limitations or anarchism if they cast their keen observations on Shakespeare but he has begotten the fascination for an unending arena of human beings and human nature in the heart of the readers which may be produced by the wrong historical evidence. But the sense of historical humour, Shakespeare produced, would not be harmed by any additional information discovered from the page of the history.⁵²

Laurence Lerner has viewed the character of Cleopatra to be a bit irrelevant to the usage of dialogues in the context of heightening the tragic emotion as he says a dying woman does not use such figures of speech; and at the pinnacle of her complex emotion, a Cleopatra would have no language to express it. This very discrepancy between emotion

⁵¹ Buddhadeva Bose, *op.cit.*, p. 21.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 207, pp. 160-161.

and the actual language of emotion is deliberately and triumphantly used by Shakespeare in the final scene of *King Lear*; in the death scene of Cleopatra he achieves the miracle: he makes the language completely adequate to the emotion and yet keeps it simple. But Rabindranath Tagore has advocated in favour of the said character by illustrating the strength of emotional complexity created by her passionate love for her lover Antonio.⁵³

Views of Rabindranath Tagore on the characters of *Tempest* of Shakespeare

Shakuntālā is one of the essays in which Rabindranath writes a long discussion by referring to the *Tempest*. Rabindranath analyses the dramatic formula of Kalidasa which might be supposed to have been manifested in the way that there comes the comparison easily lying between *The Tempest* of Shakespeare and *Shakuntālā* of Kalidas. The external and internal similarities and dissimilarities of their plays are the matter of long discussion.

Rabindranath on Miranda

Rabindranath says that the character Miranda of Shakespeare was brought up in the lap of nature in an island isolated from the din of people but the nature surrounded by the island did not have any intimate relationship with Miranda. So Miranda can be easily isolated because she did not have any intimate and spiritual relationship developed with the aspects of nature surrounding the island.

A comparative study of Kalidasa and Shakespeare by Rabindranath Tagore

Rabindranath said –

That we see the solitary island only in the description of Shakespeare not through Miranda. But Kalidas has presented nature in his poetry and the role he specified for nature is not an isolated matter, through the character of *Shakuntālā* that has been manifested.⁵⁴

In this context, Rabindranath has meant to say that man and nature in Shakespeare appear to be different from each other as Miranda failed to project nature through herself. Rabindranath further said that Miranda could not overcome the limitations when she happened to meet Ferdinand. Her personality and characteristics showed the positive sign

⁵³ Laurence Lerner (ed.), *Shakespeare's Tragedies: An Anthology of Modern Criticism* (New York: Penguin Books, 1968), p. 235.

⁵⁴ Shafi Ahmed, *Bangadeshe Shakespeare*, pp. 206-208.

of varieties. Had Ferdinand never been there Miranda would have suffered from her imperfect, fragmented notion of the personality of a man and confined to that mental ambit. In that view *Shakuntālā* would have been a perfect character. In spite of those varieties in her character, decency of her personality would have been revealed. Her close touch and cordiality with nature from her very childhood accompanied by her mates *Shakuntālā* has built her personality by developing an intimate relationship with nature. But Shakespeare's Miranda never got mingled with the aspects of nature; when Shakespeare had the opportunity to show the impact of nature conveyed by the close touch of nature making her personality tranquil and placid but Mirada had less opportunity to get mingled with nature.

Symbolic representation of nature both in Tagore and Shakespeare may be of similar importance as Symbolically Rabindranath represented the aspects of nature with a view to revealing the inner world of man in the same way Shakespeare also used the aspects of nature as to project the inner psychology of human nature. Symbolic representation of nature both in Tagore and Shakespeare as stated by Rabindranath in his letter written to C.F. Andows displays affinity of the two poets in presenting aspects of nature. Rabindranath's views on presentation of old stories with newer appeal appear to have affinity with those of Shakespeare.

There is a need to say about the plays of Shakespeare. He has presented the old stories in most of his plays associated with his own style of presentation. His originality and talent lie not in focusing the original stories but in presenting them with newer appeal and attraction of the stories chosen from the original sources. When anyone reads his plays and his characters don't appear to be coming from Scotland, Denmark or Italy rather they seem to be the characters of universal events of life touching everyone. Readers and audience appear to stand before the realities of life for all time and all the mankind.

Affinity lies in the characters of Shakespeare with those of Bengali literature

'It is of course highly probable that Shakespeare read some Seneca at school'.⁵⁵ His characters seem to be well known to all like the characters of Bengali Literature. One of

⁵⁵ A.C. Bradley, *Shakespeare Tragedy*, p. 345.

the striking features of his plays is its strength and beauty of language. The deep outlook towards life through the characters is easily conveyed in his plays and if anyone goes into the deeper he would find the complexities of life and the complex world around him in the same way.

Complexities are absent in Bengali literature

In Bengali literature there are events and characters having similar appeal but they are adorned with the long tradition of Bengali history and culture. There is no way to find the complexities as are found in Shakespearean plays.⁵⁶

Rabindranath opines that the subject matter of developing relationship between human mind and nature seems to be rarely found in world literature as it has been manifested in *Shakuntālā*. Rabindranath interprets that in the world of dissimilarities, the very reconciliation is possible only in Indian culture and tradition and not in other countries.⁵⁷

Rabindranath Tagore highlights the contact between nature and man in Bengali literature which is to be bridged by one kind of loving feelings that are not available in western literature.

Comparative study of Kalidasha and Shakespeare by Rabindranath

His comparative study of *Shakuntālā* of Kalidasa and *The Tempest* of Shakespeare illustrates his opinion as a literary critic Rabindranath has found that the external nature in *Tempest* in which Ariel takes the shape of a man but he remains far from the relationship of man. His relationship with man is of an unwilling servant. He would like to be free from his working network like a slave in the state of being confined and hurt by the power of man. There is no affection in his heart and tear in his eyes. In spite of being a woman, Miranda's lady heart never stretched her affection towards him. While departing from the island there did not occur the moment of saying good bye of Ariel from Prospero and Miranda. There is oppression or suppression and rule in *The Tempest* but intimacy, peace and cordiality in *Shakuntālā*. Nature has been personified in *The Tempest* but there did not develop the relationship of heart, the aspects of nature and the trees in *Shakuntālā* the beasts and birds developed relationship with human beings in spite of keeping the self-mood different.

⁵⁶ Jahanara Imam, *Cirayata Shāhiyā* [Universal Literature], *Shakespearean Tragedy* (Dhaka: Academic Publishers, 1989), pp. 6-7. Cited in the preface, Kabir Chowdhury.

⁵⁷ Shafi Ahmed, *Bangadeshe Shakespeare*, pp. 204-208.

Nature in Shakespeare and Kalidasha seemed to have a natural outlet as Rabindranath further said that about the comparative study of nature in Shakespeare and Kalidas. He observes that in the play *The Tempest* man has not been great in the world by sharing his feelings of love properly but by suppressing and suffocating the world and in his desire to be the lord of the universe. The main theme of *The Tempest* is the conflict and chaos centring round the material dominance-where Prospero being deprived of his own rights has been spreading his dominance in the world of nature by means of magic or a means of super human or supernatural powers. In that island somehow a few creatures managed to take shelter there after being saved from the imminent hands of death they started getting entangled in conspiracy against each other for their individual dominance over the solitary island. Consequently that ended in the long run but that was over was not sure. The turbulent nature remained calm and quite for the fear of rule as exerted by Prospero and in the creatures suffering for the lack of leisure like sick *Caliban* but there remained poison in their teeth and nails. Every body got their respective share of property and dues as they deserved. But the attainment of property might be an external gain and aim of the materialistic minded community but in poetry that is not the ultimate goal. *The Tempest* is also adorned with the inner pictures of human mind. Conflicts between man and nature, conflicts among men and the original cause of revolt and conflicts arising from greed for power are there from the beginning to the end.⁵⁸

From the above discussion highlighted by Rabindranath Tagore it is remarked that poet Rabindranath Tagore desired to glorify poet Kalidas. He is not going to accept the conflict or revolt based on material properties in literature when the artistic appeal of the same is thought to be overshadowed by the excessive touch of cruelty. But it cannot be denied that Shakespeare has highlighted the crucial realisation of human life in a symbolic way in *The Tempest* significantly. Through play *The Tempest*, crisis of culture and colonialism, chaos and conflicts appear to be the consequence of greed for property and power along with the conspiracy for vanquishing one another that appear to be the ancient causes of the downfall of mankind which are demonstrated by Shakespeare in a befitting manner.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 195, 201-204.

Miranda and *Shakuntala* in the eye of Tagore

Shakespeare has presented and realized the profound awareness about the causes of conflicts and chaos, which interrupt social justice, intensity of instincts making man faced with the puzzling situation. The two female characters like *Shakuntālā* and Miranda appear to be different from each other for their intimacy and isolation from the world of nature. Both the dramas show the background of the aspects of natural atmosphere but the two women suffer from more dissimilarities than similarities.⁵⁹

The above context has been interpreted by the great poet of Bengali literature Rabindranath Tagore with his profound observation and keen insight he has contemplated that European poets become highly interested when they find the expression of instincts and they are fond of exaggerating the activities caused by the instincts of man and let them go as far as they can. *Romeo and Juliet* of Shakespeare and in other plays there are the examples of using the excessive impact of their instincts. *Shakuntālā* is a play of profound tranquillity and a sober play which is not available among Shakespearean literary works. There is the expression of power in *The Tempest* on the other hand there is the expression of peace in *Shakuntālā*. There is the victory by force in *The Tempest* whereas success by well-being or welfare in *Shakuntālā*. There is a separation in the middle of *The Tempest* but *Shakuntālā* ends in full perfection. Innocence of Miranda is based on the simplicity of her inexperience and ignorance. On the other hand the innocence of *Shakuntālā* is based on the sorrow of her innocent guilt which is deep, permanent and matured in experience and patience. Tagore interprets about Shakespeare the following statement with reference to the comparison of Miranda of Shakespeare and *Shakuntālā* of Kalidash as he states;⁶⁰

Following the criticism of Gate. I again say that in the play *Shakuntālā*, the young beauty at the beginning has reached the very well conclusion by achieving success and mingling truth with heaven.⁶¹

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 208-211.

Shakespearean drama is deemed to be the model for the dramatists

Poet Rabindranath Tagore has reached the depth of Shakespearean literature with due realization. Rabindranath in the year 1940 one year before his death made the following statement:

The plays of Shakespeare are the models of drama before us. His ramified varieties, spreading sorrows or pains have occupied our hearts our minds from the beginning.⁶²

Bengali audience and Shakespeare

In his *Prachin Shahitta [Ancient Literature]* Rabindranath Tagore presented an important criticism on Shakespeare. Comments of Rabindranath with reference to Shakespearean characters were published in the essay *Shkuntala*. He set a long discussion on the *Tempest*. Rabindranath said: A comparative study of *Tempest* of Shakespeare and *Shakuntala* of Kalidasha easily reminds us of the findings of their external and internal similarities and dissimilarities of these two characters need be discussed. Rabindranath echoed Baledranath as to have a comparative lying between *Miranda* of Shakespeare and *Shakuntala* of Kalidasha. Rabindranath placed *Miranda* to be a character brought up in the lap of nature on an island isolated from the crowd. Due to lack of social habitation, in fact, *Miranda* could not develop any relation with the aspects of nature stated Tagore. But he presented *Shakuntala* of Kalidasha as a character of developing relation with the aspects of nature. Rabindranath interpreted that with the touch of nature *Shakuntala* received positive impact but *Miranda* remained untouched from the influence of nature upon her personality. In the year 1940 Rabindranath wrote before his death: 'Shakespeare's plays are always a model to us. His multidimensional expansion of verities and conflicts capture our minds from the beginning. The *Bangalees* are not used to witnessing or viewing the atrocities, vulgarities, jealousies, boasting of power, disbeliefs, conflicts and quarrels or the beast in man or the ugly appearance that may be the cause of a man's tragic consequence breaking trust and mutual understanding for their prolonged homage paid to the heroes possessed with super human qualities. But Shakespeare has presented man not only with the positive image but also with that of the negative.'⁶³

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 211.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p.p. 208-211.

William J. Long makes the following comments;

Shakespeare fulfilled their desires. He gave them their story and his genius was great enough to show in every play not only their own life and passions but something of the meaning of all life and of that eternal justice which uses the war of human passions for its own great ends⁶⁴

On the other hand the negative image projected by the Bengali dramatists does not appear to be similar to that of Shakespeare. Indeed, the whole tradition of the nineteenth century Bengali drama owed an immense debt to Shakespeare. Perhaps in the manifestation and manipulation of the inherent world of man's imagination where the beastly instincts of man react with the deadly appearances to anything it confronts for its sake and Shakespeare could project them according to the desires of the audience fond of witnessing the unreal or the supernatural elements with their physical eyes. Shakespeare's plays and poems and their relation to the poetry and life of this age are a subject which can claim to interest many who are not meant as the literary specialists.⁶⁵

Shakespeare's influence upon Rabindranath Tagore

It has been seen that in the boyhood of Rabindranath Tagore when Shakespeare, Byron, Milton were on the syllabus at school and college. Rabindranath Tagore was fond of receiving inspiration from Shakespeare in composing his dramas but Rabindranath Tagore saved himself from Shakespearean annuals because of his profound respect and feelings for his own country and traditional way of life. So Rabindranath Tagore was able to show his own view and individuality in composing dramas of his own style and presentation. In the massive aspect of Rabindranath Tagore references of Shakespeare have appeared several times by which Tagore's perfect evaluation about Shakespeare might not be expected but Shakespeare had profound influence on Tagore and there was no doubt that he deliberately comprehended the depth and greatness of Shakespeare. In the first evidence of Rabindranath was found in 1892 in a letter written to Lokendranath Palit. Commenting on the subjectivity and literary product of Shakespeare Tagore wrote: "..... Shakespeare enlivened the characters of his play in his own life, they seemed to have enjoyed the real taste of life as a result of which they became living people

⁶⁴ William J. Long, *English Literature*, p. 156.

⁶⁵ M.C. Bradbrook, *Shakespeare and Elizabeth Poetry*, p. 7.

otherwise they would have been simply prosaic characters of essays. Therefore there focused the self of Shakespeare but great, exceptional and refined. Antipathy towards Iago compassion for Othello, love towards Desdemona, humorous company of Falstaff, sympathetic mercy towards Lear and profound affection towards Cordelia have depicted the human heart of Shakespeare before us forever. Rabindranath further interpreted that Shakespeare had an apex of higher philosophy from human nature could be based viewed. We get people of all time in Shakespeare and the real man not the oral man. Rabindranath has given a perfect portrayed of Shakespeare by his own philosophical views and literary studies. In the analytical study of Othello Rabindranath seemed to be shocked as the atrocity of Othello crossed the artistic ambit of life. Any kind of cruel exposure is unexpected as Rabindranath Tagore an *orientalist* he was not ready to entertain the western expression of human instinct and that is why he was shocked at the crucial atrocity accomplished by Othello. In the context of history and literature Rabindranath set a comparative study with reference to *Antony and Cleopatra* in his essay *Oitihashik Upannash* (Historical Novel) expressed that in order to present the historical aspects of literature there is said to be essential for the playwright to introduce a situation and creative test which might be stated as unhistorical in the real sense of the term. Rabindranath considered the historical presentation in his play *Antony and Cleopatra* to be remarkable piece of higher literature. Rabindranath firmly believed that the rediscovery of history presented in the play of Shakespeare could not be spoiled due to the fascination Shakespeare was able to create among the readers and audience.⁶⁶

Raja and Rani: reflection of Antony and Cleopatra

In the year 1889 *Rājā and Rāni* of Rabindranath Tagore was published. In fact, he was able to overcome the tide of Shakespearean influence. In *Rājā* and *Rāni* both the characters as husband and wife would like to enjoy and adore each other beyond the demands that show the affinity of the desperate passion reflected through the hearts of *Antony and Cleopatra* of Shakespeare. The passionate love of the said couple brings tragic consequence and consequently suffers in the long run as Harold C. Goodard interprets;

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 205-210.

If one were asked to select the play of Shakespeare's that best represents all aspects of his genius and preserves the most harmonious balance among them, *Antony and Cleopatra* would be the inevitable choice.⁶⁷

Rabindranath wrote a letter to CF Andrews regarding the translation of his drama 'Raja' as the King of the Dark Chamber (1914) as Rabindranath said in his letter – 'With regard to the criticism of my play, the king of the Dark chamber. That you mention in your letter, the human soul has its inner drama which is just the same as anything else that concerns man and Sudarsana is not more abstraction than lady Macbeth, who might be described as an allegory representing the criminal ambition in man's nature.'⁶⁸

Translation of Macbeth of Rabindranath

As Rabindranath Tagore translated *Macbeth* in his early life he was supposed to be influenced by the same play. Following *Hamlet* of Shakespeare, G. C. Gupta composed the first Bengali drama in the year 1852, and it is interesting to note that poet Rabindranath was born in 1861. So it may be said that before the birth of Rabindranath, Shakespeare was studied by his predecessors. An affinity is found between the characters like Lady Macbeth and Macbeth in *Macbeth* and the characters like Chandra Sen and Berati appear to show their common semblance of mind and work. The conflicts grown in the heart of Macbeth out of his high ambition is portrayed in the character Chandra Sen of Rabindranath Tagore.⁶⁹

Similarity of the characters: Macbeth and Chandra Sen

Shakespearean plays appear to be the manifestations of the deepest emotion that affected Rabindranath Tagore in the art of his characterization of his drama *Rājā and Rāni*. Even the angry mob scene in the play *Coriolanus* is also reflected in the play *Raja and Rāni*. Their way of discussion and dialogues appear to be a bit similar to each other.

Bisarjan (Sacrifice) of Rabindranath carries the influence of Shakespeare

Bisarjon (Sacrifice) is another play composed by Rabindranath Tagore where is found the touch of Shakespearean influence. The characters in the play like *Raghupati* and *Joy*

⁶⁷ Harold C. Goddard, *op.cit.*, p. 184 (chapter-xxxi).

⁶⁸ Dr. Saiful Islam, *Rabindranather Natok: Chetonolok o Shilporoup* (Drama of Shakespeare: Heart and Art) (Dhaka: Bangla Academy, 2003), p. 165.

⁶⁹ Shafi Ahmed, *Bangadeshe Shakespeare.*, pp. 100-101.

Singh created by Rabindranath appear to have the qualities like those of Shakespearean characters. It is also viewed that firmness, self-centredness, unkindness that are supposed to reflect the Shakespearean eponym in the characters of Tagore. 'Iago' of Shakespeare a character full of unkindness, selfish attitude is reflected through the character of Rabindranath Tagore in the drama *Bisarjan* [sacrifice]. It is also interesting to note that Tagore acted in his own play in the character Raghupati.⁷⁰

Shakespearean Macbeth and Tagorian Nakhatra

Macbethan conflicts and complexes are found in the character 'Nakhatra Roy' of Rabindranath Tagore. Macbeth was greatly perturbed for his restlessness after being affected by the predictions of the witches. Yet there is a historical criticism which ascertains that Shakespeare was pandering to the superstitions of his audience in *Macbeth* and following a stage tradition rather than life in his study of the criminal nature.

The Shakespearean drama has bequeathed some conventions of very doubtful value, which Rabindranath took over. Thus, *Sacrifice* has two under-plots, both of which the poet has omitted from his English version. One under plot is talk of villagers, and is supposed to supply the 'humour' and 'comic relief' that tragedy is held to require. Bucolic chatter can be very dull. The other under-plot introduces a new motive, the Queen's desire to remove Druba, the King's adopted son. This might have been built most powerfully into the plot. But it comes far too late, more than half-way through, is made little of and handled very half-heartedly; and such a motive- so powerful, if at all genuine- is not suited for a secondary part. But the chief fault of *Sacrifice* is excessive declamation. A great deal of this the poet's maturer judgement evidently condemned, for it disappears from the English.

The characters in *Sacrifice* are reckless, waifs persuaded by the strong wind of their creator's emotion, puppets in the grip of a sternly-felt idea. Aparna, the beggar-girl, on whose deeds the whole plot turns, does not interest. A friend-objects to this, 'She is in the backdrop all the time, and in the original she is a lovely creation'. This does not seem to me true. If we are referred to *Pippa Passes*, the answer is that Browning's poem is a

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 208-211.

string of episodes, and not connected drama. Pippa is hardly an actor, she is a symbol, and kept in a symbol's position. It is not so with Aparna. She is not in the background. Then, the conversions are not worked out psychologically, in the case of either Jaisingh or Raghupati. Raghupati lived on the stage when the poet impersonated him; and he lives in the play precisely because he is the poet. In *As You Like It*, one unenthusiastically forgives the usurping Duke's conversion. But then, the play is a comedy; and its title, *As You Like It*. Raghupati's change-which is a later addition, no part of the first edition-is sudden and irrational. The play's finish is imprecise, hastily compressed, as if the poet's invention were flagging and so dropped abruptly to a fore-ordained end. Yet *Sacrifice* has not-only value as feeling and poetry, it has stage qualities, and can be made well-liked.⁷¹

Influence of *Hamlet* in *Bisarjan*

Rabindranath Tagore is said to have been influenced by *Hamlet* of Shakespeare in composing his '*Bisarjan*'. Both the characters convey emotional oscillation. Both the characters embrace tragic catastrophe at the cost of their of being the victims of motivation. None of them could show the necessary quality of strong personality or virtue in revealing the hard realities but they lack the compromising attitude to adjust with the elements of deceptions and falsehood. It is to be remembered that when Rabindranath was acquainted with the character *Hamlet* of Shakespeare, he created the character *Joyshingh*.⁷²

There is a Hamlet in everyman and there is procrastination in every person. Hamlet has accepted not only his surroundings, but himself. It is supposed that he now knows himself neither as saint nor as soldier, but a Renaissance gentleman of finely tuned sensibility; and that is saying a lot. He now knows intuitively that he will do the work before him and mark what happens.⁷³

Shesh Rakkah and the Comedy of Errors

The other plays of Rabindranath Tagore like *Shes Rakkha* [The Last Safeguard] is also supposed to be influenced by Shakespeare's the *The Comedy of Errors*. The humour of

⁷¹ Edward Thompson, *Rabindranath Tagore: Poet and Dramatist* (London: Oxford University Press, 1948), pp. 93-94.

⁷² Shafi Ahmed, *Bangadeshe Shakespeare*, p. 106.

⁷³ Wilson Knight, *op.cit.*, p. 364.

Shakespeare has been presented in a different manner in the situation of *Shesh Rakkha* as Ruddra Prasad Sengupta says- '*Sesh Rakkha*' is a veritable comedy of errors'.⁷⁴

Chiro Kumar Shava and Loves Labour's Lost

The other play of Rabindranath like *Chiro Kumar Shava* is believed to be imitated from Shakespeare's *Love's Labour's Lost*. The characters of both the plays were determined not to associate with any woman but consequently became the victims of love offered by those ladies.

Chitrangoda and Mid Summers Nights Dream

Rabindranath Tagore is sure to have borrowed the disguised technique from Shakespeare specially in creating the character like Shailo Bālā. One of the critics discovered affinity lying between the play *Chitrangoda* of Rabindranath Tagore and Shakespeare's *Mid Summer Night's Dream* but Rabindranath Tagore may be freed from this criticism because of his way in applying the Bengali culture and tradition in the depiction of the events and characters different from Shakespeare.

'Mob' scenes both in Tagore and Shakespeare

Both the talented playwrights have presented the mob in some of their plays with their insignificant but inevitable role full of stupidity, simplicity in faith, common words and their irrational conducts which are common to the 'mob' phenomenon. The character of the mob in the plays of Rabindranath like *Prokritir Protishodh* (The Revenge of Nature) *Raja* and *Rāni* [King and Queen] *Bisarjan* [Sacrifice] which are supposed to be imitated the presentation of mob scene from the Shakespearean mob.⁷⁵

Shakespeare has created the mob scene as the integral part of his drama which is not set by Rabindranath Tagore with the same motive. However, in spite of the borrowed elements from Shakespeare Rabindranath happened to resort a little to Shakespearean shelter in the way of the long duration of the career of Rabindranath.

⁷⁴ Shafi Ahmed, *Bangadeshe Shakespeare*, pp. 108-109.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 108-110.

Gradual deviation of Rabindranath from Shakespeare

Rabindranath deviates gradually from Shakespearean style in composing dramas based on the realities of life and introduced an individual symbolic style in the field of composing dramas of his own. It may be said that Rabindranath Tagore in flourishing the varieties of his literary trend had been influenced by Shakespeare. The female characters of Rabindranath Tagore may be said to have the sameness with the female characters of Shakespeare in revealing the inner conflicts of mind of a woman, Rabindranath was supposed to be attracted by the Elizabethan dramatist Shakespeare as referred to Bhabatosh Datta in his study *Rabindranath Tagore on Shakespeare*.

Poet and the playwright Shakespeare was thought to be free from all kinds of projection of his own as he never tried to focus any of the message of his age or of his own which was supposed to be highly appreciated by the Romantic poet S.T. Coleridge as a successful artist Shakespeare hid himself in the disguise of the portrayal of human nature in its vicinity of instincts and inner psychology having no similitude of his own life. There is a touch of art in his way of *universalization* but there is the lack of his own doctrine and the lack of any effort made to convey any personal message as manifested directly or indirectly by poet Rabindranath Tagore in his different writings which seem to have helped both of them portray impersonal image in their products.

Art, reality and human mind in Rabindranath

Impersonal presentation is the precondition to negative capability which was duly exercised by Shakespeare and Rabindranath Tagore although Rabindranath has used the pronoun 'I' in his short stories. In the eye of Rabindranath Tagore reality reveals in the emotional and imaginative background of human mind. Human beings feel themselves in a special field of realisation. His vision comprehends suffering, earthly coils and earthly toils, jealousy, despair, greed, but not Eliot's 'horror and boredom'. Shakespeare, Baudelaire, Eliot himself reach out to a world in which Rabindranath never writes about, though he seems to glimpse them in his strange, at time weird paintings.... But at least he is like Shakespeare in this sort of depiction that he seems never to have experienced boredom.⁷⁶

⁷⁶ Buddhadeva Bose, *op.cit.*, p. 24.

Allen Ginsberg says that Rabindranath Tagore doesn't appear to be better understood in his translation and recitation but in his songs as he states that, 'The great poet of the tongue Tagore is sung better than recited or translated and every one feels nostalgic for Rabindranath's songs.'⁷⁷

In art people are prone to express delight of this unity by which the world is realised as humanly significant where the harmony is not deeply felt, humans are supposed to remain alien and perpetually homesick. By nature man appears to be an artist and he never receives a physical representation of things round him passively. In the eye of Rabindranath Tagore there goes on an adaptation or transformation of his sentiments and imagination in order to live effectively. Man is sure to establish a harmonious kinship with everything which he is to have dealings. Man's creation is the modification of relationship. He also conveys his message in the way that the mysterious fact is that though the individuals are seeking their separate expression but their success does not appear to be individual. Men must find, feel and represent themselves in all their creative works as man is eternal. Civilization is thought to perish when the individual thwarts the revelation of the universal.⁷⁸

Both Shakespeare and Rabindranath Tagore as the translated and studied literary personalities

Suniti Kumar Chattapaddhaya highlights remarkably the significance of the translations of the works of the Rabindranath Tagore in which he presents the equal status enjoyed by both the poets conveying same hold over world literature as he says that among modern writers, Rabindranath has been one of the most widely translated. Owing to religious, doubtless to say that the Hebrew Bible is unquestionably the most translated book in the world. The great writers of humanity have also been honoured by being translated into a variety of languages. But Shakespeare is one of such writer: and there are the great leaders of thought and literature in ancient and modern Europe whose works are available in scores of languages. A representative portion of Rabindranath's works is thought to be

⁷⁷ Sunil Gangopudhyay, *City of Memories*, Kalyan Ray and Bonni Mac Dougall (tr.) (New Delhi: Penguin Books, 1991), p. x.

⁷⁸ Sisirkumar Ghose, *Rabindranath Tagore*, p. 129.

similarly available now in all the advanced languages of the world. In most cases, they have been translated from the English versions, which either he himself made or which were made by others. In a good number of instances, however, these renditions were made out and out from the original Bengali into a variety of foreign languages, like, for example, English, French, German, Italian, Russian, Czech, Chinese, Japanese and Persian: and of course into Indian languages, into most of them. With the passing of time and his influence grows, such translations are expected to be available in other languages also. Both Shakespeare and Rabindranath Tagore are the most translated and studied literary personalities of the world literature.⁷⁹

Rabindranath had the study of Shakespeare in different sections of his criticism. He deeply realised the greatness and through an in depth view of Shakespeare in the year 1892 in a letter written to Lokendranath Palite, Rabindranath was the first to note his criticism about Shakespeare as he states....

Shakespeare himself enlivened the characters of his plays in his own life. From the core of his heart he drank the inner juice of motherly affection for which the characters became living humans, other wise they used to be essays only, so in a sense Shakespeare an productions are a kind self expression but are mixed, great and varied.

Rabindranath discovered philosophy, history, humanity and science of life in the writings of Shakespeare, as Rabindranath viewed, had the touch of his individual liking and disliking without delineating any personal doctrine but with an impersonal delegation besides which there appeared the reflections of life beyond the local flavour and nativity of Shakespeare as D.L Roy focuses on the point in the following manner;

Rabindranath in his *Cinnonapatraboli* (Torn letters dated 12 September 1894) evaluated Shakespeare as a man for all the time. The real man we get and not the facial. He has projected man as Shakespeare reflected the whole humanity. In his writing there is an apex of high philosophy where from the vivid picture of human nature is best visualized. Rabindranath has also taken the views of a critic as he has criticised the limitations of Shakespeare in the following way as referred to a collection of essays.⁸⁰

⁷⁹ Meera Chattopadhyay, *op.cit.*, pp. 142-143.

⁸⁰ D.L. Roy, *Kalidasha and Vabavuti: A Collection of Essays by Dijendra Rachana Sangraha*, Vol. 2 (Kolkata: 1975), p. 9.

The subject matters of his (Shakespeare's) best plays are no doubt great but his heroes do not have any special quality. In *Hamlet* there is a quality of devotion to father. But through out the play he has hesitated. There lies the touch of procrastination meaning Hamlet is a hero of procrastination.

Othello out of his jealousy killed his innocent wife Desdemona. He was so blind to jealousy that he never bothered for any one or anything without feeling to have the proof or evidence. Macbeth is ungrateful. Antony is lustful Julius Caesar is haughty and braggart. But Shakespeare has projected the dire consequence or the tragic end of the characters as a result of their sinful nature or excessive of the instincts instigating them to go beyond the power of their reasonability and farsightedness which even came to be termed as the atonement of sin or even the events of committing suicide.

Rabindranath in the context of English literature

Perhaps no other Bengali poet so captured the natural beauty and simplicity of East Bengal as did Rabindranath.⁸¹ Buddhadeva Bose, one of the renowned critics, has stated that Tagore's periphery touching the horizon of all the aspects of the literary genre affirming his craftsmanship in employing the embryo of his art and creativity...

To describe him in terms of English literature, one must name quite a number of authors, for he compresses in one man's lifetime the development of several centuries.... He is possessed by lyric; but among his momentous works are narrative verse and verse dramas; his ballads excel Scott's, his child poems, more abundant than Blake's, blend Blake's innocence with an almost sophisticated humour.... He has created a new form of the prose play, has written on philosophy, education, politics, and science, on prosody, music and peasantry on every question of the day.⁸²

⁸¹ Rachel Van Baumer, *Aspects of Bengali History and Society* (USA: The University Press of Hawaii, 1975), p. 70.

⁸² Buddhadeva Bose, *op.cit.*, p. 14.

Conclusion

Shakespeare was the integral part of study since the boyhood days of Rabindranath. Shakespeare centered round the studies of Rabindranath when he was at the prime of his growing young the stage of life when emotions sustained in his heart flamboyantly. *Romeo and Juliet*, helplessness of a father like *King Lear*, burning of jealousy in *Othello* used to rouse exciting feelings and the excessiveness of Shakespearean characters planted undying influence upon the mind of the rising poet Rabindranath⁸³ and the plays of Shakespeare have moved the Bengali readers but they have not created any reaction of any deep realization. There is a great influence of Shakespeare on literature but that is not fully apparent in Bengali term because of the mingling and influence of our own prejudice and traditional belief from where none can remain isolated. At the same time it's a fact that the modern Indian literature owes to Tagore as the same emerged drawing the world notice through Tagore's contribution of poetry which happened to be in Bengali and Tagore acted in adding to the beauty and breadth of Bengali literature in the same way as Shakespeare happened to widen and continue his influence upon the world literature through his products.⁸⁴

In spite of manifold influences of the West, there is a sharp cultural difference between the Orient and the Occident. European education could provide us with some new ideas, but demanded, total submission. Rabindranath wanted to co-operate with imperial rulers as long as the post-enlightenment Europe supported for the formation of our national consciousness and conscience.⁸⁵ From the above statement it appears that the learning of Rabindranath Tagore created one kind of spirit which was supposed to encourage *Bangalees* to develop a counter-discourse against *orientalism*, but his profound study of Shakespeare made him awakened and particular about searching the elements of liberty of thoughts and views which resulted in his being aware of introducing his own dexterity in portraying the characters based on the colloquial flavour free from the western manifestation. To some critics of Bengali literature Rabindranath is said to be their Shakespeare. Buddah Dev Bose addressed Rabindranath to be the Chaucer,

⁸³ Shafi Ahmed, *Bangadeshe Shakespeare* (Dhaka: Bangla Academy, 1988), pp.6-7.

⁸⁴ Shyamal Banerjee, *Barnik Ray Looking for an Address* (Kolkata: The Standard Art Printers, 1975), p. xxv.

⁸⁵ Masuduzzaman, *op.cit.*, p. 146.

Shakespeare or Dryden for the *Bangalees*. There is no English literature where there is no Shakespeare simultaneously there is no Bengali literature where there is no Rabindranath Tagore.

Rabindranath Tagore spoke the truth as he saw it, leading to enthusiastic public acclaim and equally avid censure. Yet, despite either or negative public reaction, he remained reliable with his optimistic, futuristic beliefs bequeathing an example as well as a philosophy which still inspires those questing for the elevation of the human condition and the cause of world unity.⁸⁶

Both deserve to have the status of affinity and *universalization* as one mirrors the other when a comparative study of the two is sought. Comparison or comparative study refers to the similar occasion of discussion then the continuous study of the two is sure to open newer faculties of ideas and thoughts both of which are expected to invigorate the exchange of literary flavour of one another. So appreciation of Rabindranath never indicates his inferior status of the other and there doesn't have any way to suffer the complexity that supremacy of the one degrades that of the other. However, both the geniuses are the constant source of studies for the educated *Bangalees* whose evaluation of the two would beget the combination of refined literary products in the field of Bengali literature in the days to come.

⁸⁶ Katherine Henn, *Rabindranath Tagore: A Bibliography* (USA: The Scarecrow Press, Inc. Metuchen, N.J., 1985), p. xvii.

Chapter 7

Shakespeare in Bengali Translation

Introduction

Translation is the embodiment of an original work which may be defined as the gateway to enter the world of the other languages beyond mother tongue. The plays of Shakespeare have been translated into the heterogeneous languages in the world. Shakespeare translation seemed to start with the establishment of Hindu College and it was expected to continue in the Bengali language. Influence of Shakespeare was supposed to grow out a source of inspiration among the distinguished playwrights of Bengali literature since the middle of the 19th century.

Rendition of Shakespearean plays into Bengali was a matter of hard task but it developed with different trends of dimension in course of time. As per the historical evidence efforts of a student named Monkton of Hindu College came to be recognized as the first attempt of his partial translation of the play the *Tempest* in the year 1809 but no trace of that translation was found available. However, Bengali translation of *Romeo and Juliet* in 1848 by Gurudas Hazra could be defined as the first effort of translation in the Bengali language. It was written in the light of *The Tales from Shakespeare* whose Bengali title was “*Rumeo Abong Julieter Monohor Upakhyan*.¹”

I have endeavoured to uphold the utility and impact of the translations of Shakespearean plays on the common readers and audiences of Bengali literature with reference to the translated Shakespeare. I have also shown how Shakespeare had the easy access to the Bengali audience by exploring the nature of Bengali translations of Shakespearean dramas made by the Bengali playwrights. This study also projects the limitations of Shakespeare translators. details are discussed by the study of different translators of the same play of Shakespeare, a comparative study of the original Shakespeare and the translated Shakespeare or by finding out the problems of Bengali translations of Shakespearean plays I have examined about the Bengali translations of Shakespearean plays published by the Bengali playwrights on the basis of adhering to the originality or textual Shakespeare with a comparative study of the works of Shakespeare

¹ Shafi Ahmed, *Bangadeshe Shakespeare*, pp. 124-125.

translators of Bengali literature along with a list of the plays of Shakespeare translations into the Bengali language in this chapter.

Translation or rendition from one language into another connects the bridge of mutual understanding as an intellectual communion between the recipients of the original and the readers or audiences of the translated Shakespeare. The plays of Shakespeare appear to be mirroring reflections of life and society with exactness of reality that can be felt through the means of translations for the speakers beyond their mother tongues and the Shakespeare pursuits in the trend of modern dramatic literature and in theatrical presentation for the development of modern Bengali drama, literal, thematic and cultural translation became the source of immense inspiration for the Bengali playwrights.² Beyond the theatrical perspectives, translation is guided by an objective to bringing two different tongued peoples to an axle of comprehending the sameness of the text related to their life and society, whatever mechanism of language, tone, structural pattern or limitations of the translated pieces undergo. The present study highlights the nature of the translated plays of Shakespeare into Bengali. It also shows the limitations of Shakespeare translations as well as the possibilities of the translators. The study concentrates its focus on the differences lying in different translations of the same play of Shakespeare. It also upholds the modification of different sources of Shakespeare plays; modification of Shakespeare's characters, change of the titles of the original plays made by different translators. Besides, this study also aims at showing change of the themes or the gleaning of various elements of the translators from different plays of Shakespeare in one translation of a popular play. This chapter also highlights the growth of the cultural translations of Shakespeare plays into Bengali.

Translation is said to be the transformative absorption and incorporation of people or ideas into a wider society or culture as interpreted by *Sukanta Chaudhuri* that the basic process all through is the transformative assimilation of culture. Translation is one crucial expression of it. In fact, the entire assimilative process is a species of translation or more truly, an expansion or magnification of translation.³ Influence of Shakespeare is said to have penetrated into the playwrights of Bengali literature through reading of the texts as

² Nazmul Ahsan, *Shakespeare Translations in Nineteenth-Century Bengal Theatre* (Dhaka: Bangla Academy, 1995), p.vii.

³ Sukanta Chaudhuri, *Translation and Understanding* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 9.

well as translations of his plays from English to Bengali. The translation of his plays has made him attached to most of the nations having varieties of cultural, religious, social, traditional differences of the styles of life and nature of the world. In reading, watching, or acting Shakespeare for pure enjoyment and thus acceptance of Shakespeare through translation was welcome by the readers.⁴

It is viewed since the middle of the nineteenth century onwards there developed a standard form of linguistic skills of the Bengali translation and dexterity was attained by the Bengali translators who exerted their genius in their translations from Sanskrit and English, transactions of Shakespearean plays, imitated Shakespearean plays and the original Bengali plays.⁵

Translated plays of Shakespeare are of two types;- (1) Changed or modified translation (2) True rendition. Cultural translation of Shakespeare's plays before the year 1899 was the practice of the playwrights. But Shakespeare neared the commoners of Bengali community through cultural translations. Girish Chandra Ghosh did the first literal translation of Shakespeare in Bengali and he adhered to the originality of the text but Hara Chandra Ghosh with a view to reaching Shakespeare to his community became interested in the editions and alterations based on Indian cultures, cultural and social norms of the time, characters of different parts of India. It may be stated as a wise approach of the Bengali playwrights to translating Shakespearean plays blended with the taste of the Bengali readers and audiences by which the theatrical Shakespeare gradually became a well known phenomenon.⁶

Vanumati-cittobilash (1853) of Hara Chandra Gosh, *Sarumuckh-Cittoharea* (1863) of the Bengali translations of *The Merchant of Venice* and *Romio and Juliet* respectably significantly drew the notice of all concerned. Sattyndranath Tagore translated *Cymbeline* of Shakespeare, Hemochandra Bandopaddhya translated *The Tempest* of Shakespeare and Haralal Roy translated *Macbeth*, afterwards Jotindranath Tagore translated *Julius Caesar*, Girish Chandra also translated *Macbeth*, Debendranath Basu translated *Othello* of Shakespeare. These translations contributed a lot to add brilliance to the maturity of Bengali drama.

⁴ Wilson Knight, *The Wheel of Fire*, p. 3.

⁵ Nazmul Ahsan, *op.cit.*, p. 80.

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 30-32.

The staging of the translated dramas of Shakespeare won the people. Besides, in the translated dramas, influence of Shakespeare was found even in the shape and presentation of original Bengali dramas. It was found from 1852 to 1920 Shakespearean influence acted in the field of Bengali drama. Dijendralal and Khirud Prosad were thought to be influenced by the versatile genius Shakespeare and even the modern playwrights of Bengal emerged they were found to have followed Shakespeare.⁷

Reading the translation of the drama *Malini* composed by Rabindranath Tagore one of the English intellectuals said that in the said drama he found the elements of Greek drama reflected therein after Rabindranath got informed he made such comments as he viewed that he was unable to understand the meaning of that remark although he went through the translation. But Greek drama is beyond his experience as Shakespeare remained away from the Greek influence. The plays of Shakespeare were the model to the Bengali playwrights who had won the hearts of the Bengali people with the varieties and had filled their mind with joy. *Malini's* dramatic formation is constrained and does not differ from the sequence of time and region. But it has to be acknowledged that Shakespeare translations are renowned but insufficient and criticism also in meagre.⁸ But Babu Girish Chandra Ghose has been performed that difficult task of translation creditably on the whole and his translation was worthy of the original in many places. There were three kinds of translations of Shakespeare during the period from 1850 to 1872. These were as follows:

1. *Literal translation: word for word.*
2. *Adaptation: Idea for idea.*
3. *Cultural Translation: Mixture of literal translation and adaptation in terms of contemporary social, economic and political circumstances.*⁹

Thus the classic masters of ancient Greek and Rome have been known to the people of the world through translation. Shakespeare, Rabindranath, Goethe and many such literary figures have reached the audiences or readers of different languages through the network of translation. It is marked that many great poets, playwrights, dramatists, essayists, novelists have tried to translate the literary products of other languages into their own native tongues.

⁷ Azit Kumar Gosh, *Bangla Natoker Itihash*, p. 30.

⁸ *Rabindra Rachanaboli*, Vol. 4, p. 136.

⁹ Nazmul Ahsan, *op.cit.*, p. 29.

The necessity of translation is also felt on the ground of the impossibility of a person learning many languages in one short time span.”¹⁰

Since rendition of Haran Chandra was mostly based on the originality and dramatic features of the plays of Shakespeare but his translation of *Romeo and Juliet* was highly praised and became popular. One of the cardinal characteristics of Haran Chandra was that in the context of Bengali translation of Shakespeare’s plays he, like Girish Chandra, avoided Bengali nomenclature of the characters. Shakespeare’s dramatic appeal was thwarted and at the cost of his rigorous efforts he was able to present Shakespeare before the Bengali readers and audiences which rather inspired the translators of the next generations.¹¹ Lack of synonyms or similar phrases or words also appeared to be a bar to the smooth progress of translation of Shakespeare as of *Julius Caesar*. At last half a dozen of translations of *Julius Caesar* have been made by different Bengali translators and by the playwrights in particular, as there were no original or good plays and the Bengali dramatic stage had been suffering the absence of good plays upholding the choice and demand of Bengali audiences which rather expedited the inescapability of the new arrival and consequently the promising Bengali playwrights came forward to presenting or translating Shakespeare since the original Shakespeare on the stage was beyond the reach of the common audiences of Bengali soil at that time. The renowned translators of the play *Julius Caesar* are Jotindranath Tagore, Sudanshu Ranjan Ghosh, Mofiz Chaudhury, Haran Chandra Rakshit and Syed Shamshul Haque who endeavoured to translate *Julius Caesar* in their own style in which, their individuality in the mask of personalization and materialization of freedom of choice was also exhausted in translating the play as they liked. Bengali readers were interested to get the original of Shakespeare but the same appeared difficult to them although the English educated Bengali audiences and readers were prone to read the texts of the plays of Shakespeare in their original texts as the plot of this play *Julius Caesar* is from the arena of history. The emperor of Rome *Julius Caesar* was killed by the conspirers atrociously.

¹⁰ Kabir Chowdhury, *Probanda Sangraha* [Collection of Essays] (Dhaka: Shilpataru Prakashani, 1988), p. 3.

¹¹ Shafi Ahmed, *Shakespearer Nari*, pp. 175-176.

Although Shakespeare has presented his *Julius Caesar*, with a bit difference from the historical reference and shaped the same in his own approach. History, with all its exactness, remains mingled with the essence of dramatic technique and art of presentation, as directed by the playwrights where dramatic appeal stands superior to historical aspects in the play, does not weigh upon the playwright rather Shakespeare constructed *Julius Caesar* with his artistic presentation full of literary tone. The story is pathetic, no doubt, when 'Caesar' evades his wife's appeal not to go outside and Caesar becomes the tragic victim of betrayal as designed by his fellow partners.

The number of total translated works of Jotindranath Tagore is twenty two. The full translation of *Julius Caesar* was made by Jotindranath Tagore. It was published in the year 1907. His efforts to bring the original structural frame work of the play are praiseworthy. He has translated the blank verse of the play of Shakespeare with the same sort of flavour and exactness of the rhythmic and poetical presentation in his translation and the prose of Shakespeare as stated in the original play is translated into Bengali with the exactness of the same. He has applied 'Translation of poetry to be poetical or translation of prose to be prosaic' [*'Kobitar anubad kobita, gaidder anubad gaidhya hobe'*] approach to his works of translation of Shakespeare's plays into Bengali. The name 'Bengal' does not exist politically for more than half a century. But the areas of West Bengal of India and Bangladesh, which together are known to have formed (mainly) the province of Bengal in British India are linguistically and culturally much connected with each other for centuries and from an age much earlier than the inception of the British rule that upholds the study of the history of the South Asian subcontinent. Hence academically "Bengal" is a living concept of tradition, region and history for the *Bangalees* of both Bangladesh and West Bengal of India. Cultural translations of Shakespeare do not appear to be many but the impact of the acted plays of Shakespeare on their original Bengali versions but that trend created a tremendous effect on the minds of the literary and theatrical activists. Despite the differences regarding the customs, manners of Shakespeare's characters from those of the Bengali characters and manners, cultural adaptations, translations and transformations based on the literary and traditional taste & sentiment, introspection of philosophy and socio-economic aspects resulted in the creation of the Bengali dramatic trend of their originality.

Consequently the translations of those playwrights helped promote Bengali drama by making suitable adaptations in the presentation of their original characters.¹²

Translators were aware of the tastes of Bengali readers and audiences. *Bangalees* are fond of music and the early dramatic elements were also in song form. When indigenous song elements began to be transformed into modern dramatic trend, playwrights as well as translators unswervingly tried to use this idea in their works. These translations have very little literary value but they show how strongly Shakespeare influenced our playwrights and translators.¹³

In this sub-continent, there remains the fertile environment of the study of Shakespeare, a wide variety of texts constituting the *Bangalees* a rich heritage for them to read the plays and poems of Shakespeare. They are provided with an easy access to the world of Shakespeare to his kings and children-reflecting a mirror of life and manners. The words of Shakespeare are inundated with splendid poetry and superb music. From the mid 19th to the mid 20th century, the British Empire in this subcontinent opened up the doorways of the world of Shakespeare to the college and University students with the syllabus prescribed for classroom teaching. At the Honours and Post-graduate level Shakespeare received and still holds the pride of place. Shakespeare has almost become a part of the academic life and culture Bengali dramatic literature. Shakespeare's vision of life keeps unfading itself in comedy and tragedy, history and chronicle, through rhyme and blank verse, witty dialogues, passionate or psychological outburst making his readers and audiences spell bound.

As the contributors in the field of Shakespeare translations the following translators are of special dexterity: Michael Madhusdan Dutt, Dinabhandhu Mitra, Ramnarayan Tarakaratno, Jyotindranath Tagore and other playwrights of their times.¹⁴

An emotional and highly sensitive people of Bengal and it are no wonder that Shakespeare should cast his magic spell on them. Right from the time when the study of Shakespeare was introduced in Calcutta, Shakespeare became a favourite subject of study

¹² Nazmul Ahsan, *op.cit.*, p. 92.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 30.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 81.

among Bengali students. The drama of Kalidas and the knowledge of Sanskrit literature had been an excellent source for the understanding of Shakespeare's plays. Both were recognized as the supreme masters of language and poetic study and both Kalidas and Shakespeare dealt alike with kings and clowns, men and women in their dramatic creations. But while Kalidas's Classical Sanskrit appeared to be veritable hurdle to those who did not know Sanskrit, Shakespeare's dramas continued to be fervently studied by all students and some of his plays were successfully staged.

The influence of Shakespeare on Bengali literature is a very interesting subject. Perhaps when a translator attempts to simplify the original he exercises the same to reach the translation in the easier way to the readers. Some of the best translations came from Vidyasagar the Sanskrit scholar who was not a dramatist but translated *The Comedy of Errors* into *Bharantibilas* in the hope that it would give his audience a taste of Shakespeare's plays. Shakespeare's characters are frequently alluded to and compared with their counterparts in *Sanskrit* poetry by Bankim Chandra and Rabindranath Tagore. Tagore's own poem to celebrate on the anniversary of Shakespeare is evaluated to be a fine treatment paid by one great poet to another as John Dryden says that Shakespeare had an universal mind, which comprehended all characters and passions.¹⁵

Standard of Shakespeare translation and its varieties have been remarkably developed in the context of the translators of the past. The trend of Shakespeare translation has also enhanced the quality standard of Shakespeare studies. Meanwhile, European critics and those of England have reached the critics of Bengali literature. As a result attitudinal changes and acceptance of the Bengali readers and audiences contributed to the evaluation of Shakespeare studies and has promoted the growth and spread of Shakespeare as a new dimension to the dramatic and theatrical presentation. Twentieth century Bengali mind and Bengali literature had the opportunity to widen their scopes of studying Shakespeare and there have been added newer strategies to the staging of the theatrical Shakespeare with full dramatic excellence. In spite of Anti-British sentiment grown during the first quarter of twentieth century Bengali community never raised any slogan against Shakespeare. There was said to have a vast practice of Shakespeare

¹⁵ Clifford Leech, *Shakespeare: The Tragedies: A Collection of Critical Essays* (Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press, 1965), p. 8.

translation but the twentieth century translation of Shakespeare developed the translators to be particular and careful about adhering to the original Shakespeare even the acting personalities became also aware of their stage performance sincerely. Shakespeare's popularity became also stronger and in the middle of the nineteenth century in 1853 Vernacular Literature Society took the initiative to get thematic translation of Shakespeare published from the *Tales from Shakespeare*. This initiative appeared as the brief and handy literary piece that served the interest of the common readers of the time.¹⁶ It is important to note that none of the Bengali poetry attempted a literal translation of Shakespeare's plays into Bengali for that was said to be an impossible task. In the field of criticism and appreciation of Shakespeare, Bengali writers have focussed the same example shown by Bankim and for, Rabindranath, they have not written anything non-serious about Shakespeare. Although Shakespeare was read with great enthusiasm, the dramatist could not be properly introduced, as the knowledge of the readers of the Elizabethan stage was very limited. Since the readers did not have sufficient knowledge of the theatre, dramatic interpretation of his work was not always possible as he was writing in a language completely unknown to the common audience. Hence knowledge of Shakespeare came through translations. Harancharn Ghosh has been highly praised for his translations of Shakespearean plays as he was one of the very early translators Harancharan Ghosh who was also educated at Hoogly College. His version of *The Merchant of Venice* was called *Bhanumati Chittobilas* published in 1854. Unlike the original version, the Bengali production gives much stress on the element of romantic love rather than the character of the melancholy Antonio or the cunning Shylock. In translating *Romeo and Juliet*, Hemchandra, a later poet, made an important observation. This "*Romeo Juliet*" is only an imitation, and not a translation of the original. He found it necessary to launch certain changes because the Bengali language is so very unlike English that a faithful copy of the English play would, owing to differences in cultural, social and religious values, lose much of its appeal. *Bhanuniati Chittabilash* came to be recognised as the first translation of a Shakespearean play in Bengali and that was not an instance of verbal translation only, but there reflected the creation in terms of prevailing theatre practices and social, economic and political circumstances in the said translation. *Bhanuniati Chittabilash* appears to be a cultural translation having partially adapted and

¹⁶ Shafi Ahmed, *Shakespearer Nari*, pp. 182-183.

recreated in terms of the cultural and social norms of the time and in keeping with economic and political circumstances.

He followed Indian culture and characters drawn from different parts of India. The author Hara Chandra Ghose wrote in his preface as cited by Ahsan in his *Shakespeare Translation in Shakespeare in Nineteenth Century Bengali Theatre*:

I took their advice and undertook to write in the shape of Bengali Natok or Drama, taking only the plot and underplot of *The Merchant of Venice*, with considerable additions and alterations to suit the native taste, but at the same time, losing no opportunity to convey to my countrymen, who have no means of getting themselves acquainted with Shakespeare save through the medium of their own language, the beauty of the original author's sentiments as expressed in the best passages of the play in question.¹⁷

Hara Chandra Ghosh had limitations and he had acknowledged the fact in his preface. He had no desire to translate the play word for word. He tried to suit the Bengali taste and tried to *indianise* the characters and places. He realised the wide cultural gap between the Venice of the sixteenth century and Bengal of the nineteenth century and for that reason, chose the path of cultural translation. He felt that the taste of the society could not be overlooked. He was influenced by the contemporary social, economic and political circumstances. References to Indian culture, myth and classical allusions have made the Shakespearean play come close to the Bengali readers. It was a kind of assimilation in which Shakespeare's characters could be made to suit the Indian social atmosphere. Alterations and additions were made in many places, but they did not change the original story of the *Merchant of Venice*. Hara Chandra Ghosh was the first translator of a western play into Bengali after Herasim Labedev and credit also goes to him for translating the first Shakespearean play into Bengali.¹⁸

Another play written by Hara Chandra Ghosh was also a piece of translation which was rendered into Bengali from *Romeo and Juliet* and was published in the year 1864 as *Charumukha-Chittahara*. This translation was said to observe the same traits as

¹⁷ Hara Chandra Ghosh, *Bhanuniati Chittabilash* (Calcutta: Purnochandroday Mudran Jantro, 1853), A cultural translation of *The Merchant of Venice* cited Nazmul Ahsan, *Shakespeare in Nineteenth Century Bengali Theatre* (Dhaka: Bangla Academy, 1995), pp. 34-35.

¹⁸ Nazmul Ahsan, *op.cit.*, pp. 33-35.

maintained by the previous drama and 'anka' or 'anga' referred to *act* and *scene* respectively.¹⁹

In 1877 Kaliprasanna Ghosh pointed out some of the difficulties in translating Shakespeare as he thought that in Bengali poetry he could not see the signs of a capacity for sorrow or anger, hatred or courage. Kaliprasanna, however, recommended the use of blank verse unknown in Bengali literature as such until Madhusudhan tried to introduce it in his *Padmavati* in 1860.

The most widely known among the dramatists in Bangladesh is Girish Chandra Ghose. He started his career as an actor and later devoted himself to the writing of plays. His experience of an actor greatly contributed to his plays. His translation of *Macbeth* is a remarkable achievement in which it is seen that the influence of 'yatra' is viewed widely. His choice of *Macbeth* was, perhaps guided by the presence of the witches and the supernatural, murderers and the warriors who are close to 'yatra' tradition. In *Macbeth*, Girish Ghosh took full advantage of the witches, the porters and the murderers to display his dramatic talent. The merits of Girish Ghosh's translation of *Macbeth* can be best appreciated by comparing his works with other versions like the one written by Munindranath Ghosh followed the original faithfully and his translation of *Macbeth's* soliloquy after the death of Lady *Macbeth* seems to be almost mechanically contributed. Another translation of *Macbeth* was published in 1952 by Nirendranath Roy who tried to imitate Shakespeare's style in his versification. Jotindranath Tagore wrote twenty-three plays of which as many as twenty-two were translations.

With the touch of English poetry and literature English educated Bengali became enlightened with the fascinating aspects of human psychology as projected in the plays of Shakespeare. At the same time the adventures of the Elizabethan age made them acquainted with the norms and practices prevailing during the time of Shakespeare as if they had been the inhabitants of the Elizabethan England. Emotionally Bengali people started wearing English dress and following their etiquette and their culture. Shakespeare, Marlowe, Bacon seemed to be their common companions in their every life. In their manner and attitude, their life appeared to be affected by the acting of Shakespearean

¹⁹ Priyaranjan Sen, *Western Influence in Bengali Literature* (Kolkata: Academic Publishers, 1966), p. 166.

dramas like *Othello*, *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, *King Lear* and the dominating characters like Hamlet, Lear, Shylock created permanent image in their hearts. Shakespearean characters and plays were supposed to be engraved in them with the vernacular appearances having Bengali soul in the English body. But the practice of Shakespearean dramas and the study of the same initiated the Bengali intellectuals to translate his plays and indirectly contributed much to the promoting ways of Bengali literature. Perhaps there was a trend of authentic tune in the scenario of values of Bengali life and in the Bengali Language.

Despite the close touch of the Bengali intellectuals with Shakespeare, no way was found to help Bengal to produce successful translation of Shakespeare into Bengali language because of the impediments and limitations of using Bangla in their everyday life. As a result the protagonists of those translated plays of Shakespeare during that period did not find a lively translation of Shakespeare into Bengali language specially among the characters having no conflicts in the cycle of lives like the witches of *Macbeth* (Dharpal), the servants or maidservants of *Romeo and Juliet*, the city dwellers of *Julius Caesar*, Iago of *Othello*, Rodarigo, Amelia of the same play. These characters found easy out let on the soil and with the sowings. There was no touch of maintaining unity between prose and poetry. In their dialogues Bengali translation also did not maintain any particular trend of prose or verse.

Shakespeare's translation and his Bengali translators

Efforts of the Bengali translators made to translate Shakespeare into Bengali happened to be a great impediment to the using and writing in blank verse meaning his poetical expression used to be a hindrance to the translators as the translators are to maintain two vital factors simultaneously in translating the plays of Shakespeare;

- i) *Skills of translation and command of the language,*
- ii) *Extra-ordinary efforts of creative faculties are to be exerted to frame the translation in the poetical presentation.*

But in many countries of the world Shakespeare translation has been successful. Shakespeare language is very complex, for which translation of the same appears difficult. There is density in Shakespeare's language and his interest lies in telling details and at the same time, Shakespeare plays convey high philosophical thoughts and complex

psychological aspects of life along with Shakespeare's keen observation of the total success of his plays having had the appeal of lasting effect.²⁰

If may be interpreted that perhaps the educated Bengali in the past had the lack of perception and intuition to realize the depth of the conflicts of life and the inner battle of human psychology as projected by the magic characters of Shakespeare which resulted in their failure to have developed the attitude or aptitude of comprehending of those sentiments as uttered through the lips of Shakespearean characters. With the lively language of the dialogues of the characters of Shakespeare the translators could not make efforts in imbibing the inner sentiments of Shakespearean character and the dialogues and language used by the characters might have been beyond any relevant aspects as sought by the translators of the then time. Lack of affinity to realize the sentiments of Shakespeare was the obstacle on way of the Bengali Translators.

The translators came to follow the sophisticated and artificial language introduced by Madhusudan which had the dominance of Sanskrit in realizing the sentiments of Shakespeare which apparently deviated them from the inner expression to the objective poetry and philosophical aspects of Shakespeare as the translating measures were not perfect enough to engross the far-reaching depth of Shakespeare. The Madhusudian trend was influenced by the Miltonic verse having grave poetical expression consequently the language technique used by Shakespeare and tone did not favour the translators to have perfect translation of Shakespeare as their originality was based on the trend of Milton to influence Madhusudan.

It is also anticipated by Sunnil Kumar Chattapadhyay about the methodologies of Shakespeare's translations from English into Bengali language of the translators that the daily use of the living language was measured to be inferior to the poetic verse and the ups and downs of the simple, complex, poetical and practical stages of drama of Bengali life required and easy outlet to have the practice of Shakespeare's translation which might have been the easy way to get Shakespeare. Madhusudan had exercised the spoken Bengali apart from using his grave and complex verses in the trend of his literary culture and writing. The translators of the later age of his followers would have established not

²⁰ Serajul Islam Chowdhory *Sreni, Samay O Shahitya* [The Class, Period and Literature] (Dhaka: Muktaadhara, 1986), pp. 66-77.

only the easy translation of Shakespeare but also could have contributed to the composition of the creative and original dramas in the days to come.

Shakespeare's characters appear to be lively and contain mirthfulness in presenting themselves as if they were the real projections happening before the audience as Mark Van Doren says that Shakespeare loved the world as it is. That is why he understood it so well; and that in turn is why, being the artist he was, he could make it over again into something so rich and clear.²¹

It is to be mentioned with special significance that whatever might be the sources of the characters of Shakespeare emerging from history, mythology or myth. Shakespearean characters have been lively because of the magic spell of the extraordinary dialogues and the same dialogues lipped by the characters of Shakespeare were supposed to have originated from the Anglo section vocabulary of English, in particular. Shakespeare chose the then language of the English language and also from all the sectors of life easily. An author of artistic presentation is expected to depict his art with the varieties of colour of language. Accordingly, it is to be cited that there was the source or practice of translating Shakespeare into the easy spoken Bengali, the dramatists or the playwrights of Bengal might be more cordial to spread Shakespeare among the educated Bengali society.

There may be more reasons or impediments behind the lack of proper opportunity to make translation of Shakespeare as the playwright Shakespeare and the culture and his time sustaining him into an age do not find any similarity or relationship with those of the region or native land of the most countries other than the western world. So to find certain affinity and association with the touch of culture and trend of life of England as they are the products of the same regional and climatic flavour help them to provide with the best of translation of their own. Historical reference displays that only two culturally translated and adopted Bengali versions of Shakespeare's plays were done from 1852 to 1899 in the published form. But the same were said to be imitations and adaptations of the original texts of Shakespeare's plays except '*Macbeth* of Shakespeare by Girish Chandra (1899. Since the time of Girish Chanddra there introduced an era of Bengali literal translation.

²¹ Mark Van Doren, *Shakespeare* (New York: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1953), p. xv.

Previous translations were based on their following or imitations of the idea, theme and tone of a particular play of Shakespeare. Some times Bengali translators were particular about their versions of both the original and adapted plays of that time but those works were not successful on the stage or in the field of literature.²²

So any European country may easily be mingled with the ornaments of Shakespeare languages and character and his personalities of drama do not suffer the European translators of other languages from any lack of relevance or affinity with them in translating Shakespeare.

The Eastern world has been confined to the walls of engraved traditional values and cultures which appear to be showing a certain communication gap and unfriendly attitude towards the arrival of the Shakespearean characters projecting human life and society. But it has to be remembered with a mark of mention that most of the characters of Shakespeare do not come from the Elizabethan England. Shakespeare seems to have imported characters and sources of most of his plays from Rome, Greece, Italy, France, Egypt, Arab, Sicily, Denmark, Norway and also the materials of his literary products emerging from various cultural trends or races or regions or nations of the world and there is no way to be prejudiced as they do not claim to have the anthropological bases to be the Elizabethans rather they have become the dwellers or inhabitants of all the time and culture, all nations or races for exchanging the views and projections of the realities of life and inner psychological tempest of human binges and human life.

Hamlet, Othello, Cleopatra, Shylock Coriolanus, Caesar, Timon, Troilus Iago, King Lear etc. if England can claim them to be their own, at the same time Bangladesh or Bengali or the greater Bengal may also be entitled to claim them as their own and possess the command to get them as their near and dear ones as the European do.

It is conjectured that Shakespeare had the opportunity of gleaning the sub continental sources from the then Indian mythological or Bengali mythological characters of the ancient Bengal as they might have been the inhabitants of England. In the context of acting there may be an inhabitable or formal division or change in dresses of the plays but the human trend and communion never appear to be invisible. In the context of the

²² Nazmul Ahsan, *op.cit.*, p. 90.

above logical interpretations it is said that the criticism of the Bengali dramas indicate to suggest that all the characters of Bengali play do not appear to be Bengali in the context of time or period analysis. Many non-Bengali characters are thought to be *Bengalized* in the tradition of Bengali drama which undoubtedly advocates in favour of the stabilisation and establishment of Shakespeare characters in the field of Bengali drama even in view of the farsightedness of its artistic appeal and the way of the *univesalization* of art. As M.C. Bradbrook in his book *Shakespeare and Elizabethan Poetry* says, 'Shakespeare's English was not ours: almost every world has suffered some change of meaning', and as Professor F.P. Wilson points out the limitations of Shakespeare understanding are as follows:

The danger does not lie in those words which are clearly obsolete, but those where their elusive flavouring has transformed and the reader is not put on his guard. The language was in general rougher, more troubled, with more body and more live metaphors. Dialects were stronger and richer than they are now. Travellers brought back overseas words as eagerly as new fashions and theatre-goers loved to hear scraps of outlandish speech. Shakespeare uses French and Welsh at some length in his English histories.²³

It is to be noted that translation is one kind of art which can not be rated at any cost and it also mirrors the real reflection and identity of the original text to be translated. Shakespeare translation is not to be turned as a difficult corridor to enter the drama of his world if due efforts are exerted properly. Shadhindra Nath, Bishnu Deb and a lot of modern poets have shown dexterity in translating the sonnets of Shakespeare. They may be cited as the successful translators of Shakespeare's sonnets in *Bangla*. When poetry or poetic exercise remains far from the touch of any coarse material, loss and gain or when poetry is away from the conflicts caused by any greed or grievance or jealousy in that meditative world of poetry a modern Bengali poet easily might overcome the barriers of translation stage. His penetration into Shakespearean plays in which poetry sustains in the world of material conflicts and chaos, accordingly there raises the easy rendition for a Bengali translator.

Appeal of Shakespeare's plays is perennial though his people live forever; or of plot, though he is inimitable as story telling. Beyond all these, worthy of study and praise

²³ M.C. Bradbrook, *Shakespeare and Elizabethan Poetry*, pp. 74-75.

as of course they are, there is, in any of the successful plays, a created or creature like a unity of being which reveals with every step of our progress into its interior.

Modern Bengali poets have not advanced in the translating of Shakespearean plays but it never suggests their command of translation lying beyond the success for them. It is guessed that they are thought to have been reluctant in doing the same as to realize the lack of interest among the readers or their investment might be linked with certain loss causing the improper remuneration for them. Bengali plays, translations of Bengali versions of Shakespeare continued for a long time and the trend still exists although not so noticeable. Bengali translators were interested in gorgeous historical, legendary, romantic plots or tragic-comic episodes as in *Cymbeline*, *A winter's Tale* and *Measure for Measure* and the said translated plays were attended by both the readers of the plays and theatre goers.²⁴

It is also stated that among the educated class interest for drama is sure to have declined as a result of lack in the efforts for translation although they had interest and zeal for the same in the past specially in the (19th) nineteenth century when the educated Bengali class once entangled with the charms of Shakespeare plays with deep enthusiasm at the time the translators found a hearty and fertile environment to have done the same smoothly. But there was nobody interested to do any translation of Shakespeare's sonnets.

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

²⁴ Nazmul Ahsan, *op.cit.*, p. 82.

languages, the original loses its poetic charm in translation. Secondly, the divergences of local customs and manners, religious ideas etc., make literal translations unpleasant to the ear and hardly please the taste of Bengali readers.²⁵

The problem, hard to avoid, is that the Englished Tagore is not the same as the Bengali Rabindranath. The English *Gitanjali* is not the Bengali book with the same title. Some of the things I have tried to apply perhaps more to his work in translation than in the original.²⁶

The long history of Shakespeare's translations in the Bengali Language indicate that a lot of work was done in this field and the translator Girish Chandra Ghosh, among them, has proved his tremendous skill in this particular area. Shakespeare's translations have served some useful purpose because these translations worked as an effective medium through which the understanding and identity of Shakespeare reached the common Bengali readers. Without the help of these translations Shakespeare would not have been fully absorbed into Bengali literature. Shakespeare's translations played an effective role in the making of the Bard well known in the history of Bengal. These translations in a way, presented a new challenge in Bengali literature and extended its responsibilities of investigation and judgment. Shakespeare appeared to be a new experience for the Bengali translators. Bengali drama is yet to reach the height of its glory but it would never have been possible for it to grow without these translations.

Shafi Ahmed, one of the renowned Shakespeare scholars has edited a lot of limitations in the context failing to produce the exactness of true Shakespeare in the mirror of Bengali literature. Despite profound homage and tribute to the poet and playwright Shakespeare Shafi Ahmed humbly says that he was not able to bring the proper rendition of the blank verse of Shakespeare as presented in the form of the poetical aspects in his book *Shakespeare er Nari* [Women of Shakespeare]. Shafi Ahmed has stated in the preamble of the said book that he has been very much particular in keeping the meaning accurate so that his 'change' or transmission may not touch any sort of distortion or modification of the language of Shakespeare. Shakespeare appears to be a talent to have been the everyday talk of the talents. He has cited the problems of

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 29.

²⁶ Sisirkumar Ghose, *Makers of Indian Literature: Rabindranath Tagore*, p. 6.

translations of Shakespeare in the way of documentary analysis. He also considers the pronunciation of the characters which vary from person to person or country to country. There are numerous Latin or Italian names of his characters which do not find any way of lenient pronunciation in the Anglican tongue. In this context, Shafi Ahmed cites the name of Desdemona and *E* or *I* of the name of the characters like Iago, Emilia suffer the confusion raised by the overseas learners or speakers to have proper pronunciation. He deems the problems as one of the reasons for the lack of interest in delving the depth of Shakespeare studies. Shafi Ahmed earnestly appealed to the scholarly readers that the grammatical meaning and literal meaning are to be given priority in translation. He also states the spelling of the characters especially their names in Bengali writing to be a matter of bar to the smooth presentation as he thinks, arises other problems.²⁷

The quality of the translation in Chowdhury's collection reminds also of Sujit Mukherjee's comments in *Translation as Discovery* that the Major obstacle to the success of Indo-English literature, that is to say, Indian Literature in English translation, is the erratic quality of translation, quite often inferior and not even adequate (Mukherjee 133), resulting from the work of translators who have more enthusiasm than control over the English language.²⁸ A fairly good number of plays of Shakespeare have been translated but the translators have shown the tendency of their limitations of Shakespearean plays in rendering them into the Bengali language. As Professor Fakrul Alam adds his generous attitude which is referred to the proem of his book *Jibananda Das: Selected poems with an Introduction Chronology, and Glossary* about the limitations of translation 'Conscious that literal translation cannot be good translation, I have not always attempted to be exact in my renderings of Das' poems', in fact, translation is a matter of mood. To comprehend it as mode one must go back to the original, for that contains the law governing the translation or its translatability.²⁹

Bengali audience expect Shakespeare within their means and range of understanding which claims easier translations of the plays of Shakespeare, which may be

²⁷ Shafi Ahmed, *Shakespeare Nari*, p. Preamble.

²⁸ Fakrul Alam (tr.), *Jibananda Das: Selected Poems with an Introduction, Chronology and Glossary* (Dhaka: The University Press Ltd., 2003), pp. 16-17.

²⁹ Harry Zohn, *The Task of the Translator* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), p. 72.

defined as the gate way, would pave the common readers to have an easy access to Shakespearean world.

Influence of Shakespeare finds its natural outlet through the translations into other languages. In the context of literal interest and setting a comparative study of the Bengali writers and poets or dramatists to Shakespeare along with the imitating tendency, Bengali translators mostly Bengali dramatists and writers or poets took the responsibility to bring the rendition of Shakespearean plays, to introduce the art of characterization, dialogs of the plays, plot constrictions attracted them to find Shakespeare through the mirror of the easier translations.

Broadly speaking, the view among Renaissance writers, translators and critics alike seems to be that in so far as translation and imitation are considered in conjunction, translation is, at best, a particular and restricted form of imitation- where- by both forms still contrast unfavourably with “ invention’-and, at worst, a mechanical and merely utilitarian exercise of no literary merit whatsoever.

It is to be cited that translation of Shakespeare cannot afford to give proper taste of literary flavour when the original texts ascertain the demand to have the appeal of his plays with profound impact upon the mind of the readers or audiences but if they are English educated people as the intellectuals of the nineteenth century Bengal. They were expected to have been spontaneous as they had the scope to have started gleaning the depth of the Shakespearean products with deeper perusal. The whole nineteenth century was replete with the studies of Shakespeare which rather established Shakespeare permanently. Staging of his plays, translation of his work have paved the way for him to be well groomed.³⁰

Different translators opined different opinions in regard to the structure of translation which has to be coped with the mainstream of the originality of the text. In this context, renowned Russian translator expert Mikhail M. Morosov in his book titled *Shakespeare on The Soviet Stage* (p. 10) has conveyed that if translation exceeds the limit

³⁰ Shafi Ahmed, *op.cit.*, p. 183.

of action that might reflect the slow motion of the action. Translation should be the reflection of the original. Otherwise the structural meaning, literal meaning or thematic meaning may not sustain the appeal of the playwright. In this context, M. M. Morosov cites the example of *Othello* translated into the Russian language by the Russian poet Waibarg in which Morosov finds the slow motion of the mainstream caused by the excess of the limit crossing the range of originality as he says,

The first thing that occurs to you about this translation is that it is much too long, much longer than the original, in fact, by one fifth. This slows down the tempo of action ... This danger was first of all taken into consideration by our translators. Many of our new translations are equilinear.³¹

So the extra freedom or excessive subjectivity may not help a translator to have the appropriate translation of Shakespeare. More freedom than the necessity for a translator may cause the characters to go in their actions beyond the limit resulting in the failure of being extra-vagant in the context of translation of the original texts of Shakespeare. Inconsistency of the language as well as the blank verse used by Shakespeare may seem specially the translators of the original to be different as to the context of the characters.

In brief, there should be measures to be taken and efforts should be made to encourage the translation sectors of the Bengali language and the discussion of Shakespeare or his plays in Bengali can constitute that sort of ground which will extend regular exposition of Shakespeare studies in Bengali and the Bengali audience and readers would be able to enjoy Shakespearean views. It is mentionable that studies on Shakespeare or Shakespeare exposition are confined only to the scholars of English literature which obviously curbs the mind and eyes of the *Bengalis*. As a result, to study true Shakespeare never reaches the commoners.³²

³¹ M.M. Morosov, *Shakespeare on the Soviet Stage*, p. 10. Cited by Sunil Kumar Chattopadhyay, 1967 in the introduction of *Othello*, This translation in Bengali by Sunil Kumar Chattopadhyay of William Shakespeare's *Othello* is published with the assistance of UNESCO as part of its Major Project for furthering mutual appreciation of Eastern and Western Cultural Values.

³² *Ibid.*

The number of people in the Indian subcontinent who can read and understand English is much longer today than it was in the nineteenth century. But the basic pattern of the sub-continent's attitude towards Shakespeare has not significantly changed. There may have a larger body of highly educated people who have a better understanding of Shakespeare's plays. But as far as the majority of the sub-continent's population is concerned Shakespeare remains a comparatively remote figure. Sunil Cattapadhyia translated the play *Othello* on the basis of maintaining the trend of originality of Shakespearean plays. Bishnu Day has cited in the preface of the translation of *Othello* by Sunil Cattapadhyia with the analytical description of the history of Hindu College and its teaching when the pupils of Richardson and Derozio acted as the Shakespearean scholars of the time and consequently developed intellectual horizon of the young generation by introspecting Shakespeare into them.

A profound study of observation of Shakespeare in Bangladesh will become clear if that is connected with the longer tradition of the study of Shakespeare in Bengali. The response of Bengali audience to Shakespeare may be viewed primarily from three perspectives:

- i) *Academic*
- ii) *Institutional*
- iii) *Translations and stage productions.*

The main source of the academic study is a limited sense in the Universities of Bangladesh and every University has an English department which easily attracts students who are getting interested in the studies of English and European literature that are included with the texts of syllabic Shakespeare.

Shakespearean translation is found in almost all the languages of the world, and his dramas have been rendered into hundred of languages of the world, modified and imitated and in some cases his dramas have opened new branches of a lot of creative works for the intellectuals of the world.³³

³³ Rina Ghogh, *Shakespeare Translation and Problems of Translation* (Kolkata: Sanskrit Pustak Vandar, 1382 Bangla 1975), p. 240.

In this genre of translation every literary work is the result of another literary work and literature can become meta-literature or universal literature in which the concept of world literature is unfolded.

Now translation may be of three kinds:

i) *Proper Translation*

ii) *Trans-adherence*

iii) *Trans creation*

Proper translation shows the equivalence of the original in a translated language, while the third becomes original. The former shows the translator's self-effacement; but in the latter the original writer and his writing remain in the latter to be the original and his writing remains in the background and the trans-creator predominates over his writing.³⁴

A good translator, before translating any thing should learn what a translation is and what the qualities of a translator should have or what kind of limitations of Shakespeare translations may affect a translator with a need of a prudent discussion. The beginning of the nineteenth century emerges as the inception of Shakespeare translation into the Bengali language. However, it is the remarkable chapter in the history of Bengali literature manifesting a tremendous success to have the easy access of Shakespeare to Bengali audience which was inaugurated by the emergence of translating his plays and the translation of Shakespeare denotes the rapid growth to the production of the original plays in the field of Bengali literature. Full translation of the plays of Shakespeare was made by Hara Chandra which was published in the year 1853 and before one year of the same translation of Bengali original play named '*Vadrajune*' was published.

There are endless discussions being held at present and were held in the past or would be in the days to come. The significance and utility of translation are of great value now a day for the global net work and technological skills of the present civilization playing fertile environment for the translation scenario as people would like to be understandable to each other. But the nature of literary translation or the work of translation or the methodology

³⁴ Oneil Biswas, *A Book of Bengali Verse* (New York: A Writers Workshop Publication, 1990), p. 53.

applied to the translation of literature differs from the works of translation related to the other fields of science or technology.

So the translation of the literature needs to have the use of freedom in bridging the rendition of the literary products. Most of the translators of the world opine that if there is no scope to add more application of the taste to the aesthetic sense and taste of readability. Translation of any literature into other language from the original doesn't constitute the perfect sequence.³⁵

Shakespeare himself had the mind to change and modify his plays gleaned the aspects of the historical sources and with his own freedom he happened to share his contribution as a mark of his own modification of the stories and characters of his plays in which, he never was concerned with the territorial and ethnic bars of his sources.

In case of Shakespearean plays, a translator is to overcome a lot of barriers and evade the limitations. They are as follows:

- i) Socio-cultural bar
- ii) Lack of proper or appropriate words or synonyms suitable to the phrases, words used by Shakespeare
- iii) Lack of sufficient words of references to the Shakespearean age
- iv) Shakespearean language or presentation is in blank verse and based on the poetic and magic spell of rhythmic art which does not find any natural outlet with the standard, appeal of linguistic tone conveyed by Bengali language.
- v) It is of practical experience that to have the proper translation of Shakespeare, a translator need be a studious reader. The reading of the original texts of Shakespeare and his sixteenth century language can't afford any translator to have the command of the other language to find an easy scope to get him as he is.
- vi) M.C. Bradbrook in his book *Shakespeare and Elizabethan Poetry* highlights that in the context of languages a trend of the past to the present inherently acts as the media of connecting the predecessors of Shakespeare with his immediate predecessors as he says that in the field of language, Shakespeare was as bold an experimenter as Bacon in the field of science. Yet, as has been seen, he built on the work of his predecessors,

³⁵ Kabir Chowdhury, *Prabanda Sanglap*, p. 88.

and especially of his immediate predecessors, the poets of the eighties. He himself in some respects retained more of the medieval tradition, transmitted through the more popular forms of literature, than the courtly poets had done.³⁶

Keeping the limitations of translating Shakespeare in view the translators of Bengal like Girish Chandra (the dramatist), Hara Chandra, Dijendralal Roy, Ishar Chandra Viddya Sagore etc have taken Shakespeare as their own and tried their best to bring the proper rendition of Shakespearean plays.

Dijendralal Roy in his another play *Nurjahan* demonstrates Shakespearean choice. There are psychological torments, mental agonies, ordeals, inner conflicts which are duly depicted by Dijendralal Roy in his productions. Subodh Chandra Sengupta illustrates regarding Shakespearean influence upon the dramas of Dijendralal in the following way that there exists the reflection of Shakespeare in the Dijendralal Roy like other playwrights of Bengali literature. But *Nurjahan* the play composed by him highly exhibits Shakespearean touch and whether that claims success or not appears obviously to be an adventurous task no doubt.³⁷

The Bengali translators have taken that freedom extensively and spontaneously shaped Shakespeare in the image of their own as they have desired which may be categorized as the easier translation methodology applied by the Bengali playwrights to their presentation and the second approach made by some of the translators who have tried to bring the rendition of Shakespeare keeping the exactness of the original text of Shakespeare. They have tried to uphold the originality of the original plays with no change of the names of the characters or the titles of the texts in their translated plays. They have not even changed the names of the plays or plots, construction of the acts, dialogues, and soliloquies. Even they were true to Shakespeare and never betrayed him in any sense. The translators have modified the version of the original plays of Shakespeare. They have shown the art of modification and their modified approach to changing the names of the characters or the titles of the plays as found in several translations.

³⁶ M.C. Bradbrook, *op.cit.*, p. 71.

³⁷ Subodh Sengupta, *Nattokar Oneil Biswas: A Book of Bengali Verse* (New York: A Writers Workshop Publication, 1990), p. 53; Shafi Ahmed, *Bangladeshe Shakespeare*, pp. 75-101; Kabir Chowdhury, *Prabanda Sanglap*, p. 88; Subodh Sengupta, *Nattokar Dijendralal* [Dijendralal the Dramatist] (Kolkata: Bangla Calendar, 1379), p. 118.

Bengalied Shakespeare has been presented but the *English Shakespeare* can not be rendered into the other language as observed in the comments of Sisir Kumar Ghose, which he has referred to the English version of *Gitanjali* in his book *Rabindranath Tagore* that can not afford to give the original taste of text of Tagore that his Bengali *Gitanjali* can give to the Bengali readers.

Through academic syllabus of class room teaching and on the stage as the source of enjoying recreation Shakespeare gradually occupied his position in the libraries and drawing room book cases of the Bengali people.

i) *Girish Chandra Ghosh*

ii) *Madhuhudan*

iii) *Dinobondhu*

iv) *Dijendralal*

Contribution to making Shakespeare homely with the Bengali readers and audiences which was possible only by the Shakespearean scholars. Educated readers of Shakespeare could only find out the sources of his influence when after the legendary arena dominated by Richardson was going to end the arrival of Perceval age seemed arriving, and efforts of making the rendition of Shakespearean work began smoothly or took a new turn with greater prospects. '*But translation of Shakespeare is so much difficult that only the readers of thoughtful searching and of potential faculties can realize*'. Gurudas Hazra was the first to make a Bengali translation of Shakespearean play.³⁸

History shows the evidence that the translation of Shakespearean work appears to be enjoying the duration of more than 150 years from now on. But there can't be the claim that full and perfect translation of Shakespeare has been made yet.

The reason can't be denied that Elizabethan English can't be made possible fully in Bengali Language as language of the then period of the Elizabethan style appeared relevant to the sentiments and choice of the people living then and the same language doesn't appear to be suitable to Bengali language in any way. Any translation finds its outlet subject to the realization of the original text or that may be thematic or the mixture of both the two. Naturally, no translation can be said to be the appropriate mirror to have

³⁸ Shafi Ahmed, *Bangladeshe Shakespeare*, pp. 75-101.

provided the original taste. So to say that Shakespeare, despite his depth and profound literary themes, doesn't appear to be comfortable to overcome the limitations of the time and language barriers although he has crossed the ambit of the centuries. It is said that in the year 1809 a certain part of *The Tempest* of Shakespeare was translated by one 'Monckton' a student of Fort William College but the source of information doesn't establish the efforts made for the same to be related to the trend of translating Shakespeare.

But the first translation of Shakespeare in the year 1848 a book named *Romeo and Juliet er-Monohor Upakkhan* (Romantic episode of *Romeo and Juliet*) which was written and translated by one Gurudas Hazra. He made the translation from the *Tales from Shakespeare* and Shakespeare- Sree Kalinath and Sarbovoum and Shreejuth Gonesh Chandra Biddya Bagish Bhattacharya helped him do the rendition of the same after Gurudash Hazra and another translator named Sreejuth Muktaram Biddya Bagish can also be cited here who has translated following *Tales from Shakespeare* in the year 1852 which was named '*Apurba Akhhan*' which was the gist or summery of the plays of Shakespeare, and later on there raised another name Edward Rowar an Englishman but for his occupation he happened to translate Shakespeare on behalf of Vernacular Literature Society which was named in the following reference:

*Mohakobi Shakespeare Pronito Natoker Marmamnurup:
Kotipoy Akkhayeka'* in the year 1853 which resulted in the
mature stage of translations of Shakespeare.³⁹

In the year 1853 when Harnachandra presented the plays of Shakespeare in Bengali drama and he translated *The Merchant of Venice* and the Bengali name of the rendition was *Vanumoti Chittobilash* and Shafi Ahmed considered that year to be the attainment of the Bengali translation of Shakespeare's play *The Merchant of Venice*. He seemed to adorn the infrastructure of the drama as the means of his flavour of Bengali sentiments or the pulse in the *Bengalized* form. Harachandra managed to design the translated plays with more of his individual potentials. There was the reflection of his individualistic performance that added to the original play.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 125-127.

He also set a new character there at the same time he added more scenes to the translated plays of the original text. He also avoided using the original name like 'Portia' the heroine of *The Merchant of Venice*. 'Shylock', the villainous character, in this way he preferred to choose Bengali or native names helpful for the better understanding of the local audience, in fact, he emphasized the realization and understanding of the plays in his own way remaining a bit away from the original touch of Shakespeare.

So 'Shylock' was named as '*Lakkahpoti*' and 'Portia' was named as '*Vanumoti*' which was said to be the subjective presentation of the translator with a modified version of his own taken from the original play of Shakespeare, in this context, the originality of Shakespeare couldn't be ascertained. Consequently *Vamumoti Chittobilash* didn't appear to be a successful product of Bengali translation of Shakespeare as it was not able to draw the attention of the local readers to the said translated play as the original taste can never be achieved by the artificial form from the original or through modification of the works of the original ones of Shakespeare. In this context, Sukumarsen says with reference to the statement of Harnachandra who has added alterations and modifications to suit the native choice as he quotes cited in the foot note:⁴⁰

Reverend Longan English appreciated the vernacular or Bengali translation of Shakespeare's plays that were adorned with Bengali or native attire which came to be a matter of patronizing Shakespearean translation or rendition of the plays of Shakespeare by the Bengali playwrights as Harnachandra stated with reference to his introduction written both in the English and Bengali languages in which he highlighted his liberty that he exerted in rendering *The Merchant of Venice* into Bengali and he acknowledged and explained the reasons that in order to quench the thirst and desire of the Bengali audience he introduced the Bengali prose form in translating blank verses of the play of Shakespeare as he illustrates in the preface.

⁴⁰ Sukumar Sen, *Bangla Shahittyer Itihash* [History of Bengali Literature], Vol. II (Kolkata: 1962), p. 32; As a drama the book (the translation of the "Merchant of Venice" by Harachandra) definitely a failure or was not successful as a readable one but it can't be denied that Hasachandra didn't write the same as to make book actable nature he (Hasachandra) wanted to make it as an interesting text but his hope was that the essay style and excellent strong have much to be appreciated and accepted by the readers.

I undertook to write in the shape of a 'Bengali Natuck' or drama taking only the plot and under plots of "*The Merchant of Venice*" with considerable addition and alterations to suit the native taste⁴¹

The above remarks made by Harnachandra undoubtedly proclaims his subjective view regarding the use of his own formula to make Shakespeare more interesting and praiseworthy before the native readers following his own style in his translations of Shakespeare plays and he undertook another play *Romeo and Juliet* of Shakespeare which was named *Sarumukh Chitto Hara Natok* he also took the freedom of choice in doing the renditions of the said plays. As he further adds "Some time ago, I was desired by a learned friend of mine ... to show '*Romeo and Juliet*' in an oriental dress, rich not gaudy. It was also suggested that it should be rendered in the simplicity and elegance of colloquial language with a view to adopting the some more to the stage than to the study.

In fact, his statement, cited above, shows the reference to the suggestion made by his English friend in translating the plays of Shakespeare. There are attempts of *Indianization* and *Bengalization* made by Harnachandra which appear to be evident in his translation. He took the Indian names and efforts were made to present the play as a native innovation full of the choice of freedom exerted by the translator Harachandra.

There came another translator named Sattyendranath Tagore who was the elder brother of the poet Rabindrath Tagore. He named the translation of *Julius Caesar* as *Shushila Bir Shingho* which was published in the year 1868 there was also the mention of the native culture and efforts of making *Bengalization* or *Indianization* of the events and plots or characters as attempted to present by Shattyendranath Tagore.

There is another poet named Hemochandra whose contribution to this sector can never be denied. He defined Shakespeare as '*Indian Kalidash*' which highlighted his special fascination for Shakespeare. Hemochandra's devotion to Shakespeare was exhibited in the following way as he says -

'Sweetest Shakespeare, Fancy's child
Warbling his native wood nuts wild'

⁴¹ Shafi Ahmed, *Bangladeshe Shakespeare*, pp. 125-127.

Pandit 'Isharchandra Viddya Sagore' translated *The Comedy of Errors* as '*Vranti Bilash*' in the year 1869. His devotion to Shakespeare was well known as he gifted Chandra Mukhi Basu *The Complete works of Shakespeare* on the occasion of her achieving MA degree. He used Bengali names of the characters of Shakespeare but that didn't affect the beauty and comic elements of the play. His reading of *The Comedy of Errors* made him feel that the translation of the original play might be a source of immense joy for the Bengali readers.⁴²

Translation of Shakespeare is a difficult task as has already been pointed out by Kaliprashanna Ghosh and no one in East Bengal perhaps attempted this kind of hard work before Professor Kabir Chowdhury who was himself a dramatist like Girish Chandra Ghosh. Moreover, he had a sound knowledge of English and Bengali. This enabled him to make a successful translation of *The Taming of the Shrew* and the play which was presented on Dhaka Television in 1969 became very popular. In this translation the characters were made alive with their sense of humour and the natural flow of events could easily sustain the interest of the audience.

This translation was published in a book form in 1970 and professor Munier Chowdhury stated in the introduction of the said book that his Bengali version was not merely an adaptation; he tried to be faithful as far as possible to the original text. Professor Munier Chowdhury could not complete the translation of *Othello*, it was later completed by his elder brother professor Kabir Chowdhury in 1981. In the same year it was staged by the *Dhaka Theatre Group*. The translation of *Othello* was not as close to the original as was *The Taming of The Shrew*. Munier Chowdhury showed special dexterity in translating *The Taming of The Shrew* which earned him immense praise. Munier Chowdhury has translated *The Taming of The Shrew* whose Bengali name is *Mukhra Ramonir Boshikaran*. In the preamble of the said translation, Professor Kabir Chowdhury says that *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *King Lear* and *Macbeth* are said to be the greatest tragedies of Shakespeare. The psycho-analysis of human character, sagacious elements of dialogues, presentation of unique blank verse and profound introspection of human life have heightened the tragedies. The greatness of central character as well as their vulnerable points of their nature has been

⁴² *Ibid.*, pp. 124-140.

presented by the playwright Shakespeare. The role of villains and their conspiracy along with the destined consequences have given the additional mark of distinction to the plays.

As a result the downfall of the great characters has become inevitable. Death, murder and loss of lives or destruction have structurally enhanced the tragic end of the characters which have also projected their greatness in the form of helplessness.⁴³

‘Tragedies display Shakespeare’s dramatic technique at its best’,⁴⁴

Abu Shariar has translated two plays of Shakespeare *Hamlet* and *Antony and Cleopatra*. His translation of *Hamlet* was very popular among the readers. In a fairly long introduction to this translation, with a realistic approach to the qualities as stated in the original texts of Shakespeare, Dr. Serajul Islam Chowdhury remarked that the Bengali language was not very favourable for the translation of Shakespeare. In analysis Bengali language does not appear to be suitable for the translations of Shakespeare. Professor Dr. Serajul Islam Chowdhury says that about the limitation about the used of the Bengali language that it does not possess enough capacity to contain dramatic experience; it is very soft and often leans. It can easily express sentimental feeling that can hardly show any capacity for sorrow or anger and the use of the word *you*; in Bengali term leads to social discrimination as if he has painted the Bengali woman holding her traditional image. Abu Sahariar has translated mostly in purpose as it is very difficult to transmute the poetic beauty of Shakespeare’s style into Bengali language.

Freedom of using free and blank verse may be an encouraging factor suitable to make the translation with the individual taste and design which are found in his translation of Shakespeare. Professor Zillur Rahman Siddiqui has recently published a translation of Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*. He has taken the liberty of using both free verse and blank verse in order to convey the dramatic effect of the sequence. Golam Samdani has translated *Twelfth Night* in prose.

⁴³ Munir Chowdhury & Kabir Chwdhury (trs.), *Othello* (Dhaka: Muktaadhara Swadhin Bangla Sahitya Parishad, 1981), p. 8.

⁴⁴ Clifford Leech (ed.), *op.cit.*, p. 138.

The following example displays the exactness in translation as covered by Jotindranath Tagore;

Original Text (SL)	Bengali Translation (TL)
Antony: O word, thou was the forest to this hart And this, indeed; o world the heart of thee How like a deer strucken by many princes Dost thou here lie! Act iii, Scene i	antony: jagat! tumii cile a heno mriger banabhumī: ār o ridoy cilo somosta jagater ridi hetha tumi mrigo shamo shato nripotir astrāghāte nihoto hoiyā āhā āchho shue oti dino vābe

Shakespeare has projected how a civil war, palace conspiracy, murder destroying peace of human society, how a good natured man becomes agitated by his own instincts and get the victims of his own evils. Shakespeare has demonstrated how an innocent person, a good natured personality gets entangled with the destructive mechanism of life, becomes the victim of jealousy, greed, power, high ambition, selfish ego, pride, misunderstanding, unnecessary doubts and conflicts and they bring their own catastrophe. All the themes of the plays of Shakespeare appear to have been modified in their translations which offer an idea that thematically Shakespeare has been imitated, translated and this indicates the practice of following Shakespeare and consequently to follow Shakespeare is to get influenced directly or indirectly by Shakespeare.

It is also a remarkable feature in the nature of translation of Shakespeare made by Jotindranath that ‘four lines of his original play remain in the four lines of the Bengali translation. The number of four lines, comma, full stop or other grammatical and writing styles have also been maintained only to be exact and true to the plays of Shakespeare despite the limitations of being truly successful in the translation of Shakespeare Jotindranath Tagore has tried utmost to translate Shakespearean plays out and out into Bengali. Another distinct feature of the structure of the translation of Jotindranath Tagore is that he maintained 14/16 lines blank verse style of Shakespeare as manifested through the dialogues of Cassius in the said play.

(SL) Original Text	(TL) Translation of Jotindranath Tagore
Why, man he doth bestride the world like a colossus, and we petty men; Walk under his huge legs and peep about	‘dekhico nā shakha tumi, shankirno e dharā pristhe sāpia boshiā āchhe birāt Caesar? ār morā khudra jib payer talār niche ghuriā berāi hino moran jāniā’

In respect to the subject matter Jotindranath Tagore seems faithful to the original. Examples of the above highlight the evidence of his being true to the subject matter and he has brought the synonyms of Bengali words suitable to bring the proper rendition. There is a mark of poetical translation which does not suit to the conversational talk.

He has had his command of translating almost all the plays of Shakespeare and they are divided into five volumes. The translation of *Julius Caesar* is found in the second volume. He has not brought the poetical verse and structural patterns of the play into consideration. He has rather resorted to the simple rendition of the play. He has applied easy prose translation approach to the work. In most cases he has failed to bring the proper words or synonyms suitable to the words of Shakespeare and added new words applicable to the translation but he has remained true to the subject matter of the play. His addition to new words suitable to the translation has not harmed the original of the text.

Literal translation does not show the appropriateness to the words used by Shakespeare. He has given common and traditional words suitable to convey the status of the ranks used by Shakespeare. Shudhangshu Gosh has used District Commissioner or Administrator of the District as the synonym of the word 'Tribune' and 'capital' for 'capitol' or 'Magistrate' for 'Praetor' which never undermine the appeal and beauty of the original text but for a better understanding of the play he has introduced the words known to the Bengali readers.

Syed Shamsul Haque's translation of *Macbeth* and *The Tempest* were successfully staged by the joint venture of *Theatre* and *Nagaric*. As far as *The Tempest* is concerned, it is somewhat difficult to produce the visual effect of storm; ship wreck and the remote island on the stage with all these limitations facing difficulty, the directors of Shakespeare are prone to grow the effects before the audiences, which make the directors apply more of their efforts effectively. But the dramatic effect was conveyed to the audience by some symbolic mechanism and this kind of technical experiment was appreciated by the audience.

In the introductory note Syed Haque has stated the frank confession that he has not translated *Julius Caesar* of Shakespeare rather he has termed the translation as a modified version of the original text of Shakespeare. He has avoided some of the characters of the original play, some of the dialogues, some of the events that are also not introduced in his *Gananayak* rather he has chosen the theme of Shakespeare and exerted

his freedom to use Shakespearean flavour with his own doctrine. The subjective approach of the playwright, in fact, keeps Shakespeare behind the screen and has used his shadow. He also claims not to have projected any political aspects in his play. However, it is incumbent upon the readers or audience to digest Shakespeare as per their realization of dramatic faculties.

A good number of the researchers terms the plot introduced into *Gananayak* blended with the image, role based on the war of liberation of Bangladesh through the protagonist of the play. Shamsul Haque has taken the dialogues of *Julius Caesar* but not his name in his *Gananayak*. He has taken the story of Bangladesh with the back ground of Rome of the past. He has painted 'Bangabandhu' in place of 'Julius Caesar' with a view to displaying the tragic end of the great leader *Julius Caesar* represented by 'Bangabandhu' in his *Gananayak*. In this way he has presented a modified version of *Julius Caesar* in the plays named *Gananayak*.

The above discussion illustrates that Jotindranath has been true to Shakespeare but the modified version as presented thematically by Shamsul Haque indicates that a playwright as well as a translator holds the right to adopt the historical background as Shakespeare himself had gleaned the source of his play *Julius Caesar* from the page of history in the same way Shamsul Haque has used his freedom as a playwright in serving the purpose to satisfy his audiences with the projection of a great man in the context of the history of Bangladesh. It is also appropriate to place a great personality in place of the other as both of them are the victims of betrayals designed and accomplished by their own people. Jotindranath himself was a dramatist and was aware of the needs a drama. The predecessor of Rabindranath was Jotindranath Tagore himself. He was a popular translator at that time. He translated *Julius Caesar* of Shakespeare and it was published in 1907. He showed uncommon skills and dexterous command of translation in this work. He rather was more appreciated not for his original plays but for the translated plays of Shakespeare in Bengali. He translated Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* on the basis of every dialogue, tone, gradual progress of the acts or events and the characteristics of the play as a whole-as we can see the similarity between the original Shakespearean play and his translation.

Flavius: Hence! Home, you idle creatures, get you home
Is this a holiday? What? Know you not
Being mechanical you ought not walk
Upon a labouring day without the sign
Of your profession, Speak, what trade art thou?⁴⁵

Translation of Jotindranath

So a successful translator is he who can maintain the thematic and literal as well as the art of modification with exactness and can introduce in his translated work the same with no sense of distortion. There is a remarkable observation in the art of translation that the person who translates meaning, the nature and identity of the translator determines the trend of his or her translation. The exactness of the translation depends on the view or purpose of a translator. In fact, a translator, his profession, his objective, his personality, his mood, his socio-economic infrastructure, his background, his education act as the vital factors in the approach exerting his or her faculties to have of his or her translation. Now the playwrights are generally motivated by the demand and interests of the audience accordingly, he is naturally expected to uphold the choice of his audience.

His informative genius and creative genius may also afford him the factors that may affect his translation. As stated earlier that translated Shakespeare does not happen to be gifted with the power of originality as the original Shakespeare shaking the audience or readers directly and the translation of Shakespeare aims at hitting its objects indirectly which are sure to change the motion of the Shakespearean arrow. In this case the translated version of *Gitanjali* may refer to the affinity discussed above in view of the changed impact of the original upon the mind of the readers or audiences as Rathindranath Tagore, son of Rabindranath Tagore says-

The English version of *Gitanjali* is not, as many suppose it is, a poem for poem translation of the original Bengali book of that name. The translation draws upon ten different books although about half the poems are from the Bengali *Gitanjali* itself. It was the utter simplicity of the language in the English translation subtle in its artlessness which, I believe, moved Yeas so strongly. I have a feeling that the English translation reflects in some strange way the spirit of those days that he spent at Shelidah. It is as though the

⁴⁵ Shafi Ahmed, *Bangadeshe Shakespeare*, pp. 179-181.

poems were reborn in another garb; they were not mere translations.⁴⁶

Several dramatists once having achieved distinction and now appear to have merged into oblivion are necessarily omitted. Lakshmi Narayan Chakravartit who belonged to the said group and *Nandavanshochchhed Natok* was acclaimed as the best tragedy in the language in 1875. Bengali translations of various passages from foreign writers containing dramatic interest In the Bharati from 1284 Bengali year began to appear. The famous speeches of Mark Antony in *Julius Caesar*, the first scene in *Macbeth* of the meeting of the witches; scenes from Moliere translated from the original French drew the attention of the people.⁴⁷

Translation of poetry may be apparently an easier task than that of drama. Poetry is meant to be read whereas drama is meant to be staged, and therefore, it has to follow a definite structural pattern. Professor Zillur Rahman Siddique has translated Shakespeare's sonnets and in his preface he has pointed out the difficulty of translating Shakespeare from the linguistic point of view. Professor Zillur Rahman Siddique has mentioned the names of two successful translators of sonnet. Suchin Dutta and Bishnu Dey pointed out the difficulties that these two renowned translators had to face difficulties in translating sonnets of Shakespeare. Professor Zillur Rahman Siddiqui has translated 70 sonnets out of 154. One may not get the full flavour of Shakespeare in this selected translation but never the less it is a significant contribution to the translation of Shakespeare's sonnets in Bengali literature.

Baharul Alam Khelon's translation of *A Midsummer's Night's Dream* was also staged. Although the translation does not sufficiently demonstrate aptness and dramatic skill, the play deserves special maintenance because for the first time a comedy was staged for public entertainment. Mannan Hira's translation of Shakespeare and a less popular play like *Coriolanus* was also staged but it did not appeal to the public sentiment as much as *Hamlet* or *Macbeth* appealed. There might be reasons to believe that Shakespeare tragedies or comedies of Shakespeare are of his individual features and distinct individuality as the statement of CB. Max Deutschbein in his book *Die Kosmischen Mächte bei Shakespeare* (Dortmund 1947) Says 'Almost all the heroes of

⁴⁶ Rathindranath Tagore, *On the Edges of Time* (Kolkata: Visva-Bharati, 1958), p. 99.

⁴⁷ Priyaranjan Sen, *Western Influence in Bengali Literature*, p. 205.

Shakespeare's tragedies stand in close relationship to the cosmos, the celestial bodies and the elements' Cited by Clifford Leech in his book *Shakespeare: The Tragedies* (p. 124) in the essay *The Development of Imagery in Shakespeare's great tragedies* in the chapter xi.

Combination and association of the aspects having affinity with the Eastern values enhance Shakespeare's popularity. Ali Zaker has recently made an adaptation of *Hamlet* with the title *Darpan* set against a rural background with the central focus on the theme of murder and revenge, which quickly appealed to the public sentiment. *Hamlet's* popularity is revealed not only in *Hamlet's* conflict but also in his loyalty to father which is still alive in the Eastern mind.

Loyalty to father is not, of course, unknown in western society however, materialistic but it is more operative in the present day East still in many ways dominated by the father image Bengali families are maintained.

There study of Shakespeare was more enthusiastically studied in the past than at present and it is not possible to probably go back to the same circumstances that existed 25 or 30 years ago. The standard of English has declined and in the context of the present situation first, it is the liability of the small class of people getting specialized in English literature at the universities, to spread their positive reception of Shakespeare to others. Many Shakespeare scholars opine that emphasis on English Literature would open the agreeable atmosphere which may afford them the occasion to have an in-depth study of the poet and playwright Shakespeare.

The other vital factor to note that Shakespeare must be available in good translation to those having no command of English or having inadequate knowledge of the language. It is quite clear that *certain poetry and drama* appear to be a matter of problem for the common readers. It is true that a completely successful translation of Shakespeare presenting the names of the original is almost impossible. But there is no reason why, subject to the limitations of our language, it should not be possible for the competent translators to produce aesthetically satisfying versions of Shakespeare's plays.

Translation, obviously, gives the most excellent result when the translator and the original writer both belong to the same traditions expressing the same ethos and echoes of life and society they belong to. Rendition of a work from English into French or German or Chinese is not the same as translating into non-European languages. With same sort of flavour or sentiment as they share the same basic idea and same classical backdrop here and the people of the Bengali Language are in the midst of an entirely different landscape of ideas, images and basic notions so the translator must be aware of all these and must therefore attempt to render a literary work produced in one central surroundings into another with a different range of ideals. The failure of the perfect translation of Shakespeare was supposed to face certain difficulty understanding Shakespeare as an original playwright. Sanskrit plays were said to be treated to be a departed epoch; the culture and lifestyle reflected in them existed only on the echelon of fiction. On the other hand, Shakespearean and other European plays reflected an alien background and way of life, with norms and standards far unlike from those existing in India. As a result of which translations, whether from Sanskrit or from Shakespeare, did not get any hold or much appeal as they did not portray the existing everyday life of the people. The play performed on the stage but did not leave any long-term impression on the viewers, except perhaps, of novelty. But the translations, whether of Sanskrit or of Shakespeare proved to be positive. The form, style, structure and technique of European dramatic literature, especially Shakespearean, adorned with the Sanskrit dramatic tradition and helped create original plays based on Bengali traditions and custom native culture.⁴⁸

It is very interesting to note that most of the characters of Shakespeare are sought from the outside nations and countries like Greece, France, Italy, Egypt, Arab, Norway, Denmark etc. which help understand that the translators are supposed to have the choice of localising the translation of the original plays of Shakespeare by which the translators are entitled to introduce their local interests and values of the social life and staging presentations. *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *Cleopatra*, *Julius Caesar* do not appear to be not the Englishers only rather they were imported from abroad. In this way the translators of Bengal can shape the events and characters of Shakespeare in their own way without affecting the originality. Bengali is a living language and Shakespeare a playwright belonging to a different zone adorned with western views and ideas cherished by the

⁴⁸ Nazmul Ahsan, *op.cit.*, p. 70.

fifteenth and sixteenth century environment of his time in that case Bengali deserves to have the choice of digesting Shakespeare as she desires.

In Bangladesh the number of readers interested in English for its own sake is declining. Further those who come to the universities they fail to display an effective command of the language. This is due to the fact that English is no longer going to be used as the medium of instruction in schools and colleges and viewed in this perspective; there cannot be expected to have a high standard of English at the higher levels also. The cumulative effect of these changes would be that the next generation shall have the scopes in the universities and would not be able to appreciate the beauty of Shakespeare's verse if English language and literature are not patronised as they deserve.

A large number of people in Bangladesh responsible for policy decisions as they seriously think that English literature need not be studied and what is important at this stage is to use the English language for functional purpose. But what is happening at higher stages of education as a result of the gradual withdrawal of Shakespeare from the syllabus and the increasing emphasis on what is called functional English, is that language teaching is becoming more difficult and uninteresting. The young generations do not feel attracted by the content of the language course which they are required to study. Learning of language becomes effective when some amount of delight is furnished within it. It has already been discussed that foreign literature exerts its influence on national literature basically through translations.⁴⁹

Shakespeare's creativity deserves to have a strong command of English which can widen the intellectual depth of the learners as quoted by Robert Ornstein's comments are referred to the book *Shakespeare's Tragedies* in which he says that it is difficult in fact to imagine what seventeenth-century tragedy would have been like, had not Shakespeare developed the tragic art of Kyd and Marlowe to a miraculous perfection. His poetry, his art characterizations, and his dramatic situations are an integral part of the creative experience of the men that have been studied and are assimilated in their plays.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Kabir Chowdhury, "Foreign Influence on A National Literature", *Dacca University Studies*, Journal of the Faculty of Arts, Dacca, June, 1980, p. 122.

⁵⁰ Clifford Leech (ed.), *op.cit.*, p. 215.

If language is taught with the help of literature, larger vocabulary, better understanding will enable the learners to broaden their mental horizon, bringing within their reach new areas of experience and taste of a new intellectual arena.

Justice Chandra Madhob Ghosh, Sir Gurudas Bandopaddaya, Barrister P.L. and K.G.Gupta were in the opinion that to translate the inimitable language of Shakespeare was a task of no ordinary difficulty.⁵¹

Girish Ghosh showed special attention in portraying the super natural characters and events in his translations as projected by Shakespeare. He presented the witches in his own way with the changes based on his liking and linguistic styles but he was not able to bring the life and characters up to the affinity of Shakespearean genuineness. It appears to be difficult on the part of a translator to diagnose the tragic consequence in the light of the original texts as depicted by Shakespeare.

In *Macbeth* Girish Ghosh took full advantage of the witches, the porter and the murderers to display, once again, his real presentation of the verses of the witches read like original compositions and the speeches of the porter and the murderers have the savour of colloquial language. Girish Ghosh's witches do not miss any chance of breaking into song and in a footnote he pointed out that the songs were his addition to the Shakespearean plays. Although his was the best among the several translations of *Macbeth* attempted in Bengali, Girish Ghosh failed to translate poetic speeches very satisfactorily: time and again he paraphrased the lines. That the dramatist was happy as long as he could work within the tradition of musical and humorous writing and was unsure of himself when handling tragic themes are not difficult to see. In versification he sought to improve upon Madhusudan by using uneven lines in blank verse. This added to the suppleness of his verse.

Girish Ghosh showed the presentation of the supernatural characters adorned with the dialogues skilfully because the witches played vital role in instigating Macbeth to reach the tragic consequence of his life. Girish Chandra has translated *Macbeth* of Shakespeare; his translation is literal and thematic. Girish Chandra started initiating translation of the foreign dramas for the lack of proper Bengali drama suitable for stage performance. His

⁵¹ Shafi Ahmed, *Bangadeshe Shakespeare* [Shakespeare in Bengal] (Dhaka: Bangla Academy, 1988), p. 171.

attempt to translate *Macbeth* is the outcome of his efforts made to serve that purpose. But it is not certain that he has manifested any particular way in translating *Macbeth*.⁵²

Before Girish Chandra and during the prime stage of the Bengali drama (1852-1872) till the establishment National Theatre Bengali drama used to be influenced by the old dance drama, Yatra, but Sanskrit and European dramatic style influenced a lot. In a word Kalidash and Shakespeare highly influenced drama. This sort of influence acted among the Bengali playwrights in the way of blind imitation and weak translations.⁵³

The best way to appreciate the beauties of Girish Ghosh's translation of *Macbeth* is to compare it with weaker versions, like the one written by Munindranath Ghosh. Munindranath follows his original more faithfully. His translation of Macbeth's soliloquy after Lady Macbeth's death reads almost like a parody. But he fared comparatively better in the speeches of the witches, the murderers and the porter.

After the death of Girish Chandra the journal the English men, Feb. 10, 1912 says,-

The modern Bengali stage owes to him its present state. Besides being a public writer the deceased was a powerful actor himself. He had many admirers among Europeans as well as Bengalis. Mr. Skrine. Late of the Indian Civil Service in speaking of the deceased once said. How little the world knows of its greatest men.⁵⁴

Nirendranath Roy showed special dexterity in presenting the combined illustration of blank verse and rhythm. Jyotindranath Tagore seems to have enjoyed the touch of Shakespeare from the familial background and tradition. He was likely to be affected by his flamboyant and verbose styles. He also showed effective result in using blank verse.

Nirendranath Roy published his translation of *Macbeth* in 1952. His blank verse seeks to reflect the rhythm of the original but sacrifices spontaneity. Jyotindranath Tagore, one of Rabindranath Tagore's elder brothers, wrote thirty-three plays, of which as many as twenty-two were translations. He was one of the enthusiastic organisers of the

⁵² Ashit Kumar Bandahpaddhaya, *Bangla Shayter Shampurna Itibritta* [Historical Background of Bengali Literature] (Kolkata: Modern Book Agency, Third edition, 1378 Bengali Calendar), p. 488.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 22-23.

Hindu Mela. His choice of *Julius Caesar* for translation may have been influenced by his fondness for the rhetorical. His characters are said to be verbose and flamboyant. They are said to be used with sentimental language. Joytindranath did not write a language that could run close to common speech and consequently his dialogue sometimes appears to be mechanically contrived. In places he uses, unlike other translators of Shakespeare, end-stopped lines but he achieves better effect in blank verse. Joytindranath's commoners are interesting but not as interesting as those of Girish Ghosh. This is because of his remoteness from the tradition of humorous writing which Madhusudan and Dinabhandhu represented.

Shakespeare displays two uncommon qualities which are specially estimated as the source of Shakespearean impact working among the Bengali playwrights as to consider him as their standard for presenting a drama a real success before the audiences of the then time hence, Shakespeare as a poet and as dramatist holds double faculties simultaneously, so both the dramatic quality and poetical genius of Shakespeare have created tremendous source of inspiration for them. Both the blank verse mingled with his poetical faculty and extra-ordinary art of dramatic technique have held him to produce his plays. Giriish Chandra is one of the renowned translators of Shakespearean plays. He has followed Shakespeare and his style. As a translator he had artistic ability as well as well as creative potentials in translating Shakespeare plays.⁵⁵

Jotindra Mohan Ghosh's *King Lear* and Debendranath Bose's *Othello* illustrate the same defects and qualities. In the first the Fool and in the second Iago get better treatment than others. Both look like fairy tales and are quite unsatisfactory in scenes like the ones in which *King Lear* faces the storm and *Othello* kills Desdemona. Jyotindra Mohan's *King Lear* is steeped in sentimentalism. Debendranath Bose in his *Othello* chose to add a conversation between three citizens and a song by 'well-dressed women', both anticipating the final catastrophe.

⁵⁵ Amritlal Bala, *Macbeth Bikkhon* [An Observation on Macbeth] (Rajshahi: Hamida Book Corporation, 1998), pp. 88-89.

It was a common problem on the part of the translators to portray the tragic flavour as done by Shakespeare. The other problem was that from the trend of writing comedies to reach the tragedies affecting most of the translators.

The two versions of Shakespeare appear alike in another respect; both try to turn proper names into class names. Thus Albion of *King Lear* becomes 'a country' and in *Othello*, the Moor is changed into 'the General', Cassio into 'the hero' and Naples into 'a place'. This tendency has also been observed in all the Shakespeare translations discussed above. In *Julius Caesar* the characters become 'friends' and 'cousins'; in *The Tempest* Ariel is transformed into 'my son'. And in a recent translation of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* by Utpal Dutta Athens has become 'a city' and the Athenians, 'citizens'. This translation is, incidentally, does not appear to be free from the usual limitations and, although the translator knows how to draw upon the comic tradition, lacks in vivacity and sprightliness. His songs are quite pleasing and satisfactory. What translation without poetry could become is shown by another recent prose version of *Macbeth* by Asok Guha where Macbeth is estimated no better than a murderer and the reader feels only relieved when he is killed.

Dr. Mohammad Zainuddin in his book *Munier Chowdhurir Sahityakarma* '[A Critical study of the Contents and Forms] based on his research work has given a detailed description regarding the translation of some plays of Shakespeare. Munier Chowdhury has translated *The Taming of the Shrew* as Mukhra Ramoni Boshikaran and *Othello*. He has said that Shakespeare has had the craftsmanship in making his plays so impressive of a mere story having least importance meaning Shakespeare knew how to enhance the artistic presentation of a simple story with the essence of wider range and more humorous appeal, in particular, his comedies. Often an old trivial happening used to be adorned with an extra-ordinary effect resulting in the production of the tremendous success. The mere theme of any play used to be replete with universal appeal which might not have had same status, were that story handled by even the other playwrights. There is no denying the fact that people are easily charmed by the pleasant reading and acting of the plays of Shakespeare. But he doesn't have any other mechanism by which he could captivate the readers or audiences otherwise beyond his dramatic dexterity. The play *The Taming of the Shrew* happens to be a comedy displaying humorous show of life with the earthly affairs based on unreal, artificial and imaginary incidents of a lady, despite that there are sufficient reasons to be impressed by the story.

Munier Chowdhury further says that the translation of the play is neither a thematic nor a literal rendition in view of the limitations and difficulties of the translators caused by their being affected by their own nativity. He also adds that no translation can be literal as the translators are supposed to be affected by their own environment, culture and other factors leading them to the target people of the native setting. Many critics opine that the first and only translation so far of Shakespeare in East Bengal was by Munier Chowdhury. He called his translation of *The Taming of The Shrew* [*Mukhara Ramani Bashikaran*]. Mr. Chowdhury himself was a practising dramatist and had given a competent rendering of the play. Munier Chowdhury he should have chosen a comedy was not accidental, his study of the plays of Shakespeare has given him a profound understanding of the diagnosis as a promising dramatist.⁵⁶ For one thing, Shakespeare's comedies appear to lend themselves more easily to translations than his tragedies; for another, Munier Chowdhury had written successful comedies on his own. The translation was done in prose; but the sense of incongruity that Shakespeare created by using verse in dealing with trivial matters has been preserved by Mr. Chowdhury's putting a chaste, rhetorical and high priced words in dialogue. He is not always brief, but he is thought to be invariably effective.

But no matter what is said about, Shakespeare, in a non-English speaking country like ours remains, in the ultimate analysis, the responsibility of the academics or of a small minority readers and admirers. If it is believed that Shakespeare represents something very precious, embodying the brightest and highest values, offering matchless poetry and drama, it will be the accountability to continue his relevance in the changing context and inculcate the spirit in which he wrote and in which he should be understood.

Translation acts as the mirror of observing something lying unknown to a reader by which a reader can visualise the things clearly and one can understand anything through translation in spite of the backdrop of language curtain. Shakespeare translation in this way serves the purposes duly both for the readers and audiences of the plays of Shakespeare bringing him very close to the readers that make them realise the aspects of life and nature that appear to be eradicating the barriers of all kinds of wall of enigma and prejudice. Shakespeare studies have been remarkably turned a new dimension in the context of various analyses and idealistic interpretations about his plays. The dramatist Shakespeare

⁵⁶ Dr. Mohammad Zainuddin, *Munier Chowdhurir Sahityakarma* [The Literary Works of Munier Chowdhury; A critical Study of the Contents and forms] (Dhaka: Bangla Academy, 1998), pp. 134-143.

has been replete with rich materials which do not emerge to be far from the reading of the readers. But Shafi Ahmed has expressed his pessimistic view in his book *Bangadeshe Shakespeare* [Shakespeare in Bengal]. He has given the statement of professor Sunil Kumar Chattyapaddhaya that the impossibility of Shakespeare translation is not unconquerable. He has also differentiated the English educated translators having mastery over English and educated translators having no strong command of the English language. Those who are English educated they should have attitude to come forward to make attempts for Shakespeare translation. There is no scope to show any kind of reluctance towards Shakespeare translations. Shafi Ahmed encourages every effort for the easy access to Shakespeare which may be over come by the translation of literature of Shakespeare.⁵⁷

In fact, there is no hard and fast rule for translation. One English critic says,- ‘A translator is a traitor’. In this context, the statement of the poet Rabindranath Tagore can be cited here as he says that to comprehend the exactness of the original text into Bengali language cannot be made possible but the main theme has to be made suitable to the original. Here it can be mentioned that there is no definite model for translation. Translation literature and its model appears to be very resilient if that nears the text appearing to be literal translation and if that remains far from the original appears to be thematic translation. However, there are different views on translation theory. In any study of the development of Shakespeare’s art it is necessary first to discover the date when each play was written.⁵⁸

The English translation seems to have lost its Bengali taste which does not appear to have any agreement with the original.⁵⁹ But Shakespeare studies are now getting equipped with available helpful ingredients that have paved the way of newer explanations of Shakespeare translation from one language into another can not always respect normal usage and as a dramatist Shakespeare and his creations appear to be closer to us⁶⁰. If he does not translate anything consistently one way or another in this context

⁵⁷ Shafi Ahmed, *op.cit.*, pp. 216-217

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ John Lyons, *Language and Linguistics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), pp. 326-327.

⁶⁰ Shafi Ahmed, *op.cit.*, p. 216.

the structure of the argument will be concealed and the examples that are used to support it will lose their relevance. In practice, translation in relation to the purpose for which a particular translation is intended and to the assumed background knowledge of those who will use it. It is for this reason that so called literal translation is at times more appropriate than free translations. This interpretation seems to favour Tagore's concept of translation.

Shafi Ahmed also cites the negative attitude of the English Educated Bengali intellectuals who consider Bengali translations of Shakespeare to be a far reaching strategy to understand Shakespeare or barrier is the Bengali language to be in the understanding of Shakespeare in particular. He further advocates for the proper understanding of Shakespeare through Bengali translation for the class people having no command of the English language.

Methods of Shakespeare in Bengali translations Rendered by Tagor; The Non-Bengali reader has very slight opportunity of knowing the later phase of Tagore as a poet. Rabindranath has told several times, Translation should be literal but the poet himself has broken the rule repeatedly, again and again, so to speak everywhere. In his poetical work *Chittray, Shukh, Aji Megh Mukta Din; Proshanna Akash*, have been translated into English literally. But poet Rabindranath himself translated the said poems without maintaining the appropriateness of the literal translation methodology as he had translated the above briefly in the following names like- *Happiness* to day is free from clouds. Lover's gift (no. 51) The early autumn day is cloudless"⁶¹

Poet Rabindranath Tagore undoubtedly was a good translator. He felt the need to raise awareness among the translators so he told something in view of the qualities of the translators specially from Bengali to English. He says that, It is his request to the translators that the translation of any kind of the original text is to keep peace with the original text. If there appears anything recondite foot notes or other end notes may be a great solution to some extent which will not harm the translation. If translation requires constant explanation that appears to be a matter of injustice as that may be an extra labour for the translator. So the separate presentation of explanations and footnotes will help the readers to judge the work liberally and confidentially. He also considers it to be a duty for a translator to keep the things

⁶¹ Meera Chattopadhyay, *Rabindra Rachanar Ingreji Anubader Itibitta* (KolKata: Sree Guru Prokashon, 1993), p. 131. Thomson.

as they appear in the translation which is not clear in the original. It is to be remembered that the 19th century Bengali translators who endeavoured to make the best of their translations on Shakespeare undoubtedly had the limitations of having strong command of the English language. But it is note worthy to remember that their cordial approach to the efforts for Shakespeare translations; their commitment and faithfulness to depict the exactness of original Shakespeare would remain as the significant impetus to the translators of the next generations. The nineteenth century translators of Shakespeare exhibit that only the command of linguistic knowledge and command of dictionaries and the pedantic learning do not appear to be sufficient for devouring the taste of great literature contributed by Shakespeare.⁶²

Edward C. Dimock, Jr. of University of Chicago in the preamble of the book entitled *Bengali Literature in English : A Bibliography* written by Jagomohon Mukherji in which he says- ‘

‘In south Asia it is becoming increasingly vital that readers and speakers of one language get to know the literature, heritage and traditions of the numerous other languages of the sub-continent’.

In fact, it is to be recognized that a translator to be stimulated by the following factors:

- i) *To have idea about the translation already known and available in English Translation.*
- ii) *To have an idea also about the general readers of other languages for having access to Bengali literature.*⁶³

Translation is an approach to understanding something in other language and Jonathan Duncan was the first to translate from English to Bengali. The quality of Duncan’s translation is to be measured with the fact that there was none before him to initiate works of translation, accordingly, there occurred a difficult task for him to bring the rendition of English into Bengali although he humbly quoted ‘I have spared no pains

⁶² Shafi Ahmed, *op.cit.*, p. 185.

⁶³ Jagomohon Mukherji, *Bengali Literature in English: A Bibliography* (Kolkata: M.C Sarkar & Sons Pvt. Ltd., 1970), pp. viii, ix.

or labour to render this translation it self as accurate as possible.' He further says 'I should prove generally intelligible to all the natives of Bengal.'⁶⁴

Translation appears to be an approach of both a science and an art and also a means of international co-operation and national integration. It is only through translation that people can bridge the distances of culture and geography, the knowledge, trends, ideas, literary developments and thoughts of one nation can be transmitted to the other pragmatic value of which can not be ignored as the same is recognised to be an extra-ordinary skill.

It is through translations that the renaissance spread all over Europe and the world. Transcendentalism, French revolution, Fascism, Communism, Imperialism, colonialism, etc. came to be known all over the world through translations. The spread of science, technology, industrialization trade and commerce in the ancient and modern world could be made possible through translations.⁶⁵

Generally speaking translation means the rendering of a literary work from one language into another. It is the finding out of linguistic equivalents between the source language and the target language. An ideal translation is the matching of phonological, morphological, syntactic and semantic equivalents. But translation is not an easy tool to be done. The greatest problem is that of catching the regret mood, tone, intention, feeling, sense of the original writer. Hence the vexed question *is translation possible at all?* It is sometimes argued that even if fiction or drama may be amenable or approachable to rendition in another language but any attempt to translate poetry will thought to be an act of vandalism an aesthetic impertinence.

It appears to be a channel through which foreign influences can penetrate the native culture, challenge it and even contributed to subverting it.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ Quoted in Ghulam Murshid, *Kalantare Bangla Gadya: Transformation of Bengali Prose during Colonial Rule* (Kolkata: Ananda Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 1399 Bengali Calendar), p. 13.

⁶⁵ Radehoy L. Varshney (tr.), *An Introductory Textbook of Linguistics and Phonetics* (India: Student Store, 2003), pp. 331- 334.

⁶⁶ Syed Manzoorul Islam, "Shakespeare in India", *The Independent*, 15.06.2003.

Translation of Shakespeare into Bangla is not so noticeable. In the context of novel writing, there is no match for Buljack with Shakespeare; Leo Tolstoy has criticized Shakespeare to be dominating in view of verbosity of the language. It is a matter of great regret that efforts have been made for learning English poetry for more than a century but it is yet to be occupied by our heart during the time of Richardson and Derozio, their disciples had the opportunity to study Shakespeare and imbibe him with the desired fervency.

Bishnu Dev has made his comments on the successful criticism of Shakespeare which is in his view, yet to be emerged from the critics of Bengali literature.⁶⁷

Shakespeare translation does not appear to be impossible to the persons strongly deleterious in English is not unavailable but to translate this great poet may cause wastage of efforts. The reason is that translation to the readers who know English and can acquire the taste of the original text, translation of the same does not appear to be a matter of any attraction for them rather the same attributes to the memorandum of exhaustion from the original. At the same time the people having no command of English, to them Shakespeare appeals nothing but a layman. The above two types of people having command of English and the people having no knowledge of English fail to get the exact Shakespeare within their faculties. Sunil Kumar Chattapaddhay conveys the mixed reactions and impact of Shakespeare upon the readers of two categories presented in his essay '*Anubader Shapokhey*' [In Favour of Translation.] It is a matter of wonder when Shakespeare has been accepted all over the world then there is something to hesitate to get him as dear one of the *Bengalis*. Shakespeare could have been more intimate with the *Bengalis* had there been the activities of 'Bangio Shakespeare Parishad' [Shakespeare Council in Bengal] established under the leadership of Shakespeare devotee Nirendranath Roy in the year 1951 but his staying abroad from 1952 to 1956 at Kolkata the council remained inactive as a result of decreasing interest of the *Bengalis* in Shakespeare which was supposed to have thwarted the increasing interest of the educated *Bengalis*. Besides this, it is mentionable that Little

⁶⁷ Cited in the Preface *Othello*, This translation in Bengali by Sunil Kumar Chattopadhyay of William Shakespeare's *Othello* is published with the assistance of UNESCO as part of its major project for furthering mutual appreciation of Eastern and western cultural values. Sunil Kumar Chattopadhyay, 1967, Sahitya Academy India (Literature Academy, India), pp. 7-31.

Theatre used to stage Shakespeare's plays in Bengali and contributed adding more dramatic talent to the stage performance of Shakespeare but Shakespearean translation faced difficulties finding an *essay Shakespeare* before the *Bengalis* which might be a cause of communication gap between the realities of life of Shakespearean people and those of the common audiences of easy going life. The cultural gap, the language gap and the comprehending obstacle to realize Shakespearean characters were also responsible for not having an easy access of the *Bengalis* to Shakespeare.⁶⁸

Shafi Ahmen illustrates the following points with regards to the evaluation of Shakespearean translation and the limitations.

1. *Most of the Bengali translators were interested to translate Shakespeare by watching stage performance and enacting of his plays.*
2. *Some of the translators like Viddya Sagore and others were inspired by Shakespearean literary style.*
3. *Translators had to think of the Bengali audience and readers who were not so educated and expert in English and they were fond of 'yatra' traditions and naturally translators had to get their translations of Shakespeare Indianised or localised, So the earlier translators introduced their local or native flavour or taste in the titles, manners, or structures of Shakespeare's plays in their translated plays of the original Shakespeare.*⁶⁹

There are reasons for the failure of proper Shakespeare translation. The time, period, socio-economic infrastructure that Shakespeare had, people of the subcontinent do not have them in their own circle. There is no affinity of his circumstance with that of the background of the *Bengalis*. The people and taste of Shakespeare are different from those of the *Bengalis*; and with other races, nations or countries of the European belt Shakespeare matches most but the sub continental environment does not find any oneness with the Shakespearean flavour.

⁶⁸ Sunil Kumar Chattopadhyay, *Othello* (New Delhi: Sahitya Academy, 1967), pp. 16-21 (This Translation in Bengali by Sunil Kumar Chattopadhyay of William Shakespeare's *Othello* in published with the assistance of UNESCO as part of its Major Project for furthering mutual appreciation of Eastern and Western cultural values.

⁶⁹ Shafi Ahmed, *op.cit.*, pp. 184-185.

So in any language of the European arena Shakespeare may be easily equipped with. His dramatic personality is not hampered there. But the long ethnic and anthropological ambit in which sub continent lies, Shakespearean characters do not find any easy access to the world of the sub continental horizon. It is to be remembered that most of the characters of Shakespeare are not Elizabethan or they do not belong to the culture of England rather Shakespeare's characters have been suitably accepted in all countries, in all cultures, in nations through out the world although they are from Rome, Greece, France, Italy, Egypt, Arab, Cicely, Denmark, Norway in origin. The reasons for the *ununiversalization* of Shakespeare carries the mark that his characters are of different nature for ethnic or racial identity but they have won universal appeal despite their remaining far from England.

Shakespeare's characters are gleaned from different sources but they are not pictured as Elizabethans for England only in the hands of Shakespeare and if Hamlet, Othello, Cleopatra, Shylock, Coriolanus, Caesar, Timon of Athens, Troilus are claimed as the own of England then the people of Bengal have also the reasons to claim Shakespearean characters as the own of Bengal.

So when the Garman, Russian have made attempts to get translated Shakespeare, their efforts, doubtless to say, have digested Shakespeare up to their satisfaction as much as their language could convey. In the year 1864 on the 300th Death anniversary of Shakespeare 'Turgenev' the Russian scholar highlights- 'Shakespeare has become part of our life.'

In spite of the entire favourable atmosphere translation of Shakespeare in Bengali has not been possible and the main reason to be detected is the lack of using English in every day life. But one thing has to be remembered that in any translation of Shakespeare the originality has to be upheld. The main stream of the play has got no scope to be prolonged than the original one by the translators.⁷⁰

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

Remarkable Translation of Shakespearean Dramas in Bangladesh

Names of translation of Shakespearean plays	Translators	Year
Hamlet	Abu Shariar	1966
Antony and Cleopatra	Abu Shariar	1966
Othello	Munir Choudhury	1972
Macbeth	Shamsul Haque	1984
Romeo and Juliet	Mofiz Choudhury	1984
King Lear	Mofiz Choudhury	1988
Othello & Hamlet	Qamrul Ahsan	1986
Taming of the Shrew	Munier Choudhury	1966
Hamlet	Qamrul Ahsan	1987

List of the Shakespeare translation⁷¹

Names of translation of Shakespearean plays	Translated names	Names of Translators	Year
<i>Tempest</i>	<i>C. Monkton</i>		1809
<i>The Merchant of Venice</i>	<i>Vanumoti- Chitto Bilash</i>	Harachandra Gosh	1853
<i>Romeo and Juliet</i>	<i>Charumukh -Chittahara</i>	Harachandra Gosh	1864
<i>Twelfth Night</i>	<i>Susila Chandra Ketu</i>	Kanti Chandra Biddya Ratna	1872
<i>Comedy of Errors</i>	<i>Vram Kautak</i>	Beni Madab Gosh	1873
<i>Cymbeline</i>	<i>Susila Bir Shingha Natok</i>	Sattyan Dranath Tagore	1868
<i>Macbeth</i>	<i>Rudrapal</i>	Haralal Roy	1874
<i>Hamlet</i>	<i>Amar Shingha</i>	Promath Nath Basu	1874
<i>Macbeth</i>	<i>Macbeth</i>	Tarak Nath Mukha Paddhay	1875
<i>Tempest</i>	<i>Nalini Baswanta</i>	Hemo Chandra Banda Paddhay	1879
<i>Winter's Tale</i>	<i>Madam Manzuri</i>	Unknown author	1876
<i>The Merchant of Venice</i>	<i>Sur Lātā</i>	Parilāl Mukha Pāddhāy	1877
<i>Romeo and Juliet</i>	<i>Ajoy Shingha o Bilāsh Bāti</i>	Jogendrā Nārāyan Dās Gosh	1878
<i>Romeo and Juliet</i>	<i>Bashantā Kumāri Nātok</i>	Rādhā Mādob Kār	1878
<i>Tempest</i>	<i>Prokiti Nātok</i>	Chāru Chandrā Mukhā Pāddhāy	1882
<i>A Mid Summer Night's Dream</i>	<i>Sharāt Shashi</i>	Nil Rātān Mukhā Pāddhāy	1883
<i>Othello</i>	<i>Vimshingha</i>	Tārini Chandrā Pāl	1883
<i>Macbeth</i>	<i>Karnabir</i>	Nagendrā Nāth Bāsu	1885
<i>Romeo and Juliet</i>	<i>Romeo Juliet</i>	Gobin Dra Roy	1887
<i>Ohello</i>	<i>Ohello</i>	Kāli Prashanna Chatta Pāddhāy	1893
<i>Hamlet</i>	<i>Hamlet</i>	Lolit Mohon Adhikāri	1893

⁷¹ Shafi Ahmed, *op.cit.*, pp. 233-237.

Names of translation of Shakespearean plays	Translated names	Names of Translators	Year
<i>Hamlet</i>	<i>Hamlet</i>	Chaād Proshād Gosh	1894
<i>Romeo and Juliet</i>	<i>Romeo Juliet</i>	Hemo Chandrā Bāndha Pāddhay	1894
<i>A Mid Summer Night's Dream</i>	<i>Nai Dhag Nishith Shapna</i>	Nabin Chandrā Sen	1894
<i>Hamlet</i>	<i>Hori Rāj</i>	Nagendrā Nāth Chowdhury	1896
<i>As you like it</i>	<i>Anangā Rangini</i>	Annadā Proshād Bāsu	1897
<i>Macbeth</i>	<i>Macbeth</i>	Girish Chandrra Gosh	1903
<i>King Lear</i>	<i>Lear</i>	Jotindra Mohon Gosh	1902
<i>A Mid summer Night's Dream</i>	<i>Jahanara</i>	Shatish Chandra Chattapaddhay	1903
<i>Julius Caesar</i>	<i>Julius Caesar</i>	Jotindranath Tagore	1907
<i>Measure for Measure</i>	<i>Binimoy</i>	Birendranath Roy	1909
<i>Tempest</i>	<i>Jhanjhah</i>	Nagendra Proshad Sharbadhikari	1913
<i>Antonio and Cleopatra</i>	<i>Cleopatra</i>	Promath Nath Bhattya Charia	1914
<i>Winter's Tale</i>	<i>Rani Tomalini</i>	Dhanada Charan Mitra	1914
<i>The Merchant of Venice</i>	<i>Sawdagar</i>	Vupendranath Bandha Paddhaya	1915
<i>Antonio and Cleopatra</i>	<i>Cleopatra</i>	Krishna Chandra Kundu	1915
<i>Othello</i>	<i>Othello</i>	Debendranath Basu	1919
<i>Tempest</i>	<i>Kuhoki</i>	Debendranath Basu	1920
<i>Macbeth</i>	<i>Macbeth</i>	Upendranath Basu	1923
<i>The Merchant of Venice</i>	<i>Merchant of Venice</i>	Mono Mohon Roy	1924
<i>The Merchant of Venice</i>	<i>Merchant of Venice</i>	Ashutosh Gosh	1925
<i>Macbeth</i>	<i>Macbeth</i>	Nirendra Nath Roy	1952
<i>Tempest</i>	<i>Tempest</i>	Nirmal Kanti Mollik	1956
<i>The Merchant of Venice</i>	<i>Merchant of Venice</i>	Sunil Kumar Chattya Paddahya	1956
<i>The Merchant of Venice</i>	<i>Merchant of Venice</i>	Kallyan Brata Datta	1956
<i>Macbeth</i>	<i>Macbeth</i>	Manindra Datta	1956
<i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i>	<i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i>	Manindra Datta	1956
<i>King Lear</i>	<i>King Lear</i>	Kallyan Brata Datta	1957
<i>As You Like It</i>	<i>As You Like It (Translated but not yet published)</i>	Sunil Kumar Chattya Paddahya	1958
<i>Hamlet</i>	<i>Hamlet</i>	Rehan Uddin Chowdhury	1964
<i>Tempest</i>	<i>Tempest</i>	Rehan Uddin Chowdhury	1966

Names of translation of Shakespearean plays	Translated names	Names of Translators	Year
<i>Twelfth Night</i>	<i>Twelfth Night</i>	Rehan Uddin Chowdhury	1966
<i>The Taming of the Shrew</i>	<i>Mukhra Ramani Boshikaran</i>	Munier Chowdhury	1970
<i>Hamlet</i>	<i>Hamlet ba Prothishad</i>	Sayed Sajjad Hossain	1974
<i>Hamlet</i>	<i>Hamlet</i>	Abu Shahriar	1974
<i>Antonio and Cleopatra</i>	<i>Antonio and Cleopatra</i>	Abu Shahriar	1978
<i>Othello</i>	<i>Othello</i>	Munier Chowdhury O Kabir Chowdhury	1981
<i>Julius and Caesar</i>	<i>Julius and Caesar</i>	Mofiz Chowdhury	1983
<i>Gana Nayak</i>	<i>Julius and Caesar (Adapted)</i>	Sayed Shamsul Haque	1983
<i>Macbeth</i>	<i>Macbeth</i>	Sayed Shamsul Haque	1984
<i>Romeo and Juliet</i>	<i>Romeo Juliet</i>	Mofiz Chowdhury	1985
<i>Tempest</i>	<i>Tempest</i>	Sayed Shamsul Haque	1987
<i>King Lear</i>	<i>King Lear</i>	Mofiz Chowdhury	1988

Poetry

Name of the Book	Name of the Translator	Year
<i>Lucratia</i>	Kali Prashanna Kabya Bisharad	1879
<i>Shakespeare r Sonnet Panchashat</i>	Monindra Roy	1964
<i>Shakespeare r Sonnet</i>	Zillur Rahman Siddiquy	1977
<i>Shakespeare Sonnet Samagra</i>	Nikhil Kumar Nandi	1978

Stories & Tales

Name of the Book	Name of the Translator	Year
<i>Romeo and Juliet er Monohor Uppakkhan</i>	Guru Das Hazra	1848
<i>Apurba Akkhan</i>	Muktaram Biddya Bagish	1852
<i>Shakespeare r Natoker Marmanubad</i>	Virnacular Literature Society	1853
<i>Vranti Bilash (Comedy of Errors)</i>	Ishar Chandra Biddya Sagore	1869
<i>Shakespeare r Galpo (Prothom Vag)</i>	Jadu Gopal Chattya Paddaya	1887
<i>Vishok-Duhita (All's Well That Ends Well)</i>	Gabinda Chandra Roy	1888
<i>Shakespeare Granthaboli</i>	Hitobadi Prakashito	1895
<i>Shakespeare [1-4]</i>	Haran Chandra Rakkith	1898-1902
<i>Bilati Upannash Ba Bilati Kobi [Translation of the Stories From Shakespeare]</i>	Upendra Bhushan Chowdhury	1901
<i>Shakespeare [Shacitra]</i>	Shashi Bhushan Chowdhury	1910

For the Young Readers

Name of the Book	Name of the Translator	Year
<i>Sudkhor Swadagor (The Merchant of Venice)</i>	Nagendranath Roy Chowdhury	1915
<i>Tempest</i>	Pashupati Chattapaddhaya Bimal Ranjan Chattapaddhaya	1919
<i>Chamundar Shikkah [Taming of the Shrew]</i>	Nagendranath Roy Chowdhury	1922
<i>Venice Bonik [Merchant of Venice]</i>	Mohadev Dey	1925
<i>Jhar [Tempest]</i>	Khagendranath Mitra	1925
<i>Shakespeare er Galpo [Stories of Shakespeare]</i>	Bimal Datta	1940
<i>Shakespeare Tragedy</i>	Nripendra Krishna Chattapaddhaya	1943
<i>Chotoder Shakespeare</i>	Nalini Bhushan Das Gupta	1943
<i>Shakespeare er Galpo</i>	Shishir kumar Niyogi	1943
<i>Shakespeare er Natoker Galpo</i>	Khagendranath Mitra	1956
<i>Julius and Caesar</i>	Sudindra Raha	1959
<i>Macbeth</i>	Sudindra Raha	1959
<i>Comedy of Errors</i>	Sudindra Raha	1959
<i>Shakespeare er Tragedy</i>	Sudindra Raha	1959
<i>As You Like It</i>	Ashok Guha	1959
<i>Hamlet</i>	Ashok Guha	1960
<i>Antonio Cleopatra</i>	Ashok Guha	1961
<i>Comedy of Errors</i>	Ashok Guha	1961
<i>Henry Austom [Henry viii]</i>	Ashok Guha	1962
<i>King Lear</i>	Ashok Guha	1962
<i>Shakespeare er Galpo</i>	Satya Prashad Sen Gupta	1974

Biography

Shakespeare	Rishi Das	1963
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Books

<i>Shakespeare Granthaboli</i>	Basu Mati Sahyta Mandir	1923
<i>Shakespeare Rochanaboly</i>	Reflect Publication	1974

Conclusion

Translations of Shakespearean plays into Bengali had begun long before, but they do not fall under the category of literal translations. They were cultural translations and adaptations from a literary point of view.⁷²

With the increasing emphasis on the language teaching and learning, Shakespeare is going far away from us but to forget Shakespeare would be to throw away the best part of education and intellectual illustration of what has been received from the west. Shakespeare can be brought close to the common people through translation. Now that Bangladesh has developed a thriving hieratical tradition, it would be less difficult for the translators to present Shakespeare on the stage with more dramatic effect.

To keep Shakespeare aloof from the readers is to keep the depth of English literature away from them which is the pre-condition to the growth of learning of the English language.

The one hundred and fifty-year history of the translations of Shakespeare in Bengali is not marked by any great achievement. One of the reasons, apart from those suggested above is the fact that with the exception of Girish Chandra none of the outstanding dramatists in Bengal tried their hand at Shakespeare translations. Girish Ghosh was undoubtedly a man of genius, but, unlike Madhusudhan and Dinabhandhu, he was not scrupulous about the purity of the form and was unabashedly susceptible to the influence of the 'yatra' tradition. Tagore who was in his adolescence attempted to translate the witch scenes in *Macbeth* did not take the work up in his later years, another important factor was the comparative backwardness of Bengali drama in general. Compared with that of other forms, its development has been notoriously slow and it does not boast a Tagore or a Bankim Chandra that is called Vidyasagar's prose narrative the best of the translations produced in Bengal is hardly a compliment to Bengali drama.

⁷² Nazmul Ahsan, *Shakespeare in Nineteenth Century Bengali Theatre* (Dhaka: Bangla Academy, 1995), p. 34.

Curious as it may seem the fact that Vidyasagar was not a professional dramatist or actor proved an advantage for him in as much as it did not make him incorporate 'yatra' elements whereas other translators had incorporated 'yatra' elements in his work whereas other translators had to make concessions to the needs of the local stage, he was happily unaware of the obligation.

What useful purpose, then, did these translations serve? To begin with, they worked as an effective medium through which Shakespeare reached the Bengali imagination. But for them, Shakespeare would never have been fully absorbed into Bengali literature. Shakespeare translations played a very significant role in the literary history of the nineteenth century Bengal. Secondly, these translations presented a new challenge to the Bengali language and extended the limits of its possibilities. Shakespeare was a completely new experience and the effort that the language had to make to assimilate him into a new dramatic content. Bengali drama is poor even today, but it would never have been possible for it to grow and develop without those not-always-satisfactory Shakespeare translations.

Shakespeare translation into the Bengali language now is the demand of time and age for the *Bengalis*. The common readers feel the acute need to study Shakespeare and it is incumbent upon the English educated readers who should come forward to present an easy translated Shakespeare for the educated *Bengalis* having no strong command of English.

So education and Bengali translation should not be viewed separately. Shakespeare translation should be encouraged in order to make the greatest playwright have smooth access to the commoners of Bengali literature when the nations of the whole world have shown praiseworthy progress of the translation of Shakespeare's plays into their own languages when the purpose is apparent to digest and imbibe Shakespearean message there is no scope to remain far from Shakespearean literature for being prejudiced for any kind of obscurity in the global context as the exchange of views and cultural and literary communion appear to be the precondition to have the taste and

the essence of mental peace and width of intellect as the outcome of literature, which is the greatest manifestation of the humanity in the context of world literature with socio-psychological impact. There grew the demand for new methods of entertainment that must have called forth the creative activities of the writers to adopt themselves to the English form or rather the western model as quoted by Kabir Chowdhury that a national literature must have their feet firmly planted on their own soil, their own literary and cultural traditions, life styles and views with a view to getting themselves equipped with the craftsmanship freely to help themselves to whatever foreign literature can give directly or through translations and adaptations in order to strengthen, enrich and invigorate their own literature.⁷³

⁷³ Kabir Chowdhury, "Foreign Influence on A National Literature", *Dacca University Studies*, Journal of the Faculty of Arts, Dacca, June, 1980, p. 123.

Chapter 8

The Literary Presentation of Shakespeare Studies and his Acceptability and Prospects in Bangladesh

Introduction

The British are proud of Shakespeare. Of all the things they take pride on, Shakespeare as he seems to be occupying the paramount position among the playwrights of the global dramatic literature, Shakespeare holds supreme literary status. In different phases of our lives there is the existence of English culture every where which seems to have spread over every corner of the aspects of our cultural manner. The *Bengalis* are supposed to have been influenced both internally and externally, in language, in thoughts and views, in ideas and norms, even in drawing room etiquette by English influence which exhibits dominating focus of Shakespeare's influence in most cases. So his influence dominates over life and culture of the *Bengalis*. Perhaps it would not be unwise to say that how far the *Bourgeoistic* culture has evolved and affected is a matter to be guessed in the context of Shakespeare as an influential personality sustaining with an unending appeal to the readers and audiences of world literature.

Under the patronage of the English people Shakespeare-acting made tremendous progress in Kolkata and the same tradition acted behind the growth of Bengali dramatic literature which resulted in the establishment of Shakespeare in the theatrical or stage performance among the Bengali people in course of time due to socio-historical background.¹ This chapter highlights the literary presentation of Shakespeare studies and his acceptability in Bangladesh with reference to the presentation of the academic and syllabic Shakespeare. I have also attempted to explore Shakespearean impact upon the young generation of Bangladesh by stating and illustrating the findings and the positive impact of Shakespeare studies with a review of the acceptability of Shakespeare in the light of cultural penetration into Bengali life and mind and his overall influence on Bengali literature.

¹ Shafi Ahmed, *Bangadeshe Shakespeare* (Dhaka: Bangla Academy, 1988), p. 223.

In British India creative educational thought came obviously from outside the representative sources. Swami Vivekananda, Rabindranath Tagore, *Sri Aurobindo* and *Mahatma Gandhi* to mention whose contribution to the growth of national outlook had a tremendous effect in changing the outlook and attitude of the native people.²

The greatest change in Bengali literature, due to any external influence, was to have emerged from its getting in touch with the literary forms and ideas of the West, the West with which the East seems to be afraid of getting mingled to a large extent although at variance. Even at the age of supreme progress of science, technology and enlightenment or the progress of applied science at present days seeking to annihilate all distinctions lying between the two nations are getting obliterated in the way of promoting communication, mutual ties. Differences between the two are fundamental but that do not appear to be hindering the inter-entangling of influences. The fact is that the listeners to a leading national radio programme voted Shakespeare the most influential individual of the millennium shows that both he and other traditionally revered authors have strong people's support.³

Through the manifestation of a play Shakespeare seems to be opening a lot of branches of thoughts and views centring round the life of a man and his inner psychology. An academic Shakespeare is to be included among the learners of Bangladesh but university syllabus is yet to be particular about emphasizing Shakespeare studies with a view to suggesting that there should be a wide scope for the young generation to be interested in the study of Shakespeare literature.

Rabindranath used to treat Shakespeare plays as the model of his drama. He views Shakespeare as a literary creator who had his creations adapted to his time. Shakespeare's plays reflect multidimensional horizon of the realities which Rabindranath thinks to have possessed in his heart. *Malini's* dramatic plot is very considerate and with in the naturalness, which is not isolated from the trend of age and culture of the land, but it has to be acknowledged that Shakespeare does not exist in the Bengali dramas remarkably. His translation is scanty and criticism of Shakespeare is also limited. He further interprets

² Sisirkumar Ghose, *Makers of Indian Literature: Rabindranath Tagore* (New Delhi: Sahitya Akademy, 1986), p. 102.

³ Martin Stephen, *English Literature*, 3rd edition (London: Pearson Education, 2000), p. 151.

the reasons that the first and main reason is that drama in English literature appears to be the weakest form of literary works. Climax or conflict is the life blood of a drama and the middle class people of this country are afraid of conflicts. So the products of Shakespeare can indulge in the same way easily but Bengali mind is not ready to entertain the same. Naturally dramatic presentation of Shakespeare could not find any strong base in Bengali culture which happened to Shakespeare in presenting the way applicable to life of the other nations with no affinity of external aspects as projected in his plays but it is natural that an English playwright like Shakespeare has every reason and appeal to the hearts of the readers of all the time.

Prof. Serajul Islam Chowdhury highlights his views on Shakespeare in respect of his socio-economic analytical perspectives in which he says;-Shakespeare does not require any advertisement. If there is any tendency to attract the people about Shakespeare in the way of advertisement it might have collapsed the moral Shakespeare. Serajul Islam Chowdhury says that Shakespeare's morality is not to be measured as a cheap commercial item.⁴ In view of the ultimate judgment, Shakespeare's greatness lies in the reflection of the moral values of life which are said to be the chief fulcrum of his drama.

Plays of Shakespeare and man's freedom

During the time of Shakespeare, dramatic literature got evolved tremendously which was based on liberty. Man's freedom and emancipation came to be the sole-agent of renaissance resulting in the Shakespearean freedom reflected in presenting society and people of his time. His England was not ruled by others and naturally a product of a nation with having been ruled by no other nations like ours contributed to the growth of a Shakespeare who was thought to have emerged from the British land England.

Evaluation of Shakespeare as a representative of Western Influence

The slowness of Bengali prose in pre-British days is said to be an apparent fact, and there can be simply no way of remarkable comparison between prose before and after the days of British influence. It is no doubt true, as has been asserted repeatedly, that prose is a later phenomenon in the evolution of literary forms-but the principal European

⁴ Serajul Islam Chowdhury *Sreni, Samay O Shahitya* [The Class, Period and Literature] (Dhaka: Muktaadhar, 1986), pp. 66-77.

vernacular literatures had the amelioration of virile prose and cultivated it fairly and extensively before the expiry of the seventeenth century, and thus preceded Bengali by two hundred years, nevertheless.

The western influence in the prose and verse forms have also included the drama in the discussion relating to the forms of current status in Bengali literature, but for a full and comprehensive evaluation of this influence on the growth and development of Bengali literature along with the proper inclusion and spirit of the literature are surely not negligible in any account of literary changes. The spirit of free enquiry at last grew into the nerve of free-thinking and in the generation followed that to which Bankim and Bhudeb belonged.

Western influence on Bengali literature is one aspect, and the students cannot fail to be enthused by the rich receptivity of the Bengali mind which has succeeded in making its own. The new forms and ideas which belonged to the west and grew there in the process of centuries but how far-reaching they will be although considerable have been the results need to have still a matter of illustration. It is found that the influence of English was mainly responsible for the prose compositions, but that in verse there had been no new and permanent incorporations, an attempt to write the blank verse drama in imitation of Shakespeare was an ignominious failure. But that in the choice of a subject and the method of treatment, there had been considerable advance as far as the new ideas are concerned, much, undoubtedly, was due to English literature as had found in Madhusudan. Gradual progress of literatures of the Indian subcontinent with all their trends required for their individual ventilations with newer forms of that were marked among the Bengali literature in fact, were founded by the touch of the foreign influence which was chiefly manipulated by Shakespearean plays stage performances and translations of which determined his impact on the growth of Bengali dramatic literature.⁵ The spirit of emancipation in political, social and religious life, and in literature as well, because there were the shackles of convention to cast off; the spirit of enquiry and search after truth which included the study of history and a scientific curiosity; the complexities of attitude towards man and nature; the spirit of progress identified as a trait of modern

⁵ Nazmul Ahsan, *Shakespeare Translations in Nineteenth-Century Bengal Theatre* (Dhaka: Bangla Academy, 1995), p. xii.

western civilization-all these have the evidence to have steadily grown in Urdu literature. But in Bengali the harvest is said to have gleaned appears richer still, though at the same time the faculty of criticism has been more strongly cultivated, and to verse forms there have developed numerous additions both in meter, and in stanza, in prosody and such kind of which no doubt appears to be its explanation; but it is necessary to illustrate at the same time that the receptivity of the Bengali mind deserves some praise for it. There exists much vital difference between the two minds that the modern Bengali literature whose growth is akin to the product of imitation is artificial, insincere, and therefore of no count at all. He felt that the life of Bengal must be freed from this artificial, hybrid literature, and all resources should be exhausted and committed to making the heart of Bengal speak out otherwise all its strength would be of no effect. The difference between assimilation and imitation has to be observed with regard to the question of the depth and reality of western influence.⁶

Difficulties of translation as the cause of reluctance in the studies of Shakespeare were marked among the Bengali translators. Difficulties of translation and the cause of reluctance in the studies of Shakespeare are viewed in the eye of Rabindranath Tagore as stated above.

Problems of translation also appeared to be the cause of the reluctance of the intellectuals to spread Shakespeare literature smoothly among the young generation.

Also the bias for learning English at the earliest stage created problem. This could not but rudely, sometime permanently, disturb the harmony of life and thought. In several letters is heard the plea for instruction, through the mother tongue, a point of view from which he (Rabindranath Tagore) never departed.

Significant was the role of Academic and Syllabic Shakespeare in Bangladesh perspectives that nourished the spread with the arrival of the nineteenth century and the shift in population brought on by the Bengal partition act of 1905 sweeping changes occurred of which the most relevant was the one that occurred on the educational echelon. With the establishment of Dhaka University in 1921 evidence of syllabic curricular

⁶ Priyaranjan Sen, *Western Influence in Bengali Literature* (Kolkata: Academic Publishers, 1966), pp. 267-289.

interest and knowledge of Shakespeare had a new phase. Shakespeare exists in the English literature syllabus of Dhaka university from 1921 with the inclusion of the plays like *Kings Lear*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, and *Henry IV* [Dhaka University Syllabus, 1921]. But to return to the present context of our discussion *The Merchant of Venice* was performed twice once in part by Dhaka college students union in 1944 and once in fully by Dhaka university students union in 1948 and *Othello* was performed in full in Curzon Hall by Dhaka University students union in 1950. In between around 1946-7 there was recitation from *The Merchant of Venice* at Dhaka University.

Formal academic entrance of Shakespeare to the theatrical and the academic scenario of Bangladesh also had much to get the spread of Shakespeare among the educated Bengali people of the country through the translated as well as original texts of his plays. With the syllabic input comes more activity on both the formal academic scholarly level as well as on the theatrical level.

The result of western education now ascertains the pursuit of Shakespeare more westernized and evidenced in the two formal academic articles on Shakespeare that appeared in the Dhaka University Studies between 1920 and 1950. One on Shakespeare's characterization in *The Merchant of Venice* by Dr. M. Hasan and the other on Shakespeare's influence by B.C. Das in 1936 and 1939 respectively. In both of these articles attempts were made to participate professional Shakespeare discourse on an equal footing with western counterparts. They represent thus the first attempts to develop a local body of professional scholarly opinion on Shakespeare in East Bengal. In the same period starting from 1944 that is after the *Muslim Bengali* population that was the beneficiary of this western education has come of age to 1950 there were four partial and full performances of Shakespeare in English, all by amateur college and university groups in Dhaka. Actually, the practice of performing Shakespeare in English by college students may have started in Dhaka almost two decades earlier, since evidence exists of performances of *The Merchant of Venice* at *Mahabub Ali Institute*, *Jagannath College* in 1912.⁷

⁷ Sukumar Biswas, *Bangladesher Nattya Charsa Abong Natoker Dhara* [Drama Practices & Tendencies in Bangladesh] (Dhaka: Bangla Academy, 1988), p. 126.

Students of the past were highly interested in Shakespearean stage performance but the present trend of the students is supposed to capture readers only. For those of the researchers working on Shakespeare in the Bengali speaking parts of the world however reading the Bard new historically will remain an impossibility simply for the libraries do not stock the historical documents of the period which would allow the readers to read him micro politically. As a matter of fact, very little of new historicist work would find their way to one library and it is for this reason that it is felt a modest attempt to represent the movement and its version of Shakespeare may be of some use to those interested in the interpretations of Shakespeare.⁸

Values & Ideals in Shakespeare although do not have any subjective appeal but without the touch of values and ideals that are the inevitable part of human life an author or a dramatist does not find anything to attain the objectivity in real sense. A civilized nation may claim to be worthy for its values it possesses. A lot of criticism has been done of Shakespeare but not the values and ideals of the Bard for several reasons.

Shakespeare studies of the post Liberation Scenario of Bangladesh

Shakespeare, in the field of intellectual and professional level at present in Bangladesh, has reached a positive scenario although institute has not yet been formed for any kind of higher studies or research work. *Dhaka University studies* on Shakespeare contributed by the university scholars have come to be a piece of recognised evidence with a lot of promises to impinge the viable ambience.

The difference between Shakespeare and the other popular playwrights of his time was that he wrote better plays having such strong artistic value that they have been popular ever since. Indeed even today, if Shakespeare could collect his reward he would remain among the most affluent playwrights in the world. During the eighteenth and mostly in the nineteenth, Shakespeare's works appeared to be "immortal classics" and the cult of Shakespeare worshipping seems to have started being inaugurated.

Plays were said to be taken away from their deserving place on the stage and were taken to the space of the library where they came to be recognised as the products of

⁸ Fakrul Alam, *New Historicism and the Politicization of Shakespeare*, Vol. 52:2 (Dhaka: University of Dhaka, December 1999), pp. 1-11.

literature, rather than the drama in the real sense and were measured as the long poems attracting all the artistic and pseudo artistic atmosphere. Centrally sound poetry after the 19th century poetry experienced a bitter resolution.

In the nineteenth century this attitude and observation were welcoming but later on and especially in the early twentieth century a strange feeling arose in the English speaking world that poetry was not valued properly and not for the male but for the females and their clubs.

Educated middle class carries Shakespeare as their ornament. Shakespeare was being recited easily from their lips even in at the discussions, conversations, debates, recitations at seminars and symposium but beyond those sectors, how far Shakespeare remains present in the class room, in the drawing room, in the seminar room or in the journals demand proper assessment of the evaluation regarding the close contact of the Bard with the Bengalis.

How far Shakespeare is acted is a question for example, and as Shakespeare is a dramatist his products as a dramatist are to be acted regularly. But how far Shakespeare has been acted or how far of his plays is acted in this land? What ever may be the answer to this question, it does not appear to be important because original Shakespeare is not meant for the commoners. Original Shakespeare is supposed to be confined to academic and syllabus based institutions. Original Shakespeare appears to be the dramatist of the upper class educated people in this region. Hence, it can be said that the appeal and significance of Shakespearean plays are confined to the periphery of the highly educated upper class people. Upper Class People and Shakespeare belong to the same platform as dramatic presentation is one of the vital indicators in assessing the attachment of the upper-class educated Bengali to the real presentation Shakespeare. In fact, it can be stated frankly that the English educated people of the society and the Bengalis who are materialistically well off Shakespearean plays are implied with the same people who act and watch his plays. Out of this circle, there is no scope for Shakespeare to be acted or watched by any audience. How far is the upper class has been influenced or uninfluenced that is not the subject matter of the literary and cultural life of the country which may not signify anything in their lives because that class of people is like 'hyacinth' floating on the water looking beautiful but the root of the same lies under water as a result, appears harmful.

In the aspects of cultural and literary contribution the middle class people appear better than the upper class people in studying Shakespeare obviously with a few exceptions, so it suggests that Shakespeare is memorised somewhere or acted and memorised by the middle class educated people and acted in the sector of Anglo-Bengali Society. But such ways of the practice of memorisation and acting do not have the lasting effect. So to memorise and to be influenced by Shakespeare does not convey the equal sense. Memorisation or recitation of Shakespeare lies in the lips and does not enter into the heart. It may have usage as the ornaments have generally but ornaments are meant for the use of the ostentation or for external purpose which may grow a sense of pride but it does not contribute anything good. In his early prose work *spring and all*, William Carlos Williams says that Shakespeare is the greatest university of all. If a university is a place where things can be learnt about the world and doubtless to say that this is surely the highest compliment one can pay to a man, Universities, of course, have often been criticized as repositories of barren learning lacking the soul and pulses of life. But Shakespeare's medium was the stage.

Many of the dramas of Bengali literature were marked by qualities that are unmistakably *Shakespearean*. Most of the world famous stages and dominating dramatic literatures of the world hold Shakespearean touch remaining above the decays of time. Shakespeare's relation is established on the stage of theatrical and dramatic performance of the whole world. The country which has enjoyed the rapport of English language and literature or dramatic culture must have enjoyed Shakespearean impact. Intellectual entanglements and contact with Shakespeare and Shakespeare pursuits in modern Bengali dramatic attainment involves Bengali translation, adaptation, cultural transformation, imitation of Shakespeare which became immense source of inspiration for the Bengali literary personalities. Shakespeare was an every day oral discussion for the Bengalis as there had been the studies of Shakespeare in Bangladesh earlier. Still there exists Shakespeare studies but it reminds of a character '*Nimchand*' of Dinabhandhu Mitra. '*Nimchand*' who used to recite Shakespeare with spontaneity indicating that there was no scarcity of recitations from Shakespeare related to the educated Bengalis in the past. They used to recite, read and speak Shakespearean language perhaps like '*Nimchand*' but at present they might be few in number which indicates the decline of education and learning in respect of Shakespearean studies.⁹

⁹ Serajul Islam Chowdhury, *op.cit.*, p. 68.

Chapter 9

Conclusion

Shakespeare is undoubtedly estimated to be an institution when western critics treat him to be a university as quoted by Carlos Williams that Shakespeare is the greatest university having attained the authentic and recognised, critical and literary command of knowledge which is sure to contribute an immense literary source to the philosophical and analytical subject of thoughts and ideas to be received by the world of all time. The nineteenth-century Bengali humanists were aware of the blind spots in the traditional norms by the ethical message derived from the western education that implied a sort of rejection of the vices and to follow the 'English ways'. Interpretations of the Bengal renaissance and Bengali intellectuals along with the outgoing universalism of Rabindranath Tagore was the emergence of a remarkably creative outburst of literary and ideological achievements.¹ Many Indians had felt themselves set on the course of enlightenment laid out in the canonical texts of western Literature and the values absorbed from their reading of Shakespeare had noticeably fertilized the Bengali mind leading to the Bengal Renaissance of the second half of the nineteenth century.² Hindu college and the cultivation of Academic and Theatrical Shakespeare seemed to be an integral part of each other. After the foundation of a centre of western literature and higher education of science on January 20, 1817 Shakespeare was formally included in the academic institutions of Bengal as quoted by Dr. Promod Mukharjee:

A sense of profound homage to Shakespeare was one of the characteristics on the emergence of Bengal renaissance and through the decision of establishing Hindu college that renaissance symptom was evident during the second death anniversary of Shakespeare in the year 1816.³

¹ M. Bamuer, Rachel Van (ed.), *Aspects of Bengali History and Society* (Hawaii, USA: The University Press of Hawaii, 1975), p p. 10-11.

² Fakrul Alam, *Imperial Entanglements and Literature in English*, p. 122.

³ Shafi Ahmed, *Bangadeshe Shakespeare* (Dhaka: Bangla Academy, 1988), p. 9.

In order to strengthen the intellectual and literary trend of the policy makers, researchers, professional intellectuals, educational courses of the intellectual institutions and literary command and to reach the depth of the English language and English literature Shakespeare has to be studied and Shakespeare may be said to be the gate way to enter the realm of the vast arena of English literature, in particular, western literature.

Bengali drama is said to be a combination of western influence and western dramatic techniques represented by the presentation of the idea of tragedy, tragi-comic scenes, stage-craft, five-act division of Elizabethan and Shakespearean plays along with the use of music, lighting and sound, style of dialogues are supposed to have penetrated in to Bengali drama.⁴ Michael said that no real improvement in the Bengali Drama could be expected until Blank Verse was introduced into it.⁵ The western influence in the prose and verse forms has also included the drama in Bengali literature and a full comprehensive treatment of the influence on the growth and development of our Bengali literature.⁶

Paying tribute to Shakespeare has become a flourished culture to share and appreciate the glories of the dramatic genius of English literature. The scholars, who were once inspired by the west, enhanced the standard of criticism, dramatic techniques of Bengali plays, poetry, novel, essays of Bengali literature indicating the fact that the genius of a literature is prone to be penetrated into the other literature spontaneously and instantly. Accordingly, the genius of Bengali literature coming in contact with the genius of English literature highlights the mutual exchange and taste to be imbibed with an everlasting effect. On the other hand, what the Anglo Bengali society is doing is a far-reaching effect for the greater part of the society. So, to welcome such a genius and that sort of incapacity to think Shakespeare as their dear one is no doubt significant and deserves explanation to highlight that reason, how far Shakespeare exists in Bengali drama or Bengali translation or in how many ways he has been criticized by the Bengali people or not have to be taken into consideration for the truest

⁴ Nazmul Ahsan, *Shakespeare Translations in Nineteenth-Century Bengal Theatre* (Dhaka: Bangla Academy, 1995), p. 1.

⁵ Amritlal Bala, *Macbeth Bikkhon* [An observation on Macbeth] (Rajshahi: Hamida Book Corporation, 1998), p. 79.

⁶ Priyaranjan Sen, *Western Influence in Bengali Literature* (Kolkata: Academic Publishers, 1966), p. 238.

investigation of the Shakespearean influence. In the efforts made by the critics in being unsuccessful to contemplate Shakespeare indicates their limitations but the good of the other has to be accepted and entertained with no hesitation. Sustainability of Shakespeare indicates his attachment to the syllabus to be studied at schools, colleges and universities by which institutional Shakespeare may be established. With the passing of time Shakespeare is expected to have covered the gap lying in Bengali drama as produced by the Bengali playwrights. Shakespeare has become an artist ascertaining his perennial appeal with an everlasting manifestation of life and nature through his dramatic art. Art survives more than the artist as well as an artist lives in his art. Acceptance of Shakespeare crosses the zonal, geographical and cultural space, with more investigative and suggestive studies Shakespeare ought to be explored. It is surprising and interesting too that Shakespeare has become the demand of time to be acclaimed as a subject of creativity in the vicinity of one's meditation to channel the communion of reconciliation which is the reflection of the message of common representation in Shakespeare's plays as he has produced. Considerable study has taken place in Bangladesh as well as in west Bengal and post liberation scenario of Bangladesh has opened a glowing era for the prospects of Shakespeare studies specially getting furnished and patronized institutionally. British council in this regard is entitled to execute better policy for the proper diagnosis of Shakespeare. Learned scholars have started making remarkable contributions in the study of Shakespeare evaluation although desired level is expected to arrive in the days to come. From the above study, it is obvious that Shakespearean influence had been wide in scope and great in dimension from the inception of theatrical and academic representation of Shakespeare. Bengali literature without Rabindranath is akin to the English literature without Shakespeare. So demand of Shakespeare as an institution is not unexpected. Academic and theatrical Shakespeare has to be established at the educational institutions.

A degree or *M.A in Shakespeare* is to be introduced at university level. Through the academic and theatrical presentation of Shakespeare the 17th century genius seems to be existing even in the 21st century and would survive onward with the same liveliness and effectiveness stirring the humans with newer appeal and application in judging life

with the conflicts and aspects of the society and people on the surface of this earth as mirrored on the stage of Shakespeare's drama. Success of our first literary product ascertains our dependence on Shakespeare by which our dramatic literature got flourished in the same way dramatic techniques, styles of Shakespearean plays were enriched here in Bengal with the contributions of the acting personalities on the stage performance at home and abroad, Shakespeare scholars of the past although there were some to show their reluctance in receiving Shakespeare but it can be stated emphatically and unhesitatingly that the present dramatic growth of Bengali literature is the emergence of Shakespearean influence on Bengali playwrights and translators imbibed with Shakespeare, without whose dramatic products, as a model for them our dramatic literature would have been otherwise. Bengali mind like others has acknowledged that Shakespeare in no way could be connived.⁷

From the above discussion with the details of the previous chapters it becomes evident that influence of Shakespeare has worked on the contributors of Bengali literature profoundly and in England Shakespeare even today is believed to be the greatest national possession. Attractions of Shakespeare plays and the Bengali taste appear to have been commingled and continued and would continue when critics of different parts of the world held him in high evaluation as in the year 1864 Turgoniv, the Russian critic, expressed special gratitude to Shakespeare on the eve of his three hundred birth anniversary and Shakespeare to be treated as the part and parcel of day to day life. Appeal of Shakespeare was realised everywhere and most of the nations of the world came to understand the significance of the Bard within their vicinity and instinctive nature. In the same way English educated Bengali used to express their enthusiasm about Shakespeare in the way like '*He has become part of our way of life*'.

Poet Shansur Rahman considers Shakespeare to be a personality to whom life appears to be a university, which gave him the deepest knowledge and profoundest sense of understanding the world and the humans. The teaching that he obtained from life was never possible for any academic institute to render.⁸

⁷ Shafi Ahmed, *Bangadeshe Shakespeare* (Dhaka: Bangla Academy, 1988), pp. 226-227.

⁸ Shamsur Rahman (trs.), *Hamlet: A Drama of Shakespeare*, p. 9.

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