

SHAKESPEARE AND INDIAN THEATRE

THE POLITICS OF PERFORMANCE



VIKRAM SINGH THAKUR

BLOOMSBURY

Accessible and informative, timely and pertinent, this cultural history of Shakespeare and Indian theatre covers a vast range of styles and traditions. With a truly impressive sweep, the study introduces us to issues of translation, reception, education and performance, adjusting the conventional focus of attention showcasing continuing negotiations with cultural identity. A stellar and signature achievement.

Mark Thornton Burnett

Professor in English and Languages

School of Arts

Queen's University Belfast

Vikram Singh's book on the adaptations, translations, performances of Shakespeare's plays in some Indian languages from the late 18th century onwards is a fine addition to a long and remarkable tradition of Shakespeare scholarship in India. The book is ambitious in its scope, well-researched and written with remarkable clarity. Without the usual postcolonial kitsch, Vikram offers an illuminating analysis of how each linguistic and social group has used Shakespeare's plays to transform either its particular dramatic form or its own moral and life-shaping purpose.

Alok Bhalla

Teacher, writer, translator

The history of Shakespeare in India is long and multifaceted. Vikram Singh Thakur unlocks the mysteries that surround Indian theatre's engagement with Shakespeare, its origins and its sociopolitical contexts. This is a fascinating story of the countless native dialects and languages of India that have absorbed the work of the English playwright and have transformed the original educated Indian's Shakespeare into the popular Shakespeare practice of the 19th and 20th centuries, and the unique urban-folkish tradition in postcolonial India. *Shakespeare and Indian Theatre* is essential reading for theatre

historians and those studying the stage traditions that have fed into Bollywood.

Ton Hoenselaars

Professor in Early Modern English Literature and Culture
Department of English
Utrecht University, The Netherlands

Working with issues of translation, adaptation, recension and borrowing, Vikram Singh Thakur's book takes the reader through a journey in which Shakespearean texts perform various roles at critical junctures in Indian performance and literary histories. His book is sure to be of interest to scholars and theatre practitioners alike because it seeks to engage with the imbricated histories of forms and texts and their crosscutting modifications. Thakur's research is a welcome addition to the growing study of Shakespeare in India.

Anuradha Kapur

Theatre maker and teacher

SHAKESPEARE AND
INDIAN THEATRE

SHAKESPEARE AND INDIAN THEATRE

THE POLITICS OF PERFORMANCE

VIKRAM SINGH THAKUR

B L O O M S B U R Y
NEW DELHI • LONDON • OXFORD • NEW YORK • SYDNEY

BLOOMSBURY INDIA
Bloomsbury Publishing India Pvt. Ltd
Second Floor, LSC Building No. 4, DDA Complex, Pocket C – 6 & 7,
Vasant Kunj, New Delhi 110070

BLOOMSBURY, BLOOMSBURY ACADEMIC INDIA and the Diana logo are
trademarks of Bloomsbury Publishing Plc

First published in India 2020
This edition published 2020

Copyright © Vikram Singh Thakur, 2020

Vikram Singh Thakur has asserted his right under the Indian Copyright Act to
be identified as Author of this work

Bloomsbury Academic
An imprint of Bloomsbury Publishing Plc

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted
in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying,
recording, or any information storage or retrieval system, without prior permis-
sion in writing from the publishers

Bloomsbury Publishing Plc does not have any control over, or responsibility for,
any third-party websites referred to or in this book. All internet addresses given in
this book were correct at the time of going to press. The author and publisher
regret any inconvenience caused if addresses have changed or sites have ceased to
exist, but can accept no responsibility for any such changes

ISBN: HB: 978-93-89351-13-2; eBook: 978-93-89351-14-9
ePdf: 978-93-89812-65-7

Typeset in Minion Pro by Manipal Technologies Limited

Bloomsbury Publishing Plc makes every effort to ensure that the papers used in
the manufacture of our books are natural, recyclable products made from wood
grown in well-managed forests. Our manufacturing processes conform to the
environmental regulations of the country of origin.

To find out more about our authors and books visit www.bloomsbury.com and
sign up for our newsletters

For you Papa,

who instilled in me love for literature, theatre and music

Contents

| | |
|--|------|
| <i>List of Images</i> | xi |
| <i>Acknowledgements</i> | xiii |
| <i>Introduction</i> | xvii |
| I The Beginnings: Shakespeare in Calcutta | 1 |
| II Shakespeare in Parsi Theatre | 45 |
| III Shakespeare in Marathi, Kannada, Malayalam and Hindi Theatres | 91 |
| IV Performing Shakespeare in Post-Independence India | 137 |
| <i>Conclusion</i> | 185 |
| <i>Appendix</i> | 191 |
| <i>Bibliography</i> | 227 |
| <i>Index</i> | 229 |
| <i>About the Author</i> | 245 |

List of Images

- 1.1 An advertisement of Herasim Lebedeff's the Bengalee Theatre 11
- 1.2 An advertisement of Girish Ghosh's *Sita Haran* (1898) in the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 2 April 1898 26
- 1.3 An advertisement of *D'arc's Marionettes* or *Living Dolls* (1898) in the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 4 April 1898 27
- 1.4 An advertisement of *Raja Basant Roy* in the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 4 June 1898 28
- 1.5 An advertisement of *The Flower of Persia* and *Sarala* in the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 9 September 1897 29
- 1.6 An advertisement of *Annoda Mangal* and *Sarat-Sarajini* in the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 3 August 1899 30
- 1.7 Cover page of Girish Ghosh's *Macbeth* in Bengali 34
- 2.1 'Programme Note' of a *Social Gathering* of the New High School, 1915–1916 55
- 2.2 'Programme Note' of a *Social Gathering* of the New High School, 1915–1916 with a note on the performances of scenes from Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* and *Julius Caesar* 56
- 2.3 'Programme Note' of a performance by the Parsi students of St. Xavier's College, Bombay (in the aid of The Parsi Sankat Nivaran Fund) on 22 January 1922 57
- 2.4 'Programme Note' of a performance by the Parsi students of St. Xavier's College, Bombay on 22 January 1922 depicting the cast of *Romeo and Juliet* and synopsis of Act 111, scene 1 58

- 2.5 'Programme Note' of a performance by the Parsi students of St. Xavier's College, Bombay (in the aid of The Parsi Sankat Nivaran Fund) on 22 January 1922 depicting the programme schedule and synopsis and cast in Act IV, scene II of Shakespeare's *King John* and Act I, scenes IV and V of *Hamlet* 59
- 2.6 'Programme Note' of a performance by the Parsi students of St. Xavier's College, Bombay (in the aid of The Parsi Sankat Nivaran Fund) on 22 January 1922 depicting the synopsis and cast in Act I, scene III of Shakespeare's *Macbeth* 60
- 2.7 Playbill of a Gujarati play *Dhartikamp* (The Earthquake) directed by Jahangir Pestonji Khambatta and performed on 31 July 1913 62
- 2.8 Playbill of a Gujarati play *Zoolme Narwa* (*Cymbeline*) directed by Jahangir Pestonji for Empress Victoria Theatrical Company in 1899 71
- 2.9 Playbill of a Gujarati play *Zoolme Narwa* (*Cymbeline*) directed by Jahangir Pestonji for Empress Victoria Theatrical Company in 1899 depicting the cast and price of tickets 72
- 2.10 Hamlet's costume in Jal Khambatta's *Hamlet* (n.d. circa. 1940s) 74
- 2.11 Claudius's costume in Jal Khambatta's *Hamlet* (n.d. circa. 1940s) 75
- 2.12 Gertrude's costume in Jal Khambatta's *Hamlet* (n.d. circa. 1940s) 76

Acknowledgements

There are many people and institutions to whom I owe a great debt and without whose support, this work would not have been possible. I express my gratitude to the following.

Bloomsbury Publishing India for publishing my work, my publisher— Mr R. Chandra Sekhar—and the entire team at Bloomsbury. Thanks Chandra for believing in me and making it happen. I will always cherish your professional acumen. I am yet to meet a publisher who is more prompt than you are in replying to all my queries. My thanks to Shreya Chakraborti too for sending me all those ‘author queries’ time and again. They have really been helpful in bringing the work to its present shape.

Prof. Tutun Mukherjee, Prof. B. Ananthakrishnan and Mr Rajiv Velicheti from the University of Hyderabad for their invaluable comments, suggestions and encouragement. I am especially grateful to Prof. Mukherjee and Rajiv for reading my drafts painstakingly and helping me find direction whenever I was ‘lost’.

Prof. Ton Hoenselaars, former President, European Shakespeare Research Association (ESRA), and Prof. Paul Franssen from Utrecht University, The Netherlands, who made my three-month stay at Utrecht comfortable, helped me complete a research project on Shakespeare in The Netherlands and most importantly for pointing towards important questions about Shakespeare in India.

Prof. Professor Mark Thornton Burnett from Queen’s University, Belfast, for providing me with an opportunity to present a paper on Shakespeare in India at the annual conference of the British Shakespeare Association held at Queen’s University, Belfast, Ireland.

Mr M.K. Raina for taking out time to talk about his production *Badshah Pather* with me.

Prof. Anuradha Kapur and Prof. Alok Bhalla for reading my work and writing endorsements for this book.

I am particularly indebted to the staff of National Library (Kolkata), Natya Shodh Sansthan (Kolkata), National School of Drama (Delhi), Natrang Pratishthan (Delhi), Indira Gandhi Memorial Library (University of Hyderabad) and Ramesh Mohan Library (English and Foreign Languages University, Hyderabad).

A special thanks to Dr Shernaz Cama and the staff at Parzor (The UNESCO Parsi Zoroastrian Project) for providing invaluable archival material on Parsi theatre. Dr Cama, I must congratulate you for the mammoth work you have been doing.

My gratitude to Mr Abhijit Bhattacharya, Ms Kamalika Mukherjee and the staff at the Centre for Studies in Social Sciences Calcutta and the British Library for making available the digital archives of Endangered Archives Programme.

To all my students at Ambedkar University Delhi who have patiently listened to me over years (sometimes against their will) and helped me grow as a scholar. Special thanks to Anna Dasgupta for helping with the book cover.

Friends who are too many to name here. I am particularly grateful to friends from the University of Hyderabad, Ambedkar University Delhi and National School of Drama for all your support. A special thanks to Sayan for various conversations on archives and ‘the politics of publishing houses’.

My gratitude to Achhera, my house help, for helping me read Bengali.

My parents-in-law and Aadi for all your support for so many years.

My sisters, Shelley and Mona, for always being there. Thanks Shelley, Param and Sharanya for hosting me during the conference in Belfast. Thanks Mona for believing that I could it.

Eve, thanks for being so patient with me. Thanks for being there and letting me work in solitude. I promise I would spend time with family as soon as I submit this manuscript (and before I embark on the next)!

My mother whose constant support and belief in me have been invaluable. Mummy, thanks for all the teas and breakfasts and wishes and silences for they have gone into writing this book.

Finally, my father, who has been the biggest influence on me. Papa, I can't thank you enough for your wishes and belief in me. I cherish all the discussions and 'arguments' on Shakespeare over drinks. They have helped me shape this work. I am grateful to you for introducing me to the world of literature and theatre. I so much wish that you were here to see this book. I can feel your wishes and blessings ... I have missed you while writing it!

Introduction

This work titled *Shakespeare and Indian Theatre: The Politics of Performance* looks at the reception and production of Shakespeare's plays in India, that date back to the mid-18th century when the British officers in India staged Shakespeare's plays along with other English playwrights for entertainment. This was part of a larger imperialistic design that was evolving during the latter part of the 19th century to establish moral and cultural superiority over India through English education and literature. Shakespeare was a convenient ploy for achieving this aim. T.B. Macaulay, the British historian and politician, in 1835 recommended the inclusion of English language and literature in the syllabi of educational institutions in India. As a result, Shakespeare acquired a prominent place in the Indian educational curriculum. The educated Indian soon began to regard Shakespeare as the most revered writer of all ages. This compulsive love for Shakespeare, at least of young Indian students studying Bard's plays in schools and colleges, led not only to reading of his plays but also performing them, first in private and later in public as well. However, India's engagement with Shakespeare through these 250 years has not been uniform. From being 'imitative' during the first half of the 19th century to being 'popular' during the latter 19th and early 20th centuries to 'urban-folkish' in postcolonial India, the productions of Shakespeare's plays have undergone remarkable transformations.¹

The subject of this study is the production of Shakespeare's plays in India which remains an under-researched area. Although Shakespeare has been translated, adapted and performed in India for more than two centuries, there is hardly any consolidated bibliography or cohesive history available on the subject. This is especially true for those Indian languages which have registered

considerable influence of Shakespeare on their drama and theatre, let alone other languages and their theatre traditions. With so many languages and theatre traditions in India, it is quite challenging to trace Shakespeare's reception and its production throughout India. It would need several scholars from various Indian languages to compile such an encyclopaedia of Shakespeare's reception in India. This book does not attempt such a bold step. For this work, I have limited my area to a few regions with relatively higher theatre activities. There is a discussion of Shakespeare in Bengali and Parsi theatres at length. Other theatre traditions like Marathi, Kannada, Malayalam and Hindi are also equally rich and have registered considerable influence of Shakespeare. Since much of the source material on Shakespeare in India, both primary and secondary, is spread across various languages, it poses a significant challenge to a researcher in the field. However, it also renders Shakespeare a rich, nuanced and complex phenomenon in India. I am also aware that there is a new-found interest in 'Indian Shakespeare' that Bollywood has generated. There are two reasons for this love: Recognising Shakespeare's influence on Bollywood and the acceptance of Bollywood as a global phenomenon. Although Shakespeare has always 'inspired' Bollywood films, unconsciously in many cases, it is the post-Vishal Bhardwaj phenomenon that 'Bollywood Shakespeare' is now considered an important and a serious area of study. Though Shakespeare may have become more visible globally with Bhardwaj's *Maqbool* (2004) and *Omkara* (2006), there is a huge corpus of Bollywood films revolving around Shakespearean themes like star-crossed lovers, feuding families, familial infidelity and ambition overpowering duty since the 1930s.² However, a study of 'Bollywood Shakespeare' is beyond the scope of this work. There is some exciting work happening at the moment on Shakespeare and Indian cinema. Scholars like Craig Dionne, Parmita Kapadia, Poonam Trivedi, Paromita Chakravarti and Jyotsna Singh have been working on Shakespeare and cinema. In this book, I have restricted myself to Shakespeare in theatre only I sincerely hope that

my efforts to trace Shakespeare's reception and production in India would modestly extend the existing scholarship on Shakespeare.

This work does not delve into the study of Western and Indian aesthetics of performance traditions per se yet some observations in this regard would be important for studying the fusion of the aesthetics of these two traditions in 'modern' Indian theatre. Many theatre scholars have argued that the characteristics of modern Indian theatre in its early years was an imitation of Western theatre. Girish Ghosh, a well-known Bengali director and actor, for instance, blended various traditions in his plays, taking elements from *jatra*,³ the Sanskrit tradition, the newly emerging social drama and the Western classics.⁴ Poonam Trivedi argues, 'Not just in politics and governance but in the arts too, and particularly in literature, the engagement with the West began with the imitation of Western forms.'⁵ The reasons for this imitation were many. Classical Sanskrit theatre had almost disappeared by the 11th century and theatre activity in India was sustained by sparse folk and traditional performances, which too were on the decline by the 18th century due to the lack of patronage. There was a void as far as theatre activity was concerned. At this juncture, the decline of folk and traditional performances and the rise of English theatre paved the way for 'modern' Indian theatre. This was furthered by the quest of the emerging Indian middle class for a distinct cultural identity which the English theatre seemed to offer. The indigenous reform movements stemming from the colonial intervention into social practices also paved the way for the emergence of a modern sensibility and thereafter, 'modern' Indian theatre. Folk and traditional performances had already come under severe attack by the British for being 'licentious', 'immoral' and 'degraded'. The educated Indian middle class followed the colonial example and condemned these performances as degenerate that needed cleansing to become suitable for 'respectable' viewing. Indologists suggested differentiating between the 'great' and the 'little' traditions. Thus, emerged the difference between the *margi*

(classical) and the desi (folk) which in turn influenced the treatment of all expressive forms. As regards the theatre, the model provided by the Western theatre was followed in terms of conventions, techniques and devices. Representing this 'imitative' theatre are the early productions of plays mostly in English by the educated Indians. School and college students especially staged Shakespeare's plays which has been discussed at length in Chapter II. However, with the 're-discovery' of Sanskrit drama, especially after William Jones's translation of Kalidasa's *Sakuntala* (1789), Indian dramatists started looking towards their classical dramatic tradition, even in the next century. This looking towards their traditions had a two-fold result. First, Indian writers started translating Sanskrit drama into other Indian languages. Before the colonial period, there were hardly any translations of Sanskrit drama in any of the Indian languages. The second and the more important result was the syncretism of Western and Indian aesthetics, dramatic and theatrical conventions, techniques and devices that characterise the later years of Indian theatre. The focus on syncretism is significant, as it generates a more nuanced way of looking at modern Indian theatre which came about as a result of a fusion between the two theatre traditions. The fusion created a new kind of theatre which while drawing upon Western aesthetics and conventions, indigenised them by incorporating aesthetics and conventions from classical and traditional performances. Trivedi rightly argues in this context that 'the imitation of Western forms in India served not so much as a model of mimetic subordination but as an intercultural interaction that created for itself 'a margin of freedom', a 'self-consciousness' of the 'possibility of the new'.⁶

Classical theatre in India had been governed by the aesthetics laid down by Bharata in the *Natyasastra* written somewhere between 2nd century BC and 2nd century AD. This is a comprehensive treatise on Sanskrit theatre, poetics, aesthetics, dance and music. Although Sanskrit theatre had lost its glory by the 11th century, various principles of the *Natyasastra* had percolated into the traditional

theatres of India which sustained theatrical activity before 'modern' Indian theatre took shape. *Sutradhar*, for example, an important character in the Sanskrit theatre, retained its role in *yakshagana* as *bhagvata* and in *raslila* as *swami*.⁷ Unlike Aristotle's *Poetics* that deals with the literary aspects of a drama, the *Natyasastra* is much wider in scope. It depicts various aspects of performance, the literary text is just one among these. A comparative study of the *Poetics* and *Natyasastra* is not the objective of this study. It is, however, necessary for the argumentative framework of this work to highlight the elements related to the dramatic text and performance in both the traditions that found a fusion in modern Indian theatre. For instance, in the Western, especially in Aristotelian aesthetics, tragedy has been regarded as the highest literary form. The preference for a tragic end in Aristotle's *Poetics* leading to catharsis or the purgation of pity and fear in the spectator is considered the ultimate end of poetry. Theoreticians like Horace and Philip Sidney endorsed that the ideal combination of *arche* and *telos* would move the audience towards ethical and moral self-realisation. All of Shakespeare's tragedies have tragic ends. Such a concept of tragedy is absent in the Sanskrit aesthetics as laid down by Bharata. The ultimate end of drama in Indian dramatic theory is the enjoyment and the realisation of *rasa*.⁸ According to the *Natyasastra*, the play of *rasa* in the drama leads to *sthayibhava* after *phalprapti* that means that the protagonist attains his/her desire in the end.⁹ In Kalidasa's *Sakuntala*, for instance, after the ordeals the protagonists have gone through, the drama ends with the union of Dushyanta and Sakuntala. While in Western aesthetics, there are well-defined categories of tragedy and comedy, classical Indian aesthetics does not have such definitive categories. On the contrary, the *rasa-siddhanta* (theory of *rasa*) in the *Natyasastra* does not subscribe to a performance that has only one *rasa*. This is probably the reason that one cannot find a 'pure' tragedy in the Indian dramatic tradition. Bharata insists that there be many *rasas* in a play (in fact, the greater number of *rasas* the better a play is) but one

of them has to be the principle *rasa*. The other *rasas* would be merely secondary. However, as Shakespeare's plays came to be translated and performed in India in the 19th century, the tragic end gradually came to be accepted by the Indian dramatists as well as the spectators. Shakespeare's plays epitomise the inclusion of the tragic ending in the Indian dramatic tradition.

An important difference between the Western and Indian aesthetics of drama is that the Western aesthetics marks a difference between the character who represents action and articulates dialogue and the chorus which comments on the action and presents songs and dances. In Nietzschean terms, in the Western aesthetics, there is a distinction between the Apollonian and the Dionysian elements as in the classical Greek drama, while dance and drama are integrated into one and are inseparable in the Indian aesthetics of performance.¹⁰ While in the Greek tragedies, it is generally the Apollonian element that dominates the Dionysian element, it is the Dionysian element represented by dance, music, song and stylization which is emphasized in the *Natyasastra*. Bharata's preference for *natyadharmi* (suggestive/stylised) to *lokadharmi* (ordinary/realistic) makes this clear. In Marathi theatre, Vishnudas Bhave's plays generally referred to as *akhyans* had music and songs as an essential element.¹¹ Songs were formally composed while the speeches and dialogues were largely improvised by the actors and were impromptu. However, one finds that the contact with English drama and theatre that was governed mainly by the Apollonian element with regard to dialogue and action, gave rise to a new kind of drama in the Indian languages in which the Apollonian element of dialogue and action became important, without completely losing the Dionysian elements of song and dance. Parsi theatre, as will be discussed in Chapter II, is a suitable example of this fusion. In Parsi theatre, dialogue and action occupy an important place, but the songs and dances are also accorded equal importance. In fact, the fusion of the two aesthetic elements of dialogue and action, song and dance, find their best manifestation in Parsi theatre.

Not only the aesthetics of playwriting but that of performance also saw a happy fusion in modern Indian theatre. Indian theatre, both classical and traditional, emphasised the capacity of the imagination of the spectators. Hence, both used empty space without décor. However, the advent of Western theatre brought the idea of representing nature on the stage. Painted scenes were hung at the back and/or rolled down for particular scenes. Although proscenium theatre became a vogue following the Western model, one finds, that even the proscenium stage was not adopted indiscriminately. Unlike the levels in the Western proscenium stage, the proscenium stage in India was mostly empty that enabled the actor to move freely either in a realistic manner or in a stylised way. The empty stage also helped the actors, particularly for the dance sequences that demanded free movement. Again, a good example to prove this is to look at the performances of Parsi theatre in the proscenium theatre. While they employed box sets, painted curtains and transformation scenes, they also incorporated folk forms like *bhavai*, *yaksagana* or *lavani* and Urdu, Gujarati or Persian ghazals and thumris. The mixing of these conventions becomes clearer in the following account provided by R.K. Yajnik:

In the midst of the noise and bustle of the Urdu theatre, opened an hour before the performance, one hears three bells at short intervals and with the third bell a thundering gunshot is heard as the drop-curtain, gorgeously painted with mythological legends, goes up. The chorus girls sing a prayer or a 'welcome' to the accompaniment of the harmonium and rhythmic drum beats. This song ends with an offering of flowers to the distinguished patrons and with garlanding the portraits of the pioneers of the respective company or of deities. Then the action commences.¹²

The account detailed previously clearly shows that even if Parsi theatre drew upon Western stage conventions, they were adapted to suit the sensibility of the target culture. Rustom Bharucha refers to this fusion of the theatrical conventions of the two performance traditions in Parsi theatre which were,

mediated by the colonial machinery of the nineteenth-century theatre, the conventions and stage tricks derived from the pantomimes and

historical extravaganzas of the English Victorian stage. However, it should be emphasized that these derivations had been thoroughly ‘Indianized’ through music, song, colour, pathos, melodrama and the histrionic delivery of lines that are intrinsically a part of the popular theatrical tradition in India.¹³

It is this fusion of aesthetics exemplified by performances of Shakespeare’s plays in India that this study hopes to illustrate.

The last two decades have seen a shift of focus from text to performance in Shakespeare studies as evident from the number of studies on Shakespeare’s performance published over the last two decades. Although the domain of Shakespeare studies has always accommodated new perspectives, Western scholarship has tended to ignore Shakespeare productions in non-Western countries. If non-Western Shakespeare appears at all in Western scholarship, it is mostly the ‘intercultural’ performances using non-Western traditional forms of performance. Productions like that of Annette Leday and David McRuvie’s *Kathakali King Lear* (1989), Tim Supple’s multilingual production of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* (2006) or productions of Ariane Mnouchkine and Peter Brook that appropriate non-Western forms of performance have been noticed in the Western world. Non-Western Shakespeare productions, however, have largely been ignored in the West especially in the recent discourse on the performance of Shakespeare at a time when postcolonial theory has made significant contributions and even changed the critical paradigms in understanding Shakespeare’s text.

Recently some attempts have been made in the West to include non-English Shakespeare productions in Shakespeare studies. Some of these works include Dennis Kennedy’s edited volume *Foreign Shakespeare: Contemporary Performance* (1993), James C. Bulam’s edited book *Shakespeare, Theory and Performance* (1996), Pascale Aebischer et al. also published an edited volume in 2003, *Remaking Shakespeare: Performance across Media, Genres and Culture*, the 2005 Barbara Hodgdon and W.B. Worthen’s edited *A Companion to*

Shakespeare and Performance and Sonia Massai's edited book *Worldwide Shakespeares: Local Appropriations in Film and Performance* published in 2005. However, the number of essays related to the performance of Shakespeare in Asia, particularly in India that probably has the longest history of Shakespearean performances outside England, is quite scant in all these volumes. The major portions are dedicated to the study of Western productions. Kennedy's *Foreign Shakespeare*, no doubt, tries to broaden the scope of the scholarship on Shakespeare by taking into account non-English Shakespearean productions. Unfortunately, the work only accommodates Shakespearean productions from Germany, France and Central Europe. By leaving out Shakespearean productions from non-European countries, except one essay discussing Shakespearean performances in Japan, the work too remains largely Euro-centric. There is no mention of Shakespearean productions in India. Bulman's *Shakespeare, Theory and Performance* discusses various issues involved in Shakespearean performance ranging from actor's body, gender, stagecraft and performance editions. Here too, postcolonial Shakespeare finds a place in only an essay by Dennis Salter 'Acting Shakespeare in Postcolonial Space' that discusses the problems faced by actors in enacting a colonial text in a postcolonial society. However, his analysis is limited to Shakespeare's performances in Quebec. Aebischer's *Remaking Shakespeare* expands the range of Shakespeare studies by including performances across media like biography, sign language and novel, in addition to films and theatre. There is, however, only one essay in the volume by Poonam Trivedi titled 'Reading "Other Shakespeares"' on non-Western Shakespeare. Hodgdon's *A Companion to Shakespeare and Performance* is the most comprehensive of all the works on Shakespeare performance containing 34 essays out of which only Ania Loomba's 'Shakespeare and the Possibilities of Postcolonial Performance' and Yong Li Lan's 'Shakespeare and the Fiction of the Intercultural' discuss Shakespearean performances in Asia. The rest of the volume is

about Shakespearean performances in the West. Massai's *World-wide Shakespeares: Local Appropriations in Film and Performance* is a welcome attempt, as it includes Shakespeare 'world-wide'. As Massai herself admits, the book has 'a genuinely international scope', and includes various Shakespearean performances across the world including an essay on Shakespearean productions in India by Poonam Trivedi titled "It is the bloody business which informs thus ...": Local Politics and Performative Praxis'.

Realising this Eurocentrism in Shakespearean studies, scholars from postcolonial societies that still show a considerable influence of Shakespeare in their literatures and theatres, have attempted to represent non-Western Shakespearean studies. Two attempts on Shakespearean performances in India are notable. The first is an unpublished PhD dissertation by Parmita Kapadia (University of Massachusetts, 1999) titled *Bastardizing the Bard: Appropriations of Shakespeare's Plays in Post-Colonial India*. Although the dissertation takes into account the postcolonial appropriations of Shakespeare in India, it discusses only the English productions. The second is an edited anthology by Poonam Trivedi and Dennis Bartholomeusz titled *India's Shakespeare: Translation, Interpretation, and Performance* (2005). The work is commendable for its scope and includes the translation, interpretation and performance of Shakespeare's plays in India. However, the analyses of performances like Dutt's *Macbeth*, Tanveer's *Kamdeo ka Apna Vasant Ritu ka Sapna* or Karanth's *Barnam Van* finds just a page each of discussion. Understandably, some important productions like Lokendra Arambam's *Macbeth: Stage of Blood* which fuses the original text with the troubled history of Manipur is absent. Trivedi, however, published an essay later on the same in Massai's aforementioned work. Arambam's production using elements from Meitei mythology, rituals, culture and performance traditions like *thang ta* is probably the best example of using Shakespeare to subvert specific agenda and express the political concerns and aspirations of contemporary society.¹⁴

Two more recent works *Re-playing Shakespeare in Asia* (2010) edited by Poonam Trivedi and Minami Ryuta and *Performing Shakespeare in India: Exploring Indianness, Literatures and Cultures* (2016) edited by Shormishtha Panja and Babli Moitra Saraf are welcome attempts. Another interesting work that has come out exploring the relationship between Shakespeare and India is *Bollywood Shakespeares* (2014) edited by Craig Dionne and Parmita Kapadia. As the title suggests the work deals with Shakespeare and Indian cinema with two chapters on Vikram Singh Thakur's 'Parsi Shakespeare: The Precursor to "Bollywood Shakespeare"' and Parmita Kapadia's 'Bollywood Battles the Bard: The Evolving Relationship between Film and Theater in *Shakespeare Wallah*' linking theatre and cinema in India. The most recent work that has appeared in the field of Shakespeare Studies in India is Jonathan Gil Harris's *Masala Shakespeare: How a Firangi Writer Became Indian* (2018). It is quite different from all the other works mentioned earlier. Written in a style that follows the structure of Shakespearean drama, the book is divided into five acts and several scenes. Most of the scenes are titled after well-known Bollywood songs. The book in fact in a curious and a personal way establishes the relationship between Shakespeare's art and the Indian *masala* film. It is heartening to see a wide range of recent work in contemporary Shakespeare studies. However, there is much more in the area that needs to be explored.

This work is divided into four chapters, an 'Introduction' and a 'Conclusion' along with an appendix of translations and adaptations of Shakespeare available in various Indian languages. Following the 'Introduction', Chapter I is titled "The Beginnings: Shakespeare in Calcutta" that in turn is divided into three sections. Section I on 'English Theatre in the 18th and Early 19th Centuries in Calcutta' discusses English theatres in Calcutta opened by the British colonists that staged Shakespeare's plays along with those of other English eminent playwrights for entertainment. It also discusses the role played by the English in the opening of play-houses in Calcutta.

Section II, 'Spread of English Education in India', discusses the role of English education through the introduction of Shakespeare into the curriculum to promote the colonial project. Section III, 'Shakespeare Productions in Calcutta', discusses Shakespeare's adaptations and translations in Calcutta starting with various school and college productions that were staged in Calcutta. It also looks at the shift from English to Bengali productions with time.

An important point that one might miss when dealing with these early Shakespeare productions is that even during the colonial period, the reception of Shakespeare's plays in India did face some resistance which is not usually acknowledged by scholars. Dennis Kennedy observes,

[W]hereas in Europe the Shakespeare project embraced the translation and outright appropriation of the texts, in Asia the imperial mode tended to bring them in the original language as a demonstration of the linguistic and the cultural superiority of the conqueror. This was most notable in India, of course, where the insertion of the Shakespearean text into native life paralleled the insertion of the power of the master's race.¹⁵

Such an argument assumes that Shakespeare was received passively in colonial societies like India. However, this was not always the case. Resistance to Shakespeare was registered in various ways. Scholars like Samarjit Dutta whose *Shakespeare's Macbeth: An Oriental Study* (1921), *Shakespeare's Othello: An Oriental Study* (1923) and *Shakespeare's Hamlet: An Oriental Study* (1928) and Ranjee Shahni whose *Shakespeare Through Eastern Eyes* (1932) were trying to evoke Indian responses to Shakespeare's work, taking into account various factors like race, ethnicity and culture. Another form of resistance was seen in the comparisons made between Shakespeare and Kalidasa. Parmita Kapadia argues, 'in their comparisons, Indian scholars seeking to promote Indian nationalism and pride would universalise Kalidasa and argue that Shakespeare was the more provincial writer'.¹⁶ Yet, another instance is Jai Vijay Narain Singh Sharma's 'Introduction' to *Shakespeare Katha-gatha (Shakespeare's Tales and*