

**The Colours of the Butterfly : A
Discourse on the Problematics
and Issues of the Shakespea-
rean presence in Bangladesh
(1858-1988)**

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A discussion of the cultivation of Shakespearean literature and drama in the region that was East Bengal and East Pakistan and is now Bangladesh, is indubitably bound up with the social and cultural development of that region and with the linkage and parallelism that such a development had with similar events in what was East Bengal's intellectual and historical elder if not mentor, Calcutta. If the emergence of a strong interest in Shakespearean literature and performance in Calcutta in the nineteenth century is to be seen and understood in the light of both, a strong spate of translational activity in the vernacular medium and in the rise of amateur and professional playhouses in Calcutta from about the middle of the century,¹ then the arrival and prevalence of Shakespearean literature in East Bengal is also to be sought on

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such indirect but related social and literary levels. From about the middle of the nineteenth century East Bengal, with its rural population, its fewer schools and colleges, and its different, relatively less sophisticated literary tastes also knew Shakespeare, but this was a Shakespeare culturally mediated by Calcutta, conditioned by the uneven civic and intellectual development of its only urban center—Dhaka, and absorbed into its academic and social life in a manner that was more sporadic and discontinuous than that of its Western counterpart but that in its own right makes for a sketchy yet fascinating record.

To say that the record is sketchy and concerned almost wholly with Dhaka is to confront at the outset merely the most obvious problematic of this material. Between 1858 and the present time Shakespeare was known in Eastern Bengal—in the original and in vernacular translations, among coterie circles and in popular levels, in the classroom and on the stage. There are times when no evidence of his work exists and times when syllabic or curricular evidence is not matched by anything on the social or non-academic level. Documentary evidence is frequently erratic and scanty, and data bases far and few in between, both not unsurprising perhaps in a region hit by three major geopolitical convulsions and demographic shifts in the period we are considering—the partition of Bengal in 1905, the partition of India in 1947 and the birth of Bangladesh in 1971. Recent Shakespearean activity is both a beginning and a resurgence—exploratory and tentative in its own right, yet, in many ways more substantial and serious than the previous record. Chronological exposition is itself

a difficulty, given the non-uniformity of the data.

Thus, to discuss the pursuit of Shakespearean literature in East Bengal in terms of any historical or traditional continuity is a project that is as inviting to accept as it is difficult to conduct with any degree of conviction, a phenomenon as pervasive as it is subtle, as much a matter of hard data as of deductive inference and broad generalization. Choices of investigative strategy regarding this material would involve, the levels at which evidence of Shakespearean activity is to be sought (social or popular or literary and academic, in the vernacular or in the original), the theoretical and ideological framework within which such evidence may be legitimately and usefully considered (historical-sociological or literary-critical), and the possible rhetorical and substantive purpose which such an investigation may serve (social analyses or a study of literary impact or influence). Finally of course, there is the extent to which all these choices overlap and modulate each other.

These choices do not, however, eliminate the problematics of this material, they simply render them coherent and constructive. In other words, problematics *are* the particular modality of this material, the specific feature by which its disuniformities and obfuscations become the elements and directions of intellectual enquiry and its very silences translate into conjectures of meaning. It is by means of its problematics that the spare, diffuse and seemingly unconnected datum of this material lends itself into an organic overview, unburdened by the restrictiveness of conclusions and committed only to reasoned surmise and hypothesis.

The heterogeneity of the data available suggests three natural divisions in the discussion of this material. The first concerns the explosion of amateur and professional theatrical activity in the vernacular that occurred in Dhaka between 1858 and 1900 and that included in its fare commercialized versions of adaptations of Shakespearean material by Bengali playwrights in West Bengal. The second involves the expansion and institutionalization of Shakespearean activity on the academic level, in the original, that must have occurred between 1921 and 1949, with the establishment of Dhaka University. The third comprises the increased modernity and commitment of the combined Shakespearean activity of the popular, academic and literary levels that have occurred in the decades following the Second world war until the present. These divisions, bounded simply by the earliest dates at which the data for that kind of activity is available, are less periods of chronologic convenience than rough taxonomic signs that help us consider one principal mode of Shakespearean activity at a time while not disallowing a certain degree of overlap and correlation with other modes. They each define one kind of problematic, the successive correlation of which may help make for a few tentative insights into both the fact and the meaning of how Shakespeare has fared in Bangladesh.

II

Theatrical performance is, with the possible exception of the dance, the most evanescent of the performing arts. It is an electrifying event when it is being performed,

but it vanishes into thin air when it is over. It is an occasion for various categories of spiritual and mental enjoyment, but rarely for documentation. So records of dramatic performances are the hardest of datum to discover, and it is difficult to say what was the earliest date at which a Shakespeare play, in any form, was performed in East Bengal.

In the absence of any other data, and purely as a point from which to begin, we may consider the date 1858, the year in which there was a performance of *Macbeth*, in the last week of September, in Pabna, in the theatre of the British military station located there. The performance took place in a building donated to the station by a local indigo cultivator named Kelly, and the stage was set in a room decorated gaily with flags of different countries. There was also a mini orchestra, equipped with a trumpet, drum, behala and flute, in attendance. The performance, which cost Rs. 100.00 to mount, was enjoyed by the local expatriate colonial gentry who came to see it, and was evidently a social event worth reporting according to the correspondent who sent it to the *Dhaka News*.²

Such performances in British military field stations were not unusual at the time—Chittagong and Sylhet also had such events—so much so that *Dhaka News* complained about the absence of such activities from Dhaka.³ But, this performance, like others of its type, was organized, paid for, and seen almost exclusively, by the foreign military and civilian community who initiated this kind of activity for their private pleasure to relieve the monotony field station postings. Thus, it could not be said to

represent anything other than an isolated phenomenon little linked to the local population. In any case, this is the only record of a Shakespearean performance as such that can be found at this date.

Almost as a result, as it were, of the complaint voiced by *Dhaka News*, more substantial dramatic activity occurred in Dhaka from the 1880's onwards. But what happened then cannot be dissociated from the explosion of interest in Shakespearean drama that occurred in Calcutta in the nineteenth century. The body of Shakespearean dramatic translations that was given inception by *The Tempest's* translation into Bengali by the British cleric, Claude Monkton, in Fort William College in 1805, is 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 of Bengal. As several modern Bengali literary historians have pointed out, these vernacular dramatic compositions, initially tentative, but increasingly more experimental, innovative and adaptative in character, were conceived in conscious emulation of both the practice as well as the substance of Shakespeare's plays.⁴ The repertoire of this fairly defined body of Shakespearean translated and adapted material, which included almost repeatedly and throughout the century works such as *Vranti Bilash* (Comedy of Errors), *Charumukh Chittohara* (Romeo and Juliet), *Krishno Kumari* (King Lear), *Nabin Topposhini* (The Merry Wives of Windsor), *Jana* (Coriolanus), *Jamai Barik* (Taming of the Shrew), *Nalini Bosonto* and *Kopal Kundola* (The Tempest),⁵ was available to both, an interested reading public since

its practitioners were respected literary public figures of the like of Horochondro Ghose, Girish Ghose, Iswar Chondro Bidyasagar, Michael Madhusudan Dutta, Dinobandhu Mitra, as well as to an enthusiastic theatre-going public which emerged almost immediately with the establishment of the several public theatres of amateur and professional varieties that began to operate in Calcutta from about the second half of the nineteenth century.⁶

Partly as a parallel to, and partly as an extension of, the fever of theatrical activity in Calcutta, drama groups and playhouses appeared in Dhaka for the first time in the 1860's. Dhaka's first public theatre hall—Purbo Bango Rangobhumi (East Bengal Dramatic Hall)—appeared in 1862, as a result of the efforts of a few school teachers, lawyers and local landlords.⁷ Located approximately behind the present location of Jagannath College, the hall was not only the home also of Dhaka's first, albeit amateur, theatre company—the Purbo Bongo Natya Samaj (East Bengal Drama Society), but also the center for all kinds of civic activities. For about two and a half decades this was Dhaka's only stage and therefore heavily in demand by the numerous amateur and professional theatrical companies that sprang up all over what is essentially now old Dhaka in the environs of Nawabpur, Islampur Farashganj, Thattari Bazar, Babubazar, and so on. Of the names of some of these groups that have survived in spare documentation and popular memory, The Great Imperial Theatre (1899), Pride of Bengal Theatre (1871), Nawabpur Amateur Theatre Company (1860-71), Olympian Theatre (1881), Sanaton Natya Somaj (1889), are

significant in the fact that they were all active at some time or another in that period in putting on theatrical performances on a fully professional basis—that is, performances for which tickets were sold. The establishment of two less makeshift public playhouses—The Diamond Jubilee Theatre (1887) and The Crown Theatre (1890)—both in the area immediately fronting present Islampur,⁸ was merely a response to, and a symptom of, the small but regular theatre going public that had emerged in Dhaka in the three decades between the 1860 and the close of the century.

It was on the rickety boards of these crowded stages that Shakespearean drama first arrived in Dhaka, albeit in the aforementioned translated and adapted, commercialized varieties that were pouring out of Calcutta. The first Shakespeare play to arrive, and the one that seems to have been the most popular, being performed by local amateur as well as by touring professional groups from Calcutta was “নবীন তপস্বিনী” (Nabin Toposhini), Dinobandhu Mitra’s translation of *Merry Wives of Windsor*. This play was first performed by an amateur group in 1873 and then by touring groups from Calcutta repeatedly from 1873 to 1898. Other translated Shakespeare plays that followed next were “কৃষ্ণ কুমারী” (Krisno Kumari), Michael Modhusudan translation of King’s Lear also in 1873. “জনা” (Jana) or Girish Ghose’s translated adaptation of *Coriolanus* in 1899, and “জামাই বারিক” (Jamai Barik) or Dinobandhu Mitra’s Bengali version of *The Taming of the Shrew*. That these performances were the source and subject of considerable social excitement among Dhaka’s educated gentry is evident from the considerable discussion

about the relative merits and demerits of each of these productions that appeared in the pages of “ঢাকা প্রকাশ” (Dhaka Prokash) in those decades.⁹ That these performances were highly rated is also indicated by the frequent appearances in them of the finest actors of the time, such as Ardhango Mustafi. Whether other Shakespeare plays were also performed existing records do not indicate,—other vernacular plays are listed in the performances of the time—but quite clearly these plays held Dhaka’s budding theatrical interest until the end of the century. That such performances began to fade away from after the nineties is attributable in part to the rise of a new and altogether different entertainment medium of no less power than the drama—the cinema or “baiscope” as it was first called, and to which the theatre companies quickly turned.¹⁰

But this record of Shakespearean theatrical activity in Dhaka may be seen to confuse as much as it clarifies. For one thing, Shakespearean drama did not come to Dhaka exclusively—it was borne on the wave of vernacular drama that was flowing all over Bengal then. It is seriously debatable whether the plays that did come, came or were known at all to Dhaka audiences as Shakespearean plays per se.¹¹ Furthermore, even if these plays are allowed as evidence of Shakespearean dramatic activity in Dhaka, the cultural choices they represent do not speak for a deep or considered inclination for Shakespeare on the part of the local population. Their taste for Shakespeare seems to be confined either to low farce and tomfoolery of *The Taming of the Shrew* or *Merry Wives of Windsor* varieties, or to the rough and ready politics and antiquarian historicism of a *Coriolanus*. If King Lear

is seen it is seen more in the exaggerated trappings of a romance tale than as Shakespearean high tragedy. As several literary historians have observed, these precisely were the features of the crude literary and cultural character of Dhaka's and Bengal's semi-literate population.¹² Thus, the performance of these plays may be as indicative of an expression of Bengal's own native literary character as of any particular preference for Shakespeare. Finally, even on the vernacular level these were all, so to speak, imported works. No translational activity for drama was occurring in Dhaka—none of the performances were of scripts produced or devised in East Bengal. Thus, as evidence of a Shakespearean presence in East Bengal, this slim record of performances of a few lesser Shakespearean plays, presented in imported and apparently unacknowledged vernacular guise may not be enough.

More dependable evidence should be sought, then, on the educational or academic/scholarly levels. In the last four decades of the nineteenth century Dhaka had two colleges—Jagannath College established in 1858 and Dhaka College established in the 1870's—both affiliated to the University of Calcutta. Whether Shakespeare was on the curriculum of these colleges has not been circumstantially possible for this author to determine. But it is a matter of some inference that he may have been, simply because there does exist one piece of evidence of a scholarly interest in Shakespeare on the academic level in Dhaka. This is an article published in the Dhaka College Journal অধ্যায়ন (Adhoyan), edited by a member of the college faculty named N. Majumder, in 1893, of translations of Shakespeare's poems titled “সেউপিয়ান নামের

ও লুকান" (Shakespeare, Marlowe and Lucan).¹³ However may be the quality of this work, this interest in translation of Shakespeare on the academic scholarly level may be a more dependable register of Dhaka's attraction for Shakespeare than the performance of unacknowledged vernacular translations of his minor plays imported from Calcutta mentioned above. Evidence of interest in translations of Shakespeare in Dhaka also exists on the popular level. A few years earlier, in 1888, a series of translations 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 উপন্যাস কুসুম (Uponnyash Kushum). Two titles were advertised initially, *Romeo and Juliet* and *All's Well That Ends Well*, the latter under the translated title (Vishok Duhita or The Merchant's Daughter). The translator's name was listed as G. C. Dey.¹⁴ In the inside flap of the front cover was a blurb from *The Indian Mirror* that read :

The story is put together in the style of the best Bengali novels of the day and is altogether an attractive study.

Whether the series came out subsequently or was discontinued is not known. Beyond these two items of a more dependable local interest in Shakespeare in Dhaka, nothing else has been discovered at this time.

The record therefore continues to be slim but its range has increased. The three kinds of evidence of interest in Shakespeare taken together makes possible a reasoned surmise that Dhaka knew Shakespeare—although that knowledge varied from the unacknowledged and

hence unformalized and indirect Shakespearean presence in commercial vernacular drama seen by Dhaka audiences to the popular though educated reading taste for Shakespearean material transmuted within native literary forms, to the formally academic and puristic translational explorations of Shakespearean poetry. At the same time, however, it needs to be observed that this picture does not survive the century. And hence is applicable only to the closing decades.

III

With the passing 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 for us is the one that occurred on the educational level. With the setting up of Dhaka University in 1921 evidence of syllabic curricular interest in and knowledge of Shakespeare begins to appear. Shakespeare is in the English literature syllabus of Dhaka University from 1921 with the plays *King Lear*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *Macbeth*, and *1 Henry IV*.¹⁵ With this 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 makes the pursuit of Shakespeare more Westernized—evidenced in the two formal academic articles on Shakespeare in that appeared in the Dhaka University Studies between 1920 and 1950—one on Shakespeare's characterization in *Merchant of Venice* by Dr. M. Hasan and the other on Shakespeare's influence on the Restoration dramatist Thomas Otway by B. C. Das, in 1936 and 1939 respectively

(see appendix A). In both of these articles attempts were made to participate in professional Shakespearean 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 *Merchant of Venice* at Mahbub Ali Institute, Jagannath College in 1912.¹⁶ But to return to the present context of our discussion, *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 a recitation of *Merchant of Venice* at Dhaka University.¹⁷

As is evident from this data, the character of the interest in Shakespeare in Dhaka changed in the first half of the twentieth century. Now it is not that the native vernacular literary character and taste no longer provides the basis for, and is the vehicle of, an interest in Shakespeare, but that such native vernacular literary taste is no longer the sole medium of an interest in Shakespeare in the local population. An educated, if Anglicized local

knowledge of, Shakespeare has also grown. The range of interest in, and knowledge of, Shakespeare has thus widened, implicit in the widening of the character and cultural and literary taste of the East Bengal middle class located in Dhaka. Shakespeare is approached now in English, in the classroom, as well as in the vernacular on the popular level. Effective, if sole, evidence of the latter is provided by a translation of *Merchant of Venice* as ভেনিসের বণিক by R. Chokroborty published by Hena Press in 1936.¹⁸ If the older population of Dhaka (the dominant ethnic group represented by the thriving, educated Hindu professionals and landed gentry of late nineteenth century Dhaka) still survive, if in reduced number, with their taste for Shakespeare mainly in native dress, then now they have been joined by an increasingly prosperous educated newer population (the dominant ethnic group represented by the now established and consciously—aspiring to be—different urban Muslims) with their taste for Shakespeare in Western dress.

A partial indicator of the increase in the range of taste for Shakespeare among the population in this period is the list of plays now studied and performed. If before it were the elements of romance narrative (*Romeo and Juliet*), or bawdy farce (*Marry Wives of Windsor* and *Taming of the Shrew*) or crude political history of the antiquarian, populist variety (*Coriolanus*) that were the determining features of the character of that taste, now it is high tragedy in the Western mould (*King Lear*, *Macbeth*), mature problematic comedy of either the *Much Ado About Nothing* variety or of the riotous but troubled Falstaffian mould within the formal framework of the

English history play. There is still a penchant for high political history with a populist tinge and a melodramatically stylized historical grandeur but now it has moved from the crude accents of *Coriolanus* to the statelier notes of *Julius Caesar*. On the performance level, that student amateurs now turn repeatedly to *Merchant of Venice* or *Othello* may mean that now themes of racial and ethnic alienation, adjustment and definition are what preoccupy them. These are also not unlikely concerns in terms of the political turmoil that East Bengal went through in the first five decades of the century, leading up to the partition of India in 1949.

But, even if the above argument about the expansion and implicit enrichment of the interest of East Bengalis in Shakespeare in the first half of the twentieth century is admitted, it at best a tenuous hypothesis. The scantiness of the evidence not only does not permit any dependability to this hypothesis, it also raises questions about the feasibility of the hypothesis itself given the absence of any other kind of data in this period, including the growth of either any kind of serious dramatic activity or of substantial scholarly or academic discourse in English or in the vernacular. The two academic articles mentioned here are unrelated to the local world in time and history in which they appear, so that their Shakespeare may be said to be a curiously colourless and lifeless one. This feature and the fact that there seems to be little record of Shakespearean theatrical activity in the vernacular during these years may point to a situation in which a developing Muslim Bengali community, culturally distant from actual drama e. i. theatre for ideological

reasons (Islam's prohibition of drama), approached Shakespeare antiseptically as literature, in the abstract, removed if possible from their own time and place. Whether a solely anglicized interest in Shakespeare is in itself of any historical value thus becomes a moot question. It is only when the two impulses—to know Shakespeare in home grown clothes as well as in western attire—merge, can it be said an enrichment of interest in Shakespeare has occurred. In other words, if now whether more people read, knew or thought of Shakespeare still remains difficult to determine, whether they read, knew or thought of him more *seriously* than before is even more difficult to ascertain. Thus, while the Shakespearean presence in East Bengal/Pakistan up to the end of the first half of the twentieth century can perhaps be established on circumstantial grounds, the qualitative character of that presence still remains an open question.

IV

The three decades from the fifties to the present constitute a third and final period for our discussion, not only because the population we are considering underwent two major geopolitical changes—from East Bengal to East Pakistan in 1949 and from East Pakistan to Bangladesh in 1971—but also because tendencies in this region's relationship to Shakespeare that we noted in the earlier sections took a wider and deeper hold. Shakespeare was approached on the syllabic-academic and critical/scholarly levels, on the translational level, as well as on the theatrical level in both the vernacular medium as well as in English—all with signs of relatively more maturation. With the

rise and spread of educational institutions in the decades following the partition of India—Dhaka University was joined soon by Rajshahi University and then by Jahangirnagar University and Chittagong University, and Dhaka and Jagannath Colleges were kept company by distinguished colleges such as B.M. College in Barisal, M.C. college in Sylhet and Carmichael college in Rangpur—the Shakespearean presence on the syllabic level increased manifold, just as the range in which he was taught also increased. It would be sufficient to say that in these three decades more Shakespeare (including all his major works in all the genres of the canon) was taught in more places in this region than ever before. And he was approached in terms that were simultaneously historically fresh as well as a culmination of trends started in the previous decades.

As manifestation of the increased body of participation in Shakespearean discourse, on the academic levels in Dhaka alone is the fact that compared to two published scholarly/critical works on Shakespeare in the period 1921 to 1950, between 1950 to the present seventeen items of published scholarly/critical discussion of Shakespeare, in single works and anthologies, in English as well as in Bangla, can be noticed—twelve in the former and three in the latter (1 book, 1 anthology and 10 articles in English, and 1 anthology, 3 articles and 2 books in Bangla—see Appendix A). Although the majority of these represent formal academic work, written for professional reasons, that very fact means that a professional academic body of opinion on Shakespeare has now grown in this region, developing a trend started earlier. And that a lot of this work is in English is more than any-

thing else reflective of the linguistic emphasis on the instructional level at these institutions: in the twenty one years between 1950 to 1971 works are more in English because that was the medium of instruction. From 1971 to 1988 we find instances of critical scholarly discussions in Bangla because now Bangla has also entered the official level of instructional discourse. The increased use of English for professional Shakespearean discourse is also an indicator of the greater confidence with which Bengalis now use English—approaching Shakespeare in the original, discussing him in English—so that Shakespeare becomes here almost a historical yardstick for measuring the linguistic adroitness of the Bengalis. Furthermore, substantively, these works, whether in English or in Bangla, divide themselves evenly in terms of attempts to both explore Shakespeare's world in the accents and value systems of the West as well as to connect and domesticate him to our historical, political and cultural experience, implicit perhaps in titles such as "Shakespeare and Elizabethan Conventions of Marriage", or "সেক্সপিয়ারের রাজনীতি কি?" (What was Shakespeare's Politics?) on the one hand, "Shakespeare in Bengali Drama" or "সেক্সপিয়ারের চ্যালেঞ্জ (Shakespeare's Challenge) or "The East in Shakespeare's Tragedies", on the other.

It also needs to be observed that whatever may be the actual scholarly value of these works and however numerically diminutive they may be compared to the national output of the Shakespeare studies of other countries, they represent some fruition of our knowledge and familiarity with Shakespeare over the past two

periods, as well as a fresh beginning. They represent ideas and attitudes implanted and moulded by earlier teachers of Shakespearean and English literature, since the Dhaka College of the nineteen twenties lies as much behind the Dhaka University of the thirties as does the Dhaka College of the 1880's behind that of the 1920's. At the same time, the comprehensiveness and range of questions now being asked about Shakespeare, the commitment of the attempts to both truly tropicalize him as well as to discover him in his Elizabethan world, do not seem to have any immediate precedents and may therefore be said to represent a re-birth of our relations with Shakespeare. This two sided development may partly be explained by the relatively greater availability of higher education after the fifties, particularly of the English liberal arts variety, even if admittedly to a small but influential section of the population, and to the consequent expansion, liberalization and modification of traditional literary and cultural values that this may have produced. After the fifties of this century even if the Muslims did not undergo a secularization process, they did begin to seriously re-examine their relationship to dramatic literature and thereby also perhaps to Shakespeare.

The same scenario with possibly the same explanation holds for Shakespearean activity on the theatrical as well as the translational levels, from the 50's to the present. While in these three decades there have been only six performances of Shakespeare plays, all of these have been full length productions in Bangla, with all except the first one using locally devised texts that were straight translations rather than translations or transcreations. The

first in 1964. which was evidently a landmark production mounted by a fledgling Bangla Academy, of a famous nineteenth century Calcutta translation of *Comedy of Errors*—Bidyasagar's *Vranti Bilash*—proved to be a source of inspiration local attempts in the same direction subsequently, one of the most notable of which occurred in 1966 with Munier Choudhury's translation of *The Taming of the Shrew* as মুখরা রমনী বশীকরণ. That Munier Choudhury, who had taught at the English department subjects including Shakespeare, and who in his student days had given a recitation of *Merchant of Venice*, should both direct the Bangla Academy production as well as subsequently himself translate *Taming of the Shrew*, is significant: syllabic Shakespeare is leading to both to theatrical Shakespeare in the vernacular as well as to serious translational activity. The Munier Choudhury translation, which was very successful on stage and television, was the most serious and competent translation of a Shakespeare play to emerge in this region in this century.

It should not, however, be assumed that the *Comedy of Errors* performance and the translation and performances of *Taming of the Shrew* mean that the preference of the population is still only for the low drama in Shakespear—for bawdy farce in this case, since in the very same year as the *Comedy of Errors* production there was a translation of *Hamlet* by Abu Shahriar, the text of which was known in some academic and professional circles then even if it was actually published much later in 1972. This was the first translation of *Hamlet* to be attempted in this region in the 130 years that has been

the period of consideration of this paper, and we might add, one of the four or five such translation made in the whole of Bengal. Even if this was a text that was never performed, and even if *Hamlet* has not, as far as can be determined, ever been performed in this region,¹⁹ the increasing confidence of local educated and theatrical circles in now approaching Shakespeare is reflected in the fact that from 1964 up to now there has been a repeated preference, on the performance and translational levels for Shakespearean high tragedy. This is evident in Abu Shahriar's translation of *Antony and Cleopatra* in the late sixties, in Munier Choudhury's translation of *Othello* completed by Kabir Choudhury in 1972 and performed in 1985, in the translation of *Macbeth* by Shamsul Haque in 1984 and performance with British collaboration in 1986, in translation of *Romeo and Juliet* in 1984 and *King Lear* in 1988 by Mofiz Choudhury and in the translation of *Othello* and *Hamlet* by Qamrul Ahsan in 1986 and 1987 respectively (see Appendix A). In 1985 a translation of *Hamlet* was begun by Shamsur Rahman the results of which are still awaited.²⁰ If the seventies seem to have been relatively quiet as regards Shakespearean activity in translation and performance. The eighties seem to have heralded the arrival in Dhaka of Shakespearean high tragedy.

The above picture is not of course to suggest that the theatrical preference of the local population is exclusively in terms of Shakespearean high tragedy. Earlier preferences aside from low farce are still there. *Merchant of Venice* and *Julius Caesar* are still liked-witnessed in the performance of a translated text of

Merchant of Venice in Pabna in 1959, in the adaptation of *Merchant of Venice* in 1983 and translation in 1986 by Qamrul Ahsan, in the translation of *Julius Caesar* as গণ নায়ক (People's Hero), first by Shamsul Haque and then by Mofiz Choudhury in 1983, in the translation and adaptation for children of *Taming of the Shrew* in 1987. The penchant of the population for romance also persists in the eighties, as is evidenced by the translation of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in 1984 by B. Khelon and its subsequent continuous performances in and outside Dhaka for the following two years, and by the translation of *The Tempest* by Shamsul Haque and performance with British collaboration in 1987. The point is, these together with the tragedies and the low farces, make a fairly extensive range of Shakespearern taste. If one adds to these the translation of the Sonnets done by Z. R. Siddiqui in 1983, then it would not be unreasonable to say that in academic study, criticism, scholarship, translation and performance, a wider, richer and more sophisticated knowledge of Shakespeare is present in Dhaka and by inference, in its environs, in the eighties, than in the previous two decades of our study combined.

At the same time, though, despite the greater extensiveness of the data in this period we have occasion to pause. For, more activity about Shakespeare does not necessarily equate with a greater knowledge of him or a better understanding or even with a wider popularity among the population. The data presented above may offer but an illusory picture. Six Shakespearean performances in thirty years cannot be said to bespeak any marked preference for Shakespeare on the theatrical

level. The tentativeness and foreign collaboration of most of the recent major productions among these actually undercut the very confidence and increased familiarity with major Shakespearean drama that these theatrical attempts apparently suggest. Likewise, seventeen scholarly/critical works on Shakespeare, aside from the question of their substantive value, have only a relativistic merit, as indicators of growth over the past periods. They are not intrinsically or exclusively denotative of a significant appreciation or understanding of Shakespeare or of a particular attraction for him even on the intellectual, academic or professional levels. While it is true that Shakespeare seems to have entered the syllabic or curricular levels more widely in the period following the fifties, that fact applies only to the universities. His presence in the schools, and colleges, even in those among the latter offering higher degrees, and particularly after the seventies, is of a very different stature. The disproportion between the number of scholarly/critical discussions of Shakespeare in English and in Bangla would likewise seem to suggest that such knowledge or awareness of the playwright that has grown on a serious level is still only a specialized knowledge confined to a small section of the population. The advances made in translations are more dependable, admittedly—at least in their numerical frequency and range if not in their disuniformity of merit. But they are still so few as to suggest that in point of fact Shakespeare is even now virtually unknown in Bangla, in the general library as well as in the vernacular classroom. Finally, if the data is to allowed to be more or less exclusively from Dhaka it can be so only on a geographically

representative basis. This is not the case with our data. There is little evidence to suggest a recognizable Shakespearean presence elsewhere in Bangladesh.

If we now summarize the problematics of all the three periods of our consideration what we have is as follows :

- 1—from 1870 to 1900 people in Dhaka saw Shakespeare plays but a) these were imported translations from Calcutta, b) their Shakespearean value is subject for some thought, if not debate, c) the audience hardly saw or knew them as Shakespeare plays as such, and evidence that Shakespearean literature was known on the scholarly or popular levels is so scanty as to be almost negligent.
- 2—from 1900 to 1950 Shakespeare is present only on the curricular level and only on the theatrically insignificant amateur level, and both almost solely in English, that is only to a very small section of the population in very limited terms.
- 3—from 1950 to the 1980's Shakespeare is known more, in professional scholarship, on the stage, in popular reading, but the representative range of this data is still far too limited to allow any clear conclusions about the extent and quality of the Shakespearean presence in Bangladesh.

Thus, at the end of the 130 years of our discussion all we can say is that Shakespeare *has* fared in Bangladesh, somewhat, --the fact of this is stable enough, even if heavily dependant on circumstantial logic. But the data is too sketchy to suggest any defining or distinguishing characteristics in the Shakespeare we know or have

come to understand. That is, *how* Shakespeare has fared, the meaning of his presence here, is still difficult to determine.

V

One of the ways out of the dilemma is to re-examine the basic query itself of this paper—how has Shakespeare fared in Bangladesh? What does it mean to ask this question? How can it be answered? Can it be answered at all? Can such a question be asked? Between the two terms “Shakespeare” and “Bengali” (or “East Bengal” and “Bangladesh”), which is the more stably defined historical term? If it is the latter, then the question how Shakespeared has fared in Bangladesh is also the question how Bangladesh has fared with Shakespeare, which in turn means how Asian, Indian or Bengali have we been able to make Shakespeare? If on the other hand, we ascribe more stability and historical definition to the former, then the question becomes how Shakespearean have Bengalis managed to become? It may be noticed that the data we have considered in these pages have mostly been once on the side of the one term and once on the side of the other (e. g. the late nineteenth century data seems to show that theatrically Bengalis tried to domesticate Shakespeare whereas in the 1940’s it seemed they struggled with a European Shakespeare).

Most contemporary discussions on the subject, including one that is outside the data we have used, namely the articles that appeared in the pages of the Calcutta journal “পরিচয়” (Porichoy) in 1958, the issue that was devoted exclusively to Shakespeare, have implicitly or

formally ascribed preponderant value to the one or the other term. Thus Sitangsu Moitro in his article in *Porichoy* titled বাংলায় শেক্সপিয়ার চর্চা (Cultivating Shakespeare in Bangali), referring to the literary scene in West Bengal in the past 100 years but in terms that are relevant for our purposes, argues that Shakespeare has not come to Bengal, implicitly using the yardstick of whether Bengalis have been able to become Shakesperean. Quoting Michael Madhusudhan's and Rabindranath Tagore's comments about the difference and unsuitability of intrinsic Shakespearean elements to the Bengali soil and temper, Moitro argues that Shakespeare has not, in any intrinsic sense come to Bengal, and cannot come, until the sentimentality of the Bengali spirit reaches the wholeness and passion of the Shakespearean.²¹ In similar fashion, Dr. Sajjad Hussain, in his introductory article in the collection of essays on Shakespeare published by the English department on the quadricentennial of Shakespeare's birth in 1964 (see Appendix A), decrying any such thing as an "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...The essay in this book do not advance the theory that Shakespeare must be studied by people in the East for the light that he throws on anything Eastern : they discuss...the manner in which they (the East Pakistanis) have reacted to him during the time that we have known him.²²

Buturen Moutri's detailed anger and Dr. Hussain's

casual dismissiveness what is common to both is that the Bengali response to Shakespeare must be judged by things intrinsically Shakespearean. Between "Bengali" and "Shakespeare", in their assumption it is clearly "Shakespeare" which is the asendant term of fixed value. To Moitro, Bengalis have failed to be Shakespearean and to Dr. Hussain Bengalis must try to be Shakespearean and not make Shakespeare Eastern or Bengali. For both of them' Shakespeare is the receptor term with which Benglis are trying to merge and failing. The difficulty of this attitude is that firstly it is neither possible nor desirable to ascribe any fixed, stable value to Shakespeare. The value of Shakespearean literature is best understood in modern times as a shifting semantic code that is a relativistic function of time and history, a fluid mosaic of meaning in which multiple interdisciplinary phenomena occur and meet. The implicit value of a Shakespearean work never remains implicit because it was never implicit in the first place—it is a fusion of the values of the times in which he lived which in turn interacted with the values of the subsequent ages, even as this received "collective" "implicit" value interacts with those of our own age. Shakespeare always was what people have made of him. It is precisely this that imparts the "wholeness" or সামগ্রিক ভাব to Shakespeare that Moitro mentions-- a continuously inclusive text that receives and absorbs meaning even as it transmits them. Secondly, even if "Shakespeare" were a fixed and historically defined value or semantic entity, a stable "other" or another world out there, and even if it were possible for Bengalis to merge with that "other" or reach that world, why should they? What enduring value

can there be in a literature that merely demands in the reader a rejection and forsaking of his own? The problem with this kind of critical attitude is that it demands exclusively that we become cultural foreigners in order to understand or really know Shakespeare. Predictably, by this yardstick alone we can never "know" Shakespeare.

In almost opposite contrast is the attitude of Drs. S. I. Choudhury and S. M. Islam, both of whom have argued in their articles in the collection of essays on Shakespeare published by Bangla Academy in 1983 (see Appendix A), that Shakespeare hasn't come to Bangladesh because we haven't been able to Bengali-cize him sufficiently—convert his values to our own and absorb them. In the dynamics of a world of political instability and social conflict, Shakespeare's violent, explosive but moving dramas could have been our greatest educator, our most dependable ally, if only we could have accommodated them by appropriating their values as our own. Then, he would have reflected us, been one of us—instead of being as he is now—a stranger to our land. Shakespeare has not come, is not present here because the educated middle class who first received him is conservative and instinctively shrinks from conflict and shies away from receiving Shakespeare in its midst, confining him instead to a superficial anglicized, quotational level only to preserve their cultural status quo. This is why Shakespeare is neither very well known nor very well understood in Bangladesh.

The assumptions of both these complex arguments, that have been deliberately simplified and generalized for expository purposes, is that we have not been able to

make Shakespeare Bengali because of deficiencies in our own cultural character. The question here is not how much of Shakespeare's world we have understood but rather how much of our own world have we been able to illuminate through Shakespeare, not so much how Bengalis have responded to Shakespeare but of how much Bengalis have been able to make Shakespeare respond to them. Here clearly the ascendant term of defined historical stability is not "Shakespeare" but "Bengali." Also, "Bengali" is here the receptor term into which Shakespeare should be brought and is being unable to come. The difficulty is precisely in this assumption, for "Bengali" in the context of our discussion can at best be a loose semantic, assumption, a cultural dynamic whose denotative range includes traditional and non-traditional, anglicized and native, educated and uneducated, rural and urban. The "Bengali Shakespeare" cannot be a fixed term since it is a variable complex of time, place and history. The process of assimilating Shakespeare into our cultural and historical experience, of domesticating him, is a selective process that is also a continuously fluctuating process of elimination, so that the Shakespeare that is absorbed today is not the Shakespeare that was received a century ago and will not be the Shakespeare that will be evolved by Bengalis in the future. To insist on a definitive Bengali Shakespeare is to impose a deterministic rigidity on a historically changing cultural and literary cultural complex that is unhistorical. It would also therefore not be difficult to understand why this definitive "Bengali Shakespeare" can never be found in our midst.

Thus, either line of thinking—Shakespearean Bengali

or Bengali Shakespeare—is equally difficult to execute on an exclusive basis. There has to be, and is, an active inter-change between the fixed value ascribed to “Shakespeare” in the one line of thinking and that ascribed to “Bengali” in the other. The two lines of thinking are mutually reflexive so that “Shakespeare” as one ascendant term of stable historical definition interacts with and leads to “Bengali” as another ascendant term of fixed historical definition, and vice-versa. As such, there is an implicit value sharing between the two terms by which “Shakespeare” modifies “Bengali” just as much as “Bengali modifies “Shakespeare.” In this sense, a Shakespearean Bengali consciousness can co-exist with and enrich a Shakespearean European consciousness and help to produce perhaps a Shakespearean consciousness that is universal, just as much as a Bengali Shakespearean spirit can react with and modulate a Bengali Tagorean, a Bengali Nazrulian, a Bengali Bankimian, a Bengali Lallonian spirit to contribute to the evolution of a diversified modern Bengali spirit that is as informed of its location in time, place and history as it is rich in instincts of both continuity and change.

Looked at in this way, the datum of this material can present fresh and different insights from those previously affordable. Considered in the light of a reflexive and variable relationship between “Shakespeare” and “Bengali”, the opaque problematics of the data resolve themselves into perceivable shapes of meaning, and the blankness of absence converts into the visibility of presence. Shakespeare can be found in cognitive levels and contexts he could not be seen before. Thus, that

Shakespeare first came to Dhaka in unacknowledged vernacular translations imported from Calcutta may simply mean that his cultural penetration was at such points of affinity with the Bengali literary and cultural character, and in so complete a manner as to have become almost instantly unrecognizable and undetectable. More activity on the theatrical level than on the academic or translational level in that first period of our discussion is simply indicative of the fact that here too, as in Europe, Shakespeare is popular and theatrical first and literary and academic afterwards, his basic medium is the make-shift popular theatre and not the academic study or library. As in Elizabethan England it was his minor works—his English histories and low comedies—through which he first arrived in the theatre, so too it was through his comic farces and popular, if not English, histories that he could enter Bengal. That in the second part of our study, in the first half of this century, he seemingly disappears from view from the vernacular stage is because the evolving Bengaliness of his drama and the historically accrued and collectively received Shakespearism of his literature is in a dynamic conflict of mutual modification that is the second stage of the assimilation process through which his presence here develops and grows. The superficial Anglicized Shakespeare that briefly appears now on stage and in the university classroom is, so to speak, a necessary and dispensable encrustation under which the more viable chrysalis of the Bengali Shakespeare will form. The relatively greater extensiveness and confidence of the Shakespearean activity in the third period, as well as

Appendix 'A'

Consolidated Date Sheet of the Evidence of Shakespeare in East Bengal, East Pakistan and Bangladesh 1858-1988

Date	Work	Type	Location	Description/Title	Source
1858	<i>Macbeth</i>	Performance	Pabna	private British military amateur production at garrison station	<i>Dhaka Prokash</i> ; Mamun
1873	<i>Nabin Toposhini</i> (Merry Wives of Windsor)	Performance	Dhaka	amateur production in Bengali adaptations in Calcutta	<i>Dhaka Prokash</i> ; Mamun
1873-90	<i>Nabin Toposhini</i> (1873, 1898)	Performance	Dhaka	commercial and amateur productions in Bengali, of Calcutta adaptation.	<i>Dhaka Prokash</i> ; Mamun
	<i>Krishno Kumari</i> (King Lear) (1873)	"	"	"	"
	<i>Kushum Kumari</i> (1874) (Cymbeline)	"	"	"	Brojendranath Bannerji, <i>Bonglo Natyashalar Itihas</i>
	<i>Jona</i> (1899) (Coriolanus)	"	"	"	<i>Dhaka Prokash</i> ; Mamun
	<i>Jamat Barta</i> (Taming of the Shrew) (1873, 1898)	"	"	"	"
1888	<i>Romeo and Juliet</i> and <i>All's Well That Ends Well</i> (Bishok Duhita or The physician's Daughter)	"	"	Adharsha Press, Dhaka, L. M. Das and Co, Armanitola Press ; translation in Bangla in the form of popular Bengali romance novels, series title-Uponnyash Kushum	P. Mukherjee <i>Bangla Anubad Natak Shomikkha</i>
1893	Marlowe, Shakespeare and Lucan	translation of poems in Bengali	"	Dhaka College magazine <i>Adhoyan</i> , edited by N. Majumder	P. Mukherjee <i>Bangla Anubad Natak Shomikkha</i>
1912 Dec. 20	<i>Merchant of Venice</i>	performance	"	English performance at Mahbub Ali Institute, Jagannath College	Sukumar Biswas <i>Bangladesher Natya Charcha O Nata Khar Dhara</i>
1921	<i>Much Ado About Nothing</i> , <i>King Lear</i> , <i>Macbeth</i> ,	taught	Dhaka	Syllabus in English at Dhaka University	D. U. syllabus. 1921
1926	<i>Vents-er Bonik</i> (Merchant of Venice)	translation	"	Dhaka : Hena press, translator R. Chakroborty	Promode Mukherjee <i>Bangla Anubad Natak Shomikkha</i>
1936	<i>Merchant of Venice</i>	Criticism/scholarship in English	"	article in English in <i>Dhaka University Studies</i> by Dr. M. Hasan	<i>Dhaka University Studies</i> 1936
1936	Shakespearean influence on Otway	criticism/scholarship in English	"	article in English in <i>D. U. Studies</i> by B. C. Dey	<i>D. U. Studies</i> 1936
1944	<i>Julius Caesar</i>	performance	"	amateur part production in English of 35-40 minutes length by Dhaka College Students Union, directed by Sushil Babu (by now JC is in syllabus)	personal testimony of participant, Mr. Zaman
1945-50	<i>Merchant of Venice</i>	recitation	"	by Munier Choudhury at Dhaka University	"
1948	<i>Julius Caesar</i>	performance	"	production in English by Dhaka University Students Union	"
1950 11 April	<i>Othello</i>	"	"	part production in English by Dhaka University Students Union at Curzon Hall	" and newspaper clippings
1951	Shakespeare	criticism/scholarship in English	"	<i>Dhaka University Studies</i> article by A. G. Stock	<i>Dhaka University Studies</i> 1951
1959	<i>Merchant of Venice</i>	performance of translation	Pabna	Bangla performance of translation	Sukumar Biswas <i>Bangla desher Natya Charcha O Natoker Dhara</i>

Date	Work	Type	Location	Description/Title	Source
1964	<i>Henry IV</i>	criticism/scholarship in English	Dhaka	<i>Dhaka University Studies</i> article by Razia Amin	<i>Dhaka University Studies</i> 1964
1964	<i>Vrantil Bilash</i> (Comedy of Errors)	performance	"	Bangla Academy-production of Bidyasagar's 19th century translation directed by Munier Choudhury	Sukumar Biswas <i>Bangladesher Natya Charcha O Natoker Dhara</i> p. 224.
1964	<i>Hamlet</i>	translation	"	translation by Abu Shahriar, published later in the 70's.	Sukumar Biswas, <i>Theatre</i> , 1972
1964	Shakespeare	criticism/scholarship in English	"	ten articles on Shakespeare, published by English Department, D. U. on Shakespeare quadrucentennial, title <i>Homage to Shakespeare</i> , ed. Dr. S. S. Husain	Kabir Chowdhury, 1981 English Department, Dhaka University, 1964
1965	<i>Hamlet</i>	criticism scholarship in English	"	<i>Dhaka University Studies</i> article by Razia Amin	<i>D. U. Studies</i> 1965
1965	Theatre and drama	criticism scholarship in Bangla	"	article in Bangla by Dr. Rafiqul Islam on analytical history of Drama in East Pakistan	T. S. C. Journal of Dhaka University 1965
1966	<i>Mukhora Romontr Boshkoron</i> (Taming of the Shrew)	translation performance	"	translation by Munier Choudhury, performance on stage and on T. V., Published text-Ahmed Publishers, Dhaka.	"Anubad Natak ; Shomprotik Obostha," in <i>Sangbad</i> , Jan. 3, 1988 authors Kabir Choudhury and A. Zaker.
1967-70	<i>Antony and Cleopatra</i>	translation	"	translation by Abu Shahriar	Bangla Academy, 1978
1969-70	Shakespeare	criticism/scholarship in Bangla	"	Munier Choudhury's <i>Tulonamulok Shomalochona</i> (a collection of Comparative Critical Essays on Bangali and Western drama)	Dhaka : Qauality Printers.
1972	<i>Othello</i>	translation	"	translation by Munier and Kabir Choudhury	Dhaka : Muktodhara.
1973	Shakespeare's	criticism/ scholar. in English	"	monograph by Azhar Hussain on comic clowns of Shakespeare	Dhaka : Zeenat Press
1974	Shakespeare	"	"	<i>Dhaka University Studies</i> article by Inari Hossain on Shakespeare and Elizabeth conventions of marriage	<i>D. U. Studies</i> , 1974
1974	Shakespeare	adaptations	"	Book of stories from Shakespeare, author Satyaprasad Sengupta.	Dhaka : Dhaka Press, 1974.
1975	Shakespeare	criticism/scholar. in English	"	<i>D. U. Studies</i> article by Razia Amin on spiritual regeneration in Shakespeare	<i>D. U. Studies</i> , 1975
1976	Shakespeare	"	"	<i>D. U. Studies</i> article by Niza Zaman on literary ancestors of <i>Hamlets Ghest</i>	<i>D. U. Studies</i> , 1976
1977	Sonnets	translation	"	translated by Z. R. Siddiqui	Dhaka : Jatiyo Sahitya Prokashoni
1977	Shakespeare	criticism/scholar." in English	"	<i>D. U. Studies</i> article by Imtiaz Habib on Shakespeare's dramatic method	<i>D. U. Studies</i> , 1977
1981	Shakespeare	criticism/scholar." in Bangla	"	article in Bangla in <i>Bishwabiddaloy Patrika</i> by Dr. Shawkat Hussain, on Shakespeare's political preferences	<i>Bishwabiddaloy Patrika</i> 1981
1981-2	<i>Othello</i>	performance in Bangla	"	performed by Dhaka Theatre, translated by Munier & Kabir Chowdhury	<i>Theatre</i> , a quarterly journal
1983	Shakespeare	criticism/scholarship in Bangla	"	collection of ten articles in Bangla by English Department faculty of D. U. title— <i>Shakespeare : Doshti Probondho</i> , published by Bangla Academy	Bangla Academy. 1983
1983	<i>Gono Nayok</i> (Julius Caesar)	translation	"	translated by Shamsul Huq playscript only	<i>Bangladesher Natya Charcha</i> edited by Ramendu Majumder 198.

Date	Work	Type	Location	Description/Title	Source
1983 1984-5	<i>Julius Caesar</i> <i>Macbeth</i>	translation performance in Bangla	Dhaka "	translation by Mofiz Choudhury performed by Nagorik and Theatre (joint collaboration) at British Council with British Collaboration-text by Shamsul Huq	Dhaka : Moula Bros. 1983 British Council Records & Souvenir
1984	<i>A Mid Summer Night's Dream</i>	performance in Bangla	Dhaka and elsewhere	performance of playscript in Bangla, by Loko Dal ; text by B. Khelon translated by Nurul Momen	Kabir Choudhury <i>Prosanga Natek</i>
1984	<i>Romeo and Juliet</i>	translation	Dhaka	translation by Mofiz Chowdhury following Hemchandra's 19th century translation	Moula Bros, Dhaka, 1984
1985	Shakespeare	criticism/scholar- ship in English	"	<i>Dhaka University Studies</i> article by Imtiaz Habib, 20th Century Shakespeare criticism	<i>Dhaka University Studies</i> , 1985
1986	<i>Merchant of Venice</i>	translation	"	Qamrul Ahsan	Book list of Nawrose Kitabistan
1986	Shakespeare (drama in Bangladesh)	criticism/scholar- ship in Bangla	"	Askar Ibne Shaikh's book on history of Bengali stage drama in Bangladesh	Dhaka : Din Kaal Mudrayon, 1986
1986	<i>Othello</i>	translation	"	translation by Qamrul Ahsan	Dhaka : Bidya Prokash, 1986
1986	Shakespeare (his dramatic technique and Elizabethan art)	criticism/scholar- ship in English	"	paper in English by Imtiaz Habib on Shakespeare's technique and Elizabethan anamorphic art	<i>Proceedings of the Center for Advanced Research in the Humanities, D. U., 1986</i>
1987	Shakespeare (in Bangla drama)	criticism/scholar- ship in English	"	<i>Dhaka University Studies</i> article by Nazmul Ahsan on Shakespearean in- fluence on 19th century Bengali drama	<i>D. U. Studies</i> , 1987
1987	Shakespeare	criticism/scholar- ship in Bangla	"	<i>Natyokalar Kromobikash</i> (Develop- ment of Drama). A collection of Essays on Shakespearean translations and performance author M. Ismail.	Dhaka : Bangla Academy, 1987
1987	<i>Tempest</i>	translation and per- formance in Bangla	"	translation Shamsul Huq, performance by Nagorik and Theatre, with British collaboration	British Council, 1987
1988	<i>King Lear</i>	translation	"	translated by Mofiz Choudhury	Dhaka : Muktohdhara, 1988
1988	Shakespeare in Bangladesh	criticism/scholar- ship in Bangla	"	author Shafi Ahmed ; monograph, more on Shakespeare in West Bengal (title, Bangodeshe Shakespeare)	Bangla Academy, 1988
	<i>Hamlet</i>	translation	"	translated by Qamrul Ahsan	Current Book list of Nawrose Kitabistan no date
	<i>Hamlet</i>	translation	"	by Shamsur Rahman with collaboration by Imtiaz Habib	unpublished as yet
	<i>Taming of the Shrew</i>	translation and adaptation	"	translated and adapted into story for children by Prithviraj Sen	book list of Nawrose Kitabistan, no date
1988	Shakespeare in Bangladesh in translation and stage	Criticism/scholar- ship in Bangla	"	article by Nazmul Ahsan in <i>Sundorom</i>	<i>Sundorom</i> , 1988
1980- 1985	Tales from Shakespeare	translation and adaptation	"		listed by Nawrose Shahitya Sangsad
1980- 1985	<i>Merchant of Venice</i>	"	"		"

Note : The above listing does not include performances of Shakespeare by visiting Western Theatre Companies such as the Royal Shakespeare Co. of Britain, and some amateur performances in English at the Cadet Colleges of both of which there were a few in the 60's.

its undeniable tentativeness in substantive terms can be seen as both the greater substantiality and hardness as well as the transience of the chrysalis that has yet to, but will inevitably, emerge as the finished creature.

The Shakespearean presence in Bangladesh can be felt but cannot yet be seen with conviction because the thing that is forming within the chrysalis is only an inferential entity now. The particular markings of its visible reality will only be evident when it emerges full blown as the many coloured butterfly. The butterfly is a creature that is known and yet changing, common and yet elusive, ubiquitous and yet shy, delicate but enduring as a species, predictable in habitat and yet unexpected when it appears, both decoration and intrinsic product of the ambience in which it lives, as startlingly beautiful and different from its origins as it is inevitably a derivation of those origins. So may be it is and will be with Shakespeare in our midst.

References

1. This is the standard assumption of most Bengali literary historians in their discussion of the origins of modern Bengali drama e. g. Ajit Kumar Ghose's 'বাংলা নাটকের ইতিহাস' (History of Bengali Drama) (Calcutta : General Printers and Publishers, pvt. Ltd, 1976); Kironmoy Raha's *Bengali Theatre* (New Delhi : National Book Trust, 1978); Asutosh Bandhopadhyaya's 'বাংলা নাট্য সাহিত্যের ইতিহাস' (History of Bengali Dramatic Literature), Vol. 1, 1955 rpt. Calcutta : Oriental Press Pvt. Ltd, 1960); Nilima Ibrahim's 'ঊনবিংশ শতাব্দীর বাংলাদেশী সমাজ ও বাংলা নাটক' (Nineteenth Century Bengali Society and Drama) (Dhaka : Dhaka University Press, 1964).

2. *The Dhaka News*, 2. 10. 1858; for this citation and for all other citations from nineteenth century newspapers of East Bengal, I am indebted to Muntassir Mamoon's 'উনিশ শতকে বাংলাদেশের থিয়েটার' (Theatre in Bangladesh in the Nineteenth Century) (Dhaka : Suborno, 1985), and 'উনিশ শতকে ঢাকার থিয়েটার' (Theater in Dhaka in the Nineteenth Century) (Dhaka : Shilpokola Academy, 1979).
3. *The Dhaka News*, 4. 10. 1858.
4. See Ajit Kumar Ghose, pp. 22-45, and Rudroprasad Sen Gupta 'বাংলা নাটকে সেক্সপিয়রের প্রভাব' (The Influence of Shakespeare in Bengali Drama) in *Portchay* (May 1964), p. 355, and Amal Mitra 'কলকাতায় বিদেশী রংগালয়' (Foreign Drama in Calcutta) (Calcutta : Prokash Bhabon, 1967), pp. 7-21.
- 5 This is only a typical selection; the list can include both more or less plays depending on how puristic and exclusive our selection is. Some of these works, such as Modhusudan's 'কৃষ্ণ কুমারী' in particular, were distant, perhaps even unconscious, adaptations of Shakespearean originals, that were known at the time as original plays—a claim which has importance even today in tracing the chronology and history of modern Bengali plays. That some of these adaptations should not be linked to Shakespeare was asserted even by the author's themselves e. g. Modhusudan's denial that he did not have Shakespeare's work in mind when he wrote this play (in Ashutosh Bhattacharya's *Nattoker Sree Modhusudan* (The Modhusudan of Drama), (Calcutta : no press, 1968, pp. 46-51)). Such denials are however, in the nature of Wimsattian "intentional fallacies" and should be treated as such since, in the opinion of most literary historians, all these works uniformly contain unmistakable signs and elements of the Shakespearean originals in them. The distinction between translation proper and adaptation or imitation is more or less irrelevant for our purposes.
6. Raha, pp. 32-6, 48-54.
7. Sisir Kumar Basak "ঢাকার নাট্যশালার আদি ইতিহাস" (The

Historical background of Dhaka's Theatre) *Dainik Azad* 10.10.1964, p. 6-7, quoted by Mamun, in Theatre in Dhaka p. 27; Mamun in Theatre in Bangladesh (p. 28) also cites a report in *Dhaka Prokash* of the Year 1856 which seems to corroborate this news, although as Mamun points out, the exact date of the establishment of this playhouse is difficult to determine with certainty since although Abdul Qayyum in his "সাময়িক পত্রে দেকানের ঢাকা" (Newspaper accounts of the Dhaka of bygone days), *Bangla Academy Journal*, April 1970, p. 51, also uses the date 1865. Syed Murtaza Ali, in his "উনবিংশ শতাব্দীতে ঢাকার নাট্য আন্দোলন" (Theatre Movement in Dhaka in the Nineteenth Century), *Shahitya Patrika* 2 (1973) quotes the date 1862; all of this is quoted by Mamun, in Theatre in Bangladesh p. 28-29, to conclude on circumstantial evidence that a probable date that can be accepted for this event would be the first half the 1860's; also see Brojendronath Bando-padhyas (also written as Bannerji) 'বঙ্গীয় নাট্যশালার ইতিহাস' (History of Bengali Theatre), (1933 rpt. Calcutta: Bangobani Printers, 1979): Satyen Sen's "শহরের ইতিকথা" (Dhaka's Old History) in *Bangla Academy Journal*, 1974; Susil Kumar Chatterji "Hundred Years of Bengali Theatre" *Nineteenth Century Studies* (Calcutta), No. 6 (cited by Mamun, *Theatre in Bangladesh in the Nineteenth Century*, p. 89); Rafiqul Islam's "পূর্ব পাকিস্তানের নাট্য আন্দোলনের বিশ্লেষণাত্মক ইতিহাস : ঢাকা মঞ্চ" (An Analytical History of the Drama Movement in East Pakistan: Dhaka Stages) in Dhaka University T. S. C. Journal *Songjog*, 1965; Askar Ibne Sheikh's 'বঙ্গের মঞ্চ নাট্যের পশ্চাত্ত্ববি' (The Background of Bengali Stage Drama) (Dhaka: Din Kaal Press, 1936).

8. The former has not survived and the latter become Lion Cinema which has recently ceased to exist.
9. *Dhaka Prokash*, 17.8.1879, 17.5.1884, 22.8.1888.
10. The Crown was converted to Lion Cinema at the turn of the century which became Dhaka's first cinema in 1898;

see *Dhaka Prokash*, 16.4.1893.

11. There is no mention of Shakespeare in the newspaper reports of the time, linking these performances to Shakespeare.
12. See Ghose, p. 32-48, and Brojendronath Bannerji's "বাংলা নাটকে শেক্সপিয়ারের প্রভাব ১৮৫২-১৯০০" (Shakespeare's Influence on Bengali drama) in *Bohuroopi*, 18 (1964), p. 123; also see *Dhaka Prokash's* comment of 22, 6. 1873, extracted in Mamun's *Theatre in Dhaka in the Nineteenth Century*, p. 56.
13. Cited by Promod Mukherjee in his 'বাংলা অনুবাদ নাটক সমীক্ষা' (Translated Bengali Dramas) (Calcutta: R. K. Printers, 1984), p. 153.
14. Cited by Mukherjee, p. 155.
15. Dhaka University Syllabus, 1921.
16. See Sukumar Biswas's 'বাংলাদেশের নাট্য চর্চা ও নাটকের ধারা' (Drama Practices tendencies in Bangladesh) (Dhaka: Bangla Academy, 1988), p. 126
17. As revealed to this author in a personal interview, by Mr. Zaman who had been personally involved in this productions and who possessed newspaper clippings to back up his claims.
18. Cited by Promode Mukherjee; the blurb on the jacket read "As long as there is life there is hope." Price listed was 10 annas!
19. Even in West Bengal its performances have curiously been few; Jhinaidah Cadet College in 1969 there is some talk of this play being performed by at least two local groups later this year.
20. This is a project personally known to this author, and in which he has been involved briefly in a collaborative capacity.
21. *Portchoy*, (1958) pp. 311-23.
22. *Homage to Shakespeare*, (Dhaka: English Department, Dhaka University, 1965). p. 1; also see Utpal Dutta's *Shakespearean Shomaj Chetona* (Shakespeare's Social Thinking) (Calcutta: M. C. Sarkar and Sons Pvt. Ltd., 1379 Bengali Calendar).
23. Also see Munier Chowdhury's *Tulonamulok Shomalochona* (Comparative Criticism) (Dhaka: Quality Printers, 1969).