

## Indian Folk Theatres and the Indigenization of Shakespeare: Some Observations

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### Abstract

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Indian folk theatres have since long been seen as ‘rural’ alternatives to mainstream urban and suburban theatre. Once a very popular form of entertainment, folk theatrical performances have been steadily overtaken in popularity, even in rural India, by more easily accessible forms of entertainment, largely due to invasions by the electronic media, and, more specifically, in recent decades by the internet. These folk theatres form the cultural ‘womb’ of numerous ethnic communities in India; nevertheless, the purity of their form now appears threatened as they steadily disintegrate in the face of economic and commercial imperatives. Although a complete extinction of these art forms seems distant at the present moment, such an eventuality is not entirely unlikely. Ironically, the dilution of the ‘purity’ of folk theatres by applying their conventions of staging and performance to canonical plays may not only stem the erosion of traditions of folk performance, but also revitalize them and reorient the axis of their marginality. This paper looks at the multiple ways in which the traditions of Indian folk theatrical performance have helped appropriate Shakespeare’s plays, liberating them, in the process, from the formal conventions of the proscenium theatre and recovering, for audiences in India, several of the exciting practices prevalent in the public theatres in England in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. The paper acknowledges the evolution of a distinctive ‘folk’ Shakespeare, that, while still peripheral and often ignored in academia and in theatre criticism, possesses the vitality and the quality of the ‘popular voice’ that we associate with the public theatres of Shakespeare’s time. Finally, the paper examines Indian ‘folk’ Shakespeare as a form of postcolonial indigenization whose final effect is often severely subversive.

**Keywords:** folk, theatre, Shakespeare, appropriate, postcolonial, subversive

How many ages hence  
Shall this our lofty scene be acted over  
In states unborn and accents yet unknown!

(*Julius Caesar* 3.1.111-13)<sup>1</sup>

## I

The manner in which Shakespeare's former status as the cultural icon of Britain has dissolved rapidly after the collapse of the Empire, giving way to a global marketplace<sup>2</sup> where no single kind of representation of his plays dominates others, would puzzle the will<sup>3</sup>— to speak in Prince Hamlet's terms — of the zealous scholar and the seasoned academic. The sheer heterogeneity of academic and cultural interventions has been exasperating, for we have, for quite a while now, been in a situation where the literary critic attempting to write on Shakespeare has been in an epistemological quagmire. Or has the literary critic been offered the problem of plenty to the extent that Shakespeare now, more than ever before, seems fertile ground for him and his progeny to till? "Done to death", three deadly words with which aspiring researchers are sometimes intimidated when they propose a topic, do not appear to apply to Shakespeare. They never have in over four hundred and fifty years. And so, given this reluctance to let go of Shakespeare, we find ourselves confronting multiple kinds of "Shakespearean" influence and a perplexing variety of ideological allegiances and recycling. Within a plethora of thriving acts of appropriation, transplantation and representation, postcolonial re-readings contest with traditional approaches, and time-tested but not entirely worn-out pedagogical practices in the classroom begin to disintegrate and give way to alternative ways of interpreting his works. It is also a world where Shakespeare in print jostles for popularity with the performed Shakespeare.

Several decades ago, G. Wilson Knight in his "Prefatory Note" to *The Wheel of Fire* sought to make a distinction between the "central, more imaginative and metaphysical, tradition" (x) of Shakespeare criticism as practised by people like himself and the commentaries of Harley Granville-Barker who was an actor and director, besides being a critic. Granville-Barker's perceptive commentaries on Shakespeare in the once celebrated but now nearly forgotten volumes called *Prefaces to Shakespeare*<sup>4</sup> had emerged from first-hand stage experience, enabling him to establish, for instance, a strong case for the staging of the storm in *King Lear*. Wilson Knight's distinction between literary analysis and performance-driven analysis — a distinction he deems "necessary" — is symptomatic of a stubborn refusal to accept the director as critic and acknowledge the full interpretative potential of performance:

. . . the literary analysis of great drama in terms of theatrical technique accomplishes singularly little. Such technicalities should be confined to the theatre from which their terms are drawn. The proper thing to do

about a play's dramatic quality is to produce it, to act in it, to attend performances; but the penetration of its deeper meanings is a different matter, and such a study, though the commentator should certainly be dramatically aware, and even wary, will not itself speak in theatrical terms.

Wilson Knight wrote this "Prefatory Note" in 1930. Three years later, Virginia Woolf, in her review of Tyrone Guthrie's production of *Twelfth Night* at the Old Vic, made a similar distinction between Shakespeare read in books and Shakespeare in the theatre:

Shakespeareans are divided, it is well known, into three classes; those who prefer to read Shakespeare in the book; those who prefer to see him acted on the stage; and those who run perpetually from book to stage gathering plunder. ("Twelfth Night' at the Old Vic")

Distinctions made between interpretation and meaning may be misleading. J. L. Styan, ten years after the publication of Barthes's widely read and contested essay on the death of the author,<sup>5</sup> suggested that though one needed to go to the theatre for a true experience of Shakespeare, directors and actors were only interpreters and the author was the creator of a play's meaning (1977, p5). Barthes's theory had created ripples in literary circles and was still very popular; Styan's provocative reasoning reversed it and stood at the other extreme of the authorship-debate pole. In recent times, Styan's approach has been described as "essentialist" (Sen 12) for its inability to recognize the elastic quality of modern-day performance spaces. Styan himself could have been provoked by Barthes, for in an earlier work he had proposed that the creation of meaning was a collaborative effort:

In a good play all the agencies of the dramatist from the literary meaning of the word to the non-literary effects of motion and stillness are brought into use as an integral expression of meaning which is indivisible in performance. Dialogue is the scaffolding inside which stage meanings are erected. (1963, p. 48)

It is interesting that these are the opening words of a chapter suggestively titled "Making Meanings in the Theatre".

This paper seeks to make some necessary observations on the place of Shakespeare within the varied traditions of Indian folk theatres. The objective here is not to examine individual productions or critique actors' performances in specific folk appropriations of Shakespeare, but rather to dwell on the possibility of rural and peripheral appropriations to create a new episteme that shall subsequently shape both the nature of Shakespeare studies and the circulation and reception of Shakespeare performance in India as well as on the global front.

That one should begin a paper on Shakespeare in Indian folk theatres with references to Granville-Barker, Wilson Knight, Virginia Woolf and J. L. Styan may appear presumptuous. Nevertheless, very often when we talk of Shakespeare, connections need to be established between the Shakespeare that we read and the Shakespeare that we watch in performance: older approaches to the problem often inspire new thoughts. The once-tenuous bridge between Shakespeare in print and in performance has given way to frequent exchanges and negotiations. Postmodern impulses have pulled down the edifice of the *literary* Shakespeare from its high seat of cultural exclusivity and have merged it in multiple and exciting ways with numerous traditions of performance across the Anglophone and non-Anglophone worlds. The absorption of Shakespeare into the folk theatres of India is emblematic of such impulses, and also of the post-independence reinscribing of Shakespeare within indigenous traditions. In post-independence India, such reinscribing claims a transcendence for Shakespeare that goes beyond transcultural refashioning. An important lesson that we may draw from such a claim for transcendence is one related to the failure of the conservative ideologies of cultural elites who resent the dilution of their sanctified Shakespeare within what they see as the unholy preserves of post-colonial dabblers.

## II

Indian folk theatres have since long been seen as ‘rural’ alternatives to mainstream urban and suburban theatre. Performances of Shakespeare within folk theatre traditions in India for prominently Indian audiences need to be understood as no less essential to a comprehensive examination of Shakespeare’s presence in India than other forms of cultural appropriation. The canonical status of Shakespeare tends to impose a similar status on folk performances that use him. The penetration of Shakespeare into Indian folk theatre revises the peripheral status of such theatre, and exemplifies the ability of the canonical to reconfigure and revitalize the non-canonical with new utterances and meanings. Such transcultural negotiations are essentially a selective appropriation of Shakespeare, suggesting the potential of several of Shakespeare’s plays to be woven into the homegrown folk fabric to create new and exciting cultural forms. The indigenization of Shakespeare in traditional folk theatre forms has been fairly pervasive and is symptomatic of both submission and resistance to the colonial enterprise. Poonam Trivedi historicizes India’s engagement with Shakespeare and identifies Macaulay’s pronouncement of the education policy in 1935<sup>6</sup> as a defining moment for a relationship riddled with contradictions. Trivedi’s attribution of the present-day dichotomy between the “English-educated elite” and the “vernacular-speaking masses” to this policy is not merely an indication of the severity of its impact; it also helps her explain the origins of “two mutually exclusive” streams of Shakespeare’s reception in India: “an ‘academic’ literary

Shakespeare led by Anglicized Indians and a popular Shakespeare on stage, transformed and transmuted in translation” (“Introduction”, 15).

It is possible to argue that the introduction of Shakespeare into the Indian cultural psyche through performance was mutually enriching. Several possibilities latent in Shakespeare were explored and expanded, ranging from the philosophical to issues of race, gender, family and romance: the notion of Shakespeare as a “popular voice”<sup>7</sup> holding undiminishable appeal to all and sundry was promulgated even as he was stripped of his exclusively English identity. And as this happened, the plays unfolded new layers of meaning and significance, suggested new reasons for Shakespeare’s continuing relevance. India, for its part, extended not only the repertoire but also the possibilities of its theatres and was richer for the experience. Shakespeare, given his iconic status, is almost a narrative, and the indigenizing project in India, besides replanting Shakespeare and extending that narrative, also makes Indian theatre practitioners, film makers, academics and all other Indians who engage with Shakespeare in some form or the other acutely conscious of their place — historically and geographically — within this extended narrative. This process of drawing in Shakespeare and assimilating him within the Indian cultural ethos began in the eighteenth century and has been revelatory. Today, in the enthusiasm over the processes of post-colonial indigenization, one cannot afford to forget that reorientations of Shakespeare are phenomena that have travelled not only across cartographic boundaries and margins, but also against the boundaries of time. And, so, even in the Anglophone world, and not least in England itself, Shakespeare has been extensively revised, reappropriated, replayed, revitalized and reclaimed over the centuries. Indeed, it is there and not in the non-Anglophone world that the processes began. It is quite in the fitness of things to be reminded that in

the excitement generated by the sense of participating in a common project to re-plant Shakespeare in a historical narrative that can help to define our own sense of place, it is easy to forget, however, that the origins of the project lie elsewhere, and that its British and American practitioners address historical needs that are distinct from (though connected to) our own. (Neill 169)

Most books that take up the subject of Shakespeare’s presence on the Indian stage are strangely mute on the subject of the adaptation of Shakespeare’s works in folk theatrical performances. Even in books that do take up the subject, discussions are scanty.<sup>8</sup> On top of that, while there is a rich abundance of folk theatrical and dance forms across the country, there has been comparatively little documentation of these forms. Things are made worse by the fact that there are quite a few varieties of folk performance on which nothing has been written at all. This is surprising, given that such performances were until not too long ago a very popular form of entertainment. Folk culture is often perceived as a popular lower-class culture, or as mass culture that forms the base of the architectonics of

culture, and this may explain the near-absence of critical accounts of folk performance. One could, for a while, briefly look at the Frankfurt School's apprehensions, expressed by theorists such as Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, about the route the culture industry was taking around the middle of the twentieth century:

Frankfurt School thought was a polemical contribution to a broader debate about the coming of mass culture. It imagined that the relationship between base and superstructure was shifting rather than fixed and that with the rise of the culture industry the relative autonomy of the superstructure was being threatened by the dynamism of the base. (Brouillette 438)

Contrary to this threat posed by the “dynamism of the base” or that of popular culture in a more general and wide-ranging sense even in India, folk culture in India has never threatened to reconfigure the equation between itself and mainstream culture in its favour. Indian folk theatres have, in the wider gamut of the performing arts in India, been relegated to the status of the subordinate. The aesthetic and commercial claims made for mainstream Indian theatre have hardly ever haunted folk theatre.

Folk theatrical performances in India are many and varied. Indian folk dances, too, often have an unmistakable element of drama about them: the *chhau*, for instance, may well merit classification as folk dance-drama. In several forms of folk theatre, there is often the figure of the chorus, or narrator, commonly called the *sutradhara* but also known in certain forms of performance by names such as *bhagavatar*, *ranga*, *vyasa*, and *kattiankaram*. Most of these performances take place out of doors, with makeshift platforms erected to serve for stages. These stages are surrounded by spectators seated on the ground. This is similar, if not identical, to the way the stage in Shakespeare's own age was surrounded on three sides by the audience: the material conditions of staging and performance in Indian folk theatres encourage intimacy between actors and audiences as the Elizabethan and Jacobean theatres did. Moreover, folk theatrical performances in India generally have all-male casts with men playing female roles, thereby recalling a very distinguishable feature of Elizabethan and Jacobean theatrical convention. The occasional presence of a crude version of the clown figure, or *vidushaka* in Sanskrit drama, provides for satire and humour, with the satire usually directed towards society and politics. As Sanskrit drama declined and folk theatres began to take over<sup>9</sup>, the Sanskrit *vidushaka* moved on from its erstwhile elitist preserve to the realm of folk. The clown figure in Indian folk theatres generally uses very colloquial language, engages in banter even with members of the audience, and recalls similar figures in Shakespeare. Again, as in Shakespeare's theatre, stage properties are kept to a minimum while costumes can be extravagant. The makeup too is often ostentatious. Asides and soliloquies are common in some of these forms, as indeed are solos, duets and choral songs.

In several forms of folk theatre, the actors are always visible to the audience as they wait for their turn to enter the main stage. This can create the eerie effect of the off-stage characters turning into eavesdroppers and voyeurs as they are always kept aware of what is happening on the stage; the on-stage characters, too, for their part, are exposed to the characters who are off-stage. This recalls Trevor Nunn's groundbreaking Royal Shakespeare Company production of *Macbeth* at the Other Place, Stratford-upon-Avon in 1976. In that production, of which a videotaped version was produced by Thames Television in 1979, the characters who were not required in the performance area of the stage sat on stools on the margins of the stage in full view of the audience. Performers in folk theatre are generally born into the tradition and the art is passed on from one generation to the next: children born into families with a tradition of folk performance are trained by their parents from a very tender age<sup>10</sup>.

Speaking about Indian folk traditions and modern drama, Kathryn Hansen, in a 1983 essay, identifies a dichotomous relationship between mainstream urban theatre and rural folk theatre in India in the years after independence as a result of academic attention paid to the folk theatres of India, referring to studies by Balwant Gargi and Jagadish Chandra Mathur in the decade of the 1960s.<sup>11</sup> Hansen points out the failure of attempts made around this time to forge a synthesis of urban and rural theatre:

At this time, the urban streams still flowed separately. The rediscovery of folk theatre had in fact heightened the sense of a rural-urban cultural dichotomy among the educated elite. Urban theatre was perceived more and more as imitative of the West and non-Indian, while the term rural was acquiring the prestigious connotation of "indigenous". (78)

Hansen proceeds to quote the Bengali playwright Badal Sircar to establish the point that theatre in urban spaces has not been a spontaneous and natural evolution of folk or rural theatre; it has been based on paradigms suggested by the Occident. Further, Hansen cites the Urdu playwright Habib Tanvir's plea for the encouragement and preservation of rural theatre so that an Indian theatre, at once modern and indigenous, could evolve. Julia Hollander, in her 2007 study of Indian folk theatres, also refers to Badal Sircar and says that urban theatres "share their aesthetic not with the folk theatres but with Europeans and Americans (181)". Against the backdrop of these views, the amalgamation of Shakespeare into Indian folk performance traditions stands out as an extraordinary instance of the confluence of the Western and the home-grown that disturbs the easy binaries posited by Sircar.

The traditions of Indian folk theatrical performance have liberated Shakespeare's plays from the formal conventions of the proscenium theatre and have recovered, for audiences in India, several of the exciting practices prevalent in the public

theatres in England in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Several of Shakespeare's plays themselves use sources that are part of English folklore and fairy tales, and Shakespeare's immediate audiences would have recognized more easily that indebtedness which modern audiences would probably require the efforts of research to comprehend. Wendy Wall's study of the treatment of fairylore in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* focuses on Puck, derived from Robin Goodfellow who survived attacks on fairies and spirits in early modern England, and attempts to establish relations between fairylore and the Elizabethan understanding of social order. The cornerstone of Wall's argument is her assertion that "Fairylore becomes a channel through which Shakespearean drama grapples with the class-specific practices that subtend debates about English community in the late-sixteenth and early-seventeenth centuries" (68). Jill Colaco identifies the Elizabethan folkloric convention of the "night visit" in the clandestine meeting of the young lovers in *Romeo and Juliet*:

The love story of Romeo and Juliet is rooted in European folk-lore, though Shakespeare took his version directly from the unpromising pages of a long and elaborate verse-romance, which he transformed so compellingly that his lovers became the new legend. (138)

The connection between Shakespeare's art and traditions of folklore familiar to the Elizabethans suggests at least a partial rootedness of several of his plays in folk culture, and this has smoothed the path towards the transcultural appropriation of Shakespeare into various forms of Indian folk theatre.

### III

Perhaps the most important contribution to the study of the indigenization of Shakespeare through his incorporation in Indian folk theatres is Poonam Trivedi's essay<sup>12</sup> which begins with an admission that the category of "folk Shakespeare" is an oddity. For her, folk Shakespeare seems to be the epitome of a translated, nativized and indigenized Shakespeare and effectively reverses the notion of Shakespeare as a foreign cultural import. Trivedi's use of the word "folk" differs from its common usage and does not imply, as she makes clear at the start of her essay, a village or festive Shakespeare. Rather, she uses the word "in its primary sense, as cognate with the German *volk*, meaning 'of the people,' and wish[es] to discuss a Shakespeare both specific to the people, that is, Indian and popular" (152). Acknowledging that this indigenization that she calls "folk Shakespeare" is the most vital form in which Shakespeare has been "Orientalized" in performance in India, she posits a series of convincing arguments that attempt to bring "folk Shakespeare" from its peripheral cultural status "into the mainstream of Shakespearean discourse." Such an agenda is crucial to not merely the preservation of folk appropriations of Shakespeare but also to the efforts to annihilate the urban theatre-rural theatre dichotomy referred to by Hansen. If the need to announce a quintessential Indianness and foreground a postcolonial



reversal of the foreign Shakespeare is Indian folk Shakespeare's *raison d'etre*, this hybridized form that Trivedi calls "wondrous and strange" requires extraction from the margins of culture so that it may be placed within the larger global spectrum of Shakespeare performance. The visibility of Indian folk Shakespeare in urban spaces worldwide is necessary in order to negotiate prejudices against folk culture, to further underscore the plurality of Shakespeare, and to assert postcolonial resistance. Indeed, as a form of postcolonial indigenization, folk Shakespeare is often severely subversive. Moreover, it connects up to ontological and aesthetic concerns that vindicate the need for its survival. Trivedi closely looks at folk theatrical productions of *Macbeth*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Twelfth Night*, and *Othello*, "to establish that the range and variety of this adaptative process is a key element in the evolution of a postcolonial modern Indian performative aesthetic" (155).

Once a very popular form of entertainment, folk theatrical performances have been steadily overtaken in popularity, even in rural India, by more easily accessible forms of entertainment, largely due to invasions by the electronic media, and, more specifically, in recent decades by the internet. This is precisely what makes Trivedi's essay is a timely and necessary intervention. These folk theatres form the cultural 'womb' of numerous ethnic communities in India; nevertheless, the purity of their form now appears threatened as they steadily disintegrate in the face of economic and commercial imperatives. Although a complete extinction of these art forms seems distant at the present moment, such an eventuality is not entirely unlikely given that many notable productions of folk Shakespeare have already been relegated to the backyards of public memory. One such production, Utpal Dutt's *Bhuli Nai Priya*, stemmed from *Romeo-Juliet*, Dutt's own 1964 Bengali translation of *Romeo and Juliet*. The names of characters as well as the locales were Indianized: Romeo became a young Hindu called Ranjan while Juliet was turned into a young Muslim girl, Roshanara. Verona and Mantua became Murshidabad and Kolkata respectively, the latter two being more familiar to audiences in the Indian state of West Bengal than their Italian counterparts would have been in the late sixteenth century to audiences in England. But what is most innovative is the metamorphosis of Escalus, Prince of Verona into Nawab Sirajuddaula, a very well-known historical Indian ruler who had been defeated by the British in 1757. Sirajuddaula himself had been the eponymous hero of a Bengali play by Girish Chandra Ghosh which had been initially censored because of its projection of the ruling British in a bad light before it was first performed in 1905 in Kolkata. *Bhuli Nai Priya*, by reconfiguring the Montague-Capulet conflict in terms of Hindu-Muslim animosity, gave the rivalry a social and post-Partition political significance that could not have been lost on both urban and rural audiences in West Bengal which itself had been created out of the partitioning of Bengal along Hindu-Muslim lines at the time of India's independence in 1947. Tapati Gupta's detailed analysis of *Bhuli Nai Priya* addresses, at one point, the question of any possible

difference between its first production in the proscenium theatre of Protap Memorial Hall, Calcutta on 27 September 1970 and its subsequent *jatra* productions in suburban and rural Bengal where the material conditions of performance were not what they were in the metropolis:

According to Kanaklata Chatterjee, there was no change in the manner of acting. The *jatra* mode was embedded in the script itself. Dutt was not in favour of the typical declamatory *jatra* style of acting, nor did he tolerate improvisations. The script had enough excitement to captivate the audience. In *jatra*, emotions and language are strong. In the manuscript, characters like Fazal (Sampson, servant to Capulet who is Wazir Ali Khan in this play) and Zia (Gregory) vent their ire on the family of the Hindu Kandarpa Narayan Roy (Montague) in strong language. (167)

Gupta proceeds to quote Fazal from the first scene where he says that he will fight with the fury of Timor and Chenghis, be rough even with the women, and behead all his adversaries. Sadly, the text of the play was never printed and the manuscript is in private possession. It is hardly surprising, then, that Gupta should draw significantly on the accounts of Kanaklata Chatterjee who had played Gulrukh, the equivalent of the Juliet's Nurse, in *Bhuli Nai Priya*. The fact that *Bhuli Nai Priya*, though adapted to the *jatra* form, premièred in a proscenium theatre in Calcutta is significant. *Jatra* performances in those days had their premières in proscenium theatres, allowing for an attempt at the reconciliation of the streams of rural folk theatre and urban mainstream theatre and a revision of the popular perception of folk theatre as exclusively rural.

The interaction of India and Shakespeare — of cultures apparently alien to one another — could have begun with a face-off, but it did not. On the contrary, this extraordinary transcultural import vindicated the potential of cultural hybridity to empower and license multiple forms of indigenization that have, over time, reflected an almost seamless integration of Occidental and Oriental aesthetics of performance. Moreover, the simultaneous absorption and recovery of Shakespeare within indigenous theatrical practices is an intervention that reworks some of the major philosophical and religious perspectives encountered in the “original” Shakespeare, if by “original” we mean the Shakespeare initially produced and circulated in England and the major part of the Occident. Such an act of reworking effectively dismantles England's claims to the possession of Shakespeare and to the complex architecture of meanings in his plays. It is ironical that the dilution of the “purity” of folk theatres by applying their conventions of staging and performance to canonical plays and drawing them out to urban, even global, spaces may not only stem the erosion of traditions of folk performance, but also revitalize them and reorient the axis of their marginality. Folk Shakespeare, while still peripheral and often ignored in academia and in theatre criticism, possesses the vitality and raw energy and the quality of the “popular voice” that we associate with the public theatres of Shakespeare's time.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup>The quotation from Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* is from Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor (general editors), *The Oxford Shakespeare: The Complete Works* (compact ed).

<sup>2</sup>The term "global marketplace" has been borrowed from the title of Mark Thornton Burnett's *Filming Shakespeare in the Global Marketplace*. Thornton Burnett undertakes an extensive study of Shakespeare and the global market for his plays, albeit in the context of Shakespeare movies, explaining how the consumption of Shakespeare has been transformed and shaped in a globalized world.

<sup>3</sup>See *Hamlet*, "The undiscovered country from whose bourn/ No traveller returns, puzzles the will" (3.1.81-2).

<sup>4</sup>Harley Granville-Barker's *Prefaces to Shakespeare*, published between 1927 and 1947, discuss themes and staging issues of ten of Shakespeare's plays. The work is available in four volumes, Volume I is dedicated entirely to *Hamlet*, Volume II to *King Lear*, *Cymbeline* and *Julius Caesar*, Volume III to *Antony and Cleopatra* and *Coriolanus*, and Volume IV to *Love's Labour's Lost*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *The Merchant of Venice*, and *Othello*. Granville-Barker's discussions of some of these plays have been individually reprinted elsewhere.

<sup>5</sup>Barthes's "The Death of the Author," arguably his most famous essay, was first published in English in the American popular magazine *Aspen* in 1967; it was subsequently published in French in *Manteia* in 1968. The essay was later published in 1977 in a selection of Barthes's essays titled *Image-Music-Text*.

<sup>6</sup>Thomas Babington Macaulay produced his "Minute on Education" on 2 February 1835, where he scathingly attacked native Indian learning and strongly advocated the promotion of Western education through the medium of English in India. This led to the Education Act of 1835.

<sup>7</sup>The expression "popular voice" is borrowed from the title of Annabel Patterson's book *Shakespeare and the Popular Voice*.

<sup>8</sup>As this paper points out, Poonam Trivedi's article "'Folk Shakespeare': The Performance of Shakespeare in Traditional Indian Theater Forms" is probably the most comprehensive essay on Shakespeare's presence in Indian folk theatres.

<sup>9</sup>Folk theatre emerged in India in the fifteenth or sixteenth century as a result of the decline of Sanskrit and the growth of vernacular languages.

<sup>10</sup>For a brief description of the conventions of Indian folk theatre see pp. 211-12, *Encyclopedia of Asian Theatre* (Vol. 1), edited by Samuel L. Leiter.

<sup>11</sup>See Mathur, *Drama in Rural India* (1964) and Gargi, *Folk Theatre of India* (1966). These studies "were basically descriptive, documenting aspects of stagecraft in the different regions and comparing them in a general way" (Hansen 77).

<sup>12</sup>See Poonam Trivedi, "'Folk Shakespeare': The Performance of Shakespeare in Traditional Indian Theater Forms."

<sup>13</sup>Tapati Gupta's essay "from Proscenium to Paddy Fields: Utpal Dutt's Shakespeare *Jatra*" speaks extensively of Utpal Dutt's Shakespeare productions in Bengal. The essay also dwells on productions of *Romeo and Juliet* in the proscenium theatre, including that of Dutt's own Bengali translation of Shakespeare's play, before analysing in considerable detail Dutt's *Bhuli Nai Priya* and his contribution to the jatra form.

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