

Ghosh, Adhip, ed., *Prekshapot* [Context]. [Special Issue on *Macbeth*] Vol. 3 (May 2006). Kolkata. Pp 72.

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Prekshapot [Context], a literary biannual journal, brought out a special issue on the occasion of 400 anniversary of Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. The brief editorial (3) is written in biographical form where laughing at his own cenotaph Macbeth introduces himself and reveals his real self. He focuses on the eighty three 'but's altogether in the play of which twenty eight were uttered by him indicating the conflicts and contradictions within him. He says he has experienced the struggle between instincts and impulses that had resulted in boundless restlessness and psychological turmoil within him. Though he was well aware of his impending catastrophe, he proudly claims to have remained indomitable. This brief 'fictional' editorial immediately helps the reader to identify the flamboyant passion within the man who combines both the protagonist and the antagonist in his persona. Then follows a series of articles written by academicians, theatre persons and directors of productions of *Macbeth* on the Bengali stage.

"Macbether Khoje" [In Search of Macbeth] by Ashok Mukhopadhyay (15), whose theatre group, Theatre Workshop, staged a Bengali prose translation of the tragedy in 2002, uses self-styled *non-verse* or *no-verse* to reveal in unrhymed poetry, the toil, wonder, excitement and the ultimate frustration of a man of sixty two engaged in exploring the truth about Macbeth. The theatrical lineage of the explorer, i.e., himself, is traced through renowned erstwhile thespians who had engaged in the same quest in their time – Shambhu Mitra, Utpal Dutta, Ajitesh Bandyopadhyay – his fellow comrades who are categorized as '*ekdal nana bayasi pagal*' [a group of lunatics of various ages]. They have infected this "age-defying sixtytwo year old" with a similar madness, namely the desire to unearth the real Macbeth. The first ten lines reflect the toil and excitement of translating the play and the task of the translator: to "search for appropriate words," to "echo the original sound," to "reinvoke the original rhythm" and to "recreate the unique image." With "taut eyes and rigid back" [*chokh tan tan, shirdara soja*], the explorer experiences the thrill of discovery which is beyond pleasure or pain. The strain of burning the midnight oil to uncover and capture the true Macbeth, steeped in sin and repentance, generates an indescribable intimacy with the subject. It makes the them to realize that the truth about Macbeth is not limited to the tragic protagonist but encompasses world's great stage where virtue and vice, life and death are glimpsed through blood and fire. This sustained involvement, Mukhopadhyay asserts, gradually turns all such explores into so many Macbeths. The actor-director's brief

unrhymed poem thus provides an invaluable insight into the psychological impact of translating *Macbeth* for the twentieth century Bengali stage.

Subir Ghosh's article "Samakalin Prekshite *Macbeth*" [*Macbeth* in the Contemporary Context] (33-34) evokes Jan Kott's existentialist approach in foregrounding the relevance of *Macbeth* in the present times. According to him, the opening scene of the play reflects the agony of the modern man lost in the mist of fair and foul on this barren earth which ultimately leads to total frustration. *Macbeth*, in today's context, symbolizes an extremely materialistic power-monger, enticed and entrapped by the three witches, the embodiment of sex, anger and lust. The line, "Fair is foul and foul is fair," vivifies the fallacy of the present times in which to be morally and ethically "fair" is of no importance. The concluding part of *Macbeth*, asserts Ghosh, projects man as a weary soul bound by a solitary existence. Tormented by conflicts, he is de-sensitized and indifferent to both life and death. All "tomorrows" become meaningless and "nothingness" of modern existence is iterated.

"*Prasanga Macbeth*" [Context: *Macbeth*] by Proloy Deb (41-48) provides a comprehensive evaluation of the sources, influences and symbolic significance of the contents with special emphasis on the motivation of the protagonist. Deb considers *Macbeth* as distinct from Hamlet, Lear or Othello as despite their fatal flaws or "hamartia," they are not absolutely evil like *Macbeth*. Yet *Macbeth*'s ability to philosophise on life and see the bitter truth prevents one from categorizing him as "dead butcher" as Malcolm does. The author places him alongside Prometheus, Oedipus, Dr. Faustus, Hercules, Satan, Dr. Stockman of Ibsen and Ravana of the *Ramayana*, for his unyielding and uncompromising spirit. His significance lies in the fact that he is destroyed but not defeated. Deb also lauds Shakespeare's fleshing out of Lady *Macbeth*'s character from a single reference in Hollinshed. He counters both Freud who traced the usurping couple's barrenness to their volatile nature and Peter Stallibrass who identifies Lady *Macbeth* as "both an unnatural mother and sterile" and asserts that her very breakdown indicated her vulnerable human nature tormented by guilt. The author acknowledges the similarity between Lady *Macbeth* and the witches especially but refuses to classify her as the fourth witch since she was motivated by the desire to add a new dimension to *Macbeth*'s life and make him a complete man.

Sudeshna Chakrabarty provides a thorough, insightful and comprehensive overview of the success of "*Macbeth* on the Bengali Stage" in her article "*Banga Rangmanche Macbeth*" (35-40). She traces its flowering from translations, to adaptations and innovative transcreations to suit the Bengali psyche. Her discussions begins with a reference to the lost translation by Nobel Laureate Tagore, and gives a brief but effective evaluation of the nineteenth century thespian Girish Ghosh's *Macbeth* before proceeding to later translations by Ashok Guha, Nirendranath Roy, Sachindranath Sen Gupta, Utpal Dutta and Basanta Roy and the children edition by Nripendranath Chattapadhyay. *Rudrapal* and *Karnabir*, the two extant adaptations of *Macbeth* from the

nineteenth century are also scrutinized in some detail. While discussing the influence of *Macbeth* on the original scripts of Bengal she refers to the similarity between Rebati of Tagore's *Raja O Rani* [*King and Queen*] and Lady Macbeth. Tamosa of DijendraLal Roy's *Tarabi*, according to Chakrabarty, is also modelled on Lady Macbeth as both of them initiate their husbands' journey on the path of evil. The death of the king of Karnataka in Monmohan Roys *Rizia* reminds her of the violent end of the Thane of Cawdor in *Macbeth*.

The issue is further enriched by a few select photographs of productions staged by the *Royal Shakespeare Theatre Company* (31). Besides these major articles, there are synopses of academic discussions on various aspects of *Macbeth* by eminent scholars of Bengal which provide an overview of how Shakespeare's *Macbeth* Bengali theatre and criticism. On the whole this special issue of *Prekshapot* is particularly significant for its admixture of fiction, poetry and criticism to illustrate the various ways in which the tragedy can and has been appreciated by the Bengalis.