

The Renaissance and Shakespeare
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Lecture – 15
Whose Shakespeare?? Colonial Encounters/Post Colonial Negotiations

Hello, the next lecture in this MOOC on the renaissance and Shakespeare is going to be delivered by Doctor Kuljeet Singh of the department of English, SGTB Khalsa College University of Delhi. Doctor Singh is going to talk about translation, adaptation and what he calls trans creation of Shakespeare's plays into various Indian languages. He uses as his examples Raghuvir Sahays translations, Mohan maharishis bagro basant hai or a midsummer night's dream adaptation, and Royston Abels Othello a study in black and white a multilingual adaptation or trans creation as a concept of Shakespeare's Othello.

My name is Kuljeet Singh and I teach at SGTB Khalsa College, university of Delhi in the department of English. The talk which I am going to present today is entitled as whose Shakespeare, colonial encounters and postcolonial negotiations. The premise of this talk is essentially focusing on the question of reception and survival of Shakespearean plays on Indian soil. The agenda of doing Shakespeare the language in the context on one hand the cultural negotiations perceptions and performance on the other. While explaining and distinguishing between the terms translation adaptation and transformation or so to say trans creation and also cite examples to prove the fundamental question of this talk whose Shakespeare.

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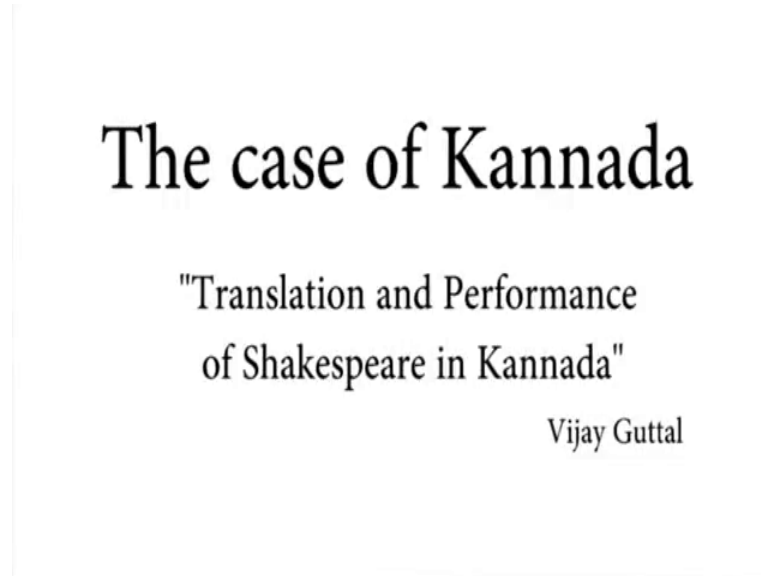
Well, several scholars have pointed out the significance of the rich complexities inherent in Indian literature. Because of its intrinsic diversity, multilinguality and multiculturalism. The reception of Shakespeare in India to quote professor (Refer Time: 02:23) Kumar Das is here deep in permissiveness, scanty and sparing. Now this is as complex as problematic as a study of western impact on Indian literature per se, nobody is sure about the exact number of translations or Shakespearean plays in Indian languages. The account seems to be substantially large as translations, adaptations of various kinds and transformations in transcreations as well.

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Translation
Adaptation
Transformation/Transcreation

This encounter also led to the growth of new theatre, which is radically distinct from the traditional practices of precolonial India.

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42.	A. N. Murtyrao	<i>The Tempest</i>	<i>Chandamaruta</i>	1981	1986
43.	H. S. Shiva Prakash	<i>King Lear</i>	<i>Lear Maharaja</i>	1988	1988, 1997
44.	Vaidchi	<i>Macbeth</i>	<i>Gombe Macbeth (For Children)</i>	1992	1989
45.	-do-	<i>Tempest</i>	<i>Dham Dham Suntaragali</i>	1992	
46.	K. V. Subbanna	<i>Timon of Athens</i>	<i>Athensina Arthavanta</i>	1994	

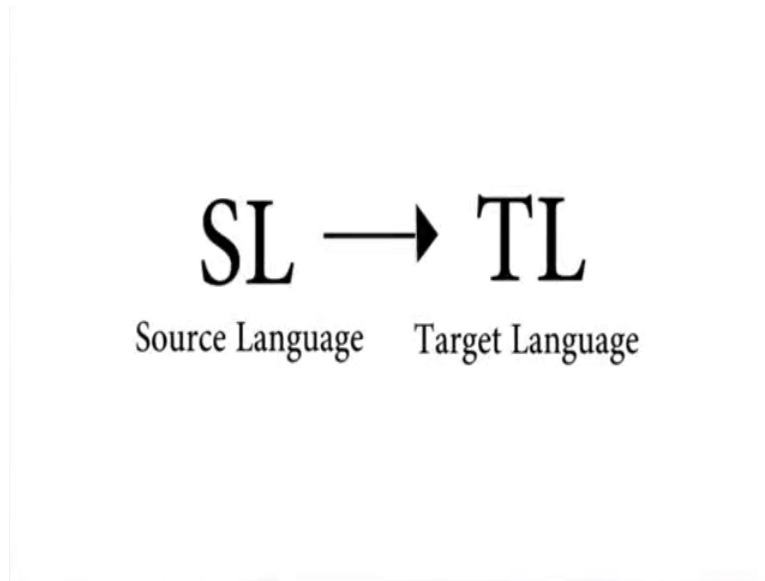
Sources:
A. N. Murtyrao, *Shakespeare* (Mysore: Mysore University, 1962), Ramchandra Dev, *Shakespeare: In Two Cultures* (Bangalore: Granthavali, 1993), D. A. Shankar, ed. *Shakespeare in Indian Languages* (Shimla: IAS, 1999).
*Translated from Telugu.
The Checklist is not exhaustive.

We will just look at the side slide which would give us a sense of number of translations, adaptations done in various different Indian languages. And these translations are sometimes also adaptations while the references given to translations only. And it is difficult to distinguish whether a text written in Indian languages based on Shakespeare is an exact translation, or is it oscillating between translation and adaptation. And hence

the category which I offer in the stock is trans creation or transformation, which I talked about slightly.

Well, it is noted while a lot of scholars that in the early years of development of modern Indian drama as a category.

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And when I say modern Indian drama as a category, I specifically look at the developments in the late 19th century return of early 20th century. So, the development of Indian evening drama as a category, during that time Shakespeare was not just translated, but adapted. Know what it means will be make clear with the help of a case with regard to Kannada literature. Either as a translation and performance of Shakespeare in Kannada Vijaya Guttal provides a long list of translations, and performances of Shakespeare in Kannada language and argues that the tendency was the same in the case of Kannada drama. By classifying the Kannada responses to Shakespeare, she provides these details.

Then I quote, it is interesting to note that the journey of Shakespeare's plays into Kannada, a south Indian languages almost the same as in other Indian languages. Beginning with numerous adaptations and illustrates the complex issue of strategies and native culture adopts in this effort to counter the onslaught of a dominant culture. Here the native culture is Kannada, and the dominant culture is the English culture.

So, broadly 3 main phases may be identified in the appropriation of Shakespeare's plays into the Kannada literary culture, through translation and adaptation. Though the goals and strategies vary from one phase to another and these phases are as follows. Number one, pre navodaya phase, which is navodaya, literally means nav uday. Which means the new rise and this is the renaissance this is also this could be translated as renaissance. So, pre navodaya the edge the phase which is from 1870s to 1920 the second phase is navodaya which is from 1920 to 1960. And the third phase is post navodaya which is 1960 onwards.

It may be observed that if all plays of Shakespeare which came to Kannada by pre navodaya writers were adaptations. The navodaya writers attempted literal translations whereas; post navodaya writers try to achieve creative translations. Now these are the 3 categories which are mentioned in these in this essay while facing it out into 3 different broader chronologies, in terms of time frames.

One is adaptation which happens in the pre navodaya phase and then literal translations which are taking place in the second phase called navodaya 1920 to 1960 whereas, post navodaya writers try to achieve creative translations. Now the that the term itself is interesting what do we mean by creative translations while talking about 3 broader areas I mean I use the word transformation, or trans creation. This this term creative translation to my mind is very close to the third category, which is transformation and trans creation or trans creation.

The writer or the director or the group of writers they take liberty in liberty with regard to the original text, and create a text which is suiting the cultural socio economic political milieu of their times. And it is it is not merely an adaptation, but also one can say loosely using the narrative in order to suit the situation of the author or the director.

So, in in in the case of Kannada literal translations are happening in the second phase which is navodaya between 1920s till 1960 while lot of adaptations took place in the pre navodaya renaissance time which is from 1870s till 1920s. Interestingly the pre navodaya phase also juxtaposes with the Parsi theatre tradition, which was a very popular from 1850 onwards in India and it lasted till 1930.

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It may be observed that if all plays of Shakespeare, which came to Kannada by pre-Navodaya writers, were adaptations, the Navodaya writers attempted literal translations, whereas post-Navodaya writers tried to achieve creative translations.

To start with the first part of the stock is translation. To put it simply it refers to the process of translating from one language to the other. The source language also referred as SL is the language in which the text is originally written, in target language or we can call it TL is the language in which text is translated.

Now, the translator is expected to abide by the meaning given in the SL or source language and find the equivalents in the TL or target language undoubtedly. In any translation a lot is lost, but translation is the only way to reach out to be larger cross section of audiences or readers. For example, the Kannada translation of Shakespeare's a midsummer night's dream, which is translated as Vasanth Yamani Swapna Chamathkar by Vasudevacharya Kerur is believed to be the closest one to the original.

Another example of translation visibly dramatic literature would be John Osborne's Look Back in Anger produced by National School of Drama New Delhi in 1970s, which was directed by Rahman Kazi. The translation of this text if one reads closely retains each and every bit of it, including the original names of the character, along with retaining the social milieu exactly like the source text.

Now what is the director doing with the text is the question here. Is it a mere replication of the socio-political milieu of Britain in India? If that is what the director has in mind, it is a bit of a stretch. If the director is expecting, it is a bit of a stretch to ask a different set of questions. But if the director is adapting it would lead to a different set of questions, and this specific

production which was done in 1970s deals with the political question. And the production on Indian stage very specifically on Delhi stage leads to lot of important questions about the significance of doing a translation with Indian actors, while retaining the original social political cultural milieu.

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The second part of the talk is adaptation. Now as a process adaptation is not just a transfer of linguistic equivalences from one language into the other. But it deals also with the transference of cultural contexts, images, metaphors, symbols and motifs. In recent years adaptation studies has established itself as a discipline in its own right separate from translation studies.

The bulk of a security to date has been restricted to literature and film departments, focusing on question of textual transfer and adaptation of text to film. It is however, much more interdisciplinary and it is not simply a case of transferring content from one medium to another. As I earlier said the cultural contexts, the metaphors, the symbols and the motifs are of utmost importance when you adapt a text from one language to another. And in addition to this the idea of cultural term quote unquote, in translation studies has prompted many scholars to consider, adaptation as a form of inter semiotic translation.

But what does it really mean? And how can we best theorize it? What are the semiotic systems that underlie translation and adaptation? These are the questions one would like to ask while closely reading the target text and comparing it with the source text. We can

look at a couple of slides here, and you would see a noted Indian theatre director Habib Tanvir's adaptation of Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* as [FL], translated as *The Love Gourd Own a Springtime Dream* done in 1993.

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It is an appropriate example of adaptation now with the tribal actors speaking in Chhattisgarhi which is the language of central India in the notch theatre tradition.

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The adaptation has transposed the richness of the imagery into an Indian idiom without sacrificing the fluency of the words, while retaining the narrative of the Shakespearean

[FL] that is the title of Habib Tanvir's adaptation of *midsummer night's dream*. As noted by Professor Poonam Trivedi, Habib Tanvir has through his plays attempts to bridge the compass between the western slash urban, and eastern slash rural divided Indian theatre while Tanvir's production centers around mechanicals of the Shakespeare's *midsummer night's dream*, the route mechanicals who are a part of the subplot of this Shakespeare's text *midsummer night's dream*.

It was very appropriately phrased as mechanicals play a bar epsilons. It is also the celebration of the plebeian as one of the critics pointed out, the production achieved equal of claim if not more. Like the Peter Brues spot freakin production in the 70s, which has the dazzling white box of a stage with the coiled wires to represent the forest actors on stills the fairies on trapeze Professor Jyotsna Singh delivered a paper entitled as *travelling Shakespeare's in India*. The genesis of Habib Tanvir's *a midsummer night's dream* at the 2004 Stanford Shakespeare in Asia event. Here are a few valuable comments which are cited from the same essay. I quote the rich interaction between Tanvir's urban and modern consciousness, and the folk styles and forms and perhaps best exemplified by his adaptation of a *midsummer night's dream* called [FL].

In this version he worked closely to the original text writing songs that reproduce the rich eventually and humor of Shakespeare's poetry. Tanvir does not create a hierarchy were privilege in his own educated consciousness as poet come play right over the unschool creativity of his actors, who are rustics coming from Chhattisgarh. In the Nano theatre methods actors trained on improvisation and spontaneity. I pointed out the idea of improvisation where text is not fixed; text is suggested actors mold the text and creates their own line.

[FL] was planned initially as a multilingual and cross-cultural piece originally planned for British actors; in the royal and urban roles speaking I mean actors was speaking English alongside the mechanicals played by rustic members of the Nano theatre from the central Indian region of Chhattisgarh. The play incorporates the north Indian musical folk create a form of nautanki.

When money dried up the British actors were replaced by Indians from Delhi. But the play focuses on these tribal workmen and the world of nature with a critique of elite culture, while extended while extending Shakespeare's original, but this is what couple

of reviewers argue. But others may think it captures a similar affection for simple modes of dramatic representation as found in *midsummer night's dream*.

Now, in this production in 1994, 95, 98 and 99 reviewers uniformly acknowledged the success of the performance. The dramaturgy and stagecraft of this production are both simple, and contemporary and yet close to the Elizabethan staging connections. As one reviewer notes [FL] is played on a bare stage. The only element of set being a handheld beautifully embroidered half curtain, which sometimes reveals, sometimes hides and sometimes becomes a backdrop to the action.

According to one anonymous critic in 1994 the play was a briskly paste to our romp, where are the chased Hindustani of the main characters was a counterfoil to the buster dilate used by queans, bottle, flutes, now etcetera. The minimal use of stage props enabled a play to proceed without interruptions for changes of scene in the open stages very utilized by the tribal dancers of buster. Who while firewood from Shakespearean ethos are not an incongruity.

Noted theatre critic Nikhat Kazmi writing about the same production was also complementary. She says Naya theatres presentation of a extract from a *midsummer night's dream*, brought to life the impossible here was a grip gripping presentation of Shakespeare with no ornate sex no pendulous. Costumes just the bare stage where 2 white Muslim cheats, celebrated the mysterious force of a charmed wood a posy of blossom of flowers, define the impressible magic of puck the elfin devil. And a nautanki style of dialogue rendition created a native flavour that would match the quaint demography of the Evan Bard.

The focus was only supposed subplot where the main protagonists are Oberon Titania puck and a bunch of amateur actors who set out to rehearse of play in the wide-open silence of the forest. It was the engrossing simplicity of Habib Tanvir's direction that shone through.

Now, if you look at the responses from the theatre critics for Habib Tanvir's [FL], one can clearly understand that Habib's intent is not to cater to or succumb to the original text, but rather recreate something which is close to the Chhattisgarhi dialect of his actors. And also, the kind of training Habib sahab had undergone you see give him a discipline of the west, but he never applied the pedagogy of the west on these actors.

And if you look at the life history of Habib sahab from 1940s onwards after his graduation and you see education in theatre from royal academy of dramatic arts, and subsequently you see he leave in Mumbai coming to Delhi to create his own theatre, he tried various ways to do theatre using you see, actors who are urban educated middle class. But he himself you see suggested that he could not produce the theatre which he wanted to he only realized when he asked his theatre actors from the rural background when he allowed his theatre actors from the rural background to do theatre in their own language. And that is where Habib's idiom of theatre was created.

Compare the idea of translation and adaptation with regard to the first 2 parts of talk. We can infer the translation could be word to word translation while adaptation looks at the deeper nonsense including symbology, metaphors, images and motives of the source text and tries to find the cultural equivalence of the same in the target language or the target text which one is endeavoring to translate.

Now, very interestingly there is a third category which I would like to propose in this talk called transformation or trans creation. To my mind transformation or trans creation could also mean lose adaptation. In other words when the author or the playwright or the director of the play who is also author in in his or her own ways takes an idea from the basic source text and transforms it, or recreates it, or trans creates it.

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Transcreation/Transformation

All together into a new performing text the process of transformation slash trans creation is it work.

A lot many times the written text undergoes substantial change when it is explored on the floor during rehearsals. Now when I use the word floor it is it is it is focusing on the process of making the play. The text which has been provided by the author is been explored by the actors along with the director on the floor, and that is what I mean when I say it is explored on the floor during rehearsals.

The director takes the creative call with regard to the interpretation of the text, and the way he or she intends to treat the text on stage. And to each interpretation there would be a difference in the text, the focus the centering the emphasis differs with regard to each director. An exceptionally app example of this category transformation or trans creation is the 1997 performance of bagro basant hai by eminent theatre director Mohan maharishi for the prestigious national school of drama. Which is based on the translation of William Shakespeare's play a midsummer night's dream written in 1595 in Hindi as Phagun Mela, which may be translated as the spring fair.

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And this will not be the exact translation, but loosely one can say the spring fair. It was done by Raguvir Sahay, though Sahay retain the names of the original characters in his translation along with omitting a few portions of the Shakespearean text, Mohan Maharshi change not only the title, but also the characters of the play.

Mohan Maharshi name the players bagro basant hai do the original title used by sahay is phagun mela. Besides that, Mohan Maharshi took the liberty of changing the names of the characters and he was exploring the text on floor with the actors at national school of drama. The king and queen the Oberon and Titania become Indra and Indrani to suit the local understanding of the audiences there.

Now, lot of other texts which are translated. So, to say by translators I treated differently by the directors. And to my mind director here also acts as the author of the performance. And I use the word performance with acute you see responsibility, because it is not just the text which was written, but also a performing text which was erected on stage as a performance. And the director of the play is not merely a person whose mediating between the author and the actors, but also trying to give his interpretation through this mediation and stating or emphasizing his point of view with the help of the stage and the actors. And the example which I just quoted bagro basanth hai would aptly display the difference between translation, adaptation and trans creation.

Another important aspect of doing Shakespeare in the last 2 decades is the avongadesh experimental kind of treatment, which a lot of directors try to impart to Shakespearean texts. If I am not mistaken I had seen almost 5 major productions done by various directors. The most important name which comes to my mind is Royston Abel who became very popular with his production of Othello in black and white. Subsequently he produced and directed plays like goodbye Desdemona, and Romeo and Juliet in technicolor and much ado about nautanki and several others.

Some of these plays took the title of Shakespearean texts, but did not even deal with the basic plotline. The major production by Royston Abel whose which traveled far and wide is Othello in black and white.

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Let us try to look at the idea with which Roy is negotiating with Shakespeare's Othello, and creating his own version of Othello in black and white.

Now, this national school of drama graduate Royston Abel in his play within a play, Othello in black and white takes William Shakespeare's Othello and places it in a company of Indian actors who do English theatre. Now the medium of the actors being a very affluent one is disturbed, when a kathakali trained actor occasional kathakali is the traditional Indian dance form. And he is been given the role of Othello.

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Hence the plot of the play and the plot of the company are all similar lines. So, and that is why I said play within a play. This gives Othello a play black and white the magic of Shakespeare entering into the life of the actors, where the lines of acting in the lines of living it grows to create whereas, different spats of theatricality.

An English theatre company based in New Delhi invites a guest director for their upcoming production of Othello. That will be an interpretation of this Shakespeare's tragedy using the traditional Indian dance form kathakali.

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The aspirations of both the senior and junior members of the company are unmet as the director Roy whose Royston Abel casts Hadeel Hussen very well-known film actor now, whose kathakali trainer to be Othello.

Hadeel is an actor from rural India whose considered an outsider while majority of the company members on account of his lower linguistic racial and socio-economic status. Barry the senior most actor in the company Barry reference to Barry john, one of the best teachers which had been who had been doing theatre in India since 1970s. And is it instrumental in creating the theatre education being at national school of drama.

He is the senior most actor he plays the senior most actor in the company thus he uses the lead role and he is offered the role of Iago, as rehearsals progressed Hadeel whose an

actor playing Othello falls in love with Kristin that the actress whose playing Desdemona. And meanwhile the disappointed Barry starts acting like in Iago in real life.

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Bringing to adults notice Kristen's ambiguous relationship with actor playing Cassio now, the situation of play Othello where an uncanny resemblance to the real life of the actors. And slowly the lives of the characters and the actors become blurred. Reality becomes rehearsals and the rehearsals become reality to point, where one does not know whether it is Othello killing Desdemona or the actor killing the actress.

So, in in Othello and black and in in Othello in black and white the play within a play, Royston Abel is trying to look at Othello in rehearsals. Othello play in black and white is a theatre production by delimits theatre group called united players skilled, also known as UPG. It was designed and directed by a very well-known director Royston Abel and it was performed in 1999 in New Delhi and he was subsequently invited to Edinburgh fringe festival.

Now, this play within a play was a complete departure from the hitherto Indian performances of Shakespeare. All actors in black costumes it was set in a rehearsal space with the minimal props and sets. This is experimental Avangardish production also represented the economic crisis of the theatre artists and groups, sponsors backing out the process and politics of actors on and off stage, conflict between the actors in real life.

The these are all the buildup a dramatic tension which powerfully oscillates between the stage reality and real reality, and hence it was a play within a play.

Now, what is this play trying to achieve by all this? Or shall we say what is the director Royston Abel trying to achieve with all this to prove it further, I would be quoting 2 important points from an essay by Professor sir mister Panja entitled as not black and white, but shades of grey Shakespeare in India. With regard to Royston Abels production Othello in black and white I quote, the production was a departure not only from the UPG's previous performances. UPG is united players skilled, but also from the previous Indian productions of Shakespeare. Indian productions of Shakespeare fall into 2 broad groups productions in English and adaptations of Shakespeare in the Indian languages.

Now, the letter may be differ the divided subdivided into 2 groups performances which follow Shakespeare's texts faithfully translating only the language and performances which radically adapt a Shakespearean text. The letter may Indianize the characters and situations and perform the play in an indigenous folk theatre such as Kathakali from Kerala or Yakshagana from Karnataka. Jatra a form from West Bengal laying emphasis on dialogue and nautanki which is a form from Utter Pradesh with a great deal of emphasis on music.

Then may also be an amalgam of a number of forms music, dance, colorful costumes and makeup can make the original play unrecognizable or casual or initiated viewing, unquote.

Now, this kind of production like we are discussing Royston's Othello in black and white, though it talks about the Shakespearean text, but it is also generating a parallel in the Indian setting. This is essentially what this paragraph is trying to talk about. I have also like to take into consideration very, very important point with professor Panja makes in the essay elsewhere I quote, what Abel wanted to highlight through this reversal and what he expressed as a prime motive for choosing Othello evidence Royston Abel.

Are the biases that the play explores? Rather than a play about race this is to him was a play about prejudice, about the biases that were not just between 2 racial groups, but within a single race. Biases that are ethnic and linguistic, biases that both he and Arden faced in their student days at the NSD in Delhi, NSD is national school of drams, they were both marginalized marked as outsiders in a construction of pan Indian as north

Indian culture. Arden from Assam and Abel from Kerala spoke Assamese and Malayalam respectively and were unfamiliar with Hindi.

In a national institution that mold and marks at the Hindi speaking theatre person, they had no role these experiences made Abel determined to do a production that reveals how as he puts in the newspaper interview, we are more white than the whites.

So, whose Shakespeare is this, and which Shakespeare are we intending to do. There are multiple questions one can argue and ask, and there are multiple tendencies one can look around with regard to theatre tradition within Indian glittering framework. Not only the professional theatre, but also the amateur theatre interestingly you see the Shakespeare society at saint Stephen's college starts its work 1923 and it reminds of doing only Shakespearean play, acts in Stephen's college university of Delhi it is an interesting segment to explore. And how Shakespeare has been done on campus at saint Stephen's college is an area, one would like to see and what would be costumes what was the stage craft like what was the language they explored. And if one looks at the evolution of Shakespeare society, how Shakespeare's plays are also undergoing radical change within that institution is an interesting point to look at.

So, whose Shakespeare is this essentially? Is it the Shakespeare which belongs to me? Or is it a Shakespeare which is imposed on me? Is it a Shakespeare which I wish to do? Or is it a Shakespeare which is being told to me? That this this is the way a Shakespeare shall be done a lot of groups around would like to do Shakespeare in the language which is Indian to contemporary audiences. There are a lot of theatre companies doing Shakespeare in modern English medium. There are theatre groups looking at Shakespeare in translated forms. There are theatre groups trying to recreate Shakespeare according to their imagination. So, which Shakespeare are we looking at? And whose Shakespeare is this? These are a couple of questions one can look at with regard to colonial encounters and postcolonial negotiations.

Now, William Shakespeare was named as the writer of the millennium in the last millennium. And this is the testimony to declare his global status and recognition nobody can take it from him. Shakespeare belongs to the world. And it is 400 death anniversary in 2016 the most appropriate way to pay homage to the bard would be by understanding the diverse impact of his work on Indian cultural ethos, and performing the phenomena

called Shakespeare. I think that would be the most defatting response to Shakespeare on his 400th death anniversary.