

**The Renaissance and Shakespeare**  
**Department of Humanities and Social Sciences**  
**Indian Institute of Technology, Madras**

**Lecture – 17**  
**Global Shakespeare (Contd.)**

Hello friends, we continue the modules on global Shakespeare. The next 2 modules will have a conversation between Andrew Dickson, the theatre critic of the guardian in England. Preti Taneja who studies at the royal Holloway in England and myself. We will talk about the globe to globe festival that was held at the globe theatre in London in 2012. We will also talk about the importance of Shakespeare being translated into many different languages, and how English is no longer an intrinsic part of the enjoyment that we get from the plays of Shakespeare. I hope you enjoy this conversation.

Hello everyone I have here with me Preti Taneja, who is from the royal Holloway university of London. She is a visiting lecturer there, as well as a PhD candidate in English and creative writing. And I also have here with me Andrew Dickson who is the theatre editor for the guardian newspaper, and the visiting fellow at babette London. Both Preti and Andrew are here on the occasion of the international seminar revisiting Shakespeare in Indian literature and culture, organized by the Shakespeare society of India and IP college university of Delhi.

They have both very kindly agreed to have a little tete a tete for our ILLL. Site welcome Preti, welcome Andrew. Now you know sort of buzzword these days is global Shakespeare. Preti, would you like to just sort of respond to this whole term global Shakespeare?

I think there is an idea that Shakespeare is universal, and that there is something in the plays which speaks to people from all different cultures from the position of what that what this plays actually mean to them in their context. And in the UK the awareness of that has grown, especially with the recent Shakespeare and the cultural Olympiad in the close globe festival which was on in 2012.

Andrew, what does global Shakespeare mean to you?

Many different things I mean it is been fascinating just being at the conference, even for the just the past few days hearing how many sides global Shakespeare has you know

that. I think there is as Preti says this idea of the kind of universal Shakespeare, I think what is also really interesting is precisely as you describe those mixing and commingling with local Shakespeare's.

So, even just hearing about the different kind of Shakespeare's available in somewhere like India in many languages and

(Refer Time: 02:49)

Entire subcontinent is being absolutely fascinating and you know, I am reminded again and again that there are thousands of Shakespeare's, millions of Shakespeare's. Most probably as many Shakespeare's as there are people who go to plays performing movies (Refer Time: 03:02)

Right, and would you say that both your opinions about global Shakespeare have been heightened or have been you know sort of, reformed by this local ya this recent extravaganza in 2012 both the performances as part of the globe to globe festival and also as part of the cultural Olympiad.

Well I think it is important not to see global Shakespeare something new. Because whenever you go to a country that is not the UK, you realize just how long people have been interacting with Shakespeare, interrogating Shakespeare, been reforming it for their (Refer Time: 03:44) and they use it to investigate paradigms of behavior in their own societies, they do not necessarily use it to understand Shakespeare.

So, that is that is something that I thinks now come home to the audience in the UK, and we have to remember as well that that audience is incredibly multicultural as well, isn't British and homogeneous.

Yeah I (Refer Time: 04:08) I mean I think what is been really striking, watching a lot of the world Shakespeare (Refer Time: 04:13) in the UK and elsewhere is how it sort of feels that particularly theatre performances are finally, caught up with what academics have been talking about for years and years and (Refer Time: 07:17) I mean in somewhere like India I mean this relationship goes back to the 18th century in As many different forms It was like in Britain we haven't quite realized that for a long long time,

we have had our own sense of who Shakespeare is We want Shakespeare to be (Refer Time: 04:35).

Yeah, yeah.

Britain's national poet (Refer Time: 04:38).

Right.

Strong I think.

Right.

In Britain, And I think what was So, exciting about the Shakespeare festival last year the world Shakespeare festival was that it finally, felt as if some of these things are being unsettled a bit. People in Britain you know as you say not homogeneous no one color no one (Refer Time: 04:56) no one class, But at the same time that people have more of an awareness that Shakespeare is out of these different people and out of these different places (Refer Time: 05:03) great (Refer Time: 05:04)

Andrew, in your presentation this morning you made this very interesting comment about how the globe to globe you know the parameters that they set up. That the performance had to be not in English A, and B that the Shakespeare text had to be followed the plots had to be followed. So, how did you come away from that globe to globe experience? You know, what is your sort of you know, your attitude to Shakespeare changed as a result of seeing him performed in languages that you didn't necessarily know?

Yeah absolutely it was changed in several interesting ways. I think one thing is that the globe to globe festival, because of the nature of it most of these companies were only performing twice. So, they literally would kind of fly in get into the theatre, get on stage do (Refer Time: 05:47) performances and then kind of disappear, again I mean the whole festival was over in 6 weeks

And so, there was very, very little time for kind of extensively, there wasn't much co production in a sense the companies were kind of told to prepare a play Turn up and do it so, there was as it were no interference.

Right

(Refer Time: 06:02) which is production side.

Right.

In contrast to other productions segment since number the royal Shakespeare company which was much more intensively involved. So, there is something very immediate about it.

Right.

(Refer Time: 06:12) it was really interesting.

Right.

And the second thing was, yeah because of these languages (Refer Time: 06:17) the globe didn't use subtitles. They were screens, but they were very, very basic next to the stage. And the yeah, I mean as an English speaking audience member I suddenly felt quite estranged from Shakespeare (Refer Time: 06:30)

(Refer Time: 06:30) elaborating was also fantastic was that you saw audiences at the globe whether they were Gujarati speaking, Hindi speaking, dari Persian speaking, you would normally go to the globe When you (Refer Time: 06:45) those performances. And the research afterwards has proved that. So, I think there was a real sense that actually people were bringing encountering Shakespeare in a place that they probably wouldn't normally go in to go to, And the notion of who is Shakespeare this was Totally volatilized.

Preti if you was seeing you know say the twelfth night production in Hindi, because you know you speak Hindi, you are you are of Indian heritage. Would your I mean, would your attitude be any different from Andrew's? And if So in what way?

I think my attitude would be different, because I was I would have been pass few audience that understood all the jokes, that were being made. And I have to say Whitley some of those jokes were actually against people who couldn't speak Hindi.

Yeah, yeah.

Because they were jokes about translation. They were jokes about Shakespeare. They were jokes about being sahibs, and being you know enamored of being able to speak English. And that was sort of mocked in a way, which only the Hindi speakers would have understood. So, it was very cleverly done. And so, from that point of view along with the Hindi speaking audience I enjoyed that very much. And having that bilinguality, and knowing that play, I think I could see it from a sort of more 630 degree view.

Yeah, yeah, yeah. Talking about bilinguality and multilinguality, one of the little excerpts of midsummer night's dream that we have up on the site is of the exchange between hermia and Helena, performed in 4 or 5 different Indian languages. All the girls were performing their roles in their own mother tongue So, to speak. And they said that and they also had to translate Shakespeare themselves.

And they said that that provided a kind of access to Shakespeare, actually translating him into Malayalam or into Sanskrit or into Nepalese. That sort of access was something that they had never found. Not in the classroom, not in an annotated text. So, Andrew would you like to react to that?

I am, I could do them maybe he be best.

Alright.

(Refer Time: 08:45) express it in (Refer Time: 08:46) more general (Refer Time: 08:47) which the (Refer Time: 08:48) essential by Shakespeare (Refer Time: 08:49). So, because the text is Shakespeare's text is nearly 400 years old. The notion of waltz understanding is what comprehension is Shakespeare's text isn't something that is that is sort of univocal and straightforward even for native English.

Yes.

Wouldn't (Refer Time: 09:06) you want a place or describe that.

Yes.

So, actually it is interesting that (Refer Time: 09:09) translation if you speak that language can offer a more direct contact, then probably many English speakers could have (Refer Time: 09:16).

I think when you talk to your practitioners who have translated the text, they go about it in a number of different ways. And they you cannot have someone sort of trying to say every single word, or you can have someone trying to kind of extract the poetry.

Yeah, yeah.

And the rhythm, and the meter that of the language.

Yeah, yeah.

And trying to kind of grasp the essence of what is there.

Right.

And that can often be very beautiful, and it does not necessarily have to be done in a contemporary Indian language.

Yeah, yeah.

It can be done in a more archaic form of Bengali poetry for example.

Yeah, yeah.

Which people would probably need translating.

Right.

Anyway.

Anyway

So, from that point of view it has that similar relationship that Shakespeare's original text does to kids in the classroom in England.

Right.

So, it is very interesting.

Yeah, yeah.

And of course, when you see it in done in like baz luhrmanns, romeo and Juliet that spoke to a whole new audience, because which was in their language and part of the globe to globe was the hip hop.

Right

Language, and that was considered one of the languages.

Right.

Because you know spoke to it is own audience.

Right

So, yeah it definitely does have great relevance.

Right.

(Refer Time: 10:22) the process adaptation and you know coming much freer in other parts of the world in other languages you know, in Britain I think they are still particularly on stage a very text based Sense (Refer Time: 10:34) Shakespeare with other drama as well, but particularly in Shakespeare that the text is a kind of holy text.

Right

(Refer Time: 10:39) and you can not tamper.

You can not tamper with it (Refer Time: 10:41)

Change it, you know people would write sort of angry (Refer Time: 10:48).

Right.

Whereas, I think in somewhere like India perhaps there is just more freedom. Because that the placing is different.

Yes.

The geography is different.

Yes.

In the way the people respond to these things is different.

Yes, yes.

And I think it is fascinating.

Right, right. And I just wanted to say that you know I think Indian students, many of them may feel maybe under the misapprehension that somehow Shakespeare is in the blood of British kids. You know, they just have to pick up a copy of Shakespeare, like that wonderful extract that you quoted from Mansfield Park this morning. And they will understand him. But it is actually not the case.

No, it is not true at all. And you know I mean I remember being in a classroom with Julius Caesar, which the world's most unimaginative teacher had as readouts and different sections. I mean I could not, I couldn't even pronounce (Refer Time: 11:37) yeah this there is a real distance (Refer Time: 11:41) I think what is really enlivening about the conversations that have happened here in the last few days is just seeing how many different Shakespeares can be in, but also how different these access points can be. In fact, it is it I find it really sort of, So, it is been So, enjoyable meeting people who have such a kind of passionate connection (Refer Time: 12:01).

Right.

(Refer Time: 12:02) and sometimes in the UK, I suppose because we slightly take Shakespeare for granted.

Right.

And also because we have to do them in school.

Right.

(Refer Time: 12:08) oh Shakespeare.

Yes. Well, you have to remember that you know we have been learning Shakespeare for even longer than you have. When kids in England have been studying Greek and Latin, kids in Bengal have been studying Shakespeare have been studying literature. Just one little point about language, I think the other language and one of the other delegates at



the seminar spoke of this is things like you know, the physical language, the body language, the choreography and often the folk idioms in India lend themselves extremely well to Shakespeare you know We saw this happening in twelfth night we saw it happening in (Refer Time: 12:44) and in [FL], which is habib tanvirs wonderful adaptation. Preti would you like to comment on that?

Well I think that is very interesting, and I think that there are specific things that one can see as correlating very much. Like that there is a humor of buffoonery, which I think exists very much in Indian cinema, exists very much in sort of the way Indians tell jokes to each other, the way that one character in a society might be the (Refer Time: 13:14) of all jokes.

Yeah, yeah.

And that exists very much in Shakespeare as well. And in long and rather less (Refer Time: 13:19) often done on sort of linguistic terms, if someone does not speak language, it does not speak English very well.

Right.

So, when those adaptations get done, you might have a malvolio character for example, we were talking about twelfth night, who is interpreted as not being able to speak very good English, but thinking that he can.

Yeah, yeah.

And that is something that in the Indian context.

Yes.

Would speak very much.

So, friends we come to the end of our 10 hour MOOC, the renaissance and Shakespeare. We began this MOOC by talking about the intellectual currents in the renaissance in Europe. About the philosophy, the politics, the visual arts and the science of the renaissance, as well as the position of women in the renaissance. We talked about how the renaissance moved from Italy to England.

We then talked about the reign of Queen Elizabeth the first, who was on the throne when Shakespeare was writing. We gave you information about Shakespeare's life and times. We then went on to give you detailed information about 2 of his tragedies, or fellow and Macbeth as well as 2 of his comedies, twelfth night and a midsummer night's dream. We also give you information about Shakespeare's history plays as well as the romances or the last place of Shakespeare.

We have in this MOOC performances by students of 2 scenes from 2 plays, a midsummer night's dream that is a multilingual performance, as well as a scene the trial scene from the merchant of Venice. These performances have been followed by panel discussions in which the students who participated in the performances, talked about how the act of performance changes the way we look at the Shakespeare texts.

We also have a lecture on Shakespeare adaptations on the Indian stage, and the MOOC concludes with conversations with 2 international experts on global Shakespeare. So, as you will see in this MOOC we talk not just about Shakespeare the literary icon or about his place as literary text, but since they are plays we also talk about performance. We talk about praxis, the practice of Shakespeare. We do hope that you have enjoyed this MOOC and gained a great deal from it.

Thank you.