

RECEPTION AND INFLUENCE OF TRANSLATION OF SHAKESPEARE'S DRAMA IN MARATHI AND ITS CONTRIBUTION TO MARATHI DRAMA

Mukta Jagannath Mahajan

Professor and Head,
Department of English,
School of Language Studies and Research Centre,
KBC North Maharashtra University, Jalgaon

In the vocabulary of the globalized world, Shakespeare can be called a trend setter. Shakespeare's handling of tragedy changed the face of classical tragedy and set the trend of Shakespearean tragedy. The matrix of his plays, his dramatic techniques and his perception of life have influenced, improvised, and inaugurated changes and development in the world of drama. His wide quoted expression, 'What's there in name?' deducts the significance of name but his own name answers the question asked by him and the answer is 'सिर्फ नाम ही काफी है'

The reception of Shakespeare in Maharashtra, one of the prominent states in India and his influence on Marathi stage is interesting to note.

Shakespeare's experimentation with the dramatic techniques and his perception of life have influenced Marathi drama so much that it has helped in creating a western dramatic consciousness among the Marathi playwrights like Gadkari, Agarkar and Shirwdkar among others who have successfully incorporated the techniques and form of tragedy in Marathi drama. These playwrights have not only accepted the influence of Shakespeare as only playwrights but as students of English literature also. Reception of Shakespeare both as a part of Syllabi and as a dramatist resulted into the Shakespearean tradition on Marathi stage through the means of translations, adaptations, independent play writing, incorporation of dramatic techniques, mixing of characterization, introduction of element of romance, element of

subplot, element of farce, mixing of tragic and comic, development of the plot structure, introducing destiny as character, assimilation of Shakespearean ideas and oriental manner of presentation of those ideas.

Shakespeare was introduced to Marathi speech community through the British education system introduced in India.

Shakespeare was prescribed in the syllabi. Till then, the world of Marathi drama was influenced by Sanskrit plays and the predominant music plays. The educated younger generation that studied Shakespeare through their syllabus found Sunita Deshpande opines that, 'The tradition of classical Sanskrit drama lost its hold when Marathi writers became familiar with English and European Drama. Between 1870 and 1920 the Marathi stage was dominated by translations and adaptations, most of Shakespeare's plays being translated during this period ...' (Deshpande 250).

The history of Marathi stage and drama recorded introduction of two dramatic techniques implemented during the Pre Kirloskar period- Shakespearean technique and Vidagdh Sanskrit through Bookish plays. Vidagdh Sanskrit means the technique borrowed from Sanskrit into Marathi which included editing of the events suitable for the play, briefing of the dialogues, translation of the Shlokas and use of the poetic forms like *arya*, *sakay dindya* and Shakespearean technique means tragic end of the play, shocking treatment of the content, villain, subplot, and soliloquies. (Kulkarni and other 370-371)

Not only school students staged Shakespeare's plays but also British Shakespeare actors were invited in the colleges to read out Shakespeare's plays to the students. Along with this the magic spell casted by Shakespearean plays resulted in the forming of various organizations like Shakespearean society of Elphinstone college as well as Natak companies like Aryodharak, Chittakarshak Ichalkarangi Natak Mandali and Shahunagarwasi Natak Mandali. These drama companies performed adaptations of Shakespeare's

plays, particularly Tara (adaptation of Cymbeline). These adaptations incorporated certain changes in English plays to suit to the taste of Marathi audience. These changes were mainly the Indianization of names of characters, their costumes, and their responses to their fellow actors. Probably these practices in adaptation and translation of Shakespearean plays culminated into the independent play writing like Natsamrat.

The reason for receiving Shakespeare so enthusiastically and reflecting his influence through adaptations, translations and stage performance may be the rules laid down by Sanskrit Poetics and the content and form of Marathi Sangeet Natak. The way Aristotle's Poetics had influenced Classical tragedy. Bharata's Natyashastra had its influence on Sanskrit plays. Underlining this difference Dr. Ginde mentions that Bharata had simply dismissed the common material life from the stage and denied the delineation of assaults resulting into tragic end or violent acts on the stage. Consequently, there was no space for the element of catharsis because according to Bharata, the function of play was:

*Dukhartanam samrathana, shokartana tapswinam
Vishritijananam kale natyametanmaya krutam (Jog, 33)*

(To confer relaxation on those people who are sad though they are powerful as well as those who are sad because they are weak, is the function of drama.)

Sanskrit playwrights depicted the sufferings faced by the hero and the heroine, but they insisted upon the happy ending of all the calamities. They practiced poetic justice in the depiction of the conflict. The fatalist approach of Sanskrit playwrights had not allowed them to project the tragic flaw in the character leading to the endless sufferings of the human being and his resultant tragic end. The very impact of oriental philosophy had kept the Sanskrit dramatists away from the questions troubling to human mind in general and to Shakespearean heroes in particular. Moreover, they believed in the strict following up of the rules laid down by Bharata.

The tradition of Sanskrit playwrights reflected in the earlier Marathi Sangeet Plays which were mainly mythological plays in content and nature popularly known as Vishnudasi Plays because Vishnudas Bhave has been credited as the father of Marathi drama. The phase of Vishnudasi play was supposed to be the phase of infancy of Marathi plays. It was the period when India's young generation was exposed to British education system. The reading of English literature had brought change in the literary taste of the new educated generation. The then contemporary Marathi mythological plays could not cater to their taste.

To quench their thirst for the development of drama, the translations of Sanskrit plays in Marathi were being performed. At this juncture Shakespeare's plays that were prescribed in the syllabus, spelled their magic on them. They realized the need of incorporating the Shakespearean dramatic consciousness in Marathi drama to compensate the limitation of Marathi plays.

Introduction to Shakespeare's plays through syllabus and their reading inspired Marathi playwright to deviate from the rules of Bharata exactly the way Shakespeare himself deviated from the rules of classical tragedy and established the trend of Shakespearean tragedy. Although Marathi dramatists did not abandon the rules of Natyashastra completely, Shakespeare's influence on them created Shakespearean tradition in Marathi drama.

First translation of Shakespeare's Othello in Marathi in 1867 by Mahadev Shastri Koltakar inaugurated the chain of translations of Shakespeare's plays in Marathi and as mentioned earlier, various drama companies staged this translation. V.M. Mahajani translated Cymbeline as Tara in 1879. The Comedy of Errors was translated twice as Bhrantikrut Chamatkar and Bhural in 1876, K.G. Natu translated Julius Cesare as Vijayshing in 1872. A.V. Patankar translated The Merchant of Venice as Stri Nyayvhatyury in 1871. N.G. Kirtane translated The Tempest as Vadal. Hamlet

was translated as Vikarvilsit by Agarkar in 1883. Taming of the Shrew was translated as Tratika. Macbeth was translated as Manjirao. Comedy of Errors was later translated as Gadya Aapula Gaav Bara. Shirwadkar once again translated Othello as Rajmurkut. These translations and their performances on the stage popularized Shakespeare even among the common people.

To enhance the interest of audience, Annasaheb Kirloskar incorporated the Vidagdh Sanskrit technique and Shakespearean technique along with the element of music in the plays Shakuntal (1880) and Saubhadra (1882). The tradition was further carried out by G.B. Deval. S.K. Kolhatkar noticeably deviated from these earlier techniques and brought a considerable change in the structure of drama. His contemporary K.P. Khadilkar built his plays in accordance with Shakespearean technique

The major playwrights who shared the credit of strengthening the Shakespearean tradition on Marathi stage were- Shripad Krishna Koltakar who was influenced by Shakespearean comedy. He practiced the farcical element from Shakespeare's comedy in his plays. Krishnaji Prabhakar Khadilkar's Janmarahasya, Mayavivah were influenced by the tragic characters delineated in Shakespearean tragedy. He attempted to assimilate two different characters from two different tragedies in his one play. Like Shakespeare's, his plays were also character plays.

Ram Ganesh Gadkari practiced Shakespearean technique of treating destiny as character in almost all his plays. And the most prolific Marathi playwright V.V. Shirwadkar who not only succeeded in developing in his plays the notion of poetic drama clearly visible in Shakespeare's tragedy but also succeeded in writing independent plays like Natsmrat in the wake of Shakespeare's King Lear. Like Shakespeare, Shirwadkar also emphasized on the weaving of internal conflict with external. Shirwadkar transformed Marathi notion of melodrama into the form of tragedy and achieved Shakespearean tragic effect by delineating the tragic experiences of

characters in his plays like Dusara Peshwa, Kaunteya. He admired Shakespeare as 'The Emperor of the Creative Universe...' (Ginde, 189).

The performances of translation, adaptations of Shakespeare's tragedies and tragicomedies like Hamlet, Othello, King Lear, The Tempest, Taming of the Shrew, Romeo Juliet, and A Midsummer Night's Dream were whole heartedly received by Marathi audience. Marathi audience welcomed Shakespeare enthusiastically probably because the voicing of human sorrows due to social and other reasons was so clear for the first time on the stage and because of that the audience could attune with that reflection of tragedy. But, in spite of this popularity, it must be noted that influence of Shakespeare did not result into anglicizing of Marathi plays, rather it culminated into Indianization of Shakespeare's content.

The reading of translations of Shakespearean plays lead to understand the influence at content level and technique level.

Influence of Shakespearean content on Marathi plays could be reviewed in the delineation of characters and their mentality. In this context Dr. Ginde records the inspiration received from Shakespeare's Othello by K.P Khadilkar who writes, "My attention was caught by Hamlet and Othello while learning the plays in college and watching their performances on the stage, I was involved in the idea of bringing the two- Hamlet and Iago in one play... I had a strong desire of assimilating the two characters and I found the Hamlet in Sawai Madhavrao and I put on the costume of Iago on the magician sent to Shrimant by Bajirao" (Ginde 141). Shakespeare's plays also supported the seeds of stories to Marathi Playwright who wrote independent plays like Natsmarat (Shriwadkar), Sawai Madhavraocha Mrutyu (K.P. Khadilkar), Guptmanjusha (Koltkar), Veertanay (Kolhtkar), Bhaubandaki (Khandilar). Acharya Are in his book Aprakashit Gadkari mentions that the origin of Ekch Pyala is in Othello (Ginde, 160)

As far as Shakespearean dramatic technique is concerned, Marathi playwrights have abundantly incorporated these techniques in their plays frequently. Gadkari's Premsanyas has incorporated the element of romance, element of many scenes in one act, mixing of tragic and comic in Gadkari's plays. Element of subplot is used in Koltkar's plays as well as in Brahmkumari by Vishram Bedekar, in Totayache Band by N.H. Kelkar. Shirwadkar and Gadkari's plays have made brilliant use of comic characters. These playwrights also practiced Shakespeare's technique of development of the play. Koltkar practiced the element of disguise used in Shakespeare's tragicomedies. He caught the impact of happy scenes from *As You Like It* in his *Premshodhan*. *Mooknayak* was written with the bearing of *Twelfth Night* as far as characters and events were concerned.

Of course, this did not mean that Marathi playwrights borrowed dramatic techniques from Shakespeare and used them as they were. They did use these techniques but befitted them in Indian context and even added their own touch to it. For instance, Shakespeare used comic element for comic relief but at the same time he added philosophical dimension to the humour for e.g., Fool's dialogues in *King Lear* or in some plays his comic characters were his mouthpiece but Marathi playwright like Gadkari used comic element to add the dimension of sarcasm.

Shakespeare used soliloquies to illuminate the deep cavern of the character's psyche or to comment on human nature but long soliloquies by Kirloskar were for connecting the story thread or by Khadilkar to introduce the play or to inform about the previous happenings.

Marathi playwright like Deval, Kirloskar, Shriwadkar practised the form of tragedy, but they could not encompass all the dimensions of Shakespearean tragedy. Shakespeare, while writing his tragedies looked at life from human perspective and painted the cruelty, horror, and formidable picture of life in his tragedy. Marathi playwrights emphasized only on the element of pity in

tragedy. The reason could be the influence of oriental philosophy. Though the experiments with Shakespearean tragedy in Marathi succeeded in creating a strong Shakespearean tradition on Marathi stage, Marathi playwrights failed to capture the depiction of human psyche as forcefully captured by Shakespeare in Hamlet or Macbeth. The way Shirwadkar succeeded in creating King Lear through Appasaheb Belwalkar in Natsmarat, no other Marathi playwright could create Macbeth or Hamlet in Marathi. This also does not mean that there is no possibility of having such king of mentalities in Asian life. Human psyche does not confine to geographical boundaries, it is common all over the world. That is why Shakespearean plays were and are still popular all over the world. But the anathemas of Asian lifestyle, particularly Marathi lifestyle does not allow to finger at the deleterious aspects of a human inner self so publically, that again through performing art like drama that casted quite a considerable impact on public psyche. Of course, Marathi drama records a golden period of Shakespearean tradition of Marathi stage that helped Marathi drama to expose itself to broader understanding of the world of World drama and the tradition discontinued after some period, but the magic of Shakespeare still works in India and is visible through the Bollywood films like Omkara, Haider etc.

Translation of Shakespeare's plays in Marathi literature not only brought new genre of tragedy but also introduced various dramatic techniques to Marathi plays.

While commenting on the delimitation of tragedy in Marathi many critics have opined that Marathi tragic plays fail to recapture the tragic grandeur of Shakespeare because the playwrights adopted the techniques, devices but the perspective, language and the concept of tragedy could not be equally accomplished.

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