

KING LEAR



Edited by
TAPU BISWAS & AMITAVA ROY

A Special Publication of
the Shakespeare Society of Eastern India

ss

KING LEAR

KING LEAR

Edited by

TAPU BISWAS & AMITAVA ROY



AVANTGARDE PRESS

Published by

Avantgarde Press

146, Sarat Bose Road, Subash Nagar

Dum Dum Cantonment, Kolkata - 700065

for Avantgarde Press, Shakespeare Society of Eastern India.

6A, Maharaja Nanda Kumar Road,

P.O. Sarat Bose Road,

Kolkata 700029.

Phone: (033) 2466 2688/98304 05624/9748726895.

E.mail: profroy@gmail.com, tapu_biswas@yahoo.com

Website Address : www.tgi.org.in/www.ssei.org.in

© Publisher/Editor for Introduction and Appendix

ISBN NO. : 978-81-928617-1-5

Published on 2023

[While all attempts have been made to acknowledge the copyright holders of the source materials used by the authors, for any inadvertent infringement of copyright laws will be corrected in next edition.]

Cover Design: Dr. Tapu Biswas

Font Cover: Lear (Amitava Roy) crowned with mettles wild flowers, leaves similar to cover of the Arden Edition ed. Kenneth Muir.

Back Cover: Top panel left: Three clowns (L) : Muira Roy Basu, (M) : Tapasya Biswas, (R) Tejaswini Biswas on halloween night, SSEI Children's little theatre workshop in 2023.

Top Row Right Panel: Goneril (Anindita Basu in red attacking Lear (Amitava Roy) in workshop on Edward Bond's Lear in 2023.

2nd Row: (L) Lear (Amitava Roy) with Fool (Tapu Biswas) in workshop sequence 2023.

Lear (Amitava Roy) with dead body of Cordelia (Sayani Dutta) in the reverse pieta position, workshop 2023.

Typing & Page setting : Mahamaya Press & Binding

Printed at:

Mahamaya Press & Binding

23, Madan Mitra Lane, Kolkata -700006

Ph. : 9830532858

Price: ₹ 1,000.00 (Rupees One Thousand only)

US \$50

UK £40

In Memoriam

Shakespeare Society of Eastern India &
Tagore Gandhi Institute
mourns the passing away of

SHREELA ROY
(1946 – 2022)

Historian, author, former Head of the Department of History, Loreto College, Kolkata, (1969 – 2006), Visiting Professor West Bengal Institute of IAS Aspirants & Diamond Harbour Women's University, Former President TGI, Lover of Shakespeare & Tagore. Secretary Nivedita Vrati Sangha, Editor *Vrati* & Long time associate of RKM Institute of Culture, Golpark.

You left your hundreds of students and admirers disconsolate on 15th March 2022 after a brief illness bravely borne.

Farewell and Rest in Peace after your journey's end.

THE EDITORS

Tapu Biswas, M.A, M Phil, Ph.D, D.Litt. is currently Associate Professor, Department of English, Visva-Bharati, Santiniketan, West Bengal, India. He is also the Vice-Principal, Bhasha Bhavana, Visva-Bharati. Dr Biswas was formerly the Assistant Registrar of Jadavpur University, Kolkata. He is honorary Jt. Secretary, Shakespeare Society of Eastern India. He is also the Hony. Secretary of the Tagore Gandhi Institute for Culture Studies and Service – Learning (both are Govt. Registered Educational and Cultural Societies). As organisational Coordinator, Dr Biswas contributed greatly to the success of the International World Shakespeare Conferences held in Kolkata and across India from 2000 till date. He has presented papers both at national and international level seminars and conferences and contributed articles in books and Journals of national and international interest. His books *Samuel Beckett's Waiting for Godot: Indian Interpretations through Critical and Analytical Studies, Translations and Stage Productions* and *Indian Response to Western "Theatre of the Absurd" Vol I & II* have been widely acclaimed both in India and abroad. He is a Recipient of UGC Research Award Post Doctoral Fellowship 2014-15. Recipient of **International Mother Teresa Award 2021**. Life member of Asiatic Society and advisory member of Indian Association of the Australian Study Centre, Eastern Region. Member of National Council of Bengal. He is co-editor of *Theatre International* (ISSN NO 2378-2036) and corresponding editor of *International Journal of Cultural Studies and Social Sciences* (ISSN NO 23474777), both the journals are Peer Reviewed and indexed in UGC-CARE list. Most recent work is his D.Litt on theatre person Badal Sircar, which is widely acclaimed as the most comprehensive thesis on the renowned director, playwright, poet, translator, theatre critic.

Amitava Roy is currently Professor Emeritus in English at Bankura University, West Bengal. Former Shakespeare Professor in English and Drama at Rabindra Bharati University, Kolkata, Director, Shakespeare Centre for Advanced Research and Shakespeare Archives at SSEI, Kolkata. Co-founder & President, Shakespeare Society of Eastern India. Represented Rabindra Bharati University as Charles Wallace Trust Visiting Professor at Oxford University (1995). Represented SSEI as Visiting Professor to Emory University, Atlanta USA in 2012. Author and Editor of over fifteen books on Shakespeare, John Osborne, Ray Lawler, Brecht *et al* and three hundred articles and papers in national and international journals and newspapers. On the editorial board of two International UGC CARE listed journals: *Theatre International* & *International Journal of Cultural Studies and Social Sciences*.

Globally renowned Theatre Director, Actor and Drama scholar. Major co-directed productions include the arena production of *Antigone* with German director Hans Heyme (Kolkata 1979), *Biblaber Mohoda*, Bengali version of *Plebeians* with the late Nobel laureate Guenter Grass (Kolkata 1986-88) *Kumari Kurukshetra* Komedie Bengali arena version of Tomas Brasche's *Frauen Kreis Lustspiel* designed by J. Launcer (Wuppertal, Germany) 1994, *Kolkata 4th May* Brecht's play on Maharaja Nanda Kumar and Warren Hastings in a Bangla Jatra version co-directed with Jatra star Ujjwal Sengupta and over fifty national and International productions of Shakespeare plays.

CONTENTS

PREFACE	11
INTRODUCTION	15
DRAMATIS PERSONS	72
KING LEAR TEXT	73
NOTES	182
APPENDIX A : <i>KING LEAR</i> IN ADAPTATION AND TRANSLATIONS : SOME EXCERPTS WITH COMMENTARY	231
APPENDIX B : CHILDREN'S THEATRE INITIATIVE	241
GLOSSARY	243
SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY	252

PREFACE

In the 1980s Professor Amitava Roy (Co-Founder and President of the 'Shakespeare Society of Eastern India' with the doyen of Indian critics Prof. Subodh Chandra Sen Gupta of Presidency College and Jadavpur University established SSEI. This is perhaps the longest running Shakespeare Society in Asia which has been on the scene for more than five decades. Roy is currently also the Professor Emeritus in English, Bankura University, West Bengal, India and Dr. Tapu Biswas (D.Litt), Jt. Secy of SSEI, Associate Professor at Rabindranath Tagore's Visva-Bharati, Santiniketan, West Bengal, India had collaborated to make a fascinating edition of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* (published by Avantgarde Press, 2022) and I was fortunate enough to have written the preface to the edition. This time, within less than a year, these two devotees of literature, have again come up with another of their dream projects : *King Lear* (Edited by Tapu Biswas and Amitava Roy) published by The Shakespeare Society of Eastern India. Writing a preface for their present edition of *King Lear* indeed is a great opportunity for me and I'm most grateful to Professor Amitava Roy, to whom I owe so much of my ideas and knowledge regarding the study of Shakespeare.

It is surprising enough that the present version of *King Lear* by SSEI is an edition which encapsulates so many triggering and thought-provoking points in simple and lucid diction unlike so-called great critical or voluminous editions available in the market and libraries now. But within the brief span of the book the editors with their experience of dealing with Shakespeare over the decades, their brilliant precision of expression and clarity of thought have touched upon all the essential areas that may act as incentives

for any student, scholar, any other ordinary reader or professor who may think of taking up this one of the best of classics in World Literature. The present edition is replete with insightful comments from some of the classical Shakespearean critics from both the West and the East like A.C.Bradley, W.B.Yeats, Dover Wilson, Jyoti Bhattacharya, Dattatreya Dutt *et al.* Apart from this, the readers who will take up this edition will enjoy the editors sense of humour in their selection of some of the critical comments on *King Lear* by some great literary figures, one of which is of course Leo Tolstoy. The reading of such a book is definitely an experience in itself. The extensive but not exhaustive quoted references to the play, its primary source materials, the indebtedness of Shakespeare to the legendary folklore and documented history everything has been done with a wise and in deft precision and keeping in mind the best advantage for the present and future generations of students or scholars who are interested to explore this field but perhaps cannot do so because of the lack of a proper guidance. The present edition covers a considerable range of selected critical comments which simultaneously focus on the creative as well as critical aspect of *King Lear*, ignoring the intimidating post-modern fashion of trying to make a text fit into certain theoretical frames.

While going through the present edition of *King Lear*, I have been surprised to note how the editors have Indianised, contemporized and brought *King Lear* quite closer to the Indian lifestyle and its socio-cultural practices from both the past and the present times. While connecting this originally British text, written almost five centuries back, to the contemporary indigenous socio-cultural, economic and political practices, the editors have traversed all the way through Indian mythology, the mythical motifs of the Indian epic *The Mahabharata*, various other indigenous legendary narratives and certain age-old regional practices. Therefore, one of the best things such an edition can do is to familiarize the text to a group of readers so distant by time, space and cultural practices from that of the original text in a completely new light of thought. It helps them to make a cross-cultural study through which a text

can be adapted as per the demand of his/her time and can assess the relevance of the text vis-a-vis the brilliance of the playwright. Therefore, by Indianizing and contemporizing Shakespeare's *King Lear*, the editors have proved once more how multidimensional and universal this play has remained even in 2023. In this edition a number of Hindi and Bengali translations have been included which successfully bring different relatable contexts of *King Lear* to the audience belonging to different Indian languages and dialects. Naturally, an English play becomes universal and inclusive in its spirit and appeal.

Another remarkable aspect of this edition is its parallel focus on the text as well as its different stage-productions. It basically comes from the editors' vast first-hand-experience of staging Shakespeare's plays both Proscenium and Off-Proscenium productions on different national and international platforms along with a rather recent production of *King Lear* in 2019. Professor Amitava Roy himself, besides being an excellent academic, has been one of the formidable theatre personalities having produced hundreds of theatre-workshops and live stage-productions in India and abroad, he along with Dr. Tapu Biswas (D.Litt) of Visva - Bharati, has reflected on certain technical aspects of *King Lear*. The sections like '*Notes and Comments*' and the brilliant '*Appendix*' often bring some very subtle and triggering insights into the text. There are sections which highlight how Shakespeare's *King Lear* was later adapted by Edward Bond in his *Lear* or in Soumitra Chattopadhyay's famous Bengali production *Raja Lear*.

Today, when the world is torn by visionless politics, money and power, very few texts can be as insightful as *King Lear*. The play acts as a sharp critique of power and other intrinsically associated with it like family, superabundant wealth, poverty, administration and friendship. The father-daughter relationships in the main plot, the father-sons relationships in the sub plot, different dimensions of conjugal relationships, the equations of friendship and loyalty, its spatial range from the royal courts to the storm-tossed Heath, the languages of the powerful and the powerless, different manifestations of violence, the nuances of dark sardonic humor

everything has been addressed with supreme dexterity without compromising anything at something else's cost. After centuries of its birth, words of the play still have that power to frighten an unruly ruler, to hold a mirror in front of his face and to show him that his critics are his best friends who stand by him in times of crises, not those who flatter and eulogize him always. Does not it look so relatable to our time irrespective of the states, countries and hemispheres of the world we live in?

For such a remarkable project Biswas and Roy are to be congratulated. They have brought all these subtle and critical strands together in this pioneering edition of Shakespeare's *King Lear*. I sincerely hope that this edition will find a secure place in all the educational institutions, public libraries and in the personal collections of all across the globe who have some interest, love and reverence for Shakespeare.

Ronan Paterson
Professor Emeritus of English &
Modern Western Theatre
Teesside University, U.K
April 2023.



Avantgarde Press

146, Sarat Bose Road, Subash Nagar,
Dum Dum Cantonment, Kolkata - 700 065/
6A, Maharaja Nanda Kumar Road
Kolkata-700 029

Phone : 9830405624/9748726895

E-mail : tapu_biswas@yahoo.com/profroy@gmail.com

Website : www.ssei.org.in/www.tgi.org.in

ISBN : 978-81-928617-1-5



ap