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**Eds.**

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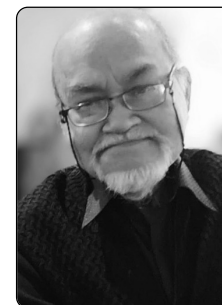
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### *In Memoriam*

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



Amitava Roy  
(1947–2024)

Professor Emeritus, Bankura University,  
Former Shakespeare Professor & Head, Department of English,  
Rabindra Bharati University,  
Former Director, Shakespeare Centre for Advanced Research,  
Rabindra Bharati University,  
Executive President, Shakespeare Society of Eastern India,  
Globally Renowned Theatre Director and Actor.  
You left thousands of students and admirers disconsolate  
on 12th April, 2024  
Farewell and Rest in Peace after your journey's end.

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## From the Editors' Desk

**Theatre International Vol. (XXII – December 2024)** begins with a paper from a scholar from Manipur. Dr. Pangeijam Sanjeev reinterprets Queen Gertrude in *Hamlet*, rejecting the enduring stereotype of a weak, lustful, disloyal woman. Surveying various critics down through the ages it argues Hamlet and the Ghost are unreliable narrators whose accusations skew readers' views. Close reading finds no evidence of infidelity. Instead, Gertrude's swift marriage to Claudius reflects a deliberate agenda: safeguarding herself, her son, and Denmark's stability amid the Fortinbras threat. Politically and personally, Claudius appears the most capable protector and perhaps even more 'manly' than Hamlet's father. Though her lines are few, Gertrude anchors the play's conflicts and decisions. Dr. Sanjeev argues that Gertrude emerges as a pragmatic, independent actor rather than a figure of moral frailty.

**Dr. Tapu Biswas** gives a comprehensive centenary survey of Badal Sircar (1925-2011), a revolutionary figure in Indian theatre. Born as Sudhindra Sircar in Kolkata, he transformed from a civil engineer to a pioneering dramatist who founded modern Indian theatre. Sircar revolutionized theatre by moving beyond traditional proscenium stages to create Open Theatre and Third Theatre movements. He took performances away from confined auditoriums to open spaces under the sky, making theatre accessible to rural and marginalized communities. His key contributions include over sixty plays like *Evam Indrajit*, *Sagina Mahato*, and *Spartacus*. He conducted transformative workshops across India and internationally, training social workers and empowering communities to create their own theatrical expressions about local issues. Biswas argues his theatre philosophy prioritized content over form, focusing on exposing social inequities and empowering the underprivileged.

**Dr. Sujato Ghosh** reads Caryl Churchill's *Top Girls* as a dialogue between flawed utopia and lived dystopia. Apparently easy feminist

solidarity is complicated by difference over sisterhood. Across acts, Churchill's intertextuality and non-linear form stage clashing voices—Marlene's careerism, Angie/Joyce's working-class burdens, and hiring-room misogyny—to expose Thatcher-era individualism. Figures like Pope Joan and Nijo dramatize the psychic costs of navigating male hegemony, while interviews (Louise, Jeanine) reveal structural exclusion. Ghosh argues that the play critiques “equaling up” bourgeois feminism yet rejects one heroine; instead it maps heterogeneous, often competing feminisms inside late-capitalist patriarchy.

**Dr. Arnab Chatterjee** traces Shakespeare's journey from page to Tollywood screen, framed by adaptation theory and auteurism. Landmark moments include *Saptapadi's* staged Othello, Ghatak's *Komal Gandhar* invoking *The Tempest*, Vidyasagar's adaptation of *Comedy of Errors* transcreated onto film as *Bhranti Bilas*, the melodramatic *Shrimati Bhyankari* echoing *Taming of the Shrew*, Sen's *Arshinagar* recoding *Romeo and Juliet*. Chatterjee after analysis of these adaptations conclude that Tollywood directors recontextualize plots, images, and themes to address local markets and ideologies, making “Bengali Shakespeares” that privilege creative control over fidelity while negotiating universality, commerce, and culture.

**Richa Gupta** pairs Steele's *The Tatler* with his sentimental comedy *The Conscious Lovers* to show how page and stage co-produce middle-class morality. Through the persona of Isaac Bickerstaff, witty sketches of coxcombs and coquettes model reform via amusement; No. 207 redefines “gentleman” by conduct, not rank. Onstage, Bevil Junior's civility and self-command counter Cimberton's pedantry, redirecting comedy from libertine triumph to ethical sentiment. By aligning rhetorical strategies (humor, exemplarity) with performative ones (contrast, decorum), Steele's oeuvre trains readers/spectators in emotional regulation and public virtue. Gupta points out that in this way Steele through both mediums shaped both literary character and social character in early eighteenth-century Britain.

**Dr. Renjini R** reads *Ponman* through biopolitics. She argues dowry

functions as population-level control over female subjectivity. Centered on Kollam's panapayattu—community fund-raising for bridal gold—the film tracks Steffi, Mariano, and Ajeesh through debt, violence, and gold-obsessed social scripts amplified by advertising. Despite legal bans, dowry persists via patriarchy, inheritance customs and greed for commodities, leading to sacrifices of other prospects and gendered harm. The narrative's climax—the main characters asserting educated self-worth—critiques performative patriarchy while exposing class/faith dynamics on Kerala's coast. The article shows how biopower performs through rituals, markets, and kinship, policing bodies and futures.

**Dr. Sonia Ningthoujam** feminist rereading of *Abhijñanasakuntalam* reframes its lyric romance as a drama of silencing and conditional recognition. Sakuntala's virtue is idealized, yet her speech is voided in court; legitimacy hinges on Dushyanta's memory (the ring), not her testimony—an instance of patriarchal epistemic violence. Kanva's injunctions script compliant womanhood; reunion restores order but reaffirms dependence on male authority. Drawing on Spivak and Irigaray, the essay exposes how symbolic elevation masks subordination: the heroine's patience and beauty are celebrated while agency is curtailed. Ningthoujam observes the play's power lies in this ambivalence—resilience yet ultimate reinscription within patriarchy.

**Dr. Swati Roy Chowdhury** analyzes Anshuman Kar's *Vemular Ramayana* as rigorous textual dramaturgy that collapses mythic and modern time. Using Genette's analepsis/prolepsis and Bakhtin's chronotope, the play juxtaposes Shambuka's execution with Rohith Vemula's institutional death to expose the structural continuity of caste violence. Drawing on Ambedkar and Spivak, the essay argues the drama demonstrates not a system's failure but its designed success. By bracketing performance to foreground the script's time logic, it shows how the “Chronotope of Caste” binds epic injunctions to present bureaucratic exclusions. Chowdhury argue that the play compels audiences to confront an unbroken politics of exclusion.

**Samim Aktar Molla** reads Poile Sengupta's *Alipha* as a feminist

theatre of resistance. Through stark binaries—rich/poor, innocence/offence, power/powerless—the play stages a woman's defiance of patriarchal norms and highlights the necessity of women's solidarity. Split staging, contrasting lights, and dialogue between a Woman and a Man dramatize systemic asymmetries while refusing simple man-blaming; the aim is empowerment. Collective action, not lone heroism, counters violence and social ostracism. Molla sees *Alipha* as emblematic of gendered struggle, where voices, bodies, and alliances expose and resist everyday coercions in family and society.

**Dr. Tilok Naskar** examines Mahesh Dattani's *Final Solutions* against India's history of communalism—from Partition to Babri Masjid's aftermath—tracking how riots recur across decades. Centering Hardika's diary and the Mob as Chorus, the study shows how memory, rumor, and grievance manufacture Hindu-Muslim antagonism inside domestic spaces. Contextualizing Dattani's writing process with Alyque Padamsee's prompt and Tazia-riot inspiration, Naskar argues the play dramatizes cycles of suspicion, scapegoating, and state complicity. It anatomizes everyday bigotry and the fragility of secular ideals, asking whether intimate reconciliation can withstand entrenched narratives that repeatedly convert neighbors into enemies.

**Shreya Sarkar** explores “mad women” across Tennessee Williams's one-acts—*This Property Is Condemned*, *The Lady of Larkspur Lotion*, *Portrait of a Madonna*, *Hello from Bertha*. Linking dramaturgical madness to Williams's biography (sister Rose, confinement anxiety), she traces motifs of delusion, institutionalization, and stigma as critiques of social abandonment. Characters like Willie exhibit grandiose delusions and survival strategies coded as pathology; stage directions and grotesque lyricism solicit compassion without sanitizing harm. Drawing on critics Sarkar distinguishes literary from clinical “madness,” showing how Williams converts marginal female suffering into a lens on class precarity, gendered policing, and fragile dignity.

**Dr. Renjini R** offers a biopolitical reading of Ponman (2025), arguing dowry practices regulate female subjectivity at population scale. Anchored

in Kollam's panapayattu—community fundraising for bridal gold—the film's Ajeesh–Steffi–Mariano triangle reveals how legality (1961 Dowry Act) coexists with violent custom. Through Foucault's population governance and inheritance debates, the essay shows dowry scripting education, marriageability, and bodily risk, sustaining patriarchy despite Kerala's literacy reputation. Ponman dramatizes how gold economies, advertising imaginaries, and kinship surveillance turn women into managed assets; Steffi's refusal gestures to agency against performative patriarchy, yet exposes the costs of dissent.

**Manvi Rai, Dr. Charu Yadav, and Ashish Dwivedi** demonstrates how backstory heightens acting authenticity in *Marnoparant and 12 Angry Jurors*. Bridging Natyashastra's bhava-rasa with Stanislavski/Strasberg/Meisner methods, the authors combine rehearsal observation, performer reflections, and audience feedback. They found that the backstory scaffolds truthful impulses, clarifies ensemble relationships, and sustains emotional continuity in pauses and silences. Actors leverage autobiographical memory to locate motivations; audiences report greater believability. The paper recommends formalizing backstory work in Indian actor training, integrating Angika/Vachika/Aharya/Sattvika with Western affective preparation to connect text, embodied memory, and spectators' empathic reception.

**Ashish Dwivedi and Charu Yadav** surveys Lucknow theatre from NawabWajid Ali Shah to the present. They trace foundations of it in royal “Shahi Stage,” dance-music drama, and through folk/Parsi influences, evolving venues, and later institutionalization (academies, auditoria). Using interviews with leading practitioners and archival fieldwork, the study maps shifts in forms, stagecraft, and publics—from ornate court spectacles to civic halls and community stages. It highlights pivotal groups/directors who globalized Lucknow's theatrical identity and shows how cultural institutions sustained training, repertory, and archives. Dwivedi and Yadav argues that the result is a diachronic portrait of a city where etiquette, music, and drama entwine.

**Naren Mondal** re-reads Utpal Dutt's *The Great Rebellion* through

Marxist historiography, defending creative distortion as class truth. Blending fiction with 1857 events, Dutt indicts bourgeois histories and spotlights weavers, sepoys, and women as revolutionary agents. Scenes of mutilated artisans, unequal pay, and cartridge controversies expose colonial extraction and comprador betrayal. Characters like Heera and Lachman embody conflicted consciousness under imperial pedagogy, while dialogues insist revolt is collective pedagogy, not episodic riot. Theatre becomes counter-history: a mass platform that remembers anti-imperialist struggles, critiques post-independence compromises. Mondal concludes that the play rallies audiences toward materialist understandings of nation and resistance.

**Dr. L. D. Easter Raj Densingh** analyzes David Hare's *Stuff Happens* as documentary-drama hybrid that stages the Iraq War's prelude. Minimalist, ensemble performance and role-doubling foreground rhetoric over spectacle; manufacture of truths, diplomacy, and executive overreach are all analyzed. With Brechtian alienation—narration, direct address, shifting viewpoints—the play reframes political leaders as performers in a media theatre, inviting critical scrutiny rather than catharsis. Tracking Powell's UN speech, "dodgy dossier," and sidelined dissenters, Densingh argues the stage becomes civic forum, intervening in cultural memory and testing democratic accountability amid propaganda and moral crisis.

This volume ends with a paper by **Shamshad Nahar** speaks about how covid pandemic disrupted theatre performances as a live physical medium. So when Shakespeare's plays were performed they had to be performed as a type of digital doubling. Physical space was no longer important, what mattered was connectivity. Yet at the same time the plays also managed to bring people out of their isolation. They also gained special traction as the themes often dealt with the body, contagion and epidemic. Nahar points out how the pandemic reinvented theatre mode itself and proved that even in such times Shakespeare is relevant and adaptable.

Happy Reading

**Editors**