

# Hamlet

PRINCE OF DENMARK



*Edited by*

**AMITAVA ROY & TAPU BISWAS**

*Preface by Prof. Ronan Paterson (UK)*

*A Special Publication of*  
**the Shakespeare Society of Eastern India**

**ss**

# HAMLET



# HAMLET

---

PRINCE OF DENMARK

*Edited by*  
AMITAVA ROY & TAPU BISWAS



AVANTGARDE PRESS

*Published by*

Dr. Tapu Biswas

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](http://www.tgi.org.in)/[www.ssei.org.in](http://www.ssei.org.in)**

© Publisher/Author

**ISBN NO. : 978-81-928617-0-8**

*Published 2022*

[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

*Front Cover:* Grave Digger (Tapu Biswas) throwing up Yorick's skull to Hamlet (Amitava Roy) in a workshop presentation at ICCR, Kolkata.

*Back Cover : Left to Right : First Row:* Hamlet (Amitva Roy) & Gertrude (Manashi Sinha Ray) in close embrace. Hamlet with Gertrude dipping into wisdom of Professor Burnett's *Hamlet and World Cinema* in between workshop scenes. Child actor Mira Roy Basu with skull in Grave Diggers Scene from *Hamlet*.

*Second Row:* The killing of Polonius (Shyamal Sarkar) with Gertrude, Hamlet and Guard. Hamlet meditating. Child actor Tejaswani Biswas in active mudra.

Third Row: Little Shakespearian Tapasya Biswas in two sequences from Alice in Tigerland. Tapasya & Tejaswani as Sleeping Beauties in fairy tale.

*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, Golepark.

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

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



## THE EDITORS

**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 Nobelist Guenter Grass (Kolkata 1986-88) *Kumari Kurukshetra Komedya* Bengali arena version of Tomas Brasche's *Frauen Kreig Lustspiel* designed by J. Launcer (Wuppertall, Germany) 1994, *Kolkata 4<sup>th</sup> May* Brecht's playon 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.



**Tapu Biswas**, M.A, M Phil, Ph.D, D.Litt. is currently faculty, 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 listed 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.

## CONTENTS

|                           |     |
|---------------------------|-----|
| PREFACE                   | 11  |
| INTRODUCTION              | 15  |
| HAMLET, PRINCE OF DENMARK | 47  |
| NOTES AND COMMENTS        | 185 |
| GLOSSARY                  | 269 |
| APPENDIX                  | 279 |
| BIBLIOGRAPHY              | 296 |



## PREFACE

If you are privileged, as I have been, to travel all over the world in pursuit of Shakespearean knowledge, it becomes apparent that, in certain places and certain countries, there are often individuals who seem to be right at the heart of almost every facet of activity. Kolkata and West Bengal indeed are such places, where there is one man who, to paraphrase Shakespeare, bestrides Eastern India like a colossus. In that corner of the subcontinent a lot of conversations about Shakespeare eventually wend their way round to Professor Amitava Roy.

I first heard him addressing a gathering of scholars from many countries at a conference, and was struck, not just by his deep and intimate knowledge of his subject, but also by his warmth and generosity towards younger and less experienced scholars. We soon became friends, and on my subsequent visits we would often share platforms, lead workshops, and eventually sit together on the editorial board of two UGC CARE-listed journals, *Theatre International* and the *International Journal of Culture Studies and Social Sciences*. In working alongside him in this context I had the opportunity to observe at close quarters not only his insight, but also his rigour as an editor, qualities which he brings to bear in his approach to the most enigmatic play in Shakespeare's canon, *Hamlet*.

To begin to describe the lifetime of knowledge and experience he brings to this task is daunting. As Cominius says, when asked

to describe Coriolanus' qualifications, "I shall lack voice". (*Coriolanus*, Iiii, 69). The international scholars who frequently seek him out, the academics who regularly cite him in their publications, the students who come to sit at his feet, (quite literally in the case of the seminar room at the Shakespeare Society of Eastern India headquarters), those who have learned to perform Shakespeare in working with him, those who have been mentored and encouraged by him over the years, all can speak of that. Let me speak of those things of which I have the closest experience. As co-founder and President of the SSEI, he has worked tirelessly over the decades, bringing together students and scholars, organising courses, conferences, workshops and performances, publishing journals, books and other materials, lobbying and promoting, advocating and proselytising, fundraising, fighting and championing Shakespeare through good times and bad. My own research and practice have been deepened and enriched by my visits to SSEI, and the lively discussions and insightful presentations I have been privileged to attend there. But at the heart of all of this activity is Amitava's own work, as writer, researcher, speaker, translator and editor.

Professor Roy is a figurehead, but is ably supported by others, most notably in recent years by Dr Tapu Biswas, (D.Litt), Joint Secretary of SSEI, and a formidable scholar in his own right. The two of them have collaborated on this fascinating edition of *Hamlet*, which brings forward contextual and supporting materials offering vital insights to researchers and students who seek to understand the significance and relevance of *Hamlet* to contemporary India. The edition covers a great many topics. In the Introduction the editors offer a comprehensive exploration of the central questions arising from the play, including the sources, the Revenge theme, Hamlet's relationships with Gertrude and Ophelia, his encounters with the Ghost, Polonius and Laertes, the importance of the

interactions with the Players, and his eventual confrontation with Death. But these, and others, are seen particularly from an Indian perspective. Roy and Biswas examine *Hamlet* closely in comparison with the great classical epics of the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana*, Sanskrit dramas and the folk theatre traditions from all across India. Analogues from Indian translations and adaptations are also examined.

The Appendices offer a wealth of insight. Among the supporting materials two long running contemporary Bangla adaptations are covered, Asit Basu's *Kolkatar Hamlet* (1972, 1975) and Bratya Basu's *Hamlet, Prince of Garanhata* (2006). The excerpts presented here give a fascinating glimpse of how modern India is responding to Shakespeare's masterpiece. Also included is the "To be or not to be" soliloquy from Pratima Das's Hindi translation, (in both Roman and Devnagari script) widely acclaimed as the best modern Hindi translation. The editors published this translation serially in *Theatre International* between 2013 and 2021. Hindi translation first began around 1895, and there have been a number of notable versions, including that of Harivansh Rai Bachchan the well known poet and Professor of English (and also the father of legendary Bollywood star Amitav Bachchan, who starred in numerous revenge-themed Shakespeare-inspired Hindi films such as *Sholay*).

Roy and Biswas' offering is very much an 'Indian' edition of Hamlet. Roy and Biswas underline the Indian connections, not just in the Introduction and Appendices, but also in the annotations and glossary. It is an *Indianised* and *contemporised* Hamlet, that brings Denmark and India together, juxtaposing Elsinore, classical and modern Kolkata and Delhi together in a novel and important manner. This remarkable edition should find itself a secure place in schools, colleges and universities as well as being of enormous interest to all those who love and care for the position of Shakespeare around the world. Professor Amitava Roy and Dr

Tapu Biswas are to be congratulated for bringing all these strands together in this pioneering edition of Shakespeare's most iconic drama.

Ronan Paterson  
Professor Emeritus of  
English and Modern Western Theatre  
Teesside University, UK  
June 2022



## 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](mailto:tapu_biswas@yahoo.com)/[profroy@gmail.com](mailto:profroy@gmail.com)

Website : [www.ssei.org.in](http://www.ssei.org.in)/[www.tgi.org.in](http://www.tgi.org.in)

ISBN : 978-81-928617-0-8



9 788192 186170 8

**ap**