

Shakespeare at the Margins: Bengali Little Magazines and the Politics of Cultural Representation

Dr. Biplab Das

Abstract

Shakespeare's emergence as a global cultural icon has been profoundly shaped by indigenous modes of interpretation and artistic expression across the Global South. In colonial India, Shakespeare functioned as an instrument of imperial pedagogy, reinforcing British cultural authority. From the late nineteenth century onwards, however, this hegemonic image was increasingly challenged through theatrical performances, translations, adaptations, classroom practices, and vernacular literary engagements that reinterpreted Shakespeare within local cultural contexts. This paper examines the reception of Shakespeare in Bengali little magazines, a significant yet understudied site of literary and cultural discourse. As alternative literary platforms, these magazines created space for writers, teachers, theatre practitioners, and general readers to engage critically with Shakespeare beyond the institutional framework of colonial education. By analysing essays and special issues devoted to Shakespeare, particularly those published during the quatercentenary commemorations, the paper explores how Bengali intellectuals appropriated the Bard to articulate indigenous perspectives. Rather than merely celebrating Shakespeare's universal genius, these magazines sought to Indianize, localize, and demystify his canonical status, transforming him from an emblem of colonial authority into a subject of cultural negotiation. The diverse and polyphonic voices preserved in these periodicals reveal an alternative history of Shakespeare's reception in Bengal, one that foregrounds dialogue, reinterpretation, and resistance. The study argues that Bengali little magazines constitute a valuable archive for understanding the decolonization of Shakespeare and the formation of vernacular literary modernity in India.

Key-words: Bengali Little Magazine, Shakespeare, Response, Periphery

1. Introduction:

The reception and study of Shakespeare in colonial Bengal during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries constitute a remarkable chapter in the cultural history of colonial India. Shakespeare's presence in Bengal emerged at the intersection of British imperial pedagogy and the intellectual aspirations of the Bengali educated middle class. While colonial administrators promoted English literature as an instrument for producing a class of educated intermediaries, Bengali intellectuals gradually transformed Shakespeare into a site of literary inquiry, cultural negotiation, and ideological reinterpretation. The institutionalization of English education played a decisive role in introducing Shakespeare to Bengal. The establishment of Hindu College (1817), later Presidency College and now Presidency University, marked the beginning of a new educational paradigm in which Shakespeare occupied a privileged position as the exemplar of

English literary excellence. Within the colonial curriculum, familiarity with Shakespeare became synonymous with intellectual refinement and modern education. Consequently, the study of Shakespeare acquired considerable cultural prestige among the Bengali intelligentsia. Leading intellectuals such as Raja Rammohan Roy, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay, and later Michael Madhusudan Dutt engaged with Shakespeare in ways that transcended classroom instruction. They admired the universality of his themes, the psychological complexity of his characters, and the dramatic richness of his works. More importantly, Shakespeare became a cultural medium through which educated Bengalis negotiated the contradictions of colonial modernity, simultaneously embracing Western literary traditions while seeking to preserve and redefine indigenous cultural identities. Translation and adaptation emerged as one of the most influential modes of Shakespeare's reception in Bengal. Rather than merely translating the original texts, Bengali writers appropriated Shakespeare through creative cultural reinterpretations. Michael Madhusudan Dutt's *Bhrantibilas* (1869), adapted from *The Comedy of Errors*, stands as one of the earliest and most celebrated examples of this process. Such adaptations localized Shakespeare by embedding his narratives within familiar Bengali social and cultural contexts, thereby making his works accessible to readers and audiences beyond the English-educated elite. The Bengali stage further expanded Shakespeare's cultural reach. During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, theatre became an important site for the dissemination and transformation of Shakespearean drama. Playwrights and theatre practitioners such as Girish Chandra Ghosh staged Bengali versions of *Macbeth*, *Othello*, and *Hamlet*, often modifying characters, settings, and dramatic conventions to suit local theatrical traditions and audience expectations. These performances not only popularized Shakespeare but also demonstrated the adaptability of his plays within indigenous performance cultures. Thus, in colonial Bengal, Shakespeare functioned simultaneously as an emblem of imperial cultural authority and as a resource through which Bengali intellectuals and theatre practitioners articulated their own cultural agency.

Following Indian independence in 1947, Shakespeare studies in Bengal entered a new intellectual phase shaped by postcolonial consciousness. The reverential colonial approach gradually gave way to critical reinterpretations that questioned the ideological assumptions underlying Shakespeare's canonical status in colonial education. Influenced by postcolonial literary theory, scholars began to examine Shakespeare not simply as a universal literary figure but also as a cultural construct implicated in imperial discourse. The writings of critics such as Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak encouraged readings that exposed the Eurocentric foundations of Shakespearean criticism while exploring the possibilities of recovering subaltern and indigenous perspectives. Academic engagement with Shakespeare consequently became more interdisciplinary, incorporating postcolonial, feminist, historicist, and cultural-materialist approaches. Universities in Bengal continued to teach Shakespeare, yet the emphasis increasingly shifted from textual appreciation to critical interrogation of the colonial conditions under which Shakespeare had acquired canonical authority. Shakespeare became a productive site for examining questions of power, identity, representation, and resistance in postcolonial India. Against this historical backdrop, the present paper examines how Shakespeare was reimagined within the Bengali little magazine movement. Unlike mainstream literary periodicals, little magazines have long served as spaces for alternative literary expression, intellectual experimentation, and cultural dissent. Bringing together teachers, theatre practitioners, translators, critics, and general admirers of Shakespeare, these magazines reveal a plurality of responses that challenge the inherited colonial image of the Bard. Focusing on the Shakespeare special

issues published during the quatercentenary celebrations in 1964, this study investigates how Bengali little magazines sought to indigenize, contextualize, and demystify Shakespeare through diverse critical and creative interventions. The paper specifically analyses two important Bengali little magazines-Uttaran and Ispaater Chithi, whose commemorative issues illuminate the polyphonic voices emerging from the cultural margins. Through these magazines, Shakespeare is no longer presented as the untouchable icon of colonial literary supremacy but as a dialogic figure continuously reinterpreted within the socio-cultural realities of Bengal.

The Bengali magazine, or “Patrika”, has played a pivotal role in the literary and cultural history of Bengal, serving as a crucial medium for the dissemination of ideas, literary works, and intellectual discourse. From the mid-19th century onwards, Bengali magazines have reflected and shaped the cultural, social, and political currents of the time, becoming an integral part of the Bengali literary tradition. The origin of Bengali magazines can be traced back to the early 19th century, coinciding with the Bengal Renaissance, a period marked by a surge in intellectual and cultural activities. The first significant Bengali magazine was “Digdarshan”, launched in 1818 by the Serampore missionaries. This magazine, though primarily educational, set the stage for future publications by introducing the concept of serialized content to the Bengali readership. Soon after magazines like “Samachar Darpan”, and “Bengal Gazette, emerged in that very year, combining news with literary content. These early magazines were instrumental in fostering a reading public and creating a space for intellectual debate and discussion. The mid-19th century saw the emergence of more literary-focused magazines, which played a critical role in nurturing Bengali literature. “Tattvabodhini Patrika”, founded in 1843 by Debendranath Tagore, was among the first to blend literature with philosophy and social reform. It provided a platform for writers, poets, and thinkers to publish their works and engage with contemporary issues. By the late 19th century, Bengali magazines had become the primary medium for publishing new literary works, including poetry, short stories, essays, and serialized novels. “Bangadarshan”, founded by Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay in 1872, became one of the most influential magazines of the time. “Bharati”, founded in 1877 by Dwijendranath Tagore, was another significant literary magazine. It became a key platform for the works of Rabindranath Tagore and other prominent writers of the period. The early 20th century was a golden age for Bengali magazines, with the emergence of several iconic publications. “Prabasi” edited by Ramananda Chatterjee and launched in 1901, became a landmark in Bengali literary culture. “Kallol”, founded in 1923, marked the beginning of modernism in Bengali literature. It provided a platform for a new generation of writers who broke away from traditional themes and styles, exploring more complex psychological and social issues. The “Kallol” group, associated with this magazine, became a significant literary movement, influencing Bengali literature for decades. In the post-independence period, Bengali magazines continued to thrive, adapting to the changing times while maintaining their role as vital platforms for literary and intellectual expression. Magazines like “Desh”, established in 1933, continued the tradition of publishing high-quality literature and essays, shaping literary tastes and public opinion. The Bengali magazine as a literary form has been instrumental in the development of not only Bengali literature and culture but also popularizing Shakespeare study in Bengal.

A little magazine is a small, non-commercial publication that typically focuses on literary and artistic content. These magazines are often produced on a limited budget, with a small print run, and are usually aimed at a niche audience. Unlike mainstream magazines, little magazines prioritize creative expression,

experimental work, and the promotion of emerging or avant-garde writers and artists over commercial success. Originally, the word ‘magazine’ means the storehouse of a weapon, a cartridge, or a cartridge holder. In Merriam Webster’s Encyclopaedia of Literature, the word magazine is defined as- “A printed collection of texts (essays, articles, stories, poems), often illustrated, that is produced at regular intervals. The original sense of the English word was “storehouse”; from its use in periodical titles in the figurative sense to mean “storehouse of information” (as the Gentleman’s Magazine, first published in 1731) it became the general word for such publications.” (Merriam Webster’s Encyclopaedia of Literature, 1995). When the word “little” is associated with the word magazine to signify a new terminology, in fact, both the words lose their original significance. Little magazines are neither little in terms of the littleness of their size and circulation nor they are magazine in the true sense. Little has a metaphorical connotation here; it is the repercussion of an intellectual movement, which tries to build up a resistance against the popular mainstream literary practices.

Encyclopaedia Britannica provides a true portrait of a little magazine- “A little magazine usually begins with the objective of publishing literary work of some artistic merit that is unacceptable to commercial magazines for any one or all of three reasons-the writer is unknown and therefore not a good risk; the work itself is unconventional or experimental in form; or it violates one or several popular notions of moral, social, or aesthetic behaviour”. According to Wikipedia- “The Little Magazines, often called ‘small magazines’ are literary magazines, which publish experimental and non-conformist writings of relatively unknown writers. They are usually non-commercial in their outlook. They are often very irregular in their publication. The earliest significant examples are the transcendentalist publication *The Dial* (1840-44), edited by Ralph Waldo Emerson and Margaret Fuller in Boston, and *The Savoy* (1896), edited by Arthur Symonds in London, which had a revolt against the Victorian Materialism as its agenda”.

So, analyzing the above lexical study, we can easily understand what might be the characteristic features of a little magazine. Little magazines are typically non-profit ventures, often run by writers, artists, and intellectuals passionate about literature and art. They rely on subscriptions, donations, or small grants rather than advertising revenue, allowing them to maintain editorial independence and focus on creative content. These magazines are known for their willingness to publish experimental, avant-garde, and unconventional work. They often serve as platforms for emerging writers and artists who may not fit into mainstream publications. This emphasis on innovation makes little magazines important incubators for new literary and artistic movements. Little magazines usually have a small print run, sometimes as few as a few hundred copies. They cater to a niche audience, often composed of fellow writers, artists, and intellectuals. The limited circulation reflects both the specialized nature of the content and the modest resources available for production. Unlike commercial magazines, little magazines often do not adhere to a strict publication schedule. They might be published quarterly, biannually, or even less frequently, depending on the resources and time available to the editors and contributors. Despite their small size and limited resources, little magazines are known for maintaining high editorial standards. Editors are often deeply involved in the literary community and are committed to publishing work of genuine artistic merit. Little magazines often foster a sense of community among contributors and readers. They are collaborative spaces where like-minded individuals can share ideas, critique each other’s work, and support the growth of new voices. Swallow lists three general characteristic features of little magazines-(i) the Magazines are economically unsound; (ii) they seldom provide any gain for those associated with them, i.e., writer editor,

or publisher; (iii) and big cities like New York, etc., are not the centre of their activity (Swallow, *The Little Magazines*, 1942). Swallow also lists three functions of the little magazine: “to provide a market for the great writing of our time; to sponsor experiment controversy, and new movements; and to give a hearing to unpopular ideas.” These characteristics make little magazines vital to the literary and artistic landscape, offering a space for creative expression and innovation that might not find a home in mainstream media.

As a literary form, the little magazine occupies a unique and influential position in the literary world. Unlike mainstream publications, little magazines are typically small, independent, and non-commercial, focusing on the promotion of literature and the arts rather than profit. Their primary mission is to provide a platform for experimental, avant-garde, and non-traditional literary and artistic work that might not find a place in commercial outlets. The little magazine serves as a crucial incubator for new literary movements and emerging voices. Historically, these magazines have been at the forefront of major literary and artistic developments. For example, the modernist movement of the early 20th century saw significant contributions from little magazines like *The Egoist* and *Poetry*, which published early works by writers such as T.S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, and James Joyce. These publications were often the first to introduce radical new ideas and styles to a broader audience, challenging conventional forms and narratives. Little magazines are also characterized by their editorial freedom. Unconstrained by the commercial pressures that shape larger publications, they can take risks with the content they publish, championing innovative and sometimes controversial work. This editorial independence has allowed them to serve as a voice for marginalized or underrepresented groups, offering a space for diverse perspectives and unconventional narratives. The form of the little magazine itself is often as experimental as its content. They frequently feature a mix of poetry, short fiction, essays, criticism, and visual art, creating a multidisciplinary space that encourages creative cross-pollination. The physical design of these magazines can also be innovative, with editors and designers often using unconventional layouts, typography, and materials.

The anti-establishment nature of the Bengali Little Magazines is one of their most defining characteristics, setting them apart from mainstream literary and cultural publications. These magazines emerged as platforms for dissent, critique, alternative thinking, often challenging the socio-political status quo and the cultural norms of their time. Rooted in a spirit of rebellion, they have played a significant role in shaping the intellectual and literary landscape of Bengal, particularly during periods of political unrest and social change. This anti-establishment ethos of Bengali little magazines can be traced back to the early 20th century, a time of significant political and social upheaval in Bengal. The rise of nationalist movements, the struggle for independence from British colonial rule, and the subsequent socio-political challenges in post-independence India created an environment where young writers and intellectuals sought platforms to express their dissatisfaction with the existing order. Little magazines became the ideal medium for the expression, as they were free from the commercial and ideological constraints that often governed mainstream publications. Bengali little magazines were often founded in opposition to the perceived conservatism and elitism of mainstream literary culture. Mainstream publications were seen as being aligned with the establishment, often promoting literature that conformed to traditional values and aesthetics. In contrast, little magazines embraced new and experimental forms of expression, challenging the literary conventions of the time. Little magazine played a dominant role in bringing the wave of modernism in Bengali literature in Bengal. And the ability ‘to say something sharply’ is one of the defining

aspects of little magazine and this quality upholds also of modernism in general. As William Troy in “The Story of Little Magazines”, admits in his 1930 attempt to eulogize the genre- “The genealogy of magazines offers one of the most confusing of studies. To pursue the different strains of heredity, to separate the tangled criss-cross of influences, when the subject is not even as dependably concrete as a man, but only one of the more elusive and insubstantial of man’s expressions, is a petty nearly hopeless task” (Troy,481). Theoretical approaches to little magazines encompass a range of perspectives, from their role in shaping literary modernism to their function as sites of cultural resistance and innovation. Little magazines are often viewed through the lens of modernism and the avant-garde. These publications emerged as crucial platforms for the dissemination of modernist aesthetics, providing a space for writers to experiment with form, language, and content. The modernist approach emphasizes the magazine’s role in challenging mainstream literary conventions and promoting new literary conventions and promoting new literary movements. Key figures like Ezra Pound and T. S. Eliot used little magazines such as *The Egoist* and *The Little Review* to publish works that would later be considered foundational to modernist literature. This approach underscores the importance of little magazines in fostering literary innovation and cultural change. Ezra Pound is a central figure in the history of little magazines, both as a contributor and an editor. Pound’s advocacy for little magazines was grounded in his belief that these small, independent publications were crucial for the development of innovative and experimental writing. Another theoretical approach considers little magazines as instruments of cultural and political resistance. These magazines often operate on the fringes of mainstream culture, challenging dominant ideologies and offering alternative perspectives. This resistance can be seen in publications like *The Blast* (associated with Vorticism) or *The Masses* (a socialist magazine), which provided platforms for radical ideas and critiques of the status quo. From this perspective, little magazines are seen as spaces where marginalized voices can be heard and where countercultural movements can take place. Janet Lyon, a 20th century scholar of modernist studies, has significantly contributed to the understanding of little magazines through her exploration of their role in the public sphere. In her work, Lyon argues that little magazines served as sites of public discourse and debate, particularly during the early 20th century.

The 20th century magazines, starting with “Probashi”, we go to 1914, and “Sabuj Patra” was a turning point in the history of Bengali Magazines. “Sabuj Patra” did not have a single page of advertising. There was another aspect of this magazine. “Sabuj Patra” started the campaign for writing in colloquial Bengal. The generic signs of little magazines were very much clear in “Sabuj Patra”. “Ekak Matra”, “Oihik”, “Swasthyer Britte”, “Raktamangsho”, “Manthan”, “Titir”, “Dhyanbindu”, “Bhashalipi”, “Pratibimbo”, “Mon Kalam”, “Batighor”, “Aneek”, “Nabyosrote”, “Amitrakkhar”, “Chitrabhash”, “Chiroharit”, “Charbak”, to name a few Bengali Little Magazines, which are running successfully in the present times. Shakespeare started to appear in the Bengali Little Magazines in the post-independence period. Though the magazine movement in Bengal tuned up in the first half of the 20th century, the specific issues started coming up on the auspicious occasion of Shakespeare’s quatercentenary anniversary in 1964. Like every other nation, India witnessed a special attraction for Shakespeare during this time. Various magazines came out commemorating this sacred moment by publishing special volumes. However, it was Srikumar Bandopadhyay who pioneered the journey of writing on Shakespeare in Bengali little magazine. Later, we saw many such little magazines like *Uttaran*, *Uttarsuri*, *Parichay* etc. concentrated on publishing their special issues in 1964. Not only Bengali little magazines but also various journals of national and international repute published on Shakespeare. These publications are an interesting study to decipher how

the indigenous approaches to Shakespeare intersect with socio-political contexts of the milieu. These issues were quite successful and appealing to the readers as these experimental and non-conformist writings welcome us for a stage of alternate discussion and debate. Later, many other Bengali little magazines focused on Shakespeare as special theme of their edition. Magazines like Natun Disha, Ebong Mushayera represent their homage to Shakespeare purely from their own native perspectives. I will discuss in this paper two magazines- Uttaran, and Ispaater Chithi which published their special issue on Shakespeare in 1964.

Uttaran, is a distinguished Bengali little magazine, widely recognized for its contribution to the literary and cultural landscape of West Bengal. The magazine was founded by poet and writer Sukanta Bhattacharya in the early 1960s. Bhattacharya, along with a group of like-minded literary enthusiasts, sought to create a platform for avant-garde literature that challenged the mainstream literary trends of the time. Under Bhattacharya's editorial leadership, "Uttaran" quickly became a crucible for new and experimental writing. The magazine was committed to publishing works that pushed the boundaries of conventional literature, offering a space for young, emerging writers and poets who were eager to explore innovative themes styles and forms. "Uttaran", played a significant role in popularizing the study of Shakespeare in Bengal, especially during a period when literary discourse was expanding to include global influences. While Shakespeare had already been a part of the academic curriculum and theatre culture in Bengal, "Uttaran" contributed by making his works more accessible and engaging to a broader audience beyond the academic and elite circles.

"Uttaran", the influential Bengali little magazine, made a significant contribution to Shakespearean studies in Bengal with a special issue edited by Kiranshankar Sengupta. This issue, dedicated entirely to the works and influence of William Shakespeare, was a milestone in the Bengali literary scene, as it sought to explore and reinterpret Shakespeare's legacy through a distinctly Bengali lens. Kiranshankar Sengupta, a respected literary figure and scholar, took the helm as the guest editor for this special issue. His deep understanding of both Bengali literature and Shakespearean works made him the ideal choice to lead such a project. Sengupta's vision for the issue was to create a dialogue between Bengali and Shakespearean literature, emphasizing the relevance of Shakespeare's themes in the contemporary Bengali context. The magazine was published from Kolkata, West Bengal. Kolkata, being the cultural and literary hub of Bengal, has been home to numerous little magazines that have played pivotal roles in the literary landscape, and "Uttaran" is one of them.

This special issue featured a rich collection of essays, translations, critical analyses, and creative adaptations of Shakespeare's works. Contributors included prominent Bengali writers, poets, and scholars who brought diverse perspectives to Shakespeare's plays and sonnets. This special volume consists of eight articles, each written in vernacular Bengali language. Some essays focused on the universality of Shakespeare's themes, such as love, power, and betrayal, while others delved into the challenges of translating and adapting his works into Bengali. The first essay titled as "Shakespeare O Bangali", contributed by Amalendu Bose is a fascinating essay. He begins the essay with a fundamental question- 'Why are we celebrating Shakespeare in such a grandiloquent manner, even after 400th years the bard's death?' This question actually sets the tone of his arguments that he projects in the later part of his essay. He further elaborates his point of argument that are we celebrating or worshipping Shakespeare with whom

we do not have any similarities in language, culture, religious beliefs or even from socio-political scenarios. So, why are still so much devotion to this western master. Even if we consider by Shakespeare's work and by knowing the time in which he produced his works, it is very clear that those modern scientific thoughts are now obsolete. With the passage of time, new thinkings, new ideologies, even new perspectives evolved human civilization. So, what is the demand of the hour? Or what is going to be fulfilled with this commemoration? Is there any definite reason for the reverence? Now, the author himself put forward his arguments and he never tried to impose his analysis on us. Neither did he endorse the brand of Shakespeare on us nor did he criticize blatantly. He realistically presented his views, and through this perspective, set the tone of the whole volume. The first thing that can be undisputably claimed of Shakespeare that he is a timeless writer. His popularity has transcended the material and demographic boundaries. Therefore, he is everyone's; anyone can be attracted to his humanistic appeal of his writings. Bose writes, "We turn to Shakespeare for the human values we all feel. Inspired by those human values we don't think anymore whether Shakespeare is writing in my language or in another language. (p.2, Uttaran, translated by me). Basu articulated his thought by saying that when he had come across these splendid lines from Shakespeare's works, like- "The rest is silence", "I am bound/ Upon a wheel of fire", "All the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand", he pondered over his initial questions. He said that these beautiful lines are the finest examples of a writer he ever came across. Furthermore, the essay delves into the translations of Shakespeare's works into Bengali, discussing the challenges and artistic liberties taken by translators to make the language and themes accessible to Bengali readers. Bose underscores the importance of these translations in making Shakespeare's works part of the Bengali literary canon. So, this particular essay "Shakespeare O Bangali" offers a comprehensive overview of the dynamic relationship between Shakespeare and Bengali theatre, illustrating how the Bard's works have been reimagined and integrated into the cultural fabric of Bengal. The essay is a testament to Shakespeare's universal appeal and his ability to inspire creative expression across different cultures and languages.

"Shakespeare Shotobarshikir Ekti Dik" by Lokenath Bhattacharya, published in this special issue, is another reflective essay that commemorates the centenary of Shakespeare's enduring influence on world literature, and more specifically, on Bengali culture and thought. Lokenath Bhattacharya, an esteemed writer and intellectual, uses this piece to explore a particular facet of Shakespeare's legacy as it resonates in Bengali. In this essay, Bhattacharya focuses on the thematic and philosophical dimensions of Shakespeare's works that have deeply influenced Bengali writers, thinkers, and audiences. He argues that Shakespeare's exploration of human nature, morality, and the complexities of power and ambition are universal themes that transcend cultural boundaries, making his works timeless and relevant even centuries later in a completely different cultural context like Bengal. He writes: "Here is such a great poet; he can be called a great national poet of all time and all ages. Today, on the occasion of his 400th birth anniversary, we have had the opportunity to pay special tribute to him. At this time, I cannot forget the historical debate centered around Shakespeare; a solution that is completely universal still seems distant; perhaps such a solution may never be possible in the future" (P. 19, Uttaran, translated by me). Bhattacharya also examines how Shakespearean themes have been woven into the fabric of Bengali literature, particularly in the 20th century, when Bengal was grappling with its own social, political and existential crises. He draws parallels between the moral dilemmas faced by Shakespearean characters and those depicted in modern Bengali literature, suggesting that Bengali writers have often turned to Shakespearean archetypes

to express the anxieties and aspirations of their time. Additionally, the essay reflects on the role of translations and adaptations of Shakespeare's works in Bengali, highlighting how these efforts have not only made Shakespeare accessible to a wider audience but have also allowed Bengali writers to reinterpret his themes within their own cultural and historical contexts. "Shakespeare Shotobarshikir Ekti Dik" is a thoughtful exploration of the enduring relevance of Shakespeare in Bengal, emphasizing how his works continue to inspire and challenge Bengali literature, making them an integral part of Bengal's literary heritage.

Another insightful essay "Shakespeare Charita" by Anil Biswas, published in the special issue of "Uttaran", delves into the life and legacy of Shakespeare, exploring the man behind the masterpieces that have captivated readers and audiences for centuries. Anil Biswas, a respected writer and critic, presents a nuanced portrait of Shakespeare, blending historical facts with literary analysis to offer readers a deeper understanding of the Bard's personal and professional journey. In this essay, Biswas begins by tracing Shakespeare's early life in Stratford-upon-Avon, discussing his humble origins and the societal influences that shaped his worldview. He explores how Shakespeare's experiences in Elizabethan England, including its political and cultural climate, informed the themes and characters in his plays. Biswas emphasizes Shakespeare's keen observation of human nature, which allowed him to create timeless characters that resonate with audiences across different cultures and eras. Anil Biswas's essay is a tribute to Shakespeare's genius, highlighting how his literary contributions continue to influence and inspire writers and thinkers in Bengal and beyond.

The Shakespeare special issue of the Bengali little magazine "Uttaran", edited by Kiranshankar Sengupta, stands as a remarkable contribution to both Bengali literature and the broader discourse on Shakespeare in India. This issue, dedicated entirely to exploring various facets of Shakespeare's influence and relevance, reflects the editor's vision of bridging the gap between Western literary traditions and Bengali cultural thought. One of the key achievements of this special issue is its ability to make Shakespeare accessible and relevant to Bengali readers. Through critical essays like Amalendu Bose's "Shakespeare O Bangali", the issue explores the deep cultural exchanges between Shakespeare's world and Bengali literature. This issue does not shy away from engaging with contemporary issues through the lens of Shakespeare's works. Essays such as Lokenath Bhattacharya's "Shakespeare Shotobarshikir Ekti Dik" reflect on how Shakespearean themes continue to resonate with modern Bengali society, addressing universal concerns like power, morality, and human nature. This special issue is also notable for its inclusion of Bengali adaptations of Shakespearean plays, which demonstrates the creative ways in which Bengali playwrights have made Shakespeare as their own writer, blending with local traditions and concerns. "Uttaran" has had a tumultuous publication history, reflecting the challenges often faced by little magazines in sustaining themselves financially and editorially. Throughout its history, "Uttaran" has remained true to its roots, offering a platform for intellectual and creative freedom. The editorial board, though changing over the years, has consistently been composed of individuals deeply committed to the arts and literature. The magazine's focus on Shakespeare was not just academic; it was also creative. "Uttaran" encouraged writers to engage with Shakespeare in innovative ways, leading to adaptations and reinterpretations of his plays in Bengali literature. This included modern retellings, reinterpretations of his characters, and the infusion of Shakespearean motifs into Bengali poetry and prose. Such creative endeavors helped demystify Shakespeare, making his works more approachable and relatable to us.

“Ispaater Chithi” is another notable Bengali little magazine that has contributed significantly to the Bengali literary scene. Emerging during the 1970s, a period marked by a surge of alternative literary expressions, “Ispaater Chithi” quickly carved out its niche with its distinctive voice and bold approach. The term “Ispaat”, meaning steel, metaphorically symbolizes the magazine’s robust and resilient content, which often reflects the struggles, frustrations, and revolutionary ideas of its time. The little magazine movement in Bengal, of which “Ispaater Chithi” is a part, was a reaction against the mainstream publishing houses and their commercial approach to literature. Unlike many other magazines of its kind, which were often centered in Kolkata, “Ispaater Chithi” was published from Raniganj, a town in the Asansol subdivision of the Paschim Bardhaman district in West Bengal. Publishing from Raniganj, this magazine brought a unique regional perspective to the Bengali literary scene, which was otherwise dominated by the Kolkata-centric publications. The magazine’s location in Raniganj, a town known for its coal mining industry and working-class population, influenced its content, which often reflected the struggles and aspirations of the common people. Despite the geographical distance from the literary hub of Kolkata, “Ispaater Chithi” managed to attract a dedicated readership and a network of contributors who were drawn to its bold and uncompromising editorial vision. The editorship of this magazine was led by a collective of passionate and visionary individuals who were committed to promoting alternative literature. Among them, Debabrata Mitra was a key figure, whose leadership was instrumental in shaping the magazine’s unique editorial voice. Critics and readers alike have praised “Ispaater Chithi” for its editorial courage, particularly in addressing complex social and political issues.

“Ispaater Chithi” has long been known for its daring editorial choices and its commitment to promoting a diverse range of literary voices. One of the most notable instances of this was the special issue dedicated to William Shakespeare, curated by Pritwish Chakraborty. This issue was significant not only because it focused on the works of Shakespeare, but also because it offered a unique Bengali perspective on his legacy. Pritwish Chakraborty, a renowned scholar and critic, beautifully compiled a series of splendid essays, analysis, translations. He was instrumental in conceptualizing and editing this special issue. A key feature of this issue was the article titled “Banglay Shakespeare Charcha” by Chittaranjan Bandopadhyay, which made a significant impact on how Shakespeare was perceived within the Bengali literary context. Bandopadhyay was an influential literary critic, and scholar, and his essay in the special issue provided an insightful exploration of Shakespeare’s works from a Bengali perspective. In this essay, Bandopadhyay discusses the impact of Shakespeare on Bengali literature and drama, highlighting how adaptations and translations have allowed Bengali audiences to engage with the timeless narratives of love, power and tragedy. Bandopadhyay also examines the ways in which Bengali playwrights and authors have drawn inspiration from Shakespearean drama, infusing their works with similar themes and dramatic structures while reflecting local sensibilities. Chittaranjan Bandopadhyay’s another essay “Shakespeare-er Dristite Bharat” published in this special issue explores how Shakespeare’s works provide a unique lens through which to view Indian culture and history. Bandopadhyay argues that Shakespeare’s plays, though rooted in Elizabethan England, offer insights into universal themes that resonate with the Indian experience. By drawing comparisons between the conflicts in Shakespeare’s plays and those in Indian history and mythology, he demonstrates the timeless and cross-cultural relevance of Shakespeare’s observations on power, ambition and morality. Another interesting essay featured in this special issue is Dr. Asit Dutta’s “Samajbhabna O Shakespeare”. This essay also incorporates interesting observation on the negotiation between Shakespeare and Bengalees. Dutta explores how Shakespeare’s portrayal of societal issues, such

as class struggles, political intrigue, and moral dilemmas, continues to resonate with contemporary audiences. Dutta contends that engaging with Shakespeare's texts can deepen our understanding of current social phenomena, as his observations on human nature remain pertinent and thought-provoking.

This issue was notable for its in-depth analysis and interpretation of Shakespeare's works, bridging the gap between Western literature and Bengali readers. "Ispaater Chithi" has garnered attention and respect in the Bengali literary community for its bold and uncompromising approach to literature. As a little magazine, it carved out a niche by offering a platform for voices that were often sidelined by mainstream publications. This magazine's publication from Raniganj, a non-metropolitan area, adds to its distinct identity, highlighting the potential of regional voices in shaping broader literary discourses. Contributors ranged from established scholars to emerging writers, all of whom brought their unique insights into how Shakespeare's works could be understood and appreciated in a Bengali context.

The study of Shakespeare in Bengali little magazines demonstrates that the Bard's afterlife in India cannot be understood solely through the histories of colonial education, university curricula, or canonical literary criticism. Instead, little magazines reveal an alternative and decentralized archive where Shakespeare was continually reinterpreted through vernacular intellectual practices. Operating outside mainstream publishing and institutional authority, these periodicals became dynamic sites of cultural dialogue in which teachers, theatre practitioners, translators, critics, and general readers collectively participated in reshaping Shakespeare's significance within the Bengali literary imagination. The essays and commemorative issues examined in this study show that Shakespeare was neither passively accepted as the supreme representative of English literary culture nor rejected as a colonial imposition. Rather, Bengali contributors appropriated his works through processes of localization, reinterpretation, and critical negotiation. Their writings sought to situate Shakespeare within indigenous literary traditions, theatre practices, and socio-cultural realities, thereby challenging the exclusivist claims of colonial literary pedagogy. In doing so, they transformed Shakespeare from a symbol of imperial cultural authority into a shared cultural resource capable of generating new meanings in a postcolonial context. The Shakespeare special issues published during the quatercentenary celebrations further illustrate how vernacular literary communities engaged with a global literary figure without surrendering their cultural autonomy. These commemorative volumes did not merely celebrate Shakespeare's canonical status; they also interrogated his relevance, translated his ideas into local idioms, and opened space for multiple interpretative voices. Such polyphonic engagements exemplify what may be described as a process of cultural vernacularization, whereby a global literary icon was continually reconstituted through regional intellectual traditions. This study also foregrounds the importance of Bengali little magazines as valuable archival sources for Shakespeare studies and postcolonial literary history. Their contribution has remained largely absent from mainstream scholarship, which has tended to privilege institutional criticism, theatrical productions, and major translations. Recovering these magazines broadens our understanding of Shakespeare's reception by highlighting the role of marginal literary networks in producing critical knowledge and cultural memory. They demonstrate that the history of Shakespeare in India was shaped not only by elite academic institutions but also by small, independent, and community-based literary initiatives. Ultimately, the reception of Shakespeare in Bengali little magazines exemplifies the complex dynamics of cultural circulation between the global and the local. Shakespeare emerges not as a fixed monument of English literary supremacy but as a mutable cultural text continually reimagined through vernacular voices. By

documenting these peripheral yet influential engagements, this paper argues for a more inclusive history of Shakespeare's global reception—one that recognizes the creative agency of regional literary cultures and acknowledges little magazines as indispensable spaces in the ongoing project of decolonizing literary canons.

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Bio-note: Dr, Biplab Das is an Assistant Professor of English, working at Vivekananda College, Madhyamgram. He has presented papers in National and International seminars and several of his articles have been published in International journals.