

Shakespearean Style and Technique in Modern Assamese Drama: A Study of Reception and Response

Mohammad Rezaul Karim
Department of Management
College of Business Administration
Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University
Al Kharj, Saudi Arabia

Abstract

William Shakespeare's influence extends from theatre and literature to present-day movies and the English language itself. Widely regarded as the most excellent writer of the English language, and the world's preeminent dramatist, Shakespeare transformed the world literature. He was the main generative force behind the entire Indian dramatic literature in various languages including modern Assamese dramas. This influence of Shakespeare helped develop a new kind of drama that is unknown to Assamese dramatic literature. His technique, characterization, and style were borrowed, resulting in an emergence of a new type of drama in the Assamese literature. The Assamese dramas of the pre-independence period owe for its rapid growth to its contact with the West in general and Shakespeare in particular. The researcher in this paper aims to dive deep into the Assamese dramas and dig out the receptions and responses to Shakespeare by the Assamese playwrights concerning his style, technique, and characterization. The researcher, keeping in mind the voluminous of the area, has limited his research area and selected the dramas of the pre-independence period for the study of reception and response to William Shakespeare. With the aid of the comparative method of investigation, the researcher finds that influences formerly Western and mainly Shakespearean played a cardinal role in the development of modern Assamese drama. **Keywords:** Shakespeare, Assamese drama, influence, characterization, style, technique

Cites as: Karim, M. R. (2019). Shakespearean Style and Technique in Modern Assamese Drama: A Study of Reception and Response. *Arab World English Journal for Translation & Literary Studies*3 (4) 107-117. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awejtls/vol3no4.9>

Introduction

William Shakespeare occupies the supreme position in the world's literature. His texts in Indian languages cannot be separated from the history of stage performances, as most versions were composed for the stage. But it is also essential to perceive that apart from the stage, and usually, without making any reference to him, Shakespeare happened to establish the cardinal literary influence from the West. He impacted most of the Indian languages in the 19th century or sometimes even in the early part of the 20th century. In most of the Indian languages, the Shakespearean presence in early modern drama varies from close translation to more or less free adaptations. These adaptations were done through occasional motifs and elements and echoes to plays that may contain nothing authentically Shakespearean, but that could not have been conceived had their authors not been directly or indirectly influenced by Shakespeare. India has a long colonial history, and as it has many languages, the influence of Shakespeare in Indian literature is more complicated than the literature of other countries. In this context, Sukanta Chaudhuri rightly observes,

The Shakespearean presence in India is older and more complex than in any other country outside the West. That is owing to India's long colonial history and the presence of unusually receptive elements in the mother culture. The local culture of most states or regions could absorb Shakespeare within its inherent structure and, in turn, be reshaped and inseminated by Shakespearean influence. (Shakespeare in India)

The study of English literature played a significant role in the Indian Renaissance of the nineteenth century. Although it is not possible to say categorically what part of Shakespeare's works played a role in this great reawakening, it has to be admitted that Shakespeare was widely read by Indian students. And these students were the real actors in this great drama of national upsurge. With the establishment of the Universities of Calcutta, Madras, and Bombay, Shakespeare's works formed an essential part in the English syllabi of Indian schools and colleges. Thus, the Indian students had to study Shakespeare, no matter whether he liked him or not. According to Ghosh (1966)

The popularity of Shakespeare among the educated readers and audience of Calcutta in the initial stages of the development of Bengali drama and stage inspired many of the writers of Bengal to translate and adapt Shakespearean plays in Bengali. Some of the important translations and adaptations were those of *Cymbeline* by Satyendranath Tagore, *The Comedy of Errors* by Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, *Macbeth* by Haralal Ray and *The Tempest* by Hemchandra Bandopadhyaya. (p. 31)

These Bengali translations and adaptations, in any case, must have inspired some of the Assamese students studying at Calcutta to make similar attempts in their language. Gogoi (2017) observes, Within no time, *Jonaki* (Journal) become the radiating center of literary activities of the educated youth brigade. Pioneers of this group were – Lakshminath Bezbaroa (1864-1938), Chandra Kumar Agarwala (1867–1938), Hemchandra Goswami (1872-1928), Padmanath Gohain Baruah (1871–1946), Satyanath Bora (1860–1925), Kanaklal Baruah (1872-1940),

etc. *Jonaki* functioned as a connecting-bridge between the ideas of East and West. This group of young Assamese started penning Assamese literature following contents and forms of Europe, especially English literature... Through *Jonaki*, the romantic content and form of English literature were introduced in Assamese literature. Several western classics, especially Shakespeare's plays were translated into Assamese. (pp. 292-293)

Ratnadhara Barua, Gunjanan Barua, Ghanashyam Barua, and Ramakanta Barkakati came out with an adaptation in Assamese of *The Comedy of Errors* entitled *Bhrama-ranga* in the year 1888. Sarma (1964) adds,

It has to be mentioned that modern drama in Assamese based on the Western model had appeared nearly three decades earlier with Gunabhiram Barua's *Ram-Navami* (1857), a tragedy, and Hemchandra Barua's farce, *Kaniyar-Kirtan* (1861), but they were not directly influenced by Shakespeare. (p. 2)

And it is only with the publication of *Bhrama-ranga* that the direct influence of Shakespeare on Assamese drama began. This influence of Shakespeare helped develop a new kind of style and technique in Assamese drama. Mahanta (1985) states,

Not only in subject-matter but in style and technique, too, the influence of Shakespeare on these plays is clearly seen. The division of a play into five acts and an act into scenes, use of blank verse by the high characters and prose by the low, introduction of comic characters and scenes as a relief to tragic intensity, use of the methods of disguises and mistaken identities as well as love intrigues, putting rather long soliloquies in the mouths of heroes – all these are unmistakably echoes of Shakespeare. (p. 64)

Methodology

The comparative method of investigation has been followed based on both primary and secondary sources throughout the research. Mainly the technical devices of modern Assamese dramatists have been studied in detail in the light of Shakespeare. Less importance has been given to the stories and incidents of the Assamese plays discussed in the paper. Only references to the text of the plays are made. All other references to the writings of other writers are furnished to justify the statements. In some cases, the statements and findings of some renowned scholars have also been cited to justify the arguments and to make the study more logical and reasonable.

The Shakespearean technique in Assamese drama

Assamese dramas were written before the Shakespearean influence continues the tradition of the medieval *ankiya nats* (one-act play), and so have no acts or scenes. Sanskrit dramas have *ankas* or acts but no scenes. Modern Assamese dramas, on the other hand, are divided into acts and scenes exactly like a Shakespearean drama. This is undoubtedly a result of Shakespearean influence, for during the latter half of the nineteenth century, no dramatist was read and imitated as much as Shakespeare. Even in *Ram Navami Natak*, the first Assamese drama written on the Western model, the influence of the Shakespearean technique is seen. Like a Shakespearean play, it has five acts,

each being divided into scenes. Even *Kaniyar Kirtan* is divided into four acts, though not five, each having separate scenes. Like Gunabhiram, Hemchandra Barua, author of *Kaniyar Kirtan*, was from an aristocratic family of Assam. He was educated in Calcutta, and as such, it was but natural that in technique as well as in theme, they were influenced by the European dramatists. Among all, he was particularly influenced by Shakespeare, although it has to be admitted that much of this influence came through Bengali. Padmanath Gohain Barua is also possessed with the idea of dividing a play into five acts that not to speak of his major historical and mythological dramas, even his smallest farce, *Bhut ne Bhram?* is expanded into five acts, although the plot hardly allows scope for such expansion. Chetia (1979) observes, “The structure of Shakespearean drama was imitated by the modern Assamese historical and mythological plays into five acts, and then the division of each act into six or seven scenes, were made under the influence of Shakespearean drama.”

Bezbarua (1968) takes pride in admitting that he “follows in the foot-steps of the great poet (Shakespeare)” (p. 1093). While assessing William Shakespeare’s influence on Bezbarua, Mahanta (1975) quotes from Bezbarua’s autobiography (*Mor Jivan Sonwaran*): “I had Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*, *King John*, *Henry IV* and *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* on the list of my college textbooks. I started dreaming of enriching Assamese literature by writing two or four plays like them” (p. 12). Barooah (1984) writes in his research work,

The dramatic technique, as well as the artistic devices of Shakespeare, have had a definite say over Bezbarua’s idea of drama. The use of soliloquies by characters in a Shakespearean play, later repudiated by Ibsen and Shaw, was a must which Bezbarua could not but follow. (p. 78)

All the significant dramas of Bezbarua are in five acts, each consisting of a varying number of scenes. Even his farce, *Litikai* has five acts, although his other farces or light comedies have less. This method of dividing a play into five acts and acts into scenes, after the fashion of Shakespeare, continued up to the third decade of the present century when new experiments in dramatic technique began. It has to be mentioned that although the early dramatists were influenced by European or Shakespearean technique and style, all of them were not able to free themselves from the influence of Sanskrit drama or the indigenous *ankiya nats*. Sarma (1973) adds “This is true of *Ram Navami*, where the environmental settings of some of the scenes remind one of a Sanskrit drama, while Rudraram Bardalai’s *Bangal Bangalani* contains eight acts like a Sanskrit Nataka.”

Characterization

Shakespearean influence is noticed in the delineation of characters also. The beginning of this is seen in *Ram Navami* itself, where the characters of the lovers, Ram and Navami, remind us, Romeo and Juliet. Like *Romeo and Juliet*, the tragedy in *Ram Navami* springs from misplaced love. And an echo of the conversation between Romeo and Juliet in Act II, scene ii, is heard in Act II, scene iv of *Ram Navami*. This influence, of course, is superficial. It does not go deeper as the characters of Ram and Navami often smack of didacticism, the playwright’s objective being to show the evils of child marriage. But when we come to Lakshminath Bezbarua and Padmanath Gohain Barua, we find that this influence has gone deeper.

Regarding some of the characters of his historical play, *Chakradhvajasimha*, Bezbarua (1968) himself says: “Lastly, I would like to say that the characters of Priyaram, Gajpuria, and their companions are conceived after Shakespeare’s Prince Henry, Falstaff and their fellows.” Whether Bezbarua has been able to imitate Shakespeare successfully or not, but that the characters of Priyaram, Gajpuria, Siddhinath, Japara, Takau, Takaru, and Gajpuriani are mostly a result of Shakespeare’s influence. Bezbarua also owes a debt to Shakespeare for his fascinating characters of Dalimi in *Jaymati Kuwari* and Pijau in *Belimar*, who are undoubtedly influenced by Miranda and Ophelia, respectively. Neog (2008) is so impressed by the similarities between Dalimi and Miranda that he calls the former “a younger sister of the latter.” Padmanath Gohain Barua created many memorable characters in his historical plays. Among them, Gadadhar is the hero in both *Jaymati* and *Gadadhar*, and he seems to bear some affinity to Hamlet. The soliloquies of Hamlet often echo in those of Gadadhar. Hamlet’s procrastinating nature is revealed among others, in the “To be or not to be” soliloquy. Gadadhar’s thoughtful and inactive nature also expresses itself in his soliloquies, some of which are tediously long and wordy. Sarma (1973) observes,

This is undoubtedly due to the fact that Gohain Barua is simply imitative and falls to transfer this influence into something of his own. Another important play to show a marked influence of Shakespeare is *Seuti-Kiran*, by Benudhar Rajkhowa, where the story is characterized by love, jealousy, and intrigues resulting in murders and suicides. There is no doubt that the play within the play (Act IV, scene ii) is conceived after the one in *Hamlet*, while the killing of Seuti by Kiran simply out of jealousy is reminiscent of Othello’s smothering of Desdemona. (p. 280)

Another vital character to be influenced by Shakespeare is Nilamber, the hero of a play of the same name, the author of which openly admits the influence of *Othello*. And Iago is undoubtedly the model for Nanda, the villain of the play. The hero of Jyotiprasad Agarwala’s *Karengar Ligiri (The Slave-girl of the Palace)*, Sundar Kunwar, has been delineated in the line of the Shakespearean model. According to Jana (2015), the hero “is a highly individualized character, with a fatal flaw, like any great Shakespearean hero. He becomes a tragic victim of his own obstinacy.” A woman character disguising as a man is peculiar to old Assamese drama. However, this is very common in Shakespearean plays like *As You Like It*, *Twelfth Night*, and *Cymbeline*. The modern Assamese dramatists like Padmanath Gohain Baruah, Kamalakanta Bhattacharya, and Sailadhar Rajkhowa have borrowed this method in their plays *Lachit Barphukan*, *Nagakonwar*, and *Pratapsimha* respectively. Jana (2015) observes, “In some Assamese plays also, we see some women characters getting their missions fulfilled by disguising themselves as male servants.”

Another prominent facet of this influence is to be seen in the introduction of characters like the fool and the clown of Shakespeare in the modern Assamese drama. It may be mentioned that this type of humorous character is not strange in Indian drama since the Vidusaka, who is of a kind with the Fool in *King Lear*, is an important character in Sanskrit drama. But the Vidusaka is strikingly absent in early Assamese drama, the *ankiya nats*. Although the later writers introduce a sort of comic character, called the ‘Bahuwa’ (Jester), to satisfy the taste of that section of the audience which can be equated with the Elizabethan groundlings. Even in the plays of

Sankaradeva, as Neog (2008) points out, “this interesting character, however, seems to be amply replaced by some of the other characters: Vedanidhi in the *Rukmini-harana*, Narada in the *Parijata-harana*, and even Visvamitra in the *Rama-vijaya*.” This shows that the greatest Assamese playwright of the earlier period is not oblivious of the lighter side of life. The comic figure is introduced with the sole purpose of stimulating laughter through his antics. But the means adopted by the modern dramatist to give comic relief to the audience by arousing laughter in them is different. It is done not through the antics of a mere jester, but a group of real men and women – servants, rustics and the like. They, through their lack of sophistication, provide food for amusement. This is exactly what Shakespeare does, and there is no doubt that the Assamese playwrights have taken their cue from Shakespeare.

Another aspect of Shakespearean influence on modern Assamese dramatists is to be seen in their use of sub-plots. It forms almost a common feature in the major five-act plays written during the pre-independence period. In the very first tragedy written on the Western model, *Ram Navami*, something like a sub-plot is found in the parallel love story of Mangal and Sonaphuli, servant and maid-servant, respectively, in the heroine’s house. Lakshminath Bezbarua, true to his professed aim of following Shakespeare, almost invariably introduces this technique in his major dramatic works: in the stories of Oresanath Pijali-Maju Aideu in *Belimar*, of Gajpuria-Priyaram Gajpuriani in *Chakradhvajasimha*, and of Shadiyakhowa Gohain and Chenehi in *Jaymati*. The love-stories of Gandharvanarayan and Pijali in Padmanath Gohain Barua’s *Lachit Barphukan* is also of the nature of a Shakespearean subplot. In the *Mulagabharu* of Radhakanta Handique, we find two subsidiary stories of love, which the dramatist adds to the main historical plot, apparently in imitation of Shakespeare. Nakul Chandra Bhuyan, another leading writer of historical plays, also makes successful use of sub-plots in his major dramas, *Badan Barphukan*, *Chandrakantasimha*, and *Vidrohi Maran*. In *Vidyavati* of Sailadhar Rajkhowa, a play based on the story of Kalidasa and Vidyavati, a subsidiary story of romantic love between Jaymalla and Champavati is presented much in the Shakespearean fashion. In his historical play, *Chatrapati Shivaji*, Atulchandra Hazarika also introduces an imaginary story of romance that goes parallel with the main story. In fact, the juxtaposition of the comic and the tragic, which is a characteristic of Shakespearean drama, is also a prominent feature in most of the major dramatic works written in Assamese during the period. Sarma (2015) asserts, “Like Shakespeare, who resorts to characters like grave-diggers, porters and the like to produce the comic effect in a tragedy, the Assamese playwright often makes use of servants, maids and rustics to achieve this objective.”

The Shakespearean style in Assamese drama

Shakespeare has his share of influence – and a significant share indeed – on the development of modern Assamese dramatic style. The earlier drama, the *ankiya nats*, were written in a variety of rhyming meters interspersed with prose both in the dialogue and stage directions, and nothing like blank verse was known to them. Mahanta (1985) observes,

It was only after the western influence that blank verse came to be used in Assamese, first in poetry and then in drama. For Shakespeare blank verse was nothing new: the verse of *Gorboduc* and ‘Marlowe’s mighty line’ were already there for his to start with, whereas

the Assamese playwright had to look far beyond the boundaries of their native land for this new mode of poetic expression. In Bengal, Michael Madhusudan Datta and Girishchandra Ghosh had already established blank verse as an effective medium of poetry and drama, and it appealed to the Assamese writers so much that they were quick to introduce it in place of the old rhyme. (p. 72)

According to Sarma (1973),

In fact, it is not so much Shakespeare as Michael Madhusudan and Girishchandra who were the immediate source of inspiration for the Assamese writer in his use of blank verse. In the initial stages, our playwrights stuck to the fourteen-syllable line, but gradually they realized the limitation of this line and adopted the type of blank verse already popularized in Bengali by Girishchandra. This type of blank verse, popularly known as the 'Garish Chanda', was found suitable for all kinds of dramatic expressions as it was but a sort of run-on prose free from the limitations of Madhusudan's line. Although Gohain Barua uses it but sparingly, it is Chandradhar Barua in whose hand this verse attains maturity. (p. 221)

Other important playwrights who use blank verse are Atulchandra Hazarika, Mitraddev Mahanta, and Radhakanta Handique. They have found it a fit medium to express dignified thoughts and heightened emotions in their mythological plays. It has to be noted that in all their plays, poetic dialogue in blank verse is generally used by the high and noble characters. The 'low' characters, on the other hand, talk in ordinary prose of the day-to-day use. In Sanskrit drama, characters of high-status converse in Sanskrit and those belonging to lower stations and women speak Prakrit. In Elizabethan drama, according to Steiner (1996),

The traditional association between the comic genre and the prose form is implicit throughout. Clowns, fools, menials, and rustics speak prose in the very same scene in which their masters speak in iambic verse. Such separation, according to social rank and dramatic mood is frequent in Shakespeare. (p. 248)

In the words of Mahanta (1985),

Our dramatists' use of prose in a blank-verse drama is very close to Shakespeare's since they almost always associate it with the comic, which, in their plays often arises from the unsophisticated talks, manners and often pranks of characters like rustics, servants and menials (p. 73).

Chandradhar Barua, suddenly shifts to prose to provide a dose of the humorous through Sarvananda, a Brahmin, in his serious mythological play, *Meghnad-vadh* (Act III, scene iii). Besides Chandradhar Barua, Padmanath Gohain Barua in his *Sadhani*, *Jaymati*, and *Gadadhar*; Atulchandra Hazarika in most of his mythological plays; Mitraddev Mahanta in *Vaidehi Viyog*, and Radhakanta Handique in his historical play, *Mulagabharu*, use this method of 'separation according to social rank and dramatic mood.' Sometimes we find, as in *Gadadhar*, the same character using prose and verse according to moods and situations like Lear in Shakespeare. This method of alternating between verse and prose according to characters, moods, and situations is a characteristic feature in most of the historical and mythological plays.

Dialogue is another important aspect to which the Assamese dramatists have responded quite elegantly. Shakespeare's influence in this respect is so undeviating that it can be effortlessly perceived that Gunabhiram Barua had endeavoured to produce ditto of *Romeo and Juliet*. Ram and Navami in *Ram Navami* echoes the dialogue of Romeo and Juliet. Juliet says–

*What is in a name?
That which we call a rose.
By any other name would smell as sweet.*
(*Romeo and Juliet*, Act II, Scene II)

What exactly Navami says to Ram in *Ram Navami* –
*Name ki kare? Golapak yadi golap nubuli palas
Bola hay teo sugandha powa nejabane?*

(*Ram Navami*, Act III, Scene V)

(What does a name do? Will not the rose smell as sweet if we call it 'palas'?)
Before committing suicide, Juliet says addressing the knife –

*O happy dagger!
This is thy sheath, there rest,
And let me die.....*
(Act – V, Scene – iii)

The same address is echoed in *Ram Navami* when Navami says addressing the knife given by Ram –

*he osra! moi ze teur baze onnak ketiao mon dia nai;
iar tumi hakhi diba! he osra! mor pran ti niba.*
(O knife! I haven't given my heart to anyone but he.
Bear witness to this. O knife! Take my life.)

Padmadhar Chaliha wrote *Amar-Lila* in adaptation of *Romeo and Juliet* in 1919. In this play Amar (Amarsimha) and Lila (Lilavati) stand for Romeo and Juliet respectively. The story is Indianised and recasts against Rajput background with Rajput names for the major characters, although the minor ones sound very much Assamese. The very famous dialogue of Juliet (*What is in a name? That which we call a rose. By any other name would smell as sweet.*) also echoed by the heroine of this play. It is done into Assamese blank verse thus:

*Kino katha acheno namat,
Golapak golap nubuli
An name matileo
Madhur gondhti tar thakiba ekei.*
(*Amar-Lila*, Act II, Scene V)

(What is there in a name?
If we call a rose by another name,
the sweet smell of it will be yet same.)

The prose dialogues of this play are rendered into Assamese in such a way as to make them appear like original composition. The author of *Amar-Lila* seems to be at his best when he translates the prose dialogue of the low characters. Broadly speaking, *Amar-Lila* is an agreeable rendering of *Romeo and Juliet*. On the stage, too, it was popular during its time, and the writer himself informs us that it was performed several times on the Sibsagar Stage alone. (Chaliha, 1946). Similarly, Lila in Sarvananda Pathak's *Viplavi Vir*, a play fashioned admittedly after *Macbeth* and the Assamese revenge play, *Nilambar*, nearly repeats *Macbeth* in an almost identical situation:

Ei samayate teok hatya karile topanik hatya
Kara haba: taio ajirpara topani najabi
(*Viplavi Vir*, Act IV, Scene iii)

(If I murder him now it will be like murdering sleep.
(And then) I myself will be able to sleep no more.)

Mahanta (1985) observes,

It is true that such direct borrowing of statement from Shakespeare is not much as the writers tried to give a palpably new mould to a borrowed idea or thought, but the few instances that we come across are sufficient to show how close Shakespeare was to some of our playwrights (p.76).

Another striking Shakespearean feature in the plays is the use of soliloquies. It seems often appropriately and elegantly, but sometimes, it seems to be extravagantly and even superfluously. Shakespeare accepted the soliloquy as he accepted other conventions. And he used it as a 'direct means of self-revelation' of characters. For him, it was a 'convenience and a freedom'. The Assamese playwrights also use this convention in the same way. Although, a few of them, particularly, Padmanath Gohain Barua, banks rather too much upon the 'convenience' offered by it. Soliloquies are there in all his major plays, which aptly reveal the inner working of characters. A few others are rather too long and could have been easily disregarded. Gada's soliloquy in Act I, scene ii of *Gadadhar* is a good instance of self-revelation. It reminds us easily one of Hamlet's soliloquies, particularly the one beginning with 'to be or not to be'. On the other hand, Dharmadhvaja's soliloquy in Act I, scene iv of *Sadhani* is much too long. It hardly tells us what is going on in the mind of the character except that towards the end, there is a vague hint of some 'anxiety' brewing in him. Bezbarua makes effective use of soliloquies as a means of revealing the inner workings of a character. And in this, he comes close to Shakespeare. The soliloquies of Gadapani in *Jaymati-kuwari* are so reminiscent of Hamlet that they seem to be fashioned after those of the prince of Denmark. Much in the same way as Hamlet, Gadapani in these soliloquies appears to be procrastinating. At the same time, he expresses a sense of guilt for leaving behind his wife alone to be tortured by a timid but oppressive king. Badanchandra's soliloquy in Act IV, scene ii of *Belimar* shows how he feels the pricks of conscience after he has got his own country devastated by the Burmese. His 'I have deprived so many people of sleep. How can I sleep myself?' is almost an echo of *Macbeth*'s 'Me thought I heard a voice cry, "Sleep no more! *Macbeth* does murder sleep" – the innocent sleep' (*Macbeth* Translation, Act II, Scene ii). Another

playwright, who reveals Shakespearean influence in the use of soliloquies, is Nakulchandra Bhuyan. Badan, the leading character in his historical play, *Badan Barphukan*, suffers from a type of somnambulism resembling Macbeth. This method of expressing an intense sense of fear and guilt after committing a horrible deed of sin or crime is undoubtedly Shakespearean. Like Macbeth seeing the ghost of Banquo at the banquet, Badan sees or fancies that he sees, the spirit of Purnananda, his greatest rival in life, while he is trying to sleep. We also hear an echo of Macbeth in the soliloquy of Badan, who is struggling hard to sleep, says: 'No: (you cannot sleep), You have taken sleep away from the eyes of so many people. You can never sleep in peace' (*Badan Barphukan*, Act I, Scene x). This is undoubtedly an echo of Macbeth re-echoed through Bezbarua's Badanchandra. Gunabhiram Barua also uses the technique of soliloquy in *Ram Navami Natak*. When Jayanti asks Navami to wear the dresses in bridal attire and leaves the room, Navami being alone in the room speaks to herself:

My heart is so full of new hopes today! All these days my hair had become unsightly for lack of care. My arms and neck had remained bare. But today, I am once more filled with a desire to deck myself. Oh the pleasure of consummation! Cursed be those who want to deny us such pleasure! (*Ram Navami Natak*, Act III, scene iv).

To be brief, the imprint of Shakespearean influence in the use of soliloquies is palpable in many other plays, particularly mythological and historical, written during the last decades of the nineteenth century and the first of the twentieth.

Conclusion

It has been seen from the preceding pages that forces originally Western and particularly Shakespearean played a predominant role in the development of modern Assamese drama. It isn't that drama in Assamese is something that arose as a result of Shakespearean influence. It had been there in Assam since the sixteenth century when Sankaradeva and Madhavadeva wrote and produced their plays. But a new type of drama modeled on Shakespearean dramaturgy evolved as a result of Shakespearean influence. It has been seen how Shakespeare has influenced substantially the style and technique of modern Assamese drama, particularly of the pre-Independence period. And what is more, it is not difficult for one to come across even expressions that sound very much Shakespearean. Thus, we can summarise that the subject matter of modern Assamese dramas is indigenous, but the characterization, dialogue, style, and technique are modeled mainly on Western dramaturgy with the echoes of William Shakespeare.

About the author:

Dr. Mohammad Rezaul Karim is an Assistant Professor of English in the Department of Management, College of Business Administration, Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University, Al Kharj, KSA. He teaches English literature and language. He holds a Ph.D. in English from Gauhati University, India. His main area of interest is comparative study in literature.
ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8178-8260>

References

- Barooah, M.P. (1984). *Western Influence on Lakshminath Bezbaroa*, thesis submitted to Gauhati University, Guwahati
- Barua, G. (1858). *Ram-Navami Natak*, 2nd ed. Gauhati
- Bezbarua, L. (1968), *Bezbarua-granthavali*, Vols. I, Sahitya Prakash, Gauhati
- Bezbarua, L. (1915), *Belimar*, included in *Bezbarua granthavali* (1970), Vol. II, Sahitya Prakash, Gauhati
- Bhuyan, N. (1955), *Badan Barphukan*, 4th ed., Assam Publishing House, Jorhat
- Chaliha, P. (1946), *Amar-Lila*, State Central Library, Shillong
- Chetia, J. (1979), *Asamiya Adhunik Natarak Oprat Pashchatya Natarak Prabhab* ('Western Influence on Modern Assamese Drama'), Rangamancha, Jorhat
- Gogoi, B. (2017), "Translation in Assamese: A Brief Account", in *History of Translation in India*, pp. 281-307, National Translation Mission, CIIL, Mysuru,
- Ghosh, A. K. (1966), *Bangla Natarak Itihas*, General Printers and Publishers Ltd., Calcutta
- Jana, J. (2015), *Shakespeare in Comparative Discourse and Influence Studies in the Assamese Language Print Media*, in *Space and Culture, India*, 2(4), pp. 3-16, ACCB Publishing, England
- Mahanta, P. (1985), *Western Influence on Modern Assamese Drama*, Mittal Publications, Delhi
- Mahanta, P. (1975), 'Bezbaruar Natarak Shvekspiyerar Prabhav' ('Shakespeare's Influence on Bezbarua's Plays'), *Asam Sahitya Sabha Patrika*, April 1975, Jorhat
- Macbeth Translation (2019, July 13) Sparknotes. Retrieved from http://sparknotes.com/nofear/shakespeare/macbeth/page_58
- Misra, T. (2007), *Ramnabami-Natak: The Story of Ram and Nabami*, Oxford University Press, Delhi
- Neog, M. (2008), *Adhunik Asamiya Sahitya*, Chandra Prakash, Guwahati
- Pathak, S. (1949), *Viplavi Vir*, Lower Assam Publishing House, Barpeta
- Sarma, S. (2015), *Asamiya Sahityar Samikshatmak Itivritta*, Soumar Prakash, Guwahati
- Sarma, S. (1973), *Asamiya Natya Sahitya*, New Book Stall, Guwahati
- Sarma, S. (1964), *Sahityar Abhas*, Dutta Baruah & Co., Guwahati
- Steiner, G. (1996), *The Death of Tragedy*, Yale University Press, New Haven & London
- Shakespeare in India (2019, April 20), Internet Shakespeare Editions. Retrieved from <http://internetshakespeare.uvic.ca/Library/Criticism/shakespearein/india1>