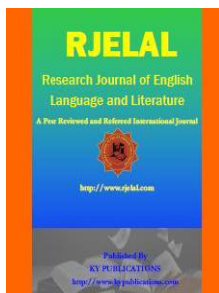




THE TRADITION OF BENGALLIENATUCK AND HURRO CHUNDER GHOSE'S
BHANUMATI CHITTOBILAS

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ABSTRACT

The tradition of Bengali natuck and theatre had been delayed and hindered because of the ups and downs that Calcutta faced in the colonial times. The tradition that precedes Hurro Chunder Ghose had scarcely known/experimented/learnt the ideals and principles of Shakespeare's adaptations and appropriation. Manifestly, the sixteenth century England and nineteenth century Bengal was, by no means, similarly situated culturally or socio-economically. Ghose did follow the plotline and characterization of Shakespeare but he could not escape the stylistic form of Sanskrit plays of the day. Contrary to *The Merchant of Venice*, *Bhanumati Chittobilas* happens to be a romantic play with the female protagonist in its centre. *Bhanumati Chittobilas* opens with Bhanumati's/Portia's issue of marriage and the planning that centres on her choosing a deserving bridegroom: as if the seed of the complication of Ghose's play is buried deep within this said planning of finding Bhanumati's groom. The play also consummates with the gleeful dawning of both Bhanumati's and Chittobilas' married lives and times, Chittabilas ascending the throne of Ujjayini/Belmont. Title opens with none other than Bhanumati's name, and to remind the generation of readers of her quest for love, follows Chittobilas' name. Portia is not Bhanumati, the former does not need to put on a disguise like the latter. What is more, Bhanumati's character gives way to a ruptured continuity. Bhanumati, at the climactic hour, is too surprising for the organic whole of the denouement of Shakespeare's play. This article addresses Indian societal system and the dharma of a chaste women in Ghose's essay. Bhanumati is seen proving herself with more vigour, seen exploiting more intellect and is seen fiddling with considerably more adventurous banter only because she does not have the free rein that Portia might have had from the European society of her day. One cannot miss the impression of Shakespearean Shylock on Lokkhopoti Ray; but at the same time Lokkhopoti is indeed rooted in the Indian culture. Shakespeare's vision and genius as an artist have found their happy unison in the portrayal of Shylock. Regrettably, Ghose lacked the same vision, the same genius, the same tradition. The linchpin of Lokkhopoti's abhorrence rests not only on principles and xenophobia but also on personal hatred. The article probes how it is more appropriate to call Ghose's *Bhanumati Chittobilas* not a translation but an adaptation of *The Merchant of Venice*.

Keywords: adaptation, appropriation, BengallieNatuck, Bhanumati Chittobilas, The Merchant of Venice, Shakespeare, Portia, Shylock, Bhanumati, Lokkhopoti Ray

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The tradition and growth of a timeless play owes its debt to the patronage, reception, adaptation and appropriation of its theatrical

performance. It goes without saying, Shakespeare's tradition as a playwright has scaled new heights under the canopy of theatrical arts, its variegated

performances and its multifaceted crafts. Shakespeare's plays enjoy a long, resonant and deep relationship with the stage. Chamberlain Co. and The Globe Theatre had catalysed the traditional wit of the bard of Avon. On the other hand, the tradition of Bengali natuck and theatre had been delayed and hindered because of the ups and downs that Calcutta faced in the colonial times. GeracimStepanovichLebedeff was the one who established the Bengallie Theatre, and translated/adapted plays started to be enacted on the stage: the first enactment being probably M. Jodrell's *The Disguise*, adapted/translated as *KalponikShongbodol*, on November 27th, 1795. Unfortunately, East India Company posed such a threat to it that the tradition of *KalponikShongbodol* could not live to see its mature adaptations in the succeeding years to come. Nor was the translated/adapted plays those followed the said play could see their fruition. Prasanna Kuman Tagore established The Hindu Theatre in 1831 and Natyashala was set up by Nabin Chandra Bosu in due course of time. Prasanna Tagore produced on stage *Julius Caesar* and the English rendering of Sanskrit play, *Uttarramcharit*.

This happens to be the era when individual Bengali playwrights first tried their hand in writing, and though written in English, plays composed by Bengali authors saw the light of the day. Rev. Krishna MohunBandopadhyay penned *The Persecuted* in as early as 1831. Sans-Souci Theatre was known to enact English plays, and it was on April 24th, 1844 that a Bengali actor, VaishnabhCharanAdhya's performance in the garb of *Othello* marked the fag end of Sand-Souci (Bandyopadhyay 466). But one cannot say that the theatrical arts of the years between 1839 to 1849 witnessed an unwavering connection between the performance and the Bengali middle class audience at large. It was mostly the colonizer white male audience and a few from the Bengali highly educated intelligentsia. The Bengali laymen would enjoy half-akhrai ,yatrapalla and mostly bard songs with gusto than these English theatre. *Asiatic Journal* records the reception of the Bengali commonace of this epoch. Hemendranath Das

Gupta refers to the January-April issue of the journal in this connection:

We recommend our Hindu patriots and philanthropists to instruct their countrymen by means of schools and when they are fitted to appreciate the dramatic compositions of refined nations, it will be quite time enough to erect theatre [...] A theatre among the Hindus with the degree of knowledge they at present possess will be like building a palace in the west. (Roy Choudhury 9-10)

But, at the same time, one cannot deny the fact that Bengali playwrights and actors celebrated Shakespeare's plays from the rudimentary existence of the BengalliNatuck. It was a time when the Bengali intelligentsia had to delve deeper into Shakespeare to find a place among the British map of cultured theatre-goers (Roy Choudhury 20). Not that Hurro Chunder Ghose was the first playwright to throw light solely on Shakespeare and his adaptation. One may find J.C. Gupta, Ghose's predecessor in this context, who espoused Shakespeare in his adapted and rendered plays. In 1852, Gupta wrote the first tragedy by a Bengali playwright, *Kirtibilas*. Shakespeare's *Hamlet* found its glib expression in *Kirtibilas*. One can easily discern from all this that Calcutta's foreign theatres created a few ripples with their enactment of Shakespeare's plays. Chowringhee Theatre that lasted through 1839 was known for enacting *Henry IV*. The theatre was burnt to the ground but the name is still perspicuous as Chowringhee Square, or Shakespeare Sarani in present-day Kolkata (Bandyopadhyay 465). But be it a foreign theatre or a stage performance of a Shakespearean play, it was hardly intended for the common countrymen of the day.

The time Hurro Chunder Ghose appeared as a playwright who adapted Shakespeare into Bengali he did not trail a tradition of Shakespearean renderings and translations. His preceding theatrical cartography was hardly enough to be followed. The preceding tradition had scarcely known/experimented/learnt the ideals and principles of Shakespeare's adaptations and appropriation. Manifestly, the sixteenth century England and nineteenth century Bengal was, by no

means, similarly situated culturally or socio-economically. Ghose, on the other hand, did follow the plotline and characterization of Shakespeare but he could not escape the stylistic form of Sanskrit plays of the day.

Portia happens to be the sole character who navigates the tragic flow of events at the climatic hour of *The Merchant of Venice*. But one cannot deny the fact that Portia is always in disguise. Shakespeare must not have taken up Portia, as the heroine, or even the romantic love affair between Portia and Antonio as the cornerstone of his *The Merchant of Venice*. If Shakespeare did, he would not put her in guise of Balthazar. Antonio is dethroned from his social pride with the loss of his merchant ships and in closing the merchant vessels return with Antonio's lost glory. The sorrowful Antony from the opening scene finds himself glad and triumphant at the end either. The play ends on a note of a merry reversal of fortune of Antonio.

One word more. Shakespeare made a tradition of naming his plays centering on male protagonists. *Henry IV*, *Othello*, *King Lear*, *Hamlet*, *Julius Caesar* and *Macbeth* bear the name of their eponymous tragic heroes. While titling his romantic plays and tragi-comedies he uses the name of the male protagonist preceding his female counterpart, for instance *Antony and Cleopatra* and unmistakably *Romeo and Juliet*. But *Comedy of Errors*, *The Tempest*, *Twelfth Night* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* also had thematic titles.

Interestingly, Antonio represents his race, his socio-economic stature. He is a merchant from the city of Venice. Shakespeare bases himself on the skeins of the sixteenth century Venice and on the context of a merchant of the day. Hence the title of the play becomes thematically suggestive, that is, *The Merchant of Venice*. On the contrary, *Bhanumati Chittobilas* happens to be a romantic play with the female protagonist in its centre. Though *The Merchant of Venice* is laden with a sub-plot, the sub-plot culminating in the casket-and-the-ring episode, the climatic apex of the play is situated in the court room only. Following the climax, Shakespeare introduces a lengthy denouement too. Bassanio and Gratiano are, in the tenor of the play,

threatened and bewildered but the audience find it hilarious and comedic. Antonio, the merchant from the city of Venice, thus, remains the pivotal issue of expectation and exploration of the playwright. Antonio epitomizes the context of Venice of which Shylock is dreadfully against. Manifestly, one can discover how from the common layman to the jailer, even a duke, all and sundry are well-wishers of Antonio. This is how *The Merchant of Venice*, the title, is summarily justified.

Bhanumati Chittobilas opens with Bhanumati's/Portia's issue of marriage and the planning that centres on her choosing a deserving bridegroom: as if the seed of the complication of Ghose's play is buried deep within this said planning of finding Bhanumati's groom. The play also consummates with the gleeful dawning of both Bhanumati's and Chittobilas' married lives and times, Chittobilas ascending the throne of Ujjayini/Belmont. Scene after scene in Ghose's play one finds the romance and love affair between Bhanumati and Chittobilas reaching its fruition, mellowing and ripening. Thus Ghose makes their love the central experience of his play.

Shakespeare's play comes full circle with just two scenes following the court room scene, Act IV Scene I, the Act V Scene I being the last one. The court room scene in Hurro Chunder Ghose's play is in Act IV Scene VIII, and Ghose also introduces another scene after the court room scene. Then follows his Act V with eight scenes, and through the said eight scenes Ghose portrays the rendezvous of Bhanumati and Chittobilas with its romantic charm, not without a tinge of humour in the course of the plot. Ghose magnifies the case of Bhanumati's swayamvar, the incredible process of choosing the groom, Bhanumati's unhappiness, her dawning of love towards Chittobilas—and the anxieties and oscillations trailing her dawning of love. It was Act III Scene II in *The Merchant of Venice* that Bassanio/Chittobilas chooses the right casket, and following this happiest hour in the play, he receives Antonio's letter crying for Bassanio's help/presence.

Ghose, on the other hand, does not pay much importance to the merchant Charudatta/Antonio. This is how choosing the casket has its merry effect for three sprawling scenes, VI to

VIII, in Ghose's Act III. Charudatta's letter finds its way into the hands of Chittobilas as late as in Act IV, Scene V. It is to be underlined that Chittobilas chooses the appropriate casket in Act III, Scene V. He ascends the throne in Ghose's Act V, Scene III. Question may well rise, why is there such a long rift between choosing the casket and his ascension to the throne? Bhanumati's parents, the king and queen, had already left as pilgrims before the end of Act IV Scene III. Then who stood between Chittobilas and the throne of Ujjayini?

Ghose posits three impediments on the way to Bhanumati and Chittobilas' reconciliation. Chittobilas also passes the quandary of the casket and the ring with flying colours in due course. But Bhanumati has yet to prove herself worthy in lover's test either. Bhanumati's timid love for Chittobilas has once championed itself in the climactic court room. In Act IV Scene V, Bhanumati tells Sushila/Nerissa:

"Rupeteykoribomughdhobuddheychoomokito.
Koriteypotir hit hoibo pundit." (Ghose 146)

The lines portray Bhanumati's desire to identify herself with the enriched lineage of the eternal chaste wives of Indian tradition, of the haloed tradition of Savitri and Behula. Truth be told, Bhanumati's character portrayal lacks a wholesome consistency. But Bhanumati is a rebel, championing the cause of love she embarks on a fearless quest to establish herself apart from the women confined in the inner sanctums of Indian homes. Thus, it is evident that the title opens with none other than Bhanumati's name, and to remind the generation of readers of her quest for love, follows Chittobilas' name.

Character happens to be an individual's way of living, the philosophy of life and human understanding rolled in one. Luigi Pirandello says, "Every action (and every idea it contains) needs a free human personality if it is to appear live and breathing before us. It needs something that will function as its motor characters in other words" (qtd. in Dawson 68). Hence, character happens to be the driving force of a story arc. One cannot summarily dismiss all this while examining the characteristic traits of Hurro Chunder Ghose's Bhanumati. Since Ghose has followed the hallowed

Shakespearean play, it becomes customary to draw a parallelism between Portia and Bhanumati. Portia hails from Belmont; she is a beautiful lady, an independent spirit, very typical of Shakespeare's heroines in love. In Shakespeare, Portia happens to be her own guardian. On the other hand, Ghose's Bhanumati is a maiden princess from Ujjayini. The latter is born and bred in the cradle of the love, attention and affection of her parents, her friends and her caring maids. It was scarcely probable for Ghose to paint an independent maiden in Bhanumati since his setting is the nineteenth century India. This is the reason behind Ghose's maiden Bhanumati to have a royal birth. It grants Ghose's Portia to enjoy a certain length/compass of freedom.

In Shakespeare, Portia, in Act III Scene II, looks down upon herself as an unworthy, uninitiated individual:

But the full sum of me

Is some of something which, to term in gross, Is an unlessoned girl, unschooled, unpractised,
Happy in this [...]. (MV: 3.2.158-161)

But Portia is a far cry from Bhanumati since the latter takes pride in her upbringing and King Birbar proclaims boldly in Ghose's Act IV Scene III,

Nana sastroporiachotumigunoboti.

Bichareponditamortumi Bhanumati (Ghose 127).

Both her parents, in Ghose's Act IV Scene III, tell Chittobilas that their daughter is skilful and intelligent. The king and the queen pride themselves on Bhanumati, "Bohubuddhidhoraesuta" (129). Such dialogues also unfailingly foreshadow the imminent fact that Bhanumati will soon prove her skill and intellect. But one cannot deny the very fact that Portia, though not a royal bloodline, champions the occasion equipped with her sheer will power, presence of mind, and with an indomitable individuality of a Shavian/Ibsenite New Woman.

Portia is also given to the emotionality of her love affair, and one can see Portia rebelling against her overprotective and possessive father every now and then. For instance, in Shakespeare's Act III Scene II, she rages:

And so all yours. O, these naughty times
Put bars between the owners and their
rights,
And so though yours, not yours. Prove it
so— Let Fortune go to hell for it, not I. (MV:
3.2.18-21)

But, to the contrary, Bhanumati regards her father's wishes to be her own; in Act III Scene V her words trail the element of obedience found in Indian children,

Shottoteyhoinubondhikyamoneykohiboshon
ndhi Raja jahekorilo baron. (Ghose 89)

Not only does she hang her head down in front of her father but also relies unwavering faith on him. Bhanumati vents her mind in Act V Scene I,

Dharmiksubuddhi pita korilen.

Shomputechinibenjeiseipriyojon. (20-21)

The machine of parental gratitude and filial obedience is altogether frothy and illogical to Portia. A Shakespearean Portia relentlessly rages sorrowfully against her late father, in Act I Scene II,

I may neither choose whom
I would nor refuse whom I dislike—so is the
will of a living daughter curbed by the will
of a dead father...

Is it not hard, Nerissa, that I cannot choose
one, nor refuse none? (MV: 1.2.21-25)

Not that Portia is a bad daughter but virtually her own likes and dislikes are categorically more valuable to Portia than mourning for her deceased father. Princess Bhanumati would never dream of going against the wishes, the allowance of her father. It is next to impossible for an Indian princess, for an Indian daughter, to be as adventurous as Portia in Belmont is and to push through the filial dictum. Princess Bhanumati can never rise to the foreground. Hence she comes to the court in disguise and it goes without saying that she is able to surprise the audience with her witty ingenuity in saving the life of Charudatta.

One could not ascertain before the court room scene that princess Bhanumati could ever dare to rise and champion the occasion. Ghose's readers must have been taken aback. Bhanumati's character portrayal did not have any hues of such rebellious wit in her. Unlike Bhanumati, Portia, from the very beginning, has a halo of adventure and individuality

about her and she does not leave any stone unturned as she seeks to be the architect of her own fate. In doing so, Portia finds it justifiably redundant to follow her father's wishes. Portia's character is ever-growing, ever-maturing. Every time Portia exercises her free will she gains in maturity. She is the epitome of life: changing, growing, evolving, finding its way. With an evolving setting in the plot, the way of life changes, adapts, adopts. Harold Rosenberg in his article "Character Change and the Drama" writes, "An egg with an ancestry, developing, changing its form; always in a slow gradual way except for the shocks of birth and death, such is the broadest metaphor of the human personality developed by the organic point of view" (Toliver 324).

It goes without saying that Portia is a free spirit. Shakespeare's Portia is characterized by her frustration towards her father, her rosy and spirited love for Bassanio, her breathless anxiety in the casket-choosing-scene—and all these turns make way for Portia's journey. Portia is not Bhanumati, the former does not need to put on a disguise like the latter. What is more, Bhanumati's character gives way to a ruptured continuity. Bhanumati, at the climactic hour, is too surprising for the organic whole of the denouement of Shakespeare's play.

One word more. While Bhanumati is mulling over the idea of approaching the judicial bench/the court room under a guise, in Act IV Scene VI she is seen confessing and explaining about it all to Sushila:

Adharmana hoy shokhidharmergochorae.
Pandavpailoproanmrittyusoroborae
(Ghose 147).

The Indian society of the day would not consider Bhanumati's expedition/adventure as dharma. Bhanumati is well aware of the limiting ethics and the curbing norms of her time. She even goes to the extent of alluding to *The Mahabharata* only to drive home the very idea/ideal of dharma. Portia, in this connection, is free from such explanations and confessions. Her witty womanhood, her adventurous individuality is not curbed by her time. Portia can be nonchalant, unlike princess Bhanumati. Portia has a clear conscience either. Portia makes it a point to uphold and fight resting

solely on her own principle of life rather than bowing down to the nonsensical ethics and traditions that bog down Bhanumati and make the latter pretty guilty of her deeds. One may find Bhanumati explaining, answering to the questions thrown by her conscience, by her society, by her time and even by her royal stature as a princess.

Portia, with her banter and innuendoes, puts an end to the life-and-death complication of an individual in *The Merchant of Venice*. Portia and Nerissa are seen taking the upper hand when it comes to dealing with their husbands and even Antonio. They have also made their hitherto intensions and expectations clear to everyone by the fag end of the play. Bhanumati is not left far behind in this connection. She has also made her name in the circle of fun, frivolity and frolic in Ghose's *Bhanumati Chittobilas*. For Bhanumati it becomes all the more hard to uphold her dharma as a princess, a daughter and as a beloved while participating in the clamour of frivolity and holiday fun in the plot because the Indian societal system and the notion of a "chaste woman" keep haunting her. Bhanumati is seen proving herself with more vigour, seen exploiting more intellect and is seen fiddling with considerably more adventurous banter only because she does not have the free rein that Portia might have had from the European society of her day. Bhanumati and Portia, both tell their husbands about their engagement in the fun, laughter and banter. But sadly, as an appendage, Bhanumati has to talk a little about the notion of chastity in women either:

"Narirbhusanjaha, konnari nashi taha,
Sotijotnekohaetaha, potirae je manibe"
(Ghose 205).

Portia's love bubbles over with confidence unlike Bhanumati's. Portia hands over the letter from Bellario, her cousin/a lawyer at Padua, to clear her husband's cloud of misgiving. It is possible for Portia to laugh at her own digressions and romantic conquests while princess Bhanumati can never mock her so-called indiscretions without giving a comprehensible explanation of affairs (to prove, illustrate and make everyone believe that her chastity and purity as a woman still remain intact). Hence, Bhanumati not only has to obviate and

glorify chastity but also has to question her own frolicking digressions in Act V Scene II:

"Tuminathpranpoti, tumimomomotigoti,
Asatikohilepoti, sati pran e moribe" (206).

Irrespective of the class the heroine might represent in an Indian play, her whole existence rests on her chastity, her virtues. Chastity is an Indian woman's backbone in any given story arc. Ghose, an Indian playwright, more precisely a Bengali, could never do without an infallibly chaste woman. Bhanumati is no exception in this regard.

Shylock happens to be an unforgettable craft of Shakespeare's ingenious characterization. His lines are never merely unidirectional and action-bound, and by virtue of his versatile dialogues he is never bound by/reduced to the character of a villain in *The Merchant of Venice*. Shylock has found his Bengali avatar in Lokkhopoti Ray. One cannot miss the impression of Shakespearean Shylock on Lokkhopoti Ray; but at the same time Lokkhopoti is indeed rooted in the Indian culture.

Shakespeare has wielded his pen throwing light in the chequered alleyways of Shylock's psychology. The chiaroscuro back-alleys and by-lanes of Shylock's oscillating mind have been depicted with gusto by Shakespeare. Shylock's characteristic traits are novelesque. Shakespeare's vision and genius as an artist have found their happy unison in the portrayal of Shylock. Regrettably, Ghose lacked the same vision, the same genius, the same tradition. Sushil Kumar Dey points out, "It seems like the playwright lacks the degree of human experience an author ought to be equipped with, and that happens to be the reason for the character portrayal and diction trailing behind in the Bengali work than its Shakespearean counterpart" [translation mine] (161). In order to delve deeper into the portrayal of Ghose's Shylock/Lokkhopoti, one should do well to keep Sushil Kumar Dey in mind.

Lokkhopoti is nothing short of a cunning moneylender than Shylock, the Jew. Lokkhopoti, too, is nothing without his Volponesque craving for wealth. In Act II, Scene VIII, he says, "Jodi shokole jay sheovalokeboldhonthakeami tai chai" (Ghose 56-57). He does not mind being left alone in the world but he cannot survive losing his riches. In spite of his

greed for interest, he lends money to Charudatta without one. Manifestly, one must ask why Lokkhopoti would do that. There has to be an ulterior motive to this serendipitous generosity on Lokkhopoti's part. Chittobilas, in the court room, even wants to drive home the point that he is ready to return tenfold of the borrowed capital. But Lokkhopoti seems immovable. The condition Lokkhopoti introduced while lending the money adduces support to the idea that Lokkhopoti is less a moneylender and more an anarchist sadist. One may also deduce that Lokkhopoti and Charudatta are at loggerheads from the very beginning. People like Charudatta is known for posing a hindrance to the livelihood of Lokkhopoti. Charudatta makes it a habit to let people borrow his money without any interest and the like of Charudatta even abhors charging interest.

One cannot brush aside the issue of race in this connection. Lokkhopoti is one of the immigrants. He calls Charudatta "bidharmi", someone without religion and caste. This play is marked by a plethora of obstinate bigotry in the right sense of the term, Lokkhopoti being intolerably devoted to his own opinions and prejudices. It is also true that Lokkhopoti himself had been the butt of bigotry given his religion and his ethnicity. In the court room scene, Bhanumati in guise of a 'sastri' refers to the addendum in the law of Gujrat state concerning the cunning demeanour of an immigrant individual who is not of Gujrat. The law of Gujrat in itself clearly underscores the bigotry, intolerance and distinction between an immigrant and a native. Charudatta either has curbed Lokkhopoti's social dignity time and again. The linchpin of Lokkhopoti's abhorrence rests not only on principles and xenophobia but also on personal hatred. In Shakespeare, Shylock gives voice to his bigotry through his burning dialogues. He is given to innuendos and banter; for instance, in Act III Scene I, Shylock is seen saying:

If a Jew wrong a Christian, what
Is his humility? Revenge. If a Christian
wrong a Jew,
What should his sufferance be by Christian
example?
Why, revenge. (MV: 3.1.64-66)

Shakespeare wanted to foreground the tussle between the Jews and the Christian, it goes without saying. Shylock has been called "Jew" a number of times in Shakespeare just to curb his individuality, his identity. Given the situation of events, Shylock plots and executes his revenge. He did not want to retire to the 'sinned against' end of hatred and bigotry. One word more. In Shakespeare, Antony ends up converting Shylock to Christianity. Undoubtedly, Shylock's religiosity is stripped of its freedom. Ghose has summarily made away with the issue of religious bigotry in his adaptation. As a result, it becomes difficult to interpret Lokkhopoti's communal bigotry.

Shylock does not want to strip Antonio off everything he possesses, rather Shylock's abhorrence springs from an unavoidable bigotry in Shakespeare. Shylock, in a way, wants to level the hatred and phobia towards Jews by hook or by crook in Shakespeare. Why Lokkhopoti is given to disdain is never clear. In fact, Ghose might not have wanted to introduce and delve deeper into the issue of religion just to steer clear of social upheaval of his day. But there remains a yawning void of reasoning in the character of Ghose's Shylock. The homicidal condition of "ardhashermangsho" or a pound of flesh does not pay Lokkhopoti his money back. In Act II, Scene IV Lokkhopoti says that he has put such a nonsensical condition just to bridge their friendship (Ghose 39). This is the mask that unites Shakespeare's Jew and Hurro Chunder Ghose's Shylock. In Act II Scene IV, Chittobilas does not make a mistake in realizing the motive of Lokkhopoti:

"Mukheteamritobishantarejahaar.
Shunoshokhetahahoteynahiprotikar."
(Ghose 40)

Regrettably, there is dross in the relationship between Lokkhopoti and his daughter, Sashimukhi. His grievous raving for his runaway daughter is more about his lost possessions. Lokkhopoti's sighs and his teardrops are endowed to his money and lost gems. Sashimukhi is merely an occasion in this context. In Act III Scene IV, Ghose's Shylock goes to the extent of saying that he looks forward to make away with the interloper and even cremate the thief on a bed of his lost money (82).

It was Shakespeare's Jessica who elopes with the Christian Lorenzo and subsequently preys

on Shylock's faith on Christianity. Shylock soon loses his faith on Christianity and on Christian individuals: be it Lorenzo, be it Antonio. In this case, Shylock is poorer than Antonio. His remaining trump card is nothing but the condition to Antonio. That void in filial relationship and the germ of filial ingratitude have made Shylock all the more vindictive. Jessica not only runs away with his wealth but also Shylock's avarice. Shylock overbrims with agonizing hatred in Act IV Scene I:

Must yield to such inevitable shame,
As to offend, himself being offended;
So can I give no reason, nor I will not,
More than a lodged hate and a certain
loathing
I bear Antonio, that I follow thus
A losing suit against him! (MV: 4.1.57-62)
It is none but his daughter who sets
Shylock's shame on fire. Lokkhopoti is no
better than a have-not.

In Ghose's Act IV Scene I, he repents that he has been sinned against (Ghose 118). He ends up losing his caste, his religion, his wealth and even his daughter. One should underline that in this case Lokkhopoti talks more about the loss of his daughter. If his daughter leaves behind her parental identity, her parental caste and religion, the father of an eloped daughter is also bereft of the social dignity. From this point of view, Lokkhopoti's hatred is not illogical. Only to achieve his end Lokkhopoti is, at times, given to betrayal. He also brings up the issue of slavery in its vocational ugliness. Lokkhopoti has the gift of the gab. Lokkhopoti, himself a vegan, seeks to fulfil his revenge by scooping out Charudatta's flesh only to make away with the latter.

What is more, Lokkhopoti, a man without a religion in the right sense of the term, is engaged in incessant ineffectual struggle within, a struggle between humanity and feverish bigotry. A portrayal like Lokkhopoti's draws a gnawing question mark on the skeins of society and humanity. Ghose, in his Preface, says that his objective is "[t]o convey to my countrymen, who have no means of getting themselves acquainted with Shakespeare, save through the medium of their own language, the beauty of the author's sentiments [...]." Hurro

Chunder Ghose, hence, had to portray his Shylock after the Shakespearean tradition. But his adaptation has failed to acquire the stature of timelessness. Asit Kumar Bandhopadhyay remarks, "Hurro Chunder had no idea whatsoever how to compress description into a dramatic setting [translation mine]" (526). Maybe this happens to be the reason why Lokkhopoti's figure could not scale the heights of Shylock's. From time to time, Ghose's Lokkhopoti has missed the bull's eye because of the length of dialogues, inflexibility, slackened portrayal and inept accuracy.

Manifestly, the title of *Bhanumati Chittobilas* does not bear a direct Shakespearean influence. The opening scene of *The Merchant of Venice* shows the audience a morose Antonio. Though morally upright and a man of principle, his error of judgement dug his own grave and he fell prey to Shylock's snare. If it was not for Portia and Bassanio, Antonio was heading towards his own tragic end. Not that Antonio and Shylock fell apart for the immediate cause at hand, rather for Antonio's undoing there loomed an unavoidable political, religious and socio-economical context. Portia, undubiously, is the staple of the Shakespearean characterization, the belle of the ball. Such was also evident from Mrs Grieg's casting in the role of Portia in Calcutta: though *SambadPrabhakar* reported the name as Alice (Roychowdhury 19-20). To conclude, it is more appropriate to call Ghose's *Bhanumati Chittobilas* not a translation but an adaptation of *The Merchant of Venice*. Shakespeare's plot and sub-plots, undoubtedly, found its illustrative way into Ghose's text but at the same time Ghose has made his mark in the map of BengallieNatuck gloriously.

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About Author

Dey graduated from the royal campus of Burdwan Raj College with honour in 2010 and was awarded the university gold medal for topping his post-graduation class from the University of Burdwan in 2012. Having cleared UGC NET in December, 2012 he joined Burdwan Raj College as guest faculty in July, 2014. Following the completion of his M.Phil. on the interface of urban sexuality in select graphic novels of Sarnath Banerjee, Dey has been a part of KaziNazrul University, Asansol, as guest lecturer from March, 2015. He is about to embark on his doctoral research on contextualizing the illustrations of the *Sandesh* Magazine. Dey has enjoyed national scholarship on drama puppetry from CCRT, Ministry of Culture, for five years when he was in high school. Primarily focussed in on comics studies, he shares a budding interest in Bengali children's/young adult fiction, art history, non-fictional humour, media studies, video game studies and spatial theory.
