Chapter X

CONCLUSION

The surveys and analyses of the preceding chapters clearly demonstrate how far Shakespeare has influenced drama and other forms of Hindi literature. For centuries, after the great dramatic tradition of Sanskrit had died out, drama was regarded merely as source of entertainment and not as a great literary medium of human expression. But with the introduction of Shakespeare into India there came a renewed sense of realisation that drama was not merely a thing of thrills and laughter but a true mirror of life. The Hindi dramatists now aimed at appealing to the reading public as well as to the spectators in the theatre. In the field of comedy, Shakespeare exercised a refining influence while urged Hindi dramatists to substitute fine romantic comedy for vulgar medieval farces of the type of Indrasabha by Imanat. Moreover, Shakespeare convinced Hindi dramatists that tragedy is one of the highest forms of dramatic writing. The use of this dramatic form opened up unparalleled and unprecedented vistas before them. They could now depict the acute internal conflict in the soul of a great hero. This internal conflict becomes progressively prominent in the plays of Bhartendu Harishchandra, Radhakrishna Das and, above all, in the plays of Jaishanker Prasad. Hindi dramatists also began to write historical plays directly
constructed on the Shakespearean model, employing most of the devices of the English dramatist. With the insistence on drama as a form of literature and on the tragic conflict, attention was now focussed on the delineation of character, often conceived in Shakespearean terms. The poetry also shows abundant signs of the richness of the new influence, especially in the field of sonnet. And, although Shakespeare was not a novelist and short story writer, he provided impetus to these forms in Hindi. Shakespeare has indeed, by and large, contributed to the revival of romance in modern Hindi literature. Biographical and critical writings on Shakespeare in the Hindi language have been considerable.

As already stated, the sources of this influence of Shakespeare have been three:

1- the original plays of Shakespeare;
2- the Bengali plays bearing the impact of Shakespeare; and
3- the translations and adaptations of his plays.

Shakespeare, once planted on the Indian soil, went on gaining ground and becoming popular for so many reasons stated in the first chapter. He was performed on the stage, introduced into the school and college curricula as a compulsory subject, and film versions of his plays were widely shown. The whole atmosphere became charged with the Shakespearean spirit. Most of the educated Indians became familiar with the plays in original.
And, as a natural outcome, they anxiously wished to impart their knowledge of Shakespeare to those who were ignorant of it through translations and adaptations. The work of translating Shakespeare into Hindi was first begun by Munshi Imdad Ali with his translation of *The Comedy of Errors* in 1879, and since then, there have been about two hundred translations and adaptations. They are generally rendered into prose and hardly come up to the mark with the possible exception of Harivanshrai Bachchan's translations of *Othello* and *Macbeth* which are in verse and try to convey the Shakespearean spirit. The prose translations, at their best, convey the sense of Shakespeare's plays in a bald unpoetical style and, at their worst, tend to become unintelligible and obscure. Nevertheless, these translations and adaptations have by and large succeeded in bringing Shakespeare within the reach of those who cannot read him in original.

Shakespeare's plays were, for the first time, produced in the original by the English people for their own entertainment in the Bengal from time to time. Various famous Shakespeare actors with their troupes visited India and enacted plays at several places. Naturally, the Indian people also were stimulated to stage his plays. The students of various educational institutions staged the original as well as the translations and adaptations. All these productions in Calcutta and several other places of India revived the interest of the
Indian people in the medieval stage and the elaborate technique of the classical Sanskrit drama. With this background, the Hindi stage began to imbibe the influence of the Shakespearean stage. A crude bare stage, colourful costumes, loud quick delivery, expressive gestures, action and spectacle, rhetoric and declamation - practically all the component elements of the Shakespearean stage found their inalienable place upon the professional Parsi stage, the parent of the modern Hindi stage. But, of course for no fault of Shakespeare, in some cases this influence was abused and was carried to a grotesque and absurd extent, resulting in mere jugglery of scenic display and much crude horse-play in the name of acting. And so, later on, efforts were successfully made to eradicate much of the obscenity and indecency that had crept into the Parsi stage by Bhartendu Harishchandra and his contemporaries. Nevertheless, the inspiration of the Shakespearean stage worked unabated in matters of plot construction, planning, technique, stage-craft and acting.

Since the age of Bhartendu Harishchandra, the influence of Shakespeare has been most effective in the domain of Hindi drama. In the earlier stages, Hindi drama derived its inspiration from Sanskrit drama but, with the advent of Shakespeare, much of the technique of Sanskrit drama was replaced by the Shakespearean technique. Shakespeare influenced Bhartendu and his contemporaries primarily in respect of outer form. They
generally did away with the tradition of introducing the play with 'Mangalacharan', 'Nandi', 'Sutradhar', and of ending it with 'bharatvakyā' and often had recourse to the 'Chorus' of the Shakespearean type. According to the Sanskrit dramatic theory, a play to be called a 'Natak' should have five to ten acts and it usually had seven acts. But these playwrights, following Shakespeare, introduced mostly five acts, further divided into scenes called 'Gambhankas'. In Sanskrit plays, the acts were not sub-divided into scenes as they hindered the evocation of the sentiments. But these playwrights stressed both internal and external action, the unfoldment of which was made possible by the rapid change of scenes. They were motivated not by the theory of 'Rasa' but by the desire to awaken suspense and curiosity. That was why the prohibitions of the Sanskrit stage - battle, death, murder, travel, kissing, embracing, burning pyre, etc., were freely presented upon the stage.

The study of Shakespearean drama widened the scope of the Hindi dramatist's subject-matter and view of life. He had now new forms of drama to write. He could attempt historical plays, 'Romantic Comedies', and tragedies on the Shakespearean pattern. The Hindi dramatist was now as much alive to the darker aspects of human life as to its brighter ones. Shakespeare tempered their idealism derived from the Sanskrit
tradition with a more practical and realistic outlook. The Sanskrit drama always depicted the victory of good over evil and never allowed the audience to carry home a sense of the waste of human goodness. This is why it had no tragedy. The hero too was generally an ideal figure, the very glass of fashion and mould of form. But the playwrights of this period, under the influence of Shakespeare, presented realistic characters, compounded of both good and evil traits, and made the flaw in the character of the hero responsible for his tragic doom.

These Hindi playwrights also followed Shakespeare in painting a gloomy and terrible atmosphere indicative of the impending calamity, in providing comic-relief through humorous scenes before a tragic event and in employing certain dramatic devices e.g., the ring-episode in The Merchant of Venice. But, let us say, these influences were not fully assimilated. For sometime they resulted in a good many unsure experiments and this state of affairs continued until the arrival of Jaishanker Prasad on the dramatic scene.

Jaishanker Prasad accepted the evocation of 'Rasa' or 'Sentiments' as the object of drama but also recognized the importance of action and conflict, taking cue from Shakespeare. Furthermore, 'chance' or 'accident' played the same role in his plays as in Shakespeare's King Lear, Macbeth, Othello, and Romeo and Juliet. And, again, with regard to the conflict,
Prasad followed the Shakespearean principle of alternation in the "rises and falls" in tension.

He presented the sub-plot, like Shakespeare, to serve either as a parallel or contrast to or as a commentary upon the main plot to heighten its effect. The sub-plot in *Aijatshatru* serves as a parallel to the main plot while in *Vishakh* it serves as a contrast. Like the English dramatist, Prasad also blended realism with romance by introducing love-stories and by connecting them with the main plot to give us the idea that life is a mingled yarn of smiles and tears.

It is in characterisation that Prasad absorbed Shakespeare's influence to the utmost. He portrayed introspective characters like Bimbasar, Skandagupta, Chandragupta, and others on the pattern of Hamlet and Richard II. He utilised the principle of contrast in characterisation in *Rajyashri, Vishakh, Aijatshatru*, and also employed the Shakespearean technique of presenting parallel characters in *Aijatshatru, Skandagupta, Chandragupta*, and *Dhrusyaswamini* to set off each other. In Sanskrit drama, there is no scope for either. The attributes of the characters are all pre-destined and they move as if in a wooden frame. Nevertheless, the principle of contrast is not totally absent from the Sanskrit plays. The chief protagonist in

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any Sanskrit play must be essentially true to one of the four types viz., noble and light-hearted (Dhiralalita), noble and calm (Dhirapr-shant), noble and exalted (Dhiraudatta), and noble and haughty (Dhiraudhatta) and any change would spoil the unity of the development of the play. But, if, at all, a change is dramatically necessary, it should be made in the plot or at most in the character of the secondary hero, in whose case a certain degree of flexibility is allowed in Sanskrit dramatics. The changing situations may affect the attitudes and gestures of the secondary hero to heighten the effect caused by the constancy of the chief protagonist. A striking instance may be cited from the play Mahaviracharita where Parashuram is exalted above evil-natured Ravana but degraded in his attitude to Ram. Even so, contrasting characters were not presented too often and we cannot treat this as a striking feature of Sanskrit drama. The reason is that in Sanskrit drama the stress is not on characterisation and plot, which preponderate in the Shakespearean drama, but on the evocation of sentiments in the minds of the spectators, characterisation and plot being accessory to that evocation. Prasad also placed emphasis on the inner conflict in the souls of his protagonists, and in the analysis of this internal conflict used soliloquies as effectively as Shakespeare did. These soliloquies were arranged by him as a means of exposition, as an

1. Bhavabhuti, Mahaviracharita, 11, 10,16 and 22.
accompaniment of the action and as a device for revealing internal thought and feeling.

Prasad followed Shakespeare not merely in presenting his heroes but also in the portrayal of his villains. Like Shakespeare, he painted two types of villains: those who die but do not leave their villainy and those who turn virtuous in the end. Prapanchbudhi and Vijaya in Skandgupta, Mahapinal in Visakh, and Leva cutta in Ajatshatru belong to the first group while Dhatark in Skandgupta and Rakshas in Chandragupta belong to the second.

The other fields in which Prasad assimilated the influence of Shakespeare are: the discarding of 'Handi', 'Sutradhar', 'Purvarang', and 'Sharatvakiya' and the division of acts into scenes, the presentation of murders, suicides, battle-scenes, fainting, fighting, kissing, embracing, burning pyre and such other devices on the stage, the introduction of the devices of dramatic irony, pathetic-fallacy, supernatural elements, the working of destiny behind human actions and the violation of the 'three unites'. With regard to the use of supernatural elements, one thing is noteworthy. Shakespeare presented supernatural elements in two forms: first, as ghosts and witches influencing his characters, and secondly, as superstitions working through the characters themselves. Prasad employed the first form in Pravashchita, presenting the Vidyadharies and the ghost of Sanyogita and the second in Visakh exploiting the irrational beliefs of the people.
When all is said to measure up Prasad's debt to Shakespeare, the fact remains that Prasad never loses his individuality of approach and originality of design. Despite the raging conflict in their minds, the heroes and heroines of Prasad are more prone to virtue than Shakespeare's. The ultimate triumph of good over evil too in his plays is more positive and more reassuring than in Shakespeare's tragedies and more realistic and less idyllic than in Shakespeare's last plays, though in both the sense of evil is equally profound. Prasad's history plays also, more than Shakespeare's, recapture the spirit and flavour of the periods of history with which they deal.

The dramatists contemporary to and after Prasad, more or less, followed in his foot-steps with regard to the Shakespearean influence until the influence of Ibsen through Bernard Shaw and other European dramatists intervened. Harikrishna Premi, Laxminarasimha Misra, Seth Govind Das, Upendranath Ashka, Vrinodaranlal Varma, Udayashanker Bhatta and Ramkumar Varma imbibed the influence of Shakespeare, partly through Prasad and partly through their direct study of his plays.

But for certain echoes, the poems of Shakespeare, other than the sonnets, have not attracted the Hindi poets as their themes are quite foreign to the Indian taste and temper. Efforts have been made to imitate the sonnets but more in technique than number.

theme. Since 1910, a large/th of sonnets have appeared from time to time in literary periodicals and miscellanies, but only a few of
them treat of love. Most of them are experiments in form and technique, some use no rhyme scheme at all; others various forms of metre and rhyme scheme, and a big majority employ the traditional couplet form throughout. These attempts do not achieve the structural efficacy of the Shakespearean model. The only possible exception is a sequence of original love sonnets by Yatindra Kumar, which frequently recall Shakespeare in the unity of both structure and atmosphere, in the underlying continuity of emotional growth, in the dramatic rendering of the various moods and in a judicious use of speech-rhythm harnessed to a well-devised metre.

In the field of novel and short story, only thematic echoes and influences are perceptible. And, although biographical and critical literature on Shakespeare in Hindi has been considerable, no outstanding and systematic assessment of his genius has been made so far.

Although in modern Hindi literature, the influence of later European literature has been largely at work, the influence of Shakespeare is by no means exhausted. The great English dramatist and poet still delights and inspires us and our dramatic literature still owes a good deal to his influence directly or otherwise. The changing interpretations of Shakespeare offer new avenues of approach and since the lovers of Shakespeares still think in terms of establishing a 'Hindi Shakespeare Manch', it cannot be said that Shakespeare's influence is dead or dying.