

Hindu College and “Performance”: 1817-1867

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Abstract

The entire Renaissance in Bengal (19th century) witnessed what we could call a “performance” of the social energies of the time, manifesting themselves in educational reform, desire to uplift the condition of women, introduce Western models of education and generally spread awareness of rationalist principles of thought. ~

One of the key nodes of this process of transformation through “performance” was Hindu College established in 1817 with the objective of promoting Western style education, curricula, methodologies of thinking and learning and imbibing a scientific attitude or spirit towards the organization of personal and public life. ~

One of the key figures in this dramatic “performance” of ideas and activism was Henry Louis Derozio. Derozio was a product of the Latin Grammar School model initiated by David Drummond in his Dharmatollah Academy. Debate was central to pedagogical practices at this academy and Derozio distinguished himself in debate. ~

Later Derozio made debate central to academic practice at Hindu College, during the five or so odd years that he was a teacher there. In debate, I see a “performance” oriented educational model.

Another vital aspect of “performance” as an active ingredient of learning and education at Hindu College during its initial period was play acting as part of the examination procedure. Eventually, the idea of “performance” at Hindu College could be seen to encompass significant translation enterprises, poetry writing in English initiatives, science advocacy, and advocacy for women’s education, establishing schools, advocacy of learning writing of text books and the founding of newspapers. Some of Derozio’s students who were actively involved in such activities were Radhanath Sikdar, Peary Chand Mitra, Ramgopal Ghosh, Tarachand Chakrabarty, Shivachandra Deb, Harachandra Ghosh and others.

Keywords: *Hindu College, “Restoration of behaviour”, event, performance, debate, literature, history, social reform, nation, Derozio and the Derozions*

Performance traditions resonate deeply within contexts of Hindu College/ Presidency College and Presidency University, and encompass many diverse connotations of the term ‘performance’. However, before I explore the major focus of my essay I would like to do a quick review of certain signal changes and shifts that take place in Europe in theatre

philosophy and dramaturgy, in the 1960's, principally initiated by Polish director and theatre philosopher Jerzy Grotowski (1933-99), who reimagined the performance space of theatre as being directly in the midst of the audience (Jerzy Grotowski 1968: 19). He removed the spatial hierarchy of performance space and audience space typical in proscenium arch theatre current from the 16th century, right up to current times within conventional modes of theatre production. This brought theatre very close to its anthropological roots, with the immediacy of the audience around the actors, which is how it still is in some African tribal communities, where the *griot* tells her stories of tribal ancestry and heroism, sitting in the midst of her audience.¹

The role of the spectator in making performance ‘happen’ is vitally true of Indian folk performance traditions too, and even within contexts of Indian classical drama. *Rasa* becomes effective only when the *sahrdaya* (ideal receptor) participates in it and completes the magic circle in which lies aesthetic production and reception. Grotowski's ‘poor theatre’ as he called it created resonances world- wide. In *Between Theater and Anthropology*, American theatre director and philosopher, Richard Schechner, speaks of how Jerzy Grotowski, Eugenio Barba (1936), Peter Brook (1925-), Jerry Turner (1927-2004), Keith Turnbull (1944), were all using methods that were “intercultural” and “interdisciplinary” and seeking to converge “anthropological” with “theatrical” models (Schechner 1985:26). Schechner was himself deeply influenced by the work of the anthropologist Victor Turner, who posited the need to relate cultures, aesthetics and social theory (Schechner 1985:14)

This thesis about how “theatre” and “ordinary” life inhered (Schechner 1985:14) in each other certainly goes as far back as Shakespeare in *As You Like It* with Jacques telling the Senior Duke in Act II scene vii, “all the world's a stage/ and all the men and women merely players”². However, this theoretical and practical and aesthetic need to relate the ‘practice of everyday life’ to theatre is something that develops in the 60's. ³In an interview published in *Perspecta*, Volume 26, and entitled ‘Behaviour, Performance, and Performance Space’ Schechner says, ‘theatre can take something and play with it, either mimetically or through repetition. The very act of recuperation of twice behaving distinguishes theater’ (98). “Twice behaving” in the context of theatre is Schechner's way of reading Aristotle's principle of ‘mimesis’ or ‘imitation’ that lies at the heart of dramatic action or specifically tragedy. Aristotle defines tragedy as the ‘imitation of an action that is serious, complete and of a certain magnitude....’ (Aristotle 1970:51).

However, Schechner does not limit his theoretical exploration only to theatre. As he states in his *Performance Studies Textbook*, (2nd draft, July 95)

The categories of performance are not fixed or static. For example, there are both sacred and secular rituals; certain dramas have the qualities of sports. Take a large-scale event like the Olympic Games. Viewed from one perspective, spectator sports

are popular entertainments; from another view, they are secular rituals. The same can be said for certain popular music concerts, street demonstrations, and political campaigns. The neat categories teachers admire are not obeyed by people and events.⁴

Looking at questions of the multiple dimensions of theatre at the level of 'everyday life' rather than its strict placement in a consigned theatre space started the Performance Studies Program at TISH in New York University in 1979-80. The co-founders were Richard Schechner, Michael Kirby, Robert Mcnamara. Through the ever expanding range of meanings of the word "performance", finally culture, politics, practice, economics, globalization, pedagogy, international relations as well as pure forms of performance like dance, theatre and music, are all imbricated. Some of Schechner's ideas that I am going to use in this essay are that performances are "rehearsed behaviours", "are heightened, marked and framed", are "learned, coded, tailor-made for the event, or class of events" and that "each of these performances enact specific sequences of events".

I find these critical paradigms very useful for my analysis of performance traditions at Hindu college which I feel were "rehearsed behaviors" in that all the actions and ideologies that led to the creation of Hindu College, came out of a culture of advocacy, rationalistic thinking, high social awareness and social philanthropy. The founding of the college was not a random, arbitrary gesture. They were "heightened, marked and framed", "learned, coded, tailor made for the event" and "enact [ed] specific sequences of events". The time period that this essay will address will be I would like to look at performance the first fifty years of the existence/performance (1817-1867) of Hindu College.

A survey of these fifty years is enough to provide a rich survey of the various forms of "performance" that created in Hindu College a tradition and a continuum that gave birth to some of the most outstanding men and women who became the leaders of Indian society over two centuries. The essay would like to look at the various kinds of energies that came together to create an educational institution that was so unique and empowered in its time, that it could even be considered, as it is by many, to be one of the major factors that led to the creation/formation of modern India. It required as I have mentioned above the "rehearsed behaviours" of advocacy, power to envision new modes of thought practice, social philanthropy, reformist zeal, and nationalist fervour of persons like Raja Rammohun Roy, David Hare, Edward Hyde East, Baidyanath Mukhopadhyay, Prasanna Kumar Tagore, Gopee Mohun Tagore, Maharaja Tej Bahadur of Burdwan, Rasamoy Dutta and others. It is my contention that Hindu College was created by what one could call a marvellous and extraordinary "performance" of the social energies of the time.

Perhaps the great "event" leading to the founding of Hindu College and its consolidation started with Raja Rammohun Roy settling in Calcutta in 1814. Rammohun Roy was a man of prodigious intellect, vast learning, astonishing linguistic abilities and broad comparative

interests in culture and religion. He was a firm believer in Reason as a guide to truth, driven by egalitarian principles and deeply committed to the upliftment of the down-trodden and marginalized of society. Among the down-trodden and marginalized with whom he had strong empathy were women (Sushobhan Sarkar 1970:9). He was outraged by the practice of Sati that was endorsed by Hindu Brahmanical culture and wrote three tracts against it between 1818-1829. Sati was ultimately legally abolished by Bentinck in 1829.

Rammohun also read deeply in Vedanta, Islam and Christianity and tried to imbibe what was best in both cultures, East and West (Sushobhan Sarkar 1970: 5) He felt that Hindu society was in a state of extreme and abject stagnation and efforts needed to be made to align it to higher progressive and civic ideals. To this end he began a society called the *Atmiya Sabha* (1815), in which many of these progressive ideas were discussed, and eventually on August 20th, 1828, he founded the Brahmo Samaj in 1828 (Sushobhan Sarkar 1970: 8-9). Education was also a field that Rammohun Roy was deeply interested in, feeling that it was a western style education, with emphasis on science, rationality, and a core component of English literature that would provide the proper or ideal curricula for a new generation of Bengali youth. When he found out that the government was going to set up a Sanskrit College with the funds that had been sanctioned by the British Parliament for promoting education among Indians, he wrote a letter of strong protest to Lord Amherst, who was Governor General (1823-1828) at that time:

We find that the government are establishing a Sanskrit School under Hindu Pandits to impart such knowledge as is already current in India (Rajnarayan Basu 1876 :31)

He points out that this would only,

... load the minds of the youth with grammatical niceties and metaphysical distinctions of little or no practical use to the possessors or to society (Rajnarayan Basu 1876 :31)

Rammohun Roy pointed out that instead of learning the ‘niceties’ of Sanskrit grammar it was important that the youth of Bengal learn subjects that Europe had taken to such a point of excellence and which had given them the intellectual and economic ascendancy that they enjoyed. He stressed that it was necessary that they study “mathematics, natural philosophy, chemistry, anatomy, and other useful sciences.” (Rajnarayan Basu 1876 :31).

In Rammohun’s work thus, we find all that is “learned”, “heightened”, “practiced” and eventful. He was one of the major movers of the time. He had contact with many of the leading liberal thinkers of England like Bentham and Owen (Ghulam Murshid 10-11) and had been deeply influenced by the ideals of the French Revolution which spoke for greater

equality, liberty and fraternity. He helped to initiate and consolidate these large changes and events in education, legislation and women's rights. His thought, work, creation of social bodies and advocacy through them, caused in short, what we would call a dramatic and epistemological shift. Texts that were very popular during this time were Tom Paine's *Age of Reason* (1791), Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* 1792, James Mill's *History of British India* (1818), Richard Carlile's *Every Woman's Book* (1826) and William Thompson's 1825 text *An Appeal of One Half of the Human Race Women against the Pretensions of the other Half Men* (Ghulam Murshid 1983: 10—11).

In this paper I argue that all radical and dramatic shifts of culture and epistemology that took place at this pivotal time be read as "performance". Calcutta was "in an extraordinary state of flux at this time" (Rosinka Chaudhuri 2002: 22) which made this "event" and "performance" possible. "Performance" would include the creation of new syllabi as "performance", pedagogy which included debate and drama as "performance", creation of new modes of cultural analysis, epistemologies and historiographies as "performance", and East-West encounters as "dramatic" since they led to creative fusions, negotiations and dialectics. It is my contention that in the creation of learned traditions in Bengal there were rehearsals in Europe, through the academies of ancient Greece which stressed Logic, Rhetoric, Music and Mathematics. The same model followed into Renaissance Europe with the creation of Latin Grammar Schools, which still remain centres of excellence in America today. The influence of the Latin Grammar Schools cannot be denied in the Renaissance of Bengal through Drummond and his pupil, Derozio who were both trained in debate and oratory.⁵ From Nikhil Sarkar's "Printing and the spirit of Calcutta" one learns that at time the volume of publishing in Calcutta was greater than anywhere else in the world, except London (Nikhil Sarkar 1990: 128). Thus one can posit that the rehearsals of performative events in Europe partially led the way for such an event in Calcutta.

Of course, this rehearsal was in tune with the social contexts of the time. The founding of Hindu College in 1817, for the purpose of dissemination of knowledge that was secular and aimed at developing rational principles of understanding, moral character, and helping students achieve enough understanding of western science and literature, which they could enrich on their own, led the way to Hindu college being the centre of this transformation of the nation, leading almost to a rebirth and the creation of new standards of excellence, rich traditions of thought and practice. As Rosinka Chaudhuri posits it became "a locus which saw the regeneration of Science, Bengali Literature and the creation of Indian Writing in English" (Chaudhuri 2002: 29). A great tradition was created which continued based on ritual, practice and recuperation leading to the moulding of leaders of the nation.

Regarding the crucial role of David Hare in this context, Sushobhan Sarkar writes in the *Bengal Renaissance and Other Essays*,

... David Hare who came out in 1800 as a watchmaker but made it his life’s mission to spread modern education in the country where he lived on till his death, four decades later..(Sushobhan Sarkar 1970: 15).

From Monotosh Chakravarty’s *Hindu College O Unish Shataker Bangla Samaj* (1979) one learns that those who were against education in English were initially successful in stalling a quick movement towards change. There were company directors who felt that way and of course there were conservative Hindu leaders. However through Rammohun’s *Atmiya Sabha* through which he had effected other changes, a building up of positive opinion for the introduction of western education took place. In one of the discussion sessions Rammohun and Hare spoke about how important it was to open an educational institution where young people could be taught to stay away from the excesses of Hindu ways. Rammohun had suggested a *Vedanta Vidyalaya*. However Hare advocated the setting up of an institution that would impart western education (Monotosh Chakrabarty 1979: 23). Missionary activity also had its impact in establishing ideas of monotheism and the need to stay away from superstitions.

Hare (1775-1842) managed to convince Dewan Baidyanath Mukhopadhyay who in turn convinced many prominent Hindus of the time and also westerners who had the advancement of India in mind. Eventually, under the chairmanship of Edward Hyde East, judge of the Supreme Court, a meeting was held at the Judge’s house on 14. 5. 1816 and the cause of an educational institution for the dissemination of western forms of knowledge won wide support from the assembled group of almost 50 members and a sum of 50000 was raised and many others promised to donate money to the cause. The deliberations ended on 21.5.1816 and a committee was set up to facilitate the process of the establishment of this institution. Edward East also made it clear that he had embarked on this project after having consulted with the Governor General Moira and his cabinet (Monotosh Chakrabarty 1979: 23).

A committee was formed with Sir Edward Hyde East as Chairman and Joseph Baretto as Treasurer (175th Anniversary Commemorative Volume, 1). An amount of 1, 13,179 was raised and the principal donors were the Maharaja (Tejchand Bahadur) of Burdwan, Babu Gopee Mohun Tagore, Babu Joy Kissen Singh, Babu Gopee Mohun Deb and Babu Ganga Narain Deb. The Maharajah of Burdwan and Babu Gopee Mohun Tagore each contributed 10,000. The stone and marble plaque that commemorates this occasion praises the “liberality and public spirit” of these donors. Hindu College was formally opened on 20th January, 1817, in a rented house in Garanhatta which later became 304, Chitpore Road. Dewan Baidyanath Mukherjee who had taken a leading role in this effort to establish a secular

institution modelled on humanistic principles of learning prophetically declared on this occasion:

which yet was but a seedling, would many years hence resemble the *bur* tree, which when fully grown was the largest tree in India, cooling and refreshing all those who came under its shade' (175th Anniversary Commemorative Volume 1992: 1).

In *Masks of Conquest*, Gauri Viswanathan offers a strong critique of this moment by writing that "the movement for English education" led by Rammohun Roy and David Hare, was "...sparked by a need for translations of English Literature into the vernaculars" and "not for a wholesale transfusion of Western thought". Certainly no one had quite envisaged the entire range of secular literature and science that were finally introduced (Gauri Viswanathan 1989: 43). Vishwanathan adds that "Sir Edward Hyde was not unappreciative of the irony of a situation where he found himself visited by a group of Calcutta citizens deploring the "national deficiency in morals" and requesting him for a college offering European education and imparting an English system of morals" (Gauri Viswanathan 1989: 43).

The greatest impetus to Hindu College was given after Henry Louis Vivian Derozio, an Eurasian joined Hindu College Derozio joined in 1826 (Monotosh Chakrabarty 1979: 47 - 48). Derozio was himself a product of Drummond's Dharmatollah Academy. Drummond was Scottish by descent and had come to India to seek his fortune and had been strongly influenced by the rationalist philosophies of Hume (Prasad Sengupta 2015: 45). From Prasad Sengupta's essay, "David Drummond" we learn that the examination and prize distribution ceremony (held simultaneously) at his school were elaborate affairs, which involved oral examinations primarily, and were conducted in the presence of distinguished people of Kolkata at that time (Prasad Sengupta 2015: 49). From *Hindu College O Unish Shataker Bangla Samaj* (Monotosh Chakravarty 79 : 52) we learn that the editor of *India Gazette*, John Grant, was present in one of Drummond's examinations and was deeply impressed by Derozio's oral skills and learning (Monotosh Chakravarty 79 : 52). This strong oral tradition, passed from Derozio to his students at Hindu College, because we know about the great emphasis that Derozio placed on debate as a tool for arriving at the truth about matters both social and philosophical. Thus in the "learned", "coded", "sequences of events" that led to Hindu College, Drummond also plays an integral role in shaping the ethos of Hindu College.

In his *Bengal Renaissance and Other Essays*, Sushobhan Sarkar writes about Derozio:

Derozio was something of a prodigy. He was educated at one of the private schools of his day run by a Scotsman, Drummond, who had something of the reputation of a poet, scholar and notorious freethinker. From him apparently the young Derozio got steeped in the intoxicating freedom urge of the French Revolution, and a passion for the freedom of thought and liberation from the deadweight of all tradition possessed his soul (19)

Sarkar informs us that Derozio was appointed as a teacher at Hindu College in May 1826 and he immediately attracted some of the best minds at the institution who were deeply drawn to the principle of free thought for which he stood (Sarkar 19). Sarkar further writes that “Derozio encouraged them to debate freely and question all authority” (Sarkar 19-20).

His ideals of education involved free and rational thinking, the right of the individual to ascertain the truth by herself/ himself through the exercise of reason and intelligence. Derozio introduced students to Hume’s *Essays*, to Lord Bacon’s *Essays* and Tom Paine’s, *Age of Reason*. All such texts emphasized the need to apply rational modes of understanding for arriving at the truth. Alexander Duff wrote disapprovingly that ‘their great authorities were Hume’s *Essays* and Paine’s *Age of Reason* (Rosinka Chaudhuri 2002: 23). As much as this led to the testing of the boundaries of knowledge, the creation of new epistemological grounds, leading to progressive ideals for social change and progress, it also brought certain excesses. Rasik Krishna Mullick openly denied the “sanctity of the Ganges” (Rosinka Chaudhuri 2002: 25), Ramgopal Ghosh refused to perform his father’s *sraddha* ceremony and Krishna Mohun Banerjee, one of the earliest converts to Christianity, had declared that ‘Pope and Dryden were to be held in higher esteem than the Hindu shastras’ (Rosinka Chaudhuri 2002: 25). Chaudhuri also posits that “their reading Tom Paine, meant that they were aware of the major issues being debated in the West and the rights of the common man was allied to the cause of liberty and equality” (Rosinka Chaudhuri 2002: 34).

Derozio was deeply influenced by the French Revolution and dreamt of the freedom of India along those lines. Fired by his nationalist fervour and the need to be free of political control from above, his students also started thinking along familiar lines and it is here that we first find the first beginnings of an anticolonial critique. In 1833 (although Derozio had left Hindu College by then) when the charter of the East India Company was extended by Parliament by another twenty years and the Company passed from being a trading company to fully being an administrative body, the Act was trenchantly critiqued by Derozions like Rasik Krishna Mallik, Pyarichand Mitra, Dakhsinaranjan Mukhopadhyay, Tarachand Chakravarty (Monotosh Chakravarty 79 :55). This is how the Derozion legacy perpetuated itself.

Pyarichand writes about Derozio in *A Biographical Sketch of David Hare*:

He often used history to cite examples of justice, patriotism, working towards human welfare (humanitarian acts) and sacrifice. All this used to be deeply imprinted on the minds of his students. Someone would be inspired by the example of justice that history provided, someone by adherence to truth (27-33).

A clerk named Haramohan Chattopadhyay bears witness to the debating sessions that Derozio had with his students:

Almost every day before the college started and after official hours, there used to be debating and discussion sessions. These sessions took place without the knowledge of the authorities. However, Derozio exerted himself tirelessly to make his students highly competent in philosophy [western] and literature (Monotosh Chakrabarty 1979: 54).

Although later Derozio had to leave Hindu College because he was accused of spreading heretical views amongst the students, He asks whether 'entrusted with the education of youth' that he was, should he have made them "pert and ignorant dogmatists by permitting them to know only what could be said upon only one side of grave questions. I can vindicate my procedure by quoting no less orthodox an authority than Lord Bacon. "...if a man", says this philosopher will begins with certainties, he shall end in doubts." (Rajnarayan Basu 1876: 43)

Before entering the subject of Debate as "performance" I would like to highlight another richly performative dimension of pedagogy at Hindu College in its initial years. As in Drummond's Academy, speeches, play enactment, recitation and reading compositions, were all part of the examination procedure at Hindu College (Monotosh Chakrabarty 1979: 44). Since Shakespeare was in the syllabus, it would not be wrong to surmise that students enacted parts of Shakespeare's plays for the examinations. However, in *Masks of Conquest*, Gauri Viswanathan mounts a powerful critique against English literature in particular, and the "humane" education it was supposed to provide. She posits that by convincing natives of the superiority of English literature and culture, they were transformed into compliant intellectual subjects of the empire and 'strengthen western cultural hegemony in enormously complex ways' (Gauri Viswanathan 1989: 2). She further argues that,

...values assigned to literature— like the proper development of character or the shaping of critical thought or the formation of aesthetic judgement...are located [in] the dynamic of power relations between educator and those to be educated (Gauri Viswanathan 1989: 4).

She further posits that this English education was aimed at creating a 'single identity' (167) that would lead to "internal schisms" (168) between those who chose this identity and those who did not. The force of her contention cannot be denied because over time the English educated intellectual has often become an alienated person in her/his own society, a hybrid being who may belong to neither world and is divorced from living contexts and issues in her/his own country.

Debate topics that provided keen interest at that time were:

Fate versus Free-will

Arguments for and contra the existence of God

The irrelevance of both idol worship and its priests

Hindu Society and Sati

The Absence of Women’s Education

The abject state of widows

Caste System

In 1834 Reverend Lal Behari Dey, who had begged David Hare for admission into Hindu College, but refused because he was Christian, located in debate and argumentation one of the finest loci of Hindu College excellence. He writes words to this effect that students of Hindu College were so used to argumentation that it greatly sharpened their intellects and made them re-examine all established truths in a new light (Monotosh Chakrabarty 1979: 42). In his book *Ekaal Sekaal* Rajnarayan Basu, Derozio and educationist, also strongly supports the culture of debate that had existed at Hindu college during the time of Derozio. In 1890 he remarked on the changing fashions of education where in the style of London university today students are just passive listeners, and do not participate in a mutual question answer format which had existed during his time. He writes, “I hate this system. I had established a debating society for my students” (Rajnarayan Basu 1885: 71)

Monotosh Chakravarty also posits that through the influence of Derozio the students of Hindu College became influenced in having pride in their nation, of adhering to the principles of truth, of aspiring continually towards knowledge and self- development, of being rational and independent in one’s thinking, to work for the spread of women’s education, to follow the examples set by the best of western literature and mould Indian/Bengali language and literature to achieve that excellence (Monotosh Chakrabarty 1979: 50). As Haramohan Chatterjee, clerk at Hindu College writes, ‘Indeed, it was a general belief and saying amongst our countrymen, which those that remember the time must acknowledge, that “such and such a boy is incapable of falsehood, because he is a Hindu College boy” (Sivanath Shastri 2018: 80)⁶

The consequence has surpassed expectation. A command of the English language and familiarity with its Literature and Science have been acquired to an extent rarely equalled by any schools in Europe. Another generation will probably witness a very material alteration in the notions and feelings of the educated classes of the Hindoo community of Calcutta (Prasad Sengupta A look at the syllabus that was in force at that time shows a rich component of English Literature including *Bacon’s Essays*, Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, *King Lear*, *Othello* and the Sonnets. It also included Milton’s *Paradise Lost* Book 1, “*Lycidas*”, “*L’Allegro*” and “*Il Penseroso*”. In the syllabus of History was included Hume and Gibbon. Philosophy included Locke, Berkeley and Hume; Mathematics contained Euclid (first 6 books and 11th book) and also Algebra, Trigonometry and Differential Calculus (Monotosh Chakrabarty

1979: 42-43. In *Gentlemen Poets in Colonial Bengal: Emergent Nationalism and the Orientalist Project* Rosinka Chaudhuri states that 'literature dominated the age, as did also western philosophy, religion, history and science, all bracketed under the aegis of 'an English education' (Rosinka Chaudhuri 2002: 26). It was an education with "high seriousness" and the 'resonance of the Old Testament and Milton" (Rosinka Chaudhuri 2002: 26). Macaulay whose landmark *Minutes* of 1835, emphatically urged the legalization of English as the medium of instruction in Higher Education in India, was hailed by Derozians like Ramtanu Lahiri and Krishnamohun Banerjee, as an "harbinger of light" (Shivnath Shastri 1907:93). Macaulay's recommendations eventually translated into Lord William Bentinck's English Education Act of 1835 which made 'English the medium of instruction in Indian education' (Gauri Viswanathan 1989: 44).

Derozio was well aware of the impact he had upon his students. He was convinced that they would be able to take his work forward and make a difference to the world. He wrote the following sonnet on them. The poem also becomes an instance of Indian Writing in English which emerged at that time or of Indian English Poetry. The incredible commitment that Derozio had towards his students speaks through these lines, even if though it is in the style of decadent Romanticism, ornate and flowery:

Expanding like the petals of young flowers
I watch the gentle opening of your minds,
And the sweet loosening of the spell that binds
Your intellectual energies and powers.
...
What joyance rains upon me , when I see
Fame in the mirror of futurity,
Wearing the chaplets you are yet to gain,
And then I feel I have not lived in vain. (Rosinka Chaudhuri 2002:89)

Rosinka Chaudhuri posits that this period witnessed "the emergence of a passionate literature in English generated through contact with the Anglo Indian poet, artist, academic, patriot, Henry Louis Derozio" (Rosinka Chaudhuri 2002: 31). This becomes an instance of poetry as "performance" and teaching too, as 'performance', applicable also in the case of Captain David Lester Richardson, who joined Hindu College in 1835, taught Shakespeare at a superlative level was deeply loved by Michael Madhusudan Dutta and also became Principal of the college in 1839. Regarding Richardson, Rosinka Chaudhuri writes, "Richardson published many literary volumes of prose and poetry written in India, and was editor of the *Bengal Annual*—a yearly collection of poetry and prose published on seven occasions between the years 1830 to 1836" (Rosinka Chaudhuri 2002 :31)

Derozio is also considered to be the first national poet of India because of the deeply patriotic fervour that speaks through the lines of his poem “Harp of India”. In Derozio there was pride and nostalgia for India’s glorious past and part of it was derived in part from his association with Orientalists like Horace Hayman Wilson, who as a government representative became a Visitor to Hindu College in 1824.⁷ This leads to ‘performance’ of nationalism which is recuperated and repeated in the poetry written by his direct student, Kasiprasad Ghosh and later by Michael Madhusudan Dutt. Dutt carried forward the Derozian hallmark of questioning and interrogating tradition through his brilliant re-visioning in *Meghnad Badh Kavya* (1861) of an alternative hero to Ram in Meghnad, Ravana’s son, in the *Ramayana*.

As Rosinka Chaudhuri posits, ‘Modern Bengali poetry was invented quite self- consciously, in the 1850’s and 1860’s by Rangalal Banerjee, Hemchandra Bandyopadhyay, Nabindchandra Sen and, most famously of all, by Madhusudan Dutt (Rosinka Chaudhuri 2002: 61-62) However, Madhusudan who declared of English, ‘Yes—I love the language—the glorious language of the Anglo-Saxon’(Rosinka Chaudhuri 2002: 88) also wrote in English, and his indebtedness to Derozio in terms of theme and language is something this essay will shortly address.

In “Harp of India” Derozio addressing the “harp” cries out,

Why hang’st thou lonely on yon withered bough?
Unstrung for ever, must thou there remain;
Thy music once was sweet—who hears it now?
Why doth the breeze sigh over thee in vain? (Rosinka Chaudhuri 2002: 28)

This patriotic strain echoes in his student Kasiprasad Ghosh’s poem is “The Shair”, also strong in nationalist feeling and sentiment:

Harp of my country! Pride of yore!
Whose sweetest notes are heard no more (Rosinka Chaudhuri 2002:68)

Michael Madhusudan Dutt’s sonnet ‘Written at the Hindu College by a native student’ fifteen years after Derozio’s sonnet to his students, carries the same fervent belief in the grand potential of those who studied at Hindu College:

Oh, how my heart exulteth while I see
These future flowers to deck my country’s brow... (Rosinka Chaudhuri 2002: 89)

As Rosinka Chaudhuri observes, the voice of the “native beneficiaries of an English education writing on education”, may be heard in the above lines. The ground had been laid for many such rituals of fine learning and reproduction, leading to the enhancement and uplifting of the country. Chaudhuri continues:

A reverence for education forms the foundation for these poems; meanwhile, the writers are self- consciously aware of belonging to the premier institution for the dissemination of western education in India. The great deeds of the students, it is implied, will add lustre not only to the reputation of the college, but also to the country they shall represent (Rosinka Chaudhuri 2002: 89).

Another fine example of bold and intrepid thinking, which uses the “master’s tools” to dismantle the Master’s house’ (Audre Lorde 1979) is Kasiprosad Ghosh’s essay “Critical remarks on the first four chapters of Mr Mill’s History of British India”, which was presented at the Hindu College Prize distribution and subsequently published in the government gazette of 14th February, 1828 and later in the Asiatic Journal. Kasiprasad had written this on the request of Horace Hayman Wilson, his teacher, who had asked him to write a review of a book for the approaching examination. (Rosinka Chaudhuri, 64-65). Mill’s influential history had in Section II of his book, summarily dismissed in 350 pages all facets of Hindu culture. Mill had never been to India and knew no Indian languages (Rosinka Chaudhuri 2002: 65). In his critique Kasiprosad defends the golden age of the Hindus and does it at a time when many of his classmates were ridiculing Hinduism (Rosinka Chaudhuri 2002: 65). In Kasiprosad’s critique we can see a “performance” of the earliest stages of the Hindu nationalist revival. The *Calcutta Gazette* praised Ghosh’s achievement:

When Mr Mill wrote his *History of British India*, he, very probably, never suspected that the pages of his work would be critically examined by a Hindoo, distinguished for his acquirements of the English language , and familiar with the classical and recondite learning of the West (Rosinka Chaudhuri 2002: 65).

This paper will not be complete without reference to the achievements and contributions of some of the leading and most exemplary of Derozians who played a very significant role in helping to take the society of Bengal and indirectly that of India, forward during the latter half of the 19th century. Radhanath Sikdar (1813-1878), brilliant mathematician translated along with Tarachand Chakrabarty, scientific books in English to Bengali and Sanskrit (Monotosh Chakrabarty 1979: 85). This is translation as “performance”. Translations were also crucial during the Renaissance in Europe. He also started a monthly paper in which social and other issues were written about in very simple language that all could access. The purpose was to raise the level of general education and knowledge. With his childhood friend Peary Chand Mitra he also started *Masik Patrika* in 1861 where social issues like widow remarriage, child marriage and polygamy were raised. He was emphatic in making the language as accessible as possible to a wide readership (Monotosh Chakrabarty 1979:86). He also started a school for poorer sections of society. We can thus see how powerful advocacy was in this age.

Debendranath Thakur, who had also studied at Hindu College till the second class, was not a direct student of Derozio but was influenced by his principles of freedom of thought and individual liberty (Monotosh Chakrabarty 1979: 86). From Peary Chand Mitra’s younger brother’s diary we come to know that in a meeting held under the aegis of the *Suhrit Society* on 15.12.1854, Debendranath presided in the presence of Sikdar and the Mitra brothers and they decided that they needed to do something effective about the above cited issues (Monotosh Chakrabarty 1979: 86).

Pyarichand Mitra (1814-1883) is another Derozion luminary who spent his entire life furthering the cause of education and in advocating valuable ideas in the many journals and newspapers he was associated with. He is the author of *Alaler Ghare Dulal* which may be considered the first Bengali novel. He wrote in the *Masik Patrika*, *Gyananweshan*, *Bengal Spectator*, *Bengal Harakura*, *Englishman*, and *Calcutta Review* (Shivanath Shastri 2018: 141). Both he and his brother Kishori Chand Mitra were Hindu College students of outstanding merit. He worked tirelessly to impart education to those who needed it, and also worked for the cause of women’s education. In 1835 he became Assistant Librarian in the Calcutta Public Library he eventually rose to the position of curator (Monotosh Chakrabarty 1979: 90). He was a member of several societies including the School Book Society, Social Science Association and Agri Horticultural Society (Monotosh Chakrabarty 1979: 90-91).

Other significant Derozions include Ram Gopul Ghosh (1815-1868) a successful businessman who contributed liberally to the development of medical science education in Calcutta (Monotosh Chakrabarty 1979: 78), Harachandra Ghosh (1808-1868) who distinguished himself as an administrator (Monotosh Chakrabarty 1979:94-95), Shivachandra Dev (1811-1890) who worked towards raising social infrastructure by being the prime mover behind the establishment of a railway station and a post office at Konnagar, some distance away from Kolkata (Monotosh Chakrabarty 1979: 97) and Rajnarayan Basu (1826-1899), educator and writer. The group also includes Dakshinanranjan Mukherjee (1814-1878), Krishnamohan Bandyopadhyay (1813-1888) and Tarachand Chakrabarty (1805-1855).

Other remarkable and distinguished alumni of Hindu College/ Presidency College in and around this time, whose contributions to Indian society had far reaching and signal implications are Keshav Chandra Sen (Brahmo reformer), Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay (first modern Bengali novelist), Dinabandhu Mitra (pioneering Bengali dramatist) Satyendranath Tagore and Dr Mahendralal Sarkar. Satyendranath Tagore was the first Indian to compete and pass the Indian Civil Service Examination, then held in London, in 1863. He joined the Indian Civil Services in 1863. In the same year Mahendralal Sarkar, a student at Hindu College between 1849-1854, took his MD examination, becoming the second MD from the Calcutta Medical College along with Jagabandhu Bose. Dr Sarkar had been Sri Ramakrishna’s physician in the last phase of his life as he had battled cancer.

Thus the rituals, enactments, rehearsals and events that led to Hindu college, created many rehearsals and events of excellence in the future. This is how a great tradition was 'performed' and continued to perform and create events through some of the greatest teachers and students who have created a venerable tradition which belongs to Hindu College/Presidency College and also Presidency University. The practices and rituals were not without their flaws, leading as Viswanathan implied to a fractured Indian society, divided along the lines of those who were educated in English and those who were not. The beginning of this process may be traced to the syllabi and teaching methodologies (especially in the Humanities, with its stress on English Literature) at Hindu College, which were taken up and replicated in other parts of India. Swapna Chakravarty quotes A.J. Arbuthnot, who in his convocation address at Madras University in 1868, says:

It is sometimes said that a wide separation has taken place between the comparatively small section of the native community who have been educated through the medium of the English language and the masses of their countrymen, that the former have become denationalized (Swapna Chakravarty 2011: 31)⁷

Criticism apart, one cannot ignore the splendid output of this hallowed institution whose alumni and teachers have provided standards of excellence that have helped to mould some of the most important cultural, literary, scientific, teaching, administrative, legal and political traditions of modern India from before the time of Independence to current times. The legacy of teaching traditions at Hindu College/Presidency College is something to marvel at and the last four decades of the 19th century, are especially remarkable in this regard. From Rajat Kanta Ray's essay on the Department of History for the 175th Year Presidency College Commemorative Volume (1992) one learns that '...the famous orientalist Dr E.B. Cowell (1858-64) was Professor of History, Political Economy and English (and at the same time, Principal of Sanskrit College).⁸ Another legendary teacher is C.E. Cullis, mathematician, whose internationally renowned work on 'matrices and determinants' was completed and published while teaching at Presidency College (Subodh Chandra Sengupta 1992:34).⁹ From Subodh Chandra Sengupta's essay we also learn that H.M. Percival joined in 1880, Bipin Behary Gupta in 1883, Jagadish Chandra Bose, later Emeritus Professor and F.R.S. in 1885, P.K. Ray in 1886 and Prafulla Chandra Ray in 1889. Binayendranath Sen joined in 1893 and Monmohan Ghosh in 1896 (Subodh Chandra Sengupta 1992: 23). From Parimal Krishna Sen's report on the Department of Chemistry in the 175th Presidency College Commemorative Volume, 1992, we learn that the '...pre-eminence of the Chemistry department at Presidency College is due to Sir Alexander Pedler'.¹⁰ Alexander Pedler was Principal in 1887 and it is his lectures in the F.A. at the University of Calcutta that attracted P.C. Ray to Chemistry.

An essay on Hindu College/Presidency College ‘high’ traditions of academic performance would not be complete without reference to those whose records have legendary resonance. The Premchand Roychand Studentship, for instance, was awarded by the University of Calcutta, after a long and rigorous examination and was its most prestigious award (Subodh Chandra Sengupta 1992:23). Between 1868 (the year of its institution) and 1900, it was conferred on 32 scholars and 25 of them were from Presidency College (Subodh Chandra Sengupta 1992:23). Among the recipients were Ananda Mohan Basu, Gouri Shankar Dey, Sarada Charan Mitra, Prasanna Kumar Lahiri, Surjya Kumar Agasti, Asutosh Mookerjee, Ramendra Sundar Trivedi, Hirendranath Dutta, Jadunath Sarkar and Priyanath Sen (Subodh Chandra Sengupta 1992:23).

As Subhodh Chandra Sengupta writes,

In 1896, Atul Chandra Chatterjee stood first in the Civil Service Examination held in London and in 1900 Harinath De; the celebrated linguist passed the Classical Tripos Examination at Cambridge in the First Class. Many alumni of the Presidency College occupied high positions in different walks of life during this period. Surjya Kumar Agasti, Ashutosh Gupta and Barada Charan Mitra passed the Statutory Civil Service Examination, Chunder Madhub Ghose and Ramesh Chandra Mitra officiated as Chief Justices of the High Court of Calcutta and Gooroodas Banerjee became Vice Chancellor of the University of Calcutta in 1884 (Subodh Chandra Sengupta 1992:23).

Among other exemplary students of the same period were Nagendranath Ghosh, Bhupendranath Basu, Satyendra Prasanna Sinha (later Lord Sinha), H.C Mookherjee, later Governor of West Bengal, Abul Kasem Fazlul Huq, Akshay Kumar Maitra (historian), Harasprasad Bhattacharyya Sastri (the Orientalist), Heramba Chandra Mitra (educationist and Brahmo leader), Krishna Chandra Bhattacharya (philosopher), Pramatha Choudhuri (Birbal), Raj Shekhar Basu (Parasuram), Dwijendralal Ray (poet and dramatist) and Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Das (Subodh Chandra Sengupta 1992:24). Belonging to this hallowed tradition are also two of the greatest national leaders of India, namely Subhas Chandra Bose, and Dr. Rajendra Prasad.

Some great teachers of the 20th century (and it will not be possible to include all) were Haraprasad Mitra, Janardan Chakrabarty, Hirendra Chandra Ganguly, Jatis Chandra Sengupta, Pratul Chandra Rakshit, Nirmal kumar Basu, Suresh Chandra Sengupta, Bhabatosh Dutta, Sukhamoy Chakrabarty, Mihir Kanti Rakshit, Ajit Kumar Bandyopadhyay, Bhupatimohan Sen, Gopinath Bhattacharya, Prabhashjiban Choudhuri, Amalkumar Raychoudhuri, Satyen Bose, Prasanta Kumar Mahalanobis, Kulesh Chandra Kar, Amiya Bhushan Chatterjee, Achintya Kumar Mukherjee, Nirmal Chandra Basu Choudhury, Anil Kumar Bhattacharya, Jitendranath Rudra, Sibatos Mukherjee, Sushobhan Sarkar, Amalesh

Tripathi, Taraknath Sen, Tarapada Mukherjee, P.C. Ghosh, Subodh Chandra Sengupta, Arukum Dasgupta, Kajal Sengupta and Rajat Kanta Roy.

Presidency alumni of the 20th century (the 21st is truly beyond my reach within the purview of my essay) whose work has led to the creation of significant institutions and paradigms of Science, Technology, Governance, Finance, Culture, Social Theory, Literature and Teaching, include names such as Nilratan Sarkar, Meghnad Saha, Satyajit Roy, Amartya Sen, Pranab Bardhan, Gayatri Chakravarty Spivak, Ranajit Guha Partha Chatterjee, Amiya Bagchi, Humayun Kabir, Bimal Jalan, Sumit Sarkar, Tanika Sarkar, Altamas Kabir, Sugata Bose, Supriya and Sukanta Chaudhuri. Swapan Chakrabarty, who is a Distinguished Professor of the Humanities at Presidency University today and is also Presidency alumni, is one of the greatest scholars and teachers that I know.

End Notes

1. Trinh T Minh-ha *Woman Native Other*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press. 1989.
2. <https://www.poets.org/poetsorg/poem/you-it-act-ii-scene-vii-all-worlds-stage>As you like it
3. The terms 'Practice of everyday Life,' are borrowed from Michel de Certeau's book bearing the same name. Michel de Certeau. *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Translated by Steven Rendall. Berkeley: University of California Press. 1984.
4. <http://www.nyu.edu/classes/bkg/schechner>.
5. I owe this information to Professor Swapan Chakravarty, currently Kabiguru Rabindranath Tagore Distinguished Chair Professor of Presidency University. Professor Chakravarty pointed out to me that David Drummond was himself trained within the Latin Grammar School tradition and it was this tradition that Derozio himself imbibed. I also owe Professor Chakravarty the reference to Prasad Sengupta's work.
6. Pandit Sivanath Shastri's book *Ramtanu Lahiri O Tatkaleen Banga Samaj* (1903) was translated and edited by Sir Roper Lethbridge as *Ramtanu Lahiri: Brahman and Reformer. A History of the Renaissance in Bengal*. It was published by Swan Sonnenschein & Co. Ltd of London in 1907. Reprinted by Forgotten Books. London: FB & co. Ltd.2018. 80. This comment was first published in the *Bengal Spectator* on 1.9.1843.
7. S Nagarajan. "Children of Macaulay" JSL. Vol. 8. 1981. 6.
8. Rajat Kanta Roy. "History". *175th Anniversary Commemorative Volume*. Presidency College, Calcutta. 1992. 93.
9. Subodh Chandra Sengupta. *175th Anniversary Commemorative Volume*. Presidency College, Calcutta. 1992. 34. This entire essay has been reprinted from Subodh Chandra Sengupta's essay 'History of the College' in the *Presidency College Centenary Volume*, as the introduction to the *175th Anniversary Commemorative Volume*.
10. Parimal Krishna Sen. "Chemistry". *175th Anniversary Commemorative Volume*. Presidency College, Calcutta. 1992. 62.

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