SHAKESPEARE STUDIES IN COLONIAL BENGAL: THE EARLY PHASE

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of
Sheffield Hallam University
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

January 2011

ABSTRACT

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Shakespeare was formally introduced in Colonial Bengal when Hindu College was established in 1817. This thesis highlights how in the midst of running controversy between Orientalists and Anglicists, amidst intense rivalry between Christian missionaries and orthodox Hindus, Hindu College pioneered Shakespeare studies, keeping it free from religious orthodoxy, and imparting secular ideas of Renaissance humanism.

Describing the historical role the leading founders of the college – Raja Rammohan Roy and David Hare – played in creating environment of secularism, this thesis is focussed on the work of three early teachers of English at Hindu College – Henry Derozio, D.L. Richardson, and H.M. Percival – who laid the foundation of Shakespeare studies in colonial Bengal. Derozio's inspiring teaching made his students not only crusaders against orthodoxy but also fighters for freedom thereby igniting the flame of the Bengal Renaissance. A poet like Derozio, Richardson, besides teaching Shakespeare's plays and promoting their performance, emerged as the first major literary critic of Shakespeare and other English poets. Percival, continuing the secular tradition of teaching, also became the first major editor of Shakespeare for Indian students, who edited with long introductions the texts of six plays.

This thesis highlights the pioneering role of these three eminent teachers of English at Hindu College who established Shakespeare studies as a secular learning of humanist ideas. This thesis also challenges the sweeping generalisation of postcolonial criticism that English education in colonial India, including Shakespeare teaching, was used to promote the political agenda of the British rulers. It points out that Shakespeare teaching as a component of English education at Hindu College defies that generalisation. Besides, if English education promoted colonial interests, it also inducted ideas of the European Enlightenment that contributed towards the general awakening in colonial Bengal. In the era of postcolonial theory's dominance in English studies, this thesis offers an original contribution to knowledge by putting forth evidence in support of secular Shakespeare studies in colonial Bengal spearheaded by eminent teachers like Derozio, Richardson, and Percival.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

For completing my research work for the degree of Ph.D. I am indebted to several individuals and institutions without whose generous help it would have been difficult to accomplish the task.

First, and foremost, I am highly indebted to my Director of Studies, Professor Lisa Hopkins (Professor of English and Head of the Graduate School, Faculty of Development and Society, Sheffield Hallam University) whose writings on Shakespeare had inspired me to wonder if she would accept me as a Ph.D. student under her guidance. It was like a dream come true when I received her response indicating that she had not only approved my Thesis Proposal but also agreed to supervise my work. Later, the of painstaking guidance I received from her on my various chapters, offering page to page, and line to line advice, removing whatever oddities of argument or style I was given to committing, proved an immensely valuable experience for me. Working under her supervision I learned to think more logically and write more coherently. I shall always carry a sense of pride and privilege that I have been a student of Professor Lisa Hopkins.

I am also grateful to my second Supervisor, Dr. Tom Rutter (Principal Lecturer in English, Faculty of Development and Society, Sheffield Hallam University), whose searching comments on the various chapters helped to clarify the ideational structure of my thesis. His guidance, too, was a learning experience.

My thanks are also due to my Local Supervisor, Professor R.W. Desai (formerly Head, Dept. of English, University of Delhi (India) and Editor of *Hamlet Studies* published from 1979 to 2004) whose advice on several aspects of style and technique toned up my presentation a good deal. I am highly grateful to Dr. Matthew Steggle of Sheffield Hallam University, who agreed to go through my thesis. His comments helped me a great deal in answering many hanging questions.

Thanks are also due to several senior Indian scholars who extended help in procuring source material for my thesis, namely Professor Sanjyukta Dasgupta (Dept. of English, Calcutta University, Calcutta), Professor G.K. Das (formerly Head of English Dept., University of Delhi), Professor Girija Sharma (Dept. of English, H.P. University, Shimla).

I must also express my gratitude to the Librarians and the supporting staff of Presidency (earlier Hindu) College (now Presidency University), Calcutta; Calcutta University Calcutta; National Library, Calcutta; Indian Institute of Advanced Study,

Shimla; National Archives, New Delhi; Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi; Kurukshetra University, Kurukshetra; Panjab University, Chandigarh; who extended all help for making available to me whatever relevant source and secondary material I found relevant to my thesis.

Last but not least I owe my gratitude to my parents whose loving care made my study period a memorable experience. I am especially indebted to my father, a former Professor of English and now President of The Shakespeare Association, whose personal library the discussions I held with him were of great help in completing my research work. My elder sister and brother remained ever-ready to extend whatever help I needed to keep my study free from domestic duties.

Contents

INTRODUCTION

The influence of Shakespeare in India has been widespread, and has been duly acknowledged in several books, each related to an aspect of Shakespeare in India, such as stage performance, translation, and interpretation in different Indian languages. These studies include *Shakespeare in Indian Languages* (Ed. D.A.Shankar); *Shakespeare's Impact in Hindi Literature* (Jagdish Prasad Mishra); *Shakespeare in Tamil Versions* by Palany Arangasamy; *Shakespeare Came to India* (Ed. C.D.Narasimhaiah); *India's Shakespeare* (Eds. Poonam Trivedi and Dennis Bartholomeusz).[1] These various studies demonstrate how Shakespeare came to India in the eighteenth century and made a lasting impact on the Indian theatre and literature studies in most of its major languages. What seems to have remained inadequately acknowledged, however, is the contribution of those eminent early teachers of English in Calcutta who actually laid the foundation of Shakespeare studies in colonial Bengal. Not that these teachers find no mention in the historical accounts of English education in India; they do receive brief attention in some, if not all, these general histories, though, of course, without any special and searching investigation into their work. A scrutiny of these available passing or casual accounts of Shakespeare studies would show how a subject of considerable significance has remained unexplored. But before we mention these accounts, it seems necessary to briefly introduce Hindu College, where these eminent teachers introduced Shakespeare studies in colonial Bengal.

A privately funded institution of higher education named Hindu College was set up in 1817 in Calcutta, the capital of Bengal and one of the three largest cities of India at the time. It was originally set up by raising funds through donations made mostly by the founders themselves. Those who held several meetings and finally resolved to set up Hindu College included twenty Indians, prominent of whom being Gopi Mohan Tagore, Raja Ram Chund, and Radha Kanta Deb. Who precisely contributed how much is not mentioned, but the names appeared in the *Asiatic Journal* of Feb. 1817 (Vol. III. p.34). Financially aided by the colonial government from 1824, Hindu College became Presidency College in 1855. Although Calcutta University, along with the universities at Madras and Bombay, was created in 1857, Presidency College continued to be the main centre for university-level education in Bengal. Initiated by Henry Derozio (1828-31), and carried forward to its great heights by D.L. Richardson (1837-1861) and H.M. Percival (1880-1911), Shakespeare studies became a hallmark of Hindu College. This

College produced eminent intellectuals who became leaders in the movement called the Bengal Renaissance, which finally led to a greater awakening in the whole of India.

In the books mentioned above, there are brief comments on Shakespeare which make no reference to what the Hindu College teachers had contributed to the teaching of Shakespeare in India. D.A. Shankar's edited volume, *Shakespeare in Indian Languages*, for instance, concludes as follows:

> No Shakespeare came with Sir Thomas Roe or Robert Clive. In fact, to really arrive in India, Shakespeare had to wait till his countrymen were through with their business of war and commerce and could get the services of the man like Macaulay who decided that the Orientals needed to be brought up on a strict diet of English education.[2]

The critic, D.A. Shankar, goes on with his pontificatory utterances to add: "Almost simultaneously with the classroom Shakespeare, emerged Shakespeare the writer for the stage."[3] Worded more in the manner of a public speech than in the style of academic investigation, the report makes no reference to any verifiable fact of the case. Those conversant with the history of British India know that while the first theatre in Calcutta was built in 1753,[4] classroom Shakespeare began as soon as Hindu College was founded in 1817.[5] Macaulay appeared much later on the scene in 1835, after Shakespeare had already secured pride of place in the minds of readers and theatre-goers in Calcutta.

A more representative account of Shakespeare studies in colonial Bengal, though not very elaborate, is given by Sisir Kumar Das,[6] who shows how Shakespeare and Milton had impacted English education in India, and how the former of these two poets had cast a spell on the Indian readers. As Das puts it,

> In the history of the reception of Western literature in India, one notices a long-drawn battle between the admirers of these two English poets. The Christian missionaries, in particular, who strongly opposed the idea of secular education, invariably preferred Milton to Shakespeare, but it was Shakespeare, rather than Milton, who cast his spell over the Indian reader. Milton was popular amongst a section of English educated students for his radical views against monarchy and portrayal of the valiant archangel .... But his impact, if indeed any, was marginal and limited. Shakespeare, on the other hand, became the most popular European author in India, and also the most influential not only in the growth of an Indian theatre but

> also in the emergence of a tragic vision which made the nineteenth century Indian literature distinct from its earlier traditions.[7]

Although a fairly reasonable view of Shakespeare studies in colonial Bengal, it only makes a comparative judgement on the popularity of Shakespeare and Milton in India. It could not have been longer, given the subject of the book, which is Indian literature, and not Shakespeare studies. It does, however, indicate an important aspect of Shakespeare studies in India, showing how the more secular Shakespeare found greater acceptability in India than the more Christian Milton, also emphasizing that even Milton's radical stance against monarchs made a limited impact on the Indians compared to Shakespeare's general popularity.

Whereas Sisir Kumar Das acknowledges Shakespeare's influence on Indian literature, Srinivas Iyengar,[8] the author of *Indian Writing in English*, speaks of a still wider influence of Shakespeare on the Indian people:

> It was not, after all, possible for people to read Shakespeare and Milton and Locke and Burke and Mill, to read about the Magna Carta and the evolution of the British Parliament, and yet acquiesce for long in British colonialism.[9]

Such general observations appear in passing in the larger historical accounts of English education in India, and are not focussed on Shakespeare studies as such. But there are other studies related to education in colonial Bengal in which the role of Hindu College and its Shakespeare studies in promoting the Bengal Renaissance finds a special mention.

These general studies of nineteenth-century Bengal do take note of Shakespeare teaching at Hindu College as a part of English education. As such, they do have some relevance to the subject in hand. But again, these studies, not specifically devoted to Shakespeare teaching in colonial Bengal, make only brief mention of the role the College played in spreading new ideas through English education. Paying not much attention to the introduction and growth of Shakespeare studies in Calcutta, these studies necessarily leave out something of great significance to the advancement of modern education in Bengal. One such mention appears in Sumanta Banerjee's study of culture in nineteenth century Calcutta.[10] About education at Hindu College Banerjee says the following:

> The Bengali students of Hindu College – and other schools set up around the same time with the objective of educating the 'natives' in European science and literature – were quick to gain proficiency in

> subjects like the intricacies of the British political and legal system, the history of England and Greece and Rome, the European classics and the plays of Shakespeare.[11]

The fact that it is Shakespeare alone from among the numerous English writers which were taught at Hindu College who finds a special mention in the cited account shows how prominent the author was in the English literature course, in fact, in the entire curriculum of study. Beyond such a brief mention, however, the book does not go any further into the growth and significance of the subject.

A similar mention, though factually erroneous, is found in a study by Jagdish Prasad Mishra[12], where in the opening chapter,"The Vogue of Shakespeare," it is stated that

> Shakespeare may have been regarded as an 'enemy to morals' and as 'a creature of the stage' in America and, may not have been introduced into 'Early American School,' but, in India, people have always readily responded to his works. Even as early as 1788, we find that attempts were made to put Shakespeare on the stage, and since then there has been a spate of Shakespeare's productions in Bengal ....
>
> But the actual introduction of Shakespeare into schools and colleges began after the able advocacy of English education by Lord Macaulay in 1835 and the vogue was furthered by the establishment of the universities of Calcutta, Bombay and Madras in 1857.[13]

The factual errors here are: one, that attempts to stage Shakespeare were first made, not in 1788, but in 1753; two, that it was not Macaulay's advocacy that led to the introduction of Shakespeare studies in India; it had already been done at Hindu College in 1817 following demand from the Indians themselves. Although Mishra makes a statement of substantial truth, and without any overt ideological or theoretical distortions, his stress on the role of Macaulay's Minute of 1835 is not substantiated by any evidence.

Although an adequate discussion of Macaulay's Minute of 1835 will appear in the next chapter which deals with the conditions leading to the introduction of Shakespeare studies in Bengal, it seems necessary to clarify here that Macaulay, an eminent advocate, based his Minute on available evidence, and made recommendations which addressed both aspirations of aware Indian subjects as well as anxieties of the ruling British authorities. The fact that a good deal of persuasion had to be done on the

ruling side for the acceptance of the Minute only underlines the truth of its not being wholly to the liking of the colonial authorities. The Minute, severely attacked by the postcolonial critics, is not without merit and substance if read in the historical context in which it appeared.

A similar erroneous mention, though equally free from postcolonial ideological slant, appears in Palany Arangasamy's contention that "With the introduction of English in Bengal and Madras from March, 1835, the study of Shakespeare was compulsorily initiated into the educational institutions."[14] As stated earlier, Shakespeare studies had already begun at Hindu College from its very inception in 1817, and Lamb's *Tales from Shakespeare* (1807) had been introduced in schools even much earlier. As Krishna Chandra Lahiri informs about Shakespeare in schools in the early years of the nineteenth century before the establishment of Hindu College in 1817, "... in third and fourth classes ... the students were initiated into the works of Shakespeare through the famous *Tales from Shakespeare* ... [which] used to be universally read in schools and outside, and was as popular as *Grimm's Fairy Tales* and Swift's *Gulliver's Travels.*"[15] But the fact of Shakespeare's popularity in India, out-topping all other English writers including Milton, comes out clearly in every account in these various descriptions not directly or exclusively focussed on Shakespeare studies in colonial Bengal.

Bhagban Prasad Majumdar, in his general study of English education in India, highlighting its role in emancipating the Indians from the traditional beliefs, inculcating the values of freedom, equality, and justice, also mentions that

> The strong urge on the part of Indian students to learn English and the exposition of literary works of England by such distinguished teachers as Derozio, D.L. Richardson [who] .... were responsible for the high standard of performance in English literature and language .... D.L. Richardson taught the Hindu College boys *Hamlet, Othello, Macbeth, King Lear* and two parts of *Henry IV* along with Pope's *Essay on Criticism, Rape of the Lock, Essay on Man* and *Prologue to the Satires* in endless alteration.[16]

Majumdar's account is more specific than those cited earlier, as also more particular about the early teachers of Shakespeare at Hindu College. Such studies establish without doubt the supremacy of Shakespeare in English literature teaching in colonial Bengal, especially at Hindu College. These studies also speak highly of Derozio and Richardson as teachers of Shakespeare. Further, all these accounts, however brief and perfunctory, do not underline any negative impact of English teaching, including

Shakespeare's, on the native population in colonial Bengal or British India. Also, we do not see in these studies any insinuation about the promotion of the ruler's religion or culture through the teaching of Shakespeare in particular. Scholars such as Majumdar do, however, point out the rulers' discrimination against educated Indians in appointments to high positions in judiciary and administration.[17] But these various accounts of Shakespeare teaching constitute only a very small part of the studies in which they appear, for the simple reason that these studies are not focussed on Shakespeare teaching at Hindu College, or in colonial Bengal.

A collection of essays, some repeated from earlier publications, *India's Shakespeare*, edited by Poonam Trivedi and Dennis Bartholomeusz, is largely focussed on cultural appropriations of Shakespeare through adaptations and translations for stage performance. In her "Introduction" to the volume, Trivedi offers a thesis that touches upon the subject of our own study of Shakespeare. Covering the entire corpus of theatre activities in India triggered by the English theatre in colonial India, Trivedi's account is substantiated with specific information. Speaking of Shakespeare studies in India, she admires the role played by the Hindu College teachers like Derozio and Richardson, but there is a sting in the tail when she remarks that "Indians now could discover the 'real' Shakespeare for themselves."[18] Her prespective gets revealed when she observes that after the Education Act of 1835, "Shakespeare was moved from the fashionable and cultural to the imperial and ideological axis."[19] One wonders how "the official promulgation of English as the language of administration and government-funded education" made "a decisive shift"[20] in the teaching of Shakespeare. Hindu College was government funded since 1824, and Richardson joined the College around 1835. Can we really say that the official promulgation issued a pedagogy of Shakespeare teaching and all teachers of English in the vast territory from Burma to North West Frontier changed their teaching methodology overnight? It is such sweeping and theory-oriented conclusions of the postcolonial critics regarding Shakespeare teaching in colonial Bengal that the present thesis attempts to contest and offer in its support the available evidence about Shakespeare studies at Hindu College (later renamed Presidency College and now Presidency University).

The present thesis, concerned with Shakespeare studies at Hindu (later Presidency) College, covering the period between 1828, when Henry Derozio joined the college and initiated Shakespeare studies, and 1911, when H.M. Percival left the college to leave behind a tradition of secular Shakespeare studies, is intended to highlight the role three eminent Shakespeare teachers played in promoting secular ideas of free thinking. As

such, it becomes imperative to point out the unfair interpretations of Shakespeare teaching in Bengal by the Theory-oriented postcolonial Indian critics.

Coming down to the critical writings on English education in India, including Shakespeare studies, which have appeared since the 1980s, we begin to encounter highly theorized accounts of western education in India, alleging complicity between the imperial rule and the role of English teaching. The earliest book in this category of postcolonial criticism is Gauri Viswanathan's *Masks of Conquest: Literary Study and British Rule in India*, which came out in 1989. What Vishwanathan's book is about is stated in the very opening of its "Introduction":

> This book is about the institution, practice, and ideology of English studies in India under British colonial rule. It does not seek to be a comprehensive record of the history of English, nor does it even attempt to catalog, in minute historical fashion, the various educational decisions, acts and resolutions that led to the institutionalization of English. The work draws upon the illuminating insight of Antonio Gramsci, writing on the relations of culture and power, that cultural domination works by consent and can (and often does) precede conquest by force.[21]

If we look closely into this policy statement of Viswanathan, it clearly comes out that though her book is about "the institution" of English studies, she would not look into the historical records, "various educational decisions, acts, and resolutions that led to the institutionlization of English." In other words, she would not, she declares, rely upon any available evidence about English studies in British India, but she would pass judgement on its pivotal role in running the empire. She further declares that instead of relying upon specific available evidence, she would apply to the specific Indian situation Gramsci's general theory about "the relations of culture and power." Considering Viswanathan's choice for making an application of a general theory of culture, ignoring the available textual and historical evidence about the specific case of English education in India, one is reminded of what Sherlock Holmes says in the story called "Scandal in Bohemia." Advising Dr. Watson on the use of theory, he says, "I have no data yet. It is a capital mistake to theorize before one has data. Insensibly one begins to twist facts to suit theories, instead of theories to suit facts."[22]

Viswanathan's statement of intention notwithstanding, she does take recourse to facts, picks up select instances, and cites only those that suit her borrowed theory. She often mentions the Christian missionaries and their main crusader, Alexander Duff,

seldom mentioning the Hindu College which played a pioneering role in the spread of English education in colonial Bengal. Note, for instance, the following:

> The Rev. William Keane attempted to persuade officials that 'Shakespeare, though by no means a good standard, is full of religion; it is full of common sense principles which none but Christian men can recognize. Sound Protestant Bible principles, though not actually told in words, are there set out to advantage, and the opposite often condemned.'[23]

Here, we are told what Rev. Keane "attempted to persuade," not what actually happened – whether the attempt was successful or not. Besides, if Shakespeare "is full of common sense principles which none but Christian men can recognise," what use would Shakespeare teaching be to the native Indians who would not "recognise" these principles? The fact of the matter is that Shakespeare was not taught in the schools run by Duff and the Missionaries; it was only the Hindu College that introduced and popularised Shakespeare, but not for spreading Christian principles, rather for promoting rationalism and secularism, actively tirading against religious bigotry of Hinduism as well as of Islam and Christianity.

The conclusion of Viswanathan's book is not surprising, because that is precisely what she set out to prove. Once Gramsci's theory of culture as an instrument of colonisation is set rolling, the facts are selected, cut to size, and displayed to show how the British empire developed using knowledge for power. Note the kind of conclusion she arrives at, which, in fact, is only the ending that was there in the beginning:

> As the history of Oriental education demonstrates, a curriculum may incorporate the systems of learning of a subordinate population and still be an instrument of hegemonic activity. Indeed the point of departure of this book is its argument that both the Anglicist and the Orientalist factions were equally complicit with the project of domination, British Indian education having been conceived in India as part and parcel of the act of securing and consolidating power. The acceptance or rejection of other cultures becomes a moot point in the face of the more encompassing motives of discipline and management.[24]

The Orientalists were actively associated with the Fort William College put up by the East India Company in 1800 to train English boys after the age of 12 or 13 to work as

officers for the civil and armed administration of the colonised country. It would be improper to club together the Orientalists and the Anglicists – people like Rammohan Roy, David Hare, Henry Derozio, and others associated with Hindu College, for these Anglicists managed their institutions maintaining distance from both the Christian as well as imperial establishment. As for the "discipline and management" of Indian people, "an empire of 200 million people," it was done not through the teaching of Shakespeare and other English writers, but "with a native army of 200,000 men, officered by Englishmen and ... kept in check by an English army numbering only 40,000." If English teaching were so powerful a weapon to control a vast empire, the British would not have been spending "25 percent of the tax revenues ... on paying for the army to keep the Indians down," whereas " 'education, public health and agriculture got a bare one percent each.'"[25] It also seems pertinent to mention here that India's freedom struggle, spread over sixty years, was led by the English-speaking middle-class, who had received through English education both in India and England, the enlightened values of liberal humanism. As for Gramsci's theory "that cultural domination works by consent and can (and often does) precede conquest by force," it does not fit on to the Indian situation where conquest by force had actually preceded the cultural domination.

Viswanathan's central assumption is that the British in India introduced the study of English literature "to perform the task of administering their colonial subjects," believing that this "disguised form of authority would be more successful in quelling potential rebellion among the natives than a direct show of force."[26] Ironically, when the foundation of the first Indian university in Calcutta was being laid, the very same day had come up the first round of the Sepoy Mutiny of 1857 (the first war of independence for the Indians), and that, too, at a place not far away from Calcutta. And we know how ruthlessly the rebellion was quelled by the military force.

Viswanathan's general study of how the British used the teaching of English literature for securing domination of the Indians does concede the following:

> How the native actually responds is so removed from the colonizer's representational system, his understanding of the meaning of events, that it enters into the realm of another history of which the latter has no comprehension or even awareness. That history can, and perhaps must, be told separately for its immensely rich and complex quality to be fully revealed.[27]

Hence, her exclusion of the Indian response in her study of the British administrators' use of the 'masks' of 'culture' to gain political control. One can see very well the point Viswanathan has made in her thesis – the rulers, any rulers, would use all available

means, hidden as well as demonstrative, to retain hold on their subjects. The point that is being ignored here is the intention of the literary text and the response of the reader, both of which deserve greater consideration in the study of literature than the intentions of the outsiders like the political rulers or religious crusaders. Thus, even though some aspects of Viswanathan's study deserve serious consideration, its keeping out of consideration the question how the native Indians responded to the "masks of conquest" makes it rather one-sided.

The two studies devoted to the Orientalist project in colonial Bengal – *British Orientalism and the Bengal Renaissance: The dynamics of Indian Modernization 1773-1835* by David Kopf; and *Gentlemen Poets in Colonial Bengal: Emergent Nationalism and the Orientalist Project* by Rosinka Chaudhuri – with their greater grounding in facts, and without imposition of any ready-made theory, make out a much more convincing case for both the Orientalists as well as the Anglicists, largely showing no bias in favour or against either. While Kopf's book came out in 1969, before the vogue of postcolonial theory, Chaudhuri's was published in 2002, after the postcolonial critics had had their say. On Shakespeare studies at Hindu College or elsewhere in Bengal, Kopf has nothing much to say in his book, the subject not being part of his investigation, but he does say a good deal about Hindu College, which indirectly reveals his attitude to English teaching, including Shakespeare. Citing from the *Presidency College Centenary Volume*, that "the most striking feature of the Hindu College was its determined effort to impart secular education," Kopf comments:

> This interpretation is difficult to accept, because the twenty Bengalis who wrote the original thirty-four rules of the charter and then approved them formally on August 27, 1816, were all conservative upper-class Hindus .... It was therefore not secular knowledge in Western dress that was to be imparted at Hindu College, but useful knowledge from the West transmitted without ethnocentric bias."[28]

Even though Kopf is correct about the upper-class Hindu status of "the twenty Bengalis," his use of the tag 'consevative' is not quite appropriate, for if that were the case, they would not have crusaded for the introduction of English education for their boys. Also, Kopf's conclusion that education at Hindu College was not secular tends to run contrary to facts about the education actually imparted at this premier institution. Kopf seems to forget that those who taught Shakespeare and other English writers at the College were not these "twenty Bengalis," but Henry Derozio, D.L. Richardson, and H.M. Percival. Besides, those who drafted and approved the College charter were not

monitoring the day-to-day college teaching. If there was any supervision at all from the Management side, it was being done by David Hare, the most revered figure among the College managers, enjoying the highest reputation among students and teachers, and his views, as will be discussed later, were antithetical to those of orthodox Hindus as well as conservative Christians.

Kopf's distinction between 'secular' and 'useful knowledge' seems rooted in the medieval Christian theology that set up an antagonism between the secular and the religious. The orthodox Bengalis, of course, would not tolerate any education deemed irreligious. Derozio's forced resignation from the college is evidence of that way of thinking. As to the usefulness of English education, Kopf has a point because all those receiving that education looked for jobs in the colonial administration. But that was not the only reason that drove the Bengali boys to Hindu College. Although there were rival institutions in Calcutta imparting the same education, Hindu College became an attraction for the boys because of its emphasis on secular ideas.

Not dominated by theory like Viswanathan, nor partially inclined like Kopf to the contribution of Orientalists, Chaudhuri makes a fair assessment of the role of Hindu College and its Shakespeare teachers like Derozio and Richardson in creating a wave of reason and free thinking. As she argues,

> There existed, however, an important tradition of dissent in the ambience surrounding the Hindu College at the same time. While Viswanathan is scrupulous in recording that here, 'criticism of Hinduism was matched by an equal contempt of Christianity by the college youth,' the emphasis in her study, as in most postcolonial work, lies on the intentions of the colonizer, and she is quite brief on this matter. But if literary postcolonial studies were more interested in the reactions of the colonized, and if the perspective was to be corrected to obtain a balanced account of the beginnings of English education in India, the importance of the anti-Christian policies at the Hindu College comes automatically into focus. The Hindu College promoted a secular concept of school instruction with an emphasis on the moralistic, humanistic functions of literature; the new ideas obtained by such a course of study, however, by weakening superstitious prejudices, only served to foster a climate of scepticism that became an enduring tradition among Bengali liberals.[29]

Even as her observations are largely true, Chaudhuri is not quite right in calling Hindu College policies "anti-Christian," for the emphasis there was on countering orthodoxy in any form, not on opposing any particular religion – Christianity or Hinduism. In the subsequent chapters, detailed evidence will be produced to show how Hindu College actually functioned. As for a climate of scepticism in and around the College, Chaudhuri is making a statement close to truth; for Derozio and Richardson, as will be shown in the later chapters, were confirmed sceptics, and the former paid the price for brandishing his scepticism a little too boldly. However, all teachers of Hindu College may not have shared their views, there being no policy of the College to recruit only sceptics. In fact, except for a broad consensus on an anti-orthodox stance, the College had no ideological commitment on either religion or politics. It will, in fact, be more appropriate to say that Hindu College promoted liberal humanist tradition through its teaching of "the best that was known and thought in the world."[30]

Sumanta Banerjee's *The Parlour and the Streets: Elite and Popular Culture in Nineteenth Century Calcutta*, published the same year Viswanathan's book came out, is also based, like *The Masks of Conquest*, on a borrowed theory of culture – the Latin American Paulo Freire's theory about 'the culture of silence.' Freire's formulation, cited by Banerjee, is as follows:

> ... the culture of silence is born in the relationship between the Third World and the metropolis .... The dependent society is by definition a silent society. Its voice is not the authentic voice, but merely an echo of the voice of the metropolis in every way: the metropolis speaks, the dependent society listens. The silence of the object society in relation to the director society is repeated in the relationship within the object society itself. Its power elites, silent in the face of metropolis, silence their own people in turn.[31]

These meta-theories of Gramsci, Freire, etc., soon run into trouble the moment they are confronted with particular facts. As we saw in the case of Viswanathan, so do we find in the case of Banerjee, rather self-contradictory observations. Note, for instance, the following:

> In Bengal the glorification of the history and cultural achievements of the past Hindu era, set in motion by the nineteenth century Orientalists, contributed to the awakening of national self-consciousness among the Bengali Hindu intelligentsia at the turn of the twentieth century. But the cultural nationalism which became an

> ally of the political movement against British colonial rule took the form of a return of the past ....[32]

In other words, the British Orientalists, the agents of the "director society," "awakened" national self-consciousness among the members of the "object" society," rather than subdue them into silence. And this awakening led to the liberation movement against the colonial rule. Sherlock Holmes comes to mind again: we had better master the facts before we marshal a theory. In both cases – Viswanathan's and Banerjee's – facts outrun their borrowed theories.

More jargon-ridden than any of the books just reviewed is Sara Suleri's *The Rhetoric of English India* (1992)[33], which, claiming that it "seeks location within the discourse of colonial cultural studies and attempts to question some of the governing assumptions of that discursive field," relies for illustrations solely on Kipling, Forster, Naipaul and Rushdie, not making even a mention of what happened in nineteenth-century Bengal, leave aside Hindu College and its teaching of Shakespeare and other English writers. As such, it is not quite relevant to our study of Shakespeare teaching in early colonial Bengal, though its mention seems unavoidable because of its very brazen overlooking of an important aspect of the history of English education in British India.

Disagreeing with the discourse of postcolonial theory, Suleri attempts "to break down the incipient schizophrenia of a critical discourse that seeks to represent domination and subordination as though the two were mutually exclusive terms .... This critical field would be better served if it sought to break down the fixity of the dividing line between domination and subordination, and if it further questioned the psychic disempowerment signified by colonial encounter."[34] Thus, Suleri proposes to take the postcolonial interrogation of English India into the realm of psychology, rather than keep it confined to cultural materialism. As an illustration of "disempowerment signified by colonial encounter," Suleri cites the case of Edmund Burke:

> The public failure of Burke's political concerns, therefore, only weakly reflects the poignancy of that discursive collapse through which he was forced to represent Hastings as Iago to India's Othello, or the embodiment of guilt on colonialism's "great theatre [of] abuse" (C W, Vol. 9, p. 348) .... Encoded in the towering rage with which Burke converts Hastings into the prime mover of colonial reprehensibility is an attendant rage at the powerlessness of that spectator who cannot tolerate to witness until its end an enactment of the shared intimacy of guilt.[35]

Suleri may be making a subtle psychological observation about Burke and other such "spectators" who were unable to withstand the logical end "of the shared intimacy of guilt," but her discussion of various writers from both sides of the politico-cultural divide does not touch upon the subject of Shakespeare studies in British India as such. Her book does, however, show the psychological depth to which postcolonial theory dived in its probing of the colonial encounter.

Another study, highly theory-oriented, is Ania Loomba's *Colonialism/Postcolonialism* (1998), which again makes no mention of Hindu College, nor of its teachers, such as Derozio and Richardson, but does speak of Shakespeare's politico-religious use in the Indian colonial situation. Note, for instance, the following:

> The process by which Christianity is made available to the heathens, or indeed Shakespeare made available to the uncultured, is designed to assert the authority of these books, and through these books, the authority of European (English) culture and to make the latter feel like clowns in the budoir [sic]. Thus the intention is to assert an unbridgeable gap or difference between colonisers and colonised peoples. But the effort to convert the natives also assumes that the latter can be transformed by the religious or cultural truths enshrined in the colonial texts. Here the assumption is that the gap between the cultures and people[s] can be bridged. Thus there is a fundamental contradiction at the heart of the attempt to educate, 'civilise,' or co-opt the colonial 'other.' We can certainly see how such a contradiction is seized upon and used by the colonised peoples. Lala Hardyal, a founder of the anti-colonial Ghadder Association [in fact, Party, not Association], used Shylock's speech in *The Merchant of Venice*, which begins 'I am a Jew. Hath not a Jew eyes?' (III.i.51-57) to argue that Shakespeare stood for human equality and that we should remember Shylock if we are 'ever tempted to scorn or wrong a brother/man of another race or creed' (Hardyal, 1934: 238). .... Thus Hardyal mimics the English uses of Shakespeare in order to contest the legitimacy of English rule in India.[36]

Here, there is another form of postcolonialism, which takes into account as much the subject's response to Shakespeare as it does the ruler's intention. To that extent Loomba's view sounds more balanced than the one-sided view of critics like Visawanathan. As Loomba illustrates, the intention of the authority and the effect on the

subject may not always be in consonance with each other. However, Loomba, even as she cites Hardyal's use of Shakespeare to his advantage, does not cite anything to show "the English uses of Shakespeare." Loomba's assertion is not backed by any evidence of fact. More general than Viswanathan's, Loomba's study offers critical definition of terms like colonialism, imperialism, neo-colonialism, postcolonialism, colonial discourse, and seeks relationships of postcolonialism with race and gender. The study does offer illustration of its theoretical argument by using literary texts. For instance, defining colonialism, Shakespeare's *The Tempest* is used to illustrate how "the process of forming a community in the new land necessarily meant *unforming* or re-forming the communities that existed there already, and involved a wide range of practises including trade, plunder, negotiation, warfare, genocide, enslavement, and rebellions."[37] What Loomba says here about the exploitations of colonialism is a commonplace of history, but postcolonial reading of Shakespeare's play is simply one available approach to interpreting the play.

Similarly, discussing the marginalised social groups and communities Loomba uses Shakespeare's *Othello*, but not the author's original text. Instead Jane Suzman's production of the play in Johannesburg, with black hero, is chosen for the illustration of "the racial politics of the play," because "to place Shakespeare's *Othello* in South Africa is to open up a powerful new reading of the play."[38] The postcolonial appropriations of Shakespeare have been used to highlight the discriminations based on race, class, gender, etc. But how far such appropriations or re-presentations are fair to the original text raises serious questions about the authority of the author as well as about the liberty of the reader.

Like most postcolonial critics, Loomba, too, insists that "the definition of civilization and barbarism rests on the production of an irreconcilable difference between 'black' and 'white,' self and other."[39] This "definition" is not borne out by the history of colonialism from ancient to the modern times. The Roman colonisers called the British and the Germans as barbarians. Earlier, the Greek colonisers called the non-Greeks as barbarians. Besides, these political constructions are extraneous to Shakespeare's *Othello* or *Tempest*.

Although not directly touching upon Shakespeare teaching in colonial Bengal, especially at Hindu College, Loomba raises relevant questions about the discrepancy between what the colonial authorities intended and how the colonised subjects responded. Those looking through the coloured glasses of postcolonial theory do not care to take stock of this discrepancy. Although a timely corrective to the blind march

of theory, pointing out the pitfall in its determined direction, Loomba's book leaves unchallenged the basic concepts of theory, such as its notions of nation and race, coloniser and colonised. This thesis attempts to rely more on the actual historical conditions than assumed theoretical constructions in relation to both Shakespeare's work and the Hindu College teachers who interpreted that work to the Indian students.

Yet another general study indirectly related to the subject of this thesis is Nandi Bhatia's *Acts of Authority/Acts of Resistance: Theatre and Politics in Colonial and Postcolonial India* (2004).[40] Relying on Jonathan Dollimore,[41] also seeking support from Gauri Viswanathan,[42] Bhatia makes what by now is a stereotypical observation in postcolonial criticism:

> The initiation of Shakespeare into the Indian academy coincided with the introduction of the discipline of English literature in India, which became an important part of the educational curriculum after the establishment of universities in Bengal, Bombay, and Madras in 1857.[43]

If Bhatia means "the discipline of English literature," as it is known in the universities, the separate department of study in English offering B.A. Honours and M.A. degrees courses, then her observation is incorrect because that started in Bengal, not with the establishment of the university of Calcutta in 1857, but with the introduction of these special courses in 1880s – the first degree in both B.A. Honours and M.A. English were awarded in 1883.[44] As for "the initiation of Shakespeare," that had taken place in 1753 in theatre,[45] and in 1817 in the classroom.[46] Bhatia's assertion that "Shakespeare became a means to establish British cultural authority and 'Anglicize the Indian subcontinent,'"[47] too, is not based on any evidence. When one encounters such large statements, one does not know how to take them. Which India, one would like to ask, is Bhatia talking about? India is neither a bunch of "baboos," nor a microscopic academic elite. Besides, if knowing English and Shakespeare is getting enslaved to the British culture, then the number of people having that influence in India is many times more today than it was in the nineteenth century.

It is precisely the untenable largeness of the postcolonial meta-concepts such as the West and the East, the British and the Indians, the alien and the native, etc., that the present study proposes to highlight, for these theoretical constructs spare no room for individuals who may not be defined in terms of the interests of their race and nation. Postcolonial critics, following the French theorists Barthes, Foucault, and Darrida, discarded the humanist terms of essentialism and universalism, calling them

metaconcepts, but ended up using terms which are no less large, such as East and West, coloniser and colonised, leaving no room for individuals. The French theorists' contention that individuals and societies are all constructed by conditions or structures of politics, language, etc., is highly debatable, for humans are not material products of any industrial unit that they would all think and act alike.

The vital difference between literature and social sciences has been that whereas in literature human subjects are viewed as natural and moral individuals, in social sciences, they are classified as categories in terms of races, religions, nations, classes, genders, etc. The dominance of social sciences in contemporary criticism, including the postcolonial, has obliterated the special domain of literature that looked beyond these divisive categories and emphasized the common qualities of human nature found in all times and all places. No doubt, we cannot deny the material level of our existence that Marx, and others after him, have emphasized. But we cannot also accept that the human subjects are produced, constructed, or determined by cultural materialism alone. When all these layers of social existence are removed, there still remains in us the human residue that gives us our individual identity – good, bad, or indifferent.

To underline the aspect of individual identity, this study finds reassuring support from the most revered Indian writer, Rabindranath Tagore, the only Indian to have received the Nobel Prize for Literature (1913), who not only lived during the most crucial period of India's freedom struggle but also stood firm on his own individual space, unruffled by the opposing claims of racist and nationalist interests. His views on the concepts of nation and individual self are relevant for our purposes. In one of his essays titled "The Nation," Tagore emphatically argues,

> ... I do not put my faith in any new institution, but in the individuals all over the world who think clearly, feel nobly, and act rightly, thus becoming the channels of moral truth. Our moral ideals do not work with chisels and hammers. Like trees, they spread their roots in the soil and their branches in the sky, without consulting any architect for their plans.[48]

One can clearly hear in Tagore's words the echo of Tom Paine's ideas. Note for instance the following from a song by Paine titled "The Liberty Tree":

> Let the far and the near all unite with a cheer,
> In defense of our Liberty Tree.[49]

Also, note the following:

The true idea of a great nation is that which promotes and extends the

principles of universal society.[50]

Paine's influence on educated Indians was very powerful. Those with English education in Calcutta from Rammohan Roy to Rabindranath Tagore read Paine as eagerly as they read Shakespeare. And these ideas ignited the young minds in Bengal leading to first the movement called Young Bengal, and then got linked up with the larger movement of the Bengal Renaissance, finally leading to the national movement for freedom. It may not be out of place to mention here that Tom Paine is a rare example in modern history of a native of an imperial nation who inspired the colonies to get liberation from the empire of his own nation. Paine's role in the American Revolution is indeed unique in recorded human history.

For Tagore, individuals are to be judged by their own individuality, not by the race or religion to which they belong. Those who constitute the subject of this thesis, the founders and early English teachers of Hindu College, were individuals of similar hue. Rammohan Roy and David Hare, Henry Derozio, D.L. Richardson, and H.M. Percival belonged to that category. Both the founders of the Hindu College as well as its early teachers of Shakespeare believed in the universality of human nature.

As Saroj Mohan Mittra, the editor of Rammohan Roy's work, writes, "Rammohun held that the entire human society is a big family. Its innumerable communities and groups are spread over different countries and states. Help and cooperation from the enlightened persons is necessary for mutual benefit and comforts of the general people."[51] That Roy always remained above the narrow feelings of race and religion, and that he continuously resisted the interference of such feelings in education, is also amply borne out by the following remark of his:

> Those about the courts of the native princes are not inferior in point of education and accomplishments to the respectable and well-bred classes in any other country. Indeed they rather carry their politeness and attention to courtesy to an inconvenient extent. Some seminaries of education (as at Benaras & C.) are still supported by the princes and other respectable and opulent native inhabitants, but often in a very irregular manner. With respect to the Hindu College in Calcutta ... many learned Christians object to the system therein followed of teaching literature and science without religion being united with them; because they consider this as having a tendency to destroy the religious principles of the students ... without substituting anything religious in their stead.[52]

Here is a humanist reaction from Roy, a founder of Hindu College along with David Hare, showing both sides of the issue concerning the nature of education to be imparted in colonial Bengal.

Not a bit different from Roy's view of education was that held by his friend David Hare – in their lasting friendship stands disproved Kipling's the 'Never the twain shall meet.' An account of Hare that appeared, after his death in 1837, in *Friend of India*, run by the Baptist Missionaries of Serampore, shows how close these two individuals were in their crusade for education in Bengal:

> Mr. Hare affords the remarkable – and in India the solitary – instance of an individual, without any refinement of education, without intellectual endowments, without place, or power, or wealth, acquiring and retaining for a long series of years one of the most important and influential positions in native society, simply by a constant endeavour to promote the improvement of rising generation. That he was the means of doing much good among the natives, and that the cause of native education in the metropolis is greatly indebted to his constant and unremitting attention, will be readily admitted by all. At the same time, it must be confessed with deep regret, that his inveterate hostility to the Gospel, produced an unhappy effect on the minds of the native youths who were so largely under his influence, by indisposing their minds to all enquiry after religious truth and inducing a general scepticism, the melancholy consequences of which will long continue to be apparent in the opinion and conduct of the generation of the enlightened native.[53]

If such concrete evidence were brought to the notice of the postcolonialist theorists, they would surely feel embarrassed. Generalisations based on abstract constructions rather than concrete facts may sound brilliant in the realm of theory, but they do not hold good when tried on facts. The available facts like the one cited above do not support the abstract arguments put forth by Viswanathan and other postcolonial critics. It may be acknowledged here that the evidence in support of Hindu College and the three eminent teachers partly comprises of memoirs by the former students of the College. But even those who have written histories of education in colonial Bengal, namely S.C.Ghosh, D.P.Sinha, J.Ghosh, Arthur Howell, Sayyid Mohmud, have also confirmed these accounts of Hindu College.

Deeply rooted in the liberal tradition fostered at Hindu College, and earlier at Drummond's Academy, Henry Derozio's views about mankind were as liberal as those of Hare, Roy, and Tagore. These liberal individuals were in no way amenable to whatever designs the Scottish Church or the imperial administration might have had. Note, for instance, Derozio's observation about Drummond's School:

> The most pleasing feature in this institution is its freedom from illiberality. We have a particular reason for noticing this circumstance. At some of the schools in Calcutta objections are made to native youth, not so much a part [sic] of the masters as of the Christian parents who have children at those schools. At the Durrumtollah Academy, however, there is none of this illiberal feeling; and it is quite delightful to witness the exertions of Hindoo and Christian youth striving together in the same classes for academical honours. This amalgamation will do much towards softening those asperities which always arise in hostile sects; and when the Hindoo and the Christian have learned from mutual intercourse how much there is to be admired in the human character, without reference to differences of opinion in religious matters, shall we not be brought nearer than we now are to that happy condition
>
> When man to man the world o'er,
> Shall brothers be and a' that[54]

The poetic lines in the quotation are from Burns, showing the Romantic influence on Shakespeare teachers of Hindu College. Once again, Derozio, like Roy and Hare, speaks of humanist values, far above the realm of race and religion. In the liberal realm of these individuals, mankind is made of individual humans, who are essentially the same, irrespective of their origin or faith. Like Derozio, Richardson, too, was a strong believer in universal human values, which are repeatedly reflected in his writings. Note, for instance, his following comments on Shakespeare:

> Shakespeare especially has addressed himself to the universal heart. The jealousy of Othello and the ambition of Macbeth are as perfectly apprehended by the intelligent Hindu alumni of an English College in Calcutta, as by the students of a scholastic establishment in the poet's native land. But Pope was too much of a London poet of Eighteenth century .... His satires, especially, are limited and obscure. It would almost be impossible, for example, to make a

> native of Hindustan comprehend the greater portion of his *Epistle on The Characters of Women*. But Shakespeare's females are sketched with miraculous powers, and with such fidelity to general nature, that they are recognized in all countries and in all ages by every reader who can understand the language in which his plays are written.[55]

In the tradition of Shakespeare studies at Hindu College, Richardson, as evident from the above citation, emphasized the universal aspect of Shakespeare and other writers, and came down heavily on English poets like Dryden and Pope who largely remained local and specific. H.M. Percival continued that tradition, who succeeded Richardson as Shakespeare teacher at Hindu College. Note, for instance, Percival's observation on *The Merchant of Venice:*

> As, in the first story, we learnt to distinguish what a man *is* from what he *has,* so the silent lesson of the caskets, in their effect on the different suitors, teaches us to distinguish what a man *is* from what he *seems to be*, and to see how the mistaking of appearances for reality brings deserved failure, and the discerning of real worth, underlying unpromising appearances, brings the happiness of deserved success. The two stories together, point a single moral: the most deceptive of the appearances of worth is wealth, and the most precious form of real worth is character.[56]

As can be seen, even as he sticks to the universalism of Shakespeare, earlier emphasized by Derozio and Richardson, Percival makes an added emphasis of moralism. At the same time, what these Hindu College teachers of Shakespeare, and before them the founders of the College, Hare and Roy, shared in common is their view of human beings as essentially the same, irrespective of their race, religion, or nation.

The secular tradition of the Hindu College, reflected in the ideas of its leading founders like Roy and Hare, as well as in the Shakespeare teaching of Derozio, Richardson, and Percival, was founded and carried forward by these individuals, whose faith in actual practice was not the one to which they technically belonged but that of liberal humanism; they felt deeply interested in the education of students and citizens with whom they shared life in Calcutta. The work of these high-minded individuals on both sides of the racial and national divide was not vitiated by the narrow or partisan interests that generally plague the mass of mankind.

Thus, this thesis is prompted by the fact that, in the first place, the contributions of the three teachers in Calcutta, who laid the strong secular foundation of Shakespeare

studies in Bengal, have not been duly acknowledged in the literary histories in general, not even in the particular accounts of Shakespeare in India. Impressionistic accounts in the form of short pieces in anthologies or journals have, of course, appeared, but even these accounts make, if at all, very brief mention of these great scholar-teachers of Shakespeare. For instance, V.Y. Kantak, in his essay "Indian Response to Shakespeare," mentions Tagore and Aurobindo as early interpreters of Shakespeare, altogether ignoring Derozio, Richardson and Percival, who had actually laid the foundation of Shakespeare studies in India. Referring to that early phase, Kantak has only this much to say: "The initial impression when Indians were first introduced to Shakespeare must have been, I imagine, one of the rawness of Shakespeare's world, and of his extreme care for the local and the particular."[57] The history of Shakespeare teaching in India is not something that Kantak should have been made to "imagine;" it is available in concrete records, at least in memoirs and reminiscences of those present at the time. Besides, one wonders about Kantak's attribution of "rawness" to "Shakespeare's World" and "of his extreme care for the local and the particular," for all the available accounts of Shakespeare's early reception in India speak of his universality. Obviously, Kantak's remark sounds like an unprepared speech.

Another great Indian scholar, C.D. Narsimhaiah, in his essay "Shakespeare and the Indian Sensibility," also talks generalities, seldom stating anything historically specific about those who introduced Shakespeare studies in India. Note, in this regard, the following:

> Of the mixed package the British brought to India the most durable and welcome has been our exposure to Shakespeare. Not the Queen for whom Indians cannot share the Englishman's enthusiasm, but Shakespeare remains our closest emotional link with England and the rest of the English speaking world. For more than 150 years now we have learnt English through Shakespeare and thanks to him learning it has been a joy and an adventure.[58]

Like Kantak, Narsimhaiah also speaks here in the idiom of an informal or popular lecture, saying nothing solid on which scholarly investigations are based. Also, to say that we have learnt English through Shakespeare is a piece of exaggeration. No doubt, Shakespeare has been one of the inevitables in the English courses at our universities, but he has always been one among so many English writers an Honours or M.A. student in India has to study. Yet another volume on Shakespeare, *Indian Response to Shakespeare*, makes the routine generalisations, without attempting to

consult the specific sources still available in Calcutta and other centres of education. Its editor, Basavraj Naikar, makes, for instance, the following prefatory observation:

> In India, Shakespeare has attracted the attention of all serious scholars. Shakespeare's great tragedies and last plays have special appeal to Indians. Shakespeare criticism in India is represented by scholars like S.C. Sen Gupta ... R.W. Desai ... Sukanta Chaudhuri.[59]

Such random comments are ahistorical, not carrying much relevance for a historical study like the present. Although Naikar's observation is not without substance, it is too general to be of use for a specific study of a period, of an institution, or even of a scholar. Besides, all the Shakespeare scholars he mentions belongs to the twentieth century or even later, none to the nineteenth.

Such impressionistic accounts as cited above are numerous, but hardly any of these would enumerate the specific features of Shakespeare studies in the early phase of colonial Bengal. Some scholars from Calcutta have, no doubt, produced concrete accounts of Shakespeare's introduction in India both on the stage as well as in the classroom. But even these accounts fall short of a full-length work on the seminal Shakespeare studies in British India, which actually means early nineteenth-century Calcutta, where Hindu College had come up as the pioneering college of Western education.

One of these short pieces is Arabinda Podar's "Shakespeare in John Company's Calcutta."[60] Although related to performance, the article brings on record Shakespeare's entry into India, dating it about 1750, showing how the stage-Shakespeare came to India much before the classroom-Shakespeare. Again on performance, though dealing with the imitations of Shakespeare in Bengali language, is Rudra Prasad Sen Gupta's "A Century of Imitation: A Study of Shakespeare's Influence on Bengali Drama,"[61] which shows how Shakespeare's influence on the native language of Calcutta is also much earlier than the bard's classroom entry. Yet another short article, Krishna Chandra Lahiri's "Shakespeare in the Calcutta University,"[62] traces the history of Shakespeare teaching in Calcutta, making a brief mention of Hindu College, stating that

> With the foundation of this centre of higher education in western literature and science on 20 January 1817, Shakespeare was formally adopted in Bengal's education. Krishna Mohan Banerjee, Rasik Krishna Mallik, Ram Gopal Ghosh, Tara Chand Chakravarti, Shiv Chandra Dev, Peary Chand Mitra, Ramtanu Lahiri and other young

> men who passed out of the Hindu College became whole-hearted disciples of Macaulay.[63]

Lahiri's remark about the students of Hindu College becoming "whole-hearted disciples of Macaulay" sounds like news from nowhere, for the early students at Hindu College were known to be whole-hearted disciples of Roy and Hare, Derozio and Richardson, none of whom liked to be known as a follower of Macaulay. Peary Chand Mitra's biography of David Hare[64] is one available evidence to our contention. Whereas Mittra's book makes no mention of Macaulay, not even once, it records a series of tributes to Hare, including Baboo Kissory Chand Mittra's lecture on "The Hindoo College And Its Founders," dated June 2, 1861, which ends with the following: "The educational movement is to be traced to him [David Hare] above all other men, and his name, I feel assured, will go down to posterity with increasing veneration, as 'the Father of Native Education,' and the 'Apostle of Native Progress.'"[65] The students of Hindu College, known as Derozians or Young Bengal, in fact, were best known for their anti-establishment activities.[66] Calling them "disciples of Macaulay" would amount to utter misrepresentation of their efforts.[67] Although a product of Hindu College, P.C.Mittra as biographer of David Hare is not known to have had any special attachment to the Scottish national. There seems no reason, therefore, to consider his narrative as purely private or personal account. In the present critical climate we, of course, tend to consider even history as subjective narrative, and literature as cultural discourse. But no one has so far challenged, or even doubted, Mittra's account of Hare's life.

In a very short piece titled "Presidency College and Shakespeare," Taraknath Sen gives brief descriptions of several teachers of Shakespeare at Presidency (earlier Hindu) College, including the three chosen for study in this thesis, namely Henry Derozio, D.L. Richardson, and H.M. Percival, giving a miniature history of Shakespeare teaching at this first college of English education. Sen's opening remarks are important:

> The connexion between Presidency College and Shakespeare, ranging over the last 150 years, has been deep and long. The parent institution, the Hindu College (founded on the 20th January, 1817) was the first educational institution in India to introduce Shakespeare as part of a regular curriculum of studies. This was the beginning that led to the phenomenal vogue of Shakespeare in India. Thanks to that beginning, he still continues to be the most widely read western writer in India ....[68]

Sen's summary of the history of Shakespeare teaching at Hindu College is like a seed deposit which can be enhanced and enumerated, expanded and elaborated, with concrete input from the various sources available about the college as well as the individual teachers who laid the foundation of Shakespeare studies in India. The only other report in brief available about Shakespeare teaching at Hindu College is noted in *175th Anniversary Commemoration Volume* of the Presidency College, dated 1992. This volume gives separate histories, though highly condensed, of each department of the College. About the teaching of Shakespeare it makes a special mention with the following opening:

> Few College departments can boast of such a distinguished history as the Department of English .... Henry Louis Vivian Derozio [was] appointed in 1828 Master of English Literature and History in the Hindu College, as Presidency was then known. Derozio died young, but the tradition of inspired teaching persisted, notably in the remarkable reading and interpretation of Shakespeare's plays by Captain David Lester Richardson ....[69]

However, the *Presidency College Commemoration Volume,* being a general history of the College from 1817 to 1992, could not be expected to give detailed account of any individual department, much less the teaching of an individual writer. But it does offer clues about the kind of tradition that developed in the English Department with regard to Shakespeare teaching, quite helpful in carrying the investigation further for a more comprehensive account of the early phase when the seminal work in Shakespeare studies was done, creating a tradition of sorts which went over 150 years.

A research work entirely devoted to Hindu College is a Ph.D. thesis by John Berwick, submitted to the University of Sydney (Australia) in 1986. Under the title "From Vidyalaya to Presidency College," Berwick traces the "genesis and evolution of the Presidency College prior to 1922,"[70] showing no particular concern with the teaching of Shakespeare. However, some of his findings and observations do help us in arriving at a view of Hindu College as a seminal institution in the spread of English education leading to the creation of an intellectual environment in Calcutta.

One of Berwick's observations relates to the syllabus for the senior class, which is as follows:

> The Committee which gave final form to the syllabus was originally composed of ten Europeans, four pandits and fifteen other members of Hindu society. However, the Europeans withdrew leaving the

> choice of a secular course of study to the Indians. The books prescribed for the senior class in 1828 showed a strong bias towards English history and literature. They were set by the Committee of Management which was composed of three Hindus, Dr. H.H.Wilson representing the government, and David Hare. The reading list included Goldsmith's *History of Greece, Rome and England*, Russel's *Modern Europe*, Robertson's *Charles the Fifth,* Gay's *Fables*, Pope's *Homer,* Dryden's *Virgil,* Milton's *Paradise Lost* and one of Shakespeare's tragedies.[71]

Berwick's account of the secular emphasis in the Hindu College syllabus is corroborated by other sources as well, but there being just one play of Shakespeare does not seem to be correct. Several accounts of the plays staged by the students of the College as also the recitations of speeches from different plays of Shakespeare at various functions clearly indicate the teaching of several plays of Shakespeare at the senior level. It is possible that Berwick speaks of the syllabus before Derozio joined the College.

The present study aims at bringing to light the largely unexplored contribution of the three Shakespeare teachers of Hindu College in the early phase of English education in colonial Bengal, for it was these teachers who laid the foundation of Shakespeare studies at the power centre of the British rule in India. Hindu College being the epicentre of Shakespeare teaching had far-reaching influence in Bengal, and even beyond Bengal, through the seminal work these three teachers and their students did in the field of Shakespeare studies. The present work also aims at interrogating the postcolonial critics who have attributed to English teaching, including that of Shakespeare, motives of promoting the empire.

No doubt, there were forces in British India which were trying to achieve extraneous ends through English teaching, not sparing even Shakespeare. There were, for instance, the missionaries like William Miller, Principal of Madras Christian College and Vice-Chancellor of the University of Madras, who taught and interpreted Shakespeare from the viewpoint of the Christian coloniser. Note, in this regard, how Miller's book, *Shakespeare's Chart of Life, being studies [of] King Lear, Macbeth, Hamlet and Othello* (1900)[72] interprets *King Lear*:

> .... Lear's initial error is not the only cause of the suffering he has to endure .... He makes no attempt in any way to arouse the tender feelings in which the order of the world allows it [Love or Devotion]

> to be obtained. They devise ways of their own for getting it .... They forget that good got in an evil way would cease to be good, even if it were possible so to get it .... The highest of all teaching makes it prominent that the kingdom of God ... is like the seed cast into the ground, which slowly, step by step, grows towards the perfect fruit "man knoweth not how." ... It is the mistake of those who seem to suppose it possible in a single generation, if not in a single year, to put into full operation in India those principles and forms of government which, rightly enough, they regard as in themselves the best. Shakespeare shows what this mistake results in ....[73]

Here, one can notice an open use of Shakespeare for purposes both religious and political. The text of *King Lear* is so interpreted here that it easily changes into a battle between good and evil, and then between the impatient mortals desiring quick results and God blessing the fruits to grow from the seed onward, and finally between the impatient Indian subjects and the ruling British Empire. Miller, if he had been appointed to teach Shakespeare at Hindu College, would not have been tolerated by the students who came from the schools run by David Hare, David Drummond, and Rammohan Roy. In fact, he could not be appointed at Hindu College, with David Hare as its custodian, known as he was for his staunch opposition to the missionary mode of education.

Angular interpretations of Shakespeare, twisting his texts to suit a particular agenda, were not confined to Christian missionaries alone. On the Indian side also, there were scholars like Samarjit Dutt who interpreted several plays of Shakespeare, including *Macbeth, Othello*, and *Hamlet*, giving to each the subtitle "An Oriental Study," claiming "to study Shakespeare from the Hindu point of view," as also "a comparative study ... of the plays of Shakespeare."[74] Dutt's contention is that quite a few characters in the plays of Shakespeare have been created under Indian influence. Arguing that Desdemona's "conception is not in accord with Western morality,"[75] and that she is modelled on Sita, the heroine of the Indian epic *The Ramayana*, he clarifies as follows:

> The fall of Constantinople ushered in the Renaissance in Europe, flooding it, so to speak, with Eastern lore .... So it is not unlikely, nay, there is reason to believe that somehow or the other the *Ramayana* or *Raghuvansham*, so widely known in both the Worlds, found its way to Europe. Research may some day find out the missing links.[76]

Quite apparently, here Dutt is relying on conjecture, making as far-fetched an interpretation of Shakespeare's *Othello* as Miller does of *King Lear;* both have their set agendas, and both carry out their agendas at the cost of Shakespeare's or his texts' intention.

Dutt does not stop at that. Like Miller, he goes away from the subject of Shakespeare's text, following his real agenda, hidden from the title, but open in the "Preface," which is:

> The object of our dwelling at length on this point is to bring home to our readers the religious fanaticism that disturbs the peace of the world .... The spread of Islam with the sword in one hand and *Koran* in the other showed how far fanaticism might go. An archaeologist has recently unearthed a startling fact that Gregory, one of the 12 Evangelists, in his fanatical zeal to spread the Gospel of Jesus in Armenia in 301 A.D., razed to the ground the Hindu Temple and routed the Hindu colony which had been in existence there since 149 B.C. ... [77]

Dutt seems a little confused here. For, as a matter of fact, Gregory the illuminator was not "one of the 12 Evangelists." Perhaps we could say that Gregory was an evangelists in the sense that his mission was to convert the people of Armenia to Christianity. In that sense he can be said to have modelled himself on the 12 evangelists. Interestingly, all this and much more religious material is inducted in Dutt's discussion of Desdemona, and that, too, in the "Preface" to his edition of *Hamlet.* All that Dutt surmises is nothing but a fantasy of his own. Besides, even if his "historical findings" are true, what relevance do they have to Shakespeare's *Hamlet* or *Othello*? Also, Dutt himself comes out in his commentary on Shakespeare no less a religious fanatic than those he goes out to condemn, all in the name of teaching Shakespeare. It was precisely against this mind-set on both sides of the religious (and racial) divide that Derozio at Hindu College had mobilised his students, later known as the "Young Bengal."

To the extent that Miller's Christian and Dutt's Hindu readings are in total rejection of the intention or reception of Shakespeare's texts, they are in line with the postcolonial view, which, too, ignores what Shakespeare's texts may have intended or how the Indian readers may have received them. Strangely, most postcolonial critics heavily rely on the intention of a few vested interests among the British in India to dub Shakespeare as an icon of imperialism. Miller and Dutt make blatant misuse of literary texts, and they do it rather brazenly. But how about the postcolonial critics? They, too,

in a way misuse the text, but in the name of cultural, not religious, studies. Decidedly, the postcolonial approaches, too, are as external to Shakespeare as those of Miller and Dutt; for they, too, ignore what is actually there in Shakespeare's work, and only play up what certain missionaries intended in recommending Shakespeare for reading in schools and colleges. Uses of literature for ulterior motives, even to prove a cultural theory, cannot merit legitimacy in literary criticism.

Dominated by the Marxist or Materialist view of culture, dubbing Arnold's spiritual or idealist view of culture as elitist or imperialist, the contemporary literary theory has reduced literary criticism to everyday concerns of practical men. Shakespeare, too, is often misinterpreted by postcolonial critics. It seems highly imperative to invoke here the saner view of Matthew Arnold:

> It is because criticism has so little kept in the pure intellectual sphere, has so little detached itself from practice, has been so directly polemical and controversial, that it has so ill accomplished, in this country, its best spiritual work; which is to keep man from a self-satisfaction which is retarding and vulgarising, to lead him towards perfection, by making his mind dwell upon what is excellent in itself, and the absolute beauty and fitness of things. A polemical practical criticism makes men blind even to the ideal imperfection of their practice, makes them willingly assert its ideal perfection, in order the better to secure it against attack; and clearly this is narrowing and baneful for them.[78]

Our present-day theory-oriented criticism is certainly polemical and partisan, mostly antagonistic to essentialism, universalism, moralism, spiritualism, and all else that is not material and contingent. Arnold's piece, though addressed to his own age, seems as much pertinent for our own, since our postcolonial critical concerns are, in fact, only a precipitated form of what Arnold abhorred in his own time.

It seems pertinent here to cite the case of the 'conventional critics' Terry Eagleton mentions as to the status of literature in our time, quite relevant to the debate about Shakespeare studies in postcolonial India:

> If literature matters today, it is chiefly because it seems to many conventional critics one of the few remaining places where, in a divided, fragmented world, a sense of universal value may still be incarnate; and where in a sordidly material world, a rare glimpse of transcendence can still be attained .... For if even *this* precariously

> surviving enclave of art can be historicised, materialized, deconstructed, then where indeed is one to find value in a degraded world?[79]

No doubt, Eagleton is on the side of the theorists and considers Arnoldian humanism of universal values as an ideal yet to be realised, but he does concede the relevance of such a trust. Those who founded Hindu College – Rammohan Roy and David Hare in particular – and those who taught Shakespeare in that College – Derozio, Richardson, and Percival in particular – belonged to Arnold's "minority" and Eagleton's ironically mentioned "conventional" lot; they were secular humanists who believed in literature as the repository of universal human values.

Having been brought up in the environment of ideas generated by the American War of Independence (1776) and the French Revolution (1789), especially inspired by the ideas of freedom and liberty that came from the writings first of Tom Paine and later by John Stuart Mill, this small set of intellectuals in Calcutta generated a climate of ideas that came to have far-reaching influence in colonial Bengal. Although branded anti-revolution, Edmund Burke was no less inspiring to them when he made those powerful speeches in the British parliament on the ill-treatment of Indian subjects by Warren Hastings and on the British taxation policy in the American colonies. While Paine's influence on Derozio largely guided his approach to life and literature, Mill's ideas made their impact on Richardson and Percival (to be discussed later in appropriate chapters).

The present study is precisely meant to highlight this very article of faith in free thinking with the legendary teachers of Hindu College who laid the foundation of Shakespeare studies in the nineteenth-century colonial Bengal, shining in their secular eminence in the twilight of the confusion created by the dubious battle between Hindu orthodoxy and Christian missionaries. The historical role that these teachers played in lighting the lamp of secularism and universalism amidst the darkness created by the warring factions of religious fanaticism deserves to be recorded and appreciated. Their rationalism and universalism, which they imparted through their teaching of Shakespeare, made their own contribution, however small, in igniting the movement of the Renaissance in Bengal in the early nineteenth century.

The view of literature pioneered and practised by the Shakespeare teachers of Hindu College seems to coincide with that of Matthew Arnold. In our time, there are critics in the Arnoldean tradition, such as Brian Vickers, who, in his *Appropriating Shakespeare: Contemporary Critical Quarrels* (1993), while seriously considering the

challenges to accepted attitudes thrown by Theory, gives a "reasoned defence of a theory of literature which has survived the 1960's revolt and will continue to do so."[80] Explaining the theory of literature he defends, Vickers argues,

> In fictional works, which give a representation of human beings interacting in situations and in ways not unlike life as we know it, our involvement is with the characters conceived of within their 'possible worlds' as free agents, responsible for their own actions, towards whom we express reactions which are both ethical and emotional (love, hate, fear, disgust). To those who share this conception of a writer creating fictional worlds which can touch our emotions and moral feelings, reading works of literature is both an enjoyable and serious activity to which they are prepared to devote a great deal of time, energy, substance. They believe that the experience will enrich but also disturb their lives, provoke them to reconsider human situations and reactions – including their own – and not necessarily leave them in a state of reassurance.[81]

As a student of Shakespeare, I feel convinced by the conception of literature articulated by Vickers. It looks back to the Arnoldean tradition to which the Shakespeare teachers of Hindu College belonged; they handed over that view of literature to generations of students for about a century between 1817 and 1911. They did, of course, have their own individual orientations and were interested in different individual pursuits, but their view of literature, by and large, was common to all. Broadly speaking, they were liberal humanists who believed in the universality of literature and considered it an important means for educating the sensibility of the young, shaping them into thinking minds. The central preoccupation of this thesis is, therefore, to highlight the role these teachers played in spreading, through Shakespeare teaching, the humanist values of secular and universal character in colonial Bengal.

Using the historical method of locating the subject in its time and place, collecting all evidence available in records, memoirs, biographies, etc., this thesis will try to make sense of the writings Derozio, Richardson, and Percival have left behind, dealing directly or indirectly, with their teaching of Shakespeare. Subscribing to the view of literature articulated by Brian Vickers in the above quotation, this study will also attempt to contest the theory-oriented opinions about Shakespeare teaching in colonial Bengal. Quite a few quotations in the thesis may look longer than expected, but they are necessitated, first because of their unfamiliarity to the foreign reader, then

because those meant to evoke milieus or offer arguments have to be produced to the extent they are intended to. Of course, no quotation is allowed to speak for itself, as all quotations are subjected to due critical analysis.

It may also be clarified here that an extensive use of historical material, especially in chapters I and II, seemed necessary because what the Hindu College teachers were doing in their teaching of Shakespeare had behind it the whole debate about English education in colonial Bengal. Without a knowledge of that background, readers, especially the non-Indians, would not be able to appreciate the particular emphasis in Shakespeare teaching at Hindu College.

The subsequent chapters will be devoted each to i) Conditions Leading to Shakespeare Studies; ii) The Hindu College; iii) Henry Derozio, the First Shakespeare Teacher; iv) D.L. Richardson, the First Shakespeare Critic; v) H.M. Percival, the First Scholar-Critic of Shakespeare; winding it up with vi) Conclusion.

Notes

[1]D.A. Shankar (ed.), *Shakespeare in Indian Languages* (Shimla: Indian Institute of Advanced Study, 1999); Jagdish Prasad Mishra, *Shakespeare's Impact in Hindi Literature* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1970); Palany Arangasamy, *Shakespeare in Tamil Versions* (Thanjavur: Muthamizh Nilayam, 1993); C.D. Narasimhaiah (ed.), *Shakespeare Came to India* (Bombay: Popular Prakashan, 1963); Poonam Trivedi and Dennis Bartholomeusz (eds.), *India's Shakespeare* (Delhi: Dorling Kindersley (India) Pvt. Ltd., 2005).

[2]See *Shakespeare in Indian Languages*, p. vii.

[3]Ibid., p. vii.

[4]See Pallab Sen Gupta, "Shakespeare in Calcutta Theatres," in *Calcutta Essays on Shakespeare,* Ed. Amalendu Bose (Calcutta: Calcutta University, 1966), p. 196.

[5]See "Presidency College and Shakespeare," in *Shakespeare Commemoration Volume,* Ed. Taraknath Sen (Calcutta: Dept. of English, Presidency College, 1966), p. vii.

[6]Sisir Kumar Das, *A History of Indian Literature: 1800-1910: Western Impact: Indian Response* (1991; New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 2008), p. 110.

[7]Ibid., p. 110.

[8]K.R. Srinivas Iyengar, *Indian Writing in English* (1985; New Delhi: Sterling Publishers Private Limited, 2003).

[9]Ibid., p. 692.

[10]See *The Parlour and the Streets: Elite and Popular Culture in Nineteenth Century Calcutta* (Calcutta: Seagull, 1998).

[11]Ibid., p. 42.

[12]*Shakespeare's Impact on Hindi Literature* (New Delhi: Mushiram Manoharlal, 1971).

[13]Ibid., p. 1.

[14]See Arangasamy, *Shakespeare in Tamil Versions* (Thanjavur: Muthamizh Nilayam, 1993), p. 4.

[15]See "Shakespeare in the Calcutta Uninersity," in *Calcutta Essays on Shakespeare,* Ed. Amalendu Bose (Calcutta: Calcutta University, 1966), p. 174.

[16]See *First Fruits of English Education* [1817-1857] (Calcutta: Bookland Private Limited, 1973), p. 140.

[17]Ibid., pp. 144-145.

[18]See *India's Shakespeare*, p. 14.

[19]Ibid., p. 15.

[20]Ibid., p. 15.

[21](New York: Columbia University Press, 1989), p.1.

[22]See *Sir Arthur Conan Doyle: The Best of Sherlock Holmes*, Ed. by David Stuart Davies (London: Wordsworth Classics, 1998), p. 4.

[23]See Viswanathan, p. 80.

[24]See Viswanathan, p. 167.

[25]See Chris Harman, *A People's History of the World* (Delhi: Orient Longman Private Limited, 2005), pp. 356-57.

[26]See Viswanathan, p. 10.

[27]Ibid., p. 12.

[28]See David Kopf, p. 181.

[29]See *Gentlemen Poets in Colonial Bengal*, pp. 95-96.

[30]The words cited here are from Matthew Arnold's "The function of Criticism at the Present Time," in *Essays By Matthew Arnold* (Oxford University Press, 1914), p. 21.

[31]See Sumanta Banerjee, *The Parlour and the Streets: Elite and Popular Culture in Nineteenth Century Calcutta* (1889; Calcutta: Seagull, 1998), p. 10.

[32]Ibid., p. 6.

[33]See *The Rhetoric of English India* (1992; New Delhi: Penguin India, 2005), pp. 1-23.

[34]Ibid., p. 4.

[35]Ibid, pp. 45-46.

[36]See *Colonialism/Postcolonialism* (London: Routledge, 1988), pp. 89-90.

[37]Ibid., p.2.

[38]Ibid., p. 14.

[39]Ibid., p. 57.

[40]Nandi Bhatia, *Acts of Authority/Acts of Resistance: Theatre and Politics in Colonial and Postcolonial India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2004).

[41]Jonathan Dollimore, "Introduction" to *Political Shakespeare: New Essays in Cultural Materialism,* ed. Jonathan Dollimore and Alan Sinfield (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985).

[42]*Masks of Conquest.*

[43]Bhatia, p. 53.

[44]See *175th Anniversary Commemoration Volume: Presidency College (1992)*, pp. 217, 232.

[45]See "Shakespeare in John Company's Calcutta," in *Calcutta Essays on Shakespeare,* p. 159.

[46]See *Shakespeare Commemoration Volume*, p. viii.

[47]Bhatia, p. 54.

[48]See *Great Works of Rabindranath Tagore* (Delhi: Black Rose Publications, 2005), p. 540.

[49]See *Tom Paine's Rights of Man: A Biography* by Christopher Hitchens (Bhopal India: Manjul Publishing House Pvt. Ltd., 2008), p. 29.

[50]Ibid., p.45.

[51]See "Preface," *Collected Works of Raja Rammohan Roy, Vol. I*, Ed. Dr. Saroj Mohan Mittra (Kolkata: Rammohan Library & Free Reading Room, 2003), p. x.

[52]See "The Condition of India," in *Collected Works of Raja Rammohan Roy, Vol. I,* pp. 184-85.

[53]See P.C. Mittra, *A Biographical Sketch of David Hare*, Ed. by Gauranga Chand Sengupta (Calcuttta: Jijinsa, 1979), pp. 76-77.

[54]Henry Derozio, "Examination of the Pupils of the Durrumtollah Academy," *Song of the Stormy Patrel: Complete Works of Henry Louis Vivian Derozio*, Eds. Dr. Abirlal Mukhopadhyay, et. el. (Calcutta: Progressive Publishers, 2000), p. 412.

[55]See D.L. Richardson, *Richardson's Literary Recreations, Calcutta Gazette* (1851), p. 314.

[56]See H.M. Percival, "Introduction" to *The Merchant of Venice* (Bombay, Calcutta, Madras: Humphrey Milford Oxford University Press, 1936), p. xiii.

[57]See *Re-Discovering Shakespeare: An Indian Scrutiny* (Delhi: Pencraft International, 2002), p. 118.

[58]See "Shakespeare and the Indian Sensibility," in *English Studies in India: Widening Horizons*, by C.D. Narasimhaiah (Delhi: Pencraft International, 2002), p. 45.

[59]See *Indian Response to Shakespeare*, Ed. by Basavraj Naikar (New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers and Distributors, 2002), p. iv.

[60]See *Calcutta Essays on Shakespeare*, Ed. by Amalendu Bose (Calcutta: Calcutta University, 1966), pp. 159-166.

[61]See *Calcutta Essays on Shakespeare*, pp. 167-172.

[62]Ibid., pp. 173-191.

[63]Ibid., p. 174.

[64]See *A Biographical Sketch of David Hare*, Ed. by Gauranga Gopal Sengupta (Calcutta: Jijnasa, 1979).

[65]Ibid., p. 157.

[66]See *Renaissance and Reaction in Nineteenth-Century Bengal: Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay,* Trans. with an Introduction by M.K. Haldar (Calcutta: Minerva Associations (Publications) PVT. LTD., 1977), p. 60.

[67]For a more comprehensive account of Young Bengal see K.S. Bhattacharjee, *The Bengal Renaissance: Social and Political Thoughts* (New Delhi – Classical Publishing Company, 1986), pp. 102-140.

[68]See *Shakespeare Commemoration Volume*, Ed. by Taraknath Sen (Calcutta: Dept. of English, Presidency College, 1966), p. vii.

[69]See *175th Anniversary Commemoration Volume: Presidency College, Calcutta*, Ed. by Amal Kumar Mukhopadhyay (Calcutta: Presidency College, 1992), p. 65.

[70]The relevant chapter from Berwick's thesis. Titled "From Vidylaya To Presidency College," is reproduced in *Nostalgia: An Illustrated History of Hindu-Presidency College (1817-1992)*, Ed. Koustubh Panda (Calcutta: Prankshan Publications Private Ltd., 1993), pp. 23-36.

[71]Ibid., p. 23.

[72]See William Miller *Shakespeare's Chart of Life* (Madras: G.A. Nateson & Co., 1900)

[73]Ibid., pp. 32-33.

[74]See Samarjit Dutt M.A., "Preface," *Shakespeare's Hamlet: An Oriental Study* (Calcutta: Das Gupta & Co., 1928), p. iv.

[75]Ibid.

[76]Ibid., p. vii.

[77]Ibid., p. xxiv.

[78]See "The Function of Criticism at the Present Time," in *Essays by Matthew Arnold*, Ed. Humphrey Milford (London: Oxford University press, 1914), p. 22.

[79]See *Literary Theory: An Introduction*, Second Edition (1983; New Delhi: Maya Blackwell Doaba Publication, 2000), p. 208.

[80]Brian Vickers, *Appropriating Shakespeare* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1993), p. 92.

[81]Ibid., p. 93.

Chapter I

Conditions Leading to Shakespeare Studies

(1753 – 1835)

As a token of their abiding love and reverence for the bard of Stratford, the people of Calcutta (now Kolkata) got the historical Theatre Road renamed as Shakespeare *Saranee* (Bangala word for Road) on the occasion of his 400th birth anniversary (23 April 1964).[1] In the same year of Shakespeare's anniversary Calcutta University, the first Indian university established by the British rulers in 1857, also brought out a memorial volume of essays on Shakespeare's impact on the life and literature of the people of Bengal.[2] The same year, the Hindu College (later named Presidency College), the first Indian college of English education established in 1817, brought out its own Shakespeare Commemoration Volume. In the brief history of the College prefacing the volume, the College rightly claimed its pioneering role in introducing Shakespeare studies in colonial Bengal.[3]

These three events in Calcutta were the crowning moments of the city's 200-year old association with Shakespeare. For a proper appreciation and understanding of this association, which embodies within its fold the history of Shakespeare studies in India, one must explore the foundational phase spread between Shakespeare's entry into Bengal around the middle of the eighteenth century and the formal teaching of Shakespeare in Calcutta in the early nineteenth century. The reason why Calcutta remains crucial for Shakespeare studies in India is because during its foundational phase Calcutta University's jurisdiction was "far-flung, extending from Peshawar [bordering Afganistan] to Rangoon [the capital of Burma (now Myanmar)] and therefore Shakespeare-teaching within this jurisdiction involved the responses of a wide variety of linguistic and cultural groups ...."[4] In other words, Shakespeare studies in Bengal, practically Calcutta, was pivotal, for it had wider ramifications in the British Indian colony. Being the only affiliating university at the time, not merely the first, Calcutta University's role was vital and seminal in promoting Shakespeare studies on the Indian subcontinent.

It is quite essential, therefore, to look into the socio-economic and politico-cultural conditions in India which facilitated the introduction of English education, leading to the study of Shakespeare in colleges and universities, making the reading of his plays a mark of distinction for a student. When Professor P.C.Ghosh, a renowned Shakespeare teacher in colonial Bengal, asked his students in 1927 how many plays of

Shakespeare they had read, there was one Taraknath Sen in the first year of the B.A. course who had read all the plays of Shakespeare.[5] The very fact that the knowledge of Shakespeare was viewed as a mark of one's distinction shows how Shakespeare enjoyed a special status among educated Bengalis.

The growth of Shakespeare studies in India is closely related to the growth of the city of Calcutta. From the city's foundation in 1690, when Job Charnok anchored his boat in Sutnati village on the river Hooghly, to its development into a seat of power in 1773, when Warren Hastings made it the capital city of the British Rule in India, Shakespeare too had been introduced to the Indians, soon becoming an attraction for the city dwellers. When the fortune-seeking British traders created the city they had also built, first a fort, and then a playhouse in 1753.[6] As Kironmoy Raha sums up the growth of theatres in Calcutta:

> Contemporary accounts of the plays and productions in the English theatre make interesting reading. One is struck by the lively press coverage they received and by zest and accomplishment of those associated with them. The Calcutta Theatre [established in 1779] ran for thirty three years .... In between had come and gone the brief but dazzling existence of Mrs. Bristow's Private Theatre .... Brief were also the lives of the Wheeler Place Theatre, the Dum Dum Theatre, the Baitaconah Theatre and the Atheneum. The most famous was the Chowringhee Theatre whose opening in November, 1813 was attended by the Governor-General, Lord Moira .... Among its founders were many distinguished persons of the period like Dr. H.H.Wilson, the Sanskrit scholar, D.L.Richardson, the famous teacher of Hindu College ... Dwarka Nath Tagore.[7]

Raha's mention of "Richardson, the famous teacher of Hindu College," as one of the founders of Chawringhee theatre is not correct, because Richardson was born in 1801 and joined Hindu College in 1837. He had not even come to India in 1813 when the Chawringhee theatre is said to have been founded. No doubt, Richardson remained actively associated with this theatre, but only after he had joined Hindu College in 1837. It was in these theatres that Shakespeare had been introduced to the Indian middle class intelligentsia in Calcutta; a sizable number of this class had already acquired a high proficiency in the English language. As Sheldon Pollock has described in detail, using Mary Louise Pratt's theory of four "contact zones,"[8] "The social mechanisms that enabled English to migrate from its community of migrant native speakers to groups of

potential Indian users consisted of four primary zones of interracial contact and acculturation," namely "the zone of employment," "the zone of marriage and family," "the zone of religious conversion," and "the zone of friendship and social relations."[9] Thus, English in India got introduced not after Macaulay's Minute of 1835, nor even with the establishment of Hindu College in 1817, but right at the time when the British merchants came to India in the early seventeenth century. Through business and social contacts, from private schools run by the wives of the British officers and the missionary schools, this multi-source spread of English in India, so well mapped out by Pollock, also disproves the postcolonial contention that English in India was an imperial project to subjugate the natives. The "project" came over two centuries after English had come to India, and the natives had been formally subjugated after the battle of Plassey in 1757.

English in India, to begin with, was the language of the officers and soldiers of the East India Company, as well as of the rich merchants and civilians who had come from England. It is quite possible that these Englishmen brought with them the plays of Shakespeare along with other European literary works for their individual reading.[10] But the actual encounter of Shakespeare with the native population took place when he was put on the stage and introduced in the classrooms, respectively in 1753[11] and 1817[12]. Before delving into the detail of this encounter, however, it seems imperative to look into the nature of interaction that took place between the two countries on the educational front, for it is that front, more than any other, which would reveal the reason why Shakespeare received such a warm welcome from the Indians who at once adopted him as their own. As V.Y. Kantak has put it, "it seems natural and inevitable that Shakespeare's insights appear so integral to the stuff of our own deepest reveries. Time and again it may happen that his words and situations fetch forth ... an image that holds a special meaning for us."[13] Even though a vague and large statement, in that it presumes to speak for an entire nation, it is understandable that a scholar of Kantak's range of reading in classical Indian literature should entertain such a feeling. Kantak's statement tends to be a little mystical as well. But the critic sounds more convincing when he argues the following:

> One recognizes the fact that Shakespeare entered the Indian cultural ambit largely as a concomitant of the British connection. There is however a factor of a considerable wider and deeper significance connected with his 'advent' in India. Could it be that Shakespeare hit us at a moment in our history when we were most impressionable to

the kind of fusion of renaissance action and medieval thought that his work embodies?[14]

Here, Kantak has touched upon something central in the early Indian response to Shakespeare: the similarity between English Renaissance and the Indian Renaissance of the nineteenth century has been talked about by several Indians from Rammohan Roy onwards. Like the European Renaissance, that came about with the encounter between ancient Graeco-Roman learning and medieval Christianity, the Indian Renaissance emerged from an encounter between the European science and literature (taught through English) and the medieval Indian orthodoxy. The outcome in both cases was victory for the "new learning." Several scholars, such as Pandit Sivnath Sastri (*A History of Renaissance in Bengal*), Subrata Dasgupta (*Awakening: The story of Bengal Renaissance*), Tapan Raychaudhury (*Europe Reconsidered: Perceptions of the West in Nineteenth Century Bengal*), have shown the emancipating impact of English education on the Indians.

When the English language entered India, followed by English education, it had to contend with the native languages and the education imparted through them. India had a well developed system of education of its own before the British captured power in the eighteenth century. The emphasis, ever since the Vedic age, however, had remained on the classical and spiritual, not on the practical aspects of learning. Higher education in particular laid emphasis on the study of literature, philosophy, and religion. The languages employed to impart this learning were Sanskrit, Arabic and Persian. "The subjects taught were the scriptures, grammar, logic and the classics, which included the codes of law and such scientific works as had come down to them from early times."[15] While the Hindus received this learning in the homely atmosphere of *Tols* and *Chatuspathis,* as these educational institutions were called in the regions of Bengal and Bihar, the Muslims received it in the mosque-like environment of their own exclusive institutions called Madrasas, chiefly meant for the propagation of their religion. Both in Sanskrit and Arabic schooling, other subjects of study included the scriptures, literature, grammar, logic, rhetoric, natural philosophy and arithmetic. While centres of higher education were restricted to towns, those for primary education were situated in the villages and were called *pathsalas* and *maktabs* where respectively the *Gurus* and *Maulavis* imparted a knowledge of the three "Rs" to students.[16]

These indigenous educational institutions of higher and primary learning, which had survived through centuries, weathering changing social and economic conditions, had of late started showing signs of decay. It was around this very time that the British

made their entry into India. Initially, the East India Company also did not take any interest in the native education, their sole concern being the consolidation of political power in the Indian territory. Before the missionaries took up the cause of English education, as D.P. Sinha points out:

> attempts had been made by certain individuals of Calcutta. The people who undertook this task were often soldiers incapable of further service, bankrupt merchants or ruined spendthrifts and even destitute widows with little education and no capacity for teaching .... the education imparted in these seminaries was of a very low order which was, however, considered sufficient for employment in subordinate situations under the government or in mercantile firms."[17]

Whatever the motivation or compulsion behind this private teaching of English, these individuals made their contribution to the promotion of English education in India, which became an important means of modernization of the natives.

Simultaneously, there were individual efforts afoot on the British side to understand the literature and scriptures of the native people. The Orientalists, seeking help from local Pundits (Sanskrit scholars), revived in modern languages the ancient literary treasure of India. The cultural encounter, far apart from the political, made its own impact on the Indian intelligentsia. As K.K.Dyson has rightly observed:

> The scene of many cultural confrontations, India became the ground of an East-West meeting, with more than one movement worthy to be called a renaissance, the ripples of which are still travelling outwards today. There was the European discovery of India's cultural heritage, with the emergence of Oriental scholarship, the reconstruction of the history of ancient India, the discovery of the Indo-European family of languages, etc., leading to the growth of modern disciplines such as comparative philology, comparative mythology, and comparative religious studies; starting with the response of the Bengali intelligentsia to Western education, there was the Indian discovery of Western learning and thought; finally, as a result of these two events working together, there was an Indian cultural revival, beginning in Bengal, and in the early stages specifically referred to by historians as the Bengal Renaissance.[18]

Decidedly, if the Orientalists modernised India's ancient learning, those promoting English education imparted modern science and literature of the West to the youth of Bengal. The new European learning also made available to Indians new ideas of liberty and equality, of nation and state. The education of the Western liberal humanism surely did much more to change India from medieval to modern mode than the Orientalists' revival of the ancient Hindu texts.

One of the consequences of the cultural encounter between the British colonisers and the colonised Indians was the emergence of the Orientalists among the ruling elite. Foremost among these was Warren Hastings, who came to India as a servant of the East India Company in 1751, and by 1772 had become the Governor of Fort-William in Bengal. Hastings soon became a great admirer of the Indo-Persian culture. As Governor-General of Bengal, he promoted Oriental scholarship, encouraging Nathaniel Halhed to write *A Code of Gentoo Laws* in 1776 and *Bengali Grammar* in 1778; and goading Charles Wilkins to translate the *Bhagvad Gita* into English, which came out in 1775 and became the first English translation of the song celestial. Wilkins also wrote his grammar of Sanskrit. Also, under the patronage of Hastings, Francis Gladwin wrote *Institutes of the Emperor Akbar* in 1783.

Another effort of Hastings to promote Oriental scholarship was to establish the Calcutta Madrassa on the request of the Indian Muslims. The courses taught in this institution included natural philosophy, Quranic theology, law, geometry, arithmetic, logic and grammar. The medium of instruction for all these subjects was Arabic. Hastings procured land for the Madrassa and asked the Court of Directors to make the rent of some villages near Calcutta as an endowment for the Madrassa. The directors did as directed and returned the money Hastings had spent on the land for this Muslim institution.

Here, it must be mentioned that in nineteenth century Bengal, not all Indians took to English education. As Geoffrey Moorhouse reports:

> the first effective thing the educational apparatus of nineteenth century Calcutta did for the Hindu Bengalis ... was to draw them far ahead of the Bengali Muslims in power and influence. The Muslims, having been dethroned in India by the Westerners, were not inclined to embrace Western values until their pride had started to heal again by the beginning of the twentieth century. Significantly, of 2,738 college students in Bengal in 1881-2, only 106 were Muslims; only

8.7 percent of the 44000 high school students were Muslims in that year.[19]

The rigid adherence of the Muslims to their religion may not have allowed them to take as much advantage of English education as the Hindus did. But there are other factors relevant to the unequal spread of education between the two communities. One of these may be the economic factor, for those comparatively in poorer economic condition are bound to have a lower percentage of education among them. Moorhouse has also missed the important factor of population ratio between the two communities, which could have given a more accurate picture of their repective position in schools and colleges. In any case, religion could not have been the only factor determining people's response to English education in colonial Bengal.

Another high official of the East India Company who took great interest in Oriental learning was William Jones. He was a well-known Persian scholar even before he came to India as a judge of the Supreme Court. His *Grammar of the Persian Language* and translation of Persian poets, published respectively in 1771 and 1773, had brought him fame as an Oriental scholar before he arrived in India. While in Calcutta, he started working enthusiastically to organise scholarly efforts in Bengal. In 1784, he established the "Asiatic Society" of Bengal with the objective to enquire into the histories and antiquities, arts, sciences and literatures of Asia. This society rendered great service to ancient learning in India by discovering, editing and publishing rare Sanskrit manuscripts. It also launched a journal, *Asiatic Researches,* which carried scholarly contributions in Oriental learning. Jones developed such a keen interest in Sanskrit learning that he began to live for three months every year in Nadia, an important centre for Sanskrit studies in Bengal. Jones became so well versed in Sanskrit that he was able to converse in it with the *Brahmins* at Nadia.[20]

The Orientalist enterprise may have been instrumental in some way in furthering the interests of the Empire. However, it may not be quite correct to say with Edward Said that it was a design[21] – to know the orient is to exercise power over them. The laudable scholarly work the British Orientalists did in India during the colonial period does not conform to Said's thesis. Michel Foucault, Said's acknowledged mentor, put forth the view that knowledge is power,[22] which Said uses to formulate his own thesis of Orientalism. Aijaz Ahmad's critique of Said, in fact, makes more sense when he observes: "A notable feature of Orientalism is that it examines the history of Western textualities about the non-West quite in isolation from how these textualities might have been received, accepted, modified, challenged, or reproduced by the intelligentsias of

the colonized countries."[23] Shakespeare studies – its history in India – goes a long way to illustrate the viewpoint Ahmed presents here. The postcolonial readings do make sense to an extent. But the dogmatic generalizations or theorizations such as Said's often run contrary to facts available from the historical evidence of the time. Even more than Ahmed, Rosinka Chaudhuri sounds quite convincing when she remarks:

> While acknowledging, always, the complicity of colonial rule in the creation of knowledge about the colonies, it is important to see the particularities of Orientalist studies (its idiom, its ideology, its rhetoric) also as regenerative material that was seized upon for self-expression ... and that became, eventually, a part of the Indian's self-consciousness. The areas of knowledge studied and disseminated by Orientalist scholars (language, literature, culture, history, heritage) were also appropriated as instruments by the urban educated, upper-and middle-class Indian.[24]

Here, again it must be reiterated, without in any way minimising the role of English Orientalists in effecting an awakening in the Indian intelligentsia of its own past, that the more radical transformation of the medieval India was done by English education that spread from different agencies operating to achieve their own different ends.

If there were people who appreciated native literature and cherished its heritage, there were others who did not value the cultural traditions of the alien land. Charles Grant, who came to India in 1767, was one such person, and quite influential at that. He was struck by the degeneration of Indian society after the disintegration of the Mughal empire. Grant felt that superstition had gained a strong foothold in the religious and social life of India. In the name of religion, he thought, *Brahmins* were misleading the common ignorant people who took them as the source of all wisdom. In the social sphere, Grant saw practices of infanticide, caste system, and Sati (burning of living women along with their dead husbands). He was particularly distressed to see the treatment meted out to the lower classes and women. Grant did not read any native literature. Neither was he aware of the cultural past of the country. He saw the present as it revealed itself to him and he felt disgusted with what he saw.

Grant's desire to do something to remove the evils of Indian society was commendable, but the remedy he thought of was not so convincing to many. He felt that the orthodox and superstitious social practices in Indian society could be overcome through teachings of Christianity. In 1790, when he returned to England, he started working with enthusiasm to move his proposal in the British Parliament to compel the

Directors of the East India Company to allow the missionaries to migrate to India for proselytization. However, Grant had to drop his move when King George III conveyed his disapproval to the scheme, finding the scheme untenable for the Indian situation. William Wilberforce, an MP for York, with whom Grant had been in touch before he returned to London in 1790, then advised him to give his plan another colouring. He suggested that instead a plan should be drafted for the diffusion of Western knowledge in India, and not to plead the cause of the missionaries. Grant took the advice and wrote his historical document, *Observations on the State of Society among the Asiatic subjects of Great Britain, Particularly in the Respect of Morals and on the Means of Improving It.*[25]

In his treatise, published in 1797, Grant alleged that the Hindus were dishonest and corrupt and practised barbarous customs such as *Sati*. He did not spare the Muslims either, and called them licentious and lawless. Grant also blamed the East India Company for being apathetic towards these evils. His remedy for the cure of these ills was to replace native religions with Christianity through the teaching of science and literature of Europe. He also suggested that English should be used as the medium of instruction. Grant went further to suggest that English should replace Persian as official language. He also advocated the establishment of English schools and recruitment of teachers with good moral character. His expectation was that very soon the students trained in these schools would themselves act as teachers of English for the native Indians.[26]

When Grant's proposal was put before the British Parliament for discussion, on the occasion of the renewal of the Company's Charter, the Attorney-General and the Solicitor General pointed out that the real purpose was to seek through this elaborate plan the migration of missionaries and school masters to India for converting Indians to Christianity. They warned that the plan would be detrimental to the business interests of the Company, and that such a move could lead to political unrest in India. The bill was defeated in both the Houses of Parliament ending Grant's dream to rejuvenate Indian society through Christianity.[27] The conversion aspect apart, Grant's plan had touched upon some of the key issues later taken up in Macaulay's famous Minute of 1835. Had Grant's proposal been accepted, he could have claimed to be the pioneer of introducing Western education in India at least half a century before Macaulay.

It is remarkable that the failure of Grant's plan did not discourage him from making further attempts to pursue his cause. The Chairman of the Court of Directors used at the time to select Chaplains for the Europeans in India. Grant, when he came to

hold this Chair, used the opportunity and sent out to India staunch evangelists like C.Buchanan and Henry Martin.[28] He also found support for his plan among the retired officials of the East India Company. For instance, Sir John Shore, after his retirement from the Governor-Generalship of Bengal, made this plea: "Until our subjects there [in India] shall be animated with us by a community of religious faith, we shall never consider our dominion as secure against the effects of external attack or internal commotion."[29]

As a matter of fact, Grant was not the only one who wanted to introduce Christianity in India; Christian missionaries had already been trying to gain official entry in the country for a long time. It had already been decided by Lord North's Regulating Act of 1773 that the Charter Act of East India Company was to be renewed every twenty years. Accordingly, when the term of the Company's Charter was due for renewal in 1813, the missionaries prepared themselves to present their case with full force in the Parliament. In February 1812, a Committee was constituted with five members, namely Bishop William Wilberforce, Charles Grant, and Henry Thornton. The Committee's task was to arrange, on behalf of Christian organizations, an interview with the Committee of Parliament. On the other hand, the Directors of the East India Company produced their own case before the Committee making a strong plea against sending missionaries to India. They emphasized the possibility of its creating adverse political reaction among the native Indians.[30]

This struggle between the Company officials and the missionaries came to a halt with the passage of the Charter Act on 21 July 1813. The missionaries won the battle as the Board of Control was given the authority to issue licences to the missionaries for migration to India. Another important aspect of the Charter was its Clause 43, which was inserted to address the question of dissemination of education among the Indians. The Clause reads as follows:

> It shall be lawful for the Governor General-in-Council to direct that out of any surplus which may remain of the rents, revenues, and profits arising from the said territorial acquisitions, after defraying the expenses of the military, civil, and commercial establishments and paying the interest of the debt, in manner herein-after provided, a sum of not less than one lac of rupees in each year shall be set apart and applied to the revival and improvement of literature and the encouragement of the learned natives of India and for the

introduction and promotion of a knowledge of the sciences among the inhabitants of the British territories in India."[31]

Although this budgetary spending on education was only 1 percent of the Company's tax revenue, as compared to 25 percent on the armed forces,[32] it was a welcome measure, for it did help promote modern education in India. English education in India, even if truncated, can be said to have been officially introduced in 1813. As for the seemingly meagre sum spent on education, it should not be a big surprise if we know that even in the current year's budget of free and rising India, only 2.86 percent is spared for education.

The said Clause proved crucial for inducting English education in India, for it made the Company responsible for the education of the natives. And it came at a time when education was not a state responsibility even in England. Also, the said Clause was rather vague and could be subjected to different interpretations. The Court of Directors, however, showed an Orientalist bias in making an interpretation of this clause. They emphasised two distinct aspects of the Clause, namely, "the encouragement of the learned natives of India and the revival and improvement of literature; secondly, the promotion of a knowledge of the sciences amongst the inhabitants of that country."[33] Thus, the introduction of English education was made in a rather truncated form. The missionaries, however, were not hampered by the clause 43 because their institutions were not aided by the Company.

The Court of Directors proposed to encourage the classical literature and sciences through the already existing Indian practice of giving "instruction at their own houses, and by encouraging them in the exercise and cultivation of their talents by the stimulus of honorary marks of distinctions, and in some instances by grants of pecuniary assistance."[34] They, in fact, chose not to mention Western education in the Despatch; instead, they emphasised the merits of Sanskrit literature, thought to be rich in ethics, and scientific works. The practical outcome of this interpretation was the proposal to open a Sanskrit College in Calcutta on the model of the Sanskrit College at Benaras. The Company proposed to give Rs. 25000 as annual grant to the College directing it to cultivate Hindu literature and facilitate gradual diffusion of European knowledge.[35]

The Charter Act of 1813 thus provided definite guidelines to the Government for spending surplus territorial revenue on education. Consequently, the colonial Government decided to pursue a general policy towards educational matters in the Bengal Presidency adopting on 17 July 1823 a note on the subject by Holt Mackenzie,

Secretary to the Government in the Territorial Department.[36] The note emphasised the necessity to take appropriate measures for the moral and intellectual development of the Indian people. It suggested two more measures: firstly, that European science should be introduced as part of the general scheme of education; and secondly, that "the Government should apply itself chiefly to the instruction of those who would themselves be teachers doing translation, compilation and publication of useful works;" Mackenzie had further suggested that after achieving these objects, the Government should concentrate on establishing "colleges for the instruction of ... educated and influential classes;" He had also advocated the formation of an "Association of Oriental learning with European Science and the general introduction of the latter, without any attempt arbitrarily to supersede the former."[37] This also implied support to existing institutions and establishment of new ones. Mackenzie preferred English as medium of instruction, hoping that the measure would facilitate the development of a language community. He finally proposed the establishment of a General Committee of Public Instruction for giving effect to his proposals.

Mackenzie's proposal to establish a General Committee of Public Instruction found favour with the Governor-General in Council. The Committee consisted of ten members with W.H.Harrington as President and H.H.Wilson as Secretary. Most members of the Committee were Oriental scholars. The only member in favour of English education was Holt Mackenzie, all other members being Orientalists. The performance of the Committee was marred by its very constitution. Having been administrators in the Company's set-up most of these members were wary of attracting adverse public opinion, especially about matters related to culture and religion of the native people in Bengal. In their view, any change in the existing system of education might antagonise the public. So, rather than introduce Western education, the Committee gave recognition to the Calcutta Madrassa and the Benaras Sanskrit College and established a Sanskrit College at Calcutta, besides two Oriental Colleges at Agra and Delhi. It also provided financial assistance to some *Tols* and Madrassas; employed Oriental scholars to translate useful English books into Arabic, Persian and Sanskrit; and undertook printing and publishing of Oriental manuscripts.[38]

Decidedly, the General Committee of Public Instruction interpreted Clause 43 of the Charter Act of 1813 in favour of the Orientalists. The chief reason for this tilt was the members' mind-set in favour of the status-quo in matters related to education and culture; any radical step in these fields, they thought, might provoke adverse reaction from the natives. Obviously, these dignitaries were unable to gauge the change that was

taking place in the Indian society. Sensing the ensuing benefits of English education, the Indians were getting more and more eager to acquire knowledge of English language and all that was available through it. Hence, English education remained largely a private enterprise in the early years of the nineteenth century.

The early nineteenth century also witnessed the rise of the middle class in the major cities of British India – Calcutta, Bombay and Madras. This middle class aspired to acquire jobs in the British administration and to fulfil that ambition, acquisition of the rulers' language was thought to be essential. There were also some educated Indians, most notably Raja Rammohan Roy, who realised the futility of pursuing a system of Indian classical education, and saw great future in knowing the language and literature of the West. As Rosinka Chaudhuri remarks:

> The study of English was not seen to be in need of government subsidy as it had been operating as a successful commercial venture in Calcutta since the late eighteenth century. Every Englishman, it was said, in strained circumstances – the broken-down soldier, the bankrupt merchant and the ruined spendthrift – set up a day school. Since the advent of European traders, Bengalis had demanded and obtained, at whatever cost and of whatever quality, an acquaintance with the English language.[39]

Evidently, English found its way among the Indians not only without government support but also much before the government adopted it officially.

The growing enthusiasm in the Indian public necessitated the opening of institutions imparting education in English language and Western literature. The pioneering effort in this direction was made by Raja Rammohan Roy, a retired Revenue Officer of the Company, and David Hare, a Scottish watch-maker in Calcutta. In 1815, Roy and Hare thought of establishing an English institution at Calcutta, and on 20 January 1817 successfully started the Hindu College. The foundation of this College was important as it was the effort of a few people to meet the growing public demand for English and literature of the West. But the Government, at the time, was not ready to support any effort in this direction. This reflects the disparity between what the people wanted and what the Government was willing to offer to them. In the view of Roy,

> With respect to the Hindu College in Calcutta ... many learned Christians object to the system therein followed of teaching literature and science without religion being united with them; because they consider this as having a tendency to destroy the religious principles of the students ... without substituting anything religious in their stead.[40]

Roy's persistent petitions to the British Parliament for extending the benefit of English education to the Indians once again belies the postclonial thesis that introduction of English education was an imperial project aimed at enslaving the native population.

Another force gathering strength in the early nineteenth century British society, also spreading its influence in British India, was Utilitarianism. Bentham, Malthus, Ricardo and Mill were making an impact on the public mind with their new ideas. Many of the young men from Britain, influenced by the principles of Utilitarianism, were sent out to India to serve the East India Company. These officials influenced the decisions of the Company in formulating the laws for British India. Also, James Mill, the faithful follower of Jeremy Bentham, challenged the orthodox values prevalent in the Indian society; he disagreed with the Orientalist Hastings, Jones, Wilkins and Wilson on the point of their praise of these values in his *History of British India.* This work earned Mill and his more famous son John Stuart Mill appointments in East India House, which increased the utilitarian influence in the headquarters of the Company. James Mill's views on the introduction of English in the education of the native Indians deserve serious consideration. To the question posed by the Select Committee of the House of Commons, 'would not the dissemination of the English language among them ... further the object of introducing native agency to a much greater extent into the various departments of the government and thereby identifying the people with the interests of their rulers?', his reply was:

> Community of language has not much identified the Irish people with the governors. I am not sure that the natives would become one whit better adapted for the great part of the employments in which we should place them by having the English language, excepting in this, that by becoming acquainted with English literature they would have a chance of having their understandings better enlightened; but that advantage, I think, is likely to be attained more speedily and exclusively by the translation of European books into their own languages.[41]

The Mills and their followers as well as the enlightened Indians began to resist the activities of the General Committee of Public Instruction. For instance, as soon as the proposal of the Committee to establish a Sanskrit College at Calcutta came to be known, it was strongly opposed by these elements. Rammohan Roy wrote a letter to Lord Amherst, the Governor-General of Bengal, on 11 December 1823, registering his protest. However, the Government did not pay any attention to Roy's objections and opened the Sanskrit College at Calcutta in 1824. Meanwhile the Committee received a

serious jolt from the headquarters of East India Company in London. In a dispatch of 18 February 1824, the Directors wrote:

> We apprehend that the plan of the institutions to the improvement of which our attention is now directed was originally and fundamentally erroneous. The great end should not have been to teach Hindu learning, but useful learning .... In professing, on the other hand, to establish seminaries for the purpose of teaching mere Hindu or mere Mohamadan literature, you bound yourselves to teach a great deal of what was frivolous, not a little of what was purely mischievous, a small remained indeed in which utility was in any way concerned.[42]

One can see here the Utilitarian emphasis in the despatch. With many a Company officer sharing the Utilitarian philosophy, this practical sense was bound to dominate the Company's education policy in India. And it did so.

Not quite appreciating the tone and tenor of the Despatch, the Committee continued with its work of promoting Oriental learning in India. The only difference the Directors' letter made was the introduction of English classes in Calcutta Madrassa, Calcutta Sanskrit College, and Delhi College. Meanwhile, by 1828 a new Governor-General, Lord William Bentinck, had taken over the Company's command. He was greatly influenced by the ideas of Utilitarianism, then in vogue in England. He wanted to introduce changes in the administration of the General Committee of Public Instruction. In a letter written to the Committee in 1829, he made it clear that it was the wish of the British Government to make its own language slowly but steadily the language of public use throughout the Indian colony. This led to the introduction of English classes in all the important Oriental institutions at Calcutta, Delhi and Benaras.

In fact, it was not just the external forces that were affecting the Committee's functioning; inside the Committee also there were members who were pressing for changes towards modernisation. By 1830, the Committee had come to have some new members who were profoundly influenced by the Utilitarian ideas of Mill and Bentham. These members did not support the Committee's work for the promotion of Oriental learning in India. Also, two important happenings at the time changed the functioning of the Committee for all times to come. Firstly, Horace Hayman Wilson, a staunch supporter of Orientalists, departed from India in January 1833. Secondly, the Charter Act of 1833 brought T.B. Macaulay as Law Member on the Council of the Governor-General of India from 8 June 1834.

Soon after Macaulay's arrival in India Bentinck promoted him as President of the General Committee of Public Instruction. Initially, Macaulay did not involve himself in the controversy between Orientalists and Anglicists. It was only when both the factions decided to approach Governor General Bentinck after their failure to reach a compromise on the future education policy of the government that he drafted, at the suggestion of Bentinck, an elaborate minute advocating the introduction of English education, which he submitted on 2 February 1835.[43]

Macaulay reinterpreted clause 43 of the Charter Act of 1813 by arguing that the word "literature" in it is meant to include English literature, and that the expression "learned native of India" also included the one familiar with the philosophy of Locke or the work of Milton. He further argued that the purpose of promoting the study of science could be achieved only if English was made as the medium of instruction. He was against the perpetuation of Oriental learning and proposed that the institutions imparting that learning were wound up as they were not of any practical use.

Macaulay dismissed the claims of Sanskrit and Arabic as medium of instruction on the ground "that dialects commonly spoken among the natives of this part of India contain neither literary nor scientific information, and ... it will not be easy to translate any valuable work into them."[44] Macaulay may not have been aware of the literary merit of the native dialects, but his argument about their inadequacy as medium of instruction for scientific knowledge is irrefutable. Advocating the claim of English as medium of instruction, he goes on to argue as follows:

> The claims of our own language it is hardly necessary to recapitulate. It stands pre-eminent even among the languages of the West ... Whoever knows has ready access to all the vast intellectual wealth which all the wisest nations of the earth have created and hoarded in the course of ninety generations. It may safely be said that the literature now extant in that language is of greater value than all the literature which three hundred years ago was extant in all the languages of the world together ... In India, English is the language spoken by the ruling class of natives at the seats of Government. It is likely to become language of commerce throughout the seas of the East.[45]

Macaulay's claim may not convince the postcolonial critics, but looking back now one realizes the force of his prophetic statement. For today not only is the ruling elite in India English speaking, more people speak English in this country today than the

combined population of England and America.[46] As to learning English, whereas during the British Raj it was introduced after the Primary stage, the leading states of the Indian Union today have made it mandatory to learn English from the very first year in school.

Macaulay further emphasized the need to impart English education by arguing that Indians themselves preferred an English education to their own – as was amply shown by the rush of students at the Hindu College and the Scottish Church College in Calcutta, and shown also by the corresponding desertion of the Sanskrit College and the Madrassa in the same city, and all that despite the stipends given to each student joining these oriental institutions. He also argued that while the Committee of Public Instruction was finding it hard to dispose of Oriental publications, the English books of the Calcutta School Book Society were selling in large numbers.

Of course, it was not Macaulay alone who had influenced the decision subsequently made by the colonial government; the towering Indian leaders like Rammohan Roy had played an equally important role. Well before Macaulay's minute of 1835 Roy had addressed a letter "To His Excellency The Right Honourable Lord Amherst, Governor General in Council," in 1824, which sums up his long struggle for the cause of English education. The concluding paragraph of the letter contains the crux of his appeal:

> If it had been intended to keep the British nation in ignorance of real knowledge, the Baconian philosophy would not have been allowed to displace the system of the schoolmen which was best calculated to perpetuate ignorance. In the same manner the Sanscrit system of education would be the best calculated to keep this country in darkness, if such had been the policy of the British legislature. But as the improvement of the native population is the object of the Government, it will consequently promote a more liberal and enlightened system of instruction, embracing Mathematics, Natural Philosophy, Chemistry, Anatomy, with other useful sciences, which may be accomplished with the sums proposed by employing a few gentlemen of talent and learning educated in Europe and providing a College furnished with necessary books, instruments, and other apparatus.[47]

Thus Roy had already submitted in 1824 precisely the reasons for introducing English education as were later put forth by Macaulay. Governor General Bentinck gave his approval to the suggestions offered by Macaulay in his resolution of 7 March 1835. He

asserted that the great object of the British Government ought to be the promotion of European literature and science among the natives of India; and that all the funds appropriated for the purpose of education would be best employed on English education alone. Bentinck further clarfied that it was not his intention to close any college or school of native learning if the native population remained inclined to avail themselves of the advantages it affords. But he did not approve of the expenditure being spent by the Committee on the printing of Oriental works which remained lying unsold. The Governor General directed the Committee that all the funds left at its disposal be henceforth employed in imparting to the native population a knowledge of European literature and science.[48]

This order by Bentinck disappointed the Orientalists, as they finally lost the battle to the Anglicists. This resolution was also important for the promotion of education in the private sector. It marked the beginning of the Government support to institutions like Hindu College which took the responsibility of promoting modern education through public enterprise. The pattern of education thus evolved has continued since then, as the policy has been pursued even after India's independence in 1947. Even until recently, some Governments in India used to support colleges with as much as 95 percent grant-in-aid, and take over whichever college failed to financially sustain itself. In their pursuit of neo-liberalism since 1990's, Governments in India are preferring to promote privatisation of education even in public sector, continuously reducing support for higher education.

It was the resolution of this sensitive issue of introducing English education that facilitated the formal study of Shakespeare in schools and colleges. Hindu College, the first institution in the country to impart Western learning to the natives, was also the first institution of higher learning where Shakespeare was introduced in the classrooms. Outside the classroom, however, Shakespeare had found entry among the Indians a long time before the establishment of the Hindu College in Calcutta in 1817. The birth of Hindu College had come about after a long churning of East-West encounter in India; it can be rightly designated as the morning star of modern India, for it was from this institution that radical thought sprouted and spread far and wide around Calcutta.

The first English theatre set up in Calcutta in 1753, called the Playhouse, was where Shakespeare plays were staged for the immense entertainment of the Indian elite. The Playhouse was set up by a society or club that called itself the "Young Writers of John Company." Since there were no newspapers at the time to report on the activities of the Playhouse, not much is known as to the particular plays popular with the Calcutta

audience. Also. the Playhouse was destroyed in 1756 when the troops of Nawab Siraj-ud Daula attacked the English garrison in Calcutta. However, a replacement was raised in 1772 and the New Playhouse or the Calcutta Theatre followed in 1775.[49] Speaking of the old and new Playhouse, in his book on Calcutta, Geoffrey Moorhouse reports, "David Garrick had a hand in promoting the first and supervised the despatch of scenery for the second, and the grateful local patrons sent him two pipes of *Madeira* for his kind interest. Then they watched...Shakespeare from a seat in the pit at Rs. 12 or a bench in the gallery at Rs. 6; ..."[50] Governor-General Warren Hastings was among its patrons. In 1780, two newspapers, *The Bengal Gazette* and *The Indian Gazette,* were started.[51] It is in such chronicles as these two, in the advertisements, announcements, previews and reviews of performances, news of arrival or departure of actors or of theatrical companies, that one finds the records of actors, theatres, and performances, of which no other evidence or trace remains.

From these newspapers one learns that the most influential and popular dramatist of the time was Shakespeare. Between 1775 when the New Playhouse was established and 1808 when it closed, it had witnessed the performance of at least eight Shakespearean plays, *Hamlet, Romeo and Juliet, The Merchant of Venice, and Richard III* among them. The last mentioned play seems to have been very well received and mentioned in the *Calcutta Gazette* (31 January 1788) as a performance that went off with "well merited éclat."[52]

Such pieces of information are stored in the *Bengal Gazette,* founded by an Irishman named James Augustus Hickey, "a weekly political and commercial paper open to all parties, but influenced by none."[53] An interesting item one comes across in Hickey's *Gazette* is a parody of "To be or not to be":

> To print – or not to print – that is the question. Whether it is nobler for a man to suffer the threats and anger of the S-p-e C-n-l [Supreme Council] or to defy them and the B---d of C-m-e [Board of Commerce], and by opposing tease them! But to stop to print – no more – and by that step to end all quabbles, and the thousand cursed plagues a printer's heir to – ti's [sic] a consumation by cowards to be wished. To cease to print my Gazette is perchance to starve – startling thoughts for in that idle state what cares may come when I have printed off my last Gazette, must give us pause – There's the respect that makes the Bengal Gazette so long lived. For who wou'd bear the insults of the time, the C-n-les [Councils'] frown, and D-es

> [Droze's] contumely – the pangs of weekly toil sorting types – laws array, the damn'd Post Office, and the spurns a patient printer of the unworthy fakes [Sic], when he himself might his quietus make by breaking up his press, - who wou'd bow, and cringe, and fawne obsequious at a Great Man's Breakfast, but that the dread of this same cursed starving, that land of famine from whose fell gripe no victim e'er returns – Puzzles the will, and makes the printer bear his present ills, and induces him to continue to print his Original Bengal Gazette than fly to projects that he knows not yet – thus famine doth make cowards of us all, and thus the boldest son of resolution ... is sicklied o'er by such pale starving thoughts, and Bengal Gazettes of great wit and spirit without roast beef and claret, die away and lose their circulation.[54]

The paper's popularity at the time is an evidence of its wide readership that relished its satires and parodies, scandals and saucy roughness. Reports about performances, especially of Shakespeare's plays, appeared as one of the regular features of the *Gazette's* matter. Hickey's playful wit, though often vulgar, added spice to the *Gazette's* matter.

An early entry in the *Bengal Gazette* mentions Shakespeare in an editorial piece captioned "description of an Englishman in *Othello* by Shakespeare." The mention is followed by a citation from the play, which runs as follows:

> Iago : Did you ever hear an Englishman reckon up the Priviledges [Sic] he has by Birth Right?
>
> Cassio : No - good Iago – what are they, pray?
>
> Iago : Why to say what he pleases of the Government; to eat more Beef and drink more claret than any Three Subjects of any other country; and to do whatever he pleases wherever he is:- Therefore he raves at his King though ever so good, while a Frenchman worships the worst, - He breaks this week the law he voted for the last and in all Countries, he is winked at and excused, for doing what would send a Native to a Mad House – He eats up the whole Ox in less Time, than a Frenchman swills the soup he makes of the shine – and as to Drinking, your dane [Sic], your German and your swag Belly'd Hollander are nothing to your Free Born Englishman, in his

> drinking, he lay your france [Sic], Austria, and Russia at the feet of the table, with no more concern at the Tavern, than in the field of Battle.[55]

The quotation, to say the least, is incorrect, freely distorted. But that is what made Hickey popular in Calcutta. He "Indianised" English, so to say, and freely misquoted Shakespeare to suit his comic ends. Hickey's selection from *Othello* is significant for more reasons than one. In the first place, this was the best way to sell Shakespeare in the new British colony where people would be curious to know about their new rulers. For another, the citation is in simple prose, informative about the various nationalities of Europe in comparison with the British. In the tragic plot of the play, such comic digressions may not be of great importance, but they do serve the purpose of making Shakespeare interesting to the Indian readers who could not be expected to grasp, at that initial stage, the subtleties of English the play's poetic passages would offer. The citation must have been of some interest also to Hickey, the Irishman, who would relish Shakespeare's fun at the cost of his own countrymen.

A later issue of the *Bengal Gazette* carried an ingenious and amusing announcement about another performance of *Othello*, which is as follows:

> The Managers of the Theatre having generously offered to give a benefit play to Mr. Soubise, toward the completion of his Manege, Mr. Soubise will appear on that night in the character of Othello. And afterwards perform the part of Mungo in the entertainment ….. The part of Iago will be attempted by the Author of the Monitor, and desdemona [sic] by Mr. H. a gentleman of doubtful Gender.[56]

In keeping with the practice in England at the time, Hon'ble John Company's Men seem to have been actors as well as managers of the theatre just as Shakespeare himself was, or David Garrick was in the 18th Century. Here, the reference to Mr. H. seems to be to Hickey himself, the editor of *Bengal Gazette*, who was known as an eccentric Irishman. Hickey's acting or posing as a person of neutral sex may have been one of his eccentricities. Be it what it may, the announcement is very much in the manner of the eighteenth century periodical essay – *Tatler* or *Spectator* - in which assumed eccentricities of the editors formed popular stuff for the readers. Decidedly, such pieces in the *Bengal Gazette* were meant to create among the Indians a 'taste' for things English.

One also comes across Oliver Goldsmith's epitaph on David Garrick Esq., in the same *Gazette:*

Old Shakespeare received him with praise and with Love, And
Beaumonts, and Bens, be his Kelly's above.[57]

Goldsmith's tribute to Garrick finds space in the *Bengal Gazette* obviously because there must have been readers of the paper among Indians, as well as among Englishmen, who were conversant with the world of Shakespeare – his plays, the actors playing them, the reviewers and writers responding to them.

Evidence of the Indian knowledge of and interest in Shakespeare is also available in another issue of Hickey's paper in which someone called C.D. has addressed a long letter to the editor, questioning the judgment of the Orientalist William Jones, who had asserted the supremacy of the Persian poet, Hafez, over Shakespeare, saying that Shakespeare was far superior to the Persian poet. In his long literary petition, so to say, this writer C.D. informs the editor, through a mirthful prologue, that he has come upon in a London Newspaper the following epigram on the London theatres of Drury Lane and Convent Garden – where Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* had an unusual success, surpassing all anticipations:

"Well what today says angry Ned
As up from bed he rouses
Romeo again and shakes his head
A pox of both your Houses."

Citing the epigram, Mr. C.D. goes on to inform the editor, "The town, Sir, had been very sufficiently satisfied with repeated exhibitions of the same piece ...."[58]

Not keen to conclude his long support to the superiority of Shakespeare over Hafez or any other poet, Mr. C.D. goes on to pontificate on the beauties of Shakespeare's poetry, citing in full his sonnet No. XCIX, which Jones had used as a comparison to Hafez's "An Ode or Song of Hafez."[59] The unnecessarily long piece by Mr. C.D. only goes to show that the *Bengal Gazette's* readers welcomed discussions related to Shakespeare, though how many of the *Gazette's* readers were native Indians cannot be easily ascertained.

Another source of information about Shakespeare's entry into India and the initial native response to his work is *The Calcutta Gazette*, launched on March 4, 1784, which was a newspaper meant to circulate government notifications, founded by Francis Gladwin, an Oriental scholar and an officer of the East India Company. Later, the paper became the sole medium for public advertisements. *The Calcutta Gazette* reveals that *Romeo and Juliet* was performed in Calcutta on 23rd August 1784, *The Merchant of Venice* was staged on 18th October 1784. The newspaper report on these performances

also carried an announcement that the "Tragedy of *Hamlet* will be performed in the course of next week: but the managers have thought [it] proper to omit the farce of the 'Mock Doctor.'"[60]

It is interesting to note that while celebrating the first anniversary of *The Calcutta Gazette's* foundation, the paper proudly cited Hamlet's instructions to the players: "to hold as 'twere the mirror up to nature; to show Virtue her own feature, scorn her own image, and the very age and body of the time his form and pressure"[61] [III, ii. 24-26]. Here, Hamlet's words are used to assure the paper's patrons about the integrity of the editors in presenting only the truth, and nothing but the truth. The paper's editorial staff seem to prove their Hamlet-like concern with the style of realism when they put down the following: "While we agree on the very accurate performance of the 'Critic'... we cannot avoid suggesting, though with infinite deference to the Director of the Theatre ... that the Tragedies of Hamlet ... and Macbeth, stand very high in the public estimation, and that they anxiously hope to see him fill some of the principal characters in the Tragedies during the continuance of the cold season."[62]

We further gather from *The Calcutta Gazette* that while *Richard III* was performed in January, 1788 "with well merited eclat, *The Merchant of Venice* returned to the stage on November 19th, 1788." As the newspaper coverage seems to suggest, in the latter performance the roles enacted were "accurate and spirited," "elegant and interesting," or "feelingly dignified", as demanded by the ruling emotion and temperament of the individual characters. It also appears from the coverage that *The Merchant of Venice* was witnessed by a distinguished audience of Calcutta. Decidedly, the majority of the *Gazette* readers were English men and women, but that readership was increasingly joined by the emerging class of Indian Anglophiles, who would soon (in the next century) outnumber the native speakers of English.[63]

Although plays inferior to those of Shakespeare seem to have found greater favour with the Calcutta crowds, those advanced in taste and learning continued to demand the performance of the master dramatist's eternal compositions in the last decade of the eighteenth century. John Company's Men performed in those years dramas like *Grecian Daughter*, *Duke and No Duke*, *Deaf Lover*, *The Little Trifler*, *The Agreeable Surprise*, etc. As the *Calcutta Gazette* records reveal, they also performed, though not as frequently, the plays of Shakespeare.[64]

Yet another source for what was going on in the literary and cultural world of Calcutta in the later eighteenth century is *The Calcutta Monthly Journal,* which also carried articles and announcements on theatres and literary publications, helping us

know about writers and dramatists who dominated the gentlemen's cultural life in Calcutta. An interesting piece of information one comes upon in the *Journal's* pages is as follows:

> A violent fire broke out on Sunday evening, the 25th ultimo, in the market known by the name of *Shakespeare's Bazar*, at the corner of the *Durrumtollah*, which consumed a great number of huts, and destroyed considerable property.[65]

The fact that a *Bazar* existed in Calcutta named after the legendary dramatist as early as 1798 shows how by the end of the eighteenth century the Bard of Stratford had squarely conquered Calcutta, adding yet another territory to his ever-expanding empire.

In a news item of *Calcutta Monthly Journal* there is also a mention of a marble statue of Shakespeare being built close to the Calcutta Theatre.[66] In the early 19th century, John Company's Men had to compete with the home- grown actors who basically came from the anglophile Bengali middle class. These new actors became quite popular. The plays performed by these actors included *Catherine and Petrucio* (Garrick's version of the *Taming of the Shrew*), *Henry IV*, *Henry V*, *Richard III*, and *Macbeth*.[67] The new breed of actors gave John Company's Men tough competition, but the credit to introduce Shakespeare and make him popular in Calcutta goes to the John Company's Men. Clearly, by the beginning of the nineteenth century, Shakespeare had been amply absorbed by the Indian intelligentsia.

Thus, Shakespeare had come to India even before the advent of the Bengal Renaissance, which favoured new learning from the West, its literatures and its sciences. As C.D. Narasimhaiah comments:

> He came to us at a propitious point in our history. Our old civilization was a little tired and had begun to show signs of decadence and our rulers of those days, the Mughals, lived too much on the surface to touch deeper springs of life. It was when we needed the fertilizing contact with a dynamic culture that Shakespeare came to us. Strangely, he helped to renew our contact with the classical age of India when Poetry and Drama with the Shakespeare-like imagery, diction, cadence was central to our own literature".[68]

With the Bengal Renaissance, of course, came the formal study of Shakespeare as a strong component of English literature introduced as a compulsory subject in schools and colleges. As V.Y. Kantak points out, "There is such a basic similarity between the state of the inner life of men of Shakespeare's own time and that of a changing India in

experiencing Shakespeare's impact. One expects a susceptibility to respond strongly and in depth, more so perhaps where the clash between the temper and mental climate of the past and present is at its most poignant. One may surely wonder: Might our Shakespeare's Hamlet prefigure many a young Indian's predicament in a renascent India."[69]

Recalling his education days in the 1880s, Rabindranath Tagore, too, echoes similar, though not quite the same, views about his response to Shakespeare's entry into India:

> At that time English literature provided us with more intoxication than nourishment. Our literary gods were Shakespeare, Milton and Byron. What moved us most in their work was the predominance of passion, something that remained concealed in British social behaviour, but surfaced with intensity in literature. Excess of emotion culminating in a passionate explosion: this seemed the characteristic feature of this literature. At least what we learnt to think of as the quintessence of English literature was this unbridled passion ... the fury of King Lear's impotent lamentation, the all-consuming fire of Othello's jealousy – these contained an excess that fuelled our imagination.[70]

Thus, right from the establishment of The Theatre in Calcutta in 1753 Shakespeare had become most popular among the Indians. From stage to study, there always remained an increasing impact of the bard of Stratford on the growing middle and upper classes in India. Although Indians in trade and in the service of the East India Company, besides the Indian aristocracy, knew English as early as the seventeenth century, the real change came when the middle class grew along with the English education at Hindu College in the early years of the nineteenth century. That Shakespeare in the eighteenth century Calcutta was viewed as the greatest dramatist is evident from accounts like the following:

> Besides Shakespeare, the plays chosen were a medley of comedies, farces and serious plays which had proved popular in the London and provincial stages of England. Thus, from examples taken at random of plays put up at the different theatres in 1814 and 1815, one finds that along with *Hamlet, Macbeth* .... there were produced *Honeymoon, The Weather Cock, The Sixty Third Letter* and many other forgotten plays.[71]

Another instance indicating Shakespeare's popularity in Calcutta is the staging of his plays in schools and colleges by the Indian students from the early years of the nineteenth century. The following report amply proves the point:

> About the same time [1831-35] the new generation, full of English and western ideas – Young Bengal as they came to be known – had begun staging Shakespeare and other English dramatists in the two auditoria built for the purpose in the two colleges imparting English education, the David Hare Academy and the Oriental Seminary.[72]

Young Bengal, it may be mentioned here, was the name given to the followers of Henry Derozio, the young teacher of English at Hindu College between 1828 and 1831. Derozio was the morning star of the Indian Renaissance, and his followers were dedicated to their cause.

It was in Hindu College, where Derozio was the first teacher of Shakespeare, that formal Shakespeare studies began in Bengal. As Taraknath Sen, in his introduction to *Shakespeare Commemoration Volume*, brought out by the Hindu College (later named Presidency College, and in 2010 made Presidency University) in 1966, says, "The connexion between Presidency College and Shakespeare, ranging over the last 150 years has been deep and long .... Among those who taught Shakespeare at the Hindu College two names stand out: Henry Louis Vivian Derozio and David Lester Richardson."[73] We shall add here the third name of H.M. Percival, who was the first teacher of English in India to have edited, with long introductions, several plays of Shakespeare he taught at the Hindu College. These three would be remembered for their seminal work in Shakespeare studies at this premier college. Their contributions need to be highlighted in detail, being the foundational work for Shakespeare studies in India. But even before that we need to look into the evolution of the institution where Shakespeare studies made a beginning – Hindu College, established in Calcutta in 1817.

Notes

[1]See Krishna Chandra Lahiri's "Shakespeare in The Calcutta University," in *Calcutta Essays on Shakespeare*, edited by Amalendu Bose (Calcutta: Calcutta University, 1966), p. 173.

[2]See Amalendu Bose, *Calcutta Essays on Shakespeare.*

[3]See Amal Kumar Mukhopadhyay (ed.), *175th Anniversary Commemoration Volume 1992* (Calcutta: Presidency College, 1996), pp. 2-4.

[4]"Preface," *Calcutta Essays on Shakespeare,* p. i.

[5]See "Introduction," *Three Essays on Shakespeare* by Taraknath Sen, with Introduction by S.C. Sen Gupta (Calcutta: Rupa & Co., 1978), p. viii.

[6]Kironmoy Raha's account of the foundation of Calcutta and the subsequent developments are detailed in his *Bengal Theatre* (New Delhi: National Book Trust, India, 1978), pp. 8-10.

[7]Ibid., p.9.

[8]See Marry Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London: Routledge, 1992), p.4.

[9]Sheldon Pollock (ed.), *Literary Cultures in History: Reconstructions from South Asia* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. 199-203.

[10]Palany Arangasamy, *Shakespeare in Tamil Versions: An Appraisal* (Thanjavur (India): Muthamizh Nilayam, 1994), p.2.

[11]See Arabinda Podar, "Shakespeare in John Company's Calcutta," in *Calcutta Essays on Shakespeare*, p. 154.

[12]See *175th Commemoration Volume*, p.2.

[13]V.Y. Kantak, *Re-Discovering Shakespeare: An Indian Scrutiny* (Delhi: Pencraft International, 2002), p.123.

[14]Ibid., p.116.

[15]See "The East India Company's Role in the Development of Education in India," in Suresh Chander Ghosh's *The History of Education in Modern India 1757-1986* (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1995), pp.6-19.

[16]Ibid., p.7.

[17]See D.P. Sinha, "Period of Missionary Activity," in his *The Educational Policy of The East India Company in Bengal to 1854* (Calcutta: Punthi Pustak, 1964), pp.1-28.

[18]Ketaki Kushari Dyson, *A Various Universe: A Study of the Journals and Memoirs of British Men and Women in the Indian Subcontinent 1765-1856* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1978), p.2.

[19]See Geoffrey Moorhouse, *Calcutta: The City Revealed* (1971; Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1974), p. 193.

[20]See Suresh Chander Ghosh, pp. 9-12.

[21]Edward Said, *Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978).

[22]Michel Foucault, *Archeology of Knowledge* (1969; New York: Pantheon, 1972).

[23]See Aijaz Ahmed, *In Theory: Classes, Nations, Literatures* (1992; London: verso, reprinted Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 172.

[24]Rosinka Chaudhuri, *Gentlemen Poets in Colonial Bengal: Emergent Nationalism and the Orientalist Project* (Calcutta: Seagull, 2002), p. 8.

[25]See Sayyid Mahmud, *History of English Education in India 1781-1893* (Aligarh, 1895), pp. 48-49.

[26]See M.A. Laird, *Missionaries and Education in Bengal: 1793-1837* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), pp. 60-62.

[27]See Suresh Chander Ghosh, pp. 15-16.

[28]See M.A. Laird, p. 45.

[29]Suresh Chander Ghosh, p. 16.

[30]See D.P. Sinha, pp.24-28.

[31]See B.D. Bhatt and J.C. Aggarwal (eds.), *Educational Documents in India 1813-1977* (New Delhi: Arya Book Depot, 1977), p.1.

[32]See Chris Harman, *A People's History of the World* (1999; Hyderabad: Orient Blackswan Pvt. Ltd., 2005), p. 358

[33]See *Educational Documents in India* 1813-1977, p. 1.

[34]See Suresh Chander Ghosh, p. 20.

[35]See D.P. Sinha, pp. 55-60.

[36]Ibid., pp. 52-54.

[37]Suresh Chander Ghosh, p. 22.

[38]D.P. Sinha, pp. 101-104.

[39]See *Gentlemen Poets in Colonia Bengal* (Calcutta: Seagull, 2002), p. 12.

[40]See *Collected Works of Raja Rammohan Roy Vol. I,* Ed. by Dr. Saroj Mohan Mitra (Kolkata: Rammohan Library & Free Reading Room, 2003), pp. 184-185.

[41]Cited in A.N.Basu's "Introduction" to *Indian Education in Parliamentary Papers* (Bombay: The Indian Institute of Education, 1952), p. xi.

[42]See Suresh Chander Ghosh, p. 28.

[43]The entire issue is concisely narrated in "The Anglo-Oriental Controversy" in D.P. Sinha's *The Education Policy of The East India Company in Bengal To 1854,* pp. 121-209.

[44]See Bhatt and Aggarwal, p. 2.

[45]Ibid., p. 3.

[46]See David Crystal, *The Language Revolution* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2004), p. 24

[47]See *Collectd Works* Vol. I, p. 196.

[48]Ibid., p. 4.

[49]See Geoffrey Moorhouse, *Calcutta: The City Revealed*, p. 61.

[50]Ibid.

[51]See H.E. Busteed, *Echoes from Old Calcutta: Reminiscences of the days of Warren Hastings, Francis, and Impey* (New Delhi: Rupa & Co, 1908), p. 265.

[52]See P. Thankappan Nair, *Hickey and His Gazette* (Kolkata: S & T Book Stall, 2001), p. 41.

[53] See Busteed, p. 266.

[54] See *Hickey and His Gazette*, p. 41.

[55]See *The Bengal Gazette*, 9th to 16th December, 1780. Available in the National Library, Calcutta.

[56]Ibid., 23rd to 30th December 1780.

[57]Ibid.

[58]See *Bengal Gazette*, 17th to 24th March 1781.

[59]Ibid.

[60]See *The Calcutta Gazette*, November 11, 1784.

[61]Ibid., February 24, 1785.

[62]Ibid., December 7, 1786.

[63]See Arabinda Poddar, "Shakespeare in John Company's Calcutta," in *Calcutta Essays on Shakespeare*, ed. Amalendu Bose (Calcutta: Calcutta University, 1966), p. 163.

[64]Ibid., p. 163.

[65]See *Calcutta Monthly Journal*, April, 1798.

[66]Ibid.

[67]Ibid.

[68]See C.D. Narasimhaiah, *English Studies in India: Widening Horizons* (Delhi: Pencraft International, 2002)

[69]See *Re-Discovering Shakespeare,* p. 118.

[70]See "Jibansmriti," *Rabindra Rachanabli*, cited in her own English translation by Meenakshi Mukherjee, *The Perishable Empire: Essays on Indian Writing in English* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 6-7.

[71]See *Bengal Theatre*, p. 11.

[72]Ibid., p. 14.

[73]See *Shakespeare Commemoration Volume* (Calcutta: Presidency College, 1966), p. vii.

Chapter II

The Hindu College (1817-1911)

As stated in the preceding chapter, Shakespeare studies as part of a formal course content at the college level in Calcutta made a beginning at the Hindu College. As we took stock of the conditions leading to Shakespeare studies in India in the preceding chapter, we need to look into the circumstances that led to the creation of the Hindu College, including the goals and purposes its founders – mainly David Hare and Rammohan Roy – had aspired to achieve. The College itself was an outcome of the East-West cultural encounter that finally led to the well-known Bengal Renaissance. The fermentation of the East-West cultural encounter in Bengal, actively in process for over half-a-century, reached the stage of maturation at the end of the eighteenth century. With Lord Wellesley's arrival as the new Governor-General of India, this fermentation was further accelerated, for he was eager to transform governance into an efficient and agreeable instrument. This led to the creation in 1800 of the Fort William College. As Geoffrey Moorhouse puts it, "... nothing that either Wellesley did in India was to have greater effect than Lord Richard's idea of a college at Fort William."[1] This college, meant for those recruited to work for The East India Company, soon became "the focal point of intellectual activity among the British, though the campus was not in the Fort itself but in the Writers' Building."[2]

The Fort William College, besides imparting Western education on the pattern of Oxford and Cambridge, also promoted oriental studies. "Mr. Lockett, the chief librarian, could boast that he supervised the largest collection of Orientalia in the world; the Escorial had 1,851 volumes, Oxford 1,561, the Seraglio in Constantinople 7,294; but Calcutta in 1818 had a grand total of 11,335 printed and manuscript sources."[3] As David Kopf emphasizes, Wellesley's educational programme "was a unique experiment in the history of European colonialism."[4] Its uniqueness lay in the assimilation of the two cultures brought together by events of history. As K.K. Dyson further elaborates the process of cultural assimilation in colonial Bengal, "Born of the tolerance, the intellectual curiosity, and the acceptance of cultural pluralism which characterized the Enlightenment, Orientalist and Conservative thinking offered a viable programme of innovation and modernization, synthesizing Indian heritage and European influence."[5]

Just as the European Renaissance combined Graeco-Roman thought with that of Christianity, so did the Bengal Renaissance imbibe Western thought, rejuvenating the decadent Indian culture, finally leading to the creation of modern India. The influence

of Western ideas of rationalism and humanism from Francis Bacon to Tom Paine on the one hand, and on the other, resuscitation of the ancient Hindu thought by the British Orientalists, generated the cultural reorientation called the Bengal Renaissance. The most influential among the Orientalists' work was H.T. Colebrooke's "essay on the Vedas" which depicted ancient Hindus as robust and outgoing, also non-mystical, given to beef-eating, living in a socially egalitarian society, and without temples and idol-worship.[6]

Besides Wellesley, who made official attempts to promote Western education, there were spirited individuals among Indians and Englishmen who were interested neither in Oriental studies nor in inculcating Christian values, but rather in imparting secular education in Western humanities and sciences. Their aim was to pull the Indian people out of the insipid life ruled by rituals and ceremonies, leaving no room for free thinking. These enlightened men in Calcutta had the leadership of David Hare and Rammohan Roy. It was these two, supported by several others, who conceived the idea of another college, different from the one at Fort William. The result of their effort was the establishment of Hindu College on January 20, 1817.

Yet another college was started by one Horace Wilson, who had come to India as a Company surgeon, worked on the Calcutta Mint, and then managed the Hindoostanee Press. The college he started was named Sanskrit College, "which was not only orientalist but scientific as well."[7] Among these various institutions, as argued in the *Shakespeare Commemoration Volume* of the Presidency College, Calcutta,[8] it was only Hindu college (later renamed Presidency College, recently made Presidency University) where great emphasis was laid on literature studies, and where Shakespeare studies started, becoming, in course of time, a hallmark of English teaching in Calcutta, carrying the impact of new education beyond the territory of Bengal. As S.K. Bhattacharyya notes, "... the foundation of the Hindu College in 1816 [sic], and the teaching of Shakespeare by eminent teachers like Richardson ... created in the minds of the students ... a literary taste for drama as such, and taught them not only how to appreciate Shakespeare critically, but also to recite and act scenes from his plays. This fashion spread to every academic institution."[9] Hindu College and Shakespeare studies became so closely associated that any mention of one was followed by a mention of the other. Those who studied at this college carried its new outlook far beyond Calcutta, beyond even the territory of Bengal.

The people who established the Hindu College did so on behalf of the emerging middle class in the early nineteenth-century British India. Many Indians had discovered

by that time that the knowledge of English would open several job opportunities in the administration of the expanding British empire. Those aware of advantages linked with English education were coming up in growing numbers who, after their long association with the Europeans in Calcutta, had come to see the benefits which a knowledge of the language and literature of English offered. These sections of Indian society were keen to have schools and colleges of English education for the young generation of Indians. It was this sort of thinking, growing stronger by the day, that led to the creation of Hindu College in Calcutta. The seminal ideas that governed the College came from David Hare (1775-1842) and Rammohan Roy (1772-1833), who fostered an atmosphere of free thinking and fresh outlook.

Rammohan Roy, whom Max Muller described as "a truly great man, a man who did a truly great work, and whose name if it is right to prophesy, will be remembered for ever as one of the great benefactors of mankind,"[10] is called by many the father of modern India. Of course, not all viewed Roy as uncritically as Max Muller did, nor is he unanimously acclaimed as the hero of modern India today. In his own time, he had opponents headed by Radhakanta Deb "who wanted modernisation within the ambit of the Dharma Sastras," not through western culture.[11] As Geoffrey Moorhouse has observed:

> [Roy's] father had been an old-fashioned zamidar, who lost his property as a result of the changes made by the Permanent Settlement, who was imprisoned and died a ruined man. The son emerged from the wreckage by, curiously enough, starting to lend money to Englishmen. He was also employed by one of the earliest students at Fort William College, John Digby, and he was soon in contact with some of the Orientalists.[12]

In Bengal, zamidars (landlords) owned big landholdings, who got farming work done by peasants and landless labourers. That Roy, son of a zamidar, should turn against the feudal system is not without precedents. Byron and Shelley in England, both sons of lords, entertained radical thoughts. Around 1804, Roy joined the East India Company's service, where he came in close contact with Englishmen, their language and literature, removing some of the prejudices he had formed against the foreigners early in his life, transforming him into a supporter of the British rule. After serving the government for about ten years Roy retired and settled in Calcutta deciding to devote himself to the propagation of his religious views and the investigation of truth. He had come to believe that ignorance was the cause of the bigotry, idolatory and superstition prevalent among his countrymen. Roy and Hare emphasized the teaching of great Western writers like

Shakespeare, Bacon, believing that this education would encourage humanist thinking, stirring the stale waters of Indian life in its decadent phase.

Rammohan Roy dreamed of an India free from conservatism and convention, and became of the firm opinion that this goal could be achieved only through the spread of Western education. He was not unaware of the richness of Sanskrit literature and the profundity of Hindu philosophy, but he had come to realise that this ancient learning had no direct bearing on modern life. He had also come to realise that the widespread ignorance and superstition among his people could not be overcome by the traditional form of learning. Having acquired a considerable knowledge of Western literature and thought, he felt that it was high time that his countrymen were exposed to the liberal ideas of the West. As D.P. Sinha puts it, Roy was "admirably suited, not only to lead the advanced sections of Indians but also to act as the intermediary between them and those Europeans who were solicitors [sic] of the wellbeing of Indians."[13]

Rammohan Roy had found meanwhile a kindred soul in David Hare, a Scottish watch-maker, who came to Calcutta in 1800. Roy collaborated with Hare for the modernisation of Indian society. Hare, like Roy, had also retired, around 1815, from his profession of watch-making to devote the rest of his life to social service.Their meeting was accidental. Hare attended, as P.C. Mittra reveals:

> ... uninvited, a meeting called by Rammohun Roy and his friends for the purpose of establishing a society, calculated to counter orthodoxy. Hare submitted that the establishment of an English school would materially serve their cause. They all acquiesced in the strength of Hare's position, but did not carry out his suggestion. Hare therefore waited on Sir Edward Hyde East, the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court ... [who] gave him an audience, heard all he had to say, and promised to think on the matter .... Buddi Nath Mukherjee ... was requested to ascertain whether his countrymen were favourable to the establishment of a college for the education of the Hindu youth, in English literature and science .... He sounded the leading members of the Hindu society, and reported to Sir Hyde East that they were agreeable to the proposal. Several meetings were held at Sir Hyde East's house, and it was resolved that an establishment be formed for the education of native youth."[14]

Thus brought together, Roy and Hare worked in unison for a long time to propagate English education in Bengal. Working as a team, they made plans, issued circulars,

collected subscriptions, and sought the support of influential Hindus and high officials of the Raj. A public meeting was finally organised where it was unanimously decided to establish an institution for English education at the higher level. A Managing Committee, consisting of Hindus and Englishmen, was constituted to put the proposal into practice. The fruit of all this effort was the birth of Hindu College in Calcutta.

The association of Rammohan Roy with the College could not be digested by many orthodox Hindus who threatened to withdraw their support and boycott the proposed college if Roy was to have an active role in running the college. The reason why orthodox Hindus were against Roy was the latter's strong opposition to orthodoxy in religion as well as education. But since both Hare and Roy wanted a college of western education, they allowed those who wanted to have the benefit of new education but maintain their old religion to have their way. Fearing that further participation in the affairs of the college would endanger the success of the project, Rammohan Roy modestly withdrew into the background,[15] leaving it for Hare to guide the affairs of the Hindu College, which came into existence on January 20, 1817, to impart liberal education to the Indian youth, with the study of English language and literature given a place of prominence. As A. Howell, often quoted by later researchers including Indians, remarks, "the foundation of this College marks an important era in the history of education in India as the first spontaneous desire manifested by the natives in the country for instruction in English and the literature of Europe."[16]

As a member of the Managing Committee, David Hare used to visit the college almost daily and took active interest in the work of teachers and the progress of students. He won the hearts of Indian students who would call him Mahatma Hare. The early success of Hindu College owed a great deal to his personal guidance and his liberal financial support. After some time, problems arose in the management of the college. The financial situation also was not very encouraging. A time came when it appeared that it would be difficult to sustain the college. But Hare saved the situation, firstly by persuading the Government to come to the assistance of the college, and then by inducing the College Committee to accept the conditions on which assistance was offered. It was Hare's foresight and tactful handling of the situation that saved Hindu College from closing down and brought the Government into active participation in the cause of English education for the first time.[17] This happened in 1824, initiating the concept of aided-college, which concept has continued ever since, though after the adoption of neo-liberalism in 1991 it has been gradually diluted, and is now on the verge of being withdrawn.

What Hare meant to the teachers and students of the college is best expressed by Captain D.L. Richardson, the greatest teacher of Shakespeare at Hindu College. His tribute to Hare is as follows:

> Ah! warm philanthropist, faithful friend!
> Thy life devoted to one generous end.
> To bless the Hindoo mind with British lore
> And truth's and nature's faded lights restore!
> If for a day that lofty aim was crossed
> You grieved like Titus that a day was lost!
> Alas! it is not now a few brief honours
> That withholds, a heavier grief o'erpowers
> A nation whom you love'd as if your own –
> A life that gave the life of life is gone.[18]

A self-effacing, saintly reformer as he was, David Hare, surely, would not have liked the line "To bless the Hindoo mind with British lore," for it smacks of demonstrative condescenscion. Nor would he have wished to be compared to Titus, for he would have hated to flaunt either the imperial aura of the Roman Titus, or the Christian zeal of Titus, the early follower of St. Paul. Captain Richardson, an Englishman of a different orientation, did not share Hare's enthusiasm for serving larger social causes.

Hare preferred to lead an average life. His response to the request made by the people of Calcutta for making himself available for a portrait bears it out, besides several other similar instances. When, in 1831, Dukhinarunjan and 564 other young native gentlemen of Calcutta requested David Hare, in a signed letter, to sit for a portrait, declaring that "it will be a gratification to our feelings if we are permitted to keep among us a representation of the man who has breathed a new life into Hindu society, who has made a foreign land the land of his adoption, who has voluntarily become the friend of a friendless people...,"[19] his reply was

> Were I to consult my private feelings, I should refrain from complying with your request. It has always been a rule with me never to bring myself into public notice, but to fill a private station in life. When I see however that the sons of the most worthy members of the Hindoo Community have come in a body to do me honour – When I observe that the address is signed by most of those with whom I am intimate, and whose feelings will be gratified if I sit for my portrait, I cannot but comply with your request.[20]

One may term this posture of modesty an assumed gesture, not genuinely reflecting the man's true nature. But all accounts available of Hare's work and conduct in Calcutta are unanimous in proclaiming him a simple and self-effacing sort of individual, who stayed away from racial controversies and political acrimonies, and wholly devoted himself to the cause of education in Calcutta, helping the native Indians who, conscious of the apparent advantages of English education, were eager to seek entry into the world of new knowledge. And whoever provided them opportunity to do so, they were grateful to him, more so to someone from the race of rulers.

We may also recall here Baboo Kisory Chand Mittra's tribute to David Hare in his Anniversary Lecture of 1861 which reads as follows:

> He loved individual man; for humanity was dear to him, not for its creed or colour .... No geographical or ethnological or social or other extraneous distinctions extended or narrowed his sympathies. He was completely above the prejudices of caste and rank.[21]

No wonder that Hare was highly respected by the educated Indians in Calcutta. Later, after Hare's death in 1842, an elegant marble statue was raised in his memory on the campus of Hare School-Hindu College, which stands today in its lone eminence. It is quite significant that no other statue, not even of Rammohan Roy, was installed by the subsequent generations of Bengalis whose gratitude to their benefactors like David Hare is always acknowledged. Acknowledged in free India as the leading light in the modernisation of India, Rammohan Roy still stays unmemorialised by Hindu College in the terms so demonstrably shown to Hare.

With the Government's assistance and the personal supervision of David Hare, Hindu College developed from a small and struggling school, with a modest curriculum, into a collegiate institution designed to impart modern education in English, covering a variety of subjects. The college reflected the spirit of David Hare. It reflected his ideal of a secular and scientific attitude to life. It also promoted cultural, rather than religious, life in Calcutta. The annual examinations were held in public, sometimes in Government house in the presence of the Governor General himself.[22] The practice of public examination gave the college a unique distinction; it invited public attention for its activities of performance, recitation and examination. We may recall here the fact "That Calcutta had a theatre before it had a church."[23] It supports the performance dimension of the Shakespeare teaching at Hindu College. That the influence of Shakespeare has been secular, not religious or imperial as made out by the postcolonial

critics, is evidenced by the two eminent Bengali writers who studied at Hindu College in mid-nineteenth century. As stated by R.K. Dasgupta:

> In 1853 Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar remarked in a lecture on Sanskrit literature that in that literature there was nothing that presented the terrible as an object of beauty. Twenty years later Bankimchandra saw this sublimity of universe in *Othello*. In a comparative study of Shakuntala and Desdemona he says, "Shakespeare's drama is like a sea and Kalidasa's is like a garden. There is no comparison between a sea and a garden. In Kalidasa we have an excess of whatever is beautiful, sweet-smelling, sweet-sounding and cheering to mind and body. Compare with this the surge and thunder, the depth and the vastness of the sea. In this incomparable tragedy of Shakespeare passions rage like the waves of the sea: and terrible anger, hatred and jealousy batter minds like a stormy wind. Its terrible movement, awful noise and rolling of passions and again its calm, its light and its shade and its music make it a rare thing in poetry."[24]

What Vidyasagar and Bankimchandra have said here in support of Shakespeare's superiority to Kalidas – the greatest Indian classical dramatist – is representative of the contemporary opinion among the English speaking Indians in Calcutta. This common perception also indicates the level of proficiency in English literature the Bengali middle class had achieved at the time. But the knowledge of the English language was not the only thing that students of Hindu College were acquiring. The emphasis on the secular and rationalistic aspect of education instilled in the students a questioning spirit. As a result, an impatience with the bondage of conventions developed among the youth. The orthodox sections of the Indian society became alarmed with this development. David Hare, who made no secret of his rationalistic views, along with Henry Derozio, the first Shakespeare teacher at Hindu College, was held responsible for the wave of irreligion which spread from Hindu College and quickly overtook the whole student community of Bengal.[25]

As to the intellectual environment of Hindu College, it can be gauged from what, in his address on the occasion of the nineteenth anniversary of David Hare, Baboo Kissory Chand Mittra spoke under the lecture-heading "The Hindoo College and Its Founders":

> I cannot admit the charge preferred against the system pursued in the Hindoo College by certain parties that it takes no account of the spiritual element in man. I emphatically deny that it is calculated to make only secularists. It has brought to those who have come within the range of its influence inestimable moral and religious benefits .... The elements of morality and religion may be conveyed independently of any system of dogmatic theology. It is impossible to study Shakespeare and Milton, Bacon and Newton, Johnson and Addison, without being inoculated with the present moral precepts and the most elevated ideas pervading their pages.[26]

Since Mittra's address was delivered on 2nd June 1861, he may or may not have read Matthew Arnold's three lectures "On Translating Homer," delivered at Oxford in 1860 and published in 1861, but his views on the religious morality of literature are quite similar to those of Arnold. In his later essays, Arnold makes a more elaborate and emphatic assertion on literature as substitute religion. Mittra's defence is understandable in its historical context, but it cannot obliterate the fact that Henry Derozio, the most popular young teacher of English at Hindu College, and his disciples were aggressively against religions as they were being practised at the time. No doubt, Derozio was not raising any theological debate like Luther or Calvin; he was only tirading against Hindu orthodoxy as he saw it in the ceremonies and rituals performed by its practioners. The Arnoldian ring in Mittra's argument goes well with his defence of literature as morality, which, as Arnold pleads, is religion without emotion – he puts it the other way, defining religion as morality touched with emotion.[27]

Placed alongside Bacon, Newton, Johnson, Addison and Milton, Shakespeare teaching in India, it seems, was a part of the Renaissance humanist emphasis, promoting rationalism and reasoning. Bhagwan Prasad Majumdar's report on the curriculum, too, highlights the impact of Shakespeare teaching in Hindu College on the students as well as the Calcutta intelligentsia in general:

> It is interesting to note that Shakespeare became extremely popular with the student community. Apart from Hindu College boys like Harchandra Ghosh who translated two of his plays into Bengali, the Sanskrit College boys rendered some of them in Sanskrit. Even the great Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar wrote *Bharantibilas* on the basis of *Comedy of Errors*. A lot of poetry was taught in Hindu College and Hoogly College as also in the General Assembly's Institution, but

> Chaucer, Spenser and Blake were not prescribed for the students. The plays of Ben Jonson and the other Elizabethan and Jacobean dramatists were also kept out of the syllabus.[28]

The singular emphasis on Shakespeare's plays is quite significant. The exclusion of Chaucer, Spenser and Blake clearly shows how Shakespeare was viewed at Hindu College as a writer above religions and races, known for embodying universal, not religious, racial, or nationalist values. We can clearly see here the influence of Bardolatory, quite predominant in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, as a contributing factor in the reception of Shakespeare in both England and India.

David Hare and Rammohan Roy, the founders of Hindu College, surely believed in rationalistic thinking, and their ideas were complemented by the inspired teaching of persons like Henry Derozio.[29] It was not religion, an emphasis in the rival Alexander Duff's school, that was taught to the students of Hindu College. They were taught instead to think for themselves and to think rationally, at least Derozio's teaching worked in that direction, and that, of course, was the main influence on the students of Hindu College. The young men educated at Hindu College and other similar institutions looked ahead and broke away from the orthodox restrictions which limited their liberty of thought and action and embraced the new learning with almost religious fervour.

Besides Hare's emphasis on reason, there was Derozio's call "to recognise the dignity of the individual and to protect and enhance his right to think freely and rationally."[30] The secular and modern education imparted at Hindu College had an uplifting effect on its students. As Moorhouse writes, "its pupils were soon offering inflated prices for copies of *The Age of Reason*."[31] Derozio, we know, was a voracious reader who looked for latest ideas and absorbed whatever suited his campaign for free thinking. Tom Paine was one of his favourites. The influence of Paine is quite apparent in several poems of Derozio that focus on the theme of liberty. As Christopher Hitchens remarks, "Spring and the natural world, were ordinary metaphors for Paine, as they have always been for those who witness the melting of political glaciers and the unfreezing of the tundra of despotism."[32] Speaking of the French Revolution, Paine had written, "...the full current of it is, in my opinion, as fixed as the Gulf Stream."[33] These metaphors of liberty we often find used by Derozio. For instance, in the poem "Freedom to the Slave" :

> He felt himself a man.
> He looked above – the breath of heaven
> Around him freshly blew;

.....

He looked upon the running stream
That 'neath him rolled away;
Then thought of winds, and birds, and floods,
And cried, "I am free as they![34]

Derozio propagated Paine's ideas not only through his poems, but also, in fact, more so, through his teaching. What Derozio was doing reflected the spirit of teaching at Hindu College. As Sumanta Banerjee has recorded in detail:

> The Bengali students of Hindu College – and other schools set up around the same time with the objective of educating the 'natives' in European science and literature – were quick to gain proficiency in subjects like the intricacies of the British political and legal system, the history of England and Greece and Rome, the European classics and the plays of Shakespeare, as evident from the appreciative reviews of their performance during the annual prize distribution ceremonies of these schools in contemporary English newspapers. Noting the change in their cultural tastes while reviewing the performance of Shakespeare's plays by the Hindu College students, one paper commented: '... the mere language of the English has been hitherto their principal, if not exclusive object; but now, in these scenes, the habits and manners of Europeans become to them matter of familiar study and acquirement. This is certainly a grand step towards enlarging the sphere of their understanding, and freeing them from the spell of prejudice, which had so long bound them to their primeval notions and customs ....'[35]

As clearly evidenced by the cited passage, the role of Shakespeare teaching at Hindu College, comprising reading, recitation, and performance, seems to have been to wean away students from orthodoxy and encourage them to acquire a European or modern outlook marked by rationalist-humanist values, encouraging the ideas of freedom and free thinking. Accounts like the one cited above are numerous, available in the journals, diaries, memoirs, etc., left behind by both English and Indian men and women of the nineteenth century. The evidence for the revolutionary spirit of Hindu College is substantial enough to show that its role in transforming the traditional society of Bengal into a modern one was central, indeed. The most electrifying role was played

by Henry Derozio, though he had a short stint at Hindu College, and a very short life thereafter. As Kironmoy Raha states:

> About the same time, the new generation, full of English and Western ideas – Young Bengal as they came to be known – had begun staging Shakespeare and other English dramatists in the two auditoria built for the purpose in the two colleges imparting English education, the David Hare Academy and the Oriental Seminary.[36]

An important member of the said 'Young Bengal' was Bankim Chander Chatterji who belonged to the first generation of Hindu College students taught by Derozio. The students of Derozio, as Raychaudhuri has remarked, came to be "known for their admiration of everything western and their unlimited contempt for the Hindu tradition."[37]

Of course, impressions always vary among different groups, even among different individuals, depending upon the position from which one views the object. Not all impressions of Derozio and the Young Bengal are as eulogistic as the one just cited. Those promoting Bengali Theatre had a different perception of the enterprise. When *Shakuntala,* an Indian play, was staged, a vernacular paper "greeted it as a welcome return to indigenous literature and the end of the undesirable spell of the English Muse."[38] A more balanced view of Shakespeare on stage comes from S.K. Bhattacharyya: "Though Shakespeare inspired the Bengali Theatre, it is not true that it opened its doors with Shakespeare's plays. The Bengali stage presented Bengali dramas with Indian themes and plots though Shakespeare's plays exerted a considerable influence."[39] Two things clearly emerge from these varying opinions about the status of Shakespeare in the Bengali Theatre: one, that Derozio and his colleagues at Hindu College had generated an environment of ideas promoting free expression; two, that Shakespeare was a great impact on Calcutta theatres including those staging plays in the local language.

In the curriculum of reading at Hindu College, a student of D.L. Richardson later recounted, "there was a heavy emphasis on English literature, especially Bacon, Shakespeare, Milton, and Pope."[40] As J. Ghosh also states, "the education imparted at Hindu College was narrow, not merely because it was entirely secular nor even because it aimed solely at the cultivation of the intellect; too much importance was attached to literary studies."[41] Citing Sir Edward Hyde East, the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court in Calcutta, Rosinka Chaudhuri, too, asserts "that this last statement, of plundering Western knowledge for advancement, but always adapting that knowledge so that they

took only 'that which they found good and liked best,' remained the predominant national feeling regarding Western influence in the modern Indian mind as it evolved through the following century."[42] "National feeling" is, perhaps, too large a category to describe the phenomenon. What seems closer to truth is the sway of English education among the educated middle classes eager to take advantage of knowing the language and acquiring the culture of the colonial rulers. Love of learning, new or old, is always a passion only with a minority, seldom assuming the form of a national movement.

All these remarks and reminiscences reinforce, more or less, the original impression about Hindu College, that it imparted secular education laying great emphasis on the study of literature, producing a wave of Western ideas, disparaging only to the religious bigots. Chaudhuri's generalisations, based on the argument put forth by those wanting to set up Hindu College are, however, a little too large to represent what actually emerged from the college campus. The available accounts of how the boys behaved in and outside the college do not quite support Chaudhuri's view. For an instance, Lord Ronaldsay gives the following account:

> Westernism became the fashion of the day and Westernism demanded of its votaries that they should cry down the civilization of their own country .... The ancient learning was despised; ancient custom was thrown aside; ancient religion was decried as an outworn superstition.[43]

Similarly, A.Howell reports that when students of Hindu College found that every day opened to them "a succession of new and strange phenomena in the unsettled realm of history, science and philosophy, they were suddenly thrown adrift from the moorings and anchorages of old creeds and thrown open the wide sea of speculation and extravagance. It was no wonder that social and moral obligation began to share the fate of religious beliefs and that the whole community was in alarm at the spread of new ideas."[44] This, too, like Chaudhuri's, is an exaggerated assertion. Keeping in view these various, often contradictory accounts, it can be inferred that while Hindu College may not have caused an upheaval in Bengal, it did create a stir to cause a climate of new ideas received from Western education, and that it did promote and make popular Shakespeare studies in and around Calcutta, the pivotal city for power and knowledge on the Indian subcontinent, being the capital of the British rulers of India.

Being great champions of modern education, the duo of Hare and Roy wanted Hindu College to flower into a premier institution of Western learning and thought, so that the Indian youth could acquaint themselves with the best that was 'known and

thought in the world'. Right from the beginning great emphasis was laid on the study of English language and literature. Some people criticised the college authorities for not giving as much importance to science, but the tradition of nurturing literary studies continued in the college. The great authors, such as Bacon, Hume and Shakespeare, were taught in a secular atmosphere.[45] Decidedly, the emphasis on language and literature studies was meant to promote the humanist values, not the scientific skills.

Established as a rival to English education imparted in the institutions managed by the Missionaries in Calcutta attempting to promote the religion and culture of the imperial authority, Hindu College aimed at keeping its education in English literature and European science free from the influence of all religions, including Hinduism, emphasizing instead the promotion of a secular and humanist outlook on life. The naming of the institution as Hindu College, through seemingly sectarian, only indicated the community of its founders, not the religious character of its education. The College did not include Hindu scriptures or any other text related to religion in its curriculum of study. Also, the three teachers of Shakespeare, namely Derozio, Richardson and Percival, the focus of our study, had nothing to do with the founding of the College. Their principal aim was to promote free thinking through the study of literature. In imparting this secular character to the College, the role of David Hare and Rammohan Roy, two leading founders of the College, was predominant. Recording the "General History of the College," Ajoy Chandra Banerjee and Asoke Kumar Mukherji specially underlined the following:

> The most striking feature of the Hindu College was its determined effort to impart secular education. Although the College was meant exclusively for the respectable classes amongst the Hindus, the Indian managers ceaselessly insisted that their primary object was the cultivation of English literature and European science rather than Hindu theology or metaphysics. Of the early sponsors, the two most talented men were Ram Mohun Roy and David Hare, who were equally opposed to sectarian or theological education; Ram Mohun, an Indian, regarded the propagation of purely Sanskritic learning as harmful, and David Hare, a Scotchman, scrupulously dissociated himself from the missionaries who wanted to give a Christian bias to education.[46]

What Bannerjee and Mukherji say here about the secular credentials of Roy and Hare is quite right so far as their individual efforts are concerned. But it does not mean that the

two directly dictated any agenda to the college teachers. Because of his serious differences with the other Hindu founders of the College Managing Committee, Roy had, in fact, opted to remain in the background; and Hare had discreetly maintained his status as a foreigner, concerned only with the academic functioning of the College. What Bannerjee and Mukherji do not include in their report is the important contribution Derozio, Richardson, and Percival had made in imparting secular character to the College through their teaching and allied intellectual activities, including public writing, open discussion, and theatre activities.

The secularism of these two influential sponsors of Hindu College, Roy and Hare, not only found reflection in the English teaching at Hindu College, it also became a strong component in Shakespeare studies spearheaded by the three eminent and influential teachers of the College. Henry Derozio, D.L. Richardson, and H.M. Percival successively continued Shakespeare teaching in colonial Bengal with a strong commitment to secularism, which they stretched at times to the verge of scepticism.

Referring to Bannerjee and Mukherji's claim of secularism for Hindu College, David Kopf, however, has contended that

> This interpretation is difficult to accept, because the twenty Bengalis who wrote the original thirty-four rules of the charter ... were all conservative upper-caste Hindus .... It was therefore not really secular knowledge in Western dress that was to be imparted at Hindu College, but useful knowledge from the West transmitted without ethnocentric bias.[47]

Kopf fails to make a distinction between the community leaders who founded Hindu College, and the eminent intellectuals who shaped the College environment. As for the "upper-caste" Hindu members, their position is aptly described by Subrato Dasgupta in his following observation:

> The bhadralok orthodoxy wanted to have their cake and eat it too: they desired their Hindu sons to imbibe Western ways in the classroom but not to bring those ways into their baithak khana, their living room. What they did not understand that the Pandora's box once opened could not be shut. They could not have imagined that when Hindu College opened its doors in 1817 it also paved the way for the onset of a paradigm shift: the displacement of one intellectual tradition by another, one collective identity by another – the kind of paradigm shift that becomes the agent of intellectual revolutions.[48]

A great contribution that David Hare made to the intellectual growth of Hindu College was the appointment of Henry Louis Vivian Derozio as Assistant Master of English and History, whose inspiring teaching and debates on and off the college campus electrified the Bengali youth in Calcutta. As Moorhouse writes, "A result of all this intellectual activity in Calcutta was the birth of the Young Bengal movement and the start of a period which has been glorified as the Bengal Renaissance. The hero of the first was Henry Louis Vivian Derozio, the Eurasian son of an officer with an English firm. He was educated in one of the private English schools of Calcutta and he was captivated by Robert Burns, the French Revolution and English radicalism."[49] Burns was, of course, privileged in Drummond's Academy where Derozio studied, as Drummond himself was a Scott. But to say that Derozio "was captivated" by Burns seems an overstatement. It is evident from his work both in verse and prose that Derozio was influenced by the British romantics, especially Byron, more than by Burns.

Although Derozio had only school education to his credit, he was considered competent to teach Shakespeare and other English writers as, besides being an established poet, he had studied at David Drummond's Academy at Dhurumtollah in Calcutta, famous for learning in English literature, especially Shakespeare . As Krishna Chandra Lahiri writes, "It was Drummond who first taught school boys in Calcutta to recite Shakespeare. He encouraged his boys to display their histrionic abilities before guests at school functions at which some extracts from Shakespeare would inevitably figure."[50] Not only did Drummand's Academy encourage acting or reciting scenes from Shakespeare, it was, in fact, the first school in Calcutta where "Shakespeare's dramas formed a part of the curriculum."[51]

How quickly and widely Shakespeare studies spread in Calcutta and the rest of Bengal in the early nineteenth century can be estimated from the following account of the phenomenon by Krishna Chandra Lahiri:

> From Drummond's school the practice spread to other institutions. There could hardly pass any ceremonial occasion at which something from Shakespeare would not be included; among the favourite passages was Portia's homage to Mercy, Mark Antony's oration at Caesar's funeral, Shylock's outburst against persecuting Christians, and Hamlet's soliloquy on death. At these functions, the special prize awarded to the best reciter would invariably be a deluxe volume of the complete works of Shakespeare, bound in morocco leather.[52]

Of course, once the Hindu College had come up, it took over the leadership of Shakespeare studies. As Lahiri goes on to record, "With the foundation of this centre of higher education .... [students] had to study in the First Form (1843) as many as four plays of Shakespeare, viz., *Macbeth, King Lear, Othello*, and *Hamlet.*"[53] Thus, even before Bradley chose the four great tragedies, scholars of Shakespeare had awarded them this status. Lahiri's reversal of the chronological order of Shakespeare's four great tragedies apart, his account of Shakespeare studies at Hindu College reveals how fervently the institution was involved in the spread of Shakespeare studies in India. Yet another account from a contemporary newspaper corroborates Lahiri's version: "In the Prize Distribution function of the Hindu College some young students recited from memory, with excellent pronunciation, several parts from the poems of an English poet named Shakespeare."[54] The emergence of Hindu College as the major centre for Shakespeare Studies was evidently due primarily to its non-religious character as compared to institutions run by the Christian missionaries', as also those managed by the Hindus', or the Muslims' seminaries. Hindu College earned its reputation for Shakespeare studies especially because of the great teachers it came to have in its early years, teachers like Henry Derozio, D.L. Richardson, H.M. Percival, and several others whose chief interest was Shakespeare. Teachers like Derozio had developed an early interest in Shakespeare as students of Drummomnd's Academy.

The curriculum choices at Hindu College were made by the Managing Committee initially, as it was a privately run institution. Later, after the college started receiving grant-in-aid from the government in 1824, all matters including curricula came to be influenced by the policies of the Raj. Fortunately, the college came to have H.H.Wilson, one of the English Orientalists, as Vice-President of the College Committee. Consequently, the curriculum emphasis remained secular because such members of the managing committee as David Hare and H.H. Wilson would not have it otherwise. As B.P. Majumdar reports, "... drama was not taught in the missionary institutions. Even Shakespeare could not find a place in the curriculum of the General Assembly's Institution .... In contrast, D.L. Richardson taught the Hindu College boys *Hamlet, Othello, Macbeth, King Lear* and two parts of *Henry IV*...."[55]

The choice of four great tragedies is no surprise, but that of *Henry IV, Part I and Part II* is interesting because H.H. Wilson had told the Select Committee of the Lords that Indian students "had considerable difficulty in understanding many of Falsataff's allusions."[56] Whatever might have been the students' difficulty, the teachers must have viewed Falstaff as a great dramatic creation of Shakespeare. Richardson's individual

preference for *Henry IV* as a great dramatic art, that combines history with comedy, must have been a factor in this choice.

The main reason for Shakespeare's popularity, as all accounts unanimously endorse, was the teaching of Shakespeare at Hindu College by an inspiring faculty like Derozio, Richardson and Percival. As for the greater emphasis on drama and poetry, ignoring altogether the novel, it should not be a surprise to anyone, because the rise of the novel in English was only half-a-century old and the novelists could not stand comparison with established classics like Shakespeare, Milton, Pope, Addison, etc. Theatres in Calcutta and the emphasis on performance in schools and colleges made drama studies greatly popular. Even in England, the novel could secure its due place in English studies only in the twentieth century. One can recall here Walter Scott's reluctance to be known as a novelist, keeping his authorship anonymous. Obviously, the novel was yet to achieve a status equal to that of poetry and drama. As Mahandra Lal Shome, a student of Hindu College in its early years, reports, "We feel the influence of Shakespeare and Bacon upon our minds, we feel the deep impression they make, we become convinced that these impressions are not to be effaced by the lapse of time and they must influence our actions."[57]

From the accounts published in contemporary newspapers of the annual prize-giving ceremonies of Hindu College from 1825 to 1838, there is a mention of its students reciting from Shakespeare's plays. Here is one such report: "On the recommendation of the General Committee of Public Instruction the Government instituted 42 Senior English scholarships, which were attached to Hindu College and some other colleges in Bengal." Interestingly, the report goes on to reveal, a majority of these scholarships were won by students of the Hindu College. The reading list for examinees to win these scholarships included "English Composition – a candidate must be able to compose an English essay, equal at least in style and matter to the Prize essays at the Hindoo College of 1838-39, besides subjects like History, General Literature, Mathematics, and Philosophy."[58]

The manner herein described of measuring proficiency in English notwithstanding, it is important to note that Hindu College remained in English studies a benchmark for other Indian institutions imparting higher education. It is also interesting to note that the Missionary institutions did not compete for these scholarships, largely because of their aversion to the teaching of Shakespeare and other dramatists, which alone carried several questions.[59] Giving more weight to Shakespeare than to any other individual writer in the Question-paper for the Scholarship

examination also shows how the Bard of Stratford occupied in English studies pride of place. Despite the great disadvantage to the students of Missionary institutions in the race for scholarships, Shakespeare remained excluded in their curriculum of English studies. Decidedly, their religious bias determined their choice of writers. As M.A. Laird states, "... all boys [were to] learn Sanskrit, Greek, Latin, and Hebrew ... political economy and metaphysics – especially the works of Thomas Brown ... and a common syllabus of divinity ...."[60]

Self-expression was given great priority in teaching at Hindu College. As noted in *Nostalgia*, "In 1835, the Managers allowed the student body to establish a magazine *The Hindoo Pioneer*, provided they did not discuss religious or political topics."[61] Obviously, the college always maintained its academic credentials, keeping out contentious elements and ideas related to religion and politics. Decidedly, it was not an easy task, but David Hare, above all, sternly safeguarded the secular spirit of the college. Hare's well-known aversion to admitting students in Hindu College who had had their education at Alexander Duff's or Missionaries' schools had become widely known in Calcutta. Hare's own reputation as a secularist became the reputation of Hindu College as well.

Hindu College also earned the distinction of producing eminent Bengali writers and intellectuals, besides distinguished persons in other fields. While educationists and reformers like Rammohan Roy and David Hare were among its eminent founders, Derozio and Richardson were among the distinguished teachers who laid the foundation for the inspiring Shakespeare teaching in India. No wonder the college produced such great writers as Michael Madhusudan Dutt and Bankimchandra Chatterjee. Both of them became leading writers of their time. They showed in their writings strong influence of the knowledge they had acquired as students. Other distinguished products of Hindu College included Tarak Nath Sen, Praphulachandra Ghosh, Subodhchanda Sengupta, and others, most of whom studied and taught Shakespeare at Hindu College.[62]

Quite a few of the students of Hindu College also became poets and playwrights of fame - all invariably showing, in varying measure, the influence of Shakespeare. One of the more important of these men of letters was Michael Madhusudan Dutt, the first Bengali to make a name as dramatist and to show an impact of Shakespeare in his writings. He was widely read in European literature and looked to the West for inspiration. One may not discover any direct influence of Shakespeare's individual

plays, but his use of blank verse, his tragedy of character, his use of comic relief in tragedy can surely be attributed to the influence of Shakespeare.[63]

Madhusudan often expressed his love for the language and literature of the West. While mentioning the splendours of English language and literature, he craves,

> ... but give me the literature, the language of the Anglo-Saxon! Banish Peto, banish Bardolph, banish Poins: but for sweet Jack Falstaff, kind Jack Falstaff, banish him not thy Harry's company; banish plump Jack and banish all the world! I say, give me the language, the beautiful language of the Anglo-Saxon![64]

As a student at Hindu College, Madhusudan was an ardent admirer of D.L.Richardson, the famous Shakespeare teacher at the time. One of the anecdotes known to posterity reveals that he was once caught imitating Richardson's slanting handwriting during recess time. However, rather than invite his teacher's displeasure, the indiscretion only endeared him to Richardson. As a favourite student of Richardson, he not only came to share his teacher's enthusiasm for Shakespeare but also got an imprint of Richardson himself. Madhusudan also published his poems in *The Calcutta Literary Gazette,* which was edited by D.L.Richardson. Despite being an outstanding student, Madhusudan had to leave Hindu College when he embraced Christianity.[65]

Madhusudan's expulsion from Hindu College belies the postcolonial thesis of critics like Gauri Viswanathan who elaborately theorise on the supposed collusion between the imperial agenda and the Missionaries' will to Christianise. One wonders where Hindu College would fit into that grand theory. Here, it is pertinent to cite what the biographer of Madhusudan, Jogindranath Basu has to say:

> It is true that the efforts of Christian missionaries such as Alexander Duff saw the conversions of one or two students in their colleges; but there was absolutely no possibility of their influence spreading in the Hindu College. Of the two people who were the leaders, teachers and exemplars of the students of Hindu College, neither had faith in Christianity. Both David Hare and D.L. Richardson were firm unbelievers in the Christian religion. Hare loved Hindu school more than his life and dedicated all the energies towards the establishment of English education in this country .... Thinking that on top of this [the controversy over the anglicized behaviour of Derozio's students] if any of the college's students embraced Christianity it would be especially harmful for Hindu College, as consequently the path of

> English education in this country would be obstructed, the great soul Hare always kept a very sharp eye on his students. Although Richardson did not have as sharp an eye as Hare, nevertheless he never hesitated to declare to his students his inner convictions concerning his lack of confidence in Christian religion.[66]

Decidedly, the postcolonial perspective about the alleged collusion between English studies and Christianity is highly coloured, if not angular, magnifying one side of the picture, obliterating altogether the other side. No wonder Hindu College finds no mention in the postcolonial studies by Loomba, Viswanathan and Suleri. A balanced view of the historical situation is expected to include the various crosscurrents of ideas and events placed in dynamic opposition to each other. Viswanathan and her associates purposely overlook the other side of the picture. Hindu College and Duff's seminary were two of the various opposing poles of the colonial situation in Calcutta. The postcolonial critics heavily rely on the latter and altogether ignore the former, thus presenting a one-sided view of the case.

Another brilliant student of Hindu College was Bankimchandra Chatterjee, who went on to become a famous novelist both in Bangla and English. There are clear signs of Shakespeare's influence on his writings. To cite one example, in his novel *Rajani* a character named Amarnath, looking at the pictures of Desdemona and Juliet, ruminates (obviously comparing Rajani with Shakespeare's heroines),

> 'You get her patience, sweetness and modesty, but where is her courage with the patience, and her pride of constancy with the modesty?' He pointed to the illumination of Juliet and said: 'You have here the figure of a beauty in the first flush of youth, but you miss youth's irrepressible restlessness.'[67]

Surely, Bankim's hero finds his Rajani inferior to Desdemona and Juliet in several ways. The allusions to Shakespeare came from Bankim's education at Hindu College, where first Derozio and then Richardson recreated Shakespeare as a living presence in the minds of their students. Bankim and Madhusudan were two of the many students who received education in the secular and thought-provoking atmosphere of Hindu College. The dream that Rammohan Roy and David Hare had entertained when they founded Hindu College became a reality with the efforts of teachers like Derozio, Richardson, Percival and many more. These teachers gave secular and humanistic values to the students. They laid down strong foundation for Shakespeare studies, which inspired generations of students.[68]

The Shakespeare teaching at Hindu College, as can be inferred from the above-quoted accounts, was not at all "the process by which Christianity is made available to heathens, or Shakespeare made available to the uncultured," as is made out by the postcolonial critic Ania Loomba.[69] Derozio or Richardson never "designed" their teaching "to assert the authority of ... European (or English) culture ...."[70] Of course, Loomba may be right so far as the missionary institutions are concerned, but no single part can stand for the whole. Hindu College teachers of Shakespeare had very different orientation from that of their counterparts in the missionaries' institutions. As for Shakespeare, his superiority as a writer, as a repository of humanist values, remains widely accepted even today. His unchallenged position as the greatest writer cuts across the sentiments of race, religion, and nation.

These accounts of Hindu College by its eminent alumini do not endorse the view presented by the postcolonial studies of English education in British India. While making out a case for the collusion of power and knowledge in colonial India, these studies have emphasized the manipulative intentions of the missionaries, entirely overlooking the efforts made by people like David Hare and Rammohan Roy.[71] To cite a simple instance of how things went at Hindu college, here is a reminiscence of Kishorilal Mitra, one of the students of Derozio:

> The youthful hand of reformers who had been educated at the Hindu College, like the top of the Kanchanjunga [the highest peak in the Himalayas], were the first to catch and reflect the dawn .... When had an opposition to popular prejudices been dissociated with difficulty and trouble? .... To excommunication and its concommitant evils, our friends were subjected .... Conformity to the idolatrous practices and customs evince a weak desertion of principle. Non-conformity to them on the other hand is a moral obligation which we owe to our conscience.[72]

Yet another account of how Hindu College was perceived by the people of Bengal comes from Haramohan Chattopadhyay, who had worked in the college office in its early years. His reminiscence runs as follows:

> [The Hindu College boys were] all considered men of truth. Indeed, the College boy was a synonym for truth and it was a general belief and saying amongst our countrymen, which, those that remember the time, must acknowledge, that 'such a boy is incapable of falsehood because he is a college [Hindu College] boy.'"[73]

Whatever the intents and purposes of English education in India in other institutions, Hindu College earned an unassailable reputation for its secular credentials. Tapan Raychaudhuri, a well-known historian of repute in India, speaks of "the secular agnostic trend in Bengali middle-class culture, traceable back to the early days of the Hindu College."[74]

In a short preamble to the *Shakespeare Commemoration Volume,* entitled "Presidency College and Shakespeare," Taraknath Sen, the volume's editor, goes on to trace the long line of eminent teachers of Shakespeare at the Hindu College in the nineteenth century: "Richardson's legacy of outstanding Shakespearean teaching was well maintained and enriched by Tawney [C.H. Tawney]. Some idea of the quality of his Shakespearean scholarship may be obtained from his critical edition of *Richard III* (London: Macmillan: 1888)."[75] Continuing his brief account of Shakespeare studies at the Hindu College, Taraknath Sen goes on to add:

> Professor H.M. Percival was one of those great figures that come to the mind at once as one recalls the history of Presidency College and of higher education in Bengal .... A pupil of Tawney's, he became Professor of English at Presidency College in 1880, and here for thirty-one years continuously he taught generations of students English literature, History, Political economy, and Political Philosophy, each up to the post-graduate stage .... While he could teach almost anything with the same mastery and excellence, in Shakespeare he surpassed himself, and generations of students at Presidency College were by him initiated into the beauties and subtleties of Shakespearean drama through an exigesis that was as illuminating as it was original and flashing comments put across with an economy of words that was a lesson by itself ... These traits of his teaching reappear in those critical editions of Shakespeare's plays he did at the request of his pupils; they were *As You Like It* (Calcutta: Longmans: 1910), *The Merchant of Venice* (London: Oxford University Press, 1912), *The Tempest* (Calcutta, 1928), *Macbeth* (Calcutta, 1929), *Antony and Cleopatra* (University of Calcutta, 1955) ...."[76]

In his "Introduction" to *Three Essays on Shakespeare by Taraknath Sen,* S.C. Sengupta, formerly a student and then a Shakespeare teacher at Hindu College, and a well known Indian scholar of Shakespeare in the last century, observes the following:

> Presidency College, Calcutta, was, and I am happy to say, still is, a centre of Shakespearean scholarship ... where teachers like D.L. Richardson, John Mann, H.M. Percival ... cast their spell on students, and even occasionally on outsiders, and from where, besides Percival's editions, Tawney's *Richard III* and also J.W. Holmes' *As You Like It* in the Arden Shakespeare originated. I am proud to mention here that Holmes' introduction is possibly the only piece of its kind discussed at some length in Ralli's monumental two volume *History of Shakespearean Criticism.*"[77]

Among numerous impressions recorded about Hindu College by its one-time students is the following from Pandit Sivnath Sastri:

> Most of those who had received their education in the Hindu College ... were fired with the desire to do away with everything that was old and embrace everything that was new. "Cast off your prejudices, and be free in your thoughts and actions," was their watchword; and there was at the time a new force at work to foster this independent spirit.[78]

All these accounts amply evidence the secular character of Hindu College, free from the influence of all those who might have attempted or intended to use English education as an instrument of imperial designs. Those who studied Shakespeare at the Hindu College, and were taught by free-thinking teachers like Henry Derozio, would not have gone for the indoctrination the postcolonial studies such as Ania Loomba's and Gauri Viswanathan's have assigned to Shakespeare teaching in India. Whatever may have been the motive behind the introduction of English literature in India, Hindu College laid its own foundation of secular teaching of literature, placing Shakespeare on top of the literary pyramid, projecting his work as the repository of humanist values, which the young Indians embraced as a support against the superstitions of their orthodox religion and as a shield against the crusade of the missionaries. David Hare's staunch commitment to secular education, strengthened by the revolutionary ideas of Derozio and the refreshing teaching of Richardson, achieved its maturity in the penetrating insights of Percival, making Shakespeare teaching at Hindu College a special feature of its liberal education.

Pointing out the polarities represented by Duff and Roy, Rosinka Chaudhuri rightly remarks:

> Roy was working towards the social and political advancement for his countrymen, but for Duff, the issues here do not rest on merely the overt questions of which language or literature should be taught but on the question of which education belonged to a high order .... While Duff's argument indicates the complexity of the politics involved in the undermining of Hindu systems of knowledge, it also points to the divergent positions in Calcutta around 1830 with regard to cultural influences on, as well as intellectual positions occupied by, men such as Kashiprasad, writing English poetry in Calcutta at the time.[79]

Thus, there were various pulls and pressures on those responsible for framing the policy of education in colonial Bengal, of whch the two extreme polarities were represented by the institutions run by Duff on the one hand and those run by Roy on the other, reputed respectively for Christian and secular emphasis. The East India Company took a cautious position, avoiding both the extremes, but not annoying either Duff or Roy. The institutions directly managed by the government maintained a moderate policy on English education. Hindu College outshined all others, especially because of its outstanding teachers like Derozio, Richardson, and Percival.

Among the large galaxy of Shakespeare teachers at Hindu College, those just mentioned can be considered founders of Shakespeare studies in India, for it was the hard work – of teaching, editing, and interpreting Shakespeare – of these three inspiring, creative, and scholarly teachers which produced a large number of Bengali scholars and writers through several generations between 1928 (when Derozio joined the college) and 1911 (when Percival left it), who continued with dedication the founders' spirit of Shakespeare studies in India.

Although during these years there were several other eminent teachers of Shakespeare at Hindu College, it was these three who in three different ways laid the foundation of Shakespeare studies in India: Derozio as an inspiring poet-teacher promoting free thinking, Richardson as poet-critic giving independent, though informed, interpretations of Shakespeare, and Percival as scholar-teacher editing a number of plays of Shakespeare for the Indian students. It is these three pillars of Shakespeare studies at Hindu College who deserve to be noted and studied for their seminal and significant contribution to Shakespeare studies in India. It is these three, therefore, whose work will be discussed at length in the subsequent chapters of this thesis.

Notes

[1]See *Calcutta: The City Revealed* (1971; Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd., 1983), p. 67.

[2]Ibid., p. 68.

[3]Ibid., p. 69.

[4]See *British Orientalism and The Bengal Renaissance, The Dynamics of Indian Modernization*, 1773-1835 (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1969), p. 95.

[5]See *A Various Universe: A Study in the Journals and Memoirs of British Men and Women in the Indian Subcontinent* 1765-1856 (1968; New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 26.

[6]See "On The Vedas or The Sacred Writings of the Hindus," in *Asiatic Researches* (1805), VIII.

[7]See *A Various Universe*, p. 70.

[8]See Taraknath Sen, pp. vii-viii.

[9]See "Shakespeare and Bengali Theatre," in *Indian Literature* 7, no. 1 (1964), pp. 29-30.

[10]See Max Muller, *Biographical Essays* (1884), p. 29.

[11]See M.K. Haldar, *Renaissance and Reaction in Nineteenth Century Bengal* (Calcutta: Minerva Associates), pp. 10-12.

[12]See *Calcutta: The City Revealed*, p. 71.

[13]See *The Education Policy of The East India Company In Bengal To 1854* (Calcutta: Punthi Pustak, 1964), p. 36.

[14]See Peary Chand Mittra, *A Biographical Sketch of David Hare*, edited by Gauranga Gopal Sengupta (Calcutta: Jijnasa, 1979), p. 5.

[15]See Pandit Sivanath Sastri, *A History of The Renaissance in Bengal,* edited by Sir Roper Lethbridge (1904; Calcutta: Editions Indian, 1972), p. 46.

[16]See A. Howell, *Education in British India Prior to 1854 and in 1870-1* (Calcutta, ? 1872), p. 9.

[17]See H. Sharp, *Selections from Educational Records*, I, P.80.

[18]See *David Hare Centenary Volume 1975-76*, edited by Rakhal Bhattacharya (Calcutta: David Hare Bicentenary of Birth Celebration Committee, 1976)), p. 1.

[19]See M.K. Haldar, "Introduction" to Bankim Chandra Chattopadhya, *Renaissance and Reaction in Nineteenth Century Bengal*, Translated with an Introduction by M.K. Haldar (Calcutta: Minerva Associates Publications Pvt. Ltd., 1977), p. 7.

[20]Ibid. p. 9.

[21]See Peary Chand Mittra's *A Biographical Sketch of David Hare,* Edited by Gauranga Gopal Sengupta (Calcutta: JIJNASA, 1979), p. 155.

[22]See J. Ghosh, *Higher Education in Bengal Under British Rule* (Calcutta, 1926), pp. 54-55

[23]See R.K. Dasgupta, "Shakespeare in Bengali Literature," in *Indian Literature,* Vol. VII, No. I (1964), P. 19.

[24]Ibid., pp. 25-26.

[25]See C.E. Trevelyan, *On the Education of the People of India* (London, 1938), p. 8.

[26]See *A Biographocal Sketch of David Hare*, p. 153.

[27]See Mathew Arnold, "The Study of Poetry," *Essays in Criticism: Second Series,* ed. S.R. Littlewood (London: Macmillan, 1956), pp. i-33.

[28]See *First Fruits of English Education 1817: 1857* (Calcutta: Bookland Private Limited, 1973), pp. 141-142.

[29]See "Introduction" to *Renaissance and Reaction in Nineteenth Century Bengal,* pp. 11-13 and 16-18.

[30]Ibid., p. 55.

[31]See *Calcutta: The City Revealed*, p.70.

[32]See Thomas Paine's *Rights of Man: A biography* (Bhopal (India) Majul Publishing house Pvt. Ltd., 2006). Pp. 6-7.

[33]Ibid., p. 7.

[34]See *Complete Works of Henry Derozio, Vol. I* (Calcutta: The Baptist Mission Press, 1827), p. 20.

[35]See *The Parlour and the Streets: Elite and Popular Culture in Nineteenth Century Calcutta* (Calcutta: Seagull, 1998), pp.42-43.

[36]See *Bengal Theatre* (New Delhi: National Book Trust, India, 1978), p. 14.

[37]See Tapan Raychaudhuri, *Europe Reconsidered: Perceptions of the West in Nineteenth-Century Bengal* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 201.

[38]See R.K. Dasgupta, "Shakespeare in Bengali Literature," in *Indian Literature,* Vol. VII, No. I (1964), p. 30.

[39]See "Shakespeare and Bengali Theatre," in Indian Literature, Vol. VII, No.I (1964), p. 30.

[40]See Tapan Raychaudhhuri, p. 56.

[41]See J. Ghosh, p. 47.

[42]See *Gentlemen Poets in Colonial Bengal: Emergent nationalism and the Orientalist Project* (Calcutta: Seagull, 2002), p. 12.

[43]J.Gosh, op. cit., p. 79: cf. Ronaldshay, op. cit. p.47.

[44]See *Education in British India prior to 1854 and in 1870-1* (Calcutta, 1872), p. 10.

[45]See D.P. Sinha, pp. 160-61.

[46]See *175th Anniversary Commemoration Volume, Presidency College, Calcutta*, pp. 2-3.

[47]See David Kopf, *British Orientalism and the Bengal Renaissance: The Dynamics of Indian Modernisation 1773-1835* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1968), p. 181.

[48]See *Awakening: The Story of Bengal Renaissance* (Noida: Random House India, 2010), p. 132.

[46]See *Calcutta: The City Revealed*, p. 70

[50]See Krishna Chandra Lahiri, "Shakespeare in the Calcutta University," in *Calcutta Essays on Shakespeare*, edited by Amalendu Bose (Calcutta: Calcutta University, 1966), p. 174.

[51]Ibid., p. 173.

[52]Ibid., p. 174.

[53]Ibid., pp. 174-75.

[54]Ibid., p. 175.

[55]See Bhagban Prasad Majumdar, *First Fruits of English Education [1817-1857]* (Calcutta: Bookland Private Limited, 1973), pp. 140-141.

[56]Cited by Majumdar, p. 141.

[57]Ibid., p. 137.

[58]Ibid., pp. 137-38.

[59]Ibid., p. 138.

[60]See *Missionaries and Education in Bengal* (Oxfoord: Clarendon Press, 1972), p. 250.

[61]See *Nostalgia: An Illusrated History of Hindu-Presidency College (1817-1992),* ed. Koustubh Panda (Calcutta: Praksham Publications Private Ltd., 1993), p. 29.

[62]See Amal Kumar Mukhopadhyay (ed.), *175th Anniversary Commemoration Volume, Presidency College, Calcutta* (Calcutta: Principal, Presidency College, 1992), pp. 65-75.

[63]See Rudraprasad Sen Gupta, "A Century of Imitation: A study of Shakespeare's Influence on Bengali Drama," in *Calcutta Essays on Shakespeare* (Calcutta: Calcutta University, 1966), p. 168.

[64]Cited in Rosinka Chaudhri's *Gentlemen Poets in Colonial Bengal*, p. 85.

[65]Ibid., p. 97.

[66]Cited in Chaudhuri, p. 96.

[67]See Nirad C. Chaudhuri, *The Autobiography of an Unknown Indian* (New York, 1951), pp. 184-85.

[68]See *175th Anniversary Commemoration Volume*, pp. 65-66.

[69]See Ania Loomba, *Colonialism/postcolonialism* (London: Routledge, 1998), pp. 89-90.

[70]Other postcolonial critics like Gauri Vishwanathan, in her *Masks of Conquest: Literary Study and British Rule in India* (London: Faber and Faber, 1990) and Sara Suleri, in her *The Rehtoric of English India* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992) also ignore these first-hand accounts by the teachers and students of Hindu College as also the historical documents including Rammohan Roy's letters and those related to the foundation of Hindu College and Hare's own school in Calcutta.

[71]See in M.K. Haldar's "Introduction" to Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay's *Renaissance and Reaction in Nineteenth Century Bengal*

[72]Ibid., p. 56.

[73]Ibid., p. 57.

[74]See *Europe Reconsidered*, p. 5.

[75]See *Shakespeare Commemoration Volume*, edited by Taraknath Sen (Calcutta: Department of English, Presidency College), p. vii.

[76]Ibid., p. viii.

[77]See *Three Essays on Shakespeare* (Calcutta: Rupa & Co., 1978), pp. xvi-xvii.

[78]See *A History of the Renaissance in Bengal: Ramtanu Lahiri: Brahman & Reformer*, from the Bengali of Pandit Sivanath Sastri, edited by Sir Roper Lethbridge (1904; Calcutta: Editions Indian, 1972), p. 56.

[79]See *Gentlemen Poets in Colonial Bengal*, p. 60.

Chapter III

Henry Derozio, a Radical Shakespeare Teacher

Recounting the history of English teaching at Hindu College in its 175th Anniversary Commemoration Volume, Asoke Kumar Mukherjee states the following:

> Few College departments can boast of such a distinguished history as the Department of English, Presidency College, Calcutta. This Department, like many others in the College, owes its formal institution around 1909-10 to the efforts of Principal H.R. James who separated the different disciplines in view of their different and special needs. But the beginnings of English teaching in the College go much further back to the days of Henry Louis Vivian Derozio, appointed in 1828, Master of English literature and History in the Hindu College, as Presidency was then known. Derozio died young, but the tradition of inspired teaching persisted, notably in the remarkable reading and interpretation of Shakespeare's plays by Captain David Lester Richardson, appointed Professor of Literature in 1837 ....[1]

As already discussed in an earlier chapter, Derozio joined Hindu College in 1826, not in 1828. Here, English teaching is said to have begun with Derozio's joining the college, which was nine years after the college was established. Elsewhere, it is stated, already mentioned in the preceding chapter, that Shakespeare teaching began with the establishment of Hindu College, but again mentioning Derozio as the first teacher of English in that college. In the absence of the college records with regard to the subjects being taught since 1817, it cannot be stated with certainty as to when Shakespeare teaching actually got initiated at Hindu College. In any case, in the absence of any other teacher of English, especially of Shakespeare, mentioned in any of the available records, it seems certain that Derozio, if not the first, was the only known teacher of Shakespeare before D.L. Richardson, about whom so much has been said by his students.

Being the first eminent teacher of English literature at the first Indian college that provided English education to the Indians, Derozio had a seminal role to play in laying the foundation of Shakespeare studies in India, which included not only inspired reading and interpretation of the plays but also their performance in the college as well as in public places. Derozio, like Shakespeare himself, had to his credit only school

education, but the school where he studied gave him a vast and deep insight into literature. He may not have read Graeco-Roman thought and literature, as Shakespeare had, but his reading in the Scottish thinkers was quite substantial.

Born on 18th April 1809, Derozio joined at the age of six the famous David Drummund's school, situated in Calcutta's well-known area called Dharmatala, where he studied until the age of fourteen, and remained as the best and most favourite student of Drummond. Among the attitudes and ideas he permanently acquired at the Drummond Academy, Derozio learnt the art of acting, acting the roles of quite a few characters from Shakespeare's plays. For instance, *The Calcutta Journal* of December 24,1821 makes a mention of his fine acting ability displayed in the "new apothecary" and the tent scene in *Richard III.* The report also praises Derozio for his "great versatility of powers, highly cultivated for so young a man."[2] Another instance mentioned in the next year's report of *The Calcutta Journal* praises him for his "good conception of Shylock .... Coleman's humorous vagary of the poetical apothecary ...."[3] There are several more reports of Derozio's acting in Shakespeare's plays, as also of his recitation of passages from those plays. Here at Drummond's Academy, Derozio had developed his interest in Shakespeare, showing an exceptional ability to recite, act, and explicate scenes and characters from the plays, always making a mark as the best performer in examinations, functions, competitions, etc.[4]

Even more precocious than his learning in recitation and acting at Drummond's Academy was Derozio's deep interest and understanding of literature and philosophy that he inherited from David Drummond. Born in Scotland in 1785, eleven years before Robert Burns died, Drummond produced a body of songs in Doric. He came to India at the age of 28 and lived in Calcutta for 30 years. Initially joining as an assistant in the propriety school of Messers Wallace and Measures, Drummond became, a few years later, the school's sole proprieter, making it the most famous school of its time, known both as Drummond's Academy and Dhurrumtollah Academy. As Thomas Edwards, Derozio's first biographer, reports, "It was one of the peculiarities of Drummond's school that ... European, Eurasian and native lads conned the same lessons, and mingled together in the same school sports."[5]

As the most promising student of Drummond's Academy, having in him poetic talent, philosophic outlook, and literary taste in almost the same measure his master had, Derozio soon emerged as the morning star of the new learning of the West, later becoming one of the leading figures of the Bengal Renaissance. As Edwards has observed,

> Drummond ... a scholar and a gentleman, was equally versed and well read in the classics, mathematics and metaphysics of his day, and trained ... less in the grammatical niceties and distinctions of verbal criticism ... than in the thought of the great writers of antiquity and in the power of independent thinking. This culture and power of independent thought, Drummond seems to have had the power of imparting in an unusual degree, and on none of his pupils did he more distinctly impress his own individuality than on young Derozio.[6]

It was not only philosophy, secular and sceptical, that Drummond taught his students: he also gave them strong grounding in English literature, especially of the Renaissance, and assigned Shakespeare the central place in this training in reading, reciting, acting, and interpreting the classics of the English literary tradition. As mentioned earlier, it was this school, more than any other, that trained boys in performing Shakespeare's plays, and made these performances a special feature at school functions.[7]

That Drummond's teaching in philosophy and literature was vast and modern can be gauged from a report of Alexander Duff, a rival to David Hare and Drummond in the field of school education, on the routine meetings Derozio and his mentor held with the intelligentsia in Calcutta after the school hours. As Duff reports, at these meetings

> The sentiments delivered were fortified by oral quotations from English authors. If the subject was historical, Robertson and Gibbon were appealed to; if political, Adam Smith and Jeremy Bentham; if scientific, Newton and Davy; if religious, Hume and Thomas Paine; if metaphysical, Locke and Reid, Stewart and Brown. The whole was frequently interspersed and enlivened by passages cited from some of our most popular English poets, particularly Byron and Sir Walter Scott. And more than once were my ears greeted with the sound of Scotch rhymes from the poems of Robert Burns.[8]

As can be noted from Duff's account, the methods of teaching at Drummond's were quite modern, using leading writers of the European Enlightenment as the leading light for moving forward. The scholarly pedagogy was key to Drummond's teaching, relating the march of civilization to the advancement of learning. The reading that Derozio did at Drummond's Academy cannot be equated to Shakespeare's learning at the Grammar

School so well brought out in T.W. Baldwin's *William Shakespere's Small Latine & Lesse Greeke*[9], but it was quite substantial, more than what other schools in Calcutta offered. Also like Shakespeare, Derozio left school rather abruptly and went out in search of livelihood. One could call Derozio also a "self-schooled"[10] genius, given the amount of creative and prose work he left behind, all accomplished before he had completed his twenty third year, falling prey to cholera in 1831. It sounds a little surprising that Duff should make no mention of Shakespeare whose plays were read, recited and performed by the students of Drummand's Academy. Perhaps his Scottish origin and missionary affiliation was responsible for his mention of Scott and Burns, and omission of Shakespeare.

That more than any other English poet Shakespeare had influenced the young mind of Derozio at Drummond's Academy is amply evidenced by the poetry he produced in the subsequent years. On leaving school in 1823, "Derozio became a clerk in the firm of Messrs. J. Scott and Company, and remained in their employment for two years. In this firm, his father had long held a highly responsible position."[11] Having no liking for clerical work, Derozio turned to writing poetry, for which his talent had already been recognised at school. Later in 1825, Derozio got into the more engaging work of an Indigo-planter at Bhaugulpore, under the hospitable roof of his uncle Johnson.

> .... It was here, with the ripple of the Ganges in his ear, and the boats of the fisher and the trader borne on the tide, out of whose broad bosom the Fakir-inhabited rock of Jhungeera that the youthful poet drunk in all those sweet influences of nature and much of human nature which indelibly impressed themselves on his intellect and imagination and stirred him to the production of his most sustained effort in poetry, *The Fakir of Jungheera.*[12]

This long poem of Derozio is comparable to Keats' achievement in *Hyperion.* The Eurasian poet's output of shorter poems, too, is no less than that of Keats, although his status may not measure up to that of the English poet. Dying young, even younger than Keats, Derozio left a body of writing in poetry and prose to posterity, which remains for his countrymen as valuable as Keats' work for the British. Keats, of course, enjoys international status, whereas Derozio remains little known outside India.

As a poet, too, Derozio shows the indelible influence of Shakespeare whose work he taught at Hindu College, inspiring generations of Indian students, several of whom became leading writers, teachers and reformers, holding the flag of radicalism

Derozio had handed over to them. Besides the numerous echoes of Shakespeare in Derozio's different poems, there are at least two sonnets which are directly related to Shakespeare. The fact that Derozio chose to write both the poems – "Romeo and Juliet" and "Yorick's Scull" – in the sonnet form also shows how deeply the young Eurasian poet was impressed by Shakespeare. [In colonial India, persons like Derozio came to be called Eurasians because their parents came from Europe and settled in Asia (Euro-Asians), whereas those with mixed English-Indian parentage were called Anglo-Indians. Derozio's father came from Portugal, although his mother was of English origin settled in India.] The sonnet "Yorick's Scull" opens with an epigraph from *Hamlet*:

Clown – This same scull, Sir, was
Yorick's scull, the King's jester.
Hamlet – (taking the scull) This?
Clown- E'en that.
Hamlet- Alas! poor Yorick!...
.....Now get you to
my lady's chamber, and tell her,let
her paint an inch thick, to this
favour she must come: make
her laugh at that,
SHAKESPEARE

With this rather lengthy epigraph Derozio's poem begins in the true Shakespearean spirit, running into fourteen lines, but without the Shakespearean rhyme scheme, being rather irregular:

It is a most humiliating thought,
That man, who deems himself the lord of all
(Alas! why doth he thus himself miscal?)
Must one day turn to nought, or worse than nought:
Despite of all his glory, he must fall
Like a frail leaf in autumn; and his power
Weighs lighter than his breath in his last hour;
And then earth's lord is fragile as a flower –
This is a lesson for thee, Pride! – thy book
Should be the charnel; into it once look,
And when thou'st read it, feed upon the thought,
The most humiliating thought, that thine

And thou shall be unto this favour one day brought –

Behold! this is the "human face divine!"[13]

Composed in the eighteenth year of his life, Derozio's sonnet certainly lacks Keatsean maturity, showing in its greater directness and inflation signs of the Shelleyean style. But the sonnet does show the deep imprint the young Derozio had received from his reading of *Hamlet*. Hamlet's contemplation of death and his subtle use of "look" and "book" in various speeches in the play find unmistakable echoes in Derozio's sonnet.

Another sonnet worth the mention in relation to Derozio's fascination for Shakespeare is his "Romeo and Juliet." Composed in the same year as "Yorick's Scull," this one does not have its epigraph from Shakespeare's play. Here, Derozio picks up his epigraph from Byron, also a favourite poet of Derozio. The excerpt from Byron is as follows:

Oh love! what is it in this world of our's

That makes it fatal to be loved?

DON JUAN, CANTO 3

Derozio's "Romeo and Juliet", showing Shakespeare's influence, again in sonnet form, runs as follows:

I thought upon their fate, and wept; and then

Came to my mind the silent hour of night,

The hour which lovers love, and long for, when

Their young impassioned souls feel that delight

Which love's first dream bestows - How Juliet's ear

Drank every soft word of her Cavalier!

And how, when his departing hour drew nigh,

She fondly called him back to her! – Oh! Why

Did she then call him back? – It is the same

With all whom love may dwell with; but the flame

Within *their* breasts was a consuming fire;

'Twas passion's essence; it was something higher

Than aught that life presents; it was above

All that we see – 'twas all we dream of love.[14]

As can be seen, the sonnet is not truly Shakespearean, neither in form, nor in tone and tenor; it is not even Keatsean, being rather inferior as art. In its lyrical flow and emotional overflow, it is surely romantic, echoing Shelley. It does however confirm Derozio's love of Shakespeare, his engagement with Shakespeare's plays. Evidently,

Derozio was more influenced by Byron and Shelley than by Keats and Shakespeare, deeply inclined as he was towards direct expression of his ideas, not towards thinking through paradox and ambiguity.

Derozio's sonnets on Shakespeare may not be as mature as those of Keats, but they do establish his keen interest in Shakespeare. What is of significance for us here is not so much the quality of his verse as the grounding in Shakespeare he had received at Drummond's Academy. This grounding is, in fact, not confined to his compositions of these two sonnets, nor to the various echoes of expressions from Shakespeare in several other poems. We can frequently hear these echoes in his prose writings as well, which constitute as substantial a volume as his verse – each running into over three hundred pages.

In Derozio's prose writings on social, political, philosophical, and literary subjects, one comes across numerous allusions and references to scenes and characters from Shakespeare's plays. In an essay titled "Beginnings – Literature in India – Promises," writing in the style of the periodical essay, assuming a persona, Derozio ruminates:

> ... Then shall I poetize, and indite verses without end? I would if I could, but I know not how it is that the Nine and I have bid each other "a long adieu" for sometime past – verily "Othello's occupation is gone." [15]

Similarly, in another essay titled "CHIT-CHAT-SCANDAL-TEA-PARTIES," Derozio writes:

> During the rainy, which is invariably the most unfashionable season in Calcutta, there prevails a great dearth of news, unless it should so happen that the arrival of a ship or two from England, brings matter of much political importance, or intelligence which is interesting, if it can only make the multitude gape with wonder .... But cases like those of Thurtell, Fontleroy, and the more unfortunate Elephant that was put lately to death for having manifested symptoms of rebellion, are of very rare occurence; and when these are wanting, Chit-Chat flags, and becomes "weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable ...."[16]

Once again, we can see Derozio using Hamlet's expression in his prose. The topical references in the passage, such as the one to "the Elephant," are not traceable, though the elephant one seems to report an incident about an elephant used for royal or tourists' ride getting violent, causing deaths of men and damage to property, inviting in turn death for itself. The mention of "symptoms of rebellion" assumes added significance in the context of the colonial rule. The allusions to Othello and Hamlet in

the above cited prose do, however, sufficiently evidence Derozio's lively interest in Shakespeare's plays, especially the great tragedies, for it is from these that he often quotes. Since tragedies were prescribed in greater number than comedies at Hindu College where Derozio taught as the first teacher of Shakespeare, it is not surprising that he should often draw upon the tragedies for various literary uses.

Later, writing in his own *India Gazette*, Derozio, in a piece called "Proposals For Establishing A Native Theatre," comments as follows:

> This is a very laudable undertaking; but, under existing circumstances, it is questionable whether the originators of it have evinced due discretion. A theatre among the Hindoos, with the degree of knowledge they at present possess, will be like building a palace in the waste. Useful information should precede amusement: at least, wise men will consider that proper. – Let the Hindoos receive [Sic] degree of knowledge before they are to be entertained with theatres.
>
> We hear that the performances are to be in English language. Who advised this stage proceeding we know not; but it is surely worth re-consideration. What can be worse than to have the best dramatic compositions in the English language murdered outright, night after night, foreign manners misinterpreted, and instead of holding the mirror up to nature, caricaturing everything human? – We recommend our Hindoo 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 a theatre.[17]

Hamlet's instructions to the players are used here to make a comment on the erection of a theatre for an uneducated populace. For Derozio, it is like putting a cart before a horse. Education, he feels, is a prerequisite for enjoying and appreciating a play. Hare and Derozio seem to have similar views on the utility of the stage. It does, however, sound a little surprising that Derozio, being himself a performer and promoter of Shakespeare's plays, should oppose the raising of a theatre in Calcutta. But as his argument reveals, his point is to emphasize the importance of education for imparting culture. For him, English plays are better staged for the populace after making them educated in English language and literature. Also surprising is Derozio's highbrow attitude to Shakespeare on stage, making education a prerequisite for appreciating performance. Perhaps, what he means is at least an elementary knowledge of English before one can comprehend

Shakespeare on stage, for otherwise it would amount to watching a dumb show. Most among Shakespeare's own audience, too, had no education, but they were English-speaking.

The cited comment may give the impression that Derozio is siding with the English, the colonisers, which is not really the case. He, like Rammohan Roy, is only being honest about his views on the cultures and civilizations of India and Europe as he found them in his time. His position in this regard is best described by Vinay Dharwadker:

> Derozio's particular interests in secular philosophy, humanism, and Romanticism combined with his Eurasian genealogy and Anglocentric upbringing to articulate a new literary position with respect to India. On the one hand ... he 'regarded the whole structure of Hinduism as superstitious and archaic'... On the other hand, since he was actually conscious of being 'neither exclusively European nor Indian'... he developed a passionate love for an imagined India (in Benedict Anderson's sense of the term) that can only be described as the first expression of romantic nationalism in Indian literature ....[18]

Dharwardher's use of 'imagined India,' invoking for justification Benedict Anderson's thesis about 'imagined communities,' is rather misplaced. It smacks of racial prejudice, since Derozio was 'neither exclusively European nor Indian.' Also, Anderson's thesis relates to post-industrial societies, not to those in the nineteenth century. As for Derozio's India, it was the real India under British rule. Derozio was not less patriotic an Indian than any other, when it came to considering the political status of his mother country. His two sonnets on India were the very first to imply the idea of freedom as a prerequisite for a nation's glory. No other Indian writer till then had given expression to such a feeling. It seems pertinent here to cite his sonnets on India. The first, "To India, My Native Land," is as follows:

> My country! In thy day of glory past
> A beauteous halo circled round thy brow,
> And worshipped as a deity thou wast. –
> Where is that glory, where that reverence now?
> Thy eagle pinion is chained down at last,
> And grovelling in the lowly dust art thou:
> Thy minstrel hath no wreath to weave for thee
> Save the sad story of thy misery! –

Well – let me dive into the depths of time,
And bring from out the ages that have rolled
A few small fragments of those wrecks sublime,
Which human eye may never more behold;
And let the guerdon of my labour be
My fallen country! One kind wish for thee![19]

As amply evidenced by this sonnet Derozio, the first Indian poet in English, was also the first among the Indian writers who composed verses about the "chained" (colonised) state of his "native land." Derozio may be an Eurasian, not a Hindu, but his patriotism is genuinely heart-felt. If he does not favour the raising of a theatre for English performances, it is because he sincerely feels, like Arnold, that without education there cannot come any culture. Hence his emphasis on schools as an earlier step than theatres.

Even as Derozio gained fame as a poet, he was offered in 1826 the appointment as sub-editor of *The India Gazette*, in which his poems had been appearing since 1822. "Through the influence of Dr. John Grant to whom he dedicated the volume [the first of his poems published in 1827], he obtained ..." the appointment "of fourth teacher at Hindu [later Presidency College, and now Presidency University] on a salary of Rs. 150 a month."[20] Just as he had instantly received fame as a poet, so he made a mark even more quickly as a teacher, creating quite a stir in the intellectual circles of Calcutta. As reported in an article published in *Reis and Rayyet* of June 22, 1902,

> That eminent scholar, Dr. H.H.Wilson ... who was the visitor of the Hindu College, was struck with his [Derozio's] mode of teaching and is said to have declared more than once that it greatly exceeded his expectations. Derozio taught history as one of philosophic minds would teach it .... Derozio possessed the rare power of weaving interest around any subject that he taught.[21]

In the absence of more information about Derozio's method of teaching, we have to rely on his writings, where it is clear that he, like Shelley, was more interested in ideas than in material realities. As in his writing, so he must have been in his teaching: he always interprets history as well as literature in terms of ideas based on the Western thought from Plato to Paine. Derozio's date of joining Hindu College is differently mentioned by different biographers. Whereas Walter Madge dates it in November 1826;[22] Thomas Edwards says it was in March 1828;[23] and Peary Chand Mittra, David Hare's biographer, fixes it in 1827;[24] the latest editor of Derozio's poems, Rosinka Chaudhuri, brings it back to 1826. Chaudhuri's date of Derozio's joining Hindu College

is also supported by the editors of *Song of The Stormy Petrel*, although they cite two sources which separately mention Derozio's joining in May and November of that year. From the viewpoint of authenticity, 1826 sounds more probable, although, besides the two different months of that year mentioned in two different sources, the sources themselves are second-hand accounts written many years after 1826.[25] The best source should have been the Presidency College itself, but the College does not seem to have retained the register of teachers related to their service in the college before 1855.

We may focus on Derozio as the first eminent teacher of Shakespeare at Hindu College, which remains our express concern. It is pertinent here to reiterate that Derozio had no formal education beyond schooling at Drummond's Academy, but his knowledge of literature and philosophy was so vast that he came to be considered far above the other teachers. Besides, and above all, he was a poet in his own right, instantly receiving recognition even in England. As Mittra remarks about Derozio as a teacher,

> I thus prominently notice his appointment, because it opened up, so to speak, a new era in the annals of the College. His career as an educator was marked by his singular success. His appreciation of the duties of a teacher was higher and truer than that of the herd of professors and schoolmasters. He felt it his duty as such to teach not only words but things, to touch not only the head but the heart. He sought not to cram the mind but to inoculate it with large and liberal ideas. Acting on his principle, he opened the eyes of his pupils' understanding. He taught them to think, and throw off the fetters of that antiquated bigotry which still clung to their countrymen. He possessed a profound knowledge of mental and moral philosophy and imparted it to them. Gifted with great penetration, he led them through the pages of Locke and Reid, Stewart and Brown. He brought to bear on his lectures great and original powers of reasoning and observation ....[26]

Such memoirs and tributes are numerous, which need not be multiplied here. It is enough to say that Derozio became a legendary teacher, a phenomenon, a movement, from the very start of his career as a teacher of history and literature.

It may not be out of place to mention here that in those days there were no separate departments of English, not even in England, and literature at the college (and at the university) level was taught along with history and philosophy. Today, we have

specialised teaching, with expert scholars even for individual authors, Shakespeare or Milton, Joyce or Yeats. Thus, most accounts of Derozio as teacher speak of his charismatic personality, in general, not of his specific teaching of Shakespeare. In the case of Richardson and Percival, comments about their Shakespeare teaching as well as their own practical criticisms of Shakespeare's plays are available, but not so in the case of Derozio. Reasons for the comparatively meagre accounts of Derozio's Shakespeare teaching and criticism are obvious. Firstly, he died young, before he could even complete his twenty third year. Secondly, his prose writings are mostly on social and philosophic subjects, very few on literary ones. Still, one can trace the tenets of his Shakespeare teaching from the observations of those who studied and discussed literature and ideas with him as well as from his own prose writings, especially those on literature.

In his introduction to the *Shakespeare Commemoration Volume*, titled "Presidency College and Shakespeare," Taraknath Sen, an illustrious alumnus of the college and later an eminent teacher of Shakespeare in the same college, mentions Derozio as a pioneer of Shakespeare teaching at Hindu College: "Among those who taught Shakespeare at the Hindu College two names stand out: two teachers of genius: Henry Louis Vivian Derozio and David Lester Richardson."[27] In the absence of Derozio's own comments on Shakespeare, these tributes to his teaching of Shakespeare make us all the more curious about what he actually must have lectured in the classroom for those five years he taught at Hindu College.

Derozio's teaching of Shakespeare was two-fold: interpretation of Shakespeare in the classroom and directing performance of plays in the college. As Pallab Sen Gupta has recorded,

> ... Derozio wrote a couple of sonnets on Shakespearean subjects (on Romeo and Juliet and Yorick's skull) and read the plays with his students in the Hindu College which he had joined as a teacher. On 27 January 1827, selected scenes from *Julius Caesar* were staged at a college in which Kashiprasad Gosh participated. Next year, the trial scene was enacted by Hindu College boys on the 12th January in the Government House .... Next year, the students of the Hindu College organised a number of recitations from several plays (*Julius Caesar, Macbeth, Troilus and Cressida, Cymbeline, 2 Henry VI, Hamlet*) at the Government House on the 18th February .... [28]

Although there are no records available in the Presidency College (earlier Hindu College) as to which plays of Shakespeare were prescribed in the college curriculum when Derozio taught there, from the reports on performances it can be presumed that, if not all, some of these plays were taught by Derozio. These reports also reveal that since girls were not favoured with college education, boys played the roles of women characters.

In another account by B.P. Majumdar, it is mentioned that Richardson, who later joined Hindu College to continue Derozio's teaching of Shakespeare and other English writers, taught the following plays: "*Hamlet, Othello, Macbeth, King Lear* and the two parts of *Henry IV*...."[29] Decidedly, Derozio must have taught these very plays during his short span between 1826 and 1831. Although Derozio's detailed commentaries on the plays of Shakespeare are not available, as they are in the case of Richardson and Percival, his general remarks on Shakespeare along with other writers amply indicate the kind of approach he must have brought to bear on the teaching of Shakespeare in his lectures. More interested in the larger role as a radical reformer of social institutions, fighting orthodoxy, Derozio was, like Matthew Arnold, much more than a teacher and critic of literature. However, even though he did not live to complete his twenty-third year, he did leave behind a body of prose writings, besides the weightier volume of poetry, from which we can certainly gather his ideas on Shakespeare as well as on literature in general.

The most important prose piece that reveals Derozio's views on poetry and poets, including Shakespeare, is titled "On the Influence of Poetry." One of the key statements he makes in this article is as follows:

> It may be said, that the province of the poet is to amuse, and that such as accomplish so much complete their proper ends. This, however, we question. Everything is either good or evil, its ultimate consequences must be considered in estimating its value. Much that affords immediate pleasure may be productive of remote but dreadful evil. And as thoughts and sentiments have a great influence in promoting good or evil, it becomes us to consider what they may effect on being promulgated. Appeals to the passion through the imagination should, therefore, be regulated according to the tendencies they possess of promoting general good or evil ....[30]

Apparently, Derozio's demand from poetry and poets is, like that of Plato, highly moralistic. In his view, "everything is either good or evil," and there is no neutral

territory in literature, as well as in life. Certainly, Derozio is no Aristotelian who would hold "pleasure" as the main purpose of literature. Nor would he be a votary of the poetics of "art for art's sake," which liberates poets from moral responsibility.

Being highly oriented, like Shelley, towards radical reformation of social attitudes and institutions, Derozio demands a categorical moral stance from poets for the improvement of society. He is not one of those who would consider the bards as inspired by heavenly muses, having no infirmities of the mortal race. For him,

> False sentiment, enthusiasm misdirected, and base passions excited must lead to evil results, and the extent of their influence will be in proportion to the talent or ingenuity with which these sentiments are expressed, that enthusiasm directed, or those passions agitated. Is this sufficiently considered by poets? ....[31]

It becomes quite clear from Derozio's line of thought that he would not spare even Shakespeare for his paradoxical and ambiguous, even sceptical and cynical, probings of the different aspects of life and human nature. No wonder then that Derozio comes down rather heavily on great poets, including Shakespeare, for not clearly and emphatically siding with the good and opposing the evil:

> Is not the great mass of what they write composed of false sentiments, subversive of much that is noble and exalted in human nature? Is not that despondency with which too many of them may be charged, a great drawback from the buoyancy and elasticity with which life is invested and which they are so liable to deaden and destroy? Is not that glory with which they have encircled military achievements like a halo that consecrates and adorns them, an ornament bestowed upon objects unworthy of it? Is not all the softness and sweetness which they have ascribed to romance, too apt to mislead and bewilder the mind? Are not many of their longings and imaginings calculated to give us a disgust for the ordinary pursuits of life and dispose us to disregard our condition to be indifferent to the realities of the present, and prospects of the future? Too many, we fear, must plead guilty to these charges. We are not insensible to the truth of much that has been written by Milton, Shakespeare, Dante, Burns, Byron, Shelley, Wordsworth and Campbell; but even in the writings of these great men, how many sentiments are to be found, which, in their general consequences,

> may be productive of more evil than good? Granting, however, that none such may be discovered in their works, can we not name a host, the greater portion of whose writings have the most direct tendency to degrade human nature, to beautify time– sanctioned fallacies, to give greater currency to erroneous opinions, and, in short, to retard the moral and intellectual advancement of human nature?[32]

It is a rather long quotation, but it is essential for the simple reason that it reveals a good deal of what Derozio would do while discussing writers and their works for instructing his students. To begin with, it is clear that, like Plato, he implies the superiority of philosophy over poetry. For, in his opinion, the poets tend to be "subversive of much that is noble and exalted in human nature," whereas the philosophers, on the other hand, do not obliterate the clear distinction between good and evil. Then Derozio also disapproves the "despondency" of the writers who tend to "deaden and destroy" "the buoyancy and elasticity with which life is invested." Decidedly, he is unable to admire the tragic vision or pessimistic view of life he finds in so many writers, including the great ones like Shakespeare. Derozio is equally critical of the writers of epics who glorify "military achievements," clearly implying his disapproval of the feudal morality of these poets.

Derozio's disapproval of romances, in the passage cited above, is equally emphatic, for he considers "all the softness and sweetness ascribed to romance" quite likely "to mislead and bewilder the mind." One reason for which he devalues romance is its "longings and imaginings" which are "calculated to give us a disgust for the ordinary pursuits of life." Evidently, Derozio would prefer writers to adopt the style of realism rather than romance, keeping us mindful of "realities of the present, and prospects of the future." In the present-day terminology, Derozio, with his preference for a socially purposeful art, for a realistic rather than romantic art, and for a forward-looking progressive art, would be viewed in close proximity to the Marxist critics. His preference for a revolutionary rather than conservative art, for a radical rather than ruminative art, also becomes clear when while listing the great writers he mentions Milton before Shakespeare and Shelley before Wordsworth. He does, of course, draw a line between these great writers in whose works may not be discovered "many sentiments", "which, in their general consequences, may be productive of more evil than good," and those ordinary writers "the greater portion of whose writings have the most direct tendency to degrade human nature" and to "beautify ... sanctioned fallacies to give greater currency to erroneous opinions, and, in short, to retard the moral and

intellectual advancement of human nature." Despite this distinction between great and ordinary writers, however, Derozio's demand for a clear moral message from the artists, including the great ones like Shakespeare and Milton, remains in place. Derozio's emphasis on the moral purpose of drama and other forms of literature shows an influence of Shelley in particular and of the Romantics in general. Even greater influence than that of Shelley on Derozio was that of Locke and Hume whose philosophic treatises on human understanding he had read right from school days.

It is necessary to mention here the present-day ideological readings, especially the postcolonial, that are designed to brand all writing in English, as well as all teaching of English, in the British colonies, as an instrument of the colonial project of British imperialism. For example, speaking of the significance of Hindu College in relation to English studies in India, Gauri Vishwanathan remarks:

> Initially, the movement for English studies, spearheaded by Calcutta's foremost citizen, Rammohan Roy, and the English watchmaker David Hare, was sparked by a need for translations of English literature into the vernaculars and not for a wholesale transfusion of Western thought. It is highly probable that no one expected to see introduced the full range of purely secular English literature and science through the medium of English.[33]

We have already cited at length in the preceding chapter Roy's and Hare's emphasis on imparting through English language purely secular knowledge of Western thought and English literature, where the purpose of translating Western thought and literature into the vernaculars does not figure even once. Also, the emphasis on the secular teaching of literature at Hindu College remained unequivocal, always opposing the bigotry of both Hindus and Christians. In fact, it was this very common interest of secular English education as a shield against the bigotry of both sides that brought David Hare and Rammohan Roy together. Above all, the secular credentials of Derozio were beyond doubt. In fact, his secularism was of such a radical nature that he had to pay the price for his radicalism by losing his teaching job at Hindu College. His views expressed in the essay under discussion, too, make it clear that he wanted literary writers to compose their texts with a clear moral purpose, taking a clear position on the side of good as against evil. And without doubt, Derozio, like Arnold, believed that the question of how to live is a moral question, both sharing their dislike for dogma, especially the religious.

Derozio minces no words when it comes to defining the social function of literature. He demands a positive and progressive outlook from the poets. Note, for instance, the following:

> ... let the poet abandon war, misanthropy, romances and false feeling and let his enthusiasm be on that side which espouses man's best interest; let it be his object to improve, while he delights, and to promote the advancement of society, while he scatters flowers along its path ....[34]

Here, Derozio's advice to poets for an art promoting secularism and moralism is a general one, making no exception even in the case of writers like Shakespeare and Milton. In his view, even the greatest writers are not free from the 'evil' of giving primacy to emotion over thought. This opposition between emotion and thought becomes clear from another prose piece by Derozio, the young Shakespeare teacher, called "Human Action," included in the miscellany called "Thoughts on Various Subjects." As Derozio puts it,

> All action that does not originate in thought, momentary and profound, is like the action of inanimate matter. It is occasioned by an external or accidental impulse. Hence arise various evils. Would men embody their thoughts, that is, act according to their principles, we should see less evil than at present exists.[35]

Echoing Aristotle's distinction between man and animal, Derozio's argument sounds like Coleridge's, deriving rules of criticism from the principles of philosophy, "making an application" of the rules "to poetry and criticism."[36] In another essay called "Reflections on the Nature of Pleasures and Pains," Derozio concludes, "All pleasures and pains belong to the mind."[37] Although Derozio largely derives his ideas from philosophic writers like Burke and Paine, he does echo here and there an influence of Shakespeare as well. In Shakespeare, we know how painfully *Henry IV* realises, "Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown."[38] *Hamlet* too surmises,"there is nothing either good or bad but thinking makes it so."[39] Both King Henry IV and Hamlet hold mind or intellect as the real source of power for all human activities. Behind both Shakespeare and Derozio stand the Aristotelian treatise on the nature of man, clearly reflected in the citations mentioned above.

From Derozio's ideas, as reflected in his essays, as also in his poems, it is amply clear that his teaching of Shakespeare was anything but an aid to imperialism, as generalised and theorised by the postcolonial critics. For example, Alastair Pennycook,

one of these critics, theorises, "Turning first to the interweaving of English and colonialism, it is clear both that English language teaching was a crucial part of the colonial enterprise and that English has been a major language in which colonialism has been written ...."[40] Such sweeping generalisations do not hold good in the particular case of English teaching at Hindu College, especially by great teachers like Derozio and Richardson. In fact, we have a direct expression of Derozio's ideas on colonialism in a prose piece called "On the Colonization of India by Europeans." In his opinion,

> The most superficial observer must perceive that India is maintained in subjection only by Military Force – withdraw it, and the boasted opinion of the natives, instead of supporting, would immediately prove the cause of the utter subversion of the empire. It is generally known, and even confessed by our rulers, that the spirit of the natives in the Upper Provinces in particular, is anything but peacable. We have lately read in one of the papers that at Lucknow, during the late Mohurrum, prayers were publicly said for the destruction of the Company's Government!![41]

Decidedly, Derozio, radical as he was in his teaching, as well as writing, always spreading the message of free thinking, could not have suited any establishment, colonial or even native. But like Arnold and other liberal humanists of the nineteenth century, he did have great faith in the power of education to reform mankind, to make people more civilized, that is, more rational and cultured. Note, for instance, the following from his essay "On the Colonization of India":

> The Company indeed have never evinced a desire to improve the means of education among the natives; but, there will not be wanting benevolent and public spirited individuals of all classes, who will come forward to promote the dissemination of the arts and sciences throughout the empire. Already do we see the beneficial effects produced by the introduction of the Hindoo College .... Education, by enlarging and enlightening their minds, would lead the way to the subversion of superstition, raise their moral and superficial character, and ultimately produce a very sensible amelioration in their condition ....[42]

Like these enlightened individuals across the political divide between the rulers and the ruled, such as David Hare and Rammohan Roy, Derozio is for uplifting humankind. The ideological twist the postcolonial theorists attribute to all those

involved in English education in India, leaving no room for liberal concerns, seems ridiculous when imposed on the teaching and writing of Derozio and his successors at Hindu College. Ignoring altogether what Derozio and his colleagues were doing at Hindu College, one of the postcolonial critics of Indian origin, Poonam Trivedi, theorises:

> ... it is with the development of postclonial theory in the West that the postcolony as a whole has found a space and a voice with which to interrogate and debate its own cultural history .... To question and examine this 'love' and expose its hegemonized dimensions. Earlier, critiques were confined to the works of Shakespeare, but now they look into the matrices in which they are embedded .... 'the political thrust and parry' in the induction and continuation of Shakespeare in India.[43]

We have traced the track of Shakespeare's teaching in colonial Bengal, decidedly done without 'the political thrust and parry.' Poonam Trivedi's account of Shakespeare in India, though highly informative, is marred by such preconceived postcolonial generalisations as the one cited above. To show how Trivedi's generalisation does not hold good in the case of Derozio we cite here Derozio's own view of the Indian colonial situation, the view of someone who initiated Shakespeare studies in Calcutta:

> ... we must draw the inference, that colonization would not be beneficial, unless the British Legislature interferes, and materially alters the present system of Indian policy, by admitting natives and Indo-Britons to a participation of privileges, on a similar footing, as far as practicable and expedient, with the Europeans. It is only by such a measure that discontent can be prevented from brooding into rebellion, and the arts and sciences, when established, can produce benefits both to the governors and governed, to Britain, and to this, at present, our oppressed and neglected native country. The basis of good government is, as Jeremy Bentham observes, 'the greatest good of the greatest number,' and I heartily hope this principle the wisdom of the legislature will see fit, ere many years elapse, to adopt in every measure connected with India.[44]

It is important here to note that this piece, signed as S.J., his familiar signature under the "pseudo name Juvenis," appeared in *The Keleidoscope* [sic] (No. September, 1829),[45] the journal edited by Derozio himself. It is equally important to note that the article was produced during the period Derozio was teaching Shakespeare and other English writers at Hindu College. As teacher and intellectual, Derozio, with the ideas cited above, could not have misinterpreted Shakespeare and other writers as serving any

racial or political agenda of the imperial authorities in India. The tone and tenor of the above cited statement clearly spells out Derozio's concern for his countrymen, and hardly any for the promotion of the imperial cause.

In an earlier piece dated July 17, 1826, signed as Juvenis, on "Literature in India," Derozio, like Arnold, explores historical reasons why literature is not flourishing in India in the epoch to which he himself belongs. He categorically disagrees with those who think that "colonisation is to benefit India beyond all cultivation," and believes that "this remains to be shown and when that is attempted, I fear me, it will be found that there is more talk than truth in this round assertion."[46] All these ideas Derozio expressed during the years he was going to teach Shakespeare and other English writers at Hindu College, and these very ideas, it can be expected, must have gone into his interpretation of literary texts. Derozio's ideas on English literature and its role in British India, as we have noted from his different prose pieces, are rational, secular, and liberal, bordering the radical in the context of nineteenth- century India.

A brief account of Derozio as teacher at Hindu College available in P.C. Mittra's biography of David Hare clearly indicates the tone and tenor of his teaching:

> Of all the teachers Mr. H.L.V. Derozio gave the greatest impetus to free discussion on all the subjects, social, moral, and religious. He was himself a free thinker, and possessed affable manners. He encouraged students to come and open their minds to him. The advanced students of the Hindu College frequently sought for his company during tiffin time, after School hours, and at his house. He encouraged every one to speak out. This led to free exchange of thought and reading of books which otherwise would not have been read. These books were chiefly poetical, metaphysical and religious.[47]

Such an open teaching and debate was not acceptable to the conservative Hindus, just as Shelley's radical views were not acceptable to the Oxford elite. The Hindu College Managing Committee soon met (middle of 1830) to take stock of the situation and passed the following order:

> The managers of the Anglo Indian College having heard that several of the students are in the habit of attending societies at which political and religious discussions are held, think it necessary to announce their strong disapprobation of the practice, and to prohibit

its continuance; any student being present at such a society after the promulgation of this order, will incur their displeasure.[48]

The order did bring about a little calm in the college, but Derozio continued with his teaching in and outside the classroom undeterred by the order. Conservative parents withdrew their boys or did not allow them to attend Derozio's classes. The Managing Committee again met a few months later (April 23, 1831), at which Ramcomal Sen said that "the College would not prosper till Derozio was removed, he 'being the root of all evil.' He further proposed that those students who were known to take English food and were hostile to Hinduism should be expelled, those boys who attended private lectures and meetings should be removed, and the teachers should be prohibited from eating on the school table."[49] Finally, Derozio was advised to resign by H.H.Wilson whom the former held in high esteem.

The conditions described here would not support the postcolonial theorisation that "the nineteenth-century Anglicist curriculum of British India is not reducible simply to an expression of cultural power, rather it seemed to confer power as well as to fortify British rule against real or imagined threats from a potentially rebellious subject population."[50] All this sounds out of place in the context of Derozio and Hindu College. All accounts of the motivation that led to the foundation of Hindu College and the memoirs of those who studied at that College clearly show that the so-called imperial agenda was never a commodity for anyone's consumption, neither Derozio's nor his opponents among members to the College Committee.

Brave as he was, wholly committed to truth, Derozio continued his task of transforming the youth of Calcutta from conservative minds into questioning explorers. His removal from the College did not dampen his enthusiasm for spreading his ideas. As P.C. Mittra records,

> While connected with the College, Derozio used to edit a paper called *Hesperus* which died away, and he established a daily paper called *East Indian.* After his connection with the College ceased, Krishnamohan Banerjee, who, after leaving College, was a teacher of Hare's School, conducted a paper called *Enquirer.*
>
> Derozio appears to have made strong impression on his pupils, as they regularly visited him at his house and spent hours in conversation with him. He continued to teach at home what he had taught at school. He used to impress upon his pupils the sacred duty of thinking for themselves – to be in no way influenced by any of the

> idols mentioned by Bacon – to live and die for truth – to cultivate and practise all the virtues, shunning vice in every shape. He often read examples from ancient history of the love of justice, patriotism, philanthropy and self-abnegation, and the way in which he set forth the points stirred up the minds of his pupils ....[51]

Such a legendary teacher, inspiring an entire generation to go after truth, following rationalism and secularism, could not be conceived, by any stretch of imagination, to interpret Shakespeare and other English writers for "the removal of 'false thinking' through English education," clearing "the path to a perception of the British Government as a fair one promoting national prosperity and justice."[52] Such large constructions as this one from Gauri Vishwanathan are far-fetched, having no bearing whatsoever on a Shakespeare teacher such as Derozio.

No doubt, there must have been in Derozio's time many government officials and college teachers who preferred and promoted such a political use of English teaching as is made out by the postcolonial theorists like Loomba and Vishwanathan. But no such teacher or official made a mark in Calcutta, or became popular, like Derozio, with his students or public at large. Derozio, on the contrary, became a phenomenon, whose followers, better known as Young Bengal, brought about an intellectual and cultural revolution, leading to the modernisation of Indian society, ultimately culminating in India's freedom over a century later. As M.K. Haldar rightly remarks, the Derozians "were the first people in India in whose mind the idea of political nationalism took shape. They were slowly arriving at the conclusion that political action for freeing the country from foreign domination was the panacea for all evils. The critical approach to traditional Hindu society soon gave place to emotional outpourings against the miseries of foreign rule."[53]

Derozio died a few months after he left Hindu College – he left the College in April 1831 and died in December the same year. But the Derozians continued his work both to promote Shakespeare studies as well as to spread rational and secular education in society. Recounting the theatrical activities in nineteenth-century Bengal Kironmoy Raha rightly remarks:

> About the same time [when the Hindoo Theatre was established in 1831] the new generation, full of English and western ideas – Young Bengal as they came to be known – had begun staging Shakespeare and other English dramatists in the two auditoria built for the

purpose in the two colleges imparting English education, the David Hare Academy and the Oriental Seminary.[54]

Hindu College at the time was also called Oriental Seminary as also the Anglo-Indian College. The other field of activity dear to Derozio was to radically change the social life of people. As Haldar observes, " The Derozians came to the forefront and protested against such Governmental measures as they did not like. They talked about trial by Jury, Indianisation of services, freedom of the Press ... the drain of wealth from India and social evils."[55]

As can be seen from the life and letters of Derozio, from his teaching as well as writing, followed with equal zeal by his followers, he and his disciples were activists demanding as much activism from the writers, including Shakespeare, as from the reformers. Concluding his account of Derozio's career, his biographer Thomas Edwards observes as follows:

> There are mural tablets, portraits, and busts in the various educational institutions of Calcutta, commemorating the worth and work of men who have laboured for the advancement of the people of India. Amid them all, the visitor looks in vain for any memorial of HENRY LOUIS VIVIAN DEROZIO, the gifted Eurasian Teacher, Philosopher and Poet, who during the short period of his connexion with the Hindu College, did more to arouse, quicken and impel the thought of young India, than any man then living or since dead; who won the esteem and high loving reverence of his pupils, and who exercised an influence over them on the side of duty, truth and virtue which has never since been equalled. The generation that knew him, and those that have succeeded, have unconsciously allowed to be realised, in part at least, something of his own ideal as embedded in his own lines, *The Poet's Grave* – although he sleeps not - [56]

The poem mentioned above as *The Poet's Grave* runs as follows:

> No dream shall flit into that slumber deep,
> No wandering mortal thither once shall wend;
> There nothing over him but the heavens shall weep,
> There never pilgrim at his shrine shall bend,
> But holy stars alone their mighty vigils keep.[57]

There is something Shakespearean about these lines. One at once recalls the lines that Shakespeare's gravestone bears:

Good friend, for Jesus' sake forebeare,
To digg the dust enclosed heare,
Blest be the man that spares these stones
And curst be he that moves my bones.[58]

The spirit of both the compositions is to stay in silence, the silence of the grave, to be left unnoticed by the meddling mortals. No less Shakespearean seems Derozio's scepticism about the scheme of things in the universe. One recalls here Derozio's letter to Dr. H.H. Wilson, Visitor of the Hindu College, written in response to the charges levelled against him by members of the College Managing Committee:

> ... "No," is my distinct reply; and I never taught such absurdity .... That I should be called a sceptic and an infidel is not surprising, as these names are always given to persons who dare think for themselves in religion ....[59]

To conclude the career of Derozio as the first Shakespeare teacher at Hindu College, it can be confidently asserted that the foundation he laid for Shakespeare teaching in India was not oriented, as alleged by Poonam Trivedi, towards producing a "schism (which lasts till today) between the English-educated elite and the vernacular-speaking masses," nor was it aimed at developing, to quote Trivedi again, "an academic literary Shakespeare led by Anglicised Indians ...."[60] One wonders what to make of such statements as the one cited above, for it attempts to give a colouring to Shakespeare teaching in India which would hold good for any teaching at the higher education level. Is there any study at the university level which is not an elite activity? Also, are not the university dons as elitist in an imperial nation as those in the colonised country? Besides, does the staging of Shakespeare make the bard a popular subject for the masses in India or any other British colony? The kind of distinction that has been attempted in Trivedi's thesis is wholly untenable in the context of Shakespeare teaching at Hindu College. Whatever may have been the intention of the much maligned Macaulay, those who were students at Hindu College never opted for English education, much less for reading Shakespeare, to imbibe a slavish mentality. Any generalisation is, of course, too large to include all, human nature being so varied. But the particular case of Derozio, as well as of Hindu College, clearly defies the kind of construction the postcolonial critics try to impose through their generalisations.

The foundation that Derozio laid for Shakespeare teaching in India carries the element, first of all, of inspired teaching, in which the teacher is a model for his pupils, a model for fresh outlook, of an open mind; in which the teacher is a guide to lead his

pupils into new territories, showing life and letters from a new perspective; in which the teacher is non-partisan, playing an agent to no authority, political or religious. Derozio also laid the foundation for making Shakespeare studies not merely an act of reading and interpreting, but also of reciting or elocuting and staging or performing. From his student life at Drummond's Academy to his teaching career at Hindu College, he remained committed to all the three aspects of Shakespeare studies. His inspiring, secular, and searching teaching has remained even to date the ideal of all great Shakespeare teachers in India.

If he has not left behind any written commentaries on the Shakespeare plays he taught at Hindu College, it is because he was more deeply involved in writing poetry and reformist prose. Had he not died young, he would have certainly put down in writing his interpretations of Shakespeare's plays he made for the benefit of his students. But he did lay a foundation which was ably continued by D.L. Richardson. Since Derozio's successor taught at Hindu College for over three decades, he was able to write much more on Shakespeare than Derozio. The next chapter, therefore, will focus on Richardson as the first Shakespeare critic in Calcutta, just as Derozio was the first Shakespeare teacher.

Notes

[1]See Amal Kumar Mukhopadhyay (ed.), *175TH Anniversary Commemoration Volume, Presidency College, Calcutta* (Calcutta: Presidency College, 1992), p. 65.

[2]Cited in Rosinka Chaudhuri, "Introduction," *Derozio, Poet of India: The Definitive Edition* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. I i.

[3]Ibid.

[4]See Pallab Sen Gupta, "Shakespeare in Calcutta Theatres," in *Calcutta Essays on Shakespeare*, ed. Amalendu Bose (Calcutta: Calcutta University, 1966), p. 200.

[5]See Thomas Edwards, *Henry Derozio*, (1884; Calcutta: Riddhi-India, 1980), p. 12.

[6]Ibid, pp. 4-5.

[7]See "Shakespeare in the Calcutta University," in Amalendu Bose, p. 174.

[8]Cited in Rosinka Chaudhuri, "Introduction," *Derozio, Poet of India* ,p. Liii.

[9]See T.W. Baldwin, *William Shakespeare's Small Latine & Lesse Greek,* 2 Vols (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1944).

[10] The phrase is Matthew Arnold's, borrowed from his sonnet "Shakespeare."

[11]See Thomas Edwards, p. 22.

[12]Ibid., p. 23.

[13]The text of the sonnet is taken from Rosinka Chaudhuri, *Derozio, Poet of India*, p. 147.

[14]The text of the sonnet is taken from Rosinka Chaudhuri, *Derozio, Poet of India,* p. 145.

[15]See *Song of the Stormy Petrel: Complete Works of Henry Louis Vivian Derozio,* Edited by Dr. Abirlal Mukhopadhyay, Sri Amar Dutta, Sri Adhir Kumar and Dr. Sakti Sadhan Mukhopadhyay (Calcutta: Progressive Publishers, 2001), p. 299.

[16]Ibid., p. 300.

[17]Ibid., p. 392.

[18] See "Formation of Indian-English Literature," in *Literary Cultures in History: Reconstruction from South Asia*, ed. Sheldon Pollock (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003),p. 225.

[19]Ibid., p. 99.

[20]See Elliot Walter Madge, *Henry Derozio: The Eurasian Poet and Reformer;* ed. by Subir Ray Chaudhuri (Calcutta: Metropolitan Book Agency, 1967), p.6.

[21]Ibid., pp. 6-7.

[22]See Walter Madge, p. 6.

[23]See Thomas Edwards, p. 30.

[24]See P.C. Mittra, *A Biographical Sketch of David Hare*, ed. by Gauranga Gopal Sengupta (Calcutta: Jijnasa, 1979). p. 149.

[25]See Rosinka Chaudhuri, p. xxxi. Also see *Song of The Stormy Patrel: Complete Works of Henry Louis Vivian Derozio*, Eds. Dr. Abirlal Mukhopadhyay and others (Calcutta: Progressive Publishers, 2000), p. xiv.

[26]See P.C. Mittra, p. 149.

[27]See Taraknath Sen, p. vii.

[28]See Amalendu Bose, pp. 200-201.

[29]See *First Fruits of English Education [1817-1837]*, Ed. Bhaghan Prasad Majumdar (Calcutta: Bookland Private Limited, 1973), p. 140

[30]See *Song of the Stormy Petrel*, p. 320.

[31]Ibid., pp. 320-21.

[32]Ibid., p. 321.

[33]See *Masks of Conquest: Literary Study and British Rule in India* (London: Faber and Faber, 1989), p. 43.

[34]See *Song of the Stormy Petrel*, p. 322.

[35]Ibid., p. 308.

[36]See S.T. Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, Ed., by J. Shawcross (1817; London: Oxford University Press, 1907), p.1.

[37]See *Song of the Stormy Petrel*, p. 315.

[38]See *Henry IV, Part II*, Act III, Scene I, Line 31; in G.B. Harrison, *Shakespeare: The Complete Works* (1948; New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1968), p.764.

[39]See *Hamlet*, Act II, Scene ii, Lines 255-26; in G.B. Harrison, p. 901.

[40]See *English and the Discourse of Colonialism* (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), p. 9.

[41]See *Song of the Stormy Petrel*, p. 317.

[42]Ibid., p. 318

[43]See "Introductio" to *India's Shakespeare*, Eds., Poonam Trivedi and Dennis Bartholomeusz (Delhi: Pearson Education, 2005), p. 20.

[44]See *Song of the Stormy Petrel*, p. 319.

[45]Ibid., p. xiv and p. xxvi.

[46]Ibid., p. 299.

[47]See Peary Chand Mittra, p. 16.

[48]Ibid., p.18.

[49]Ibid.

[50]See *Masks of Conquest: Literary Study and British Rule in India* (London: Faber and Faber, 1989), p. 167.

[51]See Peary Chand Mittra, pp. 37-28.

[52]See Gauri Vishwanathan, *Masks of Conquest*, p. 3

[53]See *Renaissance and Reaction in Nineteenth Century Bengal,* p. 71

[54]See *Bengali Theatre*, p. 14.

[55]See *Renaissance and Reaction in Nineteenth Century Bengal*, p. 60.

[56]See Thomas Edwards, p. 189.

[57]Ibid., p. 190.

[58]See Bill Bryson, *Shakespeare* (New Delhi: Harper Collins Publishers, 2007), p. 176.

[59]See Thomas Edwards, p. 87.

[60]See "Introduction" by Poonam Trivedi to *India's Shakespeare*, Eds. Poonam Trivedi and Dennis Bartholomeusz (Delhi: Pearson India), p. 15.

Chapter IV

D.L. Richardson, the First Shakespeare critic

Four years after Derozio left Hindu College, David Lester Richardson took over as teacher of English in the year of Macaulay's minute (1835), and made a mark through his teaching of Shakespeare. It may be worth the mention here that Macaulay's Minute was of no consequence as far as Hindu (now Presidency) College was concerned, for what the Minute proposed – introduction of English or modern education in place of the Arabic-Sanskrit or Classical-Oriental – the founders of Hindu College had already done 18 years ago. Much more interested in literature than in social reform, Richardson's writings, unlike Derozio's, are exclusively devoted to reflections on literary issues. Although both poets of considerable merit, while Derozio expended more of his time and energy on writing about social issues concerning the Indian cultural situation, Richardson devoted himself exclusively to writing literary compositions, both creative and critical, including extensive comments on Shakespeare. As for the difference in the primary interests of these two Shakespeare teachers at Hindu College in the early years of English education in Bengal, we shall have to look into their life situations, for they came from two very different backgrounds.

As in the case of Derozio, so in the case of Richardson, there are conflicting accounts of their dates of joining the Hindu Colllege. Interestingly, even in the same book, the *175th Anniversary Commemoration Volume* of Presidency College (originally Hindu College), published in 1992, while in the "General History of the College," the compilers, Ajoy Chandra Banerjee and Asoke Kumar Mukherjee, say that "It was in the year 1835 again, that Captain David Lester Richardson was appointed Professor of English Literature at the Hindu College,"[1] in the next chapter of the same book, namely "History of different Departments of the College," Asoke Kumar Mukharjee (the same as in chapter one) states that Richardson was "appointed Professor of literature in 1837[2]. In his essay "Shakespeare in the Calcutta University," included in that university's volume brought out to commemorate the four hundredth anniversary of Shakespeare's birth, Krishna Chandra Lahiri supports that Richardson "joined the Hindu College in 1833 as Professor of English ...."[3]

The date of Richardson's joining the Hindu College is stated to be 1837 by Taraknath Sen, the editor of *Shakespeare Commemoration Volume,* brought out by Presidency College in 1964, who in the introductory piece, "Presidency College and Shakespeare," states: "Among those who taught Shakespeare at the Hindu College, two

names stand out: Henry Louis Vivian Derozio and David Lester Richardson. Derozio died young, at the age of 24 [actually before completing his 23rd year] in 1831. Richardson came to teach six years later."[4] Six years after 1831 makes it 1837. All these conflicting mentions here of Richardson's entry into Hindu College only indicate that proper records are not available about the early teachers of Hindu College.

In the same year of Shakespeare's four hundredth birth anniversary, R.K. Dasgupta writes, in the special volume of Sahitya Academi's Indian literature, the following: "Captain D.L. Richardson (1801-1865) is even a more important figure in the history of English scholarship and Shakespeare studies in Bengal ... Richardson used to give lessons in elocution to the actors and actresses of the public theatre and encouraged his students to see English plays. And the boys who visited the English theatre and saw English plays desired to stage the plays themselves."[5]

Born in 1801, David Lester Richardson was an Englishman who joined the East India Company's Bengal Army. But being more inclined to reading and writing than to military activities, he took to composing verses even as an army officer. Due to health reasons, however, he returned to England in 1824. Back home, he continued writing poetry, published several volumes, and founded the *London Weekly Review*. He again came back to India in 1829, only to retire from the Company's army. He later became (in 1835/1837) Professor of English at Hindu College and remained associated with it till 1861, when he finally left India and went back to his home country, where he died four years later, in 1865.[6]

Like Derozio, the first eminent Shakespeare teacher in Hindu College, Richardson, the first notable Shakespeare critic was a well-known writer of verse and prose in Calcutta. His publications include *Miscellaneous Poems* (Calcutta, 1822), *Sonnets and Other Poems* (London, 1825), *Literary Leaves* (Calcutta, 1836), *The Anglo-Indian Passage* (London, 1845), *Literary Chit-Chat* (Calcutta, 1848), *Literary Recreations: Or Essays, Criticisms and Poems Chiefly written in India* (Calcutta, 1852), and *Flowers and Flower Gardens* (Calcutta, 1855). He also edited *Selections from the British Poets From the Time of Chaucer To the Present Day* (Calcutta, 1840). This he did with biographical and critical notes. Richardson also edited his journal *The Bengal Annual: A Literary Keepsake* between 1830 and 1837.[7]

It is in the prose writings of Richardson that we find scattered, though in considerable amount, his criticism of Shakespeare. Some of these pieces, in which appears a discussion of Shakespeare as poet and dramatist are as follows: "On Literary Fame and Literary Pursuits," "On Care and Condensation in Writing," "On Byron's

Opinion of Pope," "On Men of the World," "On Egotism," "Thelma and Clearchus," and "On Conversation." Besides, there are numerous references and explications of flower imagery from Shakespeare in Richardson's unique book, *Flowers and Flower Gardens.*[8] Although there is no exclusive critical piece on the plays or poems of Shakespeare, the prose pieces just mentioned have numerous critical references to Shakespeare, giving a fairly adequate idea of Richardson's credo as a critic of Shakespeare. Being an inspiring teacher and influential intellectual in the world of theatre and print, his criticism of Shakespeare, too, made an impact in Bengal, earning him the fame of a legendary teacher of Shakespeare.

All these publications where Richardson makes extensive comments on Shakespeare came out during his tenure as Professor of English, later also as Principal of Hindu College. His praise as Shakespeare teacher by his students, available in their memoirs, is even greater than that of Derozio. It is deplorable that there is no biography, nor a definitive edition of his poems, nor any critical book published on Richardson. Not only that, he does not even find mention either in the history of Indian English literature or the English history of literature. His case is a sad comment on the concept of nativism which seems to determine our approach to a writer's work. Otherwise, how does one take the fact that Richardson, a fine writer and critic, is not owned either by the scholars in India, where he lived almost all his adult life – almost 40 years – nor by the scholars in Britain, where his birth and death took place. His contribution to teaching, elocuting, and acting of Shakespeare in India needs to be acknowledged.

Richardson earned in Calcutta the status of an authority on the dramatic work of Shakespeare. Derozio, too, had made a mark as an inspiring teacher, but he remains better known for his radical ideas than for teaching Shakespeare. Having no love for the radical reformism of Derozio, Richardson was wholly devoted to the writing and study of literature, which made him a model teacher, who separated literature studies from the politics of the day, keeping it confined to the realm of ethics and aesthetics. In the changed environment of our post-Theory period, such a separation may be an anathema to critics like the editors of *Political Shakespeare.*[9] But Richardson belonged to the nineteenth century and was influenced by the literary traditions of eighteenth and nineteenth centuries humanism, particularly the kind of critical theories developed by the Romantic poets. The memoirs of his eminent students, who achieved fame as writers in English and Bangla, show Richardson as a fascinating teacher of Shakespeare, also greatly interested in the stage performances of the Bard's plays.

An account of Richardson as a Shakespeare teacher is given by S.C. Sanial, one of the distinguished students of Richardson in Hindu College, an excerpt from which is as follows:

> The two poets he pitched upon to teach his boys were Shakespeare and Pope, with whose writings his mind was thoroughly saturated. Shakespeare's *Hamlet, Othello, Macbeth, King Lear* and the two parts of *Henry the Fourth*, together with Pope's *Essays on Criticism, Rape of the Lock* ... were what he taught in endless alteration. Only the choice of *The Taming of the Shrew* and *Timon of Athens* and Young's *Night Thoughts* without either the *Paradise Lost* or *Childe Harold* was all the change we had ....
>
> But Richardson's reading of Shakespeare and Pope was excellent ... [he] made an impression which has not yet worn out in me .... So much had it charmed Macaulay that he is said to have remarked to him: 'If I were to forget everything of India, I could never forget your reading of Shakespeare.'[10]

Even as the memoir reveals the curriculum of English teaching that engaged Richardson at Hindu College, its exclamatory tone betrays the uncritical adulation of a student for his teacher. But the teacher in question was certainly great, for Sanail is not the only one to have showered such praise on Richardson as a Shakespeare teacher. Krishna Chandra Lahiri, talking about "Some Memorable Teachers" in his contribution to *Calcutta Essays on Shakespeare*, brought for in the 400th anniversary of Shakespeare's birth, also pays similar tributes to him:

> Captain Richardson's name has passed into a legend in the history of Shakespeare teaching in Bengal .... His fame rests on his inspired reading, clear elucidation and original criticism. From all accounts his Shakespeare reading was animated .... Richardson's zeal in Shakespeare studies exercised a healthy influence on the eager student community of the day. Inspired by his teaching his pupils went beyond the mere reading of the text, they were encouraged to recite and act the plays, and were even stimulated to original composition in their mother tongue. One of his pupils thus stimulated was the great Michael Madhusudan Dutt, the poet of the Bengalee Renaissance of the nineteenth century.[11]

Lahiri's account of Richardson as Shakespeare teacher is much more specific than Sanail's; it mentions particular traits of Richardson's contribution to Shakespeare studies in Calcutta, including promoting performance of his plays. Evidently, unlike Derozio, Richardson was committed to his professional work as Professor of English, making a mark as Shakespeare teacher, encouraging his students to recite and perform the plays. He did not, of course, share Derozio's extra-literary interests in social reform, or in politics. One instance in this context is pertinent for understanding the difference between these two great Shakespeare teachers.

Although made to quit his teaching job at the Hindu College, Derozio had continued his crusade for spreading radical ideas through his writings and debates at home. After his death, his followers called "Derozians" or Young Bengal formed *Society for the Welfare of the Country*, and associated with several other societies in Bengal including *The Society for the Acquisition of General Knowledge.* Narrating an incident at one of the meetings of the Society, M.K. Haldar writes:

> On the 8th of February, 1843 when Dukhinaranjan Mookerjee was reading a paper Captain D.L. Richardson, Principal of Hindu College, who was present in the meeting jumped up and characterised the paper as "treason." He also expressed the opinion that he could not permit the precints of either the Hindu College or Sanskrit College being "converted into a den of treason." So the Society shifted its headquarters .... Incidentally, it should be noted that the same Richardson joined the *Metropolitan College* in 1853 when it was started by Rajendralal Dutta, a stalwart of Hindu orthodoxy....[12]

Richardson remained the first Principal of this new college at Chanderpur from 1853 to 1860, but joined Hindu College once again in 1860. Decidedly, Richardson's use of the word "treason" is strictly confined to the college context, related to his duties as head of the educational institution. He seems to point to the breach of trust on the part of students who chose to use the college premises for exta-educational purposes. As a Principal of the college, he was expected to protect the non-political character of the institution. Unlike Derozio, he was committed to keeping the college free from political affiliations. That should not come as a surprise to any one, nor should it be construed as the reaction of an Englishman committed to the colonial agenda. In several states of the Indian Union, we still do not permit even student elections, fearing politicization of educational institutions. Richardson was a poet, scholar, and teacher, having no enthusiasm for social reform, not at least to the extent Derozio had. Another obvious

difference between the two was that while Derozio was a native Indian, Richardson was an Englishman, having been a Captain in the Company's army. How much Richardson missed his motherland can be gauged from the following:

> But alas! in this comfortless and uncongenial clime, the forlorn English exile must too generally forego these domestic pleasures. It is indeed a terrible deprivation. This is the unkindest cut of all. It is the stroke that goes most directly to the heart.[13]

Richardson's use of the expression "unkindest cut" from *Julius Caesar* is used in a lighter vein. Of course, he never seems to have allowed his national sentiments to interfere with his scholarly integrity. As a professional, he remained apolitical and cared for his students, irrespective of their racial or national identities. Had there been even the slightest racial or imperial intent in his teaching, he would not have taught at Hindu College for over quarter of a century and earned the legendary reputation as Shakespeare teacher, which is amply evidenced by the available accounts of his students and other contemporaries.

Even though he was not politically oriented, Richardson strongly believed nevertheless in the freedom of speech. A piece of documentary evidence of his commitment to this is available in the journals that he edited in Calcutta. The following account from Sisir Kumas Das's *A History of Indian Literature* is revealing:

> 'A Journal of Forty-Eight hours of the Year 1945' by Kylas Chunder Dutt, published in Capt. D.L. Richardson's *The Calcutta Literary Gazette* in 1835 ... is perhaps the most striking piece of writing in this period in respect of theme and form. It is a story of imaginary armed uprisings against the British rule. The passionate speech of the leader of the rebels before his execution reminds one of the freedom fighters yet unborn. When one remembers the series of uprisings in India ... the story appears as a formidable document of distrust and hatred against the British rule. It is ironical that the first ever glowing expression of patriotism as well as hatred for the British rule in Indian literature was recorded in English language.[14]

It is important here to note that Kylas Chunder Dutt's revolutionary prophetic dream was carried in the magazine published by Richardson, an Englishman with an army background. This evidence alone wholly belies the postcolonial theory where the language and literature of the British, their scholars and scholarship, are all dubbed, as Gauri Viswanathan does, under one nomenclature of "the British ideology."[15]

Undoubtedly, Richardson was committed to the universal values of literature, teaching it for the advancement of learning among his Indian students. His writings, too, both in prose and verse, uphold the same values. Like all others who have written about Hindu College and Richardson, Michael Madhusudan Dutt, too, acknowledges the role of Richardson as a secular Shakespeare teacher. As he puts it, "Richardson ... never hesitated to declare to his students his inner convictions concerning his lack of confidence in the Christian religion."[16] This agnostic position of Richardson aligns him with his predecessors like Hare, Drummond, and Derozio. No wonder individuals of different nationalities made a close group of like-minded intellectuals in Calcuttta.

Thus, Richardson, like Derozio, in fact in greater measure than the latter, made a reputation as Shakespeare teacher in Bengal. Also, while Derozio did more writing on radical social reforms rather than on literary creations, Richardson wholly concentrated on writing about literary subjects, producing in the process a good deal of theatrical and practical criticism related to Shakespeare. It is because of this substantial critical writing on Shakespeare that he deserves to be called the first Shakespeare critic in Bengal, with Hindu College acting as the epicentre of Shakespeare studies where both Derozio and Richardson taught.

Like most great Shakespearean critics, Richardson held the age of Shakespeare as the highest water-mark of literary achievement in English. The following from his "Thelma and Clearchus" is central to his critical credo:

> No work since the time of Elizabeth may be looked upon as an original draught from nature by the hand of genius, in which the curtain of the human heart is lifted, and the secrets of our inner being are disclosed as by the power of God. This degree of excellence was reserved exclusively for Shakespeare and his nobly-gifted contemporaries. There were no such miracles before his time, and there have been none since .... we do not think so much of what happens to the persons of Shakespeare's drama, as of the nature of their hearts or intellects. Hamlet is an intensely interesting personage, without any reference whatever to his position; and equally so is Macbeth, though a being of directly opposite nature. When we are presented with such full-length pictures of humanity as these, so distinct and animated, we receive an impression that can never fade but with life itself. Did any man, woman, or child, that has been

introduced to Hamlet or Macbeth or Othello or Lear, ever happen to forget them?[17]

One cannot help recalling here Derozio's moralist approach to Shakespeare and other writers, for his successor does not seem to carry that sort of agenda in his teaching. Richardson's commitment to the Romantic critical credo is quite clear here in his emphasis on character rather than plot – Hamlet without the Prince of Denmark, and Macbeth without the history of Scotland – in his concern with the inner working of a character's mind than with external actions. Born and brought up as he was in the age of Wordsworth and Coleridge, Richardson could not have escaped the influence of its critical credo.

Richardson's critical appreciation is not limited to the drama of the age of Shakespeare, Shakespeare's own in particular; he equally appreciates the sonnets of Shakespeare, as is evident from his essay "On Egotism". The comment he makes on the sonnets is as follows:

> Shakespeare's Sonnets, which by their personal traits have so delighted the two Schlegels, who are puzzled to account for the neglect with which they have been treated by the poet's own countrymen, abound in illustrations of that proud and lofty confidence with which the writer anticipated his immortality. The following noble sonnet will afford a specimen of the style in which the great man dared to speak of his own fame:
>
> "Not marble, nor the gilded monuments
>
> Of princes, shall outlive this powerful rhyme;"[18]

Richardson's reference to the two Schlegels also links him to Coleridge, who was largely responsible for making the Germans known in England and America. Citing in full this sonnet no. 55 as illustration, Richardson tries to prove his point that true genius is egotistical. As he argues, "It has been a question whether true genius is conscious of its powers, but I think there can be little doubt upon the subject. It is certain that both Milton and Shakespeare were fully aware of the greatness of their endowments ..."[19]

Of course, Richardson does not use egotism to mean the sense in which Wordsworth is called by Keats 'an egotistical sublime' and is held as an example of lacking the Shakespearean quality of Negative Capability.[20] One can hear in the above statement of Richardson clear echoes of the British romantic critics, especially Coleridge who took up Dryden's remark out of context and put up a strong defence in

favour of the "sanity" of genius. Dryden's "Great wits are sure to madness near allied"[21] was countered by Coleridge as follows:

> ... Shakespeare, no mere child of nature; no automaton of genius; no passive vehicle of inspiration possessed by the spirit, not possessing it; first studied patiently, meditated deeply, understood minutely, till knowledge became habitual and intuitive, wedded itself to his habitual feelings, and at length gave birth to the stupendous power, by which he stands alone, with no equal or second in his own class; to that power which seated him on one of the two glory- smitten summits of the poetic mountain, with Milton as his compeer not rival .... [22]

Although highly indebted to Coleridge, Richardson seems to have a different view of the poetic genius. For one thing, he places Milton and Shakespeare together as examples of self-conscious artists, fully aware of their loftiness among the mortals. His use of 'egotism' is clearly meant to highlight the self-esteem of great writers like Shakespeare and Milton, their awareness of being immortal in their work.

Richardson does not touch upon the fine distinction Coleridge makes between the contrary qualities of the two greatest poets in the English language. The context in which Richardson places the two together should have suggested to him the distinction also that is generally made out between them. Note, for instance, how Coleridge compares the two:

> While the former [Shakespeare] darts himself forth and passes into all the forms of human character and passion, the one Proteus of the fire and flood; the other attracts all forms and things to himself, into the unity of his own IDEAL. All things and modes of action shape themselves anew in the being of MILTON; while SHAKESPEARE becomes all things, yet for ever remaining himself.[23]

Decidedly, Richardson's observation on the "egotism" of Shakespeare and Milton drifts more towards the man than towards the art, whereas the observation of Coleridge dips into the subtle difference between the two modes of writing whose supreme examples are Shakespeare and Milton.

In another essay, "Thealma and Clearchus", Richardson proceeds through his usual historical approach, comparing his own age (the Romantic) with the age of Shakespeare. His critical comments on the dramatic power of Shakespeare and the absence of that power in the dramatic art of his own time are valuable:

> ... he who wishes to keep up his acquaintance with the personages of the modern drama, must have a strong memory indeed, if he does not find it necessary to refresh it with occasional re-perusals.
>
> They all wear out of us, like forms, with chalk
> Painted on rich men's floors, for one feast-night.
>
> We never look in the drama of the day for profound original or delineations of human nature, though it is not to be denied that we often find in it a great deal of elegant poetry, much refined thought and noble feeling, and many striking and pathetic incidents.[24]

The opening sentence in the citation seems to echo Samuel Johnson. In the argument that follows, we can hear clear echoes of Coleridge and Hazlitt in Richardson's criticism of Shakespeare-an all-out praise for the depth of his charecterization. Although Dryden and Johnson had also praised Shakespeare for the variety of characters and their lifelikeness, it was first Coleridge and then Hazlitt who emphasized the psychological depth in Shakespeare's characterization. Richardson's observation cited above clearly comes closer to the Romantic view, showing his strong affinity with the Age of Wordsworth.

One observation in the essay cited above is striking indeed, not so much for its proximity to Coleridge's view, as for its being an anticipation of what A.C. Bradley later pronounced about Shakespeare's characters, which became a truism in the twentieth century criticism of Shakespeare.[25] The said remark of Richardson, "Their character and not their fate is most present to our minds,"[26] at once reminds us of Bradley's oft-quoted "In Shakespeare character is destiny."[27] The two statements may not be the same, but they are quite similar to each other. Richardson, too, seems to stress the character of Shakespeare's heroes as the principal cause of their destiny. Our interest, he insists, remains in their character, not in their destinies. He also insists that their destinies do not seem to interest even Shakespeare so much as their characters. Although their views coincide on the issue of Shakespeare's emphasis on character rather than destiny, Richardson and Bradley owed allegiance to different critical traditions: If Richardson was rooted in the Romantic tradition largely explicated by Coleridge, Bradley was influenced by the heavy Victorian emphasis on moralism.

In his essay on "Thealma and Clearchus", a poem with that title by John Chalkhill, Richardson also traces echoes of Shakespeare's various plays in that poem.[28] Citing various sets of lines from Chalkhill's poem Richardson shows how the cited lines echo similar lines in Shakespeare's *Hamlet, Macbeth, King Lear, Taming of the Shrew*,

and *Henry the Fourth*. One of these various parallels traced by Richardson would reveal how useful the effort is in critical terms. First Richardson quotes the following lines from "Thealma and Clearchus":

> He had a man-like look, and sparkling eye,
> A front whereon sate such a majesty,
> As awed all his beholders; his long hair
> After the Grecian fashion, without care
> Hang down loosely on his shoulders, black as jet.[29]

Then follows Richardson's comment on these lines, seeking their possible source of similarity in Shakespeare. "The description reminds me", says Richardson, "of Hamlet's remarks upon his father's picture":

> See, what a grace was seated on his brow:
> Hyperion's curls; the front of Jove himself;
> An eye like Mars to threaten and command, & c.[30]

Richardson's knowledge of Shakespeare is indeed quite keen. One can see from the parallels he traces here between the sets of lines from Chalkhill and those from Shakespeare that he knew his Shakespeare well enough to carry it to whatever reading he discussed. He measured every piece of writing with the touchstone of Shakespeare. His students at Hindu College had every reason to feel mesmerised in his Shakespeare class.

In the very opening of his essay "Thelma and Clearchus," Richardson shows rare confidence in criticising Dr. Johnson as representative of the neo-classical view of Shakespeare, finding fault in several of his responses to Shakespeare's work. Note, in this context, the very opening paragraph of the essay:

> Dr. Johnson was accustomed to maintain that Pope brought English verse to its utmost possible perfection. He regarded the writers of the Elizabethan period as little better than inspired barbarians. In this respect, he was almost as great a heathen as Voltaire himself, whose opinion of Shakespeare is a much more powerful argument against the character of the critics' own minds than against the genius of our unrivalled dramatist. The French taste for the smart and artificial in style, introduced into England at the Restoration, lasted much longer than any critic of that day who had a sense of truth and nature, would have at all anticipated. But though truth and nature must at last prevail, it is wonderful for how long a period the influence of fashion

> may keep them in a state of complete subjection. For a season, and under peculiar circumstances, custom is a second nature, more powerful than the first.[31]

One can notice here Richardson's strong affiliation with the Romantic view of poetry and poets, nature and style. The fact that he can confidently, and convincingly, find fault with a great critic like Dr. Johnson and ridicule a writer like Voltaire is a sign of his self-assurance as a learned scholar. His distinction between the French and English literary tastes is not just a measure of his patriotism as an Englishman, it also shows his fine sense of critical discrimination between different nationalities, reflected in their literary preferences.

Despite his being born and brought up in the age of high Romanticism, clearly sharing the Romantic view of English poets and in the poetics, Richardson often holds his independent critical position, criticising the writers of his own age for their failings in accomplishing excellence in literary art, especially the dramatic. In the essay under discussion, Richardson assesses the writers of his own time as follows:

> In the present day, through the study of our elder dramatists, to which the nation has been urged by a small class of original-minded critics, some struggles have been made by several popular writers to return to the long- deserted paths of truth and nature. But it is melancholy to remark with what small success. Our poets are almost all egotists. They attempt to lift the curtain of the general human heart, and, instead of discovering, as through a transparent glass, the internal movements of other men, they but behold, as in a mirror, their own self-complacent images. Thus, Lord Byron reproduced himself perpetually, not only in his miscellaneous poems, but in all his dramas .... He dipped his pencil in his own inflamed and feverish blood, and thought every other man's was of the same colour.[32]

Clearly indicting the writers of the Romantic age for their lack of dramatic talent, Richardson adumbrates the thesis A.C. Bradley later formulated in his essay, "The Long Poem in the Age of Wordsworth,"[33] highlighting the lyrical spirit of the age, lacking in dramatic talent. Richardson's praise of Shakespeare and his contemporaries, centring on the naturalness of their characters, their depth and diversity, echoes Coleridge's and Hazlitt's criticism of Shakespeare. His observations on Byron are highly perceptive, and would have been endorsed by later critics. His criticism of Byron could not have been approved by Derozio, fascinated as the latter was by the radical ideas of Byron. Making

in his critical piece under discussion a survey of English poetry from Chaucer to Byron, just as Matthew Arnold did later in his "Study of Poetry,"[34] Richardson observes: "Our poets are almost all egotists,"[35] once again echoing the English Romantic poet-critics, this time John Keats. However whereas Keats called Wordsworth as an example of the "egotistical sublime," Richardson attributes egotism to all of them, including Keats, adumbrating the criticism of the Romantics by T.S. Eliot and other Modernists.

In his essay "False Criticism by True poets," in *Literary Recreations*, Richardson writes extensively about poets and their critics, including Shakespeare and his interpreters. Speaking of Dr. Johnson as a Shakespearean critic, Richardson observes the following:

> Dr. Johnson was one of the best of the commentators upon Shakespeare, and yet this is saying little in his favour ... Jonnson's remarks and explanations are generally sensible and clear, and his Preface to Shakespeare's plays is a noble piece of writing; but he never seems to enter thoroughly into the soul of that mighty poet. He could explain an obscure passage more readily than he could feel a fine one. He who thought a dirty street in London was a more agreeable prospect than the most romantic landscape in the world, and who was so insensible to the charms of music, as to wonder how any man of common sense could be so weak and foolish as to own its influence over his feelings, and could never for a moment give up the reins of his imagination into his author's hands and be "pleased he knew not why and cared not wherefore", was not likely to comment upon Shakespeare in a worthy spirit.[36]

Once again one can see here Richardson's firm commitment to the Romantic theory of literature and philosophy of criticism. His criticism of Dr. Johnson is in the familiar romantic terminology of condemning the neoclassical emphases on "general truths" and "man in society", their preference for reason rather than emotion, etc. Critical effort for Richardson is very much like the creative activity (as the Romantics viewed it), the "Negative Capability" to enter the soul of the author and speak from within. Whereas the Neoclassical poets and critics viewed life and literature from without – a matter of observation – the Romantics searched inside the real reality of life and the soul of a literary artist (not of the literary work). Obviously, Richardson as a Shakespearean critic belongs to the Romantic tradition of subjective and biographical

criticism. Johnson may have had his limitations, but he cannot be dismissed the way Richardson tries to do in the cited passage.

His romantic predilections notwithstanding, Richardson is one with all those, including Ben Jonson, Dryden, and Dr. Johnson, who lay emphasis on the universality of Shakespeare. Creating the familiar Romantic canon upheld from Coleridge to Arnold, Richardson considers Chaucer, Spenser, Shakespeare and Milton as the "four great writers" in the English tradition, ranking Dryden, Pope and Co. as the second-class poets. The "first class" poets for Richardson are worthy of that distinction because "they pierce beyond externals and mere conventionalisms. Their representations of humanity are not local or temporary. They do not describe manners but men. They wrote for all ages and all countries."[37] Despite his anti-neoclassicism, however, Richardson falls back, in his praise of Shakespeare and other great English poets, on the familiar language of praise his predecessors – Johnson, Dryden, Jonson – used for Shakespeare, though he does not share their high praise for Milton, Spencer and Chaucer.

Continuing with his elaborate praise of Shakespeare, Richardson comes down to certain illustrations for his assertion and relates the English bard to the Indian conditions. Understandably, Richardson as Professor of English at Hindu College, Calcutta, must have thought it expedient to relate Shakespeare to the Indian context where he spoke on Shakespeare to the native pupils and intelligentsia. Note how he adapts Shakespeare to local conditions in Calcutta:

> Shakespeare especially has addressed himself to the universal heart. The jealousy of Othello and the ambition of Macbeth are as perfectly apprehended by the intelligent Hindu alumni of an English College in Calcutta, as by the students of a scholastic establishment in the poet's native land. But Pope was too much of a London poet of the eighteenth century. He is so local and temporary that many of his allusions are wholly unintelligible even to his own countrymen. His satires especially are limited and obscure. It would be almost impossible, for example, to make a native of Hindustan comprehend the greater portion of his *Epistle on the Characters of Women.* But Shakespeare's females are sketched with such miraculous power, and with such fidelity to general nature, that they are recognised in all countries and in all ages by every reader who can understand the language in which his plays are written.[38]

Sounding almost Johnsonian, Richardson's reading of Shakespeare here, relating it to the Indian and world context, is a model of literary criticism in the liberal humanist tradition, looking for whatever is of universal relevance in a writer or text. The earlier colonial or imperial tone of complacency,[39] as well as the postcolonial enthusiasm to "write back" or "reinterpret"[40] are both essentially against the universal spirit of great literature which Richardson finds in Shakespeare. Richardson, an English teacher in India, is clearly free from the imperial tone common among many of his contemporary compatriots.[41]

Although an ardent admirer of Shakespeare, like Arnold or Coleridge, Richardson stops short of subscribing to the "divinity of Shakespeare."[42] Not strictly bound by any literary theory or tradition, school or shrine, having only broad affinity with the Romantics, Richardson shows the ability to rise above the Romanticism of the nineteenth century more freely than Johnson is able to rise above his neoclassical orientation. Whatever may be his enthusiasm for the universalism of Shakespeare, Richardson, like Johnson, does not ignore Shakespeare's faults whenever he comes upon them. What constitutes a 'fault' in Shakespeare is, however, often perceived quite differently by the two critics. Note, for instance, the following from Richardson's essay "On Care and Condensation in Writing":

> It is said that Shakespeare never blotted a line. To this we may reply with Ben Jonson, would that he had blotted a thousand! The errors and imperfections that are discoverable even in his wonderous pages, are spots on the sun that we often have occasion to wish away. Foreigners constantly throw these defects in the teeth of his national admirers. But Pope, in his Preface to Shakespeare, has shown that the great bard did not always disdain the task of correction, though he sometimes neglected it. *The Merry Wives of Windsor* and *The Tragedy of Hamlet* were almost entirely re-written.[43]

Notwithstanding his criticism of the neoclassical poets and critics, here Richardson invokes for support both Pope and Ben Jonson. It can be called the critical credo of Richardson that he is eclectic in his criticism of Shakespeare and other writers. Basically having the romantic background of his age, he approaches authors and texts with an open mind, always relying, like Johnson, more on his reason and common sense than on any theory or philosophy, tradition or school. Like great critics, he speaks from his own mind, relying on his own perceptions, rather than follow any critical theory, romantic or classical.

In another essay "Lord Byron's Opinion of Pope", Richardson once again uses Shakespeare as an antithesis to poets like Pope, and makes in the process a set of valuable comments on Shakespeare as well as other writers he includes in the discussion. The very opening of the essay reveals an important point about Richardson as critic:

> Lord Byron had always a nervous horror of floating with the stream, and was never inclined to express any other opinion than those which he knew to be in direct opposition to the general judgement of mankind, more especially of his own contemporaries. It was this feeling that led him to undervalue Shakespeare and make Pope his idol.[44]

As implied in the statement, the critic's nature, his character, is as important to know as the nature and character of the artist. Call it biographical, but Richardson's point cannot be dismissed easily. We know how individual temperaments and mindsets go into the making of their compositions, creative as well as critical. From the time of Eliot's Modernism, it has been fashionable to label such criticism as fallacious – "intentional fallacy"[45] or "affective fallacy"[46] – but examined without prejudice, Richardson's perception cannot be ignored in our reading of literary creations and criticisms. Of course, like any other critical approach, the biographical is not without flaws. One obvious shortcoming is that it fails to distinguish between "the man who suffered and the writer who creates," to borrow Eliot's words. Besides, not all literary texts are created from the writer's personal experience. Richardson's insistence on biographical approach once again underlines his strong allegiance to the Romantic critical tradition. Our present-day "Reader-Response and Reception Theory" calls for recognition of the individual reading in place of the writer's intention. In that case, would it not be necessary to know the kind of person the reader is, for how else would he become a factor in creating meaning of a text.[47] Richardson's linking of Byron's criticism to his personality comes close to the implications of Reader-Response and Reception Theory.

In the same essay, Richardson, as usual, brings in Shakespeare as an example of one of those writers who wrote on lofty, and not on lowly, subjects. As he argues,

> A lofty subject requires a greater grasp of intellect and a more vigorous imagination than a humble one, and therefore the author of the *Paradise Lost* or of the *Tragedy of Macbeth* would always rank above the author of the most poetical description of a game of cards that was ever written, because no human power could render it so

> eminently poetical as those two immortal productions. The card-game describer might be a *cleverer* man than Milton without a hundredth part of his genius. Lord Byron, however, very strenuously maintains that "the poet who *executes* best is the highest, whatever his department." And what is still more strange and inconsistent, after asserting that there are no "orders" in poetry, or that if there be, the poet is ranked by his execution not his subject, he elevates Pope above all other writers of verse on the ground of his being the best *ethical* poet, and ethical poetry being of the highest rank. If Bentham's prose Ethics were put into good verse, they would, according to this decision, be finer poetry than the works of Homer, Shakespeare or Milton.[48]

Richardson raises here the familiar Romantic (and Victorian) issue of great poetry being so called because of its great or lofty subject. From Wordsworth to Arnold, a clear preference for ennobling emotions remained the hallmark of greatness in poetry. We know how Matthew Arnold rejected his own "Empedocles on Etna" because suicide as a subject of poetry, he thought, is depressing rather than elevating.[49] It was for the same reason that he considered Dryden and Pope as classics of our prose, not classics of our poetry, satire being a negative feeling, the opposite of the positive feeling of love or compassion.

One thing that needs to be noted here is that compared to Richardson, Byron seems ahead of his time. His insistence that there are no "orders" – an anti-canonical argument – and that execution rather than subject determines the merit of an artist, we know, became popular slogans of literary criticism in the modern period initiated in Europe by writers like Flaubert who wanted to write a novel without a subject. As opposed to Byron, Richardson remains a man of his own time – the nineteenth century – which valued noble and grand subjects as the only appropriate themes for poetry.

Richardson also discusses, in his essay "Men of the World", the question of decorum and appropriateness in Shakespeare's characterization. Making a reference to earlier critics – obviously his predecessors of the Neoclassical age – he puts up a long defence for Shakespeare's characterization of Polonius:

> Some critics have thought that the advice which Polonius, in the tragedy of *Hamlet,* gives to his son, on his going abroad, exhibits a degree of wisdom wholly inconsistent with the general character of that weak and foolish old man. But in this case, as in most others of a

> similar nature, we find, on closer consideration, that what may seem at the first glance an error or oversight of Shakespeare's, is only another illustration of his accurate knowledge of human life. The precepts which the old man desires to fix in the mind of *Laertes*, are such as he might have heard a hundred thousand times in his long passage through the world. They are not brought out from the depths of his own soul. They have only fastened themselves on his memory, and are much nearer to his tongue than to his heart .... In the conversation of the weakest-minded persons, we often find, as in that of *Polonius,* both "matter and impertinency mixed." His advice is not that of a philosopher, but of a courtier and man of the world.[50]

To the extent that Richardson defends Shakespeare's portrait of Polonius on the grounds of the bard's "accurate knowledge of human life" he is close to Dr. Johnson. Here, Richardson decries his unnamed friend's criticism of Shakespeare for violating the principle of decorum – for not portraying character "types." Johnson, too, defends Shakespeare just as Richardson does, saying that the great bard of Stratford "always makes nature predominant over accident."[51] Like Johnson, Richardson also defends Shakespeare for the latter's adherence to life or nature, not to conventional types. But when Richardson attributes Polonius's "wisdom" to his "court education," he is taking recourse to justifying Shakespeare's characterization on the principle of decorum or appropriateness. His contention is that Polonius says what any courtier would have said in the former's situation. Once again the eclectic nature of Richardson's criticism is revealed, for he is both opposing and endorsing the tenets of neo-classicism of the earlier age.

Richardson as a teacher of English, wholly committed to explicating Shakespeare in lectures and essays, seems to have acquired such a knowledge of the bard's plays and poems that whatever subject he may be writing on he involuntarily turns to Shakespeare for illustrations of his contentions. Even in a book like *Flowers and Flower Gardens*, Richardson profusely quotes from Shakespeare's poems and plays, showing how in the matter of flora and fauna Shakespeare remains one of the richest sources. Those committed to Ecocriticism would find in Richardson a kindred soul, doing the job of an advance guard. Speaking of England, for example, saying how "to a foreign visitor the whole country seems a garden," Richardson quotes Shakespeare describing England as "a sea-walled garden."[52] Continuing with the praise of England as a vast garden, quoting several English poets, Richardson cites some lines from

Shakespeare's *As You Like It,* speaking of how "This our life, exempt from public haunt, finds tongues in trees, books in the running brooks, sermons in stones, and good in every thing."[53]

An elaborate mention that Richardson makes of Shakespeare in *Flowers and Flower Gardens* relates to the bard's biography. Beginning with a general observation, quite common with Richardson – "All true poets delight in gardens" – he adds the following:

> The truest that ever lived spent his latter days at New Place in Stratford-upon-Avon. He had a spacious and beautiful garden .... In this garden Shakespeare planted with his own hands his celebrated Mulberry tree.[54]

Richardson goes on to narrate how the different owners of New Place after Shakespeare's death treated the tree, from an object of worship to its contemptuous felling, ending in triggering a legend about how souvenirs made from the wood of that tree became decorations on the stage where Shakespeare's plays were enacted, etc.[55] Richardson's movement from plays to poet and from poet to plays is in keeping with his Romantic orientation – the opposite of Eliot's autotelic concern with the plays, for the writer and his work for the Romantics cannot be separated from each other

An interesting reference to Shakespeare appears again in relation to "Herne's Oak in Windsor Park, [which] is said by some to be still standing, but it is described as a mere anatomy. – An old oak whose boughs are mossed with age, And high top bald with dry antiquity. *As You Like It* .... Herne's Oak, as every one knows, is immortalised by Shakespeare, who has spread its fame over many lands."[56] Richardson, as usual, puts down all the details he can gather about a tree or a flower, about its actual existence and the subsequent literary uses made by different poets and playwrights. He finds in Shakespeare, among the poets, the richest treasure of flowers and flower gardens – another favourite subject of the romantic poets and critics, their love of nature. To highlight Shakespeare's fondness for trees, Richardson goes on mentioning the repeated occurrence in the bard's plays of the oak tree:

> There is an old tale goes that Herne the hunter, Sometime a keeper here in Windsor Forest, Doth all the winter time, at still midnight, Walk round about an Oak, with great ragg'd horns, And there he blasts the trees, and takes the cattle; And makes milch cows yield blood, and shakes a chain In a most hideous and dreadful manner. You have heard of such a spirit; and well you know, The

> superstitions, idle-headed eld Received, and did deliver to our age, This tale of Herne the Hunter for a truth. *Merry Wives of Windsor.* "Herne, the hunter" is said to have hung himself upon one of the branches of this tree, and even, ... Yet there want not many that do fear, in deep of night to walk by this Herne's oak. *Merry Wives of Windsor.*[57]

Thus putting Shakespeare's poetic lines in running prose Richardson goes on to mention historians and researches as to the factuality of the legend about Herne's Oak, and moves further mentioning other references to the legendary tree in other poets like Sidney, Ben Jonson, etc. Richardson emerges in *Flowers and Flower Gardens* as a man of vast learning, a great researcher, and, above all, a sensitive critic who can discriminate between nature and art, between poet and poet, and between one set of lines and another. His criticism of Shakespeare, too, is his own, though not without affinities with certain individual critics and general trends.

Describing Shakespeare's love of flowers and trees, showing how the bard uses histories, legends, superstitions, etc., in his poetic and dramatic compositions to achieve subtle psychological effects, leaving the audience wondering whether there is in the description history, or legend, or mere superstition, Richardson brings out the beauties of Shakespeare's work without offering elaborate explanations. Richardson's usual method is to place before the reader lines and passages from the bard's composition in a certain context which he creates for the purpose and allows the citations to speak for themselves. Here, biography and fiction, life and letters, are not meant to be separated from each other – the usual romantic mode of criticism.

A very interesting mention in Richardson's *Flowers and Flower Gardens* is Shakespeare's use of "THE FLOS ADONIS." The following piece in Richardson's book reveals his familiar critical response to literary items of his interest:

> The Flos Adonis, a blood-red flower of the Anemone tribe, is one of the many plants which, according to ancient story, sprang from the tears of Venus and the blood of her coy favourite. Rose cheeked Adonis hied him to the chase Hunting he loved, but love he laughed to scorn Shakespeare. Venus, the Goddess of Beauty, the mother of Love, the Queen of Laughter, the Mistress of the Graces and the Pleasures, could make no impression on the heart of the beautiful son of Myrrha, (who was changed into a myrrh tree) though the passion-stricken charmer looked and spake with the lip and eye of the fairest

> immortals. Shakespeare, in his poem of *Venus and Adonis,* has done justice to her burning eloquence, and the lustre of her unequalled loveliness. She had most earnestly, and with all a true lover's care untreated Adonis to avoid the dangers of the chase, but he slighted all her warnings just as he had slighted her affections. He was killed by a wild boar. Shakespeare makes Venus thus lament over the beautiful dead body as it lay on the blood-stained grass .... In her ecstacy of grief she prophesies that henceforth all sorts of sorrows shall be attendants upon love, - - and alas! she was too correct an oracle. The course of true love never does run smooth. Here is Shakespeare's version of the metamorphosis of Adonis into a flower ....[58]

Thus, like a true scholar, Richardson first goes into the genesis of the Greek myth about Venus and Adonis, and then shows how Shakespeare makes his own use of the myth in his poem "Venus and Adonis." Citing, in his usual running lines, long passages of descriptive poetry Richardson addresses the reader:

> The reader may like to contrast this account of the change from human into floral beauty with the version of the same story in Ovid as translated by Eusden ....[59]

Performing the critic's role, Richardson invites comparison between the two poets, Ovid and Shakespeare, obviously suggesting Shakespeare's indebtedness to the Roman poet of antiquity. At the same time, he implies the method of what is now known as comparative literature. What is remarkable about him is his breathtaking scholarship about the histories and myths of flowers, their uses by the poets, the translators of Latin into English. His botanical knowledge of flowers, plants, etc., is no less impressive. He is a great scholar-critic, indeed. Like Johnson, he combines many talents into one great writer – poet, scholar, critic, historian, biologist, etc.

Another flower image that Richardson traces in Shakespeare is that of Hyacinth. As he explains, "The common Hyacinth is known to the unlearned as the Harebell, so called from the bell shape of its flowers and from its growing so abundantly in thickets frequented by hares. Shakespeare, as we have seen, calls it the Blue-bell."[60] Richardson, in his depth of knowledge, shows how criticism is enriched by scholarship, how the background knowledge of myths and images can help interpret a poem or a play. These critical observations by him clearly qualify Richardson for his inclusion among major critics. It is rather sad that he has not found place in the history of Indian English

literature or criticism. In the two well-known histories of Indian English writing by Sirinivas Iynger and M.K.Naik, there is no mention of Richardson either as a poet or critic, although he lived all his adult life in India, playing an important role in the literary and intellectual life of nineteenth-century Calcutta, publishing creative and critical writings, editing literary journals, promoting theatres, etc.

A more elaborate discussion than that of Hyacinth in Richardson's *Flowers and Flower Gardens* appears that of the Rose. Being a more commonly used image in poetry, Rose has, of course, been a subject of great fascination for poets and critics alike. From Chaucer to Spenser, Sidney and Shakespeare, and from Blake to Shelley, Keats, Burns and Yeats, the Rose has been one of the most dynamic symbols in English poetry. Richardson, as usual, comes to the Rose imagery in Shakespeare and other poets taking a detour of its history, myth, science, and aesthetics associated with the flower. As usual, he starts with a general statement: "Human beauty and the rose are ever suggesting images of each other to the imagination of the poets."[61] And then he goes on to illustrate his statement with examples from poets, with Shakespeare always the first to appear in the list of poets: "Shakespeare has a beautiful description of the two little princes sleeping together in the Tower of London. Their lips were four red roses on a stalk that in their summer beauty kissed each other."[62]

It must be noted here that Richardson appreciates individual lines of beauty and isolated images in poems and plays, seldom speaking of the context in which the lines appear or rarely discussing the plot or structure, or even scene, in which the image appears. It can be that his approach is in complete consonance with the British Romantics who went after beauty and beautiful lines rather than plot and structure. Also in tune with the Romantics is Richardson's almost unqualified praise of Shakespeare. In the present instance, for example, one could find fault with the comparison of male lips with roses. For generally the rose is associated with the female beauty, not with the male. But the Romantic bardolatory (Shakespearean divinity, as Coleridge would put it)[63] would not leave any room for such a scrutiny of Shakespeare.

Multiplying in his usual manner examples from various poets and mythologies, combining with history and mythology associated with the flower, Richardson once again returns to Shakespeare:

> I shall close the poetical quotations on the Rose with one of Shakespeare's sonnets.
>
> O, how more doth beauty beauteous seem,
>
> By that sweet ornament which truth doth give!

The rose looks fair, but fairer we it dream
For that sweet odour which doth in it live.
The canker blooms have full as deep a dye
As the perfumed tincture of the roses,
Hang on such thorns, and play as wantonly,
When summer's breath their masked buds discloses;
But for their virtue only is their show,
They live unwooed and unrespected fade;
Die to themselves. Sweet roses do not so;
Of their sweet deaths are sweetest odours made.
And so of you, beauteous and lovely youth,
When that shall fade, my verse distils your truth.[64]

With this complete sonnet No. 54 quoted Richardson gives a long history of roses in India and England, as also the rose gardens in the two countries, so on and so forth. We need to notice here the critical mode Richardson adopts, although the book in which all this appears is not primarily one of literary criticism. He cites the lines and leaves it there for the reader to enjoy and appreciate the beauty in the image or the lines. Obviously, it is the mode appropriate to the function of criticism as appreciation, not as interpretation. After the vogue of Theory in our time, the term appreciation finds no place in criticism. As a critic, Richardson only draws our attention to the poetic beauties we need to admire.

Yet another flower image Richardson traces in Shakespeare is that of the Pansy. Like a biologist, Richardson first explains the flower: "THE PANSY OR HEART'S-EASE. The PANSY (viola tricolour) commonly called Heart's-ease, or Love-in-idleness, or Herb-Trinity (Flos Trinitarium), or Three-faces-under-a-hood, or kit-run-about, is one of the richest and loveliest of flowers."[65] After mentioning the flower's use in some other writers, Richardson returns to Shakespeare, saying:

> Shakespeare has connected this flower with compliment to the maiden Queen of England. That very time I saw (but thou couldst not) Flying between the cold moon and the earth, Cupid all armed, a certain aim he took At a fair Vestal, throned by the west; And loosed his love-shaft smartly from his bow As it should pierce a hundred thousand hearts. But I might set young Cupid's fiery shaft Quenched in the chaste beams of the watery moon – And the imperial votaress passed on In maiden meditation fancy free, Yet marked I where the

> bolt of Cupid fell. It fell upon a little western flower, Before milk white, now purple with love's wound – And maidens call it LOVE IN IDLENESS Fetch me that flower, the herb I showed thee once, the juice of it on sleeping eyelids laid, will make man or woman madly dote Upon the next live creature that it sees. Fetch me this herb and be thou here again, Ere the leviathan can swim a league. *Midsummer Night's Dream.*[66]

Thus, Richardson cites long passages of poetry from Shakespeare's plays to give to the reader the context in which the flower image appears. He does not go into offering explications, implications, or interpretations of these passages – the play as such not being his primary concern. However, even when he restricts himself to giving the reader full knowledge about a flower and its literary uses by the writers, especially the poets, he is always able to throw light on the importance of imagery in poetry, especially that of Shakespeare

Among various flowers and flower trees Richardson points out as the material for tropes in Shakespeare also appear the "fern-seed" in Shakespeare's *Henry IV, Part I*[67] and "rosemary" in *Hamlet.*[68] While some of the references, such as these two, are made in passing, those picked up for detailed mention do constitute a dimension of Richardson's literary criticism. For instance, his emphasis on Shakespeare's use of time indicated by images drawn from nature is remarkable indeed:

> .... though Shakespeare does not seem to have marked his time on a floral clock, yet, like all true poets, he has made very free use of other appearances of nature to indicate the commencement and the close of the day. The sun no sooner shall the mountains touch – Than we shall slip him hence. *Hamlet.* Fare thee well at once! The glow-worm shows the matin to be near And gins to pale his uneffectual fire. *Hamlet.* But look! The morn, in russet mantle clad, Walks o'er the dew of yon high eastern hill:- Break we our watch up. *Hamlet.* Light thickens, and the crow makes wing to the rooky wood. *Macbeth.* Such picturesque notations of time as these, are in the works of Shakespeare, as thick as autumnal leaves that strew the brooks in Valombrosa. In one of his Sonnets he thus counts the years of human life by the succession of the seasons. To me, fair friend, you never can be old, For as you were when first your eye I eyed, Such seems your beauty still. Three winters cold Have from the

> forests shook three summers' pride; Three beauteous springs to yellow autumn turned In process of the seasons have I seen; Three April's perfumes in three hot Junes burned Since first I saw you fresh which yet are green.[69]

Since Richardson himself is a poet, he often takes to describing Shakespeare'a poetic beauties in tropes, as he does here in the opening lines of the citation. His view of comparisons, one notices, remains the same as that of Wordsworth or any other romantic poet. Wordsworth, in his "Preface" to the *Lyrical Ballads,* defines the two-fold function of comparison: that it clarifies an idea and has an added charm of its own.[70] Richardson, too, offers his appreciation of Shakespeare's tropes in these very terms. All the while, he draws our attention to the pleasure aspect of Shakespeare's comparisons and to the clarification the trope makes of the object to which it is compared. The comparisons of sunrise and sunset in the above excerpts from Shakespeare's compositions are shown to perform the twin function Wordsworth ascribes to the tropes.

From flowers to flower gardens Richardson traces in Shakespeare numerous descriptios of fauna and flora, emphasizing the poet's love of nature. Note, for instance, the following:

> Shakespeare makes mention of garden knots in his *Richard the Second*, where he compares an ill governed state to a neglected garden. Why should we, in the compass of a pale, keep law, and form, and due proportion, showing, as in a model, our firm estate? When our sea-walled garden, the whole land, is full of weeds; her finest flowers choked up, Her fruit-trees all unpruned, her hedges ruined, Her knots disordered, and her wholesome herbs swarming with caterpillars.[71]

As a scholar, then Richardson goes on to point out that there is a mention of garden as comparison in Holinshed's *Chronicles*. It also needs to be noted that all along Richardson has been discussing Shakespeare as poet, never as dramatist. That again confirms his strong affinity with the Romantics who, too, treated Shakespeare as poet, seldom as dramatist, ever admiring the range and depth of his poetic imagination.

At the same time, Richardson is not altogether wedded to the critical credo of the Romantics. Often, he takes critical positions contrary to those taken by Coleridge and Wordsworth, Byron and Shelley. For example, speaking of great writers, "Shakespeare and Milton, or Byron and Wordsworth," in his essay "On Care And Condensation In Writing," Richardson argues,

> A reader is as little curious about the number of hours which a poet may have taken to write his verses, as about the number of arms or legs of his study chair. The question is, whether the verses are good or bad, and not how, when, or where, they were composed. Even the age of a writer is a consideration of very slight importance. His years have no inseparable connection with his work. The latter stand alone in the world's eye, and are judged by their intrinsic merit, and by this alone must they live or die.[72]

Here, as elsewhere, like Johnson, in fact even more than Johnson, Richardson seems ahead of his times, anticipating the Modernist criticism of Eliot who insists that "Honest criticism and suggestive appreciation are directed not upon the poet but upon the poetry."[73] We know how the Romantics would not separate the poem from the poet, making as they were their poetry from the events of their own lives. We can recall here the pre-Modernist critical approaches that sought to explain poetry in terms of the poet's life. It is remarkable that a critic like Richardson, although himself a poet of the nineteenth century, living and writing in India, should have developed such a mature critical thought as is reflected in his criticism of Shakespeare and other English poets from Chaucer to the Romantics.

As the first notable Shakespeare critic in Calcutta, Richardson remains a founder of Shakespeare studies in India. As Derozio laid the foundation of Shakespeare teaching in India, making it inspirational, emphasizing the bard's secularism through a rational interpretation of his plays in recitation and performance, so did Richardson lay the foundation of Shakespeare criticism in India, making it an appreciation of poetic beauties and universal humanism. His elaborate elucidation of floral imagery in Shakespeare, in a sense, anticipates what Miss Caroline Spurgeon was to do a century later.[74] No doubt, while Spurgeon brings out the structural significance of imagery in Shakespeare, Richardson confines his appreciation to its local effect in the particular lines. The difference between the two is important because they had very different orientations: while Richardson had the background of Romanticism, Spurgeon was fed on Modernism – combining structuralism, imagism, etc.

Richardson also anticipates Arnold in his emphasis on subject more than style. Then, Richardson at times foresees even Eliot in his emphasis on the poem as against the poet. Largely related to Romantic tradition, Richardson generally remains eclectic in his critical approach to Shakespeare and other English poets.

The British may have ignored Richardson as poet and critic because he lived and wrote in India, and the Indians may have ignored him because he was an Englishman, but his seminal and foundational role in establishing Shakespeare studies in India cannot be overlooked. Mostly, mention is made of him only as one of the teachers of English at Hindu College in the nineteenth century, invariably citing Macaulay's praise for his teaching of Shakespeare. There is a need to highlight his role as a Shakespearean critic of the foundational phase of Shakespeare studies in India. Else our understanding of the history of Shakespeare studies in India will remain not only incomplete but without a tradition. Richardson, it can be asserted, laid down the tradition of Shakespeare criticism in India, emphasizing close reading and background knowledge, besides awareness of the Western tradition from the Graeco-Roman period to the present. Among the small number of Shakespeare critics India has produced, this tradition remained alive for long.

Notes

[1]See Amal Kumar Mukhopadhyay (ed.), *175th Anniversary Commemoration Volume: Presidency College, Calcutta* (Calcutta: Presidency College, 1992), p. 5.

[2]Ibid., p. 65.

[3]See Amalendu Bose, *Calcutta Essays on Shakespeare* (Calcutta: Calcutta University Press, 1966), p. 181.

[4]See Taraknath Sen (ed.), *Shakespeare Commemoration Volume* (Calcutta: The Department of English, Presidency College, 1966), p. vii.

[5]See *Indian Literature*, Vol. VII – No.I, (New Delhi, 1964), p. 20.

[6]See G.S. Boulger, "Richardson, David Lester (bap. 1801, d. 1865)," rev. Rebecca Mills, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2007).

[7]See Rosinka Chaudhuri, "Bibliography," *Gentlemen Poets in Colonial Bengal: Emergent Nationalism and the Orientalist Project* (Calcutta: Seagull Books, 2002), pp. 2004-05.

[8]See David Lester Richardson, *Literary Leaves, or Prose and Verse: Chiefly written in India* (London: W.H. Allen & Co., 1840), p. vii.

[9]See *Political Shakespeare: Essays on Cultural Materialism*, Eds. Jonathan Dollimore and Alan Sinfield, 2nd ed. (1985; Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994).

[10]Cited in Rosinka Chaudhuri, *Gentlemen Poets in Colonial Bengal*, p. 92.

[11]See "Shakespeare in Calcutta University," in *Calcutta Essays on Shakespeare*, p. 181.

[12]See "Introduction," *Renaissance and Reaction in Nineteenth Century Bengal: Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay*, p. 82.

[13]See "On Children," in *Literary Leaves* (London: W.H. Auden & Co, 1840), p. 34.

[14]See Sisir Kumar Das, *A History of Indian Literature: 1800-1910; Western Impact: Indian Response* (New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi), p. 80.

[15]See *Masks of Conquest* (London: Faber and Faber, 1990), pp. 45-67, 68-93.

[16]Cited in Rosinka Chaudhuri, p. 96.

[17]See *Literary Leaves*, pp. 235-36.

[18]Ibid., p. 199.

[19]Ibid., p. 198.

[20]See Letters of John Keats, Ed. Frederic Page (London: Oxford University Press, 1952), pp. 71-72.

[21]See "MacFlecknoe," in *The Poems of John Dryden;* ed. by James Kinsley (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1958), p. 265.

[22]See *Biographia Literaria*, Vol. II; Ed. by J. Shawcross (1907; London: Oxford University Press, 1969), pp. 19-20.

[23]Ibid., p. 20.

[24]See *Literary Leaves*, p. 236.

[25]Although highly critical of Bradley, the New Critics always used him as a point of reference, and without acknowledging his fine observation which differentiated Shakespearean tragedy from Graeco-Roman Tragedy.

[26]See *Literary Leaves*, p. 236.

[27]See A.C. Bradley, *Shakespearean Tragedy* (1904; London: Macmillan, 1992), pp. 1-30.

[28]See *Literary Leaves*, pp. 255-57.

[29]Ibid., p. 255.

[30]Ibid., p. 256.

[31]Ibid., p. 233.

[32]Ibid., p. 235

[33]See "The Long Poem in the Age of Wordsworth," *Oxford Lectures on Poetry* (1909; London: Macmillan, 1962), pp. 177-208.

[34]See *Essays in Criticism: Second Series*, ed. by S.R. Littlewood (London: Macmillan, 1956), pp. 1-33.

[35]See "On Egotism," *Literary Leaves*, p. 209.

[36]See "Richardson's Literary Recreations," in *Calcutta Gazette* (1851), p. 313.

[37]Ibid., p. 314.

[38]Ibid., p. 314.

[39]Writers like Kipling and Conrad, as Edward Said remarks in his *Culture and Imperialism* (London: Vintage, 1994), rendered the experience of the Empire as the main subject of [their] work, depicting "the colour, glamour, and romance of the British overseas empire" (p. 160).

[40]On the other side, there are the post-colonial critics like Loomba and Vishwanathan who go on, to theorise about the complicity between English education in India and the British empire, converting the Indian Renaissance into the politics of subjugation. Ashcroft, Bill, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin's *The Empire Writes Back* (Harward, 1999) makes a similar contention, ignoring altogether the genuine work

of individual Englishmen, including Wilkins, Jones, Wilson, besides Hare, Drummond, and Hickey, who contributed to the advancement of learning in India.

[41]Charles Grant, Alexander Duff, and James Mill, for instance, express very uncharitable views about the Indians, showing no sympathy what so ever with the religion, culture, and civilization of the colonised.

[42]See S. T. Coleridge, "Introduction," *Coleridge on Shakespeare,* Ed., by Terence Hawkes (Penguin Books, 1959), p. 15.

[43]See *Literary Leaves*, p. 47.

[44]Ibid., p. 123.

[45]See William K. Wimsatt, Jr., and Monroe C. Beardsley, "The Intentional Fallacy" in Wimsatt's *The Verbal Icon* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1967)

[46]See Wimsatt and Beardsley, "The Affective Fallacy" in Wimsatt's *The Verbal Icon.*

[47]See "Reader-Response and Reception Theory" in H.R.A. Habib's *A History of Literary Criticism* (Mass. ; Blackwell Publishing, 2006), pp. 708-36.

[48]See Literary Leaves, pp. 126-127.

[49]See "The Study of Poetry," *Essays in Criticism:* Second Series, pp. 21-25.

[50]*Literary Leaves*, p. 147.

[51]See R.W. Desai, *Johnson on Shakespeare* (1979; New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1985), p. 100.

[52]See *Flowers and Flower Gardens* (1885). Electronic Library, e Books Read. Com, Page 5 of 8.

[53]Ibid.

[54]Ibid., Page 6 of 8.

[55]Ibid.

[56]Ibid., Page 3 of 8.

[57]See *Flowers and Flower Gardens*, Page 3 of 8.

[58]Ibid., Page 6 of 7.

[59]Ibid., page 7 of 7.

[60]Ibid., Page 1 0f 8.

[61]Ibid., Page 4 of 8.

[62]Ibid.

[63]See *Coleridge on Shakespeare*, p. 15.

[64]Shakespeare's Sonnet No. 54 is cited in full here in *Flowers and Flower Gardens*, Page 5 of 8.

[65]Ibid., 7 of 8.

[66]Ibid.

[67]Ibid., Page 6 of 7.

[68]Ibid., Page 7 of 7.

[69]Ibid., Page 3 of 7.

[70]See *Prose of the Romantic Period,* Ed. by Carl R. Woodring (Boston: Riverside Edition, 1961), p. 67.

[71]*Flowers and Flower Gardens*, Page 7 of 8.

[72]See *Literary Leaves*, pp. 41-42.

[73]See T.S. Eliot, "Tradition and the Individual Talent," in *Critical Theory Since Plato*, Ed. Hazard Adams (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, INC, 1971), p. 785.

[74]See Caroline Spurgeon, *Shakespeare's Imagery and What It Tells Us* (Cambridge, 1935).

Chapter V

H.M. Percival, the First Scholar-Critic of Shakespeare

Although between D.L. Richardson and H.M. Percival, there was another Shakespeare teacher at Hindu College, Charles Henry Tawney, he is being excluded here because he falls short of Derozio's status as charismatic teacher, of Richardson's as literary critic, of Percival's as scholar-critic. Although an eminent teacher and scholar in his own right, Charles Henry Tawney's contribution to Shakespeare studies in colonial Bengal does not measure up to what Percival, coming after him, added. The only available account about Tawney is given in the Anniversary Volume of Presidency College, which says the following:

> Charles Henry Tawney, who taught English here from 1864 to 1892 was Richardson's worthy successor. A distinguished Cambridge scholar, Tawney was a versatile man, equally at home in Anglo-Saxon literature, Shakespeare and Sanskrit poetry. His edition of Shakespeare's *Richard III* (Macmillan, 1888) and some of his translations of Sanskrit classics appeared while he was a member of this Department. As a teacher he was sympathetic and encouraging, had a most attractive gentleness and diffidence of manner, and never failed to awaken in his pupils a love for the finer pleasures of poetry and drama.[1]

Evidently, Tawney's distinction is rather general as a teacher, knowing Sanskrit as well as English. Then he is mentioned as a translator. As a Shakespeare scholar, his contribution is limited to his edition of *Richard III*, whereas Percival edited half a dozen plays with very long critical introductions. Hence Tawney cannot be said to have added any new dimension to Shakespeare studies.

As can be concluded from the above cited description, Tawney made a mark not as a teacher, critic, or scholar of Shakespeare so much as a "versatile man."[2] The express purpose of the present study being a consideration of those who laid the foundation of Shakespeare studies in India, highlighting their contribution to teaching, interpreting, and editing of Shakespeare's plays, Tawney and such other teachers of English at Hindu College will have to be left out, however good and great they may have been otherwise. After Richardson, therefore, it is Hugh Melville Percival who deserves the pride of place as a scholar-critic of Shakespeare. Percival achieved

distinction as an editor of Shakespeare not earned by anyone else before him in colonial Bengal.

Accounts of Percival's teaching at Hindu College are flattering indeed. One such account is by Taraknath Sen who describes him as "one of those great figures that come to mind at once as one recalls the history of Presidency College and of higher education in Bengal," who initiated generations of students "into the beauties and subtleties of Shakespearean drama through an exegesis that was as illuminating as it was original and flashing." According to Taraknath Sen, Richardson is said to have written to "Professor Praffulachandra Ghosh, that all that Bradley had said in *Shakespearean Tragedy* might have been stated more effectively in one-fourth of the space he had taken up."[3] Percival edited *As You Like It* (Calcutta: Longmans: 1910), *The Merchant of Venice* (London: Oxford University Press: 1912), *The Tempest* (Calcutta: 1928), *Macbeth* (Calcutta: 1929), *Antony and Cleopatra* (University of Calcutta, 1955). He is said to have also left behind manuscripts of his critical editions of *Hamlet* and *King Lear* the whereabouts of which are now unknown.

Taraknath Sen's account reads more like an occasional recall than a piece of historical writing. Also, despite the fact that Percival's alleged comment on Bradley's *Shakespearean Tragedy* shows his self-confidence as critic, the content of his comment is quite debatable. For brevity may be a virtue in compositions like a report or a summary of an event or account, it is not so in criticism where an argument is to be developed, especially on a subject like tragedy with a tradition going back to ancient Athens, defining the peculiar qualities that Shakespeare imparted to the genre. In another available account of Percival, Krishna Chandra Lahiri writes as follows:

> After Richardson, the study and teaching of Shakespeare revived specially when the University of Calcutta was established. Much excellent work must have been done by many teachers of Shakespeare but it is not until we reach the present century that we meet really great and memorable teachers. We begin with the greatest of them, H.M. Percival, a teachers' teacher and a scholars' scholar, a true Indian whose academic achievements in the universities of Oxford and London were of the highest order ....[4]

There are some discrepancies between what we get to know about Percival from this account and the earlier one by Taraknath Sen. One of the things that Lahiri says, and Taraknath Sen does not, is that Percival was "a true Indian." Whereas Sen's account says that he was born in Chittagong (now in Bangladesh) of Christian parents, not

making specific the nationality of his parents, Lahiri calls him not only an Indian, but a true Indian. One does not quite know what Lahiri means by his epithet "true." There is also discrepancy in the two accounts about Percival's education in England. Whereas Sen speaks of London and Edinburgh, Lahiri mentions Oxford and London. Although there are no clues as to the lost manuscripts mentioned in Sen's account cited above, it is possible that in London where Percival lived in his last years, his writings remained unnoticed. From the accounts cited above one thing that clearly stands out is the popularity and praise of Percival as a scholar-critic of Shakespeare.

Thus, sharing with Derozio and Richardson the great qualities of an inspiring teacher, Percival carried Shakespeare studies a step further: he produced editions of the plays he had taught for a long period of time. Writing in long hand from London a common foreword to the editions of several plays, dated July 1928, Percival put down the following:

> It is sixteen years now since I retired, after thirty one years of work in teaching at the Presidency College. The memory of that work, and of the happiness I felt in performing it has never left me. In imagination often, and in dreams, sometimes, it has come back to me. But this is no more than the shadow of a past happiness. The affection of two of my old pupils in replacing this shadow by the substance; and as I once lectured on Shakespeare in the Class-Room, their affection enables me now to lecture again on Shakespeare through the Press.[5]

These two pupils of Percival were P.C. Chaudhuri and P.C. Ghosh. As the "Publisher's Note" to the edition of *Antony and Cleopatra* states, "Sri P.C. Chaudhuri, who held the copyright of Professor Percival's manuscripts, not only transferred his interests in them to the University of Calcutta but also made a handsome donation towards the cost of printing and publishing them."[6] As is evident from the above, Percival, like Derozio and Richardson, enjoyed the love and reverence of his Indian students at the Presidency College. Though he taught several English poets, he, too, like his two predecessors, excelled in his teaching of Shakespeare, earning great reputation as teacher and scholar. One only wonders, however, why these pupils of Percival made no attempt to publish the manuscripts of their teacher's editions of *Hamlet* and *King Lear*. From Sen's account, it seems more likely that the manuscripts were left behind in Calcutta. Percival is said to have left Calcutta in 1910 and lived in London, from where in 1928 he sent the "Foreword" for some of his editions of Shakespeare's plays. Later,

when the offer was made to him to head the Department of English at Calcutta University, which he is said to have declined due to ill health. Lahiri maintains that "Percival's contacts with the university and especially the Presidency College continued till the end of his life."[7] From these two only accounts available about Percival's life we do not get to know the precise nature of his "contacts" with Calcutta after 1910.

Harrington Hugh Melville Percival, better known as H.M. Percival, like Richardson, was not lucky enough to have had a biographer. Besides, unlike Derozio and Richardson, he was not a creative writer. The work he left behind is solely scholarly – the annotated editions of several plays of Shakespeare and the annotated editions of Milton's *Samson Agonistes* and Spenser's *Faerie Queene Book I*, each carrying a long introduction, longer than even the text. The annotations, too, are equally lengthy, outnumbering the pages of the text.

Going through his various Introductions and annotations to Shakespeare's plays one realises that Percival specifically did this scholarly work for the benefit of Indian students. As Taraknath Sen confirms, Percival's "critical editions of Shakespeare's plays" were done "at the request of his pupils."[8] The common pattern he follows in these Introductions is to first write about the play's dates and sources; then take up its historical context; then make a scene-wise summary of the action; ending with long sketches of major and minor characters.

That Percival's editions are aimed at Indian students is also quite clear from the direct, linear, and simple style in which his introductions as well as notes are written. Compared to his edition of *The Tempest*, for instance, the Arden edition is highly referential, dense with allusions and comparisons, citing all the scholarship that has accumulated on every aspect of the text. In the case of *The Tempest* itself, whereas Percival devotes just about a page to the discussion of the play's date, and with no reference to any previous scholarship, the first Arden edition extends the discussion to 15 pages, with each page carrying various references, making the style dense and opaque. Similarly, whereas Percival devotes all the 45 pages of his Introduction to scene by scene summaries and character by character descriptions, the Arden edition devotes the same number of pages to such scholarly debates as "Text," "Themes of the Play," "The New World," "Nature," "Art," "Art and Nature," "Pastoral Tragicomedy," "Analogous Literature," "Structure-Masque Elements," "Verse-Imagery," " 'Tempest' Criticism." Not that Percival was not conversant with Shakespeare scholarship through the ages. He was well acquainted with the entire history of textual and critical scholarship related to Shakespeare's work. But since he was eager to help the native

learners of Bengal, for whom English was a second language, he deliberately chose to be simple in style, shunning erudition of diction and reference.

Prafulla Chandra Ghosh, one of the students of Percival at Hindu College, who himself later became an eminent teacher of Shakespeare, recalls Percival's "power of interpreting" as follows:

> What shall I say of his interpretation and specially of Shakespeare! It revealed to us a new world of beauty and thought into which the profane herd of critics were never allowed to intrude .... A philosopher in outlook, he perhaps overemphasized the ethical import of Shakespeare's plays, but in his interpretations he often hit the mark nearer than many of the present-day critics for whom only the play is the thing and everything else nothing.[9]

Evidently, Percival did not carry the critical debate into his classroom teaching of Shakespeare nor did he include it in his introductions and notes to the different plays he edited. And it is equally evident that he did so to make Shakespeare available to Indian students in a simple manner. As for his overemphasis on the "ethical import of Shakespeare's plays," that clearly reflects his ethical moorings, also palatable to Indian students.

Considering the pattern of four sections in Percival's introductions to the plays he edited, whereas the first and second are allotted small spaces of a page or two, the third and fourth, that is, Action and Characters, are given about twenty pages each. Devoting all the space to summarising the Action scenewise and drawing detailed sketches of characters, major as well as minor, clearly indicates the editor's intention, which is to provide aid to understanding of the text to the Indian students whose native language is not English. Percival is, of course, not an entirely neutral critic, who would just summarise an incident or describe a character; he has his own perception of Shakespeare's plays, which tends to be rather moralistic, and gets reflected in all aspects of his criticism. For instance, writing about *The Merchant of Venice*, he says, "The two stories together, point a single moral: the most deceptive of the appearances of worth is wealth, and the most precious form of real worth is character."[10] Percival's moralistic approach gets more clearly reflected in his observation on *Antony and Cleopatra:*

> The subject of the play is Sensual Love: its action shows the rise, the course and the ending of a love of this nature; it begins with sensual pleasures, which quickly run to excesses that are mistaken for true

> happiness; the course shows the interruptions of these pleasures by discords, also running into growing violence; it ends in the greatest unhappiness and in violent deaths. This is the lesson that this action teaches, that it draws from the story of the lives of two such lovers that once actually lived, and that might apply to similar cases in human life any day.[11]

Here, Percival seems to treat Shakespeare's play as a moral fable, conveying a clear moral message to all the readers, that sensual love is sure to prove fatal for the lovers. The critic seems committed to Victorian morality, seeing characters as moral entities, representing either good or evil, interpreting the play's incidents also in similar terms. To see the play in such narrow terms as Percival does surely reduces our sympathy for the two principal characters. The critic's purely moralistic approach also runs counter to Aristotle's established views on the purpose of tragedy. Shakespeare, we know, neither denies nor affirms any such moral judgement in his plays, which present events and characters in dramatic rather than in moral or philosophic terms. But Percival's Victorian morality would be quite palatable to Indian students whose own native literature strongly bore the same stamp of moralism, viewing characters in terms of good and evil.

Quite in tune with nineteenth-century works like Mary Cowden Clark's *Girlhood of Shakespeare's Heroines,*[12] Percival seems to treat Shakespeare almost as a novelist who had not bothered to give us his characters' early life. This becomes quite evident from his sketch of Miranda's early life:

> Thus grew up Miranda, wholly a child of nature, through an education such as Adam may have given to Eve, if she had ever been in her girl-hood in the Garden of Eden; and made to be such by the good old Adam, her father, both living in the new Paradise of the enchanted island. The first shock of the knowledge of evil came to her from the attempt upon her virtue, made by the new Devil, son of the old Satan, who tempted Eve; and her first experience of the loathsomeness of the evil, and her first feeling of hatred for it; - in this, rising superior to old mother Eve, who yielded to temptation.[13]

The comparison between Prospero-Miranda and Adam-Eve relationships sounds rather odd. But comparisons are always limited to one aspect common to the compared objects. And Percival limits the comparison to the innocence of Miranda and Eve, holding Miranda "superior to old mother Eve, who yielded to temptation." Some may

suggest an incestuous relationship between father and daughter; Percival, clearly, indicates no such intention, calling her "a stranger as yet to one emotion, - the love between man and woman."

Accusing other critics of not knowing Miranda's girlhood, Percival goes on to say the following:

> She is, at the age we see her at the opening of the play (and this is the period of her life that most of her critics seem to know her for the first time), a pure, innocent girl, ripening into womanhood, with a strong, clear intellect, quick, tender emotions – love for her father, grief at the story of his wrongs, gratitude to the friend who helped him in their midst, and a longing to see him – but a stranger as yet to one emotion – the love between man and woman.[14]

What other critics, in Percival's view do not know is the early girlhood of Miranda, which he sketches from his Ariel-like power to have gauged her self from her appearance:

> On board that bulk we see her (we, readers, are as expert as Ariel in seeing and hearing everything), a cherub, smiling in her father's desponding face, a cherub sent from heaven expressly to do so, and looking very much like one, warmly wrapped up as she was, with nothing but her face visible; just as cherubs look in paintings, nothing but an infant's head, with a pair of wings at the neck. Housed and cradled and nursed, she must have been by her father alone ... taught nursery tales by him ... taught in higher matters of knowledge and conduct by him of the conventions of that artificial society that they had shaken off, when setting out on their exile from civilization.[15]

Percival's own input in making the portrait of Miranda is romantically fanciful, raising her to a mythical status, far above the earthly mortals. As a Victorian critic, Percival surely could not have remained uninfluenced by the popular books of his time like *The Girlhood of Shakespeare's Heroines*. Besides, this reduction of Prospero as Adam and of Miranda as Eve-like is not in keeping with the Hindu College tradition where Derozio and Richardson had laid foundation for a secular teaching of Shakespeare.

Rejecting the neoclassical magisterial criticism which called *Antony and Cleopatra* a defective play in that it violated the principle of three unities, and considered Dryden superior to Shakespeare in that the former improved the play by

writing a new version under the heading *All for Love,* meticulously observing the three unities, Percival characterizes Dryden's "perfect art" as "spurious art," for "it is art divorced from nature."[16] Percival praises Shakespeare for his magical poetry, though he thus implies an indictment of the playwright for not remaining faithful to history; not faithful, that is, to Plutarch from whom he is believed to have borrowed the story of the play. As he comments,

> In Plutarch we have two shameless libertines in high places, whose manner of life only rouses our contempt and aversion, and whose manner of death leaves us indifferent. Shakespeare describes this real man and real woman, abating nothing from the lives they led; and (here comes that divine imagination with which he, of all poets, was most richly gifted) he so idealizes them, that contempt and aversion change at their deaths into pity and grief. This is the magic that his true art alone has worked, and that Dryden and a dozen others, who have tried their hand at this story, have failed in it.[17]

It is clear from Percival's above-cited comments on *Antony and Cleopatra,* that like the Victorians, he continues to subscribe to the bardolatory of Shakespeare. Also like other nineteenth century critics, he belittles Dryden and his rewriting of Shakespeare's play. Percival's heavy moral tone and his asking for a faithful adherence to historical facts, too, are typical of his critical credo as a Victorian. Percival's reading of the play is not supported by M.R.Ridley, the editor of The Arden Shakespeare, in whose view,

> For, unless we suffer from a kind of moral myopia, we are little troubled as we read, and even less as we see, by question of worthiness or unworthiness, still less of morality and immorality. We have been transported to a world in which such disputes seem to loose their meaning. Admittedly it is far from the noblest kind of world, as the two main figures are far from human nature at its noblest. But, being what they are, they are by their mutual passion lifted to the highest pitch to which they are capable of soaring. It is the merest fatuity of moralizing to deny the name of 'love' to their passion, and write it off as 'mere lust.'[18]

Although essentially a Victorian critic, Percival did not think much of his fellow Shakespearean critics. As Lahiri reports,

> Regarding critics and criticism of Shakespeare, Percival did not much care to know what other people had thought about his favourite author. In 1926, on receiving from P.C. Ghosh three well-known books on Shakespeare, including Bradley's justly popular

> lectures, Percival wrote back: 'I had seen none of these before and was uneasy whether they might not upset me and my notions. They have not done so.' One of these books he facetiously characterized as 'the product of a grasshopper's mind.[19]

Although Lahiri does not mention the titles of these three books on Shakespeare, it seems evident that at least the two of these were Bradley's *Shakespearean Tragedy* (1904) and Benedetto Croce's *Ariosto, Shakespeare, and Corneille* (trans. Douglas Ainslie) 1920. For Percival is cited by Lahiri on these two books in some detail. Self-opinionated as Percival was (clear from his critical writings) his dismissive attitude towards other critics is not surprising. Lahiri goes on to recount as follows:

> On Croce's chapter on Shakespeare Percival remarks rather favourably: 'Croce I cannot be hard upon, for one reason, but a reason that is all sufficient; it is this – he says that Shakespeare is to be judged by our emotions; and one who tries to judge him so, has a claim to indulgence for any faults. His biggest fault is that he forgets [his] own standard and becomes metaphorical now and then.'
>
> Percival appreciated Bradley's laborious study, though described it as rather effusive: 'So is Bradley now and then, without rising to any height that Croce reaches. Bradley is painstaking, has read Shakespeare carefully, draws his conclusions conscientiously; but what he so draws and states might have been stated more effectively in one-fourth of the space he takes up.'
>
> He even detects a few lapses in Bradley's critical judgements and decries the latter's scientific tests: "He does not understand the minor characters in *Macbeth* and he misunderstands the Tests (down to decimals on the subject of 'stopped' and 'unstopped' I think) – crutches that people who can walk reverently on their own two legs behind Shakespeare should disdain to use."[20]

A rather long quotation, but not many direct comments are available from Percival. Lahiri's compliment to Percival does not do much credit to him as scholar-critic. The reporter seems to have been guided by hearsay more than his own search into the subject. As a teacher, Percival may have given that impression – of not caring for critics – but it is not borne out by his 'introduction' and 'notes' to those of Shakespeare's plays he edited. Percival's praise of Croce for prizing emotion more than reason reflects his Victorian sentimentalism. His affinity with Croce on the reading of Shakespeare certainly makes him partisan in his critical judgement. No wonder, against general considered opinion, he holds Croce superior to Bradley. One wonders if any

Shakespearean critic would endorse Percival's view in our time. Percival's views here sound rather outdated as well as far-fetched.

Percival betrays not only the sentimental moralism but also the gender bias of his age in his critical description of Cleopatra's character. Note, for instance, the following:

> ... Readers, this is the idealized Cleopatra. Array every trait in her real character that is or looks evil, charge it with as black a colour as you can with an unsparing hand, and then flash on the picture the light of this idealization, and say, each for himself, if that flash has or has not effected a magic transformation in your thoughts and feelings about this woman, ideal and yet real, real and yet ideal: as coaltar that looks so black, gives forth, when treated by a chemist, the varying, the beautiful colours of the aniline dyes to your astonished eyes, so this real black Cleopatra, when treated by such a chemist, such an alchemist, such a magician as Shakespeare, becomes the ideal Cleopatra of many colours, of much beauty.[21]

It may be pointed out here that Percival's use of the epithet "black" for Cleopatra is not to be taken literally; it carries moral rather than racial connotation, just as black and white are commonly used for evil and good. Percival's moralistic response to Cleopatra becomes comprehensible when located in the Victorian age to which he belonged. As Mary Cowden Clarke has remarked:

> Cleopatra was the other problematic heroine for the Victorians who had to confront her blatant sensuality in an age that valued women's modesty. The French actress Sarah Bernhardt performed the role in an extravaganza of costume and scenery .... Gold and Fizdale, in their recent biography of Bernhardt, recount an incident from the London production. "After watching Sarah as Cleopatra, lasciviously entwined in her lover's arms, an elderly dowager was heard to say: 'How unlike, how very unlike the home life of our dear queen.'"[22]

In view of the popular Victorian picture of Cleopatra, Percival's sketch of her character, considering her as a bewitching black beauty, should not surprise any reader. Nor should we feel alarmed by his use of "aniline dye," the wonder effect of which must have been familiar to the Indian reader as to the British. In fact, the word aniline is derived from the Indian word *nil.* Originally prepared from Indigo *(nil)*, aniline dye must have been known to the Indian readers in the nineteenth century, when the British indigo planters in Bengal were trading the Indian produce for British chemical

industries. An interesting Bengali play *Nildarpan* (The Indigo-Mirror) by Dinabandhu Mitra, published in 1860, depicts "the oppressions and exploitations of the white Indigo planters in the Bengal countryside ...."[23] Ironically, while the author received no punishment for his rebellious piece of writing, Rev. James Long, who published the play's English version "was fined and jailed," even as the play in English "was proscribed by the government."[24] The English publication did not mention the translator's name, although Michael Madhusudan Dutt is said to have done that. Percival's own reference to indigo shows no political interest in the matter.[25]

Percival's heavy reliance on Plutarch seems to have prejudiced his reading of *Antony and Cleopatra*. He seems to forget that Shakespeare was no historian in the usual sense of the word, nor did he aspire to act like one. He only took the outline from Plutarch and created characters more lasting than the originals, giving them more powerful presence than the historical personages. Percival's strong moral sense seems to have been outraged by the "sensuality" of Cleopatra and of Antony. Percival's method of making a narrative of character analysis is so predominant in his criticism that he allots ample space to most major, and even some minor, characters, giving us interesting sketches, though not always wholly drawn from Shakespeare's plays. Note, for instance, how he begins the character-sketch of Cleopatra in his "Introduction" to the edition of *Antony and Cleopatra*:

> Cleopatra first saw Antony when she was fifteen; what she then thought of a man of thirty, we don't know. At the age of twenty eight she is summoned by the same Antony to appear before him on a charge of high treason; she obeys the summons as never defendant before or after obeyed summons; in that array up the Cydnus, which draws court and city to behold it, and leaves the judge sitting alone in his proconsular judgement seat; there is no penalty, no judgement, no trial, no sitting of the court, but, instead there is an invitation from judge to defendant to come ashore and do him the honour of dining at the proconsulate; the lady replies that it would be more becoming if the gentleman would have the civility to come and dine with the lady on board her barge; the late judge pleads guilty to the incivility, and comes in atonement for it, and his coming seals that bond of Fate which he will redeem only with his death, eleven years after.[26]

One would easily mistake it for the familiar opening of a short-story or of a chapter in a longer work of fiction. Cleopatra may have seen Antony when she was

fifteen, but her story in Shakespeare's play begins much later. Percival is building up a character from sources outside the text. To cite Hopkins yet another time, "Indeed implicit in Bradley's whole approach to Shakespeare is the assumption that Shakespeare's techniques of characterisation .... are in essential respects the same as those of the great nineteenth-century novelists – and in their cases there is always an implicit invitation to consider whether the patternings thus created imitate and/or imply the workings of a divine providence."[27] All this is amply applicable to Percival's method as well, being very similar to Bradley's. Besides Percival's strong affinity with the nineteenth-century critical tradition of using narrative mode for drawing character-sketches, or offering character analysis, he may have chosen this mode also as a more convenient way of making his commentary interesting to the non-native learners of English at the Hindu College. His moralistic thrust, however, caps these narratives with reductive descriptions of characters as moral types.

Percival's gender bias also can be seen at work in his sketch of Portia in *The Merchant of Venice.* Even though he argues her case for holding the leading role in the play, praising her for her 'strength of mind' and 'moral strength,' he does so for reasons of her performing her duties as an ideal Victorian woman. Note, for instance, the following:

> Here, then, is moral strength, showing itself in filial duty, discharged under most trying conditions. The next indication is given by her voluntary submission of herself and of all she possesses to her husband, as one whom law and religion made lord over her, though she must be aware he is her inferior in the intellectual powers that should belong to such a sovereignity ....[28]

As can be seen, Percival's sketch of Portia is quite in consonance with the Victorian view of Shakespeare's heroines. As the author of "Shakespeare's Unruly Women" has remarked, "Books about Shakespeare's heroines, illustrated with their portraits, were used to disseminate ideas of good moral behaviour among young women."[29]

In Shakespeare's play, no such invocations of womanly virtues are made as are being done here by Percival. Clearly, Percival betrays here his Victorian conservatism about the role of woman in society. Reading Percival's long description of Portia's virtues as an obedient daughter and wife reminds us of Tennyson's often-quoted lines from his poem "The Princess":

> Man for the field and woman for the hearth:
> Man for the sword and for the needle she:

Man with the head and woman with the heart:
Man to command and woman to obey:
All else is confusion. [The *Princess,* 2nd Song, 5, 427]

Percival's views about female characters sound highly conservative, more so because he comes over half a century after Derozio and Richardson had dominated through their impressive teaching the general environment of Hindu (later Presidency) College. Such individual differences, however, are bound to be there among scholars and teachers brought up in different environments. It may be reiterated that even after the Company's government extended financial support to the College, making it in turn Presidency College, leading to government's nominees on its governing body, there came about no change in its ethos of secular teaching.

In the context of the Victorian age, however, to which Percival belonged, his conservative opinion about women is not all that surprising. As Lisa Hopkins has so lucidly demonstrated in her book *Giants of the Past,* one of the side-effects of Darwinian theory was to posit women as further back than man on the evolutionary scale. In Hopkins' words:

> ... for those desirous of prescribing and controlling gender roles, the apparent ability to demonstrate the antiquity of gendering processes within species by deploying Darwinian discourses was equally empowering. Paradoxically, Milton too could provide reinforcement for the idea of a sharp separation between the sexes ... while Shakespeare could seem proof of the fixity of human nature over a lapse of three hundred years.[30]

Being a true Victorian, Percival subscribed to his age's views on the hierarchy of sexes and their clearly defined roles as laid down in Tennyson's lines. Thus, while Derozio passionately and Richardson moderately followed Romantic idealism, Percival remained a representative of Victorian moralism.

Interestingly, however, Percival takes a more sympathetic stand towards Lady Macbeth, than he does towards Cleopatra, blaming the latter for all the losses that Antony suffers. Going against the general critical opinion, Percival gives a long character analysis of Macbeth showing how the man, and not his wife, is solely responsible for all the murders, from first to last, that he commits during the course of the play's action. The crucial passage in his extensively argued defence of Lady Macbeth is the following:

> After her death, Malcolm calls her "fiend-like"; but he who speaks it is a son in whose father's murder she had helped, and knows nothing as yet of her state of mind, when he speaks. We, who have just seen it, can be more dispassionate judges, and can convert this one-sided judgement, by placing by it the other side, namely, Lady Macbeth was woman-like, was a bad woman, but not a fiend. Medea, who killed her children outright, and dismembered her brother limb by limb, was a fiend. Lady Macbeth only *said* she would, to keep an oath, slay her child, but added the most human-like, most woman-like, most unfiend-like words – "I have given suck, and know how tender 'tis to love the babe that milks me." Oedipus was made a fiend by Fate, when he killed his father, and in history fiendish sons and daughters have killed their fathers; Lady Macbeth only *said* she would kill Duncan, and then she could not kill him because "he resembled my father as he slept." She revealed even a true woman's weak point when she said "all the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand"; and she was a woman when from her sorely charged woman's breast there broke out that sigh "Oh!Oh!Oh!" In her ambition she was a bad woman; in her sufferings for it, she underwent the punishment a bad woman deserved.[31]

What Percival seems to think of Lady Macbeth gets better explained in the following comment by R.S.White:

> He [Calvin] also placed greater emphasis than Aquinas on conscience, but he sees it more as a punitive and corrective faculty than an active instrument choosing between good and evil in actual situations. Lady Macbeth and Claudius would be typical examples in his scheme: those who do wrong and are pursued by their guilty conscience.[32]

Of course, Percival does not completely absolve Lady Macbeth of her role in the murder of Duncan, but, as we shall see later, he holds Macbeth solely responsible for it, going as far as to say that the man was a born criminal, and so on. Here, we can see a different stance of Percival, different from the one he takes in the case of Cleopatra, though not without betraying his stereotypical construction of the woman. Whatever the reason, Percival's bias in favour of Lady Macbeth, compared to his attitude to Cleopatra, is quite evident. However, the fact that he equally accuses Cleopatra and Antony of

sensuality shows that in his view violation of sexual morality is a greater sin than being an accomplice in the heinous act of murder. His generalization of Lady Macbeth as a representative of womankind is as much conventional as in the case of Portia.

Percival's gender bias is also betrayed by the fact that while drawing the character sketches in his introductions to the various plays he first takes up all the male characters and then the female. In the case of *Macbeth*, for instance, he first writes about all the male characters, right upto the Porter, and then takes up the women characters, with Lady Macbeth coming after the Porter. The same pattern he follows in the other plays of Shakespeare he edited. Here, Percival may be following the order in which the Dramatis Personae are listed in the texts. The hierarchy of gender-based dramatis personae may have come down from the time of Shakespeare. In any case, Percival's attitude towards female characters is decidedly conventionally Victorian.

That Percival relies too much on Plutarch and Holinshed in his reading of Shakespeare's plays also comes out very clearly in his commentary on *Macbeth*, another play of Shakespeare he edited. Not only that he blames the English historians for distorting the Scottish history, which distortions, according to him, Holinshed perpetuated and Shakespeare followed, he seems to give greater importance to the historical source than to its artistic adaptation, unable to "see the object as in itself it really is."[33] Note, in this regard, the following from Percival's "Introduction" to his edition of *Macbeth*:

> Placed on the throne with English aid, he [Malcolm Canmore] cemented this alliance by marrying an English princess, Margaret, daughter of Edward the Confessor. Thus was established a double bond by marriages between the houses of English Kings and earls and the house of the Scottish usurping king, Duncan. Thus did his son naturally incline to the English people and English institutions, and proceed to Anglicise the Scots (e.g. he changed the thanes into earls), and thus did English historians next proceed to pervert Scottish history by debasing the older Celtic line of kings, and exalting the new Anglo-Normanized line. They made out Macbeth, the last king of the former line, to be the usurper, and blackened his character and made out Duncan, the ancestor of the latter, to be lawful king. Scottish chroniclers before Holinshed, such as Boece and Wyntoun, had, however, begun to take the Anglo-Normanizing bias and Holinshed only followed them. Shakespeare followed

> Holinshed, and drew upon his perverted facts. The result was the tragedy of *Macbeth*, the plot of which was built on the "facts," but the characters in which were wholly the creation of his divinely gifted genius.[34]

Percival's long account of how the Scottish history, especially related to Macbeth, was distorted by the "English historians" seems misplaced in his discussion of Shakespeare's *Macbeth.* From the kind of line he draws between English and Scottish historians, Percival seems to betray his strong sense of bias in favour of one nation against the other, though in the absence of his biography, or any account of his ancestry, we cannot know the basis of his partisan attitude. By mixing history with fiction, however, he does run into trouble in his account of Macbeth as a character in Shakespeare's play. His observations come out to be contradictory. Firstly, note the following:

> Scottish chroniclers before Holinshed had .... however, begun to take this Anglo-Normanising bias, and Holinshed only followed them. Shakespeare followed Holinshed, and drew upon his perverted facts. The result was the tragedy of *Macbeth,* the plot of which was built on these "facts," but the characters in which were wholly the creation of his divinely gifted genius.[35]

Now, note the following, which Percival observes two pages earlier than the one cited above:

> Why does Shakespeare take these personages from history (as Holinshed wrote it), and then give them characters that they have not in history? He does so, because he is an artist, not a historian; from history he takes *individuals*, and by his art he creates *types* out of them. In history, Duncan, Macbeth, Banquo are men of mixed good and evil in them, such as we always find men to be in actual life. By Shakespeare's art they are made types of the good man, the wicked man, the upright man; the good or bad luck of such men as we read of in history, touches us but little, but passingly.[36]

One wonders whether Macbeth is bad because Shakespeare followed Holinshed's Anglo-Normanising bias or because the artist created a type which was not in history. Still more surprising is Percival's making Shakespeare a sort of Bunyan of English drama, carving out moral types from the real individuals of history. Shakespeare does,

of course, create types, but not the moral ones; his types are the kind Johnson describes in his universally accepted observation:

> This therefore is the praise of Shakespeare, that his drama is the mirror of life; that he who has mazed his imagination, in following the phantoms which other writers raise up before him, may here be cured of his delirious ecstasies, by reading human sentiments in human language; by scenes from which a hermit may estimate the transactions of the world, and a confessor predict the progress of the passions.[37]

Percival is, therefore, not quite correct in praising Shakespeare for the wrong reasons, for the latter's creation of types of "good man, the wicked man, the upright man." These types, as a matter of fact, are Percival's, not Shakespeare's. Percival's types here are moral entities, whereas Shakespeare's are human, having a mix of good, wicked, and upright. Johnson is far more convincing to the reader than Percival.

That Percival imposes moral types onto Shakespeare becomes all the more clear from his long descriptions – in fact, narratives – of various characters in *As You Like It* , as well as in the other plays of Shakespeare he edited. Note, for instance, the following from his "Introduction" to *As you like it*:

> Avarice in a ruler has here its parallel of avarice in a subject, and, in both cases, avarice is whetted by envy: Oliver envies Orlando for the gifts nature has bestowed on him and withheld from himself, and resolves to frustrate them by leaving him shamefully uncared for in body and mind. That it is envy, not miserliness, that actuates him, is seen from his treatment of the second brother whom he is educating and caring for, because, in his want of marked character, he sees nothing to fear or envy.[38]

That Percival views characters in Shakespeare as moral types is quite clear here from his remarks on Oliver. Making the same approach to Macbeth, he would not grant him the hero's status "merely because his name gives the play its title."[39] Besides, Percival always indulges in what Cowden Clarke calls "filling out" Shakespeare, adding shades to characters not given by Shakespeare. Instead, Percival assigns Macbeth "the title of a *thoroughly bad man.*"[40] Then he proceeds to trace Macbeth's long history of life from beginning to end:

> That ingratitude, which Duncan needlessly charged himself with, was very real in Macbeth. It grew out of his inborn nature, into

> which his own words give us an insight: when, an old man, he was nearing his end, he tells us that, when a boy, he liked to read stories that filled him with horror – stories that in our days we call "penny dreadfuls," which boys with that morbid taste like to read, and which we fear might lead them, when grown up, to become bad men. The Macbeth of history, very likely, could neither read nor write, when a boy or when commander of Scottish armies, and very likely too, would have disdained these accomplishments of "clerks and monks." It is the Macbeth of the play who, when a boy, liked this poison for the mind, and, with fearsome liking, made it its food. The inward corruption wrought within was a *Love of Evil*, which gave no outward sign during the years that his brains showed themselves in military talent, and raised him to the commander of armies, while his heart was rotting within. This was the condition of Macbeth's mind, when, flushed with victory, he met the witches for the first time.[41]

Once again Percival can be seen doing the "filling out" of Shakespeare, brushing up Macbeth's portrait in loud colours. For no such information, as Macbeth's telling "us that, when a boy, he liked to read stories that filled him with horror," appears in Shakespeare's play. All this long citation is, in fact, only a part of a still longer analysis of Macbeth's character, which Percival draws by using an external apparatus of psychology to explain why Macbeth is what he is in the play. But in the process, he speaks of Macbeth's life prior to his role in Shakespeare's play. What Lisa Hopkins says about Bradley's character-based approach in his criticism of Shakespeare, can as well be said about Percival's way of treating characters in Shakespeare's plays,

> Treating the characters of the plays as though they were completely real people, he seized, often ingeniously and perceptively, on even the tiniest clues in the text to offer a wide ranging account of their personalities.[42]

Hopkins' comment on Bradley aptly describes Percival's method of describing characters; perhaps the two follow the same method because both belong to the same age. It is quite possible that Percival was influenced by the Shakespeare criticism between Coleridge and Bradley, though often he disagrees with some of their individual observations, being a more deeply-ingrained moralist than either. But in this particular case of character description, Percival is very much of the Romantic-Victorian tradition. To borrow from Hopkins' observation on Bradley again, in his description of Macbeth's

imagined character cited above Percival "sounds more like a novelist than a literary critic .... Or maybe the more appropriate comparison is with Sherlock Holmes, piecing together the clues he can glean from a visitor's appearance to astonish Watson with a complete account of the stranger's character and recent history."[43]

Calling it a mistake "to say that before this meeting [with the witches], Macbeth was by nature a noble-minded, innocent-hearted man, with an innate love of goodness in him, and that it was the witches who perverted and corrupted his nature,"[44] Percival goes on, like Sherlock Holmes, to build up his character of Macbeth as he conceives it:

> Between the nature of the witches and that of Macbeth shaped beforehand and independently, there is what Leibnitz calls a "pre-established harmony," Goethe, "an elective affinity," what science calls "chemical affinity," or the attractive forces of "gravitation" and "magnetism," and we call "like going to like." Before ever they meet, the two use the same language, almost the same words, by a kind of unconscious sameness in their natures. The witches say "Fair is foul and foul is fair." Macbeth says "So foul and fair a day I have never seen." This is an ill omen that makes us fear that those who use the same sort of language are brother and sisters, using what they have learnt from the same parents, the Devil and his dame, Hecate, who calls him her "son" – the adopted son of these, his spiritual parents, while Sinel and Lady Sinel were the parents of his body. This love of Evil, this love of the Bad, is the very root of his character born in him at his birth, silently growing in him with his growth, revealing itself in his own eyes now, when in manhood he meets his spiritual sisters and sees his inborn nature reflected in theirs.[45]

As Hopkins rightly points out in the case of Bradley, equally relevant to Percival's case, he "is principally concerned with his own 'character-building' narrative; he pays little attention here to the main events of Gertrude's [or Macbeth's] life, for instance. Another character might see things which happen to us as shaping and perhaps even determining forces in making us what we are, but as far as Bradley [or Percival] is concerned character is about nature not nurture."[46] Percival finds Macbeth an evil character by birth, and builds up on that finding the entire character-sketch of him. Percival follows here very closely Bradley's method of character building.

What Percival does not, however, share with Bradley is his scholarship of the various disciplines, including history, philosophy and theology, which sounds so

overbearing in the passage just cited. From Leibniz's concept of the universe as a "pre-established harmony" to Goethe's "elective affinity" to science's "chemical affinity" to Newton's "gravitation and magnetism" to the commonplace "like going to like" Percival presses into service a vast theoretical apparatus to prove his opinion of Macbeth's character. Also, his theoretical support for his argument about Macbeth's character does not end with these various philosophies and sciences just mentioned. He then uses Greek mythology to relate Macbeth to the tribe of the Devil. Calling Macbeth and the witches brother and sisters, having common parentage, he mentions Hecate "who calls him her 'son.'" In Shakespeare's *Macbeth,* Hecate calls Macbeth "a wavered son," not "her son." [III. v. ii] Percival then calls Macbeth the witches' "adopted son" only to prove his evil origin. Shakespeare does not seem to attribute that origin to the character. Also, the overwhelming critical opinion attributes the Hecate scene to Middleton. However impressive the scholarly apparatus, one cannot ignore the fact that the way Percival can freely mix science with mythology to muster support for his supposed opinion of Macbeth only betrays his blindness to the facts of the case, which is the text of Shakespeare's play.

This display of vast scholarship also goes against Percival's professed credo of editing Shakespeare for Indian students, as one would not expect a non-European student of English Literature to be so well-versed in European science and philosophy as is marshalled by him in his long argument about Macbeth's character. Although largely careful in avoiding scholarly references, Percival does at times get carried away by his passion to prove a point, often so carried away that he forgets his professed purpose.

One can also notice from the above citations Percival's affinity as critic with the nineteenth-century tradition between Coleridge and Bradley, using character-analysis, looking into motivation and psychology combined with ethics as tools of interpretation. The only streak that seems to separate him from close proximity to great critics like Coleridge and Bradley is that of strong moralism which makes him see Macbeth as "Mr. Badman" and Cleopatra "as coaltar that looks so black."[47] Percival describes other characters, too, in *Macbeth, Antony and Cleopatra, The Tempest, As You Like It,* and *The Merchant of Venice* as moral types. In his critical terminology, which is essentially moralistic, Octavia is good, and Cleopatra is evil. The same way, Macbeth is evil, and Banquo is good. Orlando is good, and Oliver is evil. Percival, does, of course, take note of Oliver's "conversion" at the end of the escapade into the Forest of Arden. But that appears more of a passing remark than an argued opinion.

Percival's moralistic stance notwithstanding, he seems firmly rooted in the Coleridge-Bradley tradition, conforming to the idolatry or divinity of Shakespeare as a poet; the divine power of Shakespeare's poetry, he believes, can transform an everyday reality into an enchanting dream. Note, for instance, his remark in this regard in his discussion of *Macbeth*:

> Reader, look back to what you have read of the Duncan of history, and see if you find any resemblance to the Duncan of the poet's creation. Ask yourself for which of the two you are the better – for *knowing* the character of a *real* man, or for *feeling* for the character of an *ideal* man; very likely you will reply, "I am the better for feeling so, than for knowing thus"; and in this way is poetry a better teacher than history.[48]

Percival conforms here to the Aristotelian contention that poetry combines both history and philosophy. In their own respective ways, Sidney, Coleridge and Johnson reinforced the same contention. Percival knew it all, and knew equally well, or even more, the history in each play that Shakespeare relied upon, as he amply demonstrates in his elaborate use of the historical sources of Shakespeare's plays.

No wonder that even while Percival affirms the superiority of Shakespeare's poetry over history, he uses history every time he builds up a case for or against a character in a Shakespeare's play. In his character- sketches of Antony and Cleopatra, of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth, of Octavius and Octavia, of Duncan and Banquo, Antonio and Shylock, Percival takes recourse to history, and not only the one written by Plutarch or Holinshed, but also the ones preceding or following theirs. And even while he glorifies the divine art of Shakespeare, he inevitably opts for the historical facts and personages which allegedly Shakespeare ignores or transforms into something entirely out of the range of history. Note, for instance, the following:

> Modern historical research has brought out the fact that Duncan's grandfather had dethroned and murdered Lady Macbeth's grandfather; that her brother had burned to death her first husband in his castle; that she fled for refuge, with her infant son, to Macbeth, then thane of Ross; that Macbeth sheltered her, and afterwards married her. We hear no more after this of this deeply-wronged woman; and the Lady Macbeth of the play, after Duncan's murder, is wholly a creation of Shakespeare's, in action, in suffering, in death.[49]

Percival knew as much, or more, history as he knew literature; his knowledge of history remains predominant in his Introductions to all the five plays of Shakespeare he edited. It shows the extent of his scholarship as critic and editor, though often he seems to value history more than literature, considering the latter as a sort of magic lantern that distracts the reader from reality, its effect being so powerful, more so in the case of *Macbeth.* For instance, out of 132 pages of his Introduction, whereas the scenewise summary of the play gets only 40 pages, the remining 92 pages are devoted to characters, each portrayed as much, or more, from history as from the play, the two pictures pitted against each other, left to the reader's discretion to accept either, though not without Percival's implied bias in favour of the historical.

In his Introduction to *The Tempest*, Percival does not speak of the kind of historical narative he uses in the cases of *Macbeth* and *Antony and Cleopatra.* In his usual format, he begins with the date of the play's composition, followed by "Sources of the Incidents," in which he also includes *The Discovery of the Bermudas, otherwise called the Isle of Devils & C: published in 1610; Florio's translation of Montaigne's Essays,* 1603; Amada's *Voyage to the Coast of Virginia* (sent out by Raleigh in 1584) printed in Hakluyt; *Hakluyt's Principal Navigations, Voyages, Traffiques and Discoveries of the English Nation, 1589.* Presenting scholarly documentation for the various incidents in *The Tempest*, he concludes: "None of these above can be called a "Source" of the plot of *The Tempest*; they all show partial resemblances ...."[50] Devoting greater space to "Historical Connections," Percival uses various explorations by the European navigators of the "New World," discovering the "Noble Savage," to identify the prototypes for various characters in the play. His descriptions of various characters are significant:

> The main features of what followed the discovery of the New World by the White Man ... are all brought out; but all as arising out of the course of the action of the play. In it, the New World is the Enchanted Island; the "birds and swine" of the Bermudas are the Ariels, the Sycoraxes, the Calibans of the world, are its natives, having in their natures both what is good and what is bad in human nature. Prospero's mind and hand are those of the beneficent white man, working to civilize these natives, so as to cultivate the good and eradicate the bad in them. The success of the work is shown in Ariel, the failure in Caliban. Stephano and Trinculo are the "mean whites," whose activities succeed, as theirs do, with Caliban, in demoralizing

> the natives, and making them worse than they were before they saw the white man's face. Alonzo and the lords are another class of the white man in America – the Spanish *conquistadores*, taking no interest in the New World and its inhabitants, except as they solely served their own selfish ends. And Gonzalo – what can we make of him in history? Is he a political dreamer about the "Noble Savage," or is he his disillusioned satirist? Is he the type of that yet other class of the white man in America – the *Las Casas*, who saw the callous injustice, the greed, the cruelty in the name of religion, of the conquistadores towards the natives, and the depravity brought upon them by the Stephanos and Trinculos from the Old World, but who, not gifted with the master-mind and active hand of Prospero, felt for them, but could not help them? .... Or is Gonzalo the type of the Englishman at home (Shakespeare one of them), who watched the history of colonization in the New World by their own countrymen, and drew their inferences from its results?[51]

Here is a sort of postcolonial interpretation of Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, but with the difference that it relies more on historical facts than on any general theory, showing how the colonising white men as well as the natives of the enchanted island have their respective shares of humanity, each having the mix of good and bad, varying only in degrees; in some more good than bad, in others more bad than good. All the same, Percival's historical documentation to illuminate an incident in the play overwhelms the textual reference, taking the reader far away from what Shakespeare has created for him.

Percival's comparison of Gonzalo to Las Casas is interesting indeed. It shows how Shakespeare's art is a case of critical realism, holding the mirror up to nature, but not without the streak of subversion. Percival is not quite correct in saying that Las Casas "felt for" the native Indians "but could not help them." In 1542, Las Casas had persuaded Madrid to enact the New Laws for Indian welfare. Gonzalo may be a dreamer, but Las Casas was not of that category. Percival's view of Shakespeare's representation of three types of white men, with their three different attitudes to the colonised natives, is largely inspired by contemporary history, though not without a tinge of Victorian sentimentality. The students of Hindu College were lucky indeed to have been taught by such learned teachers as Percival, and before him, Derozio and Richardson.

Reading the various critical Introductions Percival wrote to his editions of Shakespeare's several plays one cannot help recalling the postcolonial theorists, whose abstractions about the coloniser and the colonised sound out of place when compared with the actual teaching Percival and others offered at the Hindu College. One such leading postcolonial critic is Gauri Vishwanathan, for whom "Shakespeare and Milton must be dropped from the English curriculum because their texts were used at one time to supply religious values that could be introduced into the British control of India in no other way."[52]

Who in Hindu College, one would like to ask Viswanathan, made religious use of Shakespeare and Milton. Not Percival, nor Richardson, nor Derozio made any such use. The critic in question keeps the reference vague and general, not naming any particular teacher or scholar who made such a use. No wonder she makes no mention whatsoever of Shakespeare teaching at Hindu College. But in the case of Hindu College, we have seen how from its very foundation by David Hare and Rammohan Roy to the teaching of English by Derozio, Richardson, and Percival, the one and only emphasis clearly remained on keeping Shakespeare studies free from the proselytizing attempts of Alexander Duff and his fellow missionaries. Sent to India by the Church of Scotland in 1829, Duff's task was "to use Christian education ... given through the medium of English as a great instrument of assault on Hinduism ...." A great friend of the Governor General Bentinck on the one hand, and of Rammohan Roy on the other, Duff at long last made a name through his school, finally emerging "not as the hated proselytiser ... but as one of the greatest pioneers of English education and the benefactors of the people of Bengal."[53]

Continuing with Percival's commentary on *The Tempest*, where he treats the play as a critique of European colonialism, here is a concrete statement that needs to be cited to belie the premise of Viswanathan's theorization in utter disregard of facts:

> Raleigh made an attempt (1584) to colonize a newly discovered country that he named "Virginia" in advance: all that came of it was that no colony settled in it, but the name only remained. A second attempt succeeded in setting a colony in North Carolina; after a few years, the colony had to be abandoned, not a single man being found alive in it in 1591; a third attempt of his was to discover and conquer Guiana, and set up in it a "Golden Kingdom" with El Dorado for its capital; his accounts of this exploit was received with incredulity, and the only thing believed of it was the fact of its failure (1594).

> Just before *The Tempest* was composed, came revived attempts to colonize Virginia, one being the romantic story (whose truth was called in question) of the sufferings of John Smith in its administration (1607-1609); the other, the expedition of Somers, 1610. With these stories before them, would not Gonzalo and Shakespeare be sceptical about the wisdom of taking in hand "plantations," in the New World, and gravely point their satire and irony against attempts to do so? Gonzalo *might*, again, be the type of these Englishmen, and among them Shakespeare, whom disillusionment had turned into grave satirists.[54]

Decidedly, Percival must have taught this very interpretation of *The Tempest* to the students of Hindu College. Where is the question of imparting religious values through the texts of Shakespeare in such a discourse as Percival's? Percival's knowledge of history is thorough, indeed, to which he always takes recourse while reading a Shakespeare play, invariably locating it in the historical context to which it relates. In the face of such readings of Shakespeare as Percival's, the postcolonial discourse sounds out of place in the context of the Hindu College tradition of Shakespeare teaching. Derozio and Richardson did not have in their secular teaching of Shakespeare even the moralistic tinge of Percival.

Despite his dependence on history, Percival, however, often builds up his characters largely from the facts of the play's fiction, mostly documenting his contentions from the play's events. The view of the text as autonomous works well with Percival in *The Tempest*, although not so well in the case of *Macbeth* and *Antony and Cleopatra,* where the texts have greater reliance on historical sources. Note in this regard Percival's character-sketch of Prospero:

> Critics of Prospero's character have fancied resemblances between him and Shakespeare, in this that his renouncing the magic art like the other's renouncing of his dramatic art, (for *The Tempest* is one of the latest of his plays); or between him and King James, in this that both were men of books, the former working magic with their help, the latter writing on magic. It is enough to mention these fancies. Let us trace his character as its creator drew it, from the play itself.[55]

Thus, dismissing the fanciful criticism, Percival, relying on the play's text, proceeds to build up, very much like the nineteenth-century novelist (to use Hopkins' observation

on Bradley's method of writing about Shakespeare's characters), the character of Prospero:

> A man of study, a lover of the liberal arts, Prospero, duke of Milan, had no taste for the work of government, and delegated it and the powers that its execution needed, in trust to another; this trust was abused, and he was thrust out of the duchy into an exile that seemed to ensure his death. Providence frustrated this design, made Prospero lose a duchy in Italy, and gain an empire over the four elements all over Earth. This gain was the first-fruits of his studies, which in those days (some time in the Middle Ages) included the study of the beneficent art (as it was thought to be) of magic, hence called White Magic, to distinguish it from the practice of the malevolent art of Witchcraft or the Black Art.
>
> Driven from the old world of Civilization, where Wickedness held sway, he found refuge in a new world of savagery, and found wickedness holding sway there also; the same in essence, but different in form ....
>
> In the education of these two pupils, Prospero worked as a man, a Philanthropist towards the one, a loving father towards the other, a moral teacher towards both ....[56]

Incidentally, the Indian view of magic is limited to smart tricks, which those proficient in the art play to delude common people. In the Christian context, it has religious and supernatural connotations.

Here, as elsewhere, Percival may seem inclined towards moralism, but seldom towards racism or nativism. As a teacher and scholar, he is trying to perform his duties professionally, maintaining the secular position as critic. His view of Shakespeare's attitude to different races, too, illustrates his secular stance: ".... and by making Caliban take to Stephano and Trinculo at first sight, Shakespeare shows that he means to spare neither the black nor the white man, but to paint both as they are, and shows how like goes to like."[57] Decidedly, in Shakespeare, as Percival has rightly perceived, there are affinities between characters of similar types, not between those of the same race or place. To impose, as the postcolonial critics tend to do, the reductive patterns of race or nation on any of Shakespeare's plays or the teachings of Percival and his predecessors, Derozio and Richardson, is a gross distortion of the author's vision dramatized in his work, and an equally gross injustice to the integrity of these individual teachers of Hindu College.

Percival's Shakespeareanism is so strong that even in his criticism of Milton's *Samson Agonistes*, or Spenser's *Faerie Queene,* he must make Shakespeare a sort of benchmark for pointing out the presence or absence of artistic excellence in a work. Note, for instance, the following from his "Introduction" to *Samson Agonistes*:

> Milton himself, in condemning the introduction of a comic element into tragedies, seems to emphasize his dissent from the practice of Shakespeare himself and his school, on yet another point. But these points of difference eliminated, there remains one broad point of resemblance, by virtue of which Shakespeare may still claim Milton among his sons: it is this – both have for their subject the portraiture of human nature and human passion ....[58]

One can see here Percival viewing literary relations between writers the way Harold Bloom does later in *The Anxiety of Influence*, showing how Milton, like the Freudian son, must kill (or overcome) his literary father in order to grow independent of his father's influence. By placing Shakespeare and Milton in father-son relationship Percival comes very close to saying what Bloom theorizes in *The Anxiety of Influence.*[59] Percival, too, must have read Freud by the time (1928) he edited some of these plays of Shakespeare in the early years of the twentieth century. Besides, he knew the school of Ben Jonson, whose followers were called the "Sons of Ben." Percival seems to think in similar terms while writing about the followers of Shakespeare, including Milton. Even though he speaks of Milton's departure from Shakespeare in rejecting the comic element in tragedy, Percival's view of Shakespeare as the zenith of art is clearly implied in the comparison.

Although Percival's editions of Shakespeare's plays were published only after his retirement from the Hindu College in 1910, his thirty-year long teaching of Shakespeare at the College had earned him an eminence known to the entire elite of Calcutta. No wonder then that when Calcutta University was converted in 1907 from an examining body into an institution of higher learning, the university's Vice-Chancellor, Asutosh Mukherji, appointed him university lecturer to teach M.A. classes in English, initially held at Presidency (earlier Hindu) College.[60] Owing to ill-health, however, Percival left teaching in 1910 and went to London. Later, in 1912, "Asutosh tried to bring back Prof. H.M. Percival out of his retirement in England. However, Percival – who had taught at the Presidency College and had influenced the famous Shakespeare scholar, Prof. Prafulla Chandra Ghosh – was unable to accept the ardent request due to an ailing health."[61]

Unlike Derozio and Richardson, Percival was not a poet; nor was he interested in social reforms as Derozio was, or in promoting culture through theatre, etc., as Richardson was. He was an academic scholar of Shakespeare in particular, and literature in general. His contribution to Shakespeare studies in India, therefore, is much more than that of either Derozio or Richardson. Whereas Derozio remained an inspiring teacher, writing on Shakespeare indirectly in his limited work on literature in general, and Richardson made a mark as a popular Shakespeare teacher whose comments on Shakespeare's plays, though substantial, were only indirect in his general essays on literature, Percival alone produced scholarly work, editing several plays of Shakespeare with long introductions and elaborate notes.

That Percival did his scholarly work on Shakespeare specially for Indian students is also evident from the summaries in his "Introductions" of different scenes of each play in simple language as well as from the notes provided for dictions and allusions, including even grammatical flaws and finesses. Note, for instance, the opening of "NOTES" for *Antony and Cleopatra*:

> The action of the play begins in the winter of 41 B.C. At the beginning Cleopatra is twenty-eight, Antony forty five (or forty-two). The actions on the Stage fill about twelve days, and intervals of many years, therefore, occur between Acts and Scenes.[62]

Now, if we read through the opening scene of *Antony and Cleopatra*, no information about the year in which the play's action begins, or about the age of Antony or Cleopatra finds a mention. Shakespeare leaves it to the common knowledge of the Elizabethan theatre-goers to remember all that, and proceeds, like a dramatist, with the events in Alexandria, where Antony, a great Roman soldier, appears as an ardent lover of Cleopatra, ready to sacrifice all for the sake of love. Note what the play's opening lines (spoken by Philo) tell us:

> *Phi.* Nay, but this dotage of our general's
> O'erflows the measure: those his goodly eyes,
> That o'er the files and musters of the war
> Have glow'd like plated Mars, now bend, now turn,
> The office and devotion of their view
> Upon a tawny front: his captain's heart,
> Which in the scuffles of great fights hath burst
> The buckles on his breast, reneges all temper,
> And is become the bellows and the fan

To cool a gipsy's lust.[63]

And soon the lovers appear on the stage, followed by Antony's own speech, confirming Philo's observation regarding his transformation from soldier to lover:

Ant. Let Rome in Tiber melt, and the wide arch
Of the rang'd empire fall! Here is my space,
Kingdoms are clay: our dungy earth alike
Feeds beast as man: the nobleness of life
Is to do thus: when such a mutual pair [*Embracing.*
And such a twain can do't, in which I bind,
On pain of punishment, the world to weet
We stand up peerless.[64]

The message from Antony is unmistakable; the change in his character is dramatic, indeed. If we recall the Antony of *Julius Caesar*, the Antony here in the opening scene of *Antony and Cleopatra* comes to us as a big surprise. But there it is, and that is what Shakespeare has made the play about. Now, see the kind of notes Percival chooses to provide for the benefit of his target readers in India. Giving the title of "Antony Asleep" to Act I, Scene I, Percival proceeds as follows:

Antony's imbecile dotage on Cleopatra and reckless disregard of public affairs are the subject of common talk among his friends who have been witness to both.

1. *of our general's*: redundant double possessive.
2. *o'erflows the measure*: exceeds all bounds of moderation.
3. *files ... war:* armed array of troops drawn up for battle.
4. *plated*: clad in armour.
5. His eyes (that once glanced with the fire of command over an army) now turn with the devotion of love, as if in duty bound ("the office") upon a mistress.[65]

Now, compared to this, see the first Arden Shakespeare notes for the same opening lines:

Act I. Scene I.] *Acts and scenes not marked, save here, in* F.

1. *general's*] Cf. *John,* II.i.65: 'a bastard of the king's', and I.ii.71 *post.* The double genitive still occurs in colloquial usage.

4. *plated*] See R_2, I.iii.28: 'Thus plated in habiliments of war,' and Heywood, *The Silver Age* (*Works,* Pearson, iii. 132): 'Were his head brasse, or his breast doubly *plated*/ With best Vulcanian armour Lemnos yields;'etc.

bend, now turn] This is the pointing of F. Editors place a comma after *turn*, but *bend* may be independent, expressing a contrast to the fiery outlook

> inferred in *glow'd*, and without influence on *the office*, etc. Cf. Jonson, *The Poetaster*, V.ii.92: 'Nor do her once bend to taste sweet sleep.'[66]

The Arden Shakespeare notes are surely more scholarly, and difficult for the Indian students of English as foreign language. Hence Percival's choice to make them simpler.

As an editor of Shakespeare, Percival comes closer to the "postmodern textual scholarship," which Andrew Duxfield, in his "Modern Problems of Editing: The Two Texts of Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*,"[67] explains as an approach that challenges the claims of textual lines being for instance Shakespearean or un-Shakespearean. Note how Percival comes down heavily on the critics looking for "authentic" Shakespearean text:

> One aspect of the criticism of Shakespeare's texts is most noticeable in *Macbeth*: it is the *rejection* of passages on the ground that they do not come from the hand of Shakespeare .... These imaginary un-Shakespeareanisms are not the sober criticisms of a healthy frame of mind; they are barren displays of ingenuity, acrobatic feats, posture-makings, contortions, pyrotechnic displays, in criticisms; ....[68]

Here, Percival goes far beyond the critical idiom to condemn the textual scholars of Shakespeare. We cannot under-rate the hard work these scholars have put in producing 'authentic' texts of Shakespeare's plays. Percival's impatience with the arduous scholarship of editors cannot belittle their value. Making an individual insight into *Macbeth,* Percival comes out with a new emphasis on the comic scenes in the play. As he puts it,

> Sober criticism, however, makes one mistake in saying that there is no *comic element* in this play, that it is overspread with darkness, lurid with crime and bloodshed. There is much comedy in this play:- in the Porter scene, in the Ross and Old Man scene, in the Boiling Cauldron scene, in the Sergeant's Narrative scene, in Macbeth's plan for preventing ghosts from haunting us, in Macduff's liberal allowances of vice to Malcolm, in the farewell of the witches to Macbeth.[69]

Thus, even as Percival largely remains a critic of the Victorian age, looking for morality in literature, not sparing even Shakespeare for romanticising the licentious lovers in *Antony and Cleopatra,* he often rises above the limitations of his age and makes his individual judgements based on history, reason, and common sense.

In other words, Percival's critical credo, despite his moral emphasis, is largely akin to that of the nineteenth-century British critics, clearly influenced by the preferences of his age. Also, despite his differences on interpretations of individual characters, the influence of A.C. Bradley, too, is quite apparent. His seeking biographical readings of Shakespeare's sonnets or of Milton's *Samson Agonistes* is too conspicuously Victorian to be missed. Note his comments on Milton's Samson:

> The personage of Samson besides being a veiled presentment of the tragedy of Milton's own life, also allegorises the ruin of the public cause to which that life had been devoted. Samson represents Puritanism fallen and captive, as the Philistines stand for the Royalists triumphant at the restoration; Delilah is that Restoration which had sought in vain to allure and win over Milton.[70]

Percival thus reduces Milton's *Samson Agonistes* into an allegory of Milton's life and England's history of the Restoration. Milton may not have succeeded in achieving the kind of dramatic objectivity we find in Shakespeare, but his drama cannot be considered an allegory, which Percival so blatantly does. We can recall here his tendency to do the same thing in his reading of *Macbeth*, drawing parallels between Shakespeare's play and Bunyan's novel. Even in his interpretations of *The Tempest* and *Antony and Cleopatra* we have noticed the same tendency at work – considering the plays as moral fables with allegorical characters. In his "Introduction" to *The Merchant of Venice* also, he makes the following assertions:

> Recent critics have attempted to show that a somewhat close connexion existed in some cases between the subject-matter of Shakespeare's plays and his manner of life at the time of writing them. In the case of *The Merchant of Venice*, it is a fact that, about the time of the composition of this play, whose subject-matter turns upon property or wealth in its three principal shapes – that of money – and was converting some of it into another – that of houses and landed property, in his native country .... Another personal point supposed to be connected with this play of a degree of acquaintance with the local topography of Venice, that could have been acquired only from a visit .... Hence no study of the Jewish character from the life was possible to Shakespeare in his own country, as it would be in Italy, where in Coryat's time, only a few years later than the time of his supposed visit, there were 1,100 Jews residing in Venice alone.[71]

Endorsing in the very opening of the cited paragraph the biographical approach of his fellow-critics of the Victorian period, Percival strengthens their 'suppositions' by stating several 'facts' from Shakespeare's life. Whereas Shakespeare's purchases of property have found mention in all his biographies – some already there when Percival wrote his "Introduction" – his visit to Italy during the closure of theatres in 1592-93 remains only a conjecture with no evidence to support it. Percival's assertion in this regard, that "No Jews had been allowed to reside in England since their expulsion in 1290,"[72] is not quite tenable. As Carole Levin states, "But though Jews were not allowed legally to return to England until the 1650s, in the early sixteenth century a number immigrated to England and outwardly practised Christianity. By the reign of Henry VIII there was a secret Jewish community in London with a secret synagogue, financial support, and business connections with Antwerp. In the late 1530's and 1540's this community consisted of about 100 people."[73] Thus, Percival's conjectural remarks about Shakespeare's close acquaintance with Venice are not quite convincing. But his critical method, relying upon outside sources of history and biography, is very much in keeping with the critical practices of his time, the Victorian age.

We need to note here Percival's commitment to the mainstream criticism of his time, modifying it only to make his explanations more elaborate for the benefit of Indian students. We also need to note that he is not inducting any extraneous agenda into his teaching or interpretation of Shakespeare, the way, for instance, William Miller does in his interpretations of Shakespeare's four great tragedies. Principal of the Madras Christian College and Vice-Chancellor of the University of Madras, William Miller was committed to the Christian view of Shakespeare, as also to the imperial. Even his analogies in the book are religious. Note, for instance, the following: "Comparatively speaking, the greatest of Shakespeare's other plays ... are like a Grecian temple, which, however refined in the beauty of its proportions, is massive, severe and plain. *King Lear* is the cathedral, with all its complexity of chapels and of aisles, and its endless array of buttress and pinnacle and spire."[74] The very title Miller gives, for example, to his chapter on *Macbeth* shows his extraneous interest in interpreting Shakespeare; it is as follows: "Shakespeare's *Macbeth* and Ruin of Souls."[75] The Biblical tinge in the title is apparent enough. Then opening the play's discussion, he remarks:

> For the discussion of various questions which naturally precede the criticism of such a drama as *Macbeth,* I must refer to my little work entitled *Shakespeare's King Lear and Indian Politics.* In the preface of that work and in its opening pages, I have given some account of

> why the plays of Shakespeare deserve to be studied with thoughtful earnestness, ...[76]

Elaborating on the study of Shakespeare "with thoughtful earnestness," Miller recommends the study of *King Lear* for the benefit of Indian students:

> ... But what has been taken as its keynote, or central idea, has so direct a bearing on the present condition of India, and what has been said in illustration of that central idea suggests so many of the present wants of India, that it would be inexcusable to conclude an essay which is intended for Indian students without an attempt to point for their particular use some of the morals with which 'King Lear' abounds.
>
> There are things which India has to teach the world .... For among the things which India has to teach mankind, it is impossible to include anything connected with the higher forms of political life, or with the progressive development of society. In regard to such things, India must consent to be not a teacher but a learner.[77]

Miller's open agenda is decidedly political, just as the open agenda of the postcolonial critics is political, both using Shakespeare for their own extraneous ends, distorting the play's meaning to prove a point about a historical situation having nothing to do with the plot of Shakespeare's drama. No such interest, as we have seen, is ever expressed, implied or even submerged, in Percival's interpretation of Shakespeare's plays. Like his predecessors, Derozio and Richardson, he remains firmly rooted in the liberal humanist tradition of literary criticism.

Percival's tendency to seek moral allegories in the plays of Shakespeare, as well as in Milton's only drama, is, of course, peculiar to him alone, almost entirely absent, as we have seen, in Derozio and Richardson, his predecessors as Shakespeare teachers at Hindu College. This difference, though vital, apart, Percival firmly belongs to the tradition of Shakespeare teaching in Calcutta, which Derozio had initiated and Richardson had carried forward respectively in the first and second phases of the growth of Shakespeare studies, as well as that of the Hindu College, from 1817 to 1835. Percival's period, the third phase, ranges between 1880 and 1910. Whereas Derozio had initiated Shakespeare studies in the three distinct areas of reading, elocution, and performance; and Richardson had added the critical writing on Shakespeare as poet and dramatist, without taking up interpretation of any of the individual plays, Percival carried forward that tradition to the next stage of producing editions of several plays,

with long Introductions, making critical comments on key issues and events, and drawing elaborate character-sketches, besides providing notes to words, phrases, and lines from the text that called for explanation, covering the entire text from first to last scene. It is this significant critical work that Percival did, for which he rightfully deserves the title of the first scholar-critic of Shakespeare in India.

Notes

[1]See *175th Anniversary Commemoration Volume: Presidency College, Calcutta 1992,* Ed. Amal Kumar Mukhopadhyay (Calcutta: Presidency College, 1996), pp. 65-66.

[2]Ibid., p.66.

[3]See *Shakespeare Commemoration Volume,* Ed. Taraknath Sen (Calcutta: Department of English, Presidency College, 1966) pp. viii-ix.

[4]See Krishna Chandra Lahiri, "Shakespeare in Calcutta University," in *Calcutta Essays on Shakespeare*, Ed. Amalendu Bose (Calcutta: Calcutta University, 1966), p. 182.

[5]See H.M. Percival (ed.), "Foreword," *The Tempest* (Calcutta: S. Chaudhuri, 1928), pp. iii-iv.

[6]See "Publisher's Note," *Antony and Cleopatra*, Ed. H.M. Percival (Calcutta: University of Calcutta, 1955), p. v.

[7]See *Calcutta Essays on Shakespeare*, p. 182.

[8]See "Presidency College and Shakespeare," in *Shakespeare Commemoration Volume*, p. ix.

[9]Cited by Krishna Chandra Lahiri, "Shakespeare in Calcutta Universiy," in *Calcutta Essays on Shakespeare*, p. 182.

[10]See "Introduction," *Shakespeare: The Merchant of Venice*, Ed. H.M. Percival, Fourth Impression (Calcutta: Oxford University Press, 1936), p. xiii

[11]See "Introduction," *Antony and Cleopatra*, Ed. H.M. Percival, pp. vii-xxxv.

[12]Website: http://www.folger.edu/html/exhibitions/unruly women/

[13]See "Introduction" to *The Tempest*, p. xxx

[14]Ibid.

[15]Ibid., p. xxix.

[16]See "Introduction" to *Antony and Cleopatra*, p. xi.

[17]Ibid., p.xi.

[18]See "Introduction," *Antony and Cleopatra*, Ed. M.R.Ridley (London and New York: Methuen, 1954), p. xLvi.

[19]See Lahiri in *Calcutta Essays on Shakespeare*, pp. 182-183.

[20]Ibid., p. 183.

[21]See "Introduction" to *Antony and Cleopatra*, pp. xxvi-xxvii.

[22]See Mary Cowden Clarke, *Girlhood of Shakespeare's Heroines*, in *Shakespeare's Unruly Women*,

[23]See Sisir Kumar Das, *A History of Indian Literature 1800-1910: Western Impact: Indian Response* (1991; New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 2008), p. 185.

[24]Ibid., p. 185.

[25]See Sumanta Banerjee, *The Parlour and the Streets: Elite and Popular Culture in Nineteenth Century Calcutta* (Calcutta: Seagull Books, 1989), p. 186.

[26]See "Introduction," *Antony and Cleopatra*, Ed., H.M. Percival, pp. xxii-xxiii.

[27]See *Beginning Shakespeare*, p. 20.

[28]See "Introduction," *The Merchant of Venice,* Ed. H.M.Percival, Fourth Impression (Calcutta: Oxford University Press, 1936), pp. xxiv-xxv.

[29]See *Shakespeare's Unruly Women*, Page 1 of 5.

[30]See Lisa Hopkins, "Introduction," *Giants of the Past: Popular Fictions and the Idea of Evolution* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2004), p. 35.

[31]See "Introduction," *Macbeth,* Ed. H.M. Percival (Calcutta: S. Chaudhuri, 1929), p. Lxxiii.

[32]See *Natural Law in English Renaissance Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 39.

[33]The phrase is borrowed from Matthew Arnold's "The Function of Criticism at the Present Time," in *Essays by Matthew Arnold*, Ed. Humphrey Milford (London: Oxford University Press, 1914), p. 12.

[34]See "Introduction," *Macbeth,* pp. xii-xiii.

[35]Ibid., p. xiii.

[36]Ibid., pp. x-xi.

[37]See *Johnson on Shakespeare*, Ed. R.W. Desai (1979; New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1985), p. 100.

[38]See "Introduction," *As You Like It*, Ed. H.M. Percival, (Calcutta: Longman, 1910), p. xxi.

[39]See "Introduction" to *Macbeth*, Ed. by H.M.Percival (Calcutta: S.Chaudhury, 1929), p. xLiv.

[40]Ibid., p. xLiii.

[41]Ibid., p. xLiv.

[42]See *Beginning Shakespeare* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2007), p. 16.

[43]Ibid., p. 17.

[44]See "Introduction," *Macbeth*, Ed. H.M. Percival. P. xLiv.

[45]Ibid, p. xLv.

[46]See *Beginning Shakespeare*, p. 17.

[47]For Cleopatra's description see H.M. Percival, "Introduction," *Antony and Cleopatra*, p. xxvii.

[48]See H.M. Percival's "Introduction" to his edition of *Macbeth*, p. xLiii.

[49]Ibid., p. xi.

[50]See "Introduction," *The Tempest*, Ed. H.M. Percival, p. x.

[51]Ibid., pp. xii-xiii.

[52]See *Masks of Conquest: Literary Study and British Rule in India* (London: Faber and Faber, 1989), p. 169.

[53]See D.P. Sinha, *The Education Policy of the East India Company In Bengal To 1854* (Calcutta: Punthi Pustak, 1964), p. 151.

[54]See Percival's "Introduction," *The Tempest*, p. xiii.

[55]Ibid., p. xxv.

[56]Ibid, pp. xxv-xxvi.

[57]Ibid., p. xxxviii.

[58]*Samson Agonistes*, Ed., H.M. Percival (Kolkata: Radha Publishing House, 2008), p. xxxvii.

[59]See Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973).

[60]See State Master – *Encyclopaedia: Presidency College, Calcutta,* Page 4 of 20.

[61]Ibid.

[62]See H.M. Percival, "Notes," *Antony and Cleopatra*, p. 123.

[63]See *Antony and Cleopatra*, in *The Arden Shakespeare*, Ed. by M.R. Ridley (London and New York: Methuen, 1954), pp. 3-4.

[64]Ibid., pp. 5-6.

[65]See "Notes," *Antony and Cleopatra*, p. 123.

[66]See The Arden Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*, p. 3

[67]See Andrew Duxfield, "Modern Problems of Editing: The Two Texts of Marlowe's Doctor Faustus," *Literature Compuss* 2 (2005) R E 143, 1-14.

[68]See "Introduction," to *Macbeth*, p. Lxxxi.

[69]Ibid., p. Lxxxii.

[70]See "Introduction," *Samson Agonistes*, Ed. H.M. Percival, p. xxxi.

[71]See "Introduction," *The Merchant of Venice*, Ed. H.M. Percival, pp. xiii-ix.

[72]Ibid., p. ix.

[73]See "The Society of Shakespeare's England," in *An Oxford Guide, Shakespeare*, Eds. Stanley Wells and Lena Cowen Orlin, Indian Edition (2003; New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 100.

[74]See "Shakespeare's *King Lear*," *Shakespeare's Chart Of Life, being Studies [of] King Lear, Macbeth, Hamlet, Othello* (Madras: G.A. Natesan & Co., 1900), p. 11.

[75]See "Macbeth and the Ruin of Souls," *Shakespeare's Chart of Life*, p. 1.

[76]Ibid., p. 1.

[77]Ibid., pp. 86-87.

Chapter VI

The Great Legacy

That the eminent teachers of English at Hindu College in colonial Bengal – Derozio, Richardson, and Percival – left a legacy of Shakespeare studies, which included inspiring teaching, secular interpretation, stage performance, and editing plays for native students, is amply borne out by the subsequent teaching of Shakespeare in Bengal following the departure of Percival. At the Presidency College itself, H.M. Percival, last among the founders of Shakespeare studies who left Hindu College in 1910, was followed by Praphulla Chandra Ghosh who taught from 1904 to 1948 and came to be known as "the most stimulating, most brilliant and most creative teacher of his time," who in his teaching of Shakespeare "reached the peak of his form and gave to generations of students an experience that can be described as wonderful."[1] As Asoke Kumar Mukherji remarks, "Praphulla Chandra Ghosh enriched the tradition of Shakespeare teaching."[2] In Mukherji's words:

> Like one possessed, he would achieve a complete submergence of his own personality and become another. The intensity of the identification made his histrionics valid and authentic, his pictorial imagination made them vivid, and his meticulous scholarship lent them solidity and depth. The subtlest points of thematic, textual or linguistic interest would seem to be effortlessly made and carried alive into the heart of passion.[3]

Mukherji's description of Ghosh as a Shakespeare teacher echoes Keats' idea of 'Negative Capability,' denoting identification of the subject with the object. Not only Ghosh, in fact all the great teachers of Shakespeare at Hindu College – Derozio, Richardson, Percival in particular – were influenced by the British Romantic poetry and poetics. Echoes of Wordsworth and Coleridge, Byron and Shelley are too clear to be missed in the poetry as well as criticism of Shakespeare by Derozio and Richardson. Percival, coming later, was equally, influenced by the nineteenth-century critical credo that had originated with the Romantics and was later continued, with some change of emphasis, by the Victorians.

Another outstanding Shakespeare teacher in this tradition was Tarapada Mukherji, who remained on the English faculty of the Presidency College from 1931 to 1962, and "earned recognition as one of those great teachers who make their profession the passion of their lives." As Asoke Kumar Mukherji goes on to elaborate:

> His eloquence and depth of feeling and insight produced a corresponding pleasure and animation in his listeners and inspired an infectious enthusiasm in them for poetry and drama, especially poetry of the nineteenth century and Shakespearean tragedy. Generations of students listened spell-bound to his impassioned albeit closely analytical reading of his favourite authors, the classroom being transformed into a scene of authentic imaginative experience."[4]

Mukherji's description of Tarapada Mukherji as an inspired and inspiring teacher is rather rhapsodic, more poetic than critical. We need to remember that the greatest of these great teachers of Shakespeare at Hindu College – Derozio, Richardson, and Percival – encouraged free thinking rather than the hypnotism of rhetorical teaching. No doubt, impressive and effective communication of their interpretations of Shakespeare was a virtue common to all the three, but they never allowed their "art" to dominate their "matter."

Also, this tradition of inspirational teaching of Shakespeare remained highly humanistic, free from extraneous overtones of race or religion, equally eschewing the underpinning of theoretical constructs inspired by the various non-literary disciplines of knowledge. These teachers remained firmly rooted in the great English tradition of criticism descending from Samuel Johnson to A.C. Bradley, highlighting the universal humanism of Shakespeare. As another great Shakespeare teacher, C.D. Narasimhaiah, in his "Shakespeare and the Indian sensibility," has put it:

> We in India look upon Shakespeare as an intimate component of human inheritance even as Socrates, Buddha, Christ, and Gandhi have been, rather more, perhaps because of his art. Despite C.P. Snow's 'two cultures' we think we can afford to neglect the Second Law of Thermodynamics so long as we can grasp its impact, however obliquely. Not so about Shakespeare; we can't get him by proxy.[5]

Narsimhaiah, not a Bengali, but a nationally known Indian scholar of English literature, touches upon something central in the Indian response to Shakespeare. His grandiloquent style notwithstanding, Narasimhaiah's praise of Shakespeare as an epitome of pure humanity equally expresses the essence of Shakespeare teaching in colonial Bengal. Literature, Shakespeare's plays in particular, in this tradition, taken as a repository of values, signifying, as Matthew Arnold, has suggested, the morality of the

question 'how to live.' It is this secular morality that has also remained a special feature of the great Shakespeare teachers who came after the trio of Derozio, Richardson and Percival.

A distinguished Shakespearean critic after Percival, who taught at Hindu College in the years 1929-33, 1935-42, and 1946-60,[6] was Subodh Chandra Sengupta (also S.C. Sengupta). His well-known contribution to India's Shakespeare criticism has been *Shakespearean Comedy* (1950).[7] In a short sketch called "Shakespeare the Man," Sengupta explains how various historical and biographical readings of the plays have been untenable. Exposing the unviability of such readings made by critics like Frank Harris, Bernard Shaw, Dame Edith Lyttelton, Richard Simpson, etc.,[8] Sengupta remarks:

> It seems that in matters political or ethical Shakespeare's attitude was neutral or undecided. He did not want to take sides .... This, argues Hardin Craig, was a characteristic of the Renaissance mind which suspended truth not between hypothesis and verification, but between the affirmative and the negative in debate. In such circumstances, truth became not a fixed proposition, but a shifting, elusive, debatable thing to be determined by dialectical acumen before it shone forth in rhetorical clarity by its own unassisted efflulgence. Although there is a good deal of truth in this contention, it does not reveal the depth of Shakespeare's personality which in this view seems to have been more negative than capable. We have to pierce beyond conflicting thoughts and opinions to those institutions and yearnings in which lies the essence of character.[9]

Sengupta's critique of Craig comes close to what Coleridge says about Shakespeare, especially the following:

> It is absolutely necessary to recollect that the age in which Shakespeare lived was one of great abilities applied to individual and prudential purposes, and not an age of high moral feeling and lofty principle, which gives a man of genius the power of thinking of all things in reference to all. If, then, we should find that Shakespeare took these materials as they were presented to him, and yet to all effectual purposes produced the same grand result as others attempted to produce in an age so much more favourable, shall we not feel and acknowledge the purity and holiness of genius – a light,

> which, however it might shine on a dunghill, was as pure as the divine effluence which created all the beauty of nature?[10]

However, to the extent that the critics in question (some of us would not even consider Shaw and Lyttelton as critics in the usual sense) emphasize Shakespeare's neutrality in "matters political or ethical," indicating the 'negative-capability' of his personality, Sengupta endorses their view. But he considers this view rather inadequate, for, in his opinion, Shakespeare's, or any other writer's, character has deeper layers (which in Coleridge is called 'the purity and holiness of genius') than those touched by political or ethical issues. We need to note here that Sengupta is not at all averse to reading the writer's biography in his work. On the contrary, he in fact asks for more, demanding further explanation into the writer's personality and trace its reflection in his work. Keeping in view the great vogue of biographical criticism in Sengupta's time, such as Richard Ellman's books on James Joyce and W.B. Yeats, Herbert Read's on Wordsworth, Hugh Kenner's on T.S. Eliot, etc., his remarks on the biographical criticism of Shakespeare are not surprising. His quietly passing over Harding Craig's historical reading of Shakespeare's handling of political or ethical issues, however, reveals the typical ahistorical response of most Shakespeare teachers in colonial Bengal – Percival alone, among these teachers of Hindu College seems an exception, in that he relates characters and events in Shakespeare's plays to their counterparts, or approximations, in history, such as those in *Antony and Cleopatra* and *The Tempest.*

Continuing to follow the Hindu College tradition, largely influenced by the British Romantic movement, Sengupta goes on with his criticism of his own class of biographical critics of Shakespeare, seemingly dismissing their approach, but actually asking for a deeper insight into the Bard's personality, his Buddha-like character – an obvious echo of Matthew Arnold's sonnet on Shakespeare.

We need to note here that Sengupta, like his predecessors Derozio, Richardson, and Percival, treats Shakespeare as a genius who created stories which eternally remain true to life, not dominated by narrow contingent interests of race or religion, nation or ethnicity. Those rooted in the Hindu College tradition of Shakespeare studies always viewed literature as a universal human activity, adhering to the tenets of Western poetics as it has come down from Aristotle to A.C. Bradley. It is only after the vogue of Theory since the 1980's, which discarded the notions of essentialism and universalism, that the postcolonial readings of Shakespeare have become "oriental," departing from what they would call the "western" propagation of Shakespeare. The earlier oriental commentators on Shakespeare, such as Aurobindo and Tagore, did not question

Shakespeare's universality; they only related his plays to their native literature, making a comparative study between the two. The postcolonial critics, on the other hand, have set up a sharp division between East and West, the colonised and the coloniser, dubbing even Shakespeare as an icon of the imperial hegemonic power.

Statements like the following by Poonam Trivedi, one of the Postcolonial Indian critics of Shakespeare, shows how Theory-based readings have tended to present the case of Indian response to the bard of Stratford in a rather distorted form: "... in the migration of Shakespeare to India there was never any doubt about his nationality. He [Shakespeare] was always foreign and Western, he had the allure of the 'Other' and the authority of the coloniser."[11]

Such large claims on behalf of Indians – how they viewed Shakespeare – without producing any evidence as to Shakespeare's "allure of the 'Other' and the authority of the coloniser" – are devoid of critical investigation and analysis. If we in India continue to read and write about Shakespeare, it is not because of his imperial authority, but because, as Coleridge puts it,

> In all his various characters, we still feel ourselves communing with the same human nature, which is everywhere present as the vegetable sap in the branches, sprays, leaves, buds, blossoms, and fruits, their shapes, tastes, and colours.[12]

Quite like Coleridge, our Shakespeare teachers at Hindu College from Derozio down to Sengupta presented Shakespeare in a true light, never using, as Trivedi does, the coloured projector of the Postcolonial theory. Note, for instance, the following:

> The critical judgement of the English-educated class about Shakespeare was hardly shared by the traditional scholars or the common spectators. Bamkim Chandra's observation that Shakespeare is "the one man in the world's literature whose works hold up a mirror to every possible phases of man's inner life," and Hemchandra Bandopadhyay's eulogy ... (Kalidas belongs to India, you to the world) are manifestations of the English-educated Indian's passionate admiration of the English bard.[13]

This piece of history about "Western Impact: Indian Response" in the nineteenth-century Indian writing by Sisir Kumar Das reiterates the point that the Indian Intelligentsia's response to Shakespeare, as established in the initial stage by the eminent teachers of Hindu College, where these famous Bengali writers, Bankim

Chandra and Hemchandra Bandopadhyay had also been students, was very much rooted in the British Romantic response illustrated by the statement from Coleridge just cited.

Thus, there has been a continuity and consistency in the tradition laid down by Derozio, Richardson and Percival, with the eminent teachers and critics following the same common approach to Shakespeare – the secular humanist approach – considering Shakespeare as the finest product of the English Renaissance, the ultimate point that can be reached in dramatic art, appealing to the entire mankind across the boundaries of races and religions, nations and territories.

When Percival left Hindu College in 1910, J.W. Holme replaced him, who taught English until 1923 and "earned the highest esteem"[14] from his students. As a Shakespeare scholar of repute, like Percival, he edited the Arden edition of *As You Like It* (1914), and in partnership with his colleague T.S. Marlowe's *Edward II* (Blackie, 1913). As Asoke Kumar Mukherji reports, "Holme was a serious scholar, his lectures substantial, if not exciting, his tutorials helpfully critical of the native tendency towards rhetoric and verbiage."[15]

The fact that Holme could be asked to edit a play of Shakespeare for Arden clearly establishes his merit as a scholar, a worthy successor to Percival. Holme's criticism of the Indian students' tendency to unconsciously copy the ornamental style so much in vogue in the native Sanskrit tradition points to one of the prime weaknesses of Indian English. Stylistic oddities apart, the students at Hindu College imbibed the Western influence of secular reasoning.

That the tradition of editing Shakespeare's plays for Indian students, initiated by Percival, has continued since then is evident from the subsequent attempts made by teachers of English in different universities of Bengal. Professor Jitenderlal Bannerjee of Calcutta University edited in the 1920s various plays of Shakespeare prescribed for the students. Following the pattern of Introduction and Notes initiated by Percival, Bannerjee makes the following observation in his "Introduction" to his edition of *Comedy of Errors*:

> ... Shakespeare cares nothing for what has been called development of character .... We seldom get in his plays the previous life-history of his characters .... Shakespeare's only concern is to hurry them on into some intense and vital situation where, under the stress and impact of contending passions, their humanity blazes out in all sorts of strange and fantastic shapes.[16]

Writing in the familiar Hindu College tradition, Bannerjee finds Shakespeare's real genius in his insight into human character. Very much under the influence of the British Romantics, these Shakespeare teachers from Derozio to Bannerjee focussed on the characters of Shakespeare's plays, emphasizing their universality, giving much less importance to plot and diction.

Bannerjee's Introduction and Notes to *Henry V* are also very much on the pattern of Percival's editions, quite substantial and useful for the Indian students. As for his critical emphasis, it is again in the tradition founded by Derozio, Richardson and Percival, highlighting the universality of Shakespeare as "a poet of nature."[17] Once again, it is a reiteration of the well-known emphasis Johnson and Coleridge had made. Note, in this regard, the following from his "Introduction" to the *Comedy of Errors*:

> ... wherein, it may be asked, lies the secret of his profound and universal genius? ... it lies in the first place in his amazing insight into character. Once he has brought his character into focus, once he has got the grip over the situation, nothing seems to be hidden from those wonder-seeing, wonder-working eyes of his. The dark veil which spreads over the face of things and hides the deep workings of the human heart from our gaze seems to be rent asunder before this man's keen and searching vision; he takes us to the shrine's inner sanctuary; and we feel like God's spies as we traverse in his company the dark, uncharted spaces of the universe.[18]

Here, evidently, the Coleridgean "divinity of Shakespeare"[19] is at work, the divinity that illuminates to the reader all that otherwise would have remained hidden from mortal eyes. So deep-rooted is this view of Shakespeare in the critical tradition founded by the early eminent teachers of Hindu College that despite the derogatory readings of postcolonial theory, its impact persists among all those not ready to put on the new-fangled eyeglasses. Also, the reference to "God's spies" – Lear's expression – shows that Bannerjee, like his predecessors, is well-versed in Shakespeare's work.

The performance component of Shakespeare studies also continued to flourish in India not only in English, but also, in fact more so, in translation in various Indian languages. All that these Hindu College teachers had tutored their students about the performing aspect of Shakespeare's plays continued as a tradition thereafter. Rudraprasad Sen Gupta, writing about the staging of Shakespeare in nineteenth-century Calcutta, observes:

> Producing Shakespeare became a fashion for the students of Hare School, Oriental Seminary and Hindu College .... The direct or indirect influence of Captain D.L. Richardson, H.H. Wilson ... inspired in the students' mind an abiding interest in Shakespeare ....[20]

This "fashion" was actually a part of Shakespeare studies at both Hare school and Hindu College. And this emphasis on performance became a part of the tradition of Shakespeare studies which Derozio, Richardson and Percival had founded. As Krishna Chandra Lahiri remarks,

> "From the accounts, published in contemporary newspapers, of the annual prize-giving ceremonies of the Hindu College from 1825 to 1838, we find that every year the students used to recite from Shakespeare's plays .... At one such function, Madhusudan Dutt appeared in the role of the Duke of Gloucester in a scene from *Henry VI*.[21]

Lahiri's reference to Michael Madhusudan Dutt is important because, influenced by the ideas of Derozio, he had later emerged as the best product of Hindu College, attaining the status of the leading poet and dramatist in Bengal both in English and Bangla languages, combining in his writings, as well as his personality, the best of both English education and Indian heritage.

This element of performance in the form of dramatic recitation has continued for about two centuries of Shakespeare studies in Bengal. As Lahiri has rightly observed, "The tradition of Shakespeare reading in our colleges has always encouraged oratorical recitation and memorizing jewels of phrases, expressions and passages from the text."[22] This tradition was particularly strengthened by the abiding influence of D.L. Richardson, whose students between 1835 and 1862 became the carriers of his enthusiasm for performing Shakespeare. As Lahiri observes, "Inspired by his [Richardson's] teaching, his pupils went beyond the mere reading of the text; they were encouraged to recite and act the plays ....[23] At the Hooghly College in Calcutta came another Shakespeare teacher named E.M. Wheeler in the years succeeding the reign of Richardson. As Lahiri states, "Wheeler continued the tradition of lively Shakespeare reading. It had distinct histrionic accents and the intonation of acting on the stage. His zeal and passion in reading helped the students substantially to understand and appreciate Shakespeare."[24]

Thus the dramatic element in the recitation of Shakespeare was an aid to understanding the dramatic literature. Inspired teaching and critical interpretation were

combined with the element of acting to evoke the spirit of Shakespeare's dramatic scenes. These great teachers in Calcutta consolidated and concretised the tradition of Shakespeare studies to such an extent that its impact refuses to recede even in our own time of Postcolonial and Deconstructive interpretations of Shakespeare.

An important role in performing Shakespeare for larger audiences, with special emphasis on students, has been played by the Shakespeare Societies that have come up since 1780. One of these called the Dawn Society, established in 1902 and functioning until 1913, was unique in that it attempted to "popularise Shakespeare among college students."[25] Founded by Satish Chandra Mukherjee and his distinguished associates, the Society also "ran a college in Bow Bazar Street called the National College. Rabindranath [Tagore] and sister Nivedita were among the patrons of the society which came to be known as Shakespeare Society."[26] Later, other such societies came up in Calcutta, which are still functioning. Elsewhere, in Delhi, Bombay, etc., there have been and are still functioning several other Shakespeare socities or Associations, which organise seminars and conferences of scholars, and arrange performances of the plays. Leading colleges and university departments of English have theatre groups that stage Shakespeare plays for student audiences.

The latest eminent teacher in the tradition of Shakespeare studies, as it developed in colonial Bengal and has continued thereafter, is Sukanta Chaudhuri of Jadavpur University in Calcutta, whose eminence for the teaching and interpretation of Shakespeare is comparable to that of H.M. Percival. To his credit, Chaudhuri has such well-known publications as *Infirm Glory: Shakespeare and the Renaissance Image of Man* (1981), *Renaissance Pastoral and its English Developments* (1989), and his edition of *Bacon's Essays* and *Elizabethan Poetry*, besides his coedited work *Shakespeare on the Calcutta Stage: A Checklist* (2001). In one of his articles, "Shakespeare's India," Chaudhuri asserts the following:

> Thus it is that India, and the other indistinct non-realms of Shakespeare's mental world, sustain a continuous imaginative critique of the foregrounded Eurocentric bent of his defined art. They thereby hold promise of a deeper critique, a more radical redefinition of his dramatic landscape, than could have been achieved by the highest standards of authentic observation and political correctness – supposing either of these to have been conceivable in that age. By the imaginative integration of the alien, conceived most broadly and unspecifically as such, Shakespeare proposes a radical catholicity

> that paradoxically coexists with radical subversion. By such expansion of perspective, Shakespeare empowers all races, locations, and cultures to read him in their own light, endlessly modifying but never superseding any other reading.[27]

Thus, in the tradition of Shakespeare studies founded by the early eminent teachers at Hindu College, Sukanta Chaudhuri, former Professor of English at Jadavpur University, upholds the universalism of Shakespeare's humanism right in the midst of the storm raised by Theory against the "traditional" concepts of essentialism, universalism and humanism. It is this view of Shakespeare that Chaudhuri so passionately upholds which continues to remain unshaken among the scholars of Shakespeare in Calcutta and other important centres for English studies in Bengal. In recognition of Chaudhuri's contribution to Shakespeare studies he has been elected a member of the Executive Committee of the International Shakespeare Association. Although no longer at the University of Jadavpur, he continues to inspire the younger scholars of Shakespeare in maintaining the tradition that has continued in Bengal since the days of Derozio in the early nineteenth century.

Such distinction as Tagore and those linked with Hindu College maintained between the British administration and the European civilization would not, quite understandably, interest the postcolonial critics, for that would upset their theoretical applecart. But the eminent founders of Hindu College (Hare and Roy) and the renowned Shakespeare teachers (Derozio, Richardson, and Percival) were strongly mindful of the difference between politics and civilization, and they never mixed up the two.

Not only that, those not driven by the partisan view of history have often acknowledged, and English teaching at Hindu College in its own small way has clearly enumerated, that Western education, as Charles Grant had feared, ultimately led to ideas of India's freedom. As Rabindranath Tagore has observed:

> The movement, which has now succeeded the swadeshi agitation,* is ever so much greater and has moreover extended its influence all over India. Previously, the vision of our political leaders had never reached beyond the English-

* In 1905, the Congress Party resolved that the people of India would boycott purchase of British goods (hurting the rulers economically) and buy only indigenous (swadeshi) products. The occasion was the proposed partition of Bengal on religious basis.

> knowing classes .... At this juncture, Mahatma Gandhi came and stood at the cottage door of the destitute millions .... At the touch of truth the pent-up forces of the soul are set free .... No Congress or other outside institution succeeded in touching the heart of India.[28]

Tagore's reference here to Mahatma Gandhi's role in making, from 1921 onward, India's freedom struggle a mass movement rightly underlines that the freedom movement was being carried by the English-speaking classes. What Tagore does not mention here is the fact that even the mass movement after 1921 was led by the English-speaking middle classes. The leaders who managed the movement, framed the constitution, provided free India a modern government, were all English-speaking – truly the makers of modern India, the first of whom was Rammohan Roy. Besides, the role of Derozio's followers called Young Bengal had played their own small part in igniting the ideas of freedom and nationhood. The three great Shakespeare teachers also played a role, however marginal, in promoting the liberal values of free thinking which eventually went a long way in creating a new India. Like Tagore, Bankim Chandra – another patriotic poet, one of whose songs is a national song of independent India – too, acknowledged "that only through English education did the modern Hindu learn the value of freedom and the significance of nationhood."[29]

Thus, the secular-humanist character of Shakespeare studies, as a component of English education, in colonial Bengal made its own contribution to the promotion of modern outlook, leading to the the ideas of freedom and nationhood. The Shakespeare studies also played a role in creating the new awakening that led to the nineteenth-century movement of the Renaissance in Bengal. In this long chain beginning with East-West encounter in the eighteenth century, leading to the modernisation of the Indians, followed by the nineteenth-century Bengal Renaissance, which further led to the movement for India's freedom in the twentieth century, the small but significant role of Shakespeare teachers in Calcutta, deserves to be given due recognition.

Notes

[1]See *175th Anniversary Commemoration Volume*, p. 68.

[2]Ibid.

[3]Ibid.

[4]Ibid.

[5]See *English Studies in India: Widening Horizons* (Delhi: Pencraft International, 2002), p. 46.

[6]See *175th Anniversary Commemoration Volume*, p. 70.

[7]Ibid.

[8]See *Shakespeare Commemoration Volume*, Ed. Taraknath Sen (Calcutta: Dept. of English, Presidency College, 1966), pp. 11-14.

[9]Ibid., p. 15.

[10]See *Coleridge on Shakespeare*, Ed. Terence Hawkes (London: Penguin Books, 1969), p. 78.

[11]See "Play[ing]'s the thing": Hamlet on the Indian Stage," in *Hamlet Studies*, Vol. 24 (2002), p. 57.

[12]See *Coleridge on Shakespeare*, p. 94.

[13]See *A History of Indian Literature 1800-1910; Western Impact: India Response* (New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 1991), p. 188.

[14]See *175th Anniversary Commemoration Volume*, p. 69.

[15]Ibid.

[16]See *Shakespeare: Comedy of Errors*, edited with an Introduction and Notes by Jitedralal Bannerjee, M.A. (Calcutta: Bannerjee, Das & Co., 1920), p. x.

[17]See Samuel Johnson, "Preface to Shakespeare," in *Samuel Johnson: Rasselas, Poems, and Selected Prose*, Ed. Bertrand H. Branson (San Francisco: Rinehart Press, 1952), p. 263.

[18]See *Shakespeare: Comedy of Errors*, Ed. Jitenderlal Bannerjee, p. xiv.

[19]See *Coleridge on Shakespeare*, Ed. Terence Hawkes (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1969), pp. 73-74.

[20]See "A Century of Imitation: A Study of Shakespeare's Influence on Bengali Drama," in *Calcutta Essays on Shakespeare*, Ed. Amalendu Bose (Calcutta: Calcutta University, 1966), p. 167.

[21]See "Shakespeare in Calcutta University," in *Calcutta Essays on Shakespeare*, p. 175.

[22]Ibid., p. 178.

[23]Ibid., p. 181.

[24]Ibid., p. 185.

[25]See Sitansu Maitra, "Shakespeare Societies in Calcutta," in *Calcutta Essays on Shakespeare*, pp. 192-93.

[26]Ibid, p. 193.

[27]See *India's Shakespeare*, Eds. Poonam Trivedi and Dennis Bartholomeusz (New Delhi: Pearson Longman, 2006), pp. 148-49.

[28]From *Crisis in Civilization* by Rabindranath Tagore Cited by Amartya Sen in *The Argumentative Indian* (London: Penguin Books, 2005), p. 39.

[29]Cited by Sisir Kumar Das in *A History of Indian Literature 1800-1910: Western Impact: Indian Response* (New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi,2008), p. 84.

CONCLUSION

Mapping out the foundational phase of Shakespeare studies in colonial Bengal in the nineteenth century, this thesis has attempted to articulate the key components of the pattern that emerged from the efforts of three eminent Shakespeare teachers at Hindu College. While Hindu College was the first Indian College of English education in Bengal that pioneered Shakespeare teaching and became the epicentre for Shakespeare studies in Calcutta, the seat of British authority in India, Henry Derozio, D.L. Richardson, and H.M. Percival, eminent teachers of English at Hindu College, laid the foundation for Shakespeare studies in colonial Bengal.

This thesis attempted to show that as a strong component of the tradition of Shakespeare studies founded by Derozio, Richardson and Percival, secularism remained a hallmark of the subsequent Shakespeare teaching not merely at Hindu College, but also at other centres of Shakespeare studies in Bengal. Combined with the component of secularism was the element of inspired and inspiring teaching for which Shakespeare studies in Bengal became famous.

I have shown in this study that another element of the tradition of Shakespeare studies founded by Derozio, Richardson and Percival, besides that of inspired teaching, was the humanist interpretation of Shakespeare's plays in critical writing. Richardson's extensive comments on Shakespeare and his work in *Literary Leaves* and *Literary Chit-Chat* laid down that tradition, later continued by H.M. Percival and his successors, most of whom were their students.

Besides the elements of inspired teaching and secular interpretation of Shakespeare, the tradition that Derozio, Richardson and Percival founded is also marked by the scholarly work of editing. While Derozio became a symbol of inspired teaching, and Richardson a symbol of secular interpretation, Percival emerged as a symbol of model editing of Shakespeare's plays for Indian students.

This thesis has further shown that yet another component of Shakespeare studies that emerged in colonial Bengal in the nineteenth century is the performance of his plays, including recitation. Derozio had been initiated in the art of acting in Shakespeare's plays early at Drummond's Academy where he had his schooling. He not only recited and acted in Shakespeare's plays but even wrote prologues to some of those staged in the school. Later, at Hindu College, he guided his students for participation in performing competitions. D.L. Richardson went a step further and became a founder of the Chauringee Theatre in Calcutta where Shakespeare's plays

were often performed. H.M. Percival maintained the tradition and prepared Hindu College boys for performances and recitations at the competitions officially organised in Calcutta. Thus, along with reading and interpreting Shakespeare's plays, their performance and recitation remained an important aspect of Shakespeare studies at Hindu College and later at Calcutta University.

In sum, this thesis has tried to define the tradition of Shakespeare studies, as it was laid down by three eminent teachers of Hindu College – Derozio, Richardson, and Percival with its distinct components of inspired teaching, secular interpretation, textual editing, and dramatic performance, remained strong in Bengal and other parts of India. The tradition has also had its impact outside the academies, leading to translations and adaptations of Shakespeare's plays in all the major Indian languages. The fact that this impact on native Indian languages has produced historical accounts in numerous books written in English shows the unique status Shakespeare has continued to enjoy in and outside the Indian academies for over two hundred years. It is remarkable indeed that despite the negative insinuations about the role of English in colonial Bengal, including Shakespeare studies, made by the postcolonial Indian critics, the vogue of Shakespeare in Bengal (and India) has remained alive: the very fact that more critical writing from India is still coming out on Shakespeare than on any English author, shows the strong hold Shakespeare continues to have on the Indian scholars.

In highlighting the role of the founders of Shakespeare studies at Hindu College, hitherto ignored or undermined, this thesis has also attempted to show how English education in India acted as an emancipating influence on the students in Bengal, and not as an instrument to subjugate the native population. The postcolonial insistence that English education was used to promote the religion and culture of the British rulers is not borne out by the history of Shakespeare studies in colonial Bengal whose epicentre was Hindu College. On the contrary, all available accounts of the functioning of Hindu College during colonial Bengal, especially those related to Shakespeare teaching, clearly establish that English education not only liberated the native learners from the trappings of orthodoxy but also gave them the ideas of freedom and justice, of self-rule and nationalism. From David Hare and Rammohan Roy, the leading founders of the College, to Derozio, Richardson and Percival, the eminent Shakespeare teachers who influenced Indian students in the 19th century colonial Bengal, the central guiding principle remained what Rabindranath Tagore has so well summarised, asserting that India had gained from "discussions centred upon Shakespeare's drama and Byron's poetry and above all ... the large hearted liberalism of nineteenth-century English

politics."[1] It may not be out of place to mention here that in a Gandhian spirit of forgiveness, Shakespeare's *The Tempest* ends with "As you from crimes would pardon'd be/Let your indulgence set me free." Surely, Shakespeare had much to offer to Indians like Tagore and Gandhi, and all those who read his plays without prejudice. Tagore, like the Shakespeare teachers at Hindu College, maintained a clear distinction between political administration and cultural assimilation.

Notes

[1]From *Crisis in Civilization* by Rabindranath Tagore Cited by Amartya Sen in *The Argumentative Indian* (London: Penguin Books, 2005), p. 107.

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