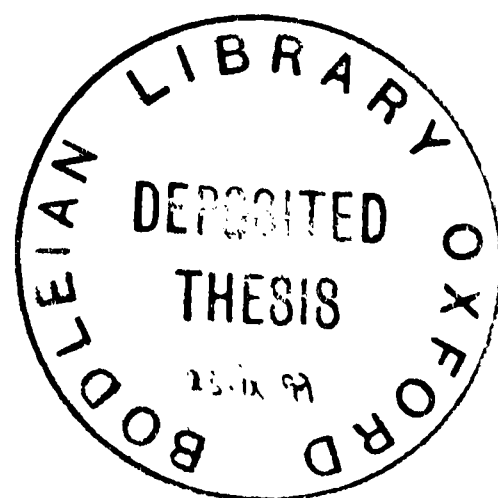


Orientalist Themes and English Verse in Nineteenth-Century India

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D. Phil. (English)
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ABSTRACT

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This thesis demonstrates how a specific tradition of English poetry written by Indians in the nineteenth-century borrowed its subject matter from Orientalist research into Indian antiquity, and its style and forms from the English poetic tradition. After an examination of the political, historical and social motivations that resulted in the birth of colonial poetry in India, the poets dealt with comprise Henry Louis Vivian Derozio (1809-31), the first Indian poet writing in English ; Kasiprasad Ghosh (1809-73), the first Bengali Hindu to write English verse; and Michael Madhusudan Dutt (1824-73), who converted to Christianity in the hope of reaching England and becoming a great 'English' poet. A subsequent chapter examines the Dutt Family Album (London, 1870) in the changing political context of the latter half of the century. In the Conclusion it is shown how the advent of Modernism in England, and the birth of an active nationalism in India, finally brought about the end of all aspects of what is here called 'Orientalist' verse.

This area has not been dealt with comprehensively by critics; only one book, Lotika Basu's Indian Writers of English Verse (1933), exists on this subject to date. This thesis, besides filling the gaps that exist in the knowledge available in this area, also brings an additional insight to bear on the current debate on colonialism and literature. After Said's Orientalism (1978), a spate of theoretical work has been published on literary studies and colonial power in British India. Without restricting the argument to the constraints of the Saidian model, this study addresses the issues raised by these works, showing that a subtler reading is possible, through the medium of this poetry, of the interaction that took place in India between the production of literature and colonialism. In particular, this thesis demonstrates that although Orientalist poetry was in many ways derivative, it also evinces an active and developing response to the imposition of British culture upon India.

Acknowledgements

I wish to thank, first of all, my supervisor, Dr Robert Young, for his consistent appreciation and constant guidance throughout my years in Oxford. Professor Jon Stallworthy encouraged me; he read the introduction and provided helpful tips on the poetry. Both he, and Dr Glenn Black, at Oriel, have always been available for reference.

I must also thank Oriel College, which sheltered me in my first three years at Oxford; subsequently, an equal measure of gratitude is due to Somerville, which buoyed my spirits greatly by making an exception in granting me a Graduate Scholarship in my third year. For this, I must thank Dr Fiona Stafford and Dr Katherine Duncan-Jones, who read my application for the award. I must also mention Dr Peter McDonald, especially for his help with recalcitrant computer programmes. In Calcutta, I have been helped as often as hindered by the staff at the National Library and the Bangiya Sahitya Parishad; but for their invaluable archives and rare books on nineteenth-century Bengal, I owe them my gratitude. Thanks are also due to Dr A. Mukherjee at Presidency College, who allowed me access to their Arts Faculty Library. Dr Aurobinda Mitra, my uncle, lent me the original, brittle, copy of The Bengali Book of English Verse, which initially set this study on its course; Miss Bani Niyogi, a grand-aunt, helped me find rare biographical details on Kasiprasad Ghosh.

I would like to acknowledge also the exceptional love and active support I have received in these last three and a half years from my parents-in-law in Calcutta, who urged me to concentrate on the thesis, as well as helped with books, articles, advice, and the National Library. My own parents have supported me throughout my life, from my earliest desire to study English Literature, right through my B.A. (Honours) at Sophia, to my M.A. and M.Phil. at Poona; they have always been proud of my achievements and glad about any honours. My sister, Priyanka, I would like to mention, though what her

contribution is, I don't exactly know. Finally, I am sure I could not have completed this thesis without my husband, Amit, who first articulated the connections I was trying to make in this thesis, and whose enthusiasm, intellectual guidance, thorough corrections, and brilliant analyses have, always and above all, sustained this project.

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Introduction

The Historical and Cultural Origins of Colonial Poetry in India

Colonial Poetry in Nineteenth-Century India

During the course of the nineteenth century, a substantial quantity of poetry was written by Indian poets (later labelled as 'Indo-Anglian' poets) writing, for the first time, in English about India.¹ These poets, to a large extent, drew upon Indian history and mythology for their themes, while writing always in traditional English metric forms and poetic diction. Their poems, in general, were remarkably alike in subject matter, form and expression, evoking few particularities of place or of individual experience. The contents of their historical poems were replete with reconstructions of legends and myths from the ancient past, material that had been taken from a textual world that had been newly recovered and recreated by Orientalist scholars at this time.² It is necessary to point out here that the interests of this thesis do not lie in poetic value or literary merit as such; the concern is not with how 'good' or 'bad' the poems under study are. The emphasis here is rather with that underlying sub-text in the poems which was formed from the pages of Orientalist research, which gave to a generation of poets a language with which to speak of India. What is interesting in these poems is the historical context from which they leapt into being with such excitement, and the evidence in them of their sources, which enable us to see clearly from what areas (textual rather than experiential) they derive their existence. The picturesque and static qualities of this poetry lend the poems a homogeneousness of texture that identify it with flatness and decorativeness rather than with immediacy or

¹ Although almost all the poetry written in English in India in the nineteenth century was produced in Bengal, this poetry located itself always in a larger concept of the whole of India, the poets themselves always finding their identity as Indians rather than Bengalis in their verse. I have, therefore, used the broader term, Indian, for these poets and their poetry throughout the thesis.

² I have used this term without quotation marks throughout the thesis to indicate, not generally as Said does to 'Anyone who teaches, writes about, or researches the Orient... either in its specific or its general aspects' (*Orientalism* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978), 2), but rather more narrowly, the original band of scholars in Calcutta in the late eighteenth and nineteenth century around William Jones and succeeding him, associated with the Asiatic Society of Bengal, who researched the antiquities of India. Thus I am not using it for its Saidian ideological significance but as a collective and classificatory term.

individualism. In many ways it is the repetitions, similarities, and look-alike qualities that demonstrate clearly the textual world of English poetry and Orientalist history from which these poems are derived. I have called this well defined strand within the body of colonial Indian poetry 'Orientalist poetry', as it was the Orientalist project in India that gave this verse its themes and preoccupations, and my thesis examines it in some detail within its historical, social, cultural and political contexts.

English verse in India in the nineteenth century was produced by both the English, who wrote about India ^{while experiencing} ~~while living in~~ India, whose verse was known at the time as 'Anglo-Indian' poetry, and by Indian poets writing in English, whose work was later labelled 'Indo-Anglian' poetry. The former included names such as William Jones and John Leyden (Orientalists), Bishop Reginald Heber (clergyman), Henry Meredith Parker (civil servant), David Lester Richardson (teacher), Sir Alfred Lyall (administrator/historian) and Sir Edwin Arnold (teacher/ journalist); the latter included members of the educated elite of Calcutta such as Henry Derozio, Kasiprasad Ghosh, Michael Madhusudan Dutt, and also the family of Dutts who produced an anthology called The Dutt Family Album, published by Longmans in London in 1870. Remarkably, the Orientalist poetry of both the English in India and the Indians writing in English followed similar trajectories, being alike on both the thematic and stylistic level. The shared characteristics of Anglo-Indian and Indo-Anglian Orientalist poetry in the nineteenth century, and the significance of their common use of Indian culture and heritage in English verse seem to lie in their mutual positions as colonial subjects of an empire. In this regard, the colonizers seem to lose their distinct identity as rulers and manipulators and assume the status, instead, of colonial subjects themselves; subject, in a different way to those they ruled, to the hidden pressures of empire. The concern of this thesis, however, is with the body of English poetry produced by a class of Indians who had responded to the relatively more overt machinations of empire, such as the school curriculum, by seizing one of the implements of colonial oppression, the English language itself, and using this medium as a meeting ground of engagement with the colonizer. Colonialism was the formative reason behind Indians writing English verse, responsible for its existence to such an extreme extent that it

would be futile to attempt an examination of this corpus of verse without it; yet, as I shall show, none of the commentators and critics who have dealt with it have ever done so. While detailing the manner in which colonial rule informed tastes and inclinations in this body of verse, this thesis shall also show how the colonized interacted with the language and literature of the colonizer to appropriate these for their own ends, defying the conventional perception of the relations between the exercisers of power and their subjects. Nineteenth-century verse by Indians in English was not, as has been the perception so far, merely an imitative exercise in mimicry, but an active grappling, sometimes even through the act of mimicry, with the tenets of the colonizers to engage, react, and interact with them in unexpected ways. The Anglo-Indian verse has been kept, necessarily, as part of a background that informed and shaped the poetry of Indians throughout the nineteenth century. This had to be done in the interests of a more cogent and detailed analysis of the verse produced by a community, as there would not have been space within the restrictions of the thesis format to deal in a detailed manner with the poetry produced by both.

This study also, for the first time, sets out to locate the history of the beginning and development of English verse in India within its social, political and cultural contexts. There have been very few books that have dealt, in any comprehensive way, with colonial poetry in nineteenth-century India.³ Only two books exist, the emphasis of one being on English writers of verse in India, and the other dealing with Indian poets only. The first, Edward F. Oaten's A Sketch of Anglo-Indian Literature (1908), contains a sweeping glance over fiction, drama, satire and poetry written primarily by Englishmen in India in the nineteenth century.⁴ There is mention, however, of the English verse from Bengal of Derozio, Greece Chunder, Hur Chunder and Shoshee Chunder Dutt, as well as of their descendant, Toru Dutt. The second, published in Oxford, is the only book to attempt a comprehensive literary critical appreciation of English poetry written by Indians in this

³I have frequently used the term 'colonial' in the context of the nineteenth-century English verse by Indians in order to emphasise their situation as colonial subjects under British rule, a historical reality that served as an informing principle in the production of their verse.

⁴E.F. Oaten, A Sketch of Anglo-Indian Literature (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner, 1908).

period: Lotika Basu's Indian Writers of English Verse (1933), which examines, in some detail, its literary worth.⁵ I shall show how criticism such as this has dated in its approach, and how such critical appreciation runs along lines of aesthetic judgement and literary value in a manner that denies this body of work its rightful context or estimation.

Turning to anthologies, it is of some interest to note that while in India there exists some record, at least, of the poetry of colonial India in the form of various anthologies published in India, in England there is to be found no evidence of *any* anthology of poetry published from England and written exclusively by Englishmen in India in all the three hundred years of British rule. Three collections of poems by both Englishmen and Indians were brought out in Britain, one of which was a souvenir to commemorate the occasion of the visit of the Prince of Wales to India, published in 1876, and another was put together by an Indian, Roby Dutt.⁶ In India, however, considerably more appeared up till 1947 in the form of compilations of verse written by Indians in English as well as by both Indians and Englishmen. With the exception of two obscure and difficult to procure works that were published by Englishmen in Calcutta in the nineteenth century, all the anthologies of English verse written in British India were compiled in the twentieth century, though these remain scattered and incoherent efforts rather than standard or definitive works.⁷ With Independence, the effort to record and anthologise the poetry of Indians in English continued, perhaps because of the contemporary flourishing of Indian English poetry in the fifties and sixties. The commonest form of collections of Indo-Anglian poetry are post-Independence publications of selections from Indian verse in English such as P. Lal and

⁵Lotika Basu, Indian Writers of English Verse (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1933). Her's is the only book concerned exclusively with the *poetry* of Indians in English in this period; one other book, John B. Alphonso-Karkala, Indo-English Literature in the Nineteenth Century (Mysore: University of Mysore Press, 1970) deals with that period but is inclusive of all genres.

⁶Hamilton Adams, ed. Anglo-Indian Prize Poems. Poems by native and English writers, in commemoration of the visit of His Royal Highness, the Prince of Wales to India. (London, 1876); Roby Dutt, ed. Echoes from East and West (Cambridge: Galloway and Porter, 1909); Gwendoline Goodwin, ed. An Anthology of Modern Indian Poetry (London: John Murray, 1927).

⁷The two nineteenth-century works are: Thomas Philip Manuel, The Poetry of our Indian Poets (Calcutta, 1861); Thomas Benson Laurence, English Poetry in India (Calcutta, 1869). Twentieth-century compilations before 1947 include P. Seshadri, Anthology of Indian Historical Verse (London: Macmillan, 1918); V.N. Bhushan, ed. The Peacock-Lute, Poems in English by Indian Writers (Bombay: Padma Publications, 1945).

K.R. Rao's Modern Indo-Anglian Poetry. An Anthology, or V.K. Gokak's The Golden Treasury of Indo-Anglian Verse, which are representative volumes of this type.⁸

English verse written by Indians in the nineteenth century, however, had been consistently compiled by one man, Theodore Douglas Dunn. It is worth noting that all of Dunn's anthologies were published from India, indicating again the lack of interest in this subject in Britain. Dunn's efforts towards collecting and anthologising the poetry of British India made a major contribution towards preserving from loss many interesting works in this neglected field. A teacher at the Presidency College (formerly the Hindu College) and Inspector of Schools, Presidency Division, Bengal, his most important publication was The Bengali Book of English Verse, a collection of poems written by Bengalis in English with an introduction that attempts to explain this phenomenon, alongside a foreword by Rabindranath Tagore.⁹ Dunn also brought out two other collections of English verse written in British India. His India in Song was published with the objective of teaching young Indian readers poetry by both Englishmen and Indians that dealt with some aspect of India.¹⁰ This was the first collection of English verse whose subject-matter was entirely Indian and which was written in India. He wrote:

This anthology of verse has two special features. The first is in its subject-matter which is solely Indian; and the second lies in the fact that no collection of English verse written in India during the last century has hitherto been published.¹¹

Poets of John Company appeared in 1921 from Calcutta, and here he 'provided for a collection of verse written in India by Englishmen from the earliest days of the British occupation up to our own time', including in it poems by thirty two poets beginning with Sir William Jones.¹² As he says in the first sentence of his Introduction:

No complete anthology of verse written by Englishmen in India has ever been compiled; and the reason is not far to

⁸P. Lal and K. R. Rao, eds. Modern Indo-Anglian Poetry. An Anthology (New Delhi: A. Chaya Devi, 1959); V. K. Gokak, ed. The Golden Treasury of Indo-Anglian Poetry (Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 1970).

⁹T.O.D. Dunn, ed., The Bengali Book of English Verse (Bombay: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1918).

¹⁰T.O. D. Dunn ed., India in Song: Eastern Themes in English Verse by British and Indian Poets (Bombay: Oxford University Press, 1918).

¹¹*ibid.*, 6.

¹²T.O. D. Dunn ed., Poets of John Company (Calcutta: Thacker, Spink & Co, 1921), ix.

seek. Those writers who have achieved distinction have won for themselves a permanent place in the records of English literature.... Those writers who have failed to secure such recognition have been forgotten; and their published works, no longer in circulation, have become the hobby of the bibliophile and the collector.¹³

The anthology, however, did not claim to be complete (for example, for copyright reasons it did not include Sir Edwin Arnold) because 'two main difficulties - the trouble and expense of copyright, and the impossibility of producing a large work at a reasonable rate under post-war conditions of publication - have compelled the limitation of the scope of this anthology.'¹⁴ The volumes brought out by T.O.D. Dunn in India are the only conscious attempt to preserve for posterity some of the poetry of British India, giving definition and shape to an entity that was as yet without a tradition or an identity.

The Orientalist poets of nineteenth-century India ^{used} a mode of poetic language that consisted of ^{common} imagery, rhetoric, and figures of speech. The poems were, on a formal and stylistic level, derivative of the idiom that belonged to mainstream English poetry. All the poets we are concerned with seemed to be imitative of English poets, whether that was Moore, Southey, Scott, or Byron. Ultimately, these poems owe as much to English poetic forms for the style in which they were written as to Orientalist themes for their content. Subject matter apart, the atmosphere and mood of the poems also were very similar. These were the first poets to write of India in English, and, in fact, the first poets to write of 'India' as a nation, for until the nineteenth century there had been no conception of Indian heritage or Indian culture in an autonomous sense, as was now available in a systematised way through Orientalist scholarship. These poets, therefore, were drawing upon a completely new vocabulary that had come into existence with the attempts of the Orientalists to classify and structure the traditions that shaped India. As a consequence, the world that actually lay 'out there', with its sights and sounds and smells, does not exist in these poems. What is present here, instead, seems to belong almost entirely to the world of Orientalist research and English literary studies.

¹³ibid., xi.

¹⁴ibid., ix.

The influence of the English canon as well as of Orientalist studies upon nineteenth-century English poetry by Indians can be examined by various means. Often, the reading of Indian poets may be determined from clues in the form of endnotes, footnotes, explanations or subheadings to the titles. The admiration these Indian poets bore for Southey or Moore, Byron or Wordsworth is self-evident from phrases, images, and even complete lines taken from these English poets and transposed upon their work; when employed consciously, these were acknowledged by the use of quotation marks, or by citing the original work that 'inspired' the poem in question, or upon which the poem was modelled. As often as there were allusions to English poetry, there were also, when the references in these poems were to the use of a particular Hindu image or Indian metaphor, allusions to the Orientalist scholars of Calcutta. The most influential figure among the Calcutta Orientalists, as far as these poets were concerned, was the founding father of Indian studies, William Jones, whose enormous achievements threw a long shadow over Orientalist poetry. While Jones's influence over the English romantic poets *has* been acknowledged, albeit inadequately compared to the depth of his contribution, in articles or essays, the example he set for Indian poets writing in English has not generally been pointed out.¹⁵ Jones implemented various methods to 'authenticate' his Eastern poetry, and Indian poets emulated his example in many respects, whether by following his manner of using Indian terms for local flora and fauna and naming their Latin equivalents in his notes, or his use of images and conceits familiar to Sanskrit poetry, or his way of providing English translations from the Persian of Sadi or Hafiz, or his style of providing detailed notes to his Indian references. I have shown the affinity to Jones's work whenever it has occurred in the works of the Indian poets, detailing the direct as well as indirect presence¹⁶ from Jones in the style and content of these poems^m. The papers published by Jones and the other members of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, as I show, cropped up from

¹⁵For Jones's contribution to romantic poetry see: R.M. Hewitt, 'Harmonious Jones,' Essays and Studies by Members of the English Association, XXVIII (1942), 42-59; Vivian de Sola Pinto, 'Sir William Jones and English Literature,' Bulletin of the School for Oriental and African Studies, XI. 4 (University of London, 1946), 692; "The Literary Place of Sir William Jones (1746-94)," Journal of the Asiatic Society, II. 1 (1960) 47-61; John Drew, 'Sir William Jones: *Asiatic Researches* and the Platonizing of India,' India and the Romantic Imagination (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1987).

time to time in Orientalist verse; and other Orientalist publications, such as the work on the Vedic age done by Colebrooke, or the series on Hindu theatre done by Wilson, also had a considerable impact. Translations from the Sanskrit formed very important source material for Orientalist verse, and Kalidasa's works, especially *Sakuntala*, translated early on by Jones, or Wilson's translation of *Meghaduta*, made a lasting impression on Indians concerning their literary heritage. Jones's nine Sanskrit hymns to Hindu deities, and his long verse-tale, 'The Enchanted Fruit', need to be mentioned also as germane to the ambience of Orientalist poetry, as they resulted in repeated reproductions of their style and content and form in the poems of the nineteenth century.¹⁶

Certain thematic strands may be commonly found in nineteenth-century Orientalist verse. One of the most prominent of these was the attempt to describe the Hindu divinities, with their attendant attributes and mythologies. The subject matter of Kasiprasad Ghosh's 'Hindu Festivals', describing the seasonal celebrations associated with Hindu gods and goddesses, was borrowed from an essay by Jones in the *Asiatic Researches* on the Hindu lunar year, while the manner in which they were written imitated Jones's style in his Hymns. In a similar vein, Derozio writes a poem on the manner in which Hindus observe the eclipse of the moon in 'The Eclipse', while Madhusudan deliberately inserted references to the Hindu deities in his long poem, *Captive Ladie*, in order to make it 'a *thorough* Indian work, full of Rishis-Calis-Lutchmees-Camas-Rudras and all the Devils incarnate, whom our orthodox fathers worshipped.'¹⁷ *The Dutt Family Album* also, in spite of the fact that its authors were newly converted to Christianity, contained a 'Hymn to Shiva', demonstrating thus the strength and durability of the Orientalist convention of addressing poems to the Hindu divinities.

¹⁶Nine hymns were composed over a period of five years, and these appeared almost immediately in *The Asiatick Miscellany*, 1 and 2 (Calcutta, 1785-86) and *The New Asiatic Miscellany* (Calcutta, 1789). In chronological order they were: 'A Hymn to Camdeo', 'A Hymn to Narayena', 'A Hymn to Sereswaty', 'A Hymn to Ganga', 'A Hymn to Indra', 'A Hymn to Surya', 'A Hymn to Lacshmi', and lastly 'Two Hymns to Pracriti: The Hymn to Durga and The Hymn to Bhavani', published posthumously; 'The Enchanted Fruit; or, The Hindu Wife: An Antediluvian Tale Written in The Province of Bahar', was published in the *Asiatick Miscellany* 1, 188-211.

¹⁷Michael Madhusudan Dutt, Letter, Madras, 19th March, 1849, *Madhusudan Rachanabali* [Collected Works of Madhusudan], ed. Kshetra Gupta (Calcutta: Sahitya Sansad, 1993), 533.

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Fascinated though they were with the Hindu divinities, Orientalist poets were also preoccupied with the portrayal of Muslims in their historical poems. Two distinct representations emerge in this area. One was the romanticised 'Oriental' presentation of Muslims, which was influenced by Western fashions for the Persian or Middle-Eastern splendours of a refined and rich civilisation. This fashion, as early as 1772, informed works such as Jones's renditions from the Persian in Poems; later it would find renewed expression with the popularity of Fitzgerald's 'translations' of Omar Khayyam. Thus, a graceful Muslim culture of mosques and minarets, poetry and wine was evoked, and found its way into Orientalist poetry in much the same manifestation. The other kind of Muslim representation in Orientalist verse typified them as aggressive invaders of India, as barbarous sackers of cities and destroyers of temples, wreaking havoc upon the peaceful land. This description was influenced by the works of British historians such as James Tod in Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan, where a high-flown rhetoric extolled the achievements of Hindu India, put to the sword by 'barbarous, bigotted [sic], and exasperated [Muslim] foes'.¹⁸ I have attempted to delineate both these directions in the depiction of Muslims in Orientalist verse in this study, drawing attention, for instance, to detailed references in Derozio's notes in 'The Enchantress of the Cave' to Beckford's Vathek, to passages in the same poem describing the Muslim invasion of India, a theme repeated in Madhusudan's Captive Ladie, and to the Rajput/Muslim conflict portrayed by the Dutts in their poems in The Dutt Family Album.

Orientalist poets, throughout the nineteenth century, practised another common convention, that of writing poems addressed to their native country and its golden past. This was not surprising considering the fact that the very idea of India as a 'nation', as I have said, was new and being formulated by Western historians for the first time. What constituted the formation of the identity of the nation was, in effect, its history and heritage. The past that was being constantly referred to in these poems had been recreated for Indians by a team of Orientalist Sanskritists (Jones, Colebrooke, Wilson, later Max Müller) who popularised the notion of the Hindu Golden Age. Accompanying the vision of India's

¹⁸James Tod, Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan, Vol. 1 (London, 1829), ix.

splendid past was an inevitable account of the present degradation of the country, usually followed by an expression of hope for a better future ahead. This theme of an ancient country that is presently debased and corrupted, but was once splendid and glorious, could have been taken straight from the sentiments of William Jones when he said of the Hindu golden age:

... degenerate and abased so ever the Hindus may now appear ...
in some early age they were splendid in arts and arms, happy
in government; wise in legislation, and eminent in various
knowledges....¹⁹

Harking back to the greater glory of ancient India was an attitude common among the Orientalists when talking of India's past, and was adopted by almost all the poets writing about India. The theme of present degradation, however, also owed a great deal to the evangelists and missionaries in India, to influential policy makers such as Charles Grant and Thomas Babington Macaulay, and to the Utilitarians following Bentham and James Mill, whose works, as I shall show, established the degeneration and abasement of Hindu character, culture and society. I have examined, throughout this study, this theme of the ancient splendour of India and its accompanying ideas on the present degraded status of the country whenever it has occurred in Orientalist verse, from, to cite a few instances, the first famous nationalist sonnets by Derozio ('To India, My Native Land', 'The Harp of India'); through to its presence in Kasiprasad Ghosh (in the opening verses - 'Harp of my country! Pride of yore!' - of the long poem 'The Shair'); to its appearance in Madhusudan Dutt (in 'King Porus'); in Hur Chunder Dutt of the Dutt Family Album (in 'Sonnet: India'); and to the last metamorphosis of this theme in the twentieth-century poetry of Sarojini Naidu (in 'To India') and Tagore (in the well-known 'Where the mind is without fear').

Related to the theme of past glory was the fascination later Orientalist poets showed for historical figures and the legends surrounding their heroic deeds in tales of Indian chivalry, a preoccupation that developed fully in the latter half of the century. Madhusudan Dutt, in 1849, selected the legend of Prithviraj and Sanjugta from the medieval period in

¹⁹William Jones, 'Third Annual Discourse,' Asiatic Researches, I (Calcutta, 1788), 347. Reprint, Delhi: Cosmo Publications, 1979. The page numbers here and for all further references to the Asiatic Researches in this thesis are from the 1979 reprint.

Indian history for his long poem Captive Ladie. By the second half of the century, Rajasthan was indubitably the richest source for stories of bygone bravery, and many of the Dutt's Orientalist poems were set in the battlegrounds or palaces of the Rajputs in Jodhpur or Marwar, while employing a style taken from Scott. Moreover, the Rajput/Muslim conflict, evoked repeatedly in the historical poems in the Dutt Family Album, and also immensely popular in the contemporary Bengali poetry of the time, signifies a symbolic representation of the confrontation between colonized/colonizer and was being used to that effect by these Indian poets under British rule.

Orientalist themes were predominant in the works of Indian poets writing in English in Bengal from 1827, when Derozio first published his verse, to approximately 1875, when this unique self-enclosed phenomenon began to come to a close. The following year saw the publication of the first volume of English poetry outside Bengal, Malabari's The Indian Muse in English, from Bombay, breaking the bonds of the closely-knit literary circle in Calcutta which had already begun to loosen by the second half of the century; ^{we can} while Toru Dutt's A Sheaf Gleaned in French Fields heralded the arrival of a new set of axioms in Indo-Anglian verse, enquiring into the nature of personal and colonial identity.²⁰ At the same time, an emergent nationalism now made the mother tongue more important in the consciousness of the people, and the major work began to be done in the vernacular instead. Orientalist preoccupations, however, continued to surface in English verse and constitute the responses of Western readership long afterwards, contributing to the success of Sarojini Naidu and Tagore in the West in the first two decades of the twentieth century. In the period between 1827 and 1875, there is no evidence, in this body of verse, of an altered consciousness in the perception of Indians after the Mutiny of 1857. The political climate changed irrevocably with this momentous event, but there was no reflection of the evolving realities of India in much of the poetry written in English, which is not unexpected when we consider the textual nature of this body of work. The preoccupation with the

²⁰Behramji Malabari, The Indian Muse in English Garb (Bombay, 1876); Toru Dutt, A Sheaf Glean'd in French Fields (Bhowanipore, 1876).

'historical' character of India continued as before, sounding, consequently, more and more distant from the mainstream of Indian political realities.

As far as the literary evaluation of Orientalist verse is concerned, this thesis shall attempt to show the limitations of conventional literary criticism as regards nineteenth-century English poetry by Indians. The reactions of critics and reviewers would most probably be best summed up in the words of Theodore Dunn, when Indians were faulted for not being capable of capturing anything 'essentially eastern in conception' in spite of being Indian, a criticism that failed to enquire into the context which this paradoxical lack of 'easterness' sprang from, and what that context implied.²¹ A typical example of this absence of 'easterness' can be found in the following verse, similar to many others of this sort to be found throughout the annals of nineteenth-century Orientalist poetry, from a sonnet entitled 'Home', where an Indian poet attempts to express nostalgia for his native landscape, though the particularities of an Indian landscape are entirely lacking in his description:

What roses blossom on the lawn !
 What warblers on the bamboo boughs,
 Lithe and elastic, swing at dawn,
 And pour their orisons and vows !
 What dew upon the greensward lies !
 How lovingly look down the skies !²²

Theodore Dunn, with the reasonable assumption of expecting 'from an eastern poet something that a western cannot give', searched through the works of the Bengali poets for anything that was 'peculiarly and exclusively oriental' and failed to find any poetry that reproduced the atmosphere of Indian life.²³ Instead, he found in the American poet, Emerson, from whose verses he then quotes, 'a whole world of eastern religious mysticism':

If the red slayer think he slays,
 Or if the slain think he is slain,
 They know not well the subtle ways
 I keep and pass and turn again.

Far or forgot to me is near;

²¹Dunn, ed., Bengali Book, xxii.

²²Govin Chunder Dutt, 'Home', The Dutt Family Album (London, 1870), 2.

²³Dunn, ed., Bengali Book, *ibid*.

Shadow and sunlight are the same;
The vanquished gods to me appear;
And one to me are shame and fame.

They reckon ill who leave me out;
When me they fly, I am the wings;
I am the doubter and the doubt,
And I the hymn the Brahmin sings.²⁴

Dunn, ironically, commends Emerson, while attributing the failure of the Bengali poets to be influenced by the colour and atmosphere of their own environment to an anxiousness to anglicise not only their vocabulary but their ideas.²⁵ A Bengali poet, on the other hand, is praised for 'dealing with a variety of pleasing topics, and exhibiting a cultivated command of English metre.'²⁶ Literary evaluation of this kind, where certain poems are praised and others condemned for failing to create authenticity of experience, does not do justice to the body of work with which we are concerned. The Romantic conception of poetry as a crystallisation of experience or inspiration demands interpretative close reading to understand how that experience is contained or expressed in the language, a process, as we can see in Dunn, that yields little or no result when we approach much of the poetry of colonial India. It is an indication of the peculiar nature of this poetry that literary criticism of the sort employed by Dunn ends up considering an American as having a more genuine feel for Hinduism than a Hindu, and praising the Bengali for his cultivated use of English metre. Dunn's criticism, in fact, demonstrates the reasons for the 'failure' of colonial poetry in nineteenth-century India, because the oriental colour that he praises in Emerson and the anglicised literary quality that prevents the Bengali poet from capturing an 'oriental' atmosphere, both actually point to the textual origins of this sort of poetry. What is interesting for the purposes of this study, however, is that an enquiry into the textual sources of this poetry leads us to a study of the conditions in which those texts were produced and disseminated, and to an examination of a dynamic culture of intellectual interrelationship in which historical research and creative endeavour intersected with each other. If we are to read this poetry more richly, in a positive light rather than in the usual

²⁴ibid. Emerson, 'Brahma,' Ralph Waldo Emerson, ed. Richard Poirier (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 538.

²⁵ibid., xxiii.

²⁶ibid., xxi.

negative mode, then it is necessary to discard the literary critical assumptions made by critics such as Dunn and move towards an appreciation that is stimulated by the presence of the texts that went into the making of Orientalist verse.

What is exposed by such readings as Dunn's is how little the criterion of 'authenticity' yields when dealing with poetry that is a typical cross-cultural by-product of the colonial situation. These poems cannot be read in isolation, nor can the critic presume that these colonial poets, by virtue of writing English verse in an outpost on the margins of empire, were automatically comparable with a Wordsworth or a Byron. Within its historical context, this poetry can remind us, in the most various and colourful manner, of the act of reading that created the reasons for its existence; thus, taking into account the material from which it was born creates a more positive appreciation of such poetry than was possible for Dunn. The colonial context within which Indian poets wrote English verse also makes imperative the realisation that these colonized subjects were interacting and reacting with the colonial predicament in an assertive action that inserted their voice in the consciousness of the colonizers. This engagement with the colonizer that takes place in the English poetry of the colonized imparts a meaning and drama to the whole phenomenon of nineteenth-century Orientalist verse that has not been acknowledged in the criticism dealing with this poetry so far.

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Critical Approaches to Colonial Literature

Most work today on colonialism and literature draws upon the insights of Edward Said, writing on the relations of culture and power. This sort of work shows how cultural domination operates through consent and often precedes conquest by force, and demonstrates the uses of literature as an instrument of ideology. The principles that organise literary knowledge are scrutinised alongside the specific inclusion of extra literary considerations, such as the exigencies of the political and historical situation.

Edward Said's Orientalism demonstrates the interrelations between society, history and textuality in order to define the cultural role played by the Orient for the West, and shows the connections between Orientalism and ideology, politics and the logic of power.²⁷ Said establishes first of all that categories such as 'the Orient' are not inert facts of nature but created entities, and that the West has created the Orient through the promulgation of certain chosen ideas and images. Emphasising the vested interests in the cultural domination of the Orient, Said's project is one of 'unlearning': a process through which the dominating discourse's grip is revealed and thus rendered impotent.

It was undoubtedly the establishment of colonial rule that stimulated the enterprise of Orientalist scholarship in India. Moreover, without official support, Oriental studies might not have flourished as it did. The collusion of power and knowledge in the establishment of colonial rule in India, besides being a theoretical point, is a practical fact. Men like Warren Hastings had their own purposes in engineering the growth of Orientalist research, which ran concurrently with very definite ideas on how to rule India. The East India Company had taken over the management of the whole of Bengal into its own hands, but Hastings did not want that to mean the introduction of English laws and English ways into India. Wanting to reconcile British rule with Indian institutions, he encouraged further investigation into the manners and customs of the country, and studies in the literature and the laws of the Indians. As a direct result, a group of men who were later to be among the founding fathers of the Asiatic Society (Charles Wilkins, Nathaniel Halhed, John Shore, Francis Gladwin, John Carnac, Jonathan Duncan and William Chambers) produced pioneering work in what was later to become a discipline in itself: Indology. It is interesting to note that the work done by these men (before the advent of Jones) was often thought of by them not so much in the light of advancing the boundaries of knowledge, but more immediately in the context of the governance and administration of a conquered country:

The importance of the commerce of India and the advantages of a territorial establishment in Bengal have at length awakened the attention of the British legislature to every circumstance that may conciliate the affections of the natives or ensure stability to the acquisition. Nothing can so

²⁷Edward Said, Orientalism (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978).

favourably conduce to these two points as a well timed toleration in matters of religion and adoption of such original institutes of the country, as do not immediately clash with the laws or interests of the conquerors.²⁸

Using passages such as these, it is customary to describe Orientalism as the ideology of European dominance in Asia, which used 'knowledge' as a political weapon for its own ends. The Orientalist's mission in India was primarily to do with deciphering scripts and studying languages, preparing manuscripts and making these available in print, and interpreting the 'knowledge' of the East in general, even if, as Said argues, these purely scholarly pursuits had been created by and always existed side by side with the compulsions of colonial rule. Empire and power were inextricably bound up with manuscripts, libraries and knowledges, as we clearly see in this passage from William Jones:

... since a variety of causes ... give the English nation a most extensive power in that kingdom [India].... the languages of Asia will now perhaps be studied with uncommon ardour; the valuable manuscripts that enrich the publick libraries will be in a few years elegantly printed; the manners and sentiments of the eastern nations will be perfectly known; and the limits of our knowledge no less extended than the bounds of our empire.²⁹

For readers following in the wake of Said, the significant words in the above passage would be 'power' in the beginning, and 'knowledge' and 'empire' towards its end, and the obvious conclusion would point towards the imperialist uses that Orientalist scholarship has served. From the perspective of this study, what needs to be seen here, however, is rather the area in between those words at the end and the beginning. For instance, the word 'enrich' suggests Jones's own contradictory consciousness of Orientalist studies as textually and culturally generative. It is a contradictory consciousness because Jones and the Orientalists - as indeed does Said - looked upon Orientalist research primarily as a receptacle of knowledge, rather than as an active agent that gave birth to other enterprises, although Said's interpretation of the uses and ends of this knowledge is quite different from, and subversive of, the Orientalist's own assumptions of its scholarly

²⁸Nathaniel Halhed, A Code of Gentoo Laws (London, 1776), ix.

²⁹William Jones, A Persian Grammar (London, 1771), xi-xii.

disinterestedness. But my reading of the particularities that went into the making of Orientalist studies is to see them also as 'physical' material in the form of printed books and libraries (which are invoked in the middle of the above paragraph), that served not only as a receptacle of knowledge, but as a producer of other texts. 'Physical', here, is understood as opposed to metaphysical, in the sense that we are treating Orientalism not only as a container of meaning or knowledge that may be either appreciated (as in David Kopf), or deconstructed (as in Said), but as a source that provided a group of poets with the principal linguistic and thematic content of their work.³⁰

Moving comprehensively away from the path traced by Edward Said, this study attempts to look at Orientalist studies not as equatable with colonialism, but as a body of *writing*, situated in, and giving rise to, a historic and cultural context. For the purposes of this thesis, Orientalist research is seen as a collection of texts whose interest, for us, lies not so much in its underlying collusion with domination, but in the interaction of its subject matter and language with a certain kind of poetry written in nineteenth-century India. It is with these assumptions in mind that I shall be examining the verse produced by this interaction, which I call the 'Orientalist' verse of nineteenth-century India. Putting aside the by now well known collaboration between Orientalism and power, it is possible to find in Orientalist scholarship material from which almost all the poets writing about India in the nineteenth century borrowed. This material and the borrowing from it, as evidenced in the poetry of colonials in India, was as much a part of the colonial process as the much mentioned knowledge-power collaboration.

It is also worth noting that the language used by the Orientalists in their research belonged as substantially to the realm of figurative speech as it did to that of conventional scholarly discourse. It was a project which created the Orient, so to speak, out of language, but the reading I offer differs substantially from the kind of interpretation that Said invokes. Said is concerned, above all, with the claims of Orientalism to be the truth about the Orient, and with pointing out its complicity with authority in the control and exploitation of the

³⁰David Kopf, British Orientalism and the Bengal Renaissance (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969).

Orient. Looking at the same nineteenth-century phenomenon, it is possible to read Orientalist scholarship also as material that contained a multitude of images within it. These images were constituted of the metaphors, similes and figures of speech contained in the language used by the Orientalists in their effort to describe and reconstruct a past. An element of fictionality was thereby produced, embedded paradoxically in the serious, scientific, and factual work of the contributors to the Asiatic Researches. For example, in a scholarly essay entitled 'On the Gods of Greece, Italy and India', where William Jones tries to delineate scientifically the characteristics of the Hindu gods while drawing analogies with European deities, we find descriptive passages of the following sort:

He had a gorgeous appearance, with a thousand heads, and on each of them a crown set with resplendent gems, one of which was larger and brighter than the rest; his eyes gleamed like flaming torches; but his neck, his tongues and his body were black; the skirts of his habit were yellow, and a sparkling jewel hung in every one of his ears; his arms were extended, and adorned with rich bracelets; and his hands bore the holy shell, the radiated weapon, the mace for war, and the lotus.³¹

In other places, the essay abounds in references to deities which catalogue thoroughly their various names, attributes and qualities, while drawing analogies with their Western classical counterparts:

... the *Hindus* also have their *Goddess of Abundance*, whom they usually call LACSHMI... she is also named PEDMA or CAMALA from the sacred Lotos or *Nymphaea*; but her most remarkable name is SRI, or, in the first case, SRIS, which has a resemblance to the *Latin*, [of Ceres] and means fortune or prosperity.³²

or again,

Here may be introduced the *Jupiter Marinus*, or *Neptune*, of the *Romans*, as resembling *Mahadeva* in his *generative character*.... The identity of the *trisula* and the *trident*, the weapon of *Siva* and of *Neptune*, seems to establish this analogy.³³

³¹William Jones, 'On the Gods of Greece, Italy, and India,' Asiatic Researches, I, 212.

³²*ibid.*, 203.

³³*ibid.*, 213-14.

Passages such as these, from Jones's scholarly researches, stand as poetic precursors to much of the work produced in nineteenth-century India by the poets dealt with in this thesis. Consider the following examples of Madhusudan's descriptions of a god and goddess along with their accompanying footnotes, where the descriptive qualities might be seen as similar to Jones's descriptive passage above, while the footnotes provide the information and analogies contained in the other two quotations from Jones given above:

And then a soft and cloudless ray,
Shone bright as smile of sunniest day,
I look'd - there stood beside my bed,
A child of Light - a heavenly maid! -*
Upon her brow a diadem,
Glisten'd with many a starry gem...³⁴

The footnote to this allusion in the poem explains the identity of the goddess: 'Sri - or Lutchmee - the goddess of Fortune, Plenty and Beauty.' Following this in Madhusudan's poem is a description of the god Shiva:

I wept - when, lo! - before me stood -
One girt with snakes of flow'r-crown'd hood,- *
Tall as the loftiest palm that be,
Beneath yon heaven's blue canopy:-
His hue was pale, - and wild his eyes,
Roll'd bright like meteors of the skies,-
A fiery trident high he bore,- *
Methought, it too, was bath'd in gore -
And from his golden crown aloft,-
There came still murmurs sweet and soft, *
Like the low plaints of some young rill,
When check'd its thoughtless, wandering will!³⁵

The three asterisks indicate the endnotes supplied by the poet, which explain firstly, that 'This is the God Sheva - the third person of the Hindu-triad. The Hindus believe that the impression of a lotus adorns the hood of the Cobra de Capella on account of its having been trod upon by the God Krishna. Sheva is always represented as under the influence of Bang - an intoxicating stuff.'; secondly, that : 'Like Neptune Sheva wears a trident called in Sanskrit "Trisulum."'; and thirdly, that : 'The river Ganges is fabled to be on the head of Sheva whence she issues into three streams - one flowing through heaven, and the other

³⁴Michael Madhusudan Dutt, *Captive Ladie*, *Madhusudan Rachanabali*, 502.

³⁵ibid., 501.

two through Earth and Hell respectively.'³⁶ Descriptive passages such as this were used by Madhusudan in order to deliberately insert an Indian air into his poem, and the detailed account of the appearance of Shiva and the symbols associated with his representation, are reminiscent of Jones' s 'scientific' presentation of the gods of India. Scholarly-looking notes explaining what is perceived as the more obscure points of Hindu mythology are derived, once again, from the format of Orientalist research, and comments such as 'Like Neptune Sheva wears a trident...' find an echo in Jones's dissertation quoted above. English poetic idiom, evident here in the use of the word 'rills', was also common to such verse.

Hindu mythology, treated in this manner, given form by the tenets of English prosody, is found ubiquitously in the pages of colonial poetry in India. Orientalist interests created not only the choice of subject matter, but also informed the entire historical background from within which such poems were produced. A later Indian poet, for example, also wrote on the same theme in a poem called 'Hymn to Shiva':

Shiva! whom all the gods in heaven obey,
 Thou mightiest, deign to hear my humble prayer!
 I've sinned. Oh save me from the fiend Despair,
 Which turns to gloom the sunshine of the day!
 The angry storms of Fate around me play,
 Strange sounds are hurtling through the troubled air,
 Be thou my steadfast rock, my guide, and stay.³⁷

The poet, Omesh Chunder Dutt, was a convert to Christianity, highly westernised and educated in English; his poem is born not out of his own experience or inspiration in Hindu faith, or from an 'authentic' Hindu context, but is derived partially from the pages of Orientalist descriptions of Hindu gods. The devotional tone in which a Hindu bard might address his god in his temple is different from the urban, secular and distanced tone of this verse; the latter can be more fully understood by contextualising it in Omesh Chunder Dutt's literary education, his social background, and his contemporary preoccupation with the Orientalist enterprise in India .

³⁶ibid., 510-11.

³⁷Omesh Chunder Dutt, 'Hymn To Shiva', Dutt Family Album, 56.

What needs to be emphasised here is the evidence we see of Orientalist scholarship indirectly giving birth to 'creative' writing among a certain section in colonial India. There *was* something of value that was born out of the Orientalist enterprise in India, and that was the rich body of writing which derived almost directly from Orientalist texts its basis for existence. What is now valuable in this corpus of creative work, however, besides the creation of 'good' poems or the existence of literary merit in these poems, is the element in these poems that give an indication of the manner in which these colonial poets confronted the colonial situation, wresting from the colonizer the power of the ruling language and putting it to use for their own ends. Therefore, as pointed out earlier, we cannot value these poems by either purely aesthetic or Saidian procedures, but need to affirm their unique historicity and engagement with power and at the same time seek a language with which to do so.

Lastly, it must be mentioned that recent studies of colonialism and literature that have dealt with British India have failed (as had Said's Orientalism) to take fully into account the voice of the colonized themselves. David Trotter, in an attempt to redefine the current narrowness of the concept of the 'colonial subject', quotes John Mackenzie's distinction between a 'centrifugal' and a 'centripetal' tendency in academic studies of colonialism, where 'Imperial history and the imperial idea have been examined almost entirely in a centrifugal manner as the radiation of influences from Britain into its wider hinterland.'³⁸ Said's study of Orientalism focused its attention on the West's manipulative tendencies in its management of the Orient and its images; the response of the 'East' in its encounter with the forces of colonisation were not included in the theoretical discourse either in Orientalism or in studies after it.³⁹ Here, I shall briefly examine the gaps in the discourse of three important representative works of this type: Gauri Vishwanathan's Masks of Conquest: Literary Study and British Rule in India (1990), Sara Suleri's The Rhetoric of English India (1992), and Nigel Leask's British Romantic Writers and the East:

³⁸David Trotter, 'Colonial subjects', Critical Quarterly, Autumn 1990, 3-20.

³⁹See Aijaz Ahmed, 'Orientalism and After,' In Theory (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1994), 172.

Anxieties of Empire (1992).⁴⁰ Using the Saidian model as their medium, the first two works from the American academy attempt to revise the discourse of colonial cultural studies as it is practised in the West. Such works, while fulfilling an urgent necessity in their time and place, still leave out of consideration the local, indigenous responses of the colonized subjects with whom they are concerned. Vishwanathan's work is a study of the English curriculum in India, beginning with the early history of British involvement in Indian education from the Charter Act of 1813, continuing with the involvement of missionary Alexander Duff and the British Government with religious instruction in the school curriculum and the subsequent shift away from religious functions to the secular uses of literature, concluding with the strengthening of literary studies as a branch of British cultural hegemony and the gradual disenchantment of Indians with colonial rule leading to the breakdown of the success of English literary education.⁴¹ Nowhere in this long narrative do the opinions, reactions, records, or testimonies of Indians themselves intrude upon the flow of the story. While the opinions of the Bengali intelligentsia do make an appearance in a solitary footnote, Mahatma Gandhi's words are used on one occasion on page 126, while Bankim Chandra Chatterjee is mentioned in a single sentence on page 157.⁴² Undoubtedly, the book's concerns are more with the vast tracts of nineteenth-century British governmental and historical documents, 'concentrating on major themes and developments rather than aiming to show the available material in all its variety', yet it is a pity that the areas left out of consideration are just 'those concerning the effects of literary instruction on individual Indians and the readings that educated Indians gave to the English texts they were taught.'⁴³

Suleri's work, on the other hand, seems ostensibly to include more of the Indian voice, focusing, as it does, 'on paradigmatic moments in the multiple stories generated by the British colonisation of the Indian subcontinent' to 'reveal the complicity that always

⁴⁰Gauri Vishwanathan, Masks of Conquest: Literary Study and British Rule in India (London: Faber and Faber, 1990); Sara Suleri, The Rhetoric of English India, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992); Nigel Leask, British Romantic Writers and the East: Anxieties of Empire (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

⁴¹Vishwanathan, Introduction, 21-22.

⁴²See Vishwanathan, 183, footnote 10.

⁴³ibid., 21.

operates in these stories', making them 'a series of guilty transactions between two cultures that are equally evasive and uncertain of their own authority.'⁴⁴ The book deals consecutively with Edmund Burke, the trial of Warren Hastings, representations of India in nineteenth-century Englishwomen's sketch-books, and the fiction of Kipling, Forster, Naipaul and Salman Rushdie. While five of these seven chapters deal anyway with English protagonists, Naipaul and Rushdie, arguably, are also based or centred in the West. The Indian in Suleri's book (as represented by the last two authors) thus speaks from centre-stage, rather than from the margins of empire, and his voice seems to assume importance only after Indian Independence. Yet, as we shall see in this thesis, Indians in the nineteenth-century were as vocal or opinionated as any English person. Why then are their speeches, their opinions, or their texts, whether in the indigenous languages or in English, not of any import in the study of nineteenth-century accounts of the anxieties of the Empire's narratives?

Nigel Leask, in British Romantic Writers and the East, acknowledges the current tendency in political and historical readings of Romanticism to 'confine such a study to the European scene.'⁴⁵ Locating his argument in the instabilities of Romantic representations of the Ottoman Empire, India, China and the Far East in the works of Byron, Shelley, De Quincey, and S.T. Coleridge, Leask sets out to give a more complex picture of the cultural, institutional and sexual politics of the period. Necessarily, though, this portrait of the period is located once again in the West, among the English Romantics. Unfortunately, the 'subver[sion] [of] the Imperialist project', which 'was largely the work of the colonized peoples' rather than the work of British Romantic writers, remains, 'with the exception of the remarkable Rammohun Roy... a *silent* but informing presence throughout [his] book'.⁴⁶

There is no need, however, for this forced silence. Indians throughout the nineteenth-century articulated their responses to colonisation, to colonising narratives, even to theories of colonization (see Kasiprasad's defence against Mill's History in Chapter 2),

⁴⁴Suleri, front flap of book cover.

⁴⁵Leask, front flap of book cover.

⁴⁶Leask, 2.

in a manner and form that was unprecedented in colonial history.⁴⁷ My thesis attempts, through a study of the nineteenth-century English poetry of colonized Indians, to correct the current imbalance in literary studies to some degree by lending a space to some of the voices of the colonized, neglected both by British and Indian cultural and literary historians. The result, in this detailed study of Orientalist verse, is an account of the confrontation between the colonizer and the colonized in which the voices of the colonized were already engaged in the formulation of an Indian identity through a unique use of indigenous heritage and history.

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The Asiatic Society of Bengal and the Fort William College at Calcutta

I have so far looked at the nature and origins of the poetry that was produced in English in nineteenth-century India and the gaps in recent academic literary studies in dealing with the interaction between literature and colonialism in British India. The Orientalist texts that provided the source material for this poetry were themselves sometimes published at about the same time as the poetry was being written, and here I shall examine, as a necessary background to my study of the poetry, the phenomenon of Orientalist scholarship as it was engendered and the circumstances in which it came to grow.

In his first presidential address to the Asiatic Society, William Jones stated that his "inquiry into the History, Civil and Natural, the Antiquities, Arts, Sciences and Literature of Asia" was a means to the end of discovering truths about "Man and Nature". The

⁴⁷One account, however, of the voices of nineteenth-century Indians raised in response to Imperialism and colonization exists in the field of South Asian history. Europe Reconsidered examines the life and writings of Bhudev Mukhopadhyay (1827-1894), Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay (1838-1894), and Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902) in the context of the changing nature of the political, economic, and socio-cultural world of Asia, to give an account of 'perhaps the earliest manifestation of the revolution in the mental world of Asia's elite groups.' Tapan Raichaudhuri, Europe Reconsidered: Perceptions of the West in Nineteenth Century Bengal (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1988), Preface, ix.

investigations of the Asiatic Society would be concerned with the three areas of human learning--"history, Science and Art." In his own words:

The first [history] comprehends either an account of natural productions, or the genuine records of empires and states; the second [science] embraces the whole circle of pure and mixed mathematics together with ethics and law, as far as they depend on the reasoning faculty; the third [art] includes all the beauties of imagery and the chorus of invention, displayed in modulated language, or represented by colour, figure or sound.⁴⁸

Subsequent discoveries in all these areas outlined by Jones went on to fill in the details of the picture of a glorious ancient India. Scholars looked towards 'authentic' sources such as grammatical treatises and commentaries, philosophic systems, religious myths and symbols, and varied sculptural and architectural remains to substantiate this picture of ancient India, and among all these the rediscovery of classical Indian literature was also undertaken.

One of the most important ancient classics to be regenerated, through Jones's translation, was Kalidasa's *Sakuntala*, a work that was to become one of the most popular texts of ancient Sanskrit literature. The rediscovery of the *Sakuntala* and the effect it had on European and Indian intellectual life is a case study of the sweeping ways in which the work done by the Orientalists affected both the Indian's and the West's perception of India. Jones had come upon the Sanskrit *natakas* (plays) through Brahmin pundits in Calcutta who had led him to a treasure house of ancient Indian literature that they had custody of by right of caste. Excited by the prospect of a forgotten dramatic literature, and keen to make known this evident masterpiece to English language readers, Jones published Sacontala; or, the Fatal Ring: an Indian Drama in October 1789 in Calcutta.⁴⁹ Before this publication, Indians themselves were generally unaware of its existence, and certainly had no

⁴⁸William Jones, 'A Discourse on the Institution of a Society', *Asiatic Researches*, I, ix.

⁴⁹Sacontala; or, The Fatal Ring: An Indian Drama by Calidas. First published in Calcutta in 1789. A year later there was a London edition by Edwards in 1790, and then another in 1792. Several translations in other European languages quickly followed: George Forster's German translation from Jones in 1791; Nikolai M. Karamsin's Russian, from Forster, in 1792; Hans West's Danish, from Jones, in 1793; A. Bruguere's French, from Jones, in 1803; and Doria's Italian, from Bruguere, in 1815.

knowledge that they had hidden, in the annals of their past literature, a Sanskrit poet whom Jones, in his preface, called the Indian Shakespeare.

The tumultuous reception the work received in Europe surpassed all of Jones' s expectations, arousing more excitement than any previous translation of Oriental literature except the Arabian Nights. The play was widely reviewed by European periodicals, and general opinion was in agreement that India too had contributed to world literature. Reviewers compared Kalidasa with Shakespeare (often to the detriment of the former); Herder and Goethe were deeply impressed with the play; and it became an important topic of conversation at that time in Europe and even America.⁵⁰ But it was the Indian reaction to the publication of Jones's *Sakuntala* that was truly unprecedented in the colonial history of India. At the time of its publication, Persian was the predominant language of culture in India, Sanskrit having been reduced to a minority status, kept alive by the Brahmins as a part of their inherited caste rituals. According to Jones's principal biographer, Garland Cannon:

The Indian people had nothing but shreds of past memories, a few dim recollections of what their nation had once been and had done in the past....

...the sudden startling knowledge that they had a great bard who had died eleven centuries before Shakespeare and Jonson, provided the beginning of a remarkable intellectual and even spiritual regeneration, a renaissance of national culture, a part of which was the excellent Indological study done later by Indians in Calcutta. Realization of the fact that they had a native drama helped give Indians the pride that heretofore they had rarely possessed.... Now Indians could hold up their heads as civilised, cultured men. The way had been opened for them to regain their literature from the Brahmans. Theirs was not a foreign, Persian culture, after all. It was a proud native culture that boasted magnificent achievements stretching backward for centuries to the brilliant Gupta period, when Kalidasa was composing his rich classical dramas...⁵¹

What Cannon calls 'a renaissance of national culture' was actually the fabrication of a national heritage and past that had never existed previously as a totality. Thus a canon was created for classical Indian literature, with *Sakuntala* being followed by many other

⁵⁰For a more detailed discussion, see G. Cannon, Oriental Jones (New York: Asia Publishing House, 1964), 165.

⁵¹Cannon, 166.

translations of Sanskrit poetry and drama by Jones's successors. In Cannon's account of the reaction to the publication of this Indian classic, it is possible to see exactly in what manner Orientalist scholarship was creating the excitement and the atmosphere that was to give to the colonial poetry with which we are concerned its themes and interests.

Translations had been the order of the day before the establishment of the Asiatic Society. Francis Gladwin had translated Abul Fazl's famous work and called it The Ayine Akbary or the Institutes of the Emperor Akbar (1777); Charles Wilkins had produced The Bhagvat-Geeta or dialogues of Kreesna and Arjuna in eighteen lectures (1785), and Halhed had been the pioneer of this sort of translation work with his A Code of Gentoo Laws (1776). The task of translation, however, was soon relegated to secondary importance in favour of academic publications. Scholarly essays that illuminated areas of India's past that had not been spoken of before were now gathered and published in the journal Asiatic Researches, which became the first journal, in 1788, to publish contributions consisting of original research on India. By 1779, five volumes of the journal had been brought out, and such was the demand for it in Europe that a pirated edition appeared there in 1798. Research and scholarship that illuminated areas of Asian antiquity came to be prized above the translations that had occupied early Orientalists such as Wilkins. Broader analyses and conceptual generalisations became the norm, and translations, as H.T. Colebrooke (Jones's successor) wrote, 'are for those who need to fill their purses', though translation work never completely stopped during the course of the century.⁵²

The pages of the Asiatic Researches were consequently filled with seminal essays in a scholarly mode that attempted to build, brick by brick, an 'authentic' idea of ancient India. The topics of the articles published here after the establishment of the Asiatic Society were detailed and specific, organised and concrete. A list of the titles of these essays will give an idea as to their range and content. Examples of major publications included 'On Hindu Widows,' (H.T. Colebrooke) and 'On Astronomical Calculations of the Hindus' (S.

⁵²Colebrooke letter, no date, cited in F. Max Müller, Biographical Essays (London, 1884), 223.

Davies) in the 1795 issue; 'A Royal Grant of Land on a Copper Plate,' (C. Wilkins) concerning the earliest historical treatment of the Pala dynasty in Bengal based on inscriptional evidence in the 1778 issue; 'Discovery of Two Urns in the Vicinity of Benares', (J. Duncan) which was about Sarnath as a Buddhist centre in the 1797 issue; 'On the Vedas', (H.T. Colebrooke) in the 1805 issue; 'Sketch of the Sikhs' (J. Malcolm) in the 1810 issue; and 'On the Ancient Geography of India' (F. Watford) in the 1815 issue. The list is varied, detailed, and extensive, and its importance lies not in the isolated evidence of particulars that each essay plumbed, but in the overall picture it created of ancient India. The image of an accomplished, glorious India was the picture that the Orientalists created, and this was the image that supplied the writers and poets and thinkers of a subsequent generation of colonial poets with their subject matter and enthusiasms.

One of the primary institutions of Orientalist scholarship, Fort William College in Calcutta, which was responsible for the first organised production and generation of texts in the history of India, was founded in the year 1800. Fort William College was basically a school for training British civil servants in the languages and culture of the people they would rule over, and served, therefore, a practical purpose which the Asiatic Society, with its scholarly interests and its emphasis on classical languages and culture, could not provide. By the turn of the century, the Fort William College, with the joint assistance of the Serampore missionaries and the Orientalists at the Asiatic Society, became an important centre for the literary 'revival' of India. This literary regeneration could be said to have had its origins in the college's need for a library and materials for printing and publishing the Oriental works necessary for its curriculum - a curriculum devised to meet the needs of training English administrators.

Fort William College was the premier Orientalist institution in the world at that time, accomplished in the study of the languages and culture of the Orient. As William Carey said in a speech at the College on September 29, 1804:

The Coloquial [sic] Hindoostanee, the classic Persian, the commercial Bengalee, the learned Arabic, and the primaevial Shanscrit[sic], are spoken fluently, after having been studied grammatically by English youths. Did ever any University in

Europe, or any literary Institution in any other age or country exhibit a scene so interesting as this?⁵³

The opinions of teachers such as Colebrooke and Carey helped to produce a generation of students who did as much to generate ideas of a Hindu great tradition as the translations and researches of the Asiatic Society. The educational programme at Fort William College influenced students such as Charles Metcalfe, William Bayley, William Bird, John Digby, and Thomas Fortesque even while becoming the chief instrument for an indigenous literary and cultural revival, led by, among others, Henry Derozio, Kasiprasad Ghosh, and Madhusudan Dutt.

Of considerable help to this project were the large grants the college provided for student awards, for work done in the languages, and for studies of the indigenous culture. Money was provided by the Court of Directors of the East India Company to the college (at least until 1815) for these purposes, amounting to 150,000 rupees annually. The Charter Act of 1813 that renewed the East India Company's Charter contained the following clause:

A sum of not less than a lakh 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 knowledge of the Sciences among the inhabitants of the British Territories in India.⁵⁴

This concern with the 'revival and improvement of literature' (by which was meant Indian literature) resulted in the printing of thousands of books in a quantity and manner as there had never been before, and equally importantly, resulted in these books then being read and their content imbibed by educated Indians; for, as the next clause of the Charter Act specified, the College was also interested in the 'encouragement of the learned natives of India.' This meant that, in effect, this institute was responsible, almost single-handedly in the beginning, for the re-creation and regeneration of Indian texts in Indian languages among the Indian people. The production of these texts and their dissemination in the popular consciousness is something that I shall be looking at throughout the course of this

⁵³William Carey, *Primitae Orientalis* (Calcutta, 1804), 114.

⁵⁴Cited in Priyaranjan Sen, *Western Influence in Bengali Literature* (Calcutta: Calcutta University Press, 1932), 64.

study, especially as I trace the ways in which Indian poets writing in English borrowed from them in their work.

It was the Fort William College that made printing and publishing in the classical and vernacular tongues possible in India on a large scale. Kopf sums up the contribution the college made:

This development [printing and publishing] was stimulated by its [the college's] ever increasing need for authentic publications and was possible because it possessed the requisite financial resources. Within its first decade of operation, Fort William had created an array of peripheral and satellite institutions that fostered an atmosphere conducive to the expansion of the communicative arts. In 1801 Serampore Mission Press was launched; in 1802 Gilchrist and Hunter established the Hindoostanee Press; in 1806 Matthew Lumsden received financial aid for a Persian Press; and in 1807, through the initiative of Colebrooke, the Sanskrit Press was established. Every one of these enterprises owed its origin and continued existence to college support. Without these establishments ... it is doubtful whether Serampore could have published India's first vernacular newspaper in 1818 or whether the Calcutta School Book Society could have published the first in its series of textbooks in that same year.⁵⁵

During the course of the first two decades of the nineteenth century, then, books in the Indian languages began to be available on a large scale for the first time in India. These books were a carefully chosen selection from classical Indian 'literary' works, 'histories', and folk tales, or whatever the Orientalists thought useful in their task of the reconstruction of Indian literature and history. The work done by the Asiatic Society and the Fort William College was instrumental in creating a tradition and history of India that was incorporated in text books which consequently found a place in libraries and educational institutions throughout India, and indeed in England as well. The poetry that was produced in the nineteenth century in India in English was almost always written by men closely connected with this corpus of texts in one capacity or another. Whether they were teachers such as Derozio, or more commonly, readers of these texts in the capacity of students and intellectuals, such as Kasiprasad or Michael Dutt, all the poets writing about India in the

⁵⁵Kopf, 115.

early nineteenth century would have come into direct contact with the material that was generated in those first days of printing and publishing in Bengal.

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The European Fashion for Orientalism

There were few colonial poets writing in India at this time, and fewer who have survived in the popular imagination. These men were colonial subjects exploiting their circumstances in order to create a body of work that achieved little recognition or fame. One of the important factors influencing their endeavours was the current fashion for the 'Orient' that was sweeping through Europe at the time. Thus, there was, in the West of that period, a preoccupation with things Oriental, and interest in the mission of rediscovering the 'glory' of ancient Asia for the benefit of European knowledge.

Raymond Schwab, in his book The Oriental Renaissance, carefully portrays the coincidence of the advent of Romanticism and Orientalism in the West, taking the position that Romanticism welcomed the Orient as an influence benefiting poetry, prose, science and philosophy. Schwab's writing is always dominated by the human image, and the extension of the domain of humanism by the eighteenth-century Orientalists was to him an enormous event that made the world complete. The partial humanism of the first Classical renaissance became the integral humanism of the second Oriental one that deposited the whole world before European man. India, of all the Orients, enjoyed at this time an overwhelming prestige among the Romantics, for it posed, in its totality, the great question of the Different. India 'presented, as had been seen only once before in the history of mankind, a past that was not dead but remained "an antiquity of today" and always.'⁵⁶ The arrival of William Jones in India in 1783 is a momentous event for Schwab; when Antequilla Duperron published the Zend Avesta in 1771, it was the first time that anyone had succeeded in breaking into one of the walled languages of Asia.

⁵⁶Raymond Schwab, The Oriental Renaissance, trans. Gene Patterson-Black and Victor Reinking (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), 6.

After the publication of *Sakuntala* in 1789, scholars had followed Jones's advice in the preface to take up the task of translating from Sanskrit manuscripts, and many more publications saw the light of day. Schlegel's publication *Über die Sprache und Weisheit der Indier* [On the Language and Wisdom of the Indians] (1808) marked the birth of a new consciousness in Europe of a vast literature that had remained unknown to the western world.⁵⁷ Coinciding with the German Romantic Revival, this discovery of Asian culture became one of the most invigorating influences of the time. Schopenhauer spoke of the revelations of the Upanishads thus:

That incomparable book stirs the spirit to the very depths of the soul. From every sentence deep, original, and sublime thoughts arise, and the whole is pervaded by a high and holy and earnest spirit. Indian air surrounds us, and original thoughts of kindred spirits.... It has been the solace of my life, it will be the solace of my death.⁵⁸

Kalidasa's *Meghaduta*, 'The Cloud Messenger', inspired the passage in Schiller's *Maria Stuart*, where the exiled queen calls on the clouds, as they fly southwards, to greet the land of her youth; two of Heine's finest poems, *Die Lotusblume* and *Auf Flügeln des Gesanges* are infused with the spirit of Hindu lyrical poetry, while Goethe's enthusiasm for *Sakuntala* was perhaps the most well known to readers at that time.

Indian classical literature and philosophy undoubtedly influenced, often through the works of German scholars and poets, the pioneers of the English Romantic Movement. Nowhere is the Vedantic doctrine of *Maya* more magnificently propounded, for example, than in *Adonais*:

The One remains, the many change and pass,
Heaven's light for ever shines, Earth's shadows fly,
Life, like a dome of many-coloured glass,
Stains the white radiance of Eternity,
Until Death tramples it to fragments.⁵⁹

Without going into a detailed study of the influences of Orientalist scholarship on European poets, it is obvious that a wave of intellectual opinion had been formed at about this time in

⁵⁷Friedrich Schlegel, *Über die Sprache und Weisheit der Indier* (Heidelberg, 1808).

⁵⁸Schopenhauer, cited in G.T. Garrat ed., *The Legacy of India* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1937), 32.

⁵⁹Thomas Hutchinson, ed. *Shelley: Poetical Works* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970), 443.

Europe that led to a consciousness of the Orient among the practitioners of literature there.⁶⁰ The writers who reflected this awareness derived their knowledge from Orientalist translations and scholarship, or indirectly from enthusiasts in Europe who popularised the Orient in their works. Gradually, the detailed and academic knowledge of the specialists disseminated into general knowledge, percolating downwards and extending far beyond the original narrow circle of scholars. Schwab quotes from the young Hugo in 'the preface to Orientales':

Today, for a thousand reasons, all of which foster progress, the Orient is of more concern than it has ever been before. Never before have oriental studies been explored so deeply. In the century of Louis XIV one was a Hellenist: today one is an Orientalist. This is a great step forward. Never before have so many minds probed the great abyss of Asia at one time. Today we have a scholar assigned to every oriental idiom from China to Egypt. As a result of this, the Orient - as an image or as an idea - has become for the intellect as well as for the imagination a sort of general preoccupation, to which the author of this book has succumbed, perhaps without realizing it.⁶¹

India acquired a whole figurative dimension in Western literature, meticulously listed by Schwab, from 'the pre-Orientalism of Milton and Dryden through the Lake Poets to Emerson, Whitman, the Transcendentalists, Richter, Novalis, Schelling, Ruckert, Heine, Goethe, and of course Friedrich Schlegel.'⁶² While Schwab notes figures in the canon of Western literature, the poets he leaves out of his list are those who were actually operating from the very site of Orientalist scholarship, those forgotten and excluded writers of verse, Indians themselves.

For Indians, writing English verse for the first time in their history, this Western fashion for the Orient was a vital shaping force that moulded and directed their poetry from the very start. It was a current that generated so much excitement in the West that it would have been impossible for the educated Indian not to have been influenced by what they

⁶⁰This theme has been dealt with in Marie E de Meester, Oriental Influences in the English Literature of the 19th century (Heidelberg: C. Winter, 1915); de Sola Pinto, 'Sir William Jones and English Literature'; 'The Literary Place of Sir William Jones (1746-94)'; and most recently in Javed Majeed's Ungoverned Imaginings (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992).

⁶¹Schwab, 12. (Schwab refers to Hugo's Les Orientales as Orientales throughout this section which I have therefore kept in that form.)

⁶²Schwab, 12.

perceived was in demand from the Orient. The bond that formed between current Orientalist concerns (later, the themes of British historians) and the poets who wrote in English, was in part influenced, it must be always kept in mind, by the fads and fancies of the audience in the West, at whom this poetry seemed to be primarily directed. The urge to explain India in their verse persisted throughout the Orientalist poetry of the nineteenth century, whether that meant, early on, delineating the features and attributes of gods and goddesses of the Hindu pantheon in the manner of Jones, or, later in the century, reflecting the tumultuous events of medieval Indian history in verse after the legends recorded in Tod's Rajasthan.

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English Education and the Renaissance in Bengal

The nineteenth century in Bengal is generally viewed as a glorious period of renaissance by historians. The word 'renaissance' is often used to refer to a revitalised Bengali language and literature, or to its modern reinterpretation of Hindu tradition, or simply to denote a historical time that spawned an entire generation of intellectual and creative giants. The multicultural nature of the Bengal renaissance is evident from contributors such as William Jones (discoverer of the Aryan Golden Age), Rammohun Roy (progenitor of modern reform movements in India), and William Carey (father of modern Bengali prose), who symbolise together the nature of the renaissance as historical rediscovery, socio-religious reformation and linguistic and literary modernization. The influx of English education had a very important role to play in bringing about the Bengal renaissance, and English literary studies had a decisive role in the creation of the poetry we have been discussing. A detailed treatment of the beginnings of English education in Bengal is therefore necessary before we can begin to appreciate the contingencies that created the corpus of poetry written in English by Bengalis.

The beginning of English education in Bengal is to be found not, as might be expected, in the laws and legislations passed by British government policy, but in the private enterprise of the people of Bengal, who realised that there were material benefits to

be gained from the acquisition of the English language. Long before Macaulay championed the cause of Western learning in India and engineered the victory of the Anglicists over the Orientalists with his renowned Minute submitted on February 2, 1835, the Bengali people had striven on their own to acquire an education in English. It was in 1835 that Governor-General Bentinck passed the Resolution that declared that 'all funds appropriated for the purposes of education would be best employed on English education alone,' whereas the Hindu College, which was the first collegiate institution of its kind anywhere outside of the West, was founded by the native elite of Calcutta in 1817.⁶³ The imparting of English education was furthered also by the invaluable contribution of the missionaries in the establishment of countless schools and colleges all over the districts of Bengal, such as the Serampore College (1818) and Bishop's College (1819).

Sir Edward Hyde, chief justice of the Supreme Court in Calcutta, was well aware of the irony of being approached, in 1816, first by Rammohun Roy, followed by a group of Calcutta citizens, requesting him for 'an establishment for the education of their children in a liberal manner as practised by Europeans of condition'.⁶⁴ Hyde reports that the natives were emphatic in their demand for receiving a classical knowledge of English language and literature:

When they were told that the Government was advised to suspend any declaration in favour of their undertaking, from tender regard to their peculiar opinions, which a classical education in the English manner might tread upon, they answered very shrewdly, by stating their surprise that they had any objection to a liberal education, that if they found anything in the course of it which they could not reconcile to their religious opinions, they were not bound to receive it; but still they should wish to be informed of everything that the English gentleman learnt, and they would take that which they found good and liked best.⁶⁵

⁶³Cited in N.K. Sinha, ed. History of Bengal (Calcutta: University of Calcutta Press, 1967), 439.

⁶⁴Letter from Sir Edward Hyde East to Mr J. Harrington, another Judge of the Supreme Court. This letter was first unearthed by Brojendranath Banerjee for a paper contributed to the Journal of the Bihar and Orissa Research Society. Cited in Upendra Nath Ball, Rammohun Roy (Calcutta: U. Ray & Sons, 1933), 154.

⁶⁵Great Britain, Parliamentary Papers, 1852-53, Evidence of William Wilberforce Bird, 32:237.

It was this same group of rich Bengalis that went on to found the Hindu College in 1817, the institution with which, without exception, all the Indian poets who wrote English verse were associated for three quarters of the century. Tutored by teachers such as D.L. Richardson and Henry Derozio, the pupils of the Hindu College went on to become notorious as the most radical advocates of social change in Bengal. The figure of Henry Derozio was an important one in Bengal at this time, so much so that members of 'Young Bengal' - the intellectual rebels of the 1920's with whom the first Bengali poets writing in English were loosely associated - were also known as 'Derozians'. David Lester Richardson was also extremely popular as a teacher of English literature at the Hindu College, where he was later Principal. Intensely interested in encouraging local literary talent, from 1830-1837 he acted as the editor of the Bengal Annual, afterwards editing Calcutta Monthly Journal, and from 1834-49, The Calcutta Literary Gazette, periodicals which are among the most valuable sources of literary activity of the time in Calcutta. He himself was a poet and writer, publishing no less than seven volumes between 1822 and 1855, but his poetry was in the nature of occasional verse expressed usually in the form of odes addressed to ladies or sonnets on the theme of exile from England in a foreign land.⁶⁶ While Derozio and D.L. Richardson are important figures as poets, it was also as teachers that they influenced greatly the spirit that was manifest in the colonial poetry with which we are concerned. This poetry was peculiarly a product of its time, born of the literary curriculum taught in the classes and the fervent anglicism in intellectual society's opinions and tastes on the one hand, reflecting an enthusiasm for English poets and English poetic idiom, and of the English enthusiasm for Oriental themes and Eastern histories on the other.

It is necessary, in order to appreciate the climate that produced the first verses written in English by Indians, to understand the social and historical framework that made such an endeavour not only possible, but prestigious. Nineteenth-century Calcutta was

⁶⁶These were: Miscellaneous Poems (Calcutta, 1822); Sonnets and Other Poems (London, 1825); Literary Leaves (Calcutta, 1836); The Anglo-Indian Passage (London, 1845); Literary Chit-Chat with Miscellaneous Poems (Calcutta, 1848); Literary Recreations (London, 1852); Flowers and Flower Gardens (Calcutta, 1855).

dominated by consolidated groups of wealthy and largely high caste members of the Bengali Hindu community. Elite groups of families (among them the Tagores) had amassed enormous fortunes in the eighteenth century by acting both as independent businessmen and as associates of the East India Company. In spite of having profited commercially from their interaction with British traders, however, this first generation of urban Calcuttans worked well within the traditional Hindu framework in their life-styles and manners. By the first three decades of the nineteenth century, however, financial gain had become modest by eighteenth-century standards. A class of moderately wealthy people developed below the established eighteenth century elite, and a distinct change came about in the metropolitan environment. The professional orientation of this class shifted mainly in the direction of subordinate judicial and executive service in the British government of Bengal. Law became a lucrative profession for those with a knowledge of English, and men such as Prasannakumar Tagore and Rasomoy Dutt became famous as lawyers even while they were landowners or businessmen. Both these men had acquired an English education through private tuition, as did other leading Bengalis of the time such as Radhakanta Deb and Ram Kamal Sen (founder members of the Hindu College) and Rammohun Roy.

A private education in English was what all the prominent members of Bengali society at the turn of the century possessed as a passport to financial security and gain. This was the generation that took part in the foundation of the Hindu College, the Calcutta School Book Society, and the Brahmo Samaj. A rigid attachment to tradition that was carried over from the previous century was combined in most of these men (with the notable exception of Rammohun Ray, who flouted tradition most radically) with a remarkable zeal for education and public services. While being acknowledged defenders of traditionalism, they were also promoters of the growth of education and social reform.

Subsequent to the changes brought about by this generation of men who synthesised traditionalism with progressiveness, there came about, in the late Twenties and early Thirties of the nineteenth century, the emergence of a class that was completely opposed to the old dominant groups and championed a new set of values. This class, defined for the first time as an intelligentsia in the Western sense of the term, was

composed almost entirely of the students who had received an organised public instruction in the English medium. Their social origin was mixed, and contemporary literary works refer to them as the gentry (*bhadralok*) in both well-off and straitened circumstances. A correspondent to the Sadler Commission had reported:

The majority of the students who flock to the schools and colleges belong to the orthodox middle classes. Most of these families still live in the villages. Since the introduction of English education, however, there has been a regular influx of Bhadrakalok classes towards the metropolis or to one or other of the 'mafassal' towns. They have been attracted thither by the new openings created by the British administrative machinery, so that people who were in the past content to live and die within the surroundings of their own village, have, in order to share the life of the metropolis, transformed themselves into an urban community which is composed of lawyers, doctors, engineers, school masters, clerks, and officials.⁶⁷

For the first time in the history of Bengal, and India, there emerged a consolidated urban middle class with a common education, a common ideology, and a common set of values. A formal education in the English medium gave this class certain tastes and affiliations which kept them firmly anchored to a particular cultural ideal.

That ideal was neither Ciceronian *humanitas* ... nor classical Greek.... It was the culture of the Hanoverian and Victorian England -rational and empirical, egalitarian and romantic, utilitarian and positivist, with a touch of Elizabethan glory wafted across the seas on the viewless wings of Elizabethan poesy. Bengal went to school... at England [sic] of Shakespeare, Milton and Byron, Bacon, Locke and Bentham, Gibbon, Hume and Macaulay, Burke, Spencer and Mill.⁶⁸

The first half of the nineteenth century produced the most immediate and whole-hearted response to Western influence. The ardour of 'Young Bengal' for the ideological implications of English education sometimes took on an adolescent character, but nevertheless acquired a striking seriousness in the society of the thirties. The right of independent thinking was taught in text books, but was out of place in the houses of students where the family priest, the family deity, and the patriarchal heads of these families dominated. Such violent paradoxes led to extreme reactions, and the youth of this

⁶⁷Report of the Sadler Commission, Calcutta University Commission, 1917-1919, Vol. 1 (Calcutta: Superintendent Government Printing, 1919), 124.

⁶⁸Sinha, 475.

generation, 'Young Bengal' or the Derozians, led unthinkable attacks on the conventions of traditional Hinduism, such as Rasik Krishna Mullick's open denial of the sanctity of the Ganges, Radhanath Sikdar's insistence on eating beef, and Ramgopal Ghose's refusal to undergo the ritual of penance, to take a few examples.⁶⁹ These young Bengali intellectuals were criticised by a later age for being 'denationalised' and 'hyper-westernised', for denying the validity of their entire cultural heritage, and following in the purely intellectual path of extreme westernization.

The influence of English literature upon the newly educated classes in Bengal has been chronicled repeatedly. In a letter to Queen Victoria, Lord Hardinge wrote in 1845:

The literature of the West is the most favourite study among the Hindoos in their schools and colleges. They will discuss with accuracy the most important events in British history. Boys of 15 [sic] years of age, black in colour, will recite the most favourite passages from Shakespeare, ably quoting the notes of the English and German commentators.⁷⁰

In a section entitled 'Bengal's Favourite Authors,' P. Sen outlines the prominent names in poetry that were popular in the nineteenth century. Shakespeare, of course, was among the earliest to be read and admired, and D.L. Richardson receives much praise for being one of the best exponents of Shakespeare. K.M. Banerji, one of the earliest converts to Christianity among the members of 'Young Bengal', had declared in 1830 that Pope and Dryden were to be held in higher esteem than the Hindu *Shastras*. Ram Tanu Lahiri, another of the Derozians, read to his students passages from Burns, Cowper, Thomson, Campbell and Milton's *Comus*, in addition to the usual texts prescribed for class teaching. Akshay Kumar Dutta read Pope's version of Homer's *Iliad* and Virgil's *Aeneid* while in school, and the famous reformer Keshub Chandra Sen's favourite poets were Shakespeare, Milton and Young.⁷¹ While the earlier half of the century saw a preponderance of the influence of neo-classical writers (though Milton and Shakespeare remained constantly admired), the latter half registered a swing towards the Romantic poets. Of these Byron

⁶⁹A. Gupta, ed. *Studies in the Bengal Renaissance* (Calcutta: National Council of Education, 1958), 19.

⁷⁰Cited in B.N. Banerjee, *Sambad Patre Sekaler Katha*, [Talk of Past Times in Newspapers] Vol.2 (Calcutta: Bangiya Sahitya Parishad, 1938), 19-20.

⁷¹Sen, *Western Influence*, 141-142.

was the most popular, and his influence was felt the most among young poets writing both in English and Bengali. One Bengali poet, for example, was criticised by a reviewer who called his poetry an imitation and translation of Byron: 'In these days is to be seen due appreciation of Byron's verse. We find Byron imitated everywhere.'⁷² Another reviewer, writing in 1878, writes of the pervasiveness of the influence of English poets upon local writers:

Those who have now won fame and distinction among the poets of this country are all avowed disciples of English poets like Milton, Byron, Scott and Tennyson.⁷³

Dinesh Chandra Sen, in the History of Bengali Language and Literature, expressed himself eloquently on the subject of 'Young Bengal':

Young Bengal, as the new generation of the Bengalis were then called, became thoroughly anglicised in spirit. They exulted in Shakespeare's dramas and Milton's poetry; they read Schiller's Robbers and Goethe's Faust; they could name all the English dramatists of the Elizabethan age - Marlow, Philip Massinger, Ford, John Webster, Ben Johnson and Shirley and reproduce from memory lines from still earlier dramatists and from Holinshed's chronicles which Shakespeare had improved on, in many a noble line. They grew mad after Shelley's Epipsychidion, Keat's [sic] Hyperion and even after Chatterton's Death of Charles Bodwin.⁷⁴

Many observers were critical about this sort of learning and system of education, and sounded warnings about establishing a habit of mechanically testing rote recall without testing understanding. Hodgson Pratt, an Inspector of Schools, asked in the Bengal Public Instruction Report of 1856-7:

... why should Greeschunder Chuckerbutty be expected to know "what circumstances enabled Shakespeare to exhibit an accurate knowledge of Greek Mythology," or "in what respect do the Dramatic compositions called 'Mysteries' differ from those called 'Moralities,'" and other facts of a like nature? On the other hand it is of very great importance, that he should see clearly the dangers of living with an open

⁷²Bankim Chandra Chatterji ed., *Bangadarshan* (Calcutta, Ashwin 1874).

⁷³Kali Prasanna ed., *Bandhab* (Calcutta, 1878).

⁷⁴D.C. Sen, History of Bengali Language and Literature (Calcutta: Calcutta University Press, 1911), 883.

sewer running under the lower floor of his house, or the
cruelty of marrying his children at an immature age....⁷⁵

There were numerous complaints in a similar vein that subjects like health, thrift, extravagance in marriage and funerals, and the role of women were not taught adequately by teachers of English literature, who had neither knowledge of the people nor sympathy with them. // Social concerns dealing with everyday life had no place either in the literary curriculum, or in the poetry that curriculum produced. (There were poems sometimes that seemed to be concerned with contemporary social malaises, such as those addressed to the plight of Hindu widows, but in these cases the attitudes were derived from concerns made fashionable by the British.) Here we are not concerned with assessing the merits of 'social relevance' as a criterion in the creation or reading of poetry, but with pointing out the 'textual' nature of the poetry we have been discussing. Reading provided the poets of colonial India with the forms of expression of their poetry; their verse contained more evidence of their reading lists than their lives, being derived almost entirely from literary studies in method and technique, and equally single-mindedly from Orientalism in themes and content. (Yet, of course, the evidence of this reading in these poems, and the uses it had been put to in them, tell us more about the social trajectory of the lives of their authors, and the life of the class they belonged to, than any thing else within the poems.)

It is important to note that the popularity of English literature in the early nineteenth century was connected to the status of Bengali at the time. In the late eighteenth century, in spite of Orientalist cultural policy, or perhaps, indeed, because of it, the Bengali language was held in very low esteem. The Orientalist bias for classicism had encouraged and promoted the classical languages of India - Sanskrit, Persian and Arabic. The literary historian J.C. Ghosh writes that 'In respect of both form and content the condition of Bengali literature at the time of Rammohun Ray was similar to the condition of English literature at the time of Chaucer.'⁷⁶ Until about 1850, writers and poets had no literary material available in Bengali, and consequently often preferred English as the language to read and write in.

⁷⁵Cited in John Murdoch, Education in India (Madras, 1872), 44.

⁷⁶J.C. Ghosh, Literature in Bengal (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1942), 118.

The tastes of many during the "30s" and "40s", indeed later too, were not satisfied by the reading matter that was available in Bengali, and said so in no uncertain terms. "If there was anything in Bengali worth reading I would read it, but there isn't." The educated elite preferred to read English in which they were now fully proficient. Many of them still despised Bengali as a literary language. As early as 1828 a young man wrote to the Samacar Darpan that he knew English better than Bengali and preferred to write in it.⁷⁷

As we have seen, the introduction of the printing press had a far-reaching effect on the changes that were taking place in Bengal at this time. The printing press was hailed as the single instrument that brought Bengali civilization into the modern world :

From that year was Hindoo literature emancipated, and emancipated forever, from the mystification and falsification of the Brahmins ... it has done far more for our civilization and well-being than can be hoped for from railroads and telegraphs.⁷⁸

It was the printing press that created the means for book production in Bengal, and what it made available was a new body of reading matter that did not merely consist of editions and translations of the ancient texts. For the first time, there came into existence pamphlets, journals, newspapers and books that were cheaply and locally available to anybody who had the will to read. An audience was created over the century, and the writers who emerged owed as much to this audience as they did to their own reading. The reading public in Bengal in the 1820s was, as we have seen, a middle class that was educated in English, and one of their most visible qualities was their adoption of Western modes of thinking and the new Western language. The newly educated Bengali middle class of the 1820s was talking in English, immersed in European culture, and reading voraciously in Western poetry, philosophy and history.

By the last quarter of the nineteenth century, this unique phase in the history of Indian poetry in English had begun to come to a close. A body of verse had been created in the nineteenth century that had exhibited an unabashed admiration for Romantic and

⁷⁷T.W. Clark, 'Encounter and Growth in Bengali Literature,' Bengal: Literature and History ed. E.C. Dimock (Michigan: Asian Studies Centre, 1967), 86.

⁷⁸Bholanath Chandra, The Travels of a Hindoo to Various Parts of Bengal and Upper India, Vol. I (London, 1869), 14.

Victorian England while extolling the splendour and glory contained in the history of ancient and medieval India. Romantic echoes in verse-form had commingled with content drawn directly from Orientalist scholarship, and later, British histories of India. Literary studies created a concept of Western poetics from Aristotle onward that defined the lines along which the poetry of these Indians was composed, while the subject matter they turned to was derived, substantially, from the Orientalist enthusiasms of the Englishmen in India. One of the clearest descriptions of this is to be found in a speech delivered in Calcutta on 3 February, 1900, by R.C. Dutt, the last of the nineteenth-century poets writing within the conventions we have been discussing:

I remember the solitary evenings when I was encamped in the midst of the rice fields of Dakhin Shahbazpur, a sea-washed island in the mouth of the Ganges, when I read Grant Duff's inspiring work on the history of the Mahrattas, and spent my nights dreaming over a story of Sivaji. I remember the days when I travelled over Tippera, and occasionally crossed over to Hill Tippera, with Tod's spirited 'History of Rajasthan' in my knapsack, and when I ventured to compose a story of Pratap Sinha. I remember how ... I sought recreation and rest amidst the countless volumes of European and Indian scholars who have written on Indian antiquities, and I conceived the idea of writing a connected history of civilisation in ancient India.⁷⁹

⁷⁹Cited in J.N. Gupta, ed. The Life and Work of Romesh Chunder Dutt (London: J.M. Dent & Sons, 1911), 53.

Chapter One

Henry Louis Vivian Derozio (1809-31)

Calcutta, centre of English poetry in India till 1857

The English poetry of colonial India in the early half of the nineteenth century was produced, without exception, in Bengal. Calcutta, the capital of British India and second city of the British Empire, saw the publication of the collected poems of pioneering Anglo-Indian poet William Jones posthumously in 1808, as well as of the only volume of poems by the first Bengali Hindu poet to write in English - Kasiprasad Ghosh in 1830.¹ Falling in between this racial divide, Henry Louis Vivian Derozio, the East Indian poet born of a Portuguese father and English mother, published the first edition of his poems from Calcutta in 1827.² The first half of the century till 1857 saw many poetical compositions by Indians in English appearing in the pages of literary journals, newspapers and magazines, and the publication of a volume of English poetry each by Rajnarain Dutt, Gooroo Churn Dutt and Michael Madhusudan Dutt (no relation to each other), whom I shall discuss in the following chapter.

The year 1857 has been a marker adopted almost universally when dealing with the history of events in India in the nineteenth century because of the changes wrought by the Sepoy Mutiny and the subsequent demise of the East India Company. However, it is of particular relevance here also as the year in which Western education in India took a giant step forward with the establishment of the Universities of Calcutta, Madras and Bombay, with English as the medium of instruction. The atmosphere that encouraged the publication of English verse by Indians gradually changed as the century wore on, and the rhetoric of

¹The term Anglo-Indian is used throughout this thesis in the old sense, to refer to those Britons who were in India either on active service or in permanent residence. In India the term currently indicates members of what was known as the Eurasian community.

²The term 'Eurasian' is dated, as it was in use in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century to denote people with one European parent, and was later replaced by the term currently in use in India - 'Anglo-Indian'. Derozio, however, preferred 'East Indian', indeed, 'rejoiced in it, and had no desire to be known by the more pretending and ostentatious appellation of "Eurasian," which his countrymen are so anxious to adopt...' Thomas Benson Laurence, English Poetry in India, being biographical and critical notices of Anglo-Indian poets with copious extracts from their writings (Calcutta, 1869), 103.

nationalism saw poets such as Michael Dutt abandon the old dream of winning a place in the English canon, turning instead to Bengali where his poetic genius found both genuine expression and instant and lasting fame.

By the second half of the century, in fact, Calcutta was no longer the hub of Anglo-Indian literary activity as it had been in the first half of the century, and the centre of poetry publications concerning India had shifted to London. Anglo-Indian poets such as Lyall and Arnold, who were writing about India in the seventh and eighth decade, had spent only a small part of their lives in India and were published entirely from London, while the only Bengali poets to write extensively in English throughout the latter half of the nineteenth century were the various members of the Dutt family, Christian Anglophiles with a declared admiration for the British government in India. They produced their first individual volumes of verse in Calcutta but went on to publish their second volumes, as well as the definitive collection of their verse, the Dutt Family Album (1870), from London. The character of colonial poetry in India in the first half of the century, therefore, was distinctly different from the latter half due to various changes in the political and social climate that were brought about by the effects of English education, the upward mobility of the middle classes and the subsequent rise of nationalism, as well as the consolidation of imperial values and change of rhetoric that marked the take-over of the East India Company by the Crown.

Calcutta, at the start of the nineteenth century, had grown into a competitive commercial centre with a wide range of interests and outlooks, a centre that brought to the indigenous culture and literature of the period an urbanisation that was strikingly different from the old system, when Bengali village bards survived through aristocratic patronage in the courts of local nawabs or rajahs. The first quarter of the century witnessed, as we shall see in this chapter, the birth of Indian English literature in the poetry of Henry Derozio, and, in fact, the birth of ^{modern} Bengali literature as well; Bengali had not so far been regarded as a literary language, that status being reserved for the classical languages such as Sanskrit or Persian. Bengali came into written existence, therefore, with the efforts of missionary William Carey, who, besides utilizing it for spreading Christianity, also supervised the

composition of text-books in that language for the instruction of English administrators in his position as professor of Bengali at Fort William College. Both these developments were further nurtured by the ascendance of the middle-class bourgeoisie, and were also a direct result of the slow decay and disruption of the villages and indigenous industries - a process that came to its culmination by the middle of the century. For indigenous literature, the first quarter of the nineteenth century was a period of experiment and preparation for the great flowering that followed. Texts published locally were either elementary attempts at composition in the vernacular languages, new publications by Orientalist scholars of the old classics of Indian literature, or translations from the Persian, Sanskrit or English into the vernacular for teaching at government schools.³ A great deal of this creative work was being done at the Fort William College in Calcutta, which employed native pundits under the supervision of Orientalist scholars to produce works in all three categories. The demand for books was greater than the rate at which books were being printed and published. The Calcutta Gazette reported the proceedings of the Calcutta School Book Society, which specialized in printing elementary text books for educational purposes:

Books of an elementary nature have been prepared and printed in many of the Native languages.

In the Sanskrit language, the Society has just printed a Vocabulary, Grammar, and Reader, with a system of Logic, and have in the press five hundred copies of a Sanskrit Version of the Elements of Natural Philosophy and History, arranged by Mr Yates.

In the Bengalee language the Society has already printed books on almost every subject of elementary instruction....

In the Hindooee [sic] language, the Society have also published a variety of Elementary works. Nor have they neglected to propose many books of the same kind in the Arabic, Persian, and Hindoostanee languages.

I rejoice to hear, that since your last report, the demand for books in the English language has so greatly increased.... It appears, that Native booksellers apply at the Society's Depository, for various publications in the English language, and that they are furnished at a discount of two annas in the rupee, on the cost price; this is an increasing demand.

Recently... the sale of English books [at a retail shop near

³Bengali prose was non-existent in the eighteenth century, as traditional literature was comprised of folk poetry or Sanskrit texts; it came into being as a direct result of colonisation, due to the need to teach Bengali to English civil servants and because of the evangelical efforts of Serampore missionary William Carey, who is acknowledged as the father of modern Bengali prose.

Hindoo College] has amounted nearly to the sum of fifty rupees per month.... This is indeed a real earnest of what are the feelings of the Native population.... The demand for books is increasing in every part of this presidency; but I regret, Sir, to find, that your resources do not keep pace with your wants.⁴

Such an account makes self-evident the state of the publication and production of books in Bengal at the start of the century, pointing conclusively not only to government patronage for the upcoming vernacular and long established classical languages of India, but also, interestingly, to a spontaneous growth in the demand for English-language texts long before the British implemented policies in favour of English education in 1835.

The first quarter of the nineteenth century saw a continuation of the deliberate efforts of the Orientalists to propagate education along the old avenues through the teaching of the classical languages of India.⁵ As an official enterprise, it co-existed with numerous private academies and missionary schools that mushroomed throughout Bengal to cater to the growing demand for an English education.⁶ This demand was not recognised by the British government until Macaulay's famous Minute in favour of the Anglicist cause saw the passing of the Resolution of 1835 which established the teaching of English language and literature in Indian schools and colleges. By the 1830s, Anglicism was in the ascendancy in Bengal. It began as an expression of discontent with the policy of promoting the Oriental languages and literatures in native education, and it vigorously advocated Western instead of Eastern learning for the Indian people. This respect for Western education, as we shall see, is reflected in many of the poems written by Bengalis educated in English at this time.

In the beginning, English had been essential to Indians in order to carry on negotiations of trade with the Englishman, and the demand for English grew with the

⁴Calcutta Gazette, Monday Evening, March 10, 1828.

⁵The Directory of Institutions of Higher Education (New Delhi: Government of India, Ministry of Education, 1958) lists the following institutes of Oriental learning at the beginning of the nineteenth century: Oriental College, Rampur, Uttar Pradesh (1774); Calcutta Madrasa, Calcutta (1784); Sanskrit College, Benares (1792); Oriental Research Institute, Mysore (1801).

⁶Accounts of the contemporary demand for English can be found in: Pearychand Mitra, A Biographical Sketch of David Hare (Calcutta, 1877); C.E. Trevelyan, On the Education of the People of India (London, 1838); George Smith, The Life of Alexander Duff (London, 1881).

establishment of the Supreme Court.⁷ Contemporary records such as W.H. Carey's collection of extracts from newspapers, The Good Old Days of Hon'ble John Company, mention schools set up in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century by a motley collection of Englishmen : 'Every Englishman in straitened circumstances - the broken-down soldier, the bankrupt merchant and the ruined spendthrift - set up a day school.'⁸ Some of these schools achieved respectability and fame, and well known schools of the time included Linstedt's and Farrell's, while Hutteman's and Sherbourne's schools competed with Drummond's Academy for first place, the latter producing among its roll of brilliant pupils the poet Henry Derozio.

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Derozio's Education under David Drummond

Derozio joined Dhurumtollah Academy - the school run by the Scottish scholar-poet David Drummond - at the age of six, leaving it, upon the completion of his studies, at fourteen. Writing in 1884, Thomas Edwards, Derozio's principal biographer, is surprised by the secular nature of the institution run by Drummond:

It was one of the peculiarities of Drummond's school that, as in the Scotland of his day [when girls and boys studied side by side]... so in Dhurumtollah, 60 years ago, European, Eurasian and native lads conned the same lessons, and mingled together in the same school sports.⁹

The role of education in the making of Derozio is important in that many of the causes dear to his heart, as reflected in his poems, writings and teaching, might have been imbibed at a very young age from the unique educational institution he attended. Certainly his love for literature and poetry was encouraged and nurtured at Drummond's school, which was well known for its organization of recitations, debates and stage performances of scenes from

⁷A description of the advent of English and the first Bengali lawyer's clerks can be found in the pioneering Bengali novel by Pyarichand Mitra (pen-name Tekchand Thakur) *Alaler Ghare Dulal* (Calcutta, 1855).

⁸W.H. Carey, The Good Old Days of Hon'ble John Company, Vol. 1 (Calcutta, 1882), 16-17.

⁹Thomas Edwards, Henry Derozio, The Eurasian Poet, Teacher, and Journalist (Calcutta, 1884), 12.

Shakespeare. Derozio's atheism, independence of spirit and progressiveness might also have been informed by the example of Drummond himself, who was well known in Calcutta for these qualities.

A staunch follower of David Hume, Drummond was given a copy of a new Persian grammar inscribed by his friend Sandford: 'To David Drummond Esq., who amidst the luxuries of the East never lost his relish for the metaphysics and the muse...'¹⁰ It is worthwhile to note that these two categories, metaphysics and poetry, were also the areas around which Derozio's whole life was centred as a poet and teacher. In 1839, Drummond started a journal of politics, news and literature called the Weekly Examiner, which was very ably conducted and met with great success, having among its regular contributors Dr John Grant and D.L. Richardson; for Derozio too journalism was the principal occupation once he stopped teaching, his pioneering achievement lying in the editing and publication of the first gazette specifically for the Eurasian community, called The East Indian. Sickness, however, compelled Drummond to discontinue his weekly in July 1841, and after a few years, in 1843, he died. His reputation as a metaphysician, surpassed by few in India, rested upon his philosophical Objections to Phrenology,¹¹ and it was perhaps his stamp upon Derozio that led, later, to Derozio's knowledge of metaphysics to be a celebrated fact in Calcutta. Besides being a teacher of Locke, Reid and Stewart, Derozio was known to have been commended at a large meeting by Rev. Dr. Mill, at that time Principal of Bishop's College, for the publication of his objections to the philosophy of Kant, which Dr. Mill asserted were 'perfectly original and displayed powers of reasoning and observation which would not disgrace even gifted philosophers'.¹²

Of Drummond as an Anglo-Indian poet and scholar in his time there is little remaining evidence today. A poem may be found included in the Bengal Annual, while another, 'Lines to the Memory of Robert Burns', has been extracted in a recent Bengali publication on Derozio, though regrettably, no reference has been given of the source,

¹⁰Cited in Benoy Ghosh, *Bidrohi Derozio* (Calcutta: Ayan Publications, 1961), 31.

¹¹Cited in Laurence, 71.

¹²A. Aratoon ed., 'A Biographical Sketch,' The Poetical Works of Henry Louis Vivian Derozio (Calcutta, 1871), 2.

making the material unreliable.¹³ Another one of his poems, along with a short critical notice, was included in a nineteenth-century anthology, English Poetry in India, compiled by T.B. Laurence. Drummond's poetry, Laurence remarks, 'makes up in fire and passion what he wants in originality', and from what he published in India it was evident that his verse frequently rose 'far above mediocrity'.¹⁴ In his native Scotland, Drummond was said to have composed many Scottish songs that proved to be popular; in India, however, his collection of poems were never published. Among the few who ever saw these poems in manuscript was D.L. Richardson, who spoke of it in glowing terms.¹⁵ These poems included a tribute to Sir Charles Metcalfe on his magnanimity and liberality on granting freedom to the Press of India, and Metcalfe subscribed, in advance, to fifty copies of Drummond's poems.¹⁶

The poem included in Laurence's anthology, 'Elegy written in the Military Officer's Burning-ground, at the Cantonments of Behrampore, Bengal', records feelings of exile, and longing for the familiar landscapes of homeland:

I listen - but the sounds of evening lone
Which erst in other lands so charmed mine ear,
The black-bird's mellow note, the curfew's tone
One moan of brook or fountain, rise not here.

Nor shepherd's pipe, nor plough-boy's vesper [sic] song,
Blends with the plaintive hum of cot and fold;
Nor blooming maiden trips the sward along,
Gilding the scene with loveliness untold.¹⁷

These lamentations for elements of Englishness missing from an alien land are part of a well-established sentiment in the body of Anglo-Indian poetry in India, and poets such as John Leyden, Bishop Reginald Heber, and later, D.L. Richardson wrote extensively on this theme of exile. The poem continues with a vision of 'Albion's sons' establishing a

¹³'Love Misplaced,' Bengal Annual, ed. D.L. Richardson (Calcutta, 1830), 319; Subir Raychaudhuri, *Henry Derozio: Tar Jeeban O Shomoy* [Henry Derozio: His Life and Times] (Calcutta: National Book Trust, India, 1993), 28.

¹⁴Laurence, 71.

¹⁵Edwards, 16.

¹⁶This poem by Drummond on Metcalfe and freedom of the Indian press appeared in the paper Bengal Hurkaru under the initials DD. See Edwards, 16.

¹⁷Laurence, 72.

'reign of love' to banish the 'dreary midnight of the mind' and 'Nature's degradation' prevailing in the 'unopposed march' of 'grim superstition' 'o'er these bright regions of the sun', rhetoric which is reminiscent of contemporary Evangelical portrayals of Hindu society and culture, as I shall show in more detail later in this thesis. The poem ends with a warning against the cruel fate of dying in a foreign land, and in a tone reminiscent of Leyden's in 'Ode to an Indian Gold Coin', cautions the reader of the falseness of the dazzle of Indian wealth as weighed against the bitter end of sinking, 'unheeded, in the rolls of time', to an early grave.¹⁸

Drummond's depiction of India throughout this poem focuses upon the present state of misery and neglect that India suffered from, an attitude that was usually, in Orientalist poetry, inescapably linked to the Orientalist's glorification of ancient India. In this poem, however, there is, instead, a plea not to obscure the real miseries of the day with flights of praise for the remote past:

Sages afar ! who hallow Gunga's stream,
And hymn the praise of Brahma's mystic love,
Ah ! yield to sober truth the pleasing dream,
And trace with me the dale, polluted shore.¹⁹

The 'sages' addressed here might be the Brahmins who dominated the Hindu social hierarchy, but since these feelings are contained in English verse that could be expected to be consumed by a small but eager English speaking audience in Calcutta, it is conceivable that Drummond had in mind enthusiastic Orientalist scholars such as Jones, whose hymns had sung 'the praise of Brahma's mystic love' and whose policies were ^{yet in effect} still, at the time, the governing policies in India.

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¹⁸ibid., 76; John Leyden, 'Ode to an Indian Gold Coin,' in The Poetical Remains (London, 1819).

¹⁹ibid., 73.

Nationalism in Derozio's poetry

Derozio's poetry occupies a different ideological position from his teacher Drummond's with regard to his depiction of India. Acknowledged as the first nationalist poet in India writing in English, he has been kept alive for schoolchildren in India because of his famous sonnets 'The Harp of India' and 'To India, My Native Land' which are included in poetry anthologies such as Panorama, which was prescribed reading at most English-medium schools throughout India. The sonnet was a favourite poetic form with Derozio - he was historically the first Indian poet to practice it - and he used it on several occasions to apostrophise, variously, his country, his pupils at the Hindu College, the moon, a fair lady, death, and the waters of Lethe. The poems addressed to India are also informed by the usual paradox present in Orientalist poetry, in that they passionately proclaim the former glories of the poet's native country while bemoaning its present state of degradation.

In the first poem, 'The Harp of India', Derozio uses the image of a harp hanging alone and unstrung on a 'withered bough' - a completely unIndian image that he might have got from Thomas Moore, and which is reminiscent of conventional imagery in the late eighteenth-century Celtic revival in English literature.²⁰ The last line emphatically proclaims his consciousness of a place in the history of his country:

Why hang'st thou lonely on yon withered bough
 Unstrung for ever, must thou there remain;
 Thy music once was sweet - who hears it now?
 Why doth the breeze sigh over thee in vain?
 Silence hath bound thee with her fatal chain;
 Neglected, mute, and desolate art thou,
 Like ruined monument on desert plain:
 O! many a hand more worthy far than mine
 Once thy harmonious chords to sweetness gave,
 And many a wreath for them did Fame entwine
 Of flowers still blooming on the minstrel's grave:
 Those hands are cold - but if thy notes divine
 May be by mortal wakened once again,
 Harp of my country, let me strike again!²¹

²⁰See Edward D. Snyder, The Celtic Revival in English Literature, 1700-1800 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1923).

²¹'The Harp of India,' Poems of Henry Louis Vivian Derozio: A Forgotten Anglo-Indian Poet, introduced by F.B. Bradley-Birt, with a new forward by R.K. Dasgupta (Calcutta: Oxford University Press, 1980), 1. [I have used, for convenient access to Derozio's poems, this latest edition of the 1923 OUP publication, henceforth referred to simply as Poems.]

This picture in the poem of a long line of gifted artists who once contributed towards the greater glory of India ('O! many a hand more worthy far than mine / Once thy harmonious chords to sweetness gave') was almost certainly a result of contemporary rediscovery of great works in Sanskrit literature by scholars such as Jones, Colebrooke and Wilson. Derozio's own desire for a place among the famous names that enriched the ancient Indian arts demonstrates a desire for continuity, tradition, and nationality, and seems to be a conscious effort on his part to negate the displacement that in reality demarcated his position as an East Indian colonial subject writing in English of India. This sense of an emphatically proclaimed belonging is also present in the sonnet 'To India - My Native Land' :

My country! in thy days 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 from thee!²²

The Orientalist-inspired theme of the days of India's past glory when it was powerful and 'beauteous', and the contrast, around which the poem hinges, with its present lowly state, are already familiar to us from the previous poem. The imagery of retrieving 'a few small fragments' from the sublime wreck of India's ancient grandeur seems to have come very definitely from the language of the Calcutta Orientalists, whose efforts were inevitably cloaked in this sort of rhetoric, and they represented their mission of rediscovering the Hindu history of India in terms not dissimilar to such metaphors. The last line invokes, again, the desire expressed in 'The Harp of India', to belong to the history of India, a desire which needs also to be placed in the context of Derozio's situation as an East Indian,

²²'To India - My Native Land,' Poems, 2.

in order to understand how such a wish was located in the culturally diverse and constantly developing ambience of the age.

It has been argued, however, that the nationalism present in these poems was imported - as much of the rest of Derozio's affiliations were - from the West. So Stephen Hay writes about Derozio's poems on India:

His [Derozio's] poems to India are virtually the first expressions of Indian nationalist thought, and their appearance among other poetry whose inspiration is clearly derivative dramatize[s] the fact that modern nationalism is essentially an alien importation into the Indian world of ideas.²³

While Hay is certainly correct about the infiltration of Western ideas of enlightened rationalism and liberalism in the newly educated class in Bengal, what he fails to apprehend is that the creation of nationalist thought in India in the form of pride in Indian heritage was largely due to the work of the Orientalist scholars right there in Calcutta, and was, therefore, the direct result of the transplanting of Western scholarship into Indian surroundings, and of the colonial situation. If Derozio's expressions of Indian nationalist thought were derived from Western influences, then it was also equally informed by the dissemination of knowledge about Hindu India by the researchers of the Asiatic Society. The work done by the Calcutta Orientalists was being absorbed and assimilated at a rapid pace by the West as well, and it is of some importance over here to realise that Derozio's pride in India was not merely an importation from the West, but also a result of imbibing attitudes and ideas from the scholarly enterprise of recreating the history of ancient India - an enterprise whose centre, even as far as the West was concerned, was the very place he calls his native land, Calcutta.

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²³Stephen Hay, Sources of Indian Tradition (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 566.

Derozio's position as an East Indian

The claim that Derozio makes on India in the two sonnets discussed above, and elsewhere in his writings, is remarkable because of his social position as an East Indian, which meant he belonged to neither side in a society that was divided into the two emphatically segregated camps of 'sahib' and 'native'. While such a position in society certainly had its disadvantages, in the early quarter of the nineteenth century, when Derozio was writing, the situation of East Indians in Calcutta's social matrix was more fluid and ambivalent than it was later in the century, with many East Indians obtaining distinction and honour in the company of both Englishmen and Indians. Imperial values had not yet solidified into rigid forms, and with the East India Company merchants in power and the business interests of all sections of society of paramount importance, there was prevalent at this time an equality among members of the upper classes of all communities that was to be gradually eroded as the distance between the ruler and the ruled widened.

The perception of the Eurasian community as disadvantaged was actually far more prevalent towards the end of the nineteenth century and beginning of the twentieth, and commentators writing of Derozio at that time, or even today, tend not to realise the significantly changed situation in society from the early days.²⁴ By the end of the century, therefore, we find Edwards commenting on the social situation of Eurasians:

Whole sections of their lower ranks have in the past disappeared entirely among native races, and their higher ranks are being absorbed among pure Europeans...²⁵

Some years later in 1923 we have Francis Bradley Birt writing of the mixed races in India:

There are few facts more pathetic and more deserving of sympathy than the mixed race which Western dominion in India has created and from which Derozio sprang. Closely allied by blood to European and Indian alike, the Eurasian community has fallen helplessly between them, failing to win acceptance from either of the great races that gave it birth..... A modern race, with few inspiring traditions and no cohesion, it is small wonder that its claims, but timidly

²⁴For an example of recent critical remarks on Derozio's position as an East-Indian, see Chittabrata Palit, 'Derozio and the Anglo-Indian Community,' New Perspectives on Nineteenth Century Bengal (Calcutta: Progressive Publishers, 1980), 168.

²⁵Edwards, i.

advocated, have been overlooked in the greater issues that have gone to the building up of our Indian Empire.²⁶

Inevitably, Derozio is then extolled by such commentators as a member of this community who achieved lasting fame, thus bringing some small comfort to others of mixed race in India. Two principal sources of information on Derozio written at the end of the nineteenth century, Thomas Edwards' biography and Stark and Madge's East Indian Worthies, exist because of the determination of their authors to preserve some of the history of the Eurasian community from decay through a portrayal of its more distinguished members.²⁷ Among their subjects - besides Derozio - are Colonel Skinner of the Irregulars (famous as the head of Skinner's Horse, the courageous Sikh Corps), James Kyd (master ship-builder to the East India Company after whom the dockyards near Calcutta were called Kidderpore), and Mr J.W. Ricketts - the 'East Indian Patriot' (founder of the first institute established for the education of children of mixed races, Doveton College, as well as the first chosen representative of the East Indian community to petition the British Parliament for a redressal of their grievances on 29 March 1830).²⁸ All these prominent East Indians were contemporaries of Derozio, and lived and died in the first few decades of the nineteenth century before the official consolidation and widespread availability of English education had the majority of East Indian youths 'treading on each other's heels in their hurry to enter the lower grades of Government service'.²⁹

There was no question at the time, therefore, of Derozio having to relinquish his identity as an East Indian to gain acceptance in polite society, and in fact he took pride in his race and his contribution to society. He took active part in the political life of East Indians in Calcutta, editing a daily called The East Indian which was a platform for issues and problems relevant to this community. When in 1830 a Committee was formed to depute a representative to England, to bring before the Parliament and other Home Authorities the official and social disabilities under which the East Indians were then

²⁶Bradley-Birt, Introduction to Poems, ii.

²⁷Herbert A. Stark and E. Walter Madge, East Indian Worthies, Being Memoirs of Distinguished Indo-Europeans (Calcutta, 1892).

²⁸See Edwards, ii; Stark and Madge, 2, 10.

²⁹Stark and Madge, 12.

labouring, Derozio was the prime mover. Upon the return of their representative, Mr J.W. Ricketts, from England, a function was held at the Town Hall at which Derozio took active part, delivering a speech that is remarkable now for its underlying assumptions of liberty, patriotism, and nationalism imported from Western thought and the influence of Orientalist scholarship in creating his pride in his country:

Gentlemen, suffering as I am from severe disease, it might naturally be asked why have I come here in this state. The answer is simple. I am an East Indian, therefore am I here. I love my country, therefore am I here. I take an interest in the welfare of my countrymen, therefore am I here. And should it be again asked, why do I love my country, I would reply by asking you, why do you love the breast that gave you nourishment!³⁰

Such intense political involvement as is evident from this speech was also to be found occasionally reflected in his literary endeavours. So, when Lord Bentinck passed a resolution making the practice of *sati* illegal in the country, Derozio wrote a poem for the India Gazette, reprinted in the Calcutta Gazette, called 'On the Abolition of Suttee'.³¹ The poem was preceded by a headnote quoting the exact words of the regulation that made *sati* illegal. ^{the poem} It celebrated the vanquishing of evil superstition by the forces of freedom, and heralded a brighter future for the country. Lord Bentinck is apostrophised as the 'father' and 'friend' of India:

See Mercy now primeval peace restore,
While paeans glad the arch ethereal rend,
For India hails, at last, her father and her friend.

....
BENTINCK, be thine the everlasting meed!
The heart's full homage still is Virtue's claim,
And 'tis the good man's ever-honored deed
Which gives an immortality to fame...³²

Derozio is often hailed as the first national poet of India, the first poet to give expression to patriotic desires for the greater upliftment of his native land. What should be noted in this context is that native well-wishers of the country at this time (an obvious example would be Raja Rammohun Roy) were unequivocal in their belief that British agency, whether through education, or as in this case, through legislation, was the only medium through

³⁰Laurence, 104.

³¹Calcutta Gazette, Monday Evening, December 14, 1829.

³²ibid.

which Indians could make any progress. The gratitude expressed here in this poem to the British Governor-General would have been out of place in the more self-consciously nationalistic atmosphere in Calcutta in the latter half of the century, when the very act of writing in the language of India's rulers became unfashionable and unpatriotic, creating a different context for Indians writing English poetry, something we shall examine later in the thesis. But this poem, written in 1829, reflects a time when liberalism, rationalism, and free-thinking were the guiding lines along which nationalism was beginning to come into consciousness, when it was still appropriate for a 'nationalist' poet to applaud a British Governor-General for leading India to the path of progress.

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The Literary Circle in Calcutta

Derozio's poetry was written with the encouragement of an audience of friends and literary companions who resided in Calcutta, who were themselves writers, poets, scholars, educationalists and journalists. His first poems, under the pseudonym 'Juvenis', began to be published with the backing of Dr John Grant, editor of the India Gazette, in that paper. Dr Grant subsequently employed him as assistant editor on his paper, and Derozio dedicated his first publication of poems to him in 1827.³³ Within a year, Derozio was appointed assistant master in the senior department of the Hindu College; he was also, at the time, editor of the Calcutta Literary Gazette, and contributor to the Calcutta Magazine, the Indian Magazine, the Literary Gazette, the Oriental Courtly Magazine, the Oriental Herald, the Literary Gleaner, the Bengal Annual, and the Kaleidoscope. As a teacher, litterateur and journalist, Derozio could count among his personal contacts some of the most well known names in Calcutta society:

Derozio's talents obtained for him admission into the best society of his day. Among his most intimate friends were Dr John Grant, editor of the India Gazette; Captain David Lester Richardson, Principal of the Hindu College, and author of several literary works; Henry Meredith Parker, H.E.I. CCS,

³³Henry Derozio, Poems (Calcutta, 1827).

Secretary to the Board of Customs; Horace Hayman Wilson, the eminent Orientalist; David Hare, the zealous promoter of native education; Theodore Dickens, the well-known advocate; Rajah Ram Mohun Roy, the first Brahmo reformer; and J.W. Ricketts, the "East Indian Patriot."³⁴

Among these eminent personalities were several poets. D.L. Richardson published many literary volumes of prose and poetry written in India and was editor of the Bengal Annual - a yearly collection of poetry and prose published on seven occasions between the years 1830 to 1836. Richardson included three of Derozio's poems, 'To India, My Native Land', 'Sonnet to the Pupils of Hindu College', and 'Ode (From the Persian of Hafiz)', in his influential Selections from British Poets, which had an appendix of poems by Anglo-Indian poets writing in India.³⁵ Henry Meredith Parker was also one of the foremost Anglo-Indian poets of his time, publishing The Draught of Immortality in the same year that Derozio's first volume was published, 1827, followed by Bole Ponjees and various other works. Derozio, as a tribute of his admiration, addressed a sonnet to him, 'Sonnet to H.M. Parker, Esq.', which concluded with a reference to the title of Parker's first volume of poems:

Bard of our sunny land, and golden sky!
My heart has gladden'd o'er thy magic lay!
'Tis like the hymn of seraphim on high,
My soul hath drunk it - and it is to me,
Sweet bard! "a draught of immortality"!³⁶

Horace Hayman Wilson, eminent Sanskritist, was known for his poetic translations from the Sanskrit, and it was to him that Derozio dedicated his second publication a year after the first.³⁷ Derozio was also a friend of the poetess and travel-writer Emma Roberts, whose book of poetry, Oriental Scenes, was published in 1830 with his assistance, a debt that is acknowledged in her Preface:

There is, however, one person to whom more particular acknowledgements are due, and she with great pleasure mentions her obligations to Mr H.L.V. DEROZIO, to whose invaluable assistance she is indebted for the superintendence

³⁴Stark and Madge, 18.

³⁵David Lester Richardson, Selections From The British Poets (Calcutta, 1840). The only other Indian poet included was Kasiprasad Ghosh.

³⁶Poems, 119.

³⁷The Fakeer of Jungheera. A Metrical Tale; And Other Poems (Calcutta, 1828).

of her volume through the press, - a task which none
save a Poet could have executed so ably.³⁸

The relations between the various literary men and women in Calcutta around Derozio demonstrate how the social network supporting Derozio in his poetic endeavours was wide-ranging and influential, contributing to his poetry the interests and enthusiasms of the time. Poems such as 'To India - My Native Land', as well as 'On the Abolition of Suttee' existed within the context of this society and its aims and ambitions rather than as isolated examples of patriotic sentiment.

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Romantic Influence On His Verse

Derozio's spirit of revolt against orthodoxy and conservatism was manifested in his role as a teacher who inspired his young Hindu students to the first radical rethinking of current norms in Indian society. His poems, too, contain ample instances of the idealism that permeated his academic activity. Of one of the typical meetings of the Academic Association (formed by Derozio and his students for open debate and free discussion), contemporary educationalist Alexander Duff had said:

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.³⁹

The idealism present in these meetings was to be found repeatedly in poems such as 'Freedom to the Slave', or 'All is Lost, save Honour' - poems that showed the influence of

³⁸Emma Roberts, Preface to Oriental Scenes, Dramatic Sketches and Tales, with Other Poems (Calcutta, 1830), vi.

³⁹Alexander Duff, India, and India Missions (Edinburgh, 1839), 614.

the current Western intellectual passion of 'liberty, equality and fraternity' for all men. That his poetry was directly linked to his reading of the romantics is obvious both from the content, and from the notes or quotations at the beginning of a poem, which are meant to reveal its sources. The titles themselves indicate the romantic and nationalistic preoccupations of the poet.

Several poems are preceded with citations from Romantic poets. Thus a poem called 'Phyle' begins : 'And Freedom's fame finds wings in every wind -*Byron* '; while another poem entitled 'Sappho' quotes Byron : 'And love too much, and yet cannot love less. *Don Juan, Canto 4* '⁴⁰ A poem called 'Leaves' has at its head: 'One step to the white death-bed, / And one to the bier, / And one to the charnel; and one - Oh where? SHELLEY.'⁴¹ A long poem, 'The Enchantress of the Cave', has quotations from the two strongest influences on Derozio's work, Byron and Moore.⁴² A couple of lines are quoted from The Giaour: 'Love will find its way / Through paths where wolves would fear to prey'; coincidentally, the same lines are quoted by Madhusudan Dutt before his long poem, The Captive Ladie, twenty two years later.⁴³ Moore's Lallah Rookh provides the other extract:

Go where we will, this hand in thine,
Those eyes before me smiling thus,
Through good or ill, in storm or shine
The world's a world of love for us.⁴⁴

The strange quest which forms the subject matter of the poem and its weird atmosphere (in the witch's evocation of mountains that are moved by magic stones or seals that control the spirit world) incorporates unmistakable elements from Byron and Moore, while the description of the witch in the cave and the young hero's encounter with her approaches the gothic romance.

⁴⁰Poems, 71, 77.

⁴¹'Leaves,' *ibid.*, 133.

⁴²This poem, 'Enchantress of the Cave,' is not included in the OUP collection edited by Bradley-Birt, but can be found in The Poetical Works of Henry L.V. Derozio, ed. A. Aratoon, (Calcutta, 1871), 39.

⁴³See Chapter Three.

⁴⁴Poetical Works, 1871, 39.

Poems such as 'Sonnet: To the Moon'; 'The Golden Vase'; and 'Sonnet: Death, my Best Friend' (once again the titles are indicative of the influences on the poem) show a strong influence of the British romantic poets in theme, sentiment, imagery and diction. 'A Walk by Moonlight' demonstrates such an unmistakable imitational quality that an Indian commentator, Arvind Krishna Mehrotra, himself a well-known Indian poet and critic, has found in the Romantic influence an indication of self-consciousness, suggesting a register of self-awareness that might point to the imitation having been premeditated, and almost written as a homage to his reading of the Romantics.⁴⁵

The moon stood silent in the sky,
And looked upon our earth;
The clouds divided, passing by,
In homage to her worth.

There was a dance among the leaves
Rejoicing at her power,
Who robes for them of silver weaves
Within one mystic hour.

There was a song among the winds,
Hymning her influence -
That low-breathed minstrelsy which binds
The soul to thought intense.

And there was something in the night
That with its magic wound us;
For we - oh! we not only *saw*,
But *felt* the moonlight round us.

How vague are all the mysteries
Which bind us to our earth;
How far they send into the heart
Their tones of holy mirth;

How lovely are the phantoms dim
Which bless the better sight,
That man enjoys when proud he stands
In his own spirit's light;

When, like a thing that is not ours,
This earthliness goes by,
And we *behold* the spiritualness
Of all that cannot die....⁴⁶

The 'mystic' hour of moonlight, the moon 'hymning her influence', the 'low-breathed minstrelsy' that leads to the 'soul' communing with 'thought intense', the '*felt*' quality of

⁴⁵Arvind Krishna Mehrotra,

⁴⁶'A Walk by Moonlight,' Poems, 106.

moonlight, all suggest a Wordsworthian wonder at the 'vague' 'mysteries' of this earth that proclaim the 'spiritualness / Of all that cannot die'. In the following verse, Derozio writes:

The inward eye is open then
To glories, which in dreams
Visit the sleeper's couch, in robes
Woven of the rainbow's beams.⁴⁷

Here the imagery seems to definitely allude to the final verse of Wordsworth's 'I wandered lonely as a cloud', ('For oft, when on my couch I lie/ In vacant or in pensive mood,/ They flash upon that inward eye/ Which is the bliss of solitude;...').⁴⁸

Yet the strongest influence on Derozio's poetry is Byron, whose themes and passions are repeated again and again in his verses. For example, Byron's preoccupation with political events in Greece find a place in a note attached by Derozio to 'The Greeks at Marathon': 'These lines were written after the announcement of an action that had taken place at Marathon between the Turks and the Greeks, in which the latter were victorious.'⁴⁹

Yes! from hence the Persian fled,
Here lay many a tyrant dead.
'Tis a gallant field of glory,
'Tis a battle famed in story;-
Here the Moslem we shall meet,
Prostrate lay him at our feet;-
Seek we freedom? - Grecians, on!
Freedom's field is Marathon!⁵⁰

Lines such as 'Here the Moslem we shall meet, / Prostrate lay him at our feet' show that Derozio was identifying the Turks according to their Muslim religion rather than as a race or a nation. Sentiments such as these might indicate that Derozio's Orientalist-influenced perception of Muslims as aggressive invaders in India might have affected his interpretation of their role in the Greco-Turk war (mentioned in the head note) that had been fought in the Middle East. In this poem, he is on the side of the Greeks against the 'Moslem', a reflection of his antagonistic position regarding the Muslim invaders in India, where too, he is on the side of the Hindus. The longer romantic verse tales, 'The Fakeer of Jungheera',

⁴⁷'A Walk by Moonlight,' *ibid.*, 107.

⁴⁸William Wordsworth, 'I wandered lonely as a cloud,' *Poetical Works*, A New Ed. (London, 1849-50), 104.

⁴⁹'The Greeks at Marathon,' *Poems*, 41.

⁵⁰*ibid.*, 42.

and 'Enchantress of the Cave' also clearly derive many elements from Byron, while the titles and contents of many of the smaller poems - 'Thermopylae', 'The Bridal', 'The Greeks at Marathon', 'Sappho', 'Phyle', 'Italy', 'Tasso', and 'Address to the Greeks' - show Derozio's fascination, following Byron's, with Greece and Italy.

Thomas Campbell's poetry, with its numerous references to India, was extremely popular among the circle around Derozio in Calcutta, and his poems were alluded to in various Calcutta publications of this era. In a description of the scene around the death-bed of Derozio as he lay dying of cholera, his biographer Edwards mentions Campbell's Pleasures of Hope being read out to him:

There crowded around his sick-bed, not terrified by the ravages of cholera, but rising above the fear of contagion, the pupil-friends of the Hindu College.... There was Mr. Hill, the Congregational Minister, and J.W. Ricketts,.... Dr. John Grant, the man of all men who first recognised Derozio's brilliant capacity, who rocked the cradle of his genius, and followed to the grave his hearse, was in constant attendance; and when some hopes were entertained that the splendid constitution of the dying lad would withstand the ravages of the disease, the doctor's melodious voice rose in the sick-chamber, reading to the East Indian boy the second book of Campbell's Pleasures of Hope. But the 'pleasures of hope' were very brief! On Saturday, the 23rd December, 1831 the weary eyes closed in death....⁵¹

The writers of East Indian Worthies begin their section on Derozio, whom they call 'Bengala's Bard', with lines from Campbell: 'Oh deem not, 'midst this earthly strife, / An idle art the Poet brings !'⁵² These lines from Campbell are actually quoted by Derozio himself at the beginning of the poem 'The Poet's Grave', where he also included the further lines: 'Let high Philosophy control / And sages calm the stream of life, / 'Tis he refines its fountain springs, / The nobler passions of the soul!'⁵³

Several of Derozio's poems had extracts from Campbell as epigraphs. These were excluded from the standard edition of Derozio's poems edited by Bradley-Birt in 1923, and to find them it is necessary to go back to the original first editions published in 1827 and

⁵¹Edwards, 167.

⁵²Stark and Madge, 16.

⁵³Poetical Works, 1871, 36. (As the original editions of 1827 and 1828 are not accessible, I have used the 1871 edition which is available at the National Library in Calcutta for a complete account of the notes to some of the poems.)

1828, or to the 1871 edition of Derozio's collected poems published in Calcutta, all of which provide the original text in its entirety. It is possible to see, for instance, from the 1871 edition, that poems such as 'Freedom to the Slave', had been composed with the poem's headnote from the poet Campbell in mind : 'And as the Slave departs, the Man returns'⁵⁴:

How felt he when he first was told
 A slave he ceased to be;
 How proudly beat his heart, when first
 He knew that he was free!-
 The noblest feelings of the soul
 To glow at once began;
 He knelt no more; his thoughts were raised;
 He felt himself a man.⁵⁵

This eulogy to the qualities of freedom reflects the importance of prevalent philosophies of humanism and egalitarianism to Derozio; the lines from Campbell upon which Derozio's poem was modelled also incorporates similar ideals of the ultimate triumph of 'Truth, Mercy, Freedom...'.⁵⁶ It might be mentioned, in this context, that Derozio, at this time in Calcutta, was leading the students of the Hindu College in intense discussions on 'the social, moral and religious questions of the day'.⁵⁷

Derozio's drawing-room proving too confined a place for these discussions, the young men got up, about the year 1828, a debating society, which they called the Academic Association, or the Academy.... The general tone of the discussions was a decided revolt against existing religious institutions. The Hindu mind, conservative for a hundred generations, had suddenly become, not only liberal, but ultra-radical. The young lions of the Academy roared out, week after week, "Down with Hinduism! down with orthodoxy!"⁵⁸

This revolt against religious superstition was directly linked to the nationalism and the philosophy of individual rights found in the writings of Tom Paine, an author read avidly by Hindu college students of the time. Alexander Duff wrote disapprovingly on the phenomenon of Paine's popularity:

⁵⁴ *ibid.*, 32.

⁵⁵ 'Freedom to the Slave,' *Poems*, 18.

⁵⁶ See Thomas Campbell, 'Pleasures of Hope,' *Poetical Works*, ed. J. Logie Robertson (London: Oxford University Press, 1907), 12.

⁵⁷ Lal Behari Day, *Recollections of Alexander Duff* (London, 1879), 30.

⁵⁸ *ibid.*

Their great authorities... were Hume's Essays and Paine's Age of Reason. With copies of the latter, in particular, they were abundantly supplied... It was some wretched bookseller in the United States of America, who, - basely taking advantage of the reported infidel leanings of a new race of men in the East, and apparently regarding no God but his silver dollars, - despatched to Calcutta a cargo of that most malignant and pestiferous of all anti-Christian publications. From one ship a thousand copies were landed, and at first sold at the cheap rate of one rupee per copy; but such was the demand that the prices soon rose, and after a few months, it was actually quintupled. Besides the separate copies of the Age of Reason, there was also a cheap American edition, in one thick vol. 8vo., of all Paine's works, including the Rights of Man, and other minor pieces, political and theological. ⁵⁹

This record of the intellectual enthusiasms of the day is important in the context of the poem above, which describe the feelings of a man freed from slavery. The fact that the educated youth of Calcutta were reading Tom Paine meant that they were aware of the major issues being debated in the West. Paine's championing of the rights of the common man was allied to patriotism; similarly, in Derozio's poem, the plea for the independence of the individual is allied to the idea of nationalism ('How proudly beat his heart, when first / He knew that he was free').

Besides this poem, 'Freedom to the Slave', Derozio also prefaced a poem called 'The Dream' with lines from Campbell: 'But sorrow returned with the dawning of morn / And the voice in my dreaming ear melted away.'⁶⁰ Another poem, 'Evening in August', begins with a line: 'And muse on nature with a Poet's eye', also from Campbell.⁶¹ The fact that these notes at the beginning of the poems were excluded from the standard edition of 1923, and subsequently from all the reprints of Derozio's poems, are significant in their indication of the negation, by the editors, of the historical background from within which these poem came into existence. Such a treatment isolates the poems as works that could be read or interpreted as unmediated crystallisations of inner experience. Derozio's verse, and the rest of colonial poetry in India in this period, are both diminished by such an approach, which by seemingly minor editorial elisions, robs the entire corpus of these poets' works

⁵⁹Alexander Duff, India, and India Missions, 616.

⁶⁰Poetical Works, 1871, 32.

⁶¹*ibid.*, 35.

of the substantial historical context that played so integral a part in their production and publication; the complex totality of the poem is, then, altered and simplified.

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Depiction of the Orient in Derozio's poems

While the engagement in Derozio's body of work with the English romantic poets is obvious, easily detected, and invariably commented upon by critics, the buried Orientalist content of his poetry has never been brought to light. Contextualising Derozio's poems in their social and historical background establishes the involvement between the poetry and the current climate among Orientalist scholars in Calcutta. Moreover, the wave of enthusiasm for the Orient that swept across Europe in the nineteenth century, and resulted in many different representations of the Orient in European literature, was also found reflected in poetry such as Derozio's, written from Calcutta. The depiction of the East (whether dealing with Hindu or Muslim culture) in his poems derived entirely from his reading rather than his experience, and was borrowed substantially either from poets such as Campbell's portrayals of the East, or from many of the textual sources used by poets like Beckford when writing about the Orient, as we shall see in the following discussion.

Interestingly, when descriptions of Persian or Muslim culture occurred in Derozio's poetry, it was almost as if this Eurasian poet writing English verse in Calcutta was putting himself in the skin of a Western poet writing from Europe about the East. The poem 'The Enchantress of the Cave: A Tale' perhaps encapsulates most perfectly the different elements present in Derozio's treatment of Muslims, a close examination of which reveals a rich range of its sources, in both Orientalist scholarship and the then fashionable Western poetry about the Orient. It begins with the poet's declared intention to tell a 'legendary' tale:

Though my neglected lyre I wake once more,
And touch with untaught hand its strings again,
And though but poor in "legendary lore"
I strive to sing in legendary strain....⁶²

⁶² *ibid.*, 39.

This striving 'to sing in legendary strain' reveals a desire to mine the resources of Indian mythology or folklore or history; areas that were currently being rediscovered, studied, and transformed into a narrative by British scholars in Calcutta. The words 'legendary lore' are used within quotation marks in the poem, which both set it apart and also emphasise it as an idea popular at the time; the quotation marks also seem to indicate the constructed nature of 'legendary lore', and thus implicitly remind us of the Orientalist project. A description of night follows, and a battle is anticipated between invading Muslims and local Hindus. The hero of the tale, Nazim (a Muslim name) questions the Witch of the Cave about the welfare of his relatives, far away at home, especially of his beloved wife, Jumeeli. The witch delivers a long monologue, full of references to Middle-Eastern legends, invoking, in the course of her speech, such amazing features as 'the seal of Soliman' which can control genii and demons of all kinds as well as command the elements, or the stone called the 'sukhrat' which resembles an emerald, and on which stands the mountain Kaf; when Allah commands the stone to move, an earthquake is produced. The witch, after these digressions, finally informs Nazim that his wife is 'pure, and shall always love thee', turning finally into the very wife he has been asking after, and they both leave in the end for the battlefield as dawn breaks.

The notes Derozio attached to this poem provide clear evidence of the Western fashion for the Orient finding its way into his poetry. Derozio appended six notes (Notes A to F) to particular lines spoken by the witch in the poem, which, according to Edwards, 'show an amount of out-of-the-way reading, and an acquaintance with legendary lore, which exhibits, in some fashion, one side, at least, of the wide reading of Derozio.'⁶³ The side of Derozio's reading that these notes reveal is one that has escaped comment since then, since, as I have said above, later editions of Derozio's poems do not contain the notes included in the full text of the original publications. These notes are worth quoting in full:

(A) *Oh! Chuhulmenar is far from me.*
Chuhulmenar is the modern name of Istakhar. It signifies
"forty pillars," so called... because forty pillars were built in
it by Soliman Ben Daoud. It was known to the Greeks by

⁶³Edwards, 211.

the name of Persepolis, so famous in the history of
"Macedonia's Madman."....

(B) *There wilt thou find great Jemshid's gem.*

Jemshid's gem has given birth to many oriental similes, and most of the Hindoostanee poets have made allusions to it....

(C) *The seal of the fifth king can controul*

Genius and Giant, and Ogre and Ghoul.

The most famous talisman of the east was the seal of Soliman Javed, fifth monarch of the world, after Adam. It not only controuled Genii and demons of all kinds, but the possessor of it had the entire command of the elements. -
Vathek, Richardson, D'Herbelot

(D) *The friendly Simurgh*

"Rara avis in terris," and wonderful stories are told concerning it. For a more particular account of it I beg to refer the reader to Calif Vathek. *from the last note to Gracour where Byron puts it in*

(E) *Till all from Kaf to Kaf was before him.* *quotes 'Caliph Vathek' (as Mr Walter*

This mountain, which is no other than Caucasus, was supposed to surround the world like a wall; and the sun, it was believed, rose from one of its eminences, and set on the opposite - hence "from Kaf to Kaf" signified *from one eternity of the earth to the other*. It was to this mountain that the Simurgh bore Tahamurath through the air, and over the desert. From the breast of this bird he took the plumes of his helmet, and they have since been worn by the most renowned warriors of the east, who consequently have never wanted success. - *Vathek*

justly entitled it, 'Asiatic tale', the 'Caliph Vathek'.)

(F) *To the mountain that stands*

On the stone that ne'er moves but when Alla commands

This stone is called *Sukhrat*, and resembles, or is thought to be, an emerald. On it stands the mount Kaf; and when Alla commands it, or any of its fibres to move, an earthquake is produced.⁶⁴

Here, a range of interests is demonstrated. Firstly, there is the influence of the continuing Western fascination with Persian culture and poetry from the time of Jones, indicated by publications in England such as Vathek (all of the notes here actually incorporate elements from Vathek, even when not directly indicated; for instance in notes A, B, and F, 'Chuhulmenar', 'Jamshed's gem' and 'Sukhrat' are also taken from Beckford). Moreover, the notes show familiarity with the current Orientalist revival of indigenous Indian poetry, noticeable, for instance, in the observation about the popularity of an 'oriental simile' among 'most of the Hindoostanee poets'. The use of Muslim legend in this poem is

⁶⁴Poetical Works, 1871, 66.

interesting because of the two interlocking strands in Derozio's manipulation of this material. The references in the notes to the poem, as I have said, show Derozio being influenced by the then prevalent fashionable Western interest in an exoticized Muslim culture. At the same time, Derozio also participates in the glorification of ancient India, a project that is local, immediate and colonial, and conceived in the academic research of Orientalist scholars in Calcutta.

This difference between the preoccupation with the Orient in Western literature on the one hand and Orientalist poetry in colonial India on the other is a crucial one, and needs to be emphasised clearly. Western poets were generally overwhelmingly concerned with Persian, Arabic, Turkish, or Middle-Eastern culture - even when they dealt with India, it was usually with reference to the Persian court culture that was prevalent in Mughal India.⁶⁵ So, the source-material of Jones's 'Palace of Fortune', an Indian verse tale written before he had set foot in India, was Alexander Dow's Tales of Inatullah, a collection of Persian stories published in England, rather than any indigenous literary text such as those he translated himself later in India.⁶⁶ This sort of poetry, written usually in the West, and based upon certain popular texts that dealt with the 'East', was symptomatic of Western 'Orientalism', and the most striking example of this type of work would be William Beckford's Vathek.

Derozio's notes to the 'Enchantress of the Cave', quoted above, are interesting in that they display an entirely Western attitude to Eastern material. The names he mentions - Vathek, Richardson, D'Herbelot, - are classic instances of sources that have traditionally been used by almost all the English poets whose poetry incorporated the Orient: Byron, Southey, Moore, Landor. John Richardson, mentioned by Derozio in Note C, was the author of Dissertation on the Languages, Literature, and Manners of Eastern Nations (Oxford, 1777), and for more than forty years one of the main sources of information on

⁶⁵Exceptions include Southey's The Curse of Kehama (London, 1810), based on Jones's Sanskrit work.

⁶⁶Jones's Eastern poetry with 'Indian' subject matter included 'The Palace of Fortune', written before he knew Sanskrit or had come to India, and published in the Poems of 1772. The translations he later did in India from the original Sanskrit included the play Sakuntala and the nine Hymns to various Hindu deities, published sequentially in the Asiatic Researches.

the East used by English writers.⁶⁷ Barthelemy D'Herbelot's Bibliothèque Orientale (La Haye, 1778), also included in Note C, was a primary source for Vathek, and is acknowledged by Beckford in his notes consistently from the opening sentences onward.⁶⁸ Meanwhile, Vathek (1782) was acknowledged most famously of all by Byron in his notes to Giaour (1813); it exerted a definite influence on the next literary generation, with its voluminous notes being 'quarried' by 'such writers as Isaac D'Israeli (Romances, 1799) and John Hamilton Reynolds (Sofie, an Eastern Tale, 1814)', while 'the oriental fantasies of such poets as Southey, Moore, Landor, and Barry Cornwall... [were] also indebted to the tale itself.'⁶⁹ To that list of literary personages in the English canon who borrowed from Vathek, we might now add the name of Derozio, writing from the outpost of Calcutta in the first quarter of the century, automatically disqualified from inclusion in that group because of his position as a colonial.

The development of Jones's body of poetry best illustrates the difference between this sort of Western 'Orientalism' and Orientalist colonial poetry in India. While the poems published in 1772 in London display attitudes common in Western poetry incorporating Oriental themes, his Sanskrit hymns, written after he had come to India and learnt Sanskrit from the pundits, display all the characteristics of what I have been calling Orientalist poetry. Orientalist poetry was written, with some exceptions, in India and not in the West (again, Southey would be the most prominent exception). In its early phases, it was concerned mainly with the history of pre-Muslim Hindu India, which was being gradually unearthed by British scholars through the deciphering of ancient scripts and the discovery of archaeological artefacts such as copper coins, plates and urns, eventually discussed in papers delivered at the meetings of the Asiatic Society. Most importantly, this history was also being re-established through the regeneration of Hindu 'great works' that were printed, published and popularised through government funds at places like the college of Fort William. The Golden Age in Indian history was one of the most important themes in

⁶⁷Fatma Moussa Mahmoud, 'Beckford, Vathek and the Oriental Tale,' William Beckford of Fonthill: Bicentenary Essays (Cairo: Supplement to Cairo Studies in English, 1960), 75.

⁶⁸Robert J. Gemmet, William Beckford (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1977), 99.

⁶⁹Roger Lonsdale, ed. Vathek (London: Oxford University Press, 1970), xxii.

Orientalist poetry, and that vision of a Hindu age was created entirely by a team of Orientalist scholars led successively by Jones, Colebrooke and Wilson. In the latter half of the century, after the demise of Orientalist policies in India, Orientalist poetry borrowed from British historians such as Tod, Elphinstone, Erskine, Grant, and Duff; historians who catalogued the legends and annals of medieval India, telling the history of Muslim power in Delhi, and of the opposition to that rule put up by the Rajputs and the Marathas. The poets of colonial India, as I shall show, put that historical opposition to foreign rule to subversive use in their English verse, by constructing a critique, in the guise of a poetic narrative, of current colonial oppression. Orientalist poets in India absorbed ideas propagated by the scholars and historians, often putting that material to unexpected uses, producing a poetry which, when it wasn't borrowing directly from historical legends and stories resurrected by the Orientalists, was always at least imbued with notions that had been generated by the Orientalist enterprise as regards India.

It is essential to note that both Western poetry about the 'Orient' and the new Indian poetry about the recently discovered Hindu past share characteristics of presenting a selective and textually informed account of the East. The charge made by Said about a selected representation of the Orient would perhaps apply equally to Orientalist poetry as to Western poetry about the Orient, in that elements of 'Orientalism', in Said's sense, will be found in Orientalist poetry as well; although there are definite differences - as outlined above - which make separate definitions essential.

While Derozio's notes to the 'The Enchantress of the Cave' reflect Western interest in the exotic aspect of Muslim culture, his references to Muslims in the section preceding the witch's monologue merge two other different impulses. Here, where the poet anticipates the battle to be fought the following day between the Muslims and the Hindus, we can see a depiction of Indian history that could have been obtained from readings in Orientalist research which emphasised, for the first time, the Hindu history of India. Thus, what we have is one of the earliest examples of the self-conscious expression of a Hindu point of view, a point of view that could have been adopted because of the Orientalist

scholar's preoccupation with Hindu history at the time. Derozio's position as an East Indian also makes this point of view the first example of nascent pan-Indian nationalism.

Though fair the night, to-morrow's sun
 Shall see a battle lost and won,
 For Bramah's children must oppose
 Their fell, invading, Moslem foes,
 And strew their corpses o'er the plains,
 Or captive wear the victor's chains.
 The conflict will be desperate,
 For either host is backed by hate -
 The Moslem brings his turban'd band,
 To win the peaceful, golden land,
 The crescent on his banner shines,
 The watchword's "Alla" in his lines,
 And on his blade the Koran verse
 Bespeaks for every foe a curse.
 The Hindoo courts the bloody broil,
 To fight or fall for his parent soil,
 And he must go forth in the battle to bleed
 For all that is dear - country, kindred, and creed;
 But evil betide him and fair Hindoostan
 If ever he yield to the proud Mussulman !

However, while the espousal of a Hindu point of view might have been due, in part, to the rediscovery of the Hindu golden age by the Calcutta Orientalists, the other direct influence upon this particular passage was Campbell's 'Pleasures of Hope'. In that poem, it is possible to see the source of Derozio's depiction here of the Hindu/Muslim conflict:

Ye orient realms, where Ganges' waters run!
 Prolific fields ! dominions of the sun !
 How long your tribes have trembled and obeyed !
 How long was Timour's iron sceptre swayed!
 Whose marshalled hosts, the lions of the plain,
 From Scythia's northern mountains to the main,
 Raged o'er your plundered shrines and altars bare,
 With blazing torch and gory scimitar, -
 Stunned with the cries of death each gentle gale,
 And bathed in blood the verdure of the vale !
 Yet could no pangs the immortal spirit tame,
 When Brama's children perished for his name;
 The martyr smiled beneath avenging power,
 And braved the tyrant in his torturing hour !⁷⁰

Campbell's use of the phrase 'dominions of the sun', an image found repeatedly in Western poets' description of India or the Orient, reveals the reason behind the Indian poets' use of the same trope whenever they referred to India. Their use of the image of India as a 'sunny' or 'golden' land would make sense if used by British poets, but when it

⁷⁰Campbell, 'Pleasures of Hope,' Poetical Works, 18-19.

is displaced into the works of Indian poets, who have known no other climate, it indicates the derivative nature of their verse. Campbell's vision of a peaceful people put to the sword by invading Muslims is replete with evocations of 'plundered shrines and altars bare', of 'blazing torch and gory scimitar', of the land 'stunned with cries of death' and 'bathed in blood'. Finally the Muslim invader and the Hindu are typified as 'avenging' 'tyrant' and 'brave' 'martyr' respectively. A note to this section of Campbell's poem directs us to his source for this bloody picture:

The same overwhelming torrent [of Mahomedism] which had inundated the greater part of Africa, burst its way into the very heart of Europe, and covering many kingdoms of Asia, with unbounded desolation, directed its baneful course to the flourishing provinces of Hindostan. Here these fierce and hardy adventurers, whose only improvement had been in the science of destruction, who added the fury of fanaticism to the ravages of war, found the great end of their conquest opposed by objects which neither the ardour of their persevering zeal, nor savage barbarity, could surmount. Multitudes were sacrificed by the cruel hand of religious persecution, and whole countries deluged in blood, in the vain hope, that by the destruction of a part, the remainder might be persuaded or terrified, into the profession of Mahomedism....

Letters from a Hindoo Rajah, by Eliza Hamilton. ⁷¹

Derozio, who had read 'Pleasures of Hope', would also have read these notes attached to that poem. The language in which the Muslim invasion of India is described here, and its transformation into the lines which Campbell writes on the same subject, subsequently finds its way into Derozio's poem. Specifically, the use of phrases such as 'Brahma's children', the picture of a 'peaceful, golden land' besieged by 'Their fell, invading, Muslim foes', and the concluding sentiments expressed in the lines 'But evil betide him and fair Hindoostan / If ever he yield to the proud Mussulman !' are a direct consequence of Derozio's reading of 'Pleasures of Hope'. It would be relevant to mention, in this context, that some of Campbell's Hindu references in 'The Pleasures of Hope' were obtained from Jones. For instance, a note to the line 'Nine times have Brama's wheels of lightning hurled / His awful presence o'er the alarmed world' explains:

⁷¹ibid., 38-39. (Elizabeth Hamilton, Translation of the letters of a Hindoo rajah, to which is prefixed a preliminary dissertation on the history, religion, and manners of the Hindoos (London, 1796).)

Among the sublime fictions of the Hindoo mythology, it is one article of belief that the Deity Brama has descended nine times upon the world in various forms, and that he is yet to appear a tenth time, in the figure of a warrior upon a white horse, to cut off all incorrigible offenders. 'Avatar' is the word used to express his descent.⁷²

Although Campbell does not give any references for this information, the lines are taken from Jones's essay 'On the Gods of Greece, Italy, and India', where Jones describes the nature of the nine preceding avatars, and then mentions that the 'tenth *Avatar* ... is yet to come, and is expected to appear mounted... on a white horse, with a cimeter blazing like a comet, to mow down all incorrigible and impenitent offenders who shall then be on earth.'⁷³ Campbell invokes the gods and goddesses of India again, subsequent to the lines quoted above, towards the conclusion of the first part of 'Pleasures of Hope':

The tenth Avatar comes ! at Heaven's command
Shall Seriswattee wave her hallowed wand !
And Camdeo bright, and Ganesa sublime,
Shall bless with joy their own propitious clime!⁷⁴

A note to these lines briefly elucidates that 'Camdeo' is the God of Love in the mythology of the Hindoos. Ganesa and Seriswattee correspond to the pagan deities Janus and Minerva.⁷⁵ Once more, no mention is made here of William Jones, without whose Sanskrit hymns, and essay comparing the gods of Greece, Italy and India, such references could not have been made. Remarkably, however, Campbell makes use of these allusions to say that these gods and goddesses shall accompany Bramha (in the form of the tenth avatar) to establish a prosperity and peace that the British empire has robbed India of. He asks 'Did Peace descend, to triumph and to save / When freeborn Britons crossed the Indian wave?', and replies in the next lines 'Ah, no! - to more than Rome's ambition true, / The Nurse of Freedom gave it not to you ! / She the bold route of Europe's guilt began, / And, in the march of nations, led the van!'⁷⁶ It is interesting to see that although Campbell is made use of by Derozio when the subject matter concerns Hindu mythology or the

⁷²ibid., 39.

⁷³Jones, 'On the Gods of Greece, Italy, and India,' Asiatic Researches I, 200.

⁷⁴ibid., 20.

⁷⁵ibid., 40.

⁷⁶ibid., 19.

Muslim invasion of India (note, therefore, the circuitous route through which Orientalist influences entered Derozio's poem), Campbell's denunciation of Britain's exploitation of India is left out of Derozio's poem. As a colonial subject, it would not have been possible for Derozio to take on the subject of British oppression in India; instead he uses the Muslim/Hindu opposition to eulogise liberty, freedom and nationhood, thus indirectly undermining British colonial domination.

It remains to be noted that in Derozio's 'Enchantress of the Cave', the Hindu is shown attempting to expel the intruders for the sake of 'all that is dear - country, kindred, and creed'. The concept of dying for one's 'parent soil', the idea of identifying oneself with one's country, however, was based, to some extent, upon ideas of liberty and the nation imported from the Western Enlightenment. Patriotic sentiment (suggested by 'parent soil', which seems to be a metaphor for 'nation') had not, most probably, actually existed in the minds of the Hindus who did historically fight the Muslim invaders, as the idea of the nation, rather than kingdom, had not yet come into existence, their system according a higher loyalty to the other two factors Derozio mentions, kindred and creed, as well as loyalty to their king.

Derozio's Orientalist reading is also evident in 'The Enchantress of the Cave' in the lines immediately following the section depicting the coming battle between the Hindus and Muslims quoted above. Here, the poet apostrophises the glorious past of the Hindu nation in a tone that is informed entirely by the revaluations and reappraisals of contemporary Orientalist researchers:

O! for the spirit of the past,
 Ere exiled Freedom looked her last -
 On this delicious orient clime!
 O! for the men of fleeted time!
 O! for the heroic hearts of old
 To fire the souls that now are cold,
 To lead them on to deeds of worth,
 And raise their glory yet on earth !
 'Tis vain to wish - it will not be:-
 But since the spark of liberty
 Is quenched, that once did warmly glow
 In daring bosoms, long ago,
 O! for a life-inspiring strain
 To fan it into light again!

The entire passage is pervaded by a feeling of nostalgia for an ancient time when 'Freedom' reigned, the men were 'heroic', and the age was one of 'glory'. This past has now been lost, and the poet wishes 'for a life-inspiring strain / to fan it into life again' before the battle. The picture of a 'heroic', 'daring' community of Hindus prior to the advent of the Muslims was taken, undoubtedly, from the work of the Orientalist scholars on Hindu history; before the Orientalist's account of it, no records had existed of the Muslim invasion from the Hindu point of view, as the Hindus had no historiography. It was Colebrooke, William Jones's successor as the President of the Asiatic Society, who had added scholarly substance to Jones's views on ancient Hindu culture. In his 'Essay on the Vedas' Colebrooke had depicted a Hindu people who had been very different from present day manifestations of Hindu society.⁷⁷ These ancient Hindus, he said, had been robust, outgoing, and non-mystical, and had belonged to a beef-eating, socially egalitarian society, with no temples or image worship. Here, instead of Oriental despotism, researchers had found evidence of independent-minded tribal republics. All these characteristics of the early Hindu states emphasised consciously the absence of those very vices that afflicted present Hindu society; Derozio, in the verses quoted above, portrays a similar idea of the 'heroic' men of 'fleeted time' who possessed a spirit almost entirely 'quenched' in the Hindus who face a battle with the Muslims in latter-day Hindustan. The 'spark of liberty' that had fired the souls of the Hindus in the past is now cold, and Freedom is now 'exiled' from the land. The picture which Derozio presents of the past contrasted with the present is a direct offshoot of the work of Orientalist researchers such as Colebrooke, which is the principal material published before 1827 that could have aided his imagination on the theme of what those early times of Hindu independence had been like.

Other poems, if examined carefully, also reveal a similar attitude that was in keeping with the ideas generated by Orientalist scholarship in India. In the poem 'The Golden Vase' there are some lines that refer to the Muslim conquest of India:

The Moslem is come down to spoil the land
Which every god hath blest. For such a soil,

⁷⁷H.T. Colebrooke, 'On the Vedas or the Sacred Writings of the Hindus,' Asiatic Researches, VIII (1805), 377-497.

So rich, so clad with beauty, who would not
 Unlock his veins, and pour their treasure forth?
 The Hindoo hath marched forward to repel
 The lawless plunderer of his holy shrines,
 The savage, rude disturber of his peace...⁷⁸

The vague glorification of Muslim legend and fantastic lore found in the notes to 'Enchantress of the Cave', inspired by English poets such as Beckford and Byron, and texts such as the Arabian Nights, here gives way to a much more concrete and specific definition of the Muslim role in the history of India as theorised by the Orientalist historians in India, and in Campbell's 'Pleasures of Hope', as we have seen. Interestingly, the rest of the poem, (which is about a maiden, pining for her lover who is at war, while gazing upon the gift of the lover - the golden vase), has very little to do with sentiments expressed in the few lines about the Muslims and the Hindus, which come as a sudden disruption in the poem. While the rest of the poem is a successful imitation of Miltonic blank verse, containing subject matter common among the romantic poets, and could have been written in any place and at roughly any time in the last three centuries, the short part about the Muslim 'plunderer' of the 'holy shrines' of the Hindus immediately and concretely contextualises the poem as one written at a time when current Orientalist histories of India were full of new evidence regarding a Hindu India that was 'so rich' and 'so clad with beauty' that Muslim pillagers could not resist the temptation to 'unlock' the 'treasure' of this soil.

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Direct Influence of William Jones

William Jones was being read at this time by every poet in India who was attempting to express a newly found concern with India's past in their poetry. Evidence of this reading can be found in individual references, in the style of allusions, and Jones is even directly mentioned in the footnotes provided by poets such as Kasiprasad and Michael Madhusudan, as I shall show in the following chapters. Derozio's long verse-tale, 'The

⁷⁸'The Golden Vase,' Poems, 95.

'Fakeer of Jungheera', which gave his second edition of poems its title, was modelled on the lines of Jones's verse-tale, 'The Enchanted Fruit; or, The Hindu Wife: An Antediluvian Tale'.⁷⁹ The latter had inaugurated a tradition of verse-tales that was later followed by Byron and the other Romantics; it is noteworthy that both Kasiprasad, in 'The Shair' and Michael Madhusudan, in The Captive Ladie, also followed this tradition of the long narrative verse-tale initiated by Jones. Derozio's reading of Jones's Sanskrit hymns is also evident from the way in which his poems, in the manner of Jones, use the Indian names for flowers, the sun ('Surya's* everlasting blaze...'), the moon ('Like Chandra* in the jewelled skies...') and the God of Wind ('As Pubna* stirs the silent sea...').⁸⁰

Derozio attached a note to the lines 'O! what were even a petal worth / Of heaven's Cameeni* sweet on earth!', in which the Cameeni flower's botanical name is given in Latin as the *Murraya Exotica*.⁸¹ In a note to the 'Hymn to Pracriti', Jones had put forward his own views on the beauty of using the Indian names of flowers, saying:

One of his [CAMA, the *Indian CUPID*] arrows is called *Mellica*, the *Nyctanthes* of our botanists, who very unadvisedly reject the vernacular names of most Asiatic plants: it is beautifully introduced by Calidasa into this lively couplet:

*Mellicamucule bhati gunjanmattamadhuvratah,
Prayane panchaoanasya sanchamapurayanniva.*

'The intoxicated bee shines and murmurs in the fresh blown *Mellica* like him who gives breath to a white conch in the procession of the God with five arrows.'

For his audiences, however, Jones was compelled to clarify the species of many Indian flowers and plants, and the passage quoted above is followed, in fact, by a page long paragraph that explains the generic species to which the Indian lotus belonged, beginning, 'It may be here observed, that *Nymphaea*, not *Lotos*, is the *generic* name in *Europe* of the flower consecrated to ISIS....'⁸² This sort of footnote, where the reference to an Indian

⁷⁹William Jones, 'The Enchanted Fruit; or, The Hindu Wife: An Antediluvian Tale Written in The Province of Bahar,' Asiatick Miscellany 1, ed. Francis Gladwin (Calcutta, 1785), 188-211.

⁸⁰'The Fakeer of Jungheera,' Poems, 141, 142, 157.

⁸¹*ibid.*, 155.

⁸²William Jones, 'The Argument' before 'A Hymn to Pracriti,' The Poetical Works, Vol. I (London, 1810), 64. [All subsequent quotations from Jones's poetry shall be from this edition.]

flower is explained with the scientific Latin name, was to be found for the first time, and ubiquitously, in Jones's Sanskrit hymns. Again, in 'The Fakeer of Jungheera', a reference to lord Krishna is footnoted: 'The Indian Apollo'.⁸³ The coinage of Krishna as the Indian Apollo was pioneered by Jones in his Sanskrit hymns, pointing irrefutably to Jones's influence on Derozio in these areas in his poetry.⁸⁴

While these footnotes provided by Derozio point to Jones's influence, especially in the elucidation of Indian subject matter, it should also be pointed out that at the time the convention of footnotes was used in all those works in English poetry which dealt with the 'Orient'. Following Beckford's Vathek (1782), closer to Derozio's time, works such as Campbell's 'Pleasures of Hope' (1799), Southey's Curse of Kehama (1810), or Moore's Lallah Rookh (1817) made extensive use of notes. All these works contain copious notes, usually to explain or elaborate upon some obscure foreign custom, ritual or detail. For instance, there are nearly four hundred footnotes in Moore's Lallah Rookh, and the very first note refers the reader to William Jones, furnishing the information that the word 'Khorasan' in Moore's section in the poem entitled 'Veiled Prophet of Khorasan', meant, 'in the old Persian language, Province, or Region of the Sun'.⁸⁵ The use of explanatory notes by Derozio and the succeeding Indian poets, Kasiprasad and Madhusudan, therefore, partly owe their presence to contemporary poetic conventions in England. This is also evident from the manner in which the attention paid to these notes declines as time passes, and by the time Madhusudan was writing in 1849, his efforts at the notes become cursory in comparison, while the Dutts, in the latter half of the century, make use of subheadings, but do not use any notes at all.

The fact that Derozio read Jones is also evident through the inclusion, in Derozio's volume of poems, of an 'Ode From the Persian of Hafiz'. The ode is a free translation in the manner of Jones, (rather than an exact translation in the form of the original) and a

⁸³'The Fakeer of Jungheera,' Poems, 174.

⁸⁴See William Jones, 'The Argument' before 'A Hymn to Camdeo' ('where KRISHEN also, and the nine GOPIA, who are clearly the *Apollo* and *Muses* of the *Greeks*...'), The Poetical Works, 56.

⁸⁵Thomas Moore, Lallah Rookh (London, 1817), 9.

comparison will show the similarity in style, form, and even the content, between the two.

Jones's 'A Persian Song of Hafiz' contains the lines:

In vain with love our bosoms glow:
Can all our tears, can all our sighs,
New lustre to those charms impart?
Can cheeks, where living roses blow,
Where nature spreads her richest dyes,
Require the borrowed gloss of art?⁸⁶

Meanwhile, Derozio's translation of his ode from Hafiz includes:

In vain the cypress waves, in vain
A thousand flowrets sigh,
Without the cheek whose tint excels
The tulip's crimson dye!
Yet what are lips where sweetness clings,
And cheeks where roses dwell,
Without the kiss, the joy, the bliss
Of pleasure's potent spell?⁸⁷

The two verses show a remarkable similarity of sentiment and manner, where the cheeks of the beloved in both extracts are likened to roses and the lover sighs 'in vain' over the beauty of the fair lady in both poems. While it is true that the Persian style had certain metaphors, images and modes of expression in common among all its compositions of this sort, we might still conjecture that Derozio chose to translate this particular ode because of its likeness to the famous 'Persian Song' of Jones. The last lines of the Ode from Hafiz ('And what's my life? - perhaps a coin - / A trifling coin at best - / Unheeded e'en by passer-by, / Unfit for bridal guest.*') are explained in a footnote by Derozio: 'This alludes to a custom in the East, of throwing money away among the guests at a bridal.'⁸⁸ Once again, we are reminded that the poems Derozio wrote were borrowing from Orientalist poetry written in India by scholars such as Jones, as well as from Western poets writing in England of the Orient, footnotes such as this, explaining the customs and manners of Eastern nations, being common to both these schools. If this example shows Derozio following Jones in the presentation of a Persian ode, then another example of Jones's influence may be found in Derozio's use of Hindu mythology. The first canto of 'The Fakeer of Jungheera' contains a 'Hymn to the Sun' in the manner of Jones's rendition,

⁸⁶William Jones, 'A Persian Song of Hafiz,' The Poetical Works , 191.

⁸⁷Derozio, 'Ode From The Persian Of Hafiz,' Poems, 24.

⁸⁸ibid., 25.

from the Sanskrit, of a 'Hymn to Surya'. Although there is no direct equation, besides the titles, between this and Jones's hymn, the general feeling of both the poems - a celebratory invocation of the Sun - is very similar.

Another characteristic of Jones's Orientalist poetry was the 'Argument' preceding the Sanskrit hymns, which explained certain rites or rituals of Hinduism, or provided detailed information about various allusions - mythological, geographical, sociological - within the hymns. This practice is imitated by Derozio in the poem 'The Eclipse', where he explains the Hindu reaction to an eclipse in a note preceding the poem, much in the manner found in almost all of Jones's Arguments:

When an eclipse is predicted, the Hindoos, men, women, and children, betake themselves to the riverside, and stand in expectation of the event, ready to plunge into the water with prayers to "all the Gods at once", that the moon may not be swallowed up by a monster, who they suppose comes for that purpose. This is the belief of the multitude; but the Brahmins know full well how eclipses are caused, and they can calculate them with the precision of the best European astronomers.⁸⁹

An Indian critic, C. Paul Verghese, in an essay assessing the achievements of Derozio's poetry, mentions this headnote of which he quotes the first sentence; he concludes, after a cursory look at the attributes of the moon in the poem itself, that it shows that 'Derozio's handling of Indian classical mythology is often uncertain' and that 'A typical example of this wavering attitude towards the Indian myth and its poetic use is "The Eclipse"'.⁹⁰ Such criticism demonstrates an incomplete understanding of Derozio's use of Indian mythology, and of the historical moment in which that use occurred; it neglects to address the context that might have made such borrowing possible, the historical or political significance Indian mythology might have had to the newly-formed middle class at that time, and fails to enquire into what intentions Derozio might have had in his use of Indian mythology. The reconstruction of Indian history was still an ongoing enterprise of cultural and political significance, and Derozio's use of Indian mythology was partly a matter of national pride and identifying himself with an emerging tradition. Whether his use of history is 'certain'

⁸⁹'The Eclipse,' *Poems*, 98.

⁹⁰C. Paul Verghese, 'Henry Derozio: An Assessment,' *Perspectives on Indian Poetry in English*, ed. M.K. Naik (Delhi: Abhinava Publications, 1984), 5.

or not is a question that can only be raised when that history has become a 'given', something that was still far from true in Derozio's time.

The contrast drawn in the last line of the note between the ignorant beliefs of the multitude and the high standards of Brahmin knowledge, which can calculate the eclipse 'with the precision of the best European astronomers', again has its roots in the Orientalist's promotion of the amazing achievements of Sanskrit studies in ancient times contrasted to present ignorance. William Jones, in his third annual discourse to the Asiatic Society, spoke of how his observations concerning the Indo-European period had been gathered impressionistically from bits and pieces of Sanskrit language and literature, the six schools of Indian philosophy, the Laws of Manu, religious myths and symbols, and varied sculptural and architectural remains, and how all these testified to a 'people with a fertile and inventive genius'.⁹¹ Crucially for our argument, however, he then goes on to conclude that since then, these people had substituted astrological calculations for a viable chronological scheme, burying their past historical achievements in 'a cloud of fables'.⁹² This dichotomy between the precise astrological calculations of the past and the 'cloud of fables' in the minds of the multitudes in the present is exactly the dichotomy present in Derozio's headnote about the Indian reaction to an eclipse.

The Orientalist fascination with legends and tales gathered from undiscovered sources and brought to light in new publications, is evident in another note appended by Derozio to one of the episodes in the 'Fakeer of Jungheera' - The Legend of the Shushan. The section begins with a minstrel who sings about a legend set in a cremation ground ('shushan'). This legend is taken from a text in Indian folklore, the story of King Vikramaditya and the Betal (supernatural spirit) - a popular story that Indian children nowadays have read in comic books or watched serialised on national television. It is interesting to speculate how the story might have found its way into Derozio's verse; an enquiry leads us to a small but complex narrative of intertextuality and dissemination typical of those times.

⁹¹William Jones, 'Third Annual Discourse,' *Asiatic Researches*, I (Calcutta, 1788), 422-23.

⁹²*ibid.*

The stories of King Vikramaditya in *Batris Simhasan* [Thirty-two Thrones] had been one of the earliest original works produced at the College of Fort William by the Bengali Brahmin pundit employed there under William Carey, Mrityunjay Vidyalkar, in 1802. A translation from the Sanskrit into plain Bengali, this tale was transcribed from traditional recitations of such fables by Brahmins in Bengal before gatherings of peasants, and put into written book form for the first time.⁹³ The borrowing that took place between varied publications of that time is demonstrated by this instance of the use of a legend pertaining to King Vikramaditya being transcribed by the Brahmin Vidyalkar, and another legend concerning King Vikramaditya being used by Derozio in a section in his longest and most ambitious poetical effort. Derozio knew and spoke Bengali, but he would not have had access to the legend he used through the traditional village recitations, proving once again that the material he incorporated in his poetry was put into currency through the Orientalist's efforts.

The note to this section of the poem shows an eagerness on Derozio's part to incorporate in the poem an entirely Indian subject written in an 'authentic' Eastern style:

A student of that excellent institution, the Hindu College, once brought me a translation of the Betal Puncheesee, and the following fragment of a tale having struck me for its wildness, I thought of writing a ballad, the subject of which should be strictly Indian.... In conformity with the practice of eastern story-tellers, who frequently repeat the burden or moral of the song, I have introduced the "O Love is strong," &c., wherever an opportunity offered...⁹⁴

This passage reveals a desire on Derozio's part to include in his narrative verse tale a ballad that would incorporate a gothic atmosphere, popular among the English romantics, but characteristically for Orientalist poetry, this was to be done through the medium of a 'strictly Indian' subject. The scheme was to be executed in a style that belonged correctly to the English ballad form, but to maintain the Eastern atmosphere, that form was tailored to conform with 'the practice of eastern story-tellers'. Such contradictory impulses were characteristic of Orientalist poetry in colonial India.

⁹³See Kopf, 114.

⁹⁴Edwards, 198.

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Critical Reception to Derozio's Poetry

Derozio's poetry has been criticised, in the present day, for its 'oriental images' and 'smart conceits'; he has also been dismissed for being 'typical of nineteenth century Indo-Anglian writing in his romanticism, his derivativeness and his use of Indian themes.'⁹⁵ The most detailed appreciation of his poetry that appeared in his time was published in the Oriental Herald, July 1829, and reprinted in the Calcutta Gazette.⁹⁶ This review expressed what was then the common attitude to his work; that the lush Orientalism of his imagery and the excessive Easternness of his descriptions derived almost all its faults and none of its virtues from the Byronic model. About 'The Fakeer of Jungheera', the reviewer wrote:

It is altogether upon the strained and extravagant model of Lord Byron's poetic romances of love and murder; and too like the exaggerated imitation of the worst Byronic style, with which we have been overflowed in this country, even to nausea, ever since the appearance of the 'Giaour', such as 'Bertram', the mad play of poor Maturin, the mad Irish novelist,- the rhyming romances of L.E.L. *et hoc genus omne* - a school of poetry which we have the satisfaction to perceive, is (in this country at least), now nearly 'on its last legs.'.... [Mr Derozio's] style and manner, though borrowed in a great degree from Byron, are characterised also, by frequent resemblances to other fashionable poetry of the day, to which his reading seems to have been unfortunately almost exclusively confined. Thus we are continually reminded of Moore's 'Lallah Rookh', and Miss Saunder's 'Troubadour'.....⁹⁷

This review is the most detailed contemporary criticism of Derozio's poetry that has survived to the present day, and a reply was made to this charge, on behalf of the poet, by his mentor Dr John Grant, who protested, in response to a review in the Oriental Quarterly Magazine, that 'When the Reviewer blames him [Derozio] for making the Byronic School too much his model, we must say for our young poet that he himself, at the time of publishing... anticipated that an objection against exaggerated passion and sentiment would

⁹⁵Benoy Ghosh, *Bidrohi Derozio*, 121; H.M. Williams, Indo-Anglian Literature 1800-1970; a survey (Bombay: Orient Longmans, 1976), 16.

⁹⁶Oriental Herald and Colonial Review, ed. James Silk Buckingham, Vols. 1-22 (London, 1824 - 29). Reprinted in the Calcutta Gazette, Monday Evening, November 23, 1829.

⁹⁷Calcutta Gazette, *ibid.*

be made.⁹⁸ Dr Grant goes on to explain that Derozio did not adopt a simpler model because 'his first consideration was, that the book should sell. To render this probable, he felt it necessary to give in to what he believed to be the general taste; and he was therefore obliged to adopt the popular and fashionable model.'⁹⁹

While the Oriental Herald review, cited above, makes some relevant points about the sources that influenced his poetry, the most interesting suggestion it makes is towards its end, when Derozio is asked to turn instead to the 'pages of Indian history' for 'purer models' and 'worthier subjects':

Our censure is designed to induce this really talented and interesting young poet to betake himself of purer models than those which have too long fascinated his juvenile fancy, and to select worthier subjects for his muse than bandits - Fakeers, or Moslem-lovers. The pages of Indian history, of his native India, in all its 'glory and its gloom', lies spread before him. The present condition and future prospects of India, are also themes of deep and inspiring interest. Let him turn to these, and he will scarcely fail to find them worthy to inspire a loftier lay than the 'Fakeer of Jungheera'.¹⁰⁰

This sort of advice by British critics to Indian poets was later repeated by Edmund Gosse in the better known case of Sarojini Naidu, who published her first volume of poetry in 1905. Finding such sentiments so early in the annals of Indo-Anglian writing perhaps indicates, above all, that the enthusiasm shown by poets in colonial India for historical themes was directed, from the very beginning, not only by popular demand, but also by the expectations of critics, reviewers and scholars who formed a part of that band of society that created a taste for it in the first place. Moreover, the passage quoted above is striking because of the connections it makes specifically between poetry, the history of India, and its current production by Orientalist scholars. The reference to 'the pages of Indian history' that lie spread before the young Indian poet is a direct indication of the current work being done by Orientalist scholars in the reconstruction of ancient Indian history, and that this subject was thought to be a valid area for Indian writers to mine is obvious from the reviewer's recommendation. In this context, it is worth noting the underlying prejudice in

⁹⁸Dr John Grant, Government Gazette, December 1829, cited in Edwards, 192-3.

⁹⁹ibid.

¹⁰⁰Calcutta Gazette, ibid.

the incorrect translation of the word 'fakir' by the reviewer, who interprets it to mean 'Moslem-lover' (The OED gives the word's meaning to be 'a religious [esp. Mohammedan] mendicant, ascetic, or wonder-worker in India') - a mistake that reveals a bias against the Muslim tradition, thought by him to be unfit for use as a topic for a poem. Instead, the poet is advised to turn to 'purer' and 'loftier' native models, to be found in the pages of Indian history. 'Native' here seems to be in opposition to 'Muslim' - an attitude that was generated by the Orientalists when they emphasised that Indian culture was not, after all, composed mainly of Persian elements, but had its own prior indigenous Hindu history.

The poetry of Henry Louis Vivian Derozio was the first instance of a colonial encounter taking place through English poetry in the history of British India. From the instances of his creative use of the colonial situation that we have seen above, it is certainly evident that his poetry could not be reduced, under any exigency, to a mere exercise of mimicry. Closely modelled on English forms as they were, his poems still deny any complete appropriation of themselves by the oppressive domination of the colonizer. Possessed with an energy and vitality born of the active interaction between their writing and the outside influences of Orientalism and English poetic norms, Derozio's poems form a living testament of the initial engagement of a colonized poet with the ambience of a colonial world. As his extensive notes reveal, his reading formed an integral part of his poetic *oeuvre*, creating the source material for much that he incorporated into his verse. The large presence, in his consciousness, of William Jones (whose works he emulated) and Horace Hayman Wilson (who was a friend), both great Orientalists interacting closely with Indian material and life, shows the irrevocable shadow that the Orientalist project at Calcutta threw upon the formation of indigenous literature and intellectual life, an informing influence which has not yet been adequately acknowledged or accepted. It is necessary, in any evaluation of the life and works of Henry Derozio, to discard the hitherto isolated aesthetic treatment of his poems, which dealt with his verse as if it existed in a vacuum, and to contend with these historical, political and social forces that formed such an integral part of his poetic consciousness; a consciousness that was the first to articulate any notion of

modern Indian identity, created and given form by the cross-currents of colonial interaction in the first quarter of the nineteenth century in Calcutta.

Chapter Two

Kasiprasad Ghosh (1809-73)

The Growth of English in Calcutta

At the end of the eighteenth century, polyglot Calcutta had, in varying degrees of use, seven languages: Bengali, Arabic, English, Hindustani, Portuguese, Persian and Sanskrit. By the turn of the century, Portuguese had virtually disappeared, while Bengali and Hindustani were held in very low esteem even among the people who spoke them, and had not yet come into existence as literary languages. Arabic, English, Persian and Sanskrit were highly regarded in different circles, and all four had considerable literary status. Of these, Persian and English were the languages of government, commerce and the law, while Sanskrit and Arabic were the languages of Holy Writ.¹

There was a growing interest among the reading public in Calcutta in new publications in English, which consisted either of re-introductions and translations of great works of Hindu literature, or of Western texts. However, this ran parallel to the slow decline and fall of Persian, which had been the court language in India, the language of culture and influence. So, for example, in the principal daily news sheet - the Calcutta Gazette - we find, as an indication of the new market for works in English, a continuous series of advertisements for the publication of translations from the theatre of the Hindus by H.H. Wilson. The first advertisement that appeared on Thursday, April 6, 1826, read:

IN A FEW DAYS WILL BE
PUBLISHED
SELECT SPECIMENS OF THE
THEATRE OF THE HINDUS
NO.1

¹For a fuller treatment of this subject, see T.W. Clark, 'The Languages of Calcutta, 1760-1840,' Bulletin of the School for Oriental and African Studies, 1956, XVIII/3, 453-9.

THE MRICHCHAKATI

OR

TOY CART, A DRAMA

Translated from the Original Sanscrit,

BY

HORACE HAYMAN WILSON, ESQ.

SECRETARY TO THE ASIATIC SOCIETY, &C.

To be had of Messrs. Smith and Co. and of Mr Thacker, of Mr
Holcroft, the Printer,

and at the Government Gazette Press.

Price 4 Rupees.²

This was followed successively by similar advertisements for The Drama of Malati and Madhava, or The Stolen Marriage, and The Uttara Rama Cherita, or Continuation of the History of Rama, translated by Wilson - all three in the year 1826, the latter two appearing on 29 August and December 7 respectively. March 12, 1827 saw the series continuing with The Mudra Rakshasa, or The Signet of the Minister; these translations were made possible due to funds allocated for this purpose by the government, and also reflected consistent demand for this sort of literature. Meanwhile, the same paper carried a notice, in 1827, of the discontinuation of a Persian paper due to lack of patronage:

We are sorry to find we have lost one of our sources of intelligence, by the discontinuance of the Persian Paper styled the *Shems al Akhbar*. The Conductor and Editor took his leave of an unthankful public, last week...³

Journals and magazines in the English language, however, were launched with enthusiasm, if not expertise, and one of these publications (to some of which Derozio is known to have contributed) was commended in an editorial in 1826 in the same gazette:

The first number of a new Periodical Publication, the Indian Magazine, has just made its appearance. It is the work we believe, of young and inexperienced writers, educated chiefly, if not entirely in this country. Under these circumstances, we are disposed to allow it considerable merit, and to deal leniently with its defects. It would be as well, however, in future numbers to lower the tone of pretension.... The Magazine is, we think, most successful in its poetical department.⁴

²Calcutta Gazette, Thursday, April 6, 1826.

³ibid., Monday Evening, May 21, 1827.

⁴Editorial, Calcutta Gazette, 1826. Cited in A.C. Dasgupta, Days of John Company:

Thus, the rising popularity of the English language - and concurrently, it is interesting to note, the popularity of English poetry - was going hand in hand with the slow decay of the classical languages, among which Persian was the first casualty. Sanskrit was being kept alive through government patronage, and while it was contributing towards a new awareness of the existence of an indigenous literature of great merit, it was not a medium of education that was in demand among the Indians themselves. Rammohun Roy had written famously to Lord Amherst on the subject in 1823:

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 the best calculated to perpetuate ignorance. In the same manner the Sanskrit system of education would be best calculated to keep this country in darkness, if such had been the policy of the British legislature.⁵

This attitude towards the value of English education as a vehicle propelling the nation towards progress was prevalent in Bengal throughout the course of the nineteenth century. Alexander Duff, militant Scottish Calvinist and pre-eminent Anglicist educationalist in the early decades of nineteenth-century Bengal, wrote eloquently on this topic in one of the most important of his pamphlets - 'New Era of the English Language and English Literature in India'. This essay, addressed to an English audience, is interesting because of its ambivalence towards 'genuine oriental scholarship', which it commends as a source of inspiration for all those interested in India; however, it then dismisses it as a viable mode of 'real' education for Indians. Thus Orientalist scholarship is praised for its figurative and metaphorical richness, as an area of brightness that should illuminate one's perception of India, but for all that, the 'true education' of Indians, could only be obtained, according to Duff, by an education in English. A high-flown rhetorical style marks his description of the richness of Indian antiquity:

If poetry and romance and chivalry be an object of pursuit, are there not ample stores of poetic effusion and romantic legend that might not be disclaimed as unworthy by any of the older nations of Europe? and are the records of any state more crowded with the recital of daring adventures and

⁵Rammohun Roy, Letter to Lord Amherst, Calcutta, Dec 11, 1823, The Correspondence of Raja Rammohun Roy, ed. Dilip Kumar Biswas (Calcutta: Saraswat Library, 1992), 195.

deeds of heroism than the annals of Rajasthan? If philology, where can we find the match of Sanskrit, perhaps the most copious and certainly the most elaborately refined of all languages, living or dead? If antiquities, are there not monumental remains and cavern temples scarcely less stupendous than those of Egypt? and ancient sculptures, which if inferior in 'majesty and expression,' in richness and variety of ornamental tracery, almost rival those of Greece?...⁶

Let the Government, he urged, use the Asiatic Society of Sir William Jones and James Prinsep as the official organ for dispensing its patronage of standard oriental writers and their translations. But for the true education of the learned themselves, as well as for the elevation of the illiterate millions, the vast ocean of oriental literature deserves Firdausi's satire on Ghuzni in all its glory: 'The magnificent court of Ghuzni is a sea, and a sea without bottom and without shore. I have fished in it long, but have not found any pearl.'⁷

The elements of Oriental glory that Duff catalogues - literature, language, art, architecture, sculpture - were all being enthused about in Orientalist scholarship in publications such as the Asiatic Researches. These cultural achievements were apparently deserving of the attention being lavished upon them by the Orientalists, but were, according to writers like Duff, ultimately without any value, and useless in the real world, where only the English mode of education could save the natives from their ignorance. This was, essentially, an Anglicist position, which ultimately took over from the old Orientalist educational policies of the government.⁸ The Anglicists shared with the Christian missionaries a profound scepticism about the 'usefulness' of Oriental learning; the issue did not seem to rest, for them, on merely the surface questions of which language or literature should be taught, but on the question of which education belonged to a higher order. As Vishwanathan has said, the Anglicists won their campaign by locating the 'conflict... not

⁶Cited in George Smith, Life of Alexander Duff, Vol. I (London, 1879), 197.

⁷ibid., 200.

⁸The term 'Anglicist' indicates the group of men led by Macaulay who were in favour of a Western mode of education for the Indian people, and against the Orientalists, who desired Indians to be educated in their own system. This movement - 'Anglicism' - was the direct offshoot, in India, of the English Utilitarianism of Bentham and Mill. The tussle between the two sides culminated in the victory of the Anglicists due to the resolution adopted by Bentinck in 1835 to educate Indians in English.

simply over language or literature, but the status of knowledge itself'.⁹ While critics such as Vishwanathan have dealt exhaustively with the politics involved in such an undermining of Hindu systems at their foundations, Duff's argument here is of interest to us in so far as it reflects the prevalent atmosphere of conflict in Calcutta around 1830 with regard to cultural influences on, as well as intellectual positions occupied by, the men who were involved in writing English poetry.

The victory of the Anglicists in Bentinck's resolution of 1835, advocating the implementation of English education, signalled the institutionalisation of an attitude already prevalent in Calcutta for at least two decades preceding the bill. Besides, the ideas of policy makers such as Duff had relegated the Oriental classical languages, even among the native population, to the background, in so far as they came increasingly to be regarded as passive vessels of culture and heritage, while the English language was in contrast considered an active vehicle of progress and enlightenment that would help to pull Indians out of the stagnation into which their society had sunk.

1827 had seen the publication, in Calcutta, of Henry Meredith Parker's The Draught of Immortality, as well as of Derozio's poems; 1830 saw both the publication of Emma Roberts' Oriental Scenes, (which was the first collection of poems by an Englishwoman in nineteenth-century colonial India), and also the first publication of English verse by a Bengali Hindu - Kasiprasad Ghosh's The Shair and Other Poems. In the same year, D.L. Richardson brought out the inaugural issue of a celebrated literary journal of poetry and prose, The Bengal Annual, which continued to be produced for a period of seven years in Calcutta, collecting in its pages many individual scattered pieces of poetry that would otherwise have been completely lost. The poetry of colonial India had begun to find a voice and an audience, and the occasional verse that had adorned columns in magazines and papers gave way now to more serious and sustained efforts, and Calcutta began to witness the publication of volumes of poetry that were of considerable interest not only to the expatriate community of Anglo-Indians or to English-educated Bengalis, but

⁹Gauri Vishwanathan, Masks of Conquest (London: Faber and Faber, 1990), 101.

also to a wide section of the British public that had begun to take a greater interest in Indian affairs than ever previously.

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Kasiprasad's Educational Background

Kasiprasad Ghosh was one of the earliest products of the newly established Hindu College. The college had been founded in 1817 by a committee of Bengali Hindu gentlemen who were paradoxically both conservative and progressive in their attitude towards an English education. While they desired the Hindu youths of the college to progress through an education in English to the lucrative opportunities such an education made available in British India, they were conservative in their fear of these young men becoming Christianised, radical and rebellious through the influence of the incendiary teachings of young Derozio, whom they therefore hastily dismissed from his post at the Hindu College without a fair hearing.¹⁰

Kasiprasad was admitted to the college in 1821 in the seventh class, and wrote his first poem in the latter end of 1827, towards the end of his student days, as a direct result of encouragement from one of the leading Orientalists of his day, H.H. Wilson, who also served as Visitor to the Hindu College.¹¹ However, this poem, 'The Young Poet's First Attempt', was judged by the author to be 'a very juvenile effort' and was therefore eliminated, as were many other poems, from inclusion in the volume of poetry he subsequently published.¹² Kasiprasad began to write English verse at a time when English education at the Hindu College had just begun to be operational, and an exhibition of competence in the English language was still relatively a rare occurrence, as a report in the Calcutta Gazette in 1828 records:

¹⁰For a full account of the proceedings at the committee meeting for the dismissal of Derozio from his post at the Hindu College, see Eliot Walter Madge, Henry Derozio: The Eurasian Poet and Reformer, new ed. (Calcutta: Metropolitan Book Agency, 1967).

¹¹Rev. James Long, 'Autobiography of Kasiprasad Ghosh,' Hand-Book of Bengal Missions, Appendix D (London, 1848), 508.

¹²ibid.

English education, among the inhabitants of Bengal, has hitherto had little more than the mere language for its object; a sufficient command of which for conducting the details of official duty, comprehended the utmost ambition of many native students. The Spelling Book, a few Reading Exercises, a Grammar, and a Dictionary, formed the whole course of their reading, except in a few isolated instances of superior ability and industry; and little more was effected than a qualification as copyist, or accountant. The Hindoo College is intended to compass something more; to teach Bengalee youth to read, and relish, English literature; to store their minds with the facts of history and science, and to enable them to express their conclusions in a clear and polished style: founded upon a comprehensive view of the constitution of society, and the phenomena of nature.¹³

Interestingly, these remarks were delivered at a Prize distribution ceremony at the Hindu College where 'One of the students of the first class, Casi Prasad Ghose [sic], presented critical comments on the first four chapters of Mill's History of British India; and specimens of poetical composition were also furnished by him, and by a scholar of the second class, Harachandra Ghose.'¹⁴ The ambition articulated in the speech - to 'teach Bengalee youth to read, and relish, English literature' through the medium of the Hindu College - bore fruit in Kasiprasad Ghosh's poetry; in later life, Ghosh remarked:

I have composed songs in Bengali, but the greatest portion of my writings in verse is in English. I have always found it easier to express my sentiments in that language than in Bengali, but whether it is because I prefer the associations, sentiments, and thoughts which are to be found in English poems to those that are met with in Bengali poetry, I cannot decide. I can only say that I have bestowed more time and attention upon English books than any others.¹⁵

This relatively new phenomenon - of bestowing 'more time and attention upon English books than any others' - was a direct development of the existence of the Hindu College, which succeeded in its aim, set forth in the report of the speech delivered at the college prize distribution, of inculcating the minds of young Bengalis with the literature of England and enabling them to express themselves thereby 'in a clear and polished style'.

The report ends with the printing of a poem written by the second scholar, Harachandra Ghose, entitled 'Benares', which is of interest here because in it we find once

¹³Calcutta Gazette, Thursday, January 17, 1828.

¹⁴ibid.

¹⁵Long, 510.

more Orientalist elements clearly delineated - the familiar address to the proud achievements of the Indian past, the related lament on the fallen nature of the country's present state, and in conclusion, an expression of hope for the country's future as guided through British agency:

Benares hail ! thou pride of Hindoostan !
 Where first the Muses strung sweet wreaths for man.
 The earth was waste, and dark as darkest mine
 Thou wert the desert flower, and thou the gold divine.
 Where once the glorious wild poetic fire,
 Thine ancient Bramin's bosom, did inspire,
 The light of science burst upon their mind,
 But to that light, alas! their sons are blind....
 ...

Thy power's no more, fast fading is thy fame,
 Thy grandeur sunk, and lost thy mighty name.
 Yet soothing Hope comes whispering in my ears,
 Hope that wipes often Misery's salt tears.
 "Despair not", thus she gently says, "again
 "Shall science flourish, truth resume her reign.
 "Since generous Britons have been kind to you,
 "And rais'd the seats of science here anew,
 "No fear of Blasts, for prosp'rous gales shall blow,
 "And pure the stream of Poetry shall flow."¹⁶

The achievements of Indian culture, both in the past and also as projected in the future, are located prominently here in the field of Poetry and Science. Benaras is 'hailed' because 'the Muses strung sweet wreaths for man' there in the past, and the future is envisaged as prosperous once more, because the 'pure the stream of Poetry shall flow' - an indication perhaps, of Orientalist emphasis on literature as a reflection of the greatness of ancient Indian culture. The poem also, fairly typically for the time, upholds the progressive vision that knowledge of Western science is the medium through which India might reattain great heights, and gratitude is expressed to the Anglicists, those 'generous Britons' who have 'raised the seats of science here anew'. Another interesting feature of this sort of Orientalist poetry is the emphasis on the Brahmins as true representatives of culture among the Hindus - 'Where once the glorious wild poetic fire, / Thine ancient Bramin's (sic) bosom, did inspire'. In the headnote to Derozio's poem 'The Eclipse', as we have seen, there is to be found a similar regard for the high attainments of Brahmins in astronomy. Whenever the

¹⁶Calcutta Gazette, *ibid.*

Orientalists glorified Indian culture, it was the 'high' culture of the Vedas, the Aryans, and the Brahmins, never the rich folk traditions or popular art of India. This attitude towards the Hindu Golden Age was related to the values and beliefs of the men who created the Orientalist enterprise, men who were products of the eighteenth-century world of ideas. It was the romantic movement in England that first established the province of the common man as legitimate poetical and cultural material, an idea that had not yet travelled the distance between England and India. The poems written by Indians in the first third of the century still reflect the earlier neo-classical age in England, and consequently privilege, unconsciously, the attitudes of those times. The Enlightenment emphasised a belief in the universality of man, in classicism, and in rationalism, values that characterised the Orientalist policies operating in India before the advent of Mill's Utilitarianism and its offshoot in India, Anglicism. The reverence for the Brahminical high culture of ancient Aryan Hinduism may therefore be concluded to have emerged, in part, from the seeds of an eighteenth-century classicism that informed the scholarship of the Orientalists.

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Kasiprasad's Involvement with Orientalist Research

Kasiprasad's direct involvement in the Orientalist causes of his time was first manifested most prominently in the article he presented at the Prize distribution ceremony of the Hindu College, subsequently published in the Government Gazette of 14 February, 1829, and afterwards reprinted in the Asiatic Journal, 'Critical remarks on the first four chapters of Mr Mill's History of British India'. This reply to Mill's attack on Hindu culture came at a time, in 1828, when many young students of the Hindu College, taking Derozio's teaching against religious superstition to an extreme, were ridiculing Hindu customs and manners. It was an important historical landmark in that Kasiprasad became the first Indian intellectual to defend a secular concept of a golden age among the Hindus, preceding, by almost eleven

years, H.H. Wilson's widely publicised refutation of Mill.¹⁷ Kasiprasad's argument derived clearly from the work of the Calcutta Orientalists, and was actually written, as he mentioned himself, at Dr Wilson's request: 'About this time also, on the approach of the examination, Dr Wilson desired me to write a review of some book, and accordingly, in December following, I submitted to him my "Critical remarks on the first four chapters of Mr Mill's History of British India," ...'¹⁸

The Calcutta Gazette praised Kasiprasad's achievement in the following terms:

When Mr. Mill wrote his History of British India, he, very probably, never suspected that the pages of his work would be critically examined by a Hindoo, distinguished for his acquirements in the English language, and familiar with the classical and recondite learning of the West. And many of our readers will no doubt be surprised to meet with an attempt of the kind at so early a period as the present day. For this sudden revolution, in the intellectual qualities of the natives of this country, we are mainly indebted to the establishment of the Anglo-Hindoo College...¹⁹

Kasiprasad's arguments in his defence of Hindu culture are taken directly from Orientalist theories of the time. Against Mill's criticism of Indian chronology as the product of a wild and ungoverned imagination, Kasiprasad began by rationalising the four 'yugs' into which Indian chronology is divided, saying that they were comprehensible according to the ancient astronomy practised not only in India but as practised in ancient Egypt and Chaldea as well. To Mill's criticism that the separation of professions by ancient Hindu legislators led to the creation of a barrier against further progress, he replied by commending the system for its prudence and wisdom, suggesting that these laws had been put in place for the greater good of the greater number of people - an attitude taken from the work of Colebrooke on the original historical purposes of the Hindu caste system.²⁰ In the same manner he defended the ancient privileges of the Brahmins, admitting at the same time that present day manifestations of Brahminism were corruptions of its former purity:

¹⁷Wilson discussed Mill's sources in J. Mill, History of British India, 4th ed. (London, 1840), I, iii-iv.

¹⁸Long, 436.

¹⁹Calcutta Gazette, Thursday, February 14, 1828.

²⁰For the original essay by Colebrooke, see: 'Enumeration of Indian Classes,' Asiatic Researches, V (1798), 53-67.

The practice of a Brahmin to sit in Dharna, for the recovery of his debt, is a recent abuse of priestly power. It is neither encouraged in any of our sacred writings, nor was it ever practised in the ancient or more learned times of Hindustan.... Therefore to apply this modern custom to the ancient mode of recovering debts, and thence to draw positive conclusions of our ancient customs is ridiculous.²¹

The rediscovery of Vedic India by the Calcutta Orientalists is attributed largely to the work of H.T. Colebrooke, whose systematic and detailed research into the Vedic period has been acknowledged by successors such as Max Müller, who believed that it was Colebrooke, far more than Jones, who tackled 'the really difficult works, the grammatical treatises and the commentaries, the philosophic systems, and before all, the immense literature of the Vedic period.'²² Colebrooke's greatest contribution to the Orientalist theories of his time was perhaps his insistence, in his 'Essay on the Vedas', that Vedic Hinduism was a monotheistic tradition, and that the existence of polytheism and idolatry in present day India was a misappropriation of authentic sources by lower, corrupted forms of Hinduism such as *Tantrism*.²³ In each essay, he drew dramatic contrasts between rediscovered customs of Vedic India and the aberrations from those very same rituals in contemporary Hindu society. For example, it was Colebrooke who first demonstrated from textual sources that *sati*, the voluntary immolation of widows in Bengal, was actually a departure from the authentic tradition.²⁴ As we have seen, it was also Colebrooke who discovered the discrepancies between the ancient textual requirements in the historical origins of the Indian caste system and contemporary mores then prevalent in Hinduism. Kasiprasad's contention in his essay - that to conclude from 'recent abuses of priestly power' that the ancient customs of Hinduism were offensive was 'ridiculous' - therefore derived directly from readings in Orientalist theories as propagated by Colebrooke specifically and the Asiatic Society of Bengal in general.

²¹Calcutta Gazette, *ibid*.

²²F. Max Müller, *Biographical Essays* (London, 1884), 262.

²³H.T. Colebrooke, "On the Vedas or the Sacred Writings of the Hindus," *Asiatic Researches*, VIII (1805), 377-497.

²⁴H.T. Colebrooke, "On the Duties of a Faithful Hindu Widow," *Asiatic Researches*, IV (1795), 205-15.

Another point that is worth noting in Kasiprasad's essay, one of the first scholarly texts written by a Hindu gentleman, is the firm line drawn between Muhammedan India and Hindu India - a consciousness that had not, in fact, existed academically in India before Orientalist reconstructions of the pre-Muslim history of India. So Kasiprasad attacks Mill for referring to Orme's history of India as an authority, for Orme's book alludes to Muhammedan times 'but not of the ancient or independent times of Hindustan...'²⁵ The description of the judicature in Mill is that of Muslim justice, 'and not of the original judicature of the Hindus, to which our author [Mill] applies the former', and the picture of Muslim law that Mill draws, according to Kasiprasad, 'could not possibly be applied to that of the ancient Hindus, of directly opposite manners, customs, religion, and laws.'²⁶ This emphatic assertion of the difference between the two communities might have existed prior to the advent of the Orientalists in the form of common prejudice or social segregation, but only now could Kasiprasad uphold such differences in a scholastic mode, with the researches of the Orientalist scholars providing him with the material to base that difference academically upon scholarship and research.

While Kasiprasad's refutation of Mill was prompted by his education at the Hindu College and the influence of Dr. Wilson, other facets of his life and work also received the full benefit of the intellectual currents prevalent at the time around educated gentry like him in Calcutta. Thus, besides writing poetry in English, he was also encouraged to publish several prose articles in English, testifying to the existence of a demand for such contributions. He writes of his prose:

I seldom wrote in prose until the year 1829, in which, and in the following year I wrote "*The Vision, a tale*;" "*On Bengali Poetry*," and "*On Bengali Works and Writers*," published by you in the Literary Gazette, as well as "*Sketches of Ranajit Singh*," and of "*The King of Oude*," also published by you in the Calcutta Monthly Magazine. As for my anonymous contributions to your periodicals, they need not be particularised. But the writings of mine in prose that are most likely to be of any use, are those I am now engaged in for your Literary Gazette,... under the head of Memoirs of Native Indian Dynasties.²⁷

²⁵Calcutta Gazette, ibid.

²⁶ibid.

²⁷Long, 508.

Once again, the choice of subject matter here is notable for its emphasis on, besides literary composition in English, indigenous literature and history, interests produced by the literary taste he imbibed from his English teachers at the Hindu College, by the contemporary fostering of Bengali through the production of texts at the Fort William College under Carey, and by the Orientalist's research into Indian history. Literature and history constituted the predominant intellectual preoccupation of his time; there was also an enthusiasm for the classical languages of India, an enthusiasm which we can see Kasiprasad possessed, for instance, from his memoir, when he says, 'I have acquired a tolerable knowledge of Persian, Nagri, and Sanskrit since I had [sic] left college.'²⁸ Later in life, he continued writing in English; from 1846 onward, he published a weekly paper titled the Hindu Intelligencer. A reputed publication, the Hindu Intelligencer was operated by an English printing press owned by Kasiprasad - the ownership of an English press by a Bengali gentleman being still a rarity in those days. A Bengali paper, the *Sambad Bhaskar*, carried an appeal which urged other Bengali gentlemen to use the English printing press owned by Kasiprasad for any books or papers to be published in English, testifying to the period's burgeoning interest in the English language press:

We are delighted to proclaim that the paper, the Hindu Intelligencer, has ceased to suffer from having to use some other's machine; the editor, at his own expense, having acquired an iron machine and letters. Since last Monday that machine has begun publication of the Hindu Intelligencer. At this instant, we request the people of this country, if they produce books etc. in the English language, to please send them to the Hindu Intelligencer's machine to be printed.... Babu Kasiprasad Ghosh has been the first to show the way, and we appeal to our countrymen to please help to the best of their ability. (My translation)²⁹

This appeal to all Bengalis to unite in the cause of native advancement is remarkable for its early espousal of solidarity within the ranks of the newly forming Bengali bourgeoisie, where Kasiprasad is recognized as being 'the first to show the way' - towards what? - certainly it would seem towards an independent identity asserted against colonial

²⁸ibid., 509.

²⁹The *Sambad Bhaskar*, 2 February 1849; cited in Brajendranath Banerjee, ed. and compiled, *Sambad Patre Sekaler Katha*, [Selections from Newspapers of Past Times] Vol. 1, 1818-1830 (Calcutta: Bangiya Sahitya Parishad, 1938), 438.

domination. The paper continued to appear till the Indian Mutiny of 1857, when Lord Canning passed a law curbing the native press, after which it was never revived, Kasiprasad passing away in the year 1873.

It should be mentioned in this context that any attempt to reconstruct Kasiprasad's life's work in substantial detail faces considerable difficulties; besides his short autobiographical essay in Long, reprinted in Brojendranath Banerjee's Selections from Newspapers, no other source of information exists on this writer. A short notice in a Bengali work, Subal Mitra's *Saral Bangla Abhidan*, provides essentially the same details, with some additional information, such as the fact that Kasiprasad was also the author of nearly three hundred Bengali songs.³⁰ Such scant biographical information results in the near erasure of his figure from the cultural and literary history of his time, and my project here is to reinsert his achievements through his poetry into the map of that age.

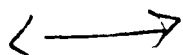
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The Shair and Other Poems

The title page of The Shair carried a couplet from Byron - 'Nor mote my shell awake the weary Nine, / To grace so plain a tale - this lowly lay of mine' - and the volume was dedicated to Lord Bentinck, then Governor General of India, while the first canto of the title poem, 'The Shair, A Poem in Three Cantos,' was dedicated 'To Horace Hayman Wilson, Esq.'.³¹ These three references at the very beginning of the volume indicate certain corresponding features to be found throughout the life and work of Kasiprasad: the impress of the English romantics upon the text of his poetry, the alignment with British agencies for practical and nationalist gain, and the debt to the work of the Calcutta Orientalists for the ideological background from which his poetry was born, the last a factor completely ignored and unrecognised in the context of his poetry to this day.

³⁰Subal Mitra, Ed. *Saral Bangla Abhidan*, 7th ed. (Calcutta: New Bengal Press, 1936), 374.

³¹*ibid.*, 1.



Whose sweetest notes are heard no more!
 O! give me once to touch thy strings,
 Where tuneful sweetness ever clings.
 Though hands that far superior were
 Once waked the sleeping sweetness there;
 Yet if my scanty skill can make
 One note, however faint, awake,
 My weak endeavour will not be
 In vain;- 'tis all I wish from thee.³²

Compare these lines of Kasiprasad to those in Derozio's poem, 'The Harp of India':

Why hang'st thou lonely on yon withered bough?
 Unstrung for ever, must thou there remain;
 Thy music once was sweet - who hears it now?....
 ...
 O! many a hand more worthy far than mine
 Once thy harmonious chords to sweetness gave,....

 Those hands are cold - but if thy hands divine
 May be by mortal wakened once again,
 Harp of my country, let me strike the strain!³³

The poet's native country, in both instances, is symbolised by the harp - ironically an instrument foreign to India and much written about in romantic poetry - whose music was once 'sweet' but now is 'heard no more'. Both poems continue with an invocation of the past when far superior hands awakened worthier notes, and end similarly with a wish on the poet's part to revive the glorious traditions of the land once more. Kasiprasad's line, 'In vain;- tis all I wish from thee', is also reminiscent of a similar expression in Derozio's other nationalist sonnet, 'To India, My Native Land', which ends 'My fallen country! one kind wish from thee!'³⁴ This direct imitation from Derozio shows the latter's pre-eminent position among poets in Calcutta at the time. The sentiment, imagery, diction and metaphor in the two poems are almost identical, showing once more the repetitive nature of the entire body of Orientalist poetry in colonial India, with poets borrowing from the same sources and creating a similar ambience in their poems.

After the introductory verses, the first of which is quoted above, Canto One of the verse tale begins with the story of the Shair, told by a narrator named Hassan to the

³²ibid.

³³Derozio, *Poems* (Calcutta: Oxford University Press, 1980), 1.

³⁴ibid., 2.

body of Orientalist poetry in colonial India, with poets borrowing from the same sources and creating a similar ambience in their poems.

After the introductory verses, the first of which is quoted above, Canto One of the verse tale begins with the story of the Shair, told by a narrator named Hassan to the accompaniment of his musical instrument - the Zeeran. The use of the Persian term for the hero of the poem is explained in the Preface:

The original title of the first poem in the book, was "The Minstrel;" but the Author having observed that persons wholly unacquainted with it, upon hearing its name only, mistook it for an imitation of some English poem of the same name, such as Dr. Beattie's "Minstrel;" he subsequently altered and called it by its present title "The Shair," the Persian term for a minstrel or a bard, and the reason of his adopting the Persian word is, that Hassan, who narrates the poem, is a Mussulman, and therefore calls the Hero of it a *Shair* or a bard.³⁵

Apart from Persian nomenclature, however, the poem reveals very little Persian influence in its style, tone or content, seeming to rely instead on an overabundance of ornamentation in the English style. Thus one reviewer in the Calcutta Gazette remarked that 'Our young author views scenes *couleur do rose*, and with a fanciful eye, for we have hills, and purling rills, and zephyrs, and swans, and nightingales where we would not have expected to find them. The poem is almost wholly wanting in incident - and is therefore more a vehicle of sentiment than of adventure.'³⁶ Despite references to Indian birds - the Koil and the Bulbul, to lotus-blossoms and to Surya, the sun, the verses are overwhelmingly English in their diction and form, as only an excerpt can demonstrate:

His descant chaunts the Koil now
From yonder mountain's gilded brow.
The rose is blushing sweet to hear
Her Bulbul's tale with pity's tear.
Where opening lotus-blossoms gay
Yield to the kiss of Surya's ray,
How anxious for the honey-dew
Hover the bees' innumerable crew!
The purling streamlet makes a song,
As through the vale it glides along.³⁷

³⁵Kasiprasad Ghosh, Preface to Shair, no page number.

³⁶Calcutta Gazette, Monday Evening, September 20, 1830.

³⁷Shair, 6.

The Spenserian spelling of 'chaunt', the song of the Indian bird, 'the Koil', being described as a 'descant', the 'purling' streamlet that glides through the 'vale', and the whole contained in strict couplets, seem to contribute to a successful imitation of English poetic idiom. Yet although the correct English tone and form of the lines appear to point solely in the direction of English poetic devices, the coupling of the rose and the bulbul harks back to an old Persian tradition in verse made popular through the translations of the Orientalists. John D. Yohannan, in 'The Persian Poetry Fad in England,' elaborates:

The *gul u bulbul*, or rose and nightingale legend, was indeed more than sufficiently exploited in the minor poetry of the period. It is of course a staple of Persian poetry and of the Islamic in general. Having come into English literature... through a translation from the Turkish by Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, it was revived in full force by the school of Sir William Jones later in the century.³⁸

The essentially Persian motif of the unrequited love of the bulbul for the rose has been retained by Kasiprasad in the lines 'the rose is blushing sweet to hear/ Her Bulbul's tale with pity's tear'. The popularity of this motif is evidenced also in its presence in Byron's *Giaour*, where a line, 'For there the Rose, o'er crag or vale, / Sultana of the Nightingale,' is footnoted '[t]he attachment of the nightingale to the rose is a well-known Persian fable. If I mistake not, the "bulbul of a thousand tales" is one of his appellations.'³⁹ Thus, we see how colonial poets such as Kasiprasad, writing from Calcutta in the first half of the nineteenth century, were influenced by Orientalist preoccupations, which might even have reached them through popular works of English poetry. The stiffness of form in Kasiprasad's English verse might be understood better if the novelty of his situation could be appreciated, in that he assiduously applied rules of poetry learnt from textbooks to his compositions in English, which were attempts in a second language which never attained for him the level of familiarity that it did as a colonial 'first' language for some of the Bengalis who wrote poetry in English after him; poets such as Toru Dutt and Manmohan

³⁸John D. Yohannan, 'The Persian Poetry Fad in England, 1770-1825,' *Comparative Literature*, IV (Spring 1952), 150.

³⁹Byron, 'The Giaour: Fragment of a Turkish Tale,' *The Works of Lord Byron*, ed. Ernest Hartley Coleridge (London, 1898), 86.

Ghose, who, unlike Kasiprasad, not only wrote their verse in English, but used English in their correspondence, and for almost all purposes in society.

What is not immediately apparent from the title poem 'The Shair', however, is the debt Kasiprasad owed to the Calcutta Orientalists for the themes of his verse. It was their research into the splendour of ancient India which created in him enough pride for his native country to eulogise its greatness in, for example, the penultimate and climactic verses of 'The Shair,' where the lovelorn minstrel delivers his farewell song before he puts an end to his life on the ocean rocks below him:

Farewell my lovely native land !
 Where roses bloom in many a vale;
 Where green-clad hills majestic stand,
 Where flowrets woo the scented gale;...
 ...

Land of the Gods and lofty name;
 Land of the fair and beauty's spell;
 Land of the bards of mighty fame;
 My native land ! for e'er farewell!⁴⁰

The use of the term 'my lovely native land' had a new significance in the English poetry of nineteenth-century Indian poets such as Derozio and now Kasiprasad. It is vital to recall that it is the forces of colonialism, bringing Western education and also Indian history through Orientalist scholarship into the consciousness of Indians for the first time, that make the use of the phrase 'my lovely native land' in this poem symptomatic of the historical context from which the poem arose. The image of India as a place where 'roses bloom in many a vale', for example, seems to have come from Kasiprasad's reading of descriptions of English landscape; while the phrase 'Land of the Gods' evokes the manner in which English poets eulogised ancient Greece. Orientalist writings often spoke of ancient India in terms borrowed from their perception of classical Greece, sometimes drawing direct correspondences between the two civilizations, as in Jones's essay, 'On the Gods of Greece, Italy, and India'. This confusion is reflected in Kasiprasad's use of the term 'Land of the Gods', a phrase subconsciously evocative of ancient Greece, to invoke India.

⁴⁰Shair, 68-9.

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Poems Taken Directly from Orientalist Sources

For a more specific instance of Kasiprasad's borrowing from Orientalist sources, we should turn to the poem immediately following 'The Shair', 'The Hero's Reward', based on Wilson's translation of 'Vikram Urvasi'. A note preceding the poem proclaims:

The following poem was written after having perused Dr. Wilson's translation of the "VIKRAM URVASI, or the Hero and Nymph." The only incident related in the poem, is the union of *Pururavas* the king, with *Urvasi* the fairest of celestial courtezans; but the manner in which it is treated here, entirely differs from that in the drama, as will be evident to the reader. It may be necessary, however, to premise that the poem is written rather too much in the spirit of Hindu poetry.⁴¹

Once again, here, we are presented with factual evidence of an Indian poet (in fact, the first Hindu poet in English, in this case) writing a poem that has been directly taken from Orientalist scholarship of the time, creating a genre - Orientalist verse - that up to this day has gone unrecognised as a distinct entity within the field of Indo-English poetry.

How much the original model influenced his own poem is apparent also from the endnotes appended to the poem. In 'The Hero's Reward', the notes reveal a very close adherence to the original translation by Dr Wilson; for instance, in some places the reader is even asked to refer to a particular page in Wilson's book to explain a reference in further detail:

*Because their sisters fair and gay,
Had been by Kesi borne away.*
Pururava asking the nymphs the cause of their terror was answered that two by name Urvasi and Chitrlekha had as they were returning from the Court of Kuvera, lord of riches, been forcibly carried away by Kesi, a demon of great power.- See Dr. Wilson's translation of *Vikrama and Urvasi*, page 17.⁴²

Similarly, notes to other references explaining mythological events or genealogical details are suffixed with different page numbers of the original text of Vikram and Urvasi.

⁴¹The Shair, 79.

⁴²*ibid.*, Note 18, 105.

Sometimes an entire sentence from Wilson is included in the note within quotation marks - as, for example, in Note 20 - with the exact page number given as well for reference:

20. *Until the monarch flung a dart.*
 "The King attacked the demon and destroyed him with the shaft of Vayu (or a dart which was sacred to the God of the wind) by which he not only released the nymphs, but established Indra on his throne which the demon had endangered." - *Vikrama and Urvasi* page 11.⁴³

'The Hero's Reward' contains thirty five allusions in all, of which seven include a reference to Wilson's text. The notes to the allusions to gods and goddesses explain, for instance, that 'Satakratu' is 'a name of Indra', and that Indra is 'the sovereign ruler of the upper region', and 'Sachi' his wife, is 'the Queen of the firmament'. They are then introduced to the Western reader with a comparison; Indra is 'like the Grecian Jupiter' or 'Vayu' the God of Wind is 'like the Aeolus of the Greeks.'⁴⁴ Jones referred to Indra as Jupiter in his 'Argument' preceding 'A Hymn To Indra', where an entire passage elaborated on the parallel attributes of Indra and Jupiter:

INDRA, therefore, or the King of the Immortals, corresponds with one of the ancient Jupiters (for several of that name were worshipped in Europe), and particularly with Jupiter the *Conductor*, whose attributes are so nobly described in the Platonic philosophers...⁴⁵

Notes of this sort, where an Indian god is likened to a Greek one, are once again evidence of the reading of Jones's Sanskrit hymns and essays in the Asiatic Researches.

The story related in 'The Hero's Reward' is that of the union between king Pururavas and the celestial nymph Urvasi, brought about by the god Indra after Pururavas had vanquished the demon Kesi and relieved the world of a dreaded destroyer. A mythological story taken from Hindu texts, such subject matter for a poem became available to a person such as Kasiprasad because of Orientalist scholarship in Calcutta, due to which he was writing this poem based upon such emphatically Indian themes in the first place. The note preceding the poem stating that it is 'written rather too much in the spirit of

⁴³ibid., Note 20, 106.

⁴⁴ibid., Notes 6, 7 and 8, 103-4.

⁴⁵William Jones, 'Argument' preceding 'A Hymn To Indra,' Poetical Works (London, 1810), 82-3.

Hindu poetry' seems, paradoxically, a proud rather than apologetic assertion, for in those days of contemporary excitement in the unearthing of an indigenous Hindu past, to be a Hindu was becoming, once more, an identity to own up to proudly. Kasiprasad was always aware of his position as a Hindu poet writing in English, declaring in his Preface that he was 'the first Hindu who has ventured to publish a volume of English Poems'.⁴⁶ This declaration reminds us again that these were days when, due to the Orientalists, an assertion of being Hindu was also a claim of being an 'authentic' representative of India, the inheritor of an ancient lineage native to the land (unlike, Derozio's position, of which Kasiprasad must have been aware). These were also times when the concept of being an 'Indian' did not yet exist in reality, and gentlemen identified themselves according to their community or religion rather than country, national secularism not yet having come into being in any significant way in the consciousness of a native person of India. This demarcation of his own situation as a Hindu gentleman is apparent also in the manner in which, in the endnotes to 'The Hero's Reward', he exhibits an insider's knowledge of his subject matter, thus presenting information that co-existed side by side with his dependence on the correct scholarly apparatus provided by Wilson's translation. Thus, accurate accounts of the ancestry of king Pururavas are supplemented with references to Wilson, as in Note 26, in which a diagram is drawn to show the exact genealogy according to which Pururavas is said to be descended from the sun and the moon.⁴⁷ Other allusions are explained in a manner that shows an everyday familiarity with the customs and mores of the Hindu way of life, as, for example, when he explains in Note 28 that 'At the reception of a guest, a few ceremonies conformable to the rules of hospitality as laid down in the Sastras should be observed towards him by his host.'⁴⁸

This intimacy with Hindu cultural mores is also evident in Kasiprasad's assertions as regards literary devices or metaphors used by indigenous poets. In a note towards the end of the poem, it is interesting to see how he uses Wilson to support his own knowledge:

As the moon is adorned by the star

⁴⁶Shair, Preface, i.

⁴⁷ibid., 107.

⁴⁸ibid., Note 29, 107.

This is a common simile with Hindu poets. Thus in the [sic]*Vikrama and Urvashi*, page 21, Rambha seeing Pururava at a distance advancing with Urvashi and Chitrlekha observes,

Attended by each brilliant star,
Like Chandra in his radiant car.⁴⁹

As we can see, after asserting with an insider's authority that the phrase used by him in his poem is a common simile among Hindu poets, he then proceeds to provide his assertion with impeccable scholastic armour in the form of the supporting citation from Wilson's translation of the original Hindu text.

Kasiprasad also makes similar statements regarding metaphors that belong to his culture in the title poem of the volume, 'The Shair', explaining, for instance, why he has resorted to the use of the word 'swan' instead of 'the *Rajahansa*', which is a 'superior species of the gander, to whom Indian poets have made the like allusions which European bards make to the swan.'⁵⁰ Similarly the 'Vin' is explained as being the current name of the Indian lute, and an abbreviation of the Sanskrit term *Vina*.⁵¹ In yet another poem, a footnote to a line - 'So bloomed his soul - a lotos fair' - explains the use of the simile: 'In Bengallee as well as in Sanscrit poetry, the heart is generally compared to the lotos.'⁵² In another poem he writes in a footnote to the line 'Hail sovereign of the seasons six!': 'According to us the seasons are in number six.'⁵³ Thus we see how he assumes an authority on matters pertaining to Hindu ways with a local person's ease in familiar territory, using the pronoun 'us' to mean Hindus, so establishing an idiom that firmly situates him in his own right as a native Hindu gentleman in Calcutta writing poetry in English.

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⁴⁹ibid., Note 34, 108.

⁵⁰ibid., 'The Shair,' 6.

⁵¹ibid., 8.

⁵²ibid., 39.

⁵³ibid., 'Stanzas Written In Spring,' 164.

The 'Hindu Festivals'

Kasiprasad's consciousness of his identity as a Hindu gentleman was interwoven with an incipient nationalism that was then just beginning to take root in the minds of the English-educated youth in Calcutta. Kasiprasad's volume of poems contains a long section entitled 'Hindu Festivals', which takes up a substantial number of pages, indeed, almost half the volume. The poems included in this section are descriptive accounts of the various Hindu festivals during a calendar year in Bengal, and the impulse behind their composition is given by Kasiprasad in the Preface:

The Author's motive of writing the "Hindu Festivals," almost all the principal ones of which will be found in the subsequent pages of this volume, is nothing else but this: Being one day in conversation with a friend on the subject of publishing his poems, he was suggested the importance and utility of writing something by way of national poetry; and having then no other Indian subject at hand which he could make a choice of, but the Hindu Festivals; an account of which he had promised to write for the Calcutta Literary Gazette; he versified them into small pieces of poetry, which were published in that journal.⁵⁴

This realisation of the 'importance and utility' of writing 'something by way of national poetry' is remarkable in its manifestation as a continuous preoccupation in nineteenth-century colonial poetry. Nationalism, in one form or the other, was present in the poetry of Derozio and Kasiprasad, as well as in their successors, Michael Madhusudan and the Dutts of the Dutt Family Album, whose Anglophile interests and Christianity might seem to obliterate surface indications of nationalist strains in their poetry, although, as I shall show in the following chapters, that was not entirely the case. For Kasiprasad, the current atmosphere in Calcutta was encouraging towards the fostering of a consciousness of national identity through the medium of English, for he mentions, towards the end of the paragraph, that this work on the Hindu festivals had already been commissioned by the Calcutta Literary Gazette before he decided to include it in The Shair in verse form.

The section entitled 'Hindu Festivals' describes eleven festivals, and each poem on an individual festival catalogues the occasion for the celebrations, the rites and rituals, or the season associated with the festival. The poems are prefaced with a short sentence

⁵⁴ibid., Preface, ii.

explaining the origin of the festival or the particular god or goddess they commemorate; thus the first, called 'Dasahara', has a subheading, 'Or *Ganga Puja*, a festival in commemoration of the descent of GANGA the river, upon the earth', and the second, 'Ras Yatra', has 'Or a festival in commemoration of one of the many gambols of KRISHNA, the Indian Apollo, with the milk-women' preceding it, and so on for all the individual poems.⁵⁵ The poems that follow, are, on an average, between three to five pages long, and attempt to encapsulate the festive spirit in their verses in an informal, unscholarly mode, without too many footnotes or allusions to the various attributes or names associated with the god or goddess; in this aspect they differ from Jones's overburdened Sanskrit hymns.

Jones's spirit, however, hovers distinctly behind these poems, if not in the style in which they are written, at least very definitely in the atmosphere of their creation, in that such themes could only have been of any interest to a literary person in Calcutta around 1830 because of Jones and his literary work on Orientalist themes. Kasiprasad had, in fact, borrowed his subject matter here from William Jones. The subject of the Festivals of the Hindu year had been introduced to the Asiatic Society of Bengal by Jones, who published a paper on it in the third volume of the *Researches*, 'The Lunar Year of the Hindus':

Having lately met by accident with a wonderfully curious tract of the learned and celebrated *Raghunandana*, containing a full account of all the rites and ceremonies in the lunar year, I twice perused it with eagerness, and present the Society with a correct outline of it, in the form of a calendar, illustrated with short notes. The many passages quoted in it from the *Vedas*, the *Puranas*, the *Sastras* of law and astronomy, the *Calpa*, or sacred ritual, and other works of immemorial antiquity and reputed holiness, would be thought highly interesting by such as take pleasure in researches concerning the *Hindus*...⁵⁶

In this paper, Jones created a table of the twelve Hindu months and gave 'a full account of all the rites and ceremonies' associated with particular days under those monthly headings. All the festivals described in Kasiprasad's poems on the Hindu Festivals may be found here, scientifically delineated and categorised under their different headings. Kasiprasad gives us the evidence of his sources for the subject of the Hindu Festivals in the last note

⁵⁵ibid., 'No. 1. - Dasahara,' 125; 'No. II. - Ras Yatra,' 128.

⁵⁶William Jones, 'The Lunar Year of the Hindus,' *Asiatic Researches*, III (1792), 257.

attached to that section: 'For a more particular account of the nature and character of the Hindu Festivals... see the "Hindu Kalendar" published at intervals in the Government Gazette of 1827, by its Editor, or Asiatic Researches, vol. 3 Page 521.'⁵⁷

Thus, Kasiprasad's note under the fifth poem of the Hindu Festivals, 'Sri Panchami', says: 'Or *Saraswati Puja*, a festival in honour of SARASWATI, the goddess of Learning.'⁵⁸ Meanwhile, Jones had described the festival celebrated on the fifteenth day of the lunar month *Magha* in the following manner:

On this lunar day SARASWATI, here called SRI, the Goddess of Arts and Eloquence, is worshipped with offerings of perfumes, flowers, and dressed rice. Even the implements of writing and books are treated with respect, and not used on this holiday.

*Samvatsara pradipa*⁵⁹

Similarly, Kasiprasad's 'Kojagara Purnima: Or *Lakshmi Puja*, a festival in honour of LAKSHMI, the goddess of plenty, love and beauty', or 'Dola Yatra: Or a festival, in commemoration of the swinging of KRISHNA in the cradle while a child', can be found explained in Jones's text, when he elaborates on 'Cojagara' or 'Manwantara Dolayatra' in the months of 'Aswina' and 'P'halguna' respectively.⁶⁰

While Kasiprasad's poetry on the Hindu Festivals borrowed its material, as we have seen above, from Jones's writings on the Hindu lunar year, the contents of the poems also owe much to Jones's Sanskrit hymns. For example, Jones wrote a hymn to 'Lachsmi', the goddess of wealth who represents the preserving power of nature:

Daughter of *Ocean* and primeval Night,
Who fed with moonbeams dropping silver dew
And cradled in a wild wave dancing light
Saw'st with a smile new shores and creatures new,
Thee Goddess! I salute; thy gifts I sing...⁶¹

Consequently, Kasiprasad Ghosh also addresses the goddess of wealth on a full moon night, albeit in a different style, in a poem describing the celebration of 'Kojagara Purnima:

⁵⁷Shair, 201.

⁵⁸ibid., 138.

⁵⁹Jones, ibid., 272.

⁶⁰Jones, ibid., 261, 275.

⁶¹William Jones, *Poetical Works*, 105.

Or *Lakshmi Puja*, a festival in honour of LAKSHMI, the goddess of plenty, love, and beauty':

Crowned with the golden ears of corn
 The harvest-fields below,
 That have a matchless verdure worn,
 Smile by the lunar glow;
 And seem afar as if the sky,
 Our emerald sky hath been
 Down on the earth, while on it high
 The meteors dim are seen.
 O ! these are blessings to our living,
 Goddess of plenty ! of thy giving.⁶²

Again, Kasiprasad's first poem in the series, on the river goddess Ganga, is reminiscent of Jones's hymn to Ganga in spite of the differences in the manner of presentation:

Glorious river! thee of yore
 Siva on his tresses bore,
 When thou didst thy rapid flow
 Take unto this world below....

Propitious river! by thy grace
 Royal Sagar's numerous race,
 Though burned to ashes by the fire
 Of the saintly sage's ire,
 Enjoyed the bright, unchanging hours....⁶³

Here we see Kasiprasad's use, in a poem on the festival of 'Dasahara', of mythological stories, such as the legend of the river Ganga's birth in the matted locks of the god Siva (the story of her origin from the forehead of Siva was mentioned by Jones in his hymn to Ganga), or that of king Sagar's destruction by a sage.⁶⁴ These allusions, far fewer than were present in Jones, are explained in great detail in the notes appended at the end of the volume, almost in a reversal of Jones's use of Arguments *preceding* the poems. The manner in which all the relevant information is conveyed, however, is similar to Jones's, and Kasiprasad mentions at the start of his notes to the Hindu Festivals that they were being provided because they were 'necessary for the information of the European reader'.⁶⁵ Such an assertion reveals he expected that a large number of his audience would be European, and the current fascination with the Orient in the West guaranteed such an

⁶²Kasiprasad Ghosh, 'Sri Panchami', *Shair* (Calcutta, 1830), 150.

⁶³*Shair*, 'No.1. - Dasahara,' 125-6.

⁶⁴William Jones, 'A Hymn to Ganga,' *Poetical Works*, 139-40.

⁶⁵*Shair*, 'Notes to the Hindu Festivals,' 189.

assumption, with Kasiprasad at the centre of the hub of Orientalist research, Calcutta. Thus, he writes his notes to the poems on the Hindu festivals in accurate detail, and reinforces them by quoting from Orientalist sources. The note to the verse quoted above, from 'Dasahara', therefore, runs in the following way:

*Glorious river! thee of yore
Siva on his tresses bore, &c.*

Page 125 l.1.

Inconsequence [sic] of the incapability of the earth "to bear the sudden descent of so great a river as the *Ganges*," SIVA stood on a peak of the Himmalayan [sic] mountains called *Kailasa*, which was his residence; and interposed "his sacred head," on which GANGA first fell, and after wandering for some time amongst his tresses, took her course to the region of mortals.⁶⁶

The portions of the note that are within quotation marks have been taken, I found, from H.H. Wilson's notes to his translation of Kalidasa's *Megha Duta*, although Kasiprasad fails to acknowledge his source directly here. Wilson, in his note, explained Kalidasa's description of the flowing of the river Ganges - 'She, who with smiling waves disportive strayed...' - with the following information:

The earth being unable to bear the sudden descent of so great a river as the *Ganges*, Siva was induced, at the intercession of Bhagiratha, to interpose *his sacred head*. Accordingly, Ganga first alighted on the head of the deity, and remained for a considerable period wandering amongst the tresses of his long and entangled hair, to the extreme jealousy and displeasure, according to Kalidasa, of the goddess Gauri, or Parvati, Siva's consort. [my emphases]⁶⁷

As it is possible to clearly see, Kasiprasad took the phrases with quotation marks in his own notes from the above passage in Wilson, apparently for no greater reason than to lend his reference authenticity in the eyes of Western readers. In another note to a poem called 'Kali Puja' in the Hindu Festivals, we find a description of the birth of the goddess Kali from the forehead of Parvati or Durga, taken directly from a translation by H.H. Wilson of a Sanskrit play. The entire passage is lifted, in the manner we have seen above, and incorporated in the notes within quotation marks:

⁶⁶ibid., Note 1, 190.

⁶⁷H.H. Wilson, trans. *The Megha Duta*, in Works by the late Horace Hayman Wilson, Vol. IV (London: Trubner & Co., 1864), Note to Verse 349, p.360.

PARVATI is a name of DURGA from whose "forehead... contracted with wrathful frowns, sprang swiftly forth a goddess black and of formidable aspect... robed in the hide of an elephant, dry and withered and hideous with yawning mouth, and lolling tongue and blood-shot eyes, and filling the regions with her shouts." *Extracted from the Markandeya Purana in the Malati Madhava, or the Stolen Marriage. Page 57.*⁶⁸

Kasiprasad also specifically mentions William Jones a little later in his notes in context of the second poem on the Hindu festivals - 'Ras Yatra'. In an image he uses in the poem, he compares Krishna's consort Radha's lips to the god of love Kama's bow. Elaborating on the use of this simile in a note, he says: "'The weapons and the application of the allegory will be best explained by a verse in Sir W. Jones's hymn to the deity-...'"⁶⁹ He then proceeds to quote ten lines from Jones's 'A Hymn to Camdeo'. Curiously enough, the entire portion is within quotation marks, and the reference at the end is not to the original poem by Jones, but to the 'Annotations to the Cloud Messenger, page 109.' This reference to the 'Annotations to the Cloud Messenger' is confusing, as the author or actual title of the work is not given. The confusion here is due to the fact that Kasiprasad is actually not quoting from Jones directly, but from Wilson's quotation of Jones, in the notes Wilson attached to his translation of Kalidasa's *Megha Duta*, or The Cloud Messenger. Referring to the *Megha Duta*, we see that William Jones's lines are quoted by Wilson in his note in order to elucidate upon the attributes of the Indian god of love, Kama, to explain Kalidasa's use of the expression: 'the god who wields the five fold dart'.⁷⁰ This shows a complicated intertextuality at work here, in that William Jones was being used, firstly, by the later scholar, Wilson, and then Wilson's authority was being made use of by Kasiprasad for his Indian references.

William Jones is mentioned again by Kasiprasad in a note on the river Yamuna:

The place is celebrated as the scene of the youthful sports of KRISHNA, with the GOPIS or milk-maids, which are generally too well known to the European community to

⁶⁸Shair, Note 43, 201.

⁶⁹ibid., Note 11, 193.

⁷⁰Wilson, Works, 394-5.

require a description by the translation of the Songs of
JAYADEVA by Sir William Jones.⁷¹

From this reference it is obvious that Kasiprasad's reading of Jones was far from being confined merely to the better known Sanskrit hymns, and extended to his other Sanskrit translations as well, among which the 'Songs of Jayadeva' was a well known prose venture marking Jones's arrival, in his translations, into major Sanskrit literature.

That Kasiprasad was in close contact with all the latest developments in the Orientalist project is obvious not only from the evidence of his thorough knowledge of Jones and Wilson, but also from the manner in which he cites specific volumes of the Asiatic Researches in his notes when necessary. In the sixth poem on the Hindu Festivals, 'Durga Puja', the buffalo-demon whom the goddess Durga slays is renamed Minotaur, and this is dealt with in greater detail in a note:

The mighty Minotaur had warred in vain
With thee, whose prowess stretched him breathless - slain.
Page 143 l.13.

The story of the Egyptian Minotaur is similar to that of the demon whom DURGA with much difficulty slew and who had the head of a buffalo and the body of a human being; whence his name is MAHISASURA or the buffalo-fiend, Vide Asiatic Researches, vol. VIII. Page 75.⁷²

In his use of the term Minotaur for *Mahisasura*, Kasiprasad was following the method of the Calcutta Orientalists, and he himself makes this clear by citing the specific volume and page number of the article from the Asiatic Researches that he borrowed from. The Researches are also mentioned in the last note to the Hindu Festivals, as we have seen, when Kasiprasad comments: 'For a more particular account of the nature and character of the Hindu Festivals... see the "Hindu Kalendar"... or Asiatic Researches, vol.3 Page 521.'⁷³

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⁷¹ibid., Note 7, 192.

⁷²ibid., Note 24, 196.

⁷³ibid., 201.

Other Contemporary Influences

Besides these particular references to specific volumes of the Asiatic Researches, signifying his constant and close perusal of the Asiatic Society publications, a glance through the notes to the Hindu Festival poems also reveals a close relationship with other poets writing Orientalist poetry and English periodical publications of the time. Besides such contemporary Orientalist translations from the Sanskrit as we have seen above, there are also a couple of mentions of Hamilton's Gazetteer, an English periodical aimed at a European reading public:

The *Yamuna*, or as it is called by foreigners, the Jumna, washes the borders of *Vrindavana*, or Bindrabund, situated on the west side of the river. - Vide Hamilton's Gazetteer, page 151.⁷⁴

Here too, as in the scholarly notes to the poems in the Hindu Festivals, Kasiprasad addresses a Western audience with relevant facts about Indian locations such as the Yamuna river or the Vrindavan forest.

Most interestingly, there is a mention, in one of the notes, of Henry Meredith Parker's volume of Orientalist poetry, The Draught of Immortality, when Kasiprasad writes, in order to explain the lines, 'With thee, the sister goddess fair / Bearing the nectar cup':

After LAKSHMI had arisen, she was immediately followed by the Goddess of wine, SURADEVI, with the cup of nectar in her hand. For a more particular account of this, Vide Mr. Parker's beautiful Poem, "The Draught of Immortality."⁷⁵

So we see that Kasiprasad was well aware not only of the scholastic material being turned out by the Calcutta Orientalists regarding Hindu mythology or history, but also of the poetical publications surrounding that enterprise, such as Parker's Draught of Immortality, which he seems to have admired. Henry Meredith Parker is mentioned again at the beginning of the third canto of Kasiprasad's title poem, 'The Shair', which is dedicated to him. The two other cantos of the poem are dedicated to H. H. Wilson and James Young,

⁷⁴ibid., Note 7, 192.

⁷⁵ibid., Note 34, 199.

both Englishmen, and one an eminent Orientalist. It is worth mentioning in this context that on January 7, 1829, H.H. Wilson had proposed that members of the Bengali intelligentsia be admitted to membership in the Asiatic Society. Among the first group to be welcomed into this Orientalist institution were Ram Kamal Sen, Russamoy Dutt (father of Govin, Hur and Greece Chunder Dutt of the Dutt Family Album), Prasanna Kumar Tagore, and Dwarkanath Tagore (grandfather of Rabindranath Tagore). Before leaving for England, Wilson appointed Ram Kamal Sen, who had worked for twenty nine years for the Society, to his new post of native secretary.⁷⁶

The literary Orientalist network in Calcutta that had surrounded the East Indian poet Derozio around the first quarter of the nineteenth century was also to be found in contact with Kasiprasad. In his memoir written about himself and his literary activities, Kasiprasad mentions that Emma Roberts, the publication of whose volume of poetry Derozio supervised, was supposed to write his biography:

The most faithful representation of a person when made by himself is apt to betray him. If, therefore, I have fallen into any error, you will pardon me. Miss Roberts, at the time she was about to proceed to England, had expressed her wish to write an account of my life, and I furnished her at her request with a few memoranda, which I can send you if you want them.⁷⁷

We can conclude from such references that Emma Roberts, Henry Meredith Parker, Henry Derozio and Kasiprasad Ghosh were leading players in a recognisable unit of literary activity surrounding the Orientalists in Calcutta. There were countless minor players as well in the literary circuit centred around Calcutta, ranging from genteel contributors of occasional verse to daily gazettes or periodical journals and magazines published in India (for the consumption of English residents in India as well as for English-educated Bengali gentlemen), to more serious men of letters - journalists, educationalists, administrators and even military men. Names that were known in such a capacity in the nineteenth century in India include (for example) Charles Arthur Kelly, Sir John Malcolm, David Lester Richardson, Robert Scott, George Herbert Trevor, John Dunbar, Ralph Griffith, James

⁷⁶Manuscript Proceedings of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, IV (January 7, 1829), 68.

⁷⁷Long, 510.

Hutchinson and William Waterfield - all of whom were selected by T.O.D. Dunn for inclusion in his anthology India in Song: Eastern Themes in English Verse.⁷⁸ These contributors wrote poetry occasionally, sporadically sending pieces to magazines, newspapers or journals, rarely publishing separate volumes of their own. Exceptions include Richardson and Waterfield, who managed to consolidate their achievements in this area by bringing out their own individual volumes. Records of Bengali contributors to English journalistic publications in India were relatively rare; the only names that crop up in poetry published in gazettes and journals around the 1830s are of those of Derozio and Kasiprasad Ghosh, who also consequently published individual volumes of verse. Not aware themselves that they represented, taken as a group, any consolidated movement in the body of English poetry in India - an entity that was not recognised in its own right until the twentieth century - they were yet recognisably part of an endeavour to define India through their poetry; a literary project that came out of the twin impetuses of Orientalist scholarship into Indian antiquity and the popularity of the Orient in English poetry.

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Other Minor Poems in *The Shair*

The other poems that are included in The Shair are written in the romantic style, with three long poems included in the first section - 'The Haunt of the Muse', 'The Lover's Life' and 'Hope'. Besides these three, there are several other smaller poems at the end of the volume under the section heading, Minor Poems. These include 'Sonnet to the Moon', 'Stanzas Written in Spring', 'The Setting Sun', 'Evening in May', 'Can I Cease to Remember' and others, some with a small line such as 'written after a shower' or 'written during a storm' preceding the poem. 'The Haunt of the Muse' is prefaced with a couple of lines from Akenside's (his name is not mentioned) Pleasures of Imagination: '...Fancy dreams/ Of

⁷⁸Dunn, India in Song (Bombay: Humphrey Milford, 1918).

sacred fountains and Elysian groves, /And vales of bliss.⁷⁹ Of his initiation into writing poetry, Kasiprasad wrote:

From my earliest boyhood I have had a fancy to write poetry. The music of the falling rain or of rustling leaves attracted my attention, and in the abstraction of my mind which followed, I used to give vent to my feelings in verse. When I produced my first poem, I showed it to Mr. R. Halifax, now the head teacher in the Hindu College, who observed that there was no measure in it, and advised me to read Carey's Prosody; but as a copy of that work could not be found in the shops, I returned to Murray's Prosody, and Lord Kames' Elements of Criticism, from which I derived all my first knowledge of English versification. I then commenced reading the best poets in a regular and measured tone, which soon accustomed my ears to English rhythm. I then re-wrote my first piece, and showed it again to Mr Halifax, who approved of it. I have since continued to write English poetry....⁸⁰

While the citation of the various books and techniques he used to familiarise himself with the language shows his apprenticeship in the English language, the mention, in the beginning, of the 'music of the falling rain' and 'rustling leaves' moving his soul towards the writing of verse points, indubitably, to his allegiance to the English romantics. The birth of poetry in a moment of mental 'abstraction' after communion with nature ('emotion recollected in tranquillity') was a concept set forth most famously in the romantic manifesto in the Lyrical Ballads (1815), and Kasiprasad in this passage adheres very closely to that ideal. The reference to 'music of the falling rain' is interesting in that it precedes Tagore's famous proclamation about his childhood love of a phrase evoking the sound of rain and rustling leaves (*jal pare, pata nore*). Thus Kasiprasad's comment seems almost to foreshadow some of Tagore's finest Bengali poetry, especially some songs and poems about the monsoons in Bengal. The fact that his writing of English verse owed its impulse entirely to his education at the Hindu College is obvious from the passage, which records his indebtedness to his teacher there.

Among these minor poems, which are written overwhelmingly in a conventional English romantic mode, there are a couple of poems with Indian themes, 'Song of the

⁷⁹ibid., 'The Haunt of the Muse,' 109.

⁸⁰Long, 508-9.

Boatmen to Ganga' and 'The Vina or the Indian Lute'. In the first poem, the English metrical forms and Western idiom (in lines such 'Gold river! gold river! how gallantly now/ Our bark on thy bright breast is lifting her prow') contribute, however, to a curious negation of 'authentic' atmosphere.⁸¹ The other poem, 'The Vina', falls back upon another pattern, in that it reiterates the sentiments that are hallmarks of Orientalist poetry in India: the present neglect and degeneration of a once glorious nation.⁸² The poem's imagery of the unstrung lute repeats yet again the metaphor and theme of Derozio's 'Harp of India', and his own lines at the end of the title poem, 'The Shair'.

While the poems with Indian titles, like the ones above, have no outstanding traces of Easternness in their composition, paradoxically, a poem called 'Morning in May' incorporates, almost casually, Indian metaphors that are evocative of a different culture. A note after the title informs us that the poem was 'Written after a shower' (such notes seem to be a convention in themselves), and in the middle of the poem, we find the following stanzas:

Hear the cuckoo's far, sweet cooing
 From that cage's gloom,*
 And the love-lorn Bhramar's+ wooing
 Of the lotos bloom.

Sweetly now the breeze is blowing,
 Tuning soft his song;
 How the golden river's glowing,
 As it rolls along!⁸³

The image of the river as 'golden' and 'glowing' is recognisably Indian, as the wide and meandering rivers of the Gangetic plain are the colour of mud or gold, and the Ganges, especially, has already been referred to as 'gold river' by Kasiprasad in another poem, 'Song of the Boatmen to Ganga', mentioned above. The asterisk beside 'cages of gloom' indicates a footnote that says: 'The cages for birds of amusement are for many reasons covered with cloth-veils, and consequently dark within.' This would once again be a familiar image to any Indian at that time, when keeping birds of amusement was a favoured pastime among the gentry, derived from the Muslim court culture that was still alive then.

⁸¹ibid., 'Song of the Boatmen to Ganga,' 183.

⁸²Shair, 'The Vina; Or The Indian Lute,' 185.

⁸³ibid., 'Morning In May,' 175.

The other footnote attached to the third line explains what the 'love-lorn Brahmar' is: 'A large buzzing bee called the bumble-bee, which is said to be in love with the lotos flower, which has been the cause of many tender allusions in Hindu poetry.' These sort of 'authentic' references to Hindu culture were probably what English readers desired from Indian poets writing in English in order to experience a 'genuine' Eastern ambience in their verse. The use of this particular metaphor has a curious consequence that is worth mentioning. In the 1835 issue of the popular English literary journal, Forget-Me-Not, a poem was included called 'The Love-Suit' by Captain M'Naghten. This poem uses the metaphor introduced by Kasiprasad in the following manner:

Like that bee* which seeks with amorous strain the
lotos every day;
....
So strives my heart to win the goal of thy most hal-
lowed love;⁸⁴

The asterisk next to 'bee' indicates a footnote that says:

I gather from a poetical volume by Kasiprasad Ghosh, a young and high-caste Hindoo, of Calcutta, (who, long before he had attained his twentieth year, had written English poetry of a superior order,) that a species of bee, called the *brahmar*, is fabled by his countrymen to be enamoured of the lotos flower, as the bulbul is said by the Persians to be of the rose.⁸⁵

Such an espousal of a particular metaphor, first by Kasiprasad and then picked up from him, by M'Naghten, shows the close interrelationship at work in the literary network connecting India and England in the first half of the century. This was indeed a time when the English literary world was interested in the Orient and in India in a manner never to be repeated in the history of British colonialism, an interest that was nourished by the Orientalist enterprise in India, which was involved in highlighting indigenous aspects of India that were hitherto unknown and unemphasised. Without the context of the Orientalist project, this small detail about a favourite Hindu metaphor loses its significance and importance. Once again, however, a distinction could be made here between the fashion for the Orient in English poetry (to be found in Beckford, Moore, or Fitzgerald), which

⁸⁴Forget-Me-Not (1835): 198.

⁸⁵*ibid.*

referred to Muslim cultures of the Middle-East, where the rose and the nightingale legend might be found; and Orientalist poetry, which was concerned with the Indian subcontinent, and therefore brought into currency Hindu metaphors such as that of the lotus and the bee as mentioned here by Kasiprasad and then M'Naghten.⁸⁶

It might also be observed, in this context, that English Orientalism, as defined elsewhere by Said, was always, in some form or the other, present in the corpus of Orientalist poetry in India. Thus, while here in this poem Kasiprasad is concerned with the conscious espousal of a Hindu metaphor, in 'The Shair', as we have seen above, he couples the rose and the nightingale to illustrate the pity of love, using the traditional Persian image quite unconsciously and without any footnote or explanation. Once again, therefore, we realise that this emphasis on the pre-Muslim Hindu past (which was being excavated by the Orientalists) was a deliberate and well-meaning effort on the part of poets like Kasiprasad to underline those aspects of their culture that seemed somehow more native to them than the dominant Mughal court culture then in its last phase in India.

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Critical Response to Kasiprasad

Kasiprasad Ghosh was reviewed widely both in Bengali magazines as well as in English periodicals in Calcutta as well as in England, though most of these notices concentrated on the remarkable achievement of an Indian native being able to compose poetry in a language that was comparatively new to him. A Bengali weekly, in its issue of February 27, 1830, commented:

If we had any doubts regarding the ability of the people of this country to undertake the most difficult type of original composition in English they are dispelled by this work. We take this opportunity to state that the progress made by our

⁸⁶This use of Kasiprasad's metaphor by M'Naghten is mentioned in Dr A. Bose, 'Bengali Writing in English in the Nineteenth Century,' N.K. Sinha ed. The History of Bengal (Calcutta: University of Calcutta Press, 1967), 514-529, where he adds also that this M'Naghten must in all probability have been Captain R.A. McNaughten, editor in Calcutta of the John Bull, who was involved in a controversy with Derozio when the latter was editor of The East-Indian.

people in English education during the last ten years is really wonderful.... the progress has been so remarkable that there are about two hundred young men in Calcutta who have as much mastery over English as their own mother-tongue. Some of them, like Babu Kashiprasad [sic], mentioned above, have devoted themselves so assiduously to English learning that they have succeeded in composing such books as the majority of Englishmen would not readily undertake.⁸⁷

In Britain, several contemporary journals noticed the publication of The Shair, including The New Monthly Magazine and the Athenaeum.⁸⁸ In November 1834, Fraser's Magazine wrote of Kasiprasad, unlike the others, in a frivolous, supercilious tone :

We may particularly notice the picture of that amazingly clever lad, Khasiprasad-Ghosh [sic], the Hindoo poet, whose poem in honour of the Gold River (Ganges) appears not only in Fisher's Scrap Book, but in Tom Roscoe's Oriental Annual. Khasiprasad [sic] ought therefore to feel much honoured. We are told he is a very excellent and worthy young fellow, who drinks brandy pawnee as orthodoxically as if he were a Christian.⁸⁹

As I have pointed out before, the role played by Orientalist research in the literary endeavours of colonial India has not been recognised at all by commentators. Colonial poetry about India has, in any case, not received much attention in any form, whether with respect to the compilation of anthologies, or in the form of an informed criticism, or even through the existence of a sustained audience for such work. The rare academic appreciations of the English verse written in colonial India make no concessions for the historical, social and intellectual contexts from within which this poetry arose. The earliest commentator who dealt with this area in considerable detail was Theodore Dunn, who was responsible for invaluable work in the compilation of several anthologies of both Indo-Anglian and Anglo-Indian poetry of the nineteenth century, all of which were preceded by informative and involved criticism in the prefaces to individual volumes, as already mentioned in the Introduction. The typical line along which his evaluations ran, however, was one that insisted on the production of 'great works' of inspired genius, works that

⁸⁷Cited in R.C. Majumdar, Glimpses of Bengal in the Nineteenth Century (Calcutta: Elite Press, 1960), 36. The name of the weekly has not been mentioned by Majumdar.

⁸⁸The New Monthly Magazine June 1831: 253; Athenaeum 190 (1831): 382.

⁸⁹Fraser's Magazine November 1834: 608.

inherently crystallised the essence of what 'poetry' was defined as being. Anything that failed to climb that height of an exalted appreciation of 'truth' or 'nature', or did not succeed in capturing the 'essence' that was the hall mark of all great poetry, was condemned; for an Indian poet, this essential quality was supposed to reside in the exclusively oriental character of his verse. When that oriental 'essence' was not found, the verse was dismissed as 'limited', 'slight', 'occasional', or 'inadequate', as the following passage demonstrates:

The range of the poetry... [of nineteenth-century Bengalis writing in English] is limited in the extreme. Their subjects are found in the picturesque incidents of Indian history and legend, in the ritual of Hinduism, at times in the Christian theology and scriptures. At best, these themes may be described only as occasional, and their treatment is slight..... It would be foolish to condemn these authors for what they did not attempt to accomplish; but the charge of inadequacy may be pressed more closely in examining their treatment of such Indian themes as they chose to represent in their verse. Such poetry as they produced was Indian only in so far as it was written in Bengal, and was the result of education received therein; and it is scarcely an exaggeration to say that here its oriental character begins and ends.⁹⁰

A fair comment on its own terms, such a reading, however, negates almost the entire corpus of colonial poetry produced in India by consigning to it the label of 'bad' poetry, and ignores the fact that these poems may be perceived as sites of the historical, cultural, and literary cross-currents that prevailed at the time, or as the depositories of new developments in a colonial situation. As a result, the general passage above was followed by specific criticism of Kasiprasad's verse in a commentary that was blinkered to its underlying socio-historical significance. So Dunn quotes two verses from a poem in the section on the Hindu festivals - 'Sri Panchami' - on the goddess Saraswati, concluding only with the comment that 'he is merely re-echoing the jingle of such 18th century rhymesters as William Hayley, and fails utterly to reproduce the atmosphere of his own faith.'⁹¹ As we have already seen in the analysis of the section on the Hindu festivals, these poems were actually replete with the influences of the Calcutta Orientalists,

⁹⁰T.O.D. Dunn, Bengali Writers of English Verse: a record and an appreciation (Calcutta: n.p. 1918), 16.

⁹¹ibid., 17. This comment was repeated in the Introduction to the Bengali Book of English Verse (Bombay: Longmans, Green, & Co., 1918), xxii.

specifically Jones's Sanskrit hymns and Wilson's translations of classical Hindu drama, besides displaying their careful cultivation of English prosody and idiom.

An attitude that complained of the lack of 'anything that is peculiarly and exclusively oriental', however, did not originate with Dunn, whose criticism echoed English reviews of The Shair that had appeared in the year immediately following its publication.⁹² Kasiprasad had sent a volume of his poems to the editor of The Athenaeum, and consequently a review, appeared in that magazine in June 1831.⁹³ The reviewer had the same objections to the 'Hindu Festivals' that Dunn enumerates, and after citing Kasiprasad's intention of writing national poetry in the section on the Hindu festivals, he goes on to comment:

We are not at all inclined to be critical with a work written and published under such circumstances; but one objection we must state, that, whatever the intention may have been, the Poems generally are *not* national; excepting the names there is nothing eastern about them; they would pass current in our own Magazines for genuine home-manufacture, although some are of superior workmanship.⁹⁴

This sort of objection to the failure of an Indian poet to produce 'national' or 'eastern' poetry, continued well into the twentieth century; thus, almost exactly a century after these comments appeared in The Athenaeum, the first Indian critic to deal academically with Kasiprasad's work in some detail, Lotika Basu, commented in 1933:

The style too is ornate, full of conventional epithets, metaphors and similes usually from Bengali or Sanskrit poetry.... *The Hindu Festivals* shows how out of sympathy Kashiprosad [sic] really was with Indian institutions for he misses the spiritual significance of these festivals and of the gods and goddesses they are named after. Instead they are paeans in praise of the deities and these latter are used to ornament his verse as the gods and goddesses of the Greeks ornamented the verse of the 18th [sic] century poets.⁹⁵

⁹²ibid.

⁹³The Athenaeum, 190 (1831): 393. The start of the review remains interesting: 'On our return home from Vauxhall a few evenings since, where we had been wondering at the unaccustomed presence of a learned Brahmin, Ram Mohun Roy, we were somewhat startled to find on our table a sufficiently neat volume called "The Shair," printed at Calcutta - sold at No.3, Durromtollah - and addressed "To the Editor of the Athenaeum, with the compliments of the Author, Kasiprasad Ghosh."

⁹⁴The Athenaeum, 393.

⁹⁵Lotika Basu, Indian Writers of English Verse (Calcutta: Calcutta University Press, 1933), 21.

While her comparison of Kasiprasad's style with the manner in which English poets of the eighteenth century used Greek deities in their verse emphasises the imitative aspect of Kasiprasad's verse, Basu misses entirely the fact that Kasiprasad's poems seem to be merely 'paeans in praise of the deities' precisely because their 'inspiration' or source matter lay in the province of Jones's literary efforts in the rendition of the Sanskrit hymns; The emphasis on 'metaphors and similes usually from Bengali or Sanskrit poetry', which she finds limiting, can be seen in a totally new light when the Orientalist background, from which the use of these indigenous metaphors was deliberately derived, is taken into consideration. Thus, she fails to notice the cultural and intellectual transaction - that between Kasiprasad and Jones - that lay behind and was implicitly present in Kasiprasad's verse, one of the earliest instances of its kind in the history of colonial India.

Later criticism of the beginnings of Indo-Anglian poetry followed a similar pattern, staying confined to the same restricted literary parameters in its understanding of the poetry of Kasiprasad or Derozio or Michael Madhusudan Dutt. Consequently, a commentator such as Arvind Krishna Mehrotra, introducing a recent anthology of Indian verse in English, states, '[Indo-Anglian] poetry... especially that written between 1825 and 1945, is truly dead. Later poets have found no use for it, and a literary tradition is of no use to anyone else.... Henry Derozio, Toru Dutt, Aurobindo Ghose, and Sarojini Naidu were courageous and perhaps charming men and women, but not those with whom you could today do business.'⁹⁶ An academic study by H.M. Williams, Indo-Anglian Literature (1800-1970): A Survey, discusses the nineteenth-century poets in a similar manner, saying of Derozio that 'he is typical of nineteenth century Indo-Anglian writing in his romanticism, his derivativeness and his use of Indian themes'; of Kasiprasad that he 'caused a stir in English-speaking circles and made people aware of the existence of an Indo-Anglian "school" of poetry'; and of Madhusudan that his 'English poetry, though decidedly inferior [to his Bengali poetry], is interesting as another attempt by a talented Indian to unite the two

⁹⁶Arvind Krishna Mehrotra, Ed. Twelve Modern Indian Poets (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1992), 1-2.

cultures and make use of Indian material'.⁹⁷ And thus, within the space of a paragraph, all these three writers are dealt with conclusively as poets whose attempt to reach the 'universal' criteria of 'good' poetry had failed, without any further attempt to contextualise their poetry in their historical situation or delve deeper into the rich source material for this poetry.

The relation between the Orientalist project in Calcutta and the colonial poetry of nineteenth-century India is important not only because it reveals source material hitherto unnoticed and unrecognized, but because it is this connection that demonstrates the hidden nationalist bias of these poems. The anglicized ambience and imitation of English poetic form in these poems, and also their very medium, the language of the colonial rulers, have led commentators to ignore any contribution these poets might have made towards the formation of a national identity. The desire, on the part of these poets, to incorporate material recovered by the Orientalists from the history and heritage of ancient India, besides many other direct statements of intention, shows that they were, in actuality, involved in the creation of a 'national' element for the first time in the history of India; this attempt to invent a national character in their verse sprang from liberal values, values that made possible their eclectic use of English styles and forms as vehicles for indigenous, native content and subject matter. A long line of liberal, secular Indian nationalists, from Rammohun Roy to Nehru, advocated for India's progress a harmonious mixture of the East and the West, an idea which is to be found mirrored in the combination of form and content in these poems. Further, the idea that reading and education would give Indians access to the best of both Indian and European culture was an idea that would be crucial to modern India; interestingly, Orientalist poetry provides one of the earliest instances of such an idea, and such choices, being put into practice. In Kasiprasad, as well as in the other Orientalist poets, the use of Hindu images, the incorporation of Hindu themes, the descriptions of Hindu rites and manners, all belong recognizably to an impulse belonging to the assertion of Hindu identity, then envisaged as the 'authentic' Indian identity. While

⁹⁷H.M. Williams, *Indo-Anglian Literature (1800-1970): A Survey* (Bombay: Orient Longmans, 1976), 16-17.

the use of these indigenous sources was undoubtedly related to the fashion for these elements in Western poetry, it is equally true that these colonised poets were not only responding to current fads, but were also involved in producing a statement of 'something by way of national poetry' through paradoxically borrowed means; it was a project that would be, in its foreshadowing of an indigenous liberal, secular consciousness, ultimately subversive to colonial rule.⁹⁸ Sites of a dramatic engagement with colonialism, the 'failure' attributed to these poems by critics so far have denied them the important significance of being the first vehicles of engagement with colonial rule, an engagement whose proportions grew until it ultimately unseated the machinery of colonial domination in India.

⁹⁸Shair, ii.

Chapter Three

Michael Madhusudan Dutt (1824-1873)

Consolidation of English Education in Calcutta

English, in the middle of the nineteenth century in Calcutta, continued to make progress as the accepted vehicle of education for the betterment of all Indians. One of the most respected Bengali educationalists of that century, Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar, wrote in a letter to the Council of Education at the time:

For certain reasons, which it is needless to state here, we are obliged to continue the teaching of the Vedanta and Sankhya in the Sanskrit College. That the Vedanta and Sankhya are false systems of philosophy is no more a matter of dispute.... Whilst teaching these in the Sanskrit course we should oppose them by sound philosophy in the English course to counteract their influence.¹

Vidyasagar was reputed throughout the land as a fierce patriot, promoter of the Bengali language and asserter of Bengali identity and individuality, social and religious reformer, a man associated always with national self-respect. These views, following Rammohun Roy, show clearly how well wishers of the nation continued to emphasise the need for Western education and training. At the time of Madhusudan, knowledge of English literature and philosophy combined with an informed awareness of classical Indian literature as propagated by the Orientalists was still an integral part of the education of the refined Bengali gentleman. Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, in his novel *Rajani* (1877), portrayed a character named Amarnath, who, in the course of a conversation, displays the sort of learning that erudite gentlemen in Bengal could be expected to possess:

From Shakespeare's heroines he came to Sakuntala, Sita, Kadamvari, Vasavadatta, Rukmini, and Satyabhama, and he analysed their characters. The discussion of ancient literature led in its turn to ancient historiography, out of which there emerged some incomparable exposition of the classical historians, Tacitus, Plutarch, Thucydides, and others. From

¹Letter to Dr Ballantyne, cited in Arabindo Poddar, Renaissance in Bengal (Simla: Indian Institute for Advanced Studies, 1970), 32.

the philosophy of history of these writers Amarnath came down to Comte and his *lois des trois elats*, which he endorsed. Comte brought in his interpreter Mill and then Huxley; Huxley brought in Owen and Darwin; and Darwin Buchner and Schopenhauer. Amarnath poured the most entrancing scholarship into my ears, and I became too engrossed to remember our business.²

The scholarship exhibited in this passage of both Western and Indian literature, philosophy and history (which, moreover, shows direct Orientalist influence in the interest expressed in 'ancient literature' and 'ancient historiography') points to Bankim Chandra's own remarkable erudition. Bankim had been one among the three Indians who obtained the first B.A. awarded by Calcutta University after his studies at the Hindu College, subsequently joining the administrative services under the British. His first novel, Rajmohan's Wife, was written in English, appearing as a serial in the Indian Field of 1864, after which he turned to Bengali, becoming the most celebrated Bengali novelist and litterateur of his age.³ Such wide-ranging interests are also to be found, before Bankim, in the poet who followed Kasiprasad as the most famous exponent of English language and literature in Bengal, Michael Madhusudan Dutt, who was a notorious instance of a valiant striving towards a place in the English canon only to, towards the latter portion of his life, make an about-turn towards his own mother-tongue, Bengali, where he found at last a status and dignity befitting his talent.

Madhusudan's consciousness was shaped by the prevailing currents of conflicting ideas in Calcutta, which included, besides the Anglicist championing of Western learning, Orientalist ideas generated by researchers into Indian antiquity. In a poem written while still in college entitled 'Written At The Hindu College By A Native Student,' he reiterates sentiments found in Derozio's famous 'Sonnet To The Pupils Of The Hindu College'. The fact that English poetry written in Bengal was a by-product of the colonial situation is self-evident, but just to what extent this poetry was a response to the intellectual movements of

²Nirad C. Chaudhuri's translation, vide The Autobiography of an Unknown Indian (New York, 1951), 184-5.

³J.C. Bagal, ed., *Bankim Rachanabali* [The Collected Works of Bankim] (Calcutta: Sahitya Sansad, 1990), 291.

the times, absorbing and contributing to the enthusiasms and fashions of the age, is apparent when we compare these two sonnets about the students of the Hindu College. One of these is written by a teacher and the other by a student, separated by an estimated gap of fifteen years, and yet they are astonishingly alike not only in the feelings expressed towards the students of the college, but also in the attitude towards India.⁴ The first, Derozio's poem, ran:

Expanding like the petals of young flowers
 I watch the gentle opening of your minds,
 And the sweet loosening of the spell that binds
 Your intellectual energies and powers,
 That stretch (like young birds in soft summer hours)
 Their wings, to try their strength. O, how the winds
 Of circumstances, and freshening April showers
 Of early knowledge, and unnumbered kinds
 Of new perceptions shed their influence;
 And how you worship truth's omnipotence.
 What joyance rains upon me, when I see
 Fame in the mirror of futurity,
 Weaving the chaplets you have yet to gain,
 Ah then I feel I have not lived in vain.⁵

Madhusudan's poem was written in sonnet form as well, and contained the same 'exultant' hopes about the future greatness of the young students at the college:

Oh! how my heart exulteth while I see
 These future flow'rs, to deck my country's brow,
 Thus kindly nurtured in this nursery!-
 Perchance, unmark'd some here are budding now,
 Whose temples shall with laureate-wreaths be crown'd
 Twined by the Sisters Nine: whose angel-tongues
 Shall charm the world with their enchanting songs.
 And time shall waft the echo of each sound
 To distant ages:- some, perchance, here are,
 Who, with a Newton's glance, shall nobly trace
 The course mysterious of each wandering star;
 And, like a God, unveil the hidden face
 Of many a planet to man's wondering eye,
 And give their names to immortality.⁶

⁴Derozio could have written a sonnet addressed to his students only after he had commenced teaching there, which was in 1827, while Madhusudan's poem was written in 1842.

⁵Henry Derozio, *Poems* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1980), 43. This poem was first published in the *Bengal Annual*, ed. D.L. Richardson (Calcutta, 1831).

⁶*Poems* [41], *Madhusudan Rachanabali* [Collected Works of Madhusudan] (Calcutta: Sahitya Sansad, 1993), 454. All the following references of 'Poems' and 'Letters' are from this collection, which shall be referred to as the *Rachanabali*.

The second poem seems almost to begin at the point where the first left off, with the opening line 'Oh! how my heart exulteth while I see...' repeating the sentiments expressed in the eleventh line of Derozio's sonnet 'What joyance rains upon me, when I see...'. Subsequently, Madhusudan, like Derozio, expresses belief in the fame that awaits the students; but while Derozio addresses his pupils, Madhusudan is referring to his contemporaries, which makes the poem a celebration of himself and his friends (some of whom, such as Bhudev Mukhopadhyay, did achieve eminence in scholarship and other fields). Both these sonnets are similar in diction and tone; it is interesting to note here that Madhusudan's diction is far more 'literary' and has dated more than Derozio's language. We find the image of the pupils as budding flowers nurtured in this college, (which Madhusudan therefore likens to a nursery), in the opening section of both poems. Both poets, moreover, use the image of 'laureate-wreathes' or woven 'chaplets' that shall 'crown' the brows of achievers. While Derozio's poem articulates a general perception, that of the brightening aura of new influences on young minds that 'worship truth's omnipotence', Madhusudan describes the arrival of these youths at summits of two distinct areas of knowledge: the arts, in the form of 'enchanted songs' that shall 'charm the world' in 'distant ages'; and the sciences, with the image of new planets and stars being discovered - singularly alike to Keats's image in 'Upon First Looking Into Chapman's Homer'.

While it is interesting, in itself, to note the likeness between the poems, what is remarkable is the social and historical context that brought them about. The great emphasis placed on English education in the early half of the nineteenth century led to the hero-worship accorded to teachers such as Derozio and Richardson, and to the legendary status attributed to educationalists of the time such as Rammohun Roy, David Hare, Alexander Duff and Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar. This reverence for education forms the foundation from which the poems above sprang, for the self-consciousness of the writers, who were aware of belonging to the seminal institution for the dissemination of Western education in the history of India, is transparently present in the feelings incorporated in the poems.

While the glorification of Western science and arts was inherently an Anglicist position, shades of the old Orientalist policies are also present in the desire to bring 'renewed glory' to India, the land both poets wish to rejuvenate. The great deeds of the students at the Hindu College, it is implied, will add lustre not only to the reputation of the institution they came from, but also to the country they shall represent; so they are pictured by Madhusudan as 'future flow'rs, to deck my country's brow'. The view, in these poems, of education as redemptive and empowering to the native, creates a more complex picture than is to be found in the discourse of a Saidian critic such as Vishwanathan, who writes specifically on literary studies in British India. Her view of British educational policy in Masks of Conquest needs to take cognizance of instances such as these, where two examples are presented of native beneficiaries of an English education, writing on education.

It is worth noting here that the first Indian poet to use the sonnet form employed in the poems above had been Derozio, while it was Madhusudan who had introduced it into the Bengali language. When, later in life, he turned to his mother-tongue, Michael Madhusudan Dutt gave to the Bengali language her first modern tragedy, the first social comedies, the first epic and blank verse, as well as the first sonnet; he combined these with secular themes and a resonance of language altogether unknown in Bengali letters. His Bengali poetry derived its heroic sentiment entirely from Western influences, and his most celebrated work, the *Meghnad Badh Kavya*, was a reinterpretation of the mythological story from the *Ramayana* of the slaying of the demon-king Ravana's son Meghnad by the forces of good, Ram and his brother Lakshman. The portrayal, in this poem, of the losing side as heroic, was derived from Milton's Paradise Lost, and the fallen glory of the demon-king's son parallels Milton's treatment of Satan in the Biblical story. As his borrowing of Western influences for Bengali poetry was both intentional and artistically significant, Bengali critics have identified thoroughly the connections between his reading of English

poetry and its reflection upon the body of his Bengali poetry.⁷ Madhusudan's English poetry, however, has always remained peripheral to his achievements in his own tongue, and has never been examined in sufficient detail by any critic concerned with Indo-Anglian poetry to date. Looked at closely, Madhusudan's life and work, not least the work done in English, reveal fascinatingly contradictory impulses throughout - of a thorough knowledge and eclectic incorporation of the great masters of Western literature; deep love and admiration for the mythology of his own country; conviction in the civilising aspects of Christianity and condemnation of the degrading features of practised Hinduism.

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Madhusudan's Education and Literary Aspirations

Madhusudan was an extreme Anglophile in his youth, which he gradually tempered to more reasonable proportions in his later life, though he never, to his dying day, relinquished his faith in the superiority of Western civilization and culture. This was due, at least partially, to his early education at the Hindu College. Derozio had passed away at the time when Madhusudan was a student there, but his influence lingered, moulding the attitudes of generations of students in following years. Jogindranath Bose, Madhusudan's principal biographer, writes of Derozio's influence on him:

Madhusudan did not belong the Hindu College at the time when Derozio was there, entering the college a few years after Derozio left. But Derozio's reputation was still very much alive in the college, and many of the college's students continued to imitate the manners and mores of the students of Derozio. Consequently, in spite of not having been a student of Derozio, Madhusudan could not rise above his influence. Degradation of Indian literature, love for Western literature, disdain for native manners and customs and a bias towards Western social norms signified the typical

⁷For an account in English, see Harendra Mohan Dasgupta, Studies in Western Influences on Nineteenth-Century Bengali Poetry 1857-1887 (Calcutta: Chuckervutty, Chatterjee & Co., 1935).

characteristics of Hindu College students in those days. (My translation)⁸

D.L. Richardson, who taught English literature at the Hindu College, had an intense influence upon the young Madhusudan. This was especially because Richardson was a great champion of English poetry, as is evident from the memoirs of another of his students, worth citing from extensively for the information it imparts on the effects of Hindu college education on students contemporary to Madhusudan:

... Captain Richardson succeeded in inspiring the native students who sat at his feet with some portion of the ardour that filled his own breast. It was due to his exertions that the native students who gathered round him cultivated the literature of England with the devotion that is displayed in the English universities by the English youth in the study of the classics....

...Indeed he was never so enthusiastic in his vocation as when introducing his boys to an intimate acquaintance with the great poets of his nation, and enriching their minds with the most precious treasures of British thought. 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, Essay on Man and Prologue to the Satires, were what he taught in endless alternation. Only the choice of The Taming of the Shrew and Timon of Athens and Young's Night Thoughts without either The Paradise Lost [sic] or Childe Harold was all the change we had. Richardson was a great admirer of Wordsworth, but he never made us read that poet....

But Richardson's reading of Shakespeare and Pope was excellent... [and] 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.'⁹

Besides his enduring fame among his Bengali students as a teacher, Richardson was well known in his time as an editor of reputed literary anthologies published from Calcutta such as the Bengal Annual and The Orient Pearl, as well as of literary magazines and journals

⁸Jogindranath Basu, *Michael Madhusudan Datter Jivan Carit* [*Michael Madhusudan Dutt: The Story of His Life*] ed. Sukhomay Mukhopadhyay, 4th ed. (Calcutta: Asok Kumar Barik, 1978), 32.

⁹S.C. Sanial, 'Captain David Lester Richardson,' *The Calcutta Review*, No 243 (Jan - Mar 1906), 1, 6-7.

such as the Calcutta Literary Gazette, and the Calcutta Monthly Journal. Richardson was also a poet himself, published both from London and Calcutta.¹⁰ His interest in encouraging English poetry among his students resulted in two independent books of poetry being dedicated to him. Chronologically, Kasiprasad Ghosh's The Shair was followed by Gooroo Churn Dutt's School Hours or Poems, Composed at School (1839), dedicated 'To D L Richardson Esq.';¹¹ while Rajnarain Dutt, who published Osmyn: An Arabic Tale in 1844, also dedicated his book to Richardson, excerpts of which are to be found in Dunn's Bengali Book of English Verse, the original volume being lost. It is interesting to note here that Govin Chunder Dutt, father of Toru Dutt and contributor to the Dutt Family Album, was also a student of Richardson in the time of Madhusudan.

Jogindranath Basu, in his biography of Madhusudan, provides anecdotal details of Madhusudan as a student, and tells us that he was caught imitating Richardson's slanting handwriting one day in school during recess, such was his desire to imitate every aspect of his role model; he was also reported to have exclaimed in class, upon hearing Richardson read an essay to his students prior to its publication, 'I wish I had been the author of it'.¹² Madhusudan published his youthful poems in the literary magazine D.L. Richardson edited, the Calcutta Literary Gazette, and under his guidance, in local magazines such as the Gleaner, Blossom and Comet. He mentions these magazines in a doggerel entitled 'Stanzas On Granting "Leave of Absence" To My Muse':

Farewell! But oh! remember me,
Return before our 'Monthlies' all,
The 'Gleaner'-'Blossom'-'Commet'[sic] tempt
Me, to scribble for them all.¹³

¹⁰See Introduction.

¹¹Gooroo Churn Dutt, School Hours or Poems, Composed At School (Calcutta, 1839). To support this thesis's argument of a common theme present in Orientalist poetry of the glory of ancient India contrasted with its present degradation, it would be worthwhile to quote the first few lines of Gooroo Churn's 'Introductory Lines': Dear native Country, famed in olden time,/Where heroes bled, and poets sweetly sung,/Striking thy Harp-strings that symphonious rung:-/Blest Region! Surrosoty's fav'rite clime!.... Lost is thy glory, silent is thy tongue... (p.xv,xvi).

¹²Basu, 61-2.

¹³Poems, 'Stanzas On Granting 'Leave Of Absence' To My Muse,' [10], 440.

While still a student, Madhusudan also contributed to the *Gyanambesan*, the Bengal Spectator, and the Literary Gleaner.¹⁴

How much Madhusudan wanted to leave his country for England's 'glorious shore', in order to be a famous poet, can be seen clearly from his correspondence and early poetry. Naive and hopeful in turn, full of literary ambition, confident and gregarious, the letters are also informative about the young Madhusudan's reading habits, literary likes and dislikes, and always underneath everything, of his longing for England. He sent his poems to England to the editors of Blackwood's Magazine and Bentley's Miscellany, where they were never published.¹⁵ The poems he sent to the former were dedicated to Wordsworth, as we see from a letter to his friend Gour Das Basak, to whom he wrote:

I have sent my poems to the Editor of the Blackwood's Tuesday last: I haven't dedicated them to you, as I intended, but to William Wordsworth, the Poet: My dedication runs thus: "These poems are most respectfully dedicated to William Wordsworth Esq., the Poet, by a foreign admirer of his genius - the author." Oh! to what a painful state have I committed myself. Now, I think the Editor will receive them graciously, now I think he will reject them.¹⁶

In another letter to Gour, written from a town by the sea, Tumlook [Tamluk], he exclaims:

I am come nearer that sea which will perhaps see me at a period (which I hope is not far off) ploughing its bosom for "England's glorious shore." The sea from this place is not very far: what a number of ships have I seen going to England!¹⁷

A few days later, he writes:

I am reading Tom Moore's Life of my favourite Byron - a splendid book upon my word! Oh! how should I like to see you write my "Life" if I happen to be a great poet - Which I am almost sure I shall be, if I can go to England.¹⁸

The letters abound in references to periodicals and books that were being exchanged between the friends. He mentions, as we have seen, 'Moore's Life of my favourite Byron',

¹⁴Kshetra Gupta, 'Jiban-Katha,' or 'Life-Story,' ed., *Rachanabali*, 25.

¹⁵Basu, 520.

¹⁶Letters [11], no date, 519-20.

¹⁷Letters [16], 'Tumlook, Friday', no date, 522.

¹⁸Letters [18], 'Khidirpoor, 25th November, 1842, Night', 524.

and writes, in a cryptic shorthand, of returning 'Your Byron Vol. 2nd Crabbe with thanks'; and elsewhere, 'Shakespeare and the Harakaru [the Bengal Harkaru - a Calcutta paper] you cannot have to-day'.¹⁹ In another letter from Tumlook, he remarks: 'now and then [I] read a little out of Campbell and a book called "Letters from Italy"'.²⁰ Besides English literature, another interest was Western classical history, also taught at the Hindu College; in a note he asks 'Please do request Shib of the first class to return my Eutropius. Let him keep my Eton Grammar. I have got one, but let him return my Eutropius as soon as he can'.²¹

Poems written at the immature age of seventeen reflect an unreal longing for England and a textbook Englishness of form. Significantly, a typical effect of colonization manifests itself in a poem entitled 'My Fond Sweet Blue-Eyed Maid', where he assumes the persona of the coloniser, an Englishman in India, when he addresses the 'maid':

Though in a distant clime I roam,
By Fate exiled from thee;
And tho' the sweets of native home
Are thus estranged from me...²²

Another small poem written in the same year reflects still more acutely the ambitions and preoccupations of his life at this stage:

I sigh for Albion's distant shore,
Its valleys green, its mountains high;
Tho' friends, relations, I have none
In that far clime, yet oh! I sigh
To cross the vast Atlantic wave
For glory, or a nameless grave!

My father, mother, sister, all
Do love me and I love them too,
Yet oft the tear-drops rush and fall
From my sad eyes like winter's dew.
And, oh! I sigh for Albion's stand
As if she were my native-land!²³

¹⁹Letters [11], no date, 520; [13], 'Kidderpore, 13th October 1842', 521.

²⁰Letters [14], 'Tumlook 3rd Kartic 1249 [Bengali dates] Tuesday Morning', 521.

²¹Letters [21], 'Kidderpore, 27th Nov., Midnight', 526.

²²Poems [1], 'My Fond Sweet Blue-Eyed Maid', 28th March, 1841, Kidderpore, 435.

²³Poems [8], Kidderpore, 1841, 438. (Where they do not have titles, I have indicated only the numbers of the poems as given in the *Rachanabali*.)

Other poems contain reiterations of this desire 'To leave this land, though mine own land it be...', manifesting his intense longing to be a famous poet in England, a desire nurtured at school and by the texts he read and immersed himself in at this age.²⁴

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Conversion to Christianity

Madhusudan's conversion to Christianity was a significant step taken in the direction of his youthful desire to achieve fame as a poet in England; a year before his conversion, he had written to his best friend Gour:

Perhaps, you think I am very cruel, because I want to leave my parents. Ah! my dear! I know that, and I feel for it. But "to follow Poetry," (says A. Pope) "one must leave father and mother." Too much of this. You are wise, think on it.²⁵

This letter, written in 1842, was prophetic of things to come, for Madhusudan, in order to follow 'Poetry', did leave his friends, relations and polite Hindu society by taking the giant step of actually converting to Christianity.²⁶ Madhusudan's conversion, according to all contemporary accounts of the time, was precipitated by the decision, on the part of his parents, to marry him to the young daughter of a rich Hindu landowner. However, his own ideas concerning his future role as a great 'English' poet were too firm to be dislodged by marriage, and he wrote once again to Gour:

You don't know the weight of my afflictions.... At the expiration of three months from hence I am to be married.... You know my desire for leaving this country is too firmly rooted to be removed. The sun may forget to rise, but I cannot remove it from my heart. Depend on it - in the course

²⁴Poems [29], Kidderpore, 1842, 449.

²⁵Letters [19], 'Kidderpore, 26th Nov., 1842, Sunday', 524.

²⁶The number of those actually converting was extremely poor compared to the efforts expended by the missionaries in India, and until 1843, when Madhusudan converted, there had been, in Calcutta, only nine cases of conversion. For a full account of converts to Christianity in this period, see Lal Behari Day, Recollections of Alexander Duff (London, 1879), 160-184.

of a year or two more, I must, either be in England or cease
 "to be" at all - *one of these must be done!*²⁷

'The sun may forget to rise, but I cannot remove it from my heart' wrote Madhusudan of his desire for leaving his country to be a famous poet in England, and this drove him towards Christianity as a desperate step towards the final goal of reaching the shores of England. Personal factors such as the crisis in his life due to his impending marriage might have led to the measure of seeking refuge with the English missionaries, but always, uppermost in his mind at this point in his life, was his intense longing only to be able to reach England in order to be a poet.

It is important to note, however, that Madhusudan could not have received any impetus towards the Christian religion at the Hindu College. The most important figures at the college, David Hare and D.L. Richardson, were not men who advocated Christianity to their students, and in fact took active steps to see that this did not happen:

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 his 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 upon 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 the Christian religion. (My translation)²⁸

The Hindu College did not, in fact, admit Christian students at all, and once Madhusudan had converted to Christianity he was obliged to leave, consequently joining the missionary

²⁷Letters [21], 'Kidderpore, 27th Nov., Midnight', 526.

²⁸Basu, 92.

Bishop's College. It was therefore definitely not due to a Christian education at the Hindu College that Madhusudan wished to convert, as such an act would have been regarded unfavourably by his superiors there, and unfashionable by his fellow students.

This point, made in a Bengali biography of Madhusudan that is largely unknown to English readers, is an important one in the general context of studies of British Rule in India. While critics studying the collusion of power and knowledge in colonial India have emphasised the evangelical rhetoric of the Christian mission there, no notice has been taken of records left by the indigenous intelligentsia. For instance, we shall see that Bengali gentlemen who received an English education in the nineteenth century protested that in premier institutions such as the Hindu College, Christian proselytising was actively discouraged *in the interests* of propagating an English education amongst Indians. In Masks of Conquest, however, Vishwanathan takes no notice of this remarkable evidence when she carefully delineates the underlying connection between the domination of India and the rhetoric of the Christian mission in India, devoting chapters two and three, 'Praeparatio Evangelica' and '"One Power, One Mind"', to this purpose; it is an argument, in fact, that informs her entire book.²⁹ These chapters deal specifically with Alexander Duff and Charles Grant, and emphasise emphatically the link between the literary curriculum and the Christian mission, asserting that the former was born out of the latter in an attempt to skirt the restrictions placed upon the propagation of the Christian faith in India. It is imperative, however, that such an analysis should also acknowledge conflicting testimony by Bengalis of the discouragement they encountered, while receiving an English education at the Hindu College, when they expressed interest in the Christian religion. A fellow student of Madhusudan at the Hindu College writes vividly in a letter to Jogindranath Basu of an anecdote relevant to this context, worth citing fully:

It is true that most of the students at the college did not believe in the rites and rituals of Hinduism. But very few people suffered anxiety at the thought that any student of that college might embrace Christianity. There were two reasons for this - firstly, many students read Gibbon, Hume and

²⁹Gauri Vishwanathan, Masks of Conquest (London: Faber, 1990), 45-68, 68-94.

Brown, and debated the writers and texts of the time of the French Revolution; and the second reason was Mahatma David Hare saheb. He kept a special lookout on the movements and doings of his students. In fact, he was even aware of goings on that the student's parents were ignorant of. In this context, I cannot resist providing you with an example of my own. A padre named Sandis had arrived at the Mirzapur mission. On hearing that he had announced the gift of a Bible to every student who wished to read one, six or seven of us from the college went to see him. He greeted us with great cordiality, asked us to sit down, and proceeded to enumerate the virtues of his religion. Later, when we were leaving, he presented us with a Bible each. I had never seen such a Bible previously, in royal octavo, with footnotes, in large type, and the binding must have cost no less than five or six rupees - in short, the book was produced very beautifully. Our delight in gaining that book knew no bounds. On the way back, we decided to keep the matter of the gift of the Bible a secret. But who can hide from the investigations of the all-knowing Hare saheb! Five or six months later one day, he asked all of us to visit him after four, but he didn't ask all of us on the same day. First he took --- with him; spoke sweetly to him and elicited all the information he needed. In this way, one by one, he called all of us and confiscated our Bibles. Two or three days after this he sent a message for us with his favourite *mali* (gardener) Kali to go and see him. His study, in those days, was on the upper floor at the site where the Cathedral Mission College stands now. Upon seeing us, he assumed a terrifying aspect. I had never seen him in such a state until that time. We were dealt out the sort of atonement worthy of our deed, and were released after a dozen strokes of the cane each. While coming away, he warned us about the future with various sweet words. Ever since that time, we not only never tried to read the Bible again but avoided the very act of walking by a church.³⁰

Narratives such as the one extracted above are valuable in their own right as correctives to the sort of monologic discourse constructed by Saidian critics about the relations between the literary curriculum, the Christian mission, and imperialism in the context of British rule in India in the nineteenth century. The story of Madhusudan himself is one of education engendering social and literary aspiration; his conversion to Christianity seems also to be a move towards social mobility, which he wanted to use to try and compete, on equal terms, with the English. Such accounts, provided by the very natives that the English rulers dominated through the supposedly insidious route of literary studies, fill in the gaps in the

³⁰Basu, 92-93.

discourse of critics such as Vishwanathan, and provide for a more multi-faceted and open-ended narrative than the one which usually exists in Saidian critiques of colonialism.

The suspicion that Madhusudan had in fact converted to Christianity in order to be closer to fulfilling his yearning to reach England was also confirmed by a report filed by the eminent Derozian, Reverend Krishna Mohun Banerjee, himself the first and till then the most famous case of conversion to the Christian religion:

He [Madhusudan] called one day and introduced himself to me as a religious inquirer *almost persuaded to be a Christian*. After two or three interviews and a great deal of conversation, I was impressed with the belief that his desire of becoming a Christian was scarcely greater than his desire of a voyage to England. I was unwilling to mix up the two questions, and while I conversed with him on the first, I candidly told him that I could lend him no help as regarded the second question. He seemed somewhat disheartened and came to me less frequently after that....³¹

Whatever Madhusudan had in mind at the moment of converting to Christianity, having made his decision he held to his position firmly, and although he gave no recorded explanation for it, never, through the rest of his life, did he express regret or dissatisfaction with his new religion. At the time of his conversion he disappeared dramatically one day from Calcutta, and it was learnt later that the missionaries, anticipating trouble from his wealthy father, had spirited him away to Fort William cantonment. On the 9th of February, 1843, at the Old Mission Church situated in Mission Row in Calcutta, Madhusudan was baptised by Archdeacon Dealtry into the Christian religion and given the name Michael. His baptism was accomplished to the accompaniment of a hymn that he had written himself for the occasion, which began:

Long sunk in Superstition's night,
By sin and Satan driven,-
I saw not,- cared not for the light
That leads the blind to Heaven.³²

³¹K.M. Banerjee, cited in K.L. Haldar, 'Michael Madhu Sudan Dutt,' National Magazine (Calcutta, Jan 1892), 35.

³²Poems [46], 467.

The occasion for the composition of this hymn, and its rhetoric on the subject of heathen degeneracy leads us to note the reasons behind this theme's repeated presence in Madhusudan's poems, and generally in the poetry written by Indians in English. Besides having its origins in Orientalist scholarship, such rhetoric had its sources also in the evangelical language of the Christian mission in India. The opening of India to missionary activity was accomplished by the passing, in British Parliament, of the Charter Act of 1813, after the earlier Act of 1793 had denied them permission to practise in British territory in India. Complementary to the propounding of Christian faith in India was the derogation of contemporary Hindu society and religion. A typical example of this sort of proselytizing activity, for example, is the scathing denunciation of Indian religion and society in Charles Grant's Observations on the State of Society among the Asiatic Subjects of Great Britain, written as early as 1792. In this work, Grant's intense revulsion from Hindu society found expression in a systematic attack on the Hindu caste system, idol worship, polytheism and propitiatory rites. Many other works in a similar vein had helped, by the time Madhusudan was writing his poems in English, to build a general picture of the degradation of Hindu society. Thus the language used in the hymn Madhusudan composed, in phrases such as 'Long sunk in Superstition's night/ By sin and Satan driven', seems to be directly influenced by the evangelical writings of the British in India.

After this momentous event, however, Madhusudan did not find it any easier to fulfil his desires regarding a voyage to England. 'I won't go to England till December next.... I am not going to England with Mr Dealtry; my father won't allow that...' he wrote to Gour.³³ In the same letter, he mentions his English poetry:

I have written very little poetry ever since my baptism; I am plotting something though. They will appear, where do you think, Boy? in no less a place than London itself.³⁴

All the 'plotting' that Madhusudan was capable of, however, did not advance his position in any way, and he remained, following all these grand ideas and dreams, for three more

³³Letters [24], no date, 527. His father still supported him monetarily.

³⁴ibid.

years at Bishop's College. Here he was tutored by the Rev. K.M. Banerjee, and learnt Greek, Latin and Sanskrit. He was forced to leave the college when his father discontinued payment of the college charges, and once again, in a sudden and dramatic development, disappeared from Calcutta without word to any of his friends or acquaintances, resurfacing after some months in Madras in the year 1849.

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Poems Written at the Hindu College, Calcutta

Before Madras, Madhusudan had produced a prolific amount of English verse while still at Calcutta. Here, as I have already mentioned, he had contributed many pieces to literary magazines and papers. Some of the poems that had been composed during his tenure at the Hindu College (he wrote very little after being admitted to Bishop's College) were juvenile efforts, more often resembling playful, frivolous jottings at school; many of these were addressed to his friend Gour Das Basak. Some are no more than exercises in particular poetic forms, such as this short poem of eight lines:

I loved a maid, a blue-eyed maid
 As fair as maid can e'er be, O.
 But she, oft with disdain, repaid
 My fondness and affection, O.
 For her I sighed, and e'er shall sigh,
 Tho' she shall ne'er be mine, O.
 For this sad heart's starless sky
 None but herself can light, O.³⁵

The reason for the disconcerting nature of such imitation, however, lies outside the text of the poem in the exigencies of the colonial encounter that brought it about. There are poems in this section that stand out more than others, such as the sonnet to the pupils of the Hindu College; others are relevant because they expressed his desire to reach England, which I have discussed above. Among the plethora of incidental poetry he wrote while at Hindu College, those poems that have been executed with reasonably more care strongly resemble

³⁵Poems [19], 444.

the shorter poems on varied themes produced by his two Indian predecessors, Derozio and Kasiprasad, in that they are derivative of the romantics in sentiment, style and form.

So, like Derozio's 'Freedom to the Slave', Madhusudan has a poem entitled 'The Slave', and while the former begins his poem with a line from Campbell, Madhusudan begins his with a line from Cowper: 'There is no flesh in man's obdurate heart!'³⁶ Many other minor poems by Madhusudan written in this period exhibit the same style as all the other minor poems by natives of Calcutta in this era that have been examined so far. They have similar titles as well, such as 'Composed During A Morning Walk', 'To A Star During A Cloudy Night', 'After A Shower In The Evening', 'Night', etc.. Often, a line may evoke an indisputable resonance from the English romantics, such as: 'I wandered forth alone, I knew not where...'.³⁷ The clouds, the sky, the green surroundings, the birds, the flowers, the sun or moon, all these recur in poem after poem dealing with the poet's emotions and the beauties of Nature. The language used here is representative of readings in English poetry, with words that evoke English landscapes used incongruously for Indian settings. Examples would include images such as: 'the distant cot, the silver rill,/ Its little waves, in crowds that run,/ The green-robed meadows calm and still,/ The shepherd and the fleecy clan....' or 'The lark springing from his bed,/ With loud acclaims to every grove and bower,/ Did trumpet forth Day's nativity...'.³⁸ Such essentially English features, incorporated into an Indian landscape, emphasise the dislocation in these poems as a result of the colonial encounter, and indicate the textual origins of this section of his works.

However, one of the sonnets here is remarkable for its enumeration of the virtues of what Madhusudan perceived England to be, and in its parallel with a later, similar, description of another utopia by Rabindranath Tagore. Madhusudan describes his vision of an idealized Britain:

³⁶ibid [20], 444.

³⁷ibid [33], 451.

³⁸ibid [36] and [37], 452.

...
 For I have dreamed of climes more bright and free
 Where virtue dwells and heaven-born liberty
 Makes even the lowest happy;- where the eye
 Doth sicken not to see man bend the knee
 To sordid interest:- climes where science thrives,
 And genius doth receive her guerdon meet;
 Where man in all his truest glory lives,
 And Nature's face is exquisitely sweet:
 For those fair climes I heave the impatient sigh,
 There let me live and there let me die.³⁹

The sentiments that Madhusudan records of a heavenly Britain are turned around and expressed in a very like manner, but for India, almost a century later by Rabindranath Tagore in 'Where the mind is without fear'. Lines in Madhusudan's poem such as 'Where virtue dwells and heaven-born liberty / Makes even the lowest happy' or 'where the eye / Doth sicken not to see man bend the knee / To sordid interest' or 'Where man in all his truest glory lives, / And Nature's face is exquisitely sweet', are all echoed, remarkably, in a similar tone of high idealism, and similar language, in Tagore's poem:

Where the mind is without fear, and the head is held high;
 Where knowledge is free;
 ...
 Where words come out from the depth of truth;
 Where tireless striving stretches its arms towards perfection;
 ...
 Where the mind is led forward by thee into ever-widening
 thought and action-⁴⁰

The last line of Tagore's poem, however, ends with the poet's invocation to the 'Lord' for his country to 'awake' into a 'heaven of freedom'. The balance of similarities and differences between the two poems, both of which exhibit the same sort of high-minded vision of an ideal society, the former imagining this society exists in England, while the latter wishes India to transform itself into his utopia, shows up the enormous gulf dividing the two poets. In the space between 1842, when the first poem was written, and 1913, when the second was published in English, the colonial situation in India had changed completely, Indian attitudes hardening irrevocably into opposition to the British from the

³⁹ibid [29], 449.

⁴⁰Rabindranath Tagore, 'Where the mind is without fear,' *Gitanjali* (London: Macmillan, 1913), 27-28.

establishment of Crown Rule in 1858 onward. Madhusudan's poem reflects a time when the relationship between the British and Indians was still fluid, in the first third of the almost three hundred years of British rule in India, with not even a century having elapsed since the British took over Bengal in 1757. Madhusudan's poem is, thus, a record of sentiments that had consequently become impossible to sustain in the new equation relating India to England in the twentieth century.

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Two Long Poems: The 'Upsori' and 'King Porus'

Among the poems written in this period are two long poems - 'The Upsori' and 'King Porus' - that deserve special mention because these poems reveal a growing interest in Orientalist-inspired themes.⁴¹ They also incorporate, consciously, more Indian elements than in all the preceding poems combined, and therefore exude a more 'Indian' air than is to be found in the others. This turn towards writing that incorporated Indian material was striking, signalling the start of the creation of a genuine poetic sensibility in Madhusudan.

The first poem is about, as the title indicates, an *upsori*, or heavenly nymph. Such subject matter was popularised, as we have already seen in Kasiprasad's poem 'The Hero's Reward', by H.H. Wilson's translations of the theatre of the Hindus, among which was Kalidasa's *Vikrama and Urvasi* or The Hero and the Nymph.⁴² In that play the heroine Urvasi is a celestial nymph won by the brave king Pururavas. The Indian word for nymph is '*apsara*', and Madhusudan's poem is on a similar theme, a love story about a heavenly nymph. As 'The Upsori' does not contain any explanatory notes or footnotes, it is not possible to claim *definitely* that Madhusudan had written it under the influence of Orientalist translations of Sanskrit drama; however, as I shall show, that does seem to be the case.

That Madhusudan had read Wilson's translations of the Theatre of the Hindus we know

⁴¹Poems [44], 457; [45], 463.

⁴²Horace Hayman Wilson, trans., Select Specimens of the Theatre of the Hindus, Vol. I (London, 1871), 183.

from the notes to Captive Ladie, but as that was written at a later date, it is not certain that he had a knowledge of the translations at the time when this poem was written.⁴³ Yet the subject-matter of the poem is so similar to the themes in Hindu poetic drama that had been popularised by Wilson just preceding this period, that justification does exist for asserting that such a poem could not have been written by Madhusudan without his having been influenced by the Orientalist enterprise in Calcutta at the time. Wilson's influence seems most apparent in the theme of the poem. Consisting of twenty six stanzas of ten lines each, the poem tells the story of a nymph who comes to earth from her celestial sphere, and, upon beholding a beautiful and pure hermit youth, falls in love with him, and gives her affections to him entirely. In *The Mrichchhakati* or, The Toy-Cart (the first and most well known of the plays that Wilson translated) as well, the heroine, a beautiful courtesan, falls in love with the virtuous and noble Brahmin, Charudatta, giving him her love unreservedly.⁴⁴ Amalgamating elements from both these plays, Madhusudan's poem seems to take the notion of his 'hermit-youth' from the character of Charudatta, the virtuous Brahmin, and his heroine, the 'upsori', seems to have been derived from the character of the celestial nymph *Urvashi* in the other play, *Vikrama and Urvashi* or, The Hero and the Nymph.

'The Upsori' contains many references to the Indian setting in which the action of the poem takes place, and trees, flowers and plants familiar to the Indian landscape are mentioned by name. These allusions are not provided with footnotes, and it is reasonable to assume that this was because the poem was not intended for publication. Consequently, when Madhusudan mentions 'a soft breeze from the Parijata bow'r...' he does not give the Latin or English name for the flower, as he does in similar circumstances for the long poem Captive Ladie that he published with an English audience in mind, as we shall see later. The poem begins in the halls of the king of heaven, where after a feast and celebratory dance, a nymph sits brooding. Presently she descends to earth, and the radiant landscape lit

⁴³A reference to the Mahabharata in the notes to the Captive Ladie is annotated 'Wilson. As. Res. xvii, 609.' indicating an essay by Wilson in the Asiatic Researches.

⁴⁴Wilson, Theatre of the Hindus, 1.

by moonlight is described at length. Here, the lotus is described: 'The *comul*, veil'd watch'd on her liquid throne, / -Pale languishing with sad and tearful eyes / For Morn....'.⁴⁵ No footnote is given in the usual manner explaining that 'comul' is the Indian word for lotus, and that the lotus opens its petals at day and closes them again at night. There follows a mention of the *Tamal* tree, familiar to Bengalis, and then of a 'spreading banian hoar with years...' A temple, located nearby, is described as that of the goddess *Kali*, and an account is given of her fearsome aspect:

The fane was won,- 'twas Kally's - Frightfulness!
Lo! there she stood in martial majesty,
Gorg'd with the blood of Sembo's cursed race,
And garlanded with heads! - Her blood-red eye
Shot lightning; in her hand the gory blade
Shone like a brand of fire - while naked, wild
She trampled upon her prostrate husband's head,
And with a fiendish glare upon him smiled!
Her raven locks stream'd wildly bath'd in gore,
And shed dark drops of blood upon the slippery floor.⁴⁶

This stanza, with its startling and violent imagery, is a sudden intrusion on the so far placid and serene atmosphere of the poem, which continues, after this passage, in its established style, describing the owl and 'the lone bat' in the trees. This description of the goddess is an imaginative exercise grounded in the then current Western fashion for an Orient that was exotic and supposedly fearful; it also owes something to the manner in which Orientalist researchers pioneered scientific descriptions of the aspect and attributes of particular Hindu deities for scholarly reasons. The goddess Kali is described again and mentioned in a footnote in the later publication, *Captive Ladie*, where reference is made to the Historical and descriptive account of British India.⁴⁷ However, once again, it is not possible to be sure whether Madhusudan had read the description of Kali in British India before he wrote the 'Upsori'.

⁴⁵Poems, 'The Upsori', 459.

⁴⁶ibid, 459.

⁴⁷Hugh Murray, Historical and Descriptive Account of British India, Vol II (Edinburgh, 1832), 301.

After this charged account of an Oriental goddess, the poem loses momentum, and goes on to describe the ascetic youth, 'fair as the statued *Cama* '; once again, it is not certain, but highly probable, that this reference indicates Madhusudan had read Jones's 'Hymn to Camdeo'. The nymph falls in love with the hermit-youth, loses him in the forest, and at the end of the poem, is reunited with him accidentally in a grove. There are more allusions to Indian flora and fauna in the subsequent parts of the poem, and the *Camine* flower (also to be found in Jones's hymns) is mentioned, as well as the sacred *Toolsi* tree, while the wind is referred to as *Moloya*, which is the Sanskrit word for breeze. All these Sanskrit words and Hindu references, however slight in themselves, attain substance in the context of the Indian theme of the poem, and indicate a privileging of the poet's indigenous heritage. Without the Orientalist popularising of ancient Hindu philosophy, poetry and drama, without the Orientalist reconstruction of Hindu history, and without the excitement in the Western intellectual community in the achievements of this hitherto undiscovered Hindu past, Madhusudan's poem about the heavenly *apsara* and the hermit-youth would not have come to exist at all. This poem also marks, in however incipient a way, the beginning of the development of Madhusudan as a poet, moving away from the earlier exercises in mimicry of English poetic forms towards a literary sensibility that was, eventually, to be uniquely his own.

The other poem by Madhusudan that I have mentioned above, 'King Porus', was published in September 1843 in the Literary Gleaner.⁴⁸ Madhusudan converted to Christianity on 9 February, 1843, and therefore this poem was published eight months after his conversion. Presuming that the writing of the poem was more or less contemporaneous with its publication, it came about at a time of spiritual isolation and turmoil, in the dramatic phase surrounding Madhusudan's conversion to the Christian religion. Perhaps that experience of inner vicissitudes found expression in the theme of this poem, which portrayed a beleaguered and brave king standing steadfast in battle against his enemies.

⁴⁸Basu, 73.

* from ^{first stanza} The Giaour A Fragment of a Turkish Tale, 1813

The poem is preceded by two quotations: 'We ne'er shall look upon his like again!' from Shakespeare, and 'When shall such hero live again?' from Byron.* It is divided into six stanzas of approximately twenty lines each, though the number of lines vary from one section to the next. At the beginning there is a description of a tumultuous night, when a storm rages over the heads of the sleeping 'sons of Ind' who rest, unsuspecting of 'a deadlier storm' about to 'burst' on them. Day, in the next stanza, finds the two sides, the Indians and the Macedonians, in the midst of a fierce battle, and the poem continues in the following stanza with a description of King Porus, and of his stature, dignity, and awesome courage in battle. King Alexander, impressed with such bravery, stops the fighting upon seeing Porus wounded, and in the fifth verse the two kings meet face to face. Porus remains unbowed and unconquered before the mighty Greek emperor, and asks to be treated as a king, an answer that pleases Alexander, who then releases him; and so the battle is 'both lost and won'. The poem ends with a long section on the glories of ancient India, and the present state that India now suffers.

As the poem was to be published in a literary journal, Madhusudan does attach a single footnote to a line in the poem ('Twas morn; the Lord of day,/ From gold Sumero's* palace bright,/ Look'd on his own sweet clime...'), which informs the reader: 'The mountain Sumero (which according to Hindu Mythology is of pure gold) is the Olympus of the Hindus.'⁴⁹ Such an explanation by now reads familiarly in this thesis (as it is also to be found in Derozio and Kasiprasad), taking the same approach as that of William Jones, who linked Hindu mythology to the Greek for Western audiences.⁵⁰ Otherwise the poem is relatively free of allusions and notes, and when Madhusudan describes the felling of 'Brama's [sic] hardy sons' by the Macedonians, he does not seem to think it necessary to attach a note on the god Bramha.⁵¹ As a result, however, it is not possible to know exactly

⁴⁹Poems, 'King Porus', 464.

⁵⁰See, for arguably the first example of the poetic use of Mount Sumeru, William Jones, 'Hymn to Indra,' Poetical Works, (London, 1810), 84, 85-86. Referred to subsequently as Poetical Works.

⁵¹'King Porus', 464.

what reading led him to select this particular moment from Indian history. Nevertheless, a more general claim might be made from the topic of the poem, which belongs to the Hindu history of India. Certainly it can be asserted once again that it would not have been possible for Madhusudan to have picked such subject matter unless he had come into contact with the regeneration by the Calcutta Orientalists of Indian, specifically Hindu, heritage and history. One of the earliest mentions of King Porus is in Alexander Dow, whom Madhusudan refers to in his notes to the Captive Ladie. Dow's account, however, differs from Madhusudan's imaginative recreation of the story; in Dow, Porus, whose Indian name is given as 'Phoor', is mentioned as having lost his life in battle against Alexander: 'and in a furious battle, say the Indian historians, lost many thousands of his subjects, the victory, and his life.'⁵²

While the historical figure of Porus is used as a metaphor for national pride in the poem, the last section of the poem, extolling the achievements of ancient India in comparison with the current low situation of the country, follows a by now well established pattern in Indian poetry in English in this period. An extract from this section demonstrates beyond any doubt the affinities between this and similar passages in other Orientalist poems:

And where art thou - fair Freedom! - thou -
 Once goddess of Ind's sunny clime!
 When glory's halo 'round her brow
 Shone radiant, and she rose sublime,
 Like her own towering Himalye[sic]
 To kiss the blue clouds thron'd on high!
 Clime of the Sun! - how like a dream

 The glory hath now flitted by!
 The crown that once had deck'd thy brow
 Is trampled down - and thou sunk low:-⁵³

Although 'King Porus' is, at the present time, known in India because of its inclusion in readers and text books in the English curriculum at the secondary school level, it has not

⁵²Alexander Dow, The History of Hindostan Translated from the Persian (Of Ferishta), Vols. 1-3, A new ed. (London, 1803), 10.

⁵³'King Porus', 466.

been commented upon by any critic concerned with Indo-Anglian poetry. For instance, in the rare critical event of a whole chapter devoted to this period, the specimens of Madhusudan's work that are dealt with are only the long poems Captive Ladie and Visions of the Past.⁵⁴ Jogindranath Basu, Madhusudan's biographer, however, does comment briefly on 'King Porus' after quoting the entire poem:

The vigour of style that is the main characteristic of Madhusudan's verse is clearly visible in this poem. It is possible to estimate from this poem in what manner, at eighteen years of age, Madhusudan's heart was overflowing with pride at the thought of the ancient glory of his own country. The last few lines of the poem will remind the reader of Derozio's Fakeer of Jungheera. (My translation)⁵⁵

What Basu does not, of course, realise, is that rather than being a manifestation of a spontaneous overflow of the poet's emotions at the thought of ancient India, this passage was the result of a growing awareness among educated Indians such as Madhusudan of their indigenous heritage, an awareness that owed its existence to the work of the Orientalist researchers on Indian antiquity. Basu's instinctive realisation that there is something in common between the last lines of the poem and Derozio's Fakeer of Jungheera validates the perception of a common Orientalist-inspired ambience in these poems, which is a central argument of this thesis.

While it is true that in his early poems Madhusudan leaves little *direct* evidence of his reading of the Orientalist scholars, a glance at other contemporary writings shows that he was indeed acquainted with William Jones's poetry in the period when the two poems discussed above were written. In an essay written in 1842, while still at the Hindu College, Madhusudan referred to Jones's poetry:

The happiness of a man who has an enlightened partner is quite complete. The very idea of so sweet a possession awakens even in the most prosaic bosoms feelings truly poetical. Who is there who would not give up
"All Bokhara's vaunted gold,

⁵⁴John B. Alphonso-Karkala, Indo-English Literature in the Nineteenth Century (Mysore: University of Mysore Press, 1970).

⁵⁵Basu, 74.

And all the gems of Samarcund:" for it?⁵⁶

The quotation from Jones was taken from the single most celebrated short poem translated by Jones, 'A Persian Song of Hafiz'. The images which Madhusudan refers to, in the lyric that Jones made out of Hafiz's lines, were in the very first verse:

That rosy cheek, that lily hand,
Would give thy poet more delight
Than all Bocara's vaunted gold,
Than all the gems of Samarcand.⁵⁷

Another poem written in Calcutta but published later in the Madras Circulator also seems to indicate the influence of Jones's Oriental poetry on Madhusudan's English poetry at this stage. Called 'Ode (From the Persian of Sadi)', the poem is a free translation in the manner of translations from the Persian that were made fashionable in England by Jones, and addresses the beauties of the poet's beloved:

Oh! Come, gaze on that eye whose beam
Is softer than ray, so bright,
That lulls to Love's ethereal dream
The maiden in her dewy bow'r...⁵⁸

This poem was published under the pen-name Madhusudan regularly used in Madras, Timothy Penpoem, along with a little note indicating, in characteristically colourful terms, his knowledge of Byron's reference to Sadi:

The reader must remember that the author was a
Mahomedan, and not a Christian like the translator. Shaik
Sadi, 'the moral poet of Persia' as my Lord Byron, (in a
note to the *Bride of Abydos*, if I mistake not) calleth him,
was a terrible old blackguard, worse than all the Anacreons,

⁵⁶An Essay On the importance of educating Hindu Females, with reference to the improvement which it may be expected to produce on the education of children, in their early years, and the happiness it would generally confer on domestic life', *Rachanabali*, 623. It would not be idle speculation to conclude, from the sentiments expressed in this essay, that Madhusudan's refusal to have an arranged marriage could have had something to do with the high-flown ideals of romantic love he garnered from his reading of Western poetry and prose.

⁵⁷William Jones, 'A Persian Song of Hafiz', Poetical Works, 191. First published in Jones's Poems, Consisting Chiefly of Translations from the Asiatick Languages (London, 1772).

⁵⁸Poems [47], 'Ode', 467. While the poem is dated 'Calcutta 1844' it was published much later in Madras in the Madras Circulator and General Chronicle in 1848-49.

Hafizes and Littles in the word [sic]. Read his 'Dewan Sadi'. - T.P.⁵⁹

Such a poem is important in this context primarily because it indicates that the fashion for translations from Persian poetry that had swept England in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century had reached Madhusudan in far away Calcutta as well. As the note shows, he seems to have been familiar with Byron's interest in the Persian poet Sadi, and this attempt by him to translate a poem by Sadi indicates that he had definitely read the early poetry of William Jones.

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Exile and English Poetry in Madras

Madhusudan remained in Madras from 1849 to 1856, the year of his father's death. These years saw him married to an Englishwoman, whom he afterwards abandoned for a Frenchwoman named Henrietta; she remained his companion till the end of his life. Madras also saw the composition and publication of the bulk of Madhusudan's English poetry. Here he made the fullest attempt to realise the ambitions he had nurtured for so long concerning the publication of his English verse, and, encouraged by a sympathetic audience in Madras, published his only really substantial venture in English, a long poem called The Captive Ladie, in 1849.

In Madras, cut off from the financial help he had so far been receiving from his parents, Madhusudan earned his living as a literary journalist. He contributed regularly to the Madras Circulator and General Chronicle and the Athenaeum, and was the editor, for a period, of the Madras Spectator and the Hindu Chronicle. It was for the Madras Circulator that he wrote the long poem The Captive Ladie, where it was first published. Encouraged by the reception it received in Madras, he then appended to it a verse fragment called Visions of the Past and published both together in book form in 1849. He had contributed

⁵⁹*Rachanabali*, 68.

many minor pieces of verse to the Madras papers, and most of the minor poems, such as 'On Hearing a Lady sing', or 'On a faded lily given to the author by a Lady', or another called 'Comest thou as one in beauty's ray', were written in the conventional romantic mode, and had for subject matter meditations upon nature or beauty.

The Captive Ladie, on the other hand, was written on a theme taken from pages of Indian history, and was subtitled 'A Fragment of an Indian Tale'. Before the poem, Madhusudan added a note in which he sketched, in a bare outline, the substance of the story he had taken as his theme. He did not give any source he might have been drawing upon, declaring only that it was a legend 'pretty generally known in India', taking for granted, by that statement, the historical knowledge about India's past that the Orientalist scholars popularised in the nineteenth century among educated Indians and Englishmen in India.⁶⁰ The poem begins with eleven stanzas of an 'Introduction', most of which Madhusudan devoted to reflections upon the passing of youth and a celebration of love, written, apparently, with his wife in mind.⁶¹ Towards the end of Introductory stanzas, he introduced the topic which forms the fabric of his tale:

Then come and list thee to the minstrel-lyre
 And Lay of Eld of this my father-land,
 When first, as unchain'd demons, breathing fire,
 Wild, stranger foe-men trod her sunny strand,
 And Pluckt her brighter gems with rude, unsparing hand.⁶²

We have here, once again, the often repeated pre-lapsarian image of a peaceful India, and the depiction of the Muslim invaders as 'rude' and 'unsparing' 'demons', robbing the land of her treasures. We have in this verse, for the first time in poetry written in English by Indians, the appellation 'father-land' for India. The use of the term 'father-land' instead of the usual Indian personification of one's country as the motherland stems from the Western influences on Madhusudan. It is a term that was also commonly used by the Dutts of the Dutt Family Album, as we shall see in the next chapter.

⁶⁰ibid, 71.

⁶¹'Talking of my good lady puts me in mind of the introduction of the "Captive" addressed to her. I give you a few specimens.' Madras, 19th March, 1849. Letters [37], 532.

⁶²Captive Ladie, 480.

The Captive Ladie is comprised of two cantos, each of which is preceded by lines from Byron and Moore respectively. The first canto quotes from The Giaour: 'Love will find its way/ Through paths where wolves would fear to prey'; and the second canto is preceded by lines from Lallah Rookh: 'Land of the Sun! what foot invades/ Thy pagods and thy pillar'd shades,/ Thy cavern shrines and idol stones,/ Thy monarchs and thousand thrones?/ 'Tis he of Gazna!'⁶³ It is remarkable coincidence that the two poems that provided epigraphs for Madhusudan's only substantial venture in English poetry should have done the same for Derozio's long poem 'The Enchantress of the Cave'. There too, the poem is preceded by quotations from Byron's Giaour and Moore's Lallah Rookh, and while the lines taken from Moore are different, the same couple of lines from Byron have been extracted: 'Love will find its way...' Both poets were obviously participating in what had become a convention in this sort of poetry (Byron's Giaour itself was prefaced with a stanza from Moore), although whether this exact parallel with Derozio was a conscious imitation or an unconscious echo there is no way of determining conclusively. It is reasonable to assume, however, that Madhusudan, as a student of Hindu College, must have read the poetry of the teacher whose influence still pervaded the corridors of that institution. A small instance such as this helps us to note the interrelationships between the practitioners of Orientalist poetry, and the formation of a body of verse with common points of reference and common ideals.

*

Depiction of Muslims in The Captive Ladie

Madhusudan's Captive Ladie was founded upon a central tenet - opposition between the Muslim invader and the Hindu invaded - and passages in both cantos of his poem reflect his thinking on this subject. Throughout his depiction of the battle between the two sides, the Muslim foe is described as fearful, while the Hindus are shown to be struggling

⁶³ibid, 480; 494.

desperately against them for life and liberty. While in the first canto these events happen far away, incidents of war are described at more length and with more immediacy in the second canto. So, the only lines in the first canto that reflect the conflict are:

They say the Crescents' on the gales
Which whisper in our moon-lit vales -
They say that Moslem feet have trod
The fanes of him - the Bramin's God -
And that from western realms afar
Fast flows the tide of furious war...⁶⁴

The symbolical use of the Muslim crescent recurs throughout the poem. (Towards the end of the poem, after the war has been fought, the conquering Muslim side is invoked through the use of the crescent: 'The sun looks down, his burning eye,/ Now sees the Crescent's blood-red wave, / Gild fall'n Husteena's lowly grave...'.⁶⁵) The effect, in the first canto, of a war being fought at a distance is accomplished by words such as 'they say', indicating news travelling from afar. The use of a literary idiom inherited from Madhusudan's study of English poetry is always interesting to note, and here it is present unmistakably in the use of 'fanes' in the line 'They say that Moslem feet have trod/ The fanes of him - the Bramin's God...'.

The second canto, on the other hand, treats the confrontation between Hindu and Muslim in a much more immediate manner, relying on vivid descriptive accounts of the scenes of action. Passages describing the scene before the actual battle show the Muslims expressing fierce and aggressive feelings against the Hindus :

And loud the laugh and proud the boast,
Swells from that fierce, un-number'd host
And wild the prayer ascends on high,
Dark Vengeance! thine impatient cry -
"Oh! for a glimpse of Day's fair brow,
To crush yon city tow'ring now,
To make each cafir-bosom feel,
Th' unerring blade of Moslem-steel! -
By Alla! how I long to be,
Where Myriads writhe in agony,
And mark each wretch with rolling eye,
Call on false gods,- then curse and die,

⁶⁴ibid, 484.

⁶⁵ibid, 507.

Meet pilgrim for the dire domain,
Where Eblis holds his sun-less reign!⁶⁶

The 'loud' 'laugh' and 'proud' 'boast', the 'wild' 'prayer[s]' 'swell[ing]' from the 'un-number'd host' of 'fierce' warriors, followed by the bloodthirsty sentiments expressed by fanatical fighters, serve to stereotype the Muslim invader in the role they had been assigned in all the Orientalist verse we have examined. The Muslims intend to 'crush yon city' of the *kafirs*, - that is the unbelievers, the Hindus - who believe, sacreligiously, in 'false gods'. Words such as 'crush' and 'trample' are used in the context of the invading Muslim army; for example, when the King of Delhi recalls the fury of his beloved's father, the King of Kanoje, he remembers - 'He curst me,-"yes,- let Moslem tread / Crush, - trample on the dastard-head / Of him who pluckt my sweetest flow'r...'.⁶⁷ The imagery and diction that is to be found in these descriptions of the Muslims versus the Hindus is consistent and unfaltering in its use of powerful language to sum up the terrible aspect of the invaders, an aspect I shall return to in this discussion.

The only place in the poem where the Muslims are shown in any other light is in a passage where the poet imagines them resting in the calming influence of moonlight before the battle. Here there is a mention of Rocnabad and Mosellay, suggesting that this picturisation of a gently dreaming Islamic town was inspired, in fact, by Jones's translations from the Persian. In Madhusudan's lines, we find the Muslim soldiers wishing to banish the moon to their own native lands:

Go - hie thee hence - where Rocnabad,-*
With murmuring waters wildly glad,
Doth woo thy stars to silver rest,
Upon its gently-heaving breast-
Or, where soon as the sun hath set,
And dome and kiosk and minaret
Glow with thy pale moon's gentler beam;
Like the bright limnings of some dream,
Thy lover gayly tunes his lay -
The rosy bow'rs of Mosellay!-⁶⁸

⁶⁶ibid, 496.

⁶⁷ibid, 504.

⁶⁸ibid, 496.

This reference to Rocnabad and Mosellay is taken from Jones's translation 'A Persian Song of Hafiz', which he drew upon to make a point in his school-essay as well, as we have seen above. Jones's verse, from which he borrows on this occasion, runs:

Boy! let yon liquid ruby flow,
And bid the pensive heart be glad,
Whate'er the frowning zealots say:-
Tell them their Eden cannot show
A stream so clear as Rocnabad,
A bower so sweet as Mosellay!

Jones's 'clear streams' was transformed in Madhusudan's poem to the 'murmuring waters' of Rocnabad, while 'a bower so sweet' was rewritten as 'the rosy bow'rs of Mosellay'.⁶⁹ The asterisk next to Rocnabad in Madhusudan's poem refers to an endnote which explains that Rocnabad and Mosellay were taken by him from the line "'Kenara ab rocnabad o gul gushte mosellay ra "' as sung by Hafiz.⁷⁰ Thus, Madhusudan does not acknowledge Jones directly here, choosing instead to refer to the original Persian lines. Elsewhere, however, in the dramatic poem, Rizia: Empress of Inde, written while Madhusudan was still in Madras, he does acknowledge Jones's lines directly, mentioning in a footnote:

"A *melted ruby* is a common periphrasis for wine in the Persian poetry" Sir W. Jones.
"Boy! let yon liquid ruby flow"..... H.⁷¹

Here, Madhusudan quotes from Jones's line in 'A Persian Song of Hafiz', though once again the reference is directly to Hafiz, indicated by the shorthand 'H'.

It is interesting to reflect, at this point, on the attitudes that inform Madhusudan's description of the Muslims in Captive Ladie. Two clear strands exist in this context; firstly they are shown, for most of the time, as aggressive invaders contrasted with the gentle character of their 'prey', the Hindus. There is more than a little sentimentalisation present in this portrayal, and arguably, this particular dramatisation of the coming of Muslim rule to India owes much to its depictions in British histories such as Tod's Annals or Erskine's History, of heroic wars fought between local Rajput princes and powerful Muslim

⁶⁹Jones, Poetical Works, 191.

⁷⁰Captive Ladie, Notes on Canto II, 510.

⁷¹Rizia: Empress of Inde, 644.

emperors. The second strand differs considerably from this sort of rhetoric. This alternative portrayal exists, as I have pointed out, in only a short section of the poem, where the poet imagines the Muslims in their 'original state' in their own Middle-Eastern lands, as occupants of cities of 'dome and kiosk and minaret', 'murmuring waters' and 'rosy bow'rs'. What is remarkable about this depiction is that it seems to have been taken quite substantially from the popular 'Orientalism' of Beckford, Byron, Moore or Fitzgerald. The generally romanticized overtones present here reflect the representation of Muslim culture as it existed in the exoticized versions of Western poets writing of the Orient. Thus, details about the Muslims in this part of the poem resemble Edward Fitzgerald's translations of the Rubaiyyat more than anything else:

High in his tent of costliest shawl,
Which tow'rs midst thousands, glittering all...

...
The Moslem-chief holds glad divan,
Nor fasts and lists to alcoran,
And that grim brow here bigot zeal,
Oft set its sternest - fiercest seal,*...
Smiles gayly like a lightless stream,
When Chandra shed her silver-beam,
As sweetly sounds the gay Sittar*
Like voice of Home when heard afar,
Or wild and thrilling rolls along,
Ferdousi's high, heroic song;-*72

There are three asterisks in this extract, and they refer, respectively, to 'Mahmud of Ghizni [who] was a fierce bigot'; to the sitar, spelt 'sittar', 'a musical instrument'; and lastly, to 'Ferdousi', whom Madhusudan introduces as 'The Chaucer of Persia; -author of the "Shahnameh." - He was contemporary with Mohammed.'⁷³ These footnotes, present as they are in Madhusudan's first substantial venture to be published in English, indicate the current compulsion to authenticate all literature about the East, a compulsion that could be said to have begun with Jones. Jones's preface to his translations from the Persian in the Poems of 1772 carried elaborate explanations of sources in order to distinguish his work as 'genuine':

⁷²ibid, 495.

⁷³Notes on Canto II, 510.

The reader will probably expect, that, before I present him with the following miscellany, I should give some account of the pieces contained in it; and should prove the authenticity of those *Eastern* originals, from which I profess to have translated them: indeed, so many productions, invented in *France*, have been offered to the public as genuine translations from the languages of *Asia*, that I should have wished, for my own sake, to clear my publication from the slightest suspicion of imposture...⁷⁴

The preface continues with detailed descriptions of the original texts from which Jones's poems were composed. This urge to document, in a scholarly manner, the references used in Western literary compositions about the distant Orient, carried over into the work of Indians writing in English who belonged, in fact, to that very East. In an effort to lend 'authenticity' to their material in the poems, therefore, Indian poets included notes to the allusions in their poems. An indication of the pressure, on poets such as Madhusudan, to provide scholarly-looking notes to the poems is given in a letter:

When you get my poem, I hope, you will re-write the Notes and enlarge them. I trust much to your knowledge of Hindu Antiquities. I have some intention of republishing it in London with my new Poem. Can't you quote Sanskrit authority for all I say? Do write a learned Essay "garnished with Sanscrit and other quotations on the Rajshooya Jujnum." I shall acknowledge it publicly.⁷⁵

As a result of this desire to bolster poetic material with historically accurate details, Madhusudan provides this poem with a number of notes, which he includes at the end of the poem in two separate sections to each canto. The description of the 'Rajshooya Jujnum' (variously spelt by him) which he is so anxious about in the above letter is provided, in the end, by himself:

The "Feast of Victory" - or, as it is called in Sanscrit the "Raj Shooio Jugum" is described at great length in the Second Book of the far-famed "Mohabharut". It was celebrated by the most powerful monarch whose claims to superiority over the whole country admitted of no dispute.... There are very few instances of the successful celebration of this Feast, recorded in Indian History or, rather Mythology. Those of Dasaratha, the father of Rama, king of Oude, and Jadasteer

⁷⁴Jones, *Poetical Works*, 195.

⁷⁵Letters [39], 504. Madras, 27th May, 1849.

the famous Pandu prince are the only ones which occur to me at present.⁷⁶

The intention here seems to be to validate the events in his historical poem by anchoring them firmly in the annals of Indian history. The poet is imitating the format in Orientalist publications

for Western readers where there was great emphasis on the 'authenticity' of the material.

However, in this note for example, Madhusudan characteristically fails to achieve complete professionalism in this aspect, bringing in examples at random from memory, rather than, as Kasiprasad did, citing the authority of a British scholarly text. He seems to realise this himself, correcting himself when mentioning that he refers not to history, but to mythology, a distinction, interestingly, which his Indian ancestors would not perhaps have recognised.

*

Hindu references in the **Captive Ladie**

Madhusudan's fascination with Hindu mythology is famous because of its impact on his Bengali poetry, substantial portions of which were based on stories from both the Indian epics. The Captive Ladie too contains many references to Indian mythological incidents from the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*, as well as figures of Hindu gods and goddesses. In Canto I, a minstrel sings about 'The Feast of Victory', describing the historical event central to the poem, the abduction of the princess by the king of Delhi at the feast hosted by her father, the king of Kanauj. The second canto deals with the war fought between the invading Muslim army and the King of Delhi, which the latter loses due to the lack of aid from his neighbour and father-in-law, the King of Kanauj. The latter remains an implacable foe due the insult he had received at his 'Feast of Victory' when his daughter, the 'captive ladie', had been abducted. It is in the first canto of the poem that there are the maximum

⁷⁶Notes on Canto I, 509.

number of allusions to Indian mythology, and I shall show, in the following section, how they are introduced into the poem in such a concentrated manner that it appears probable they were inserted there due to a desire on the part of the poet to have a respectable amount of material about Indian antiquities in it. This conclusion is supported in a letter to his old friend Gour Das:

Pray, tell Bhoodeb that when he gets my Poem, he will be surprized [sic] at my knowledge of Hindu Antiquities, for it is a *thorough* Indian work, full of Rishis - Calis - Lutchmees - Camas, Rudras and all the Devils incarnate, whom our orthodox fathers worshipped. The 1st canto contains an episode called the "Raj-shooya Jujnum" with a terrible battle and "a that."⁷⁷

That Oriental works were popular in the West he would already have been aware of because of the fame of Byron or Moore, but the fact that it might be a tenable idea for himself to exploit Indian materials in order to attract English audiences was a notion that he seems to have nurtured for the first time with the publication of Captive Ladie. I shall also demonstrate that Madhusudan's attitude towards the Indian content of his poem was ambivalent in its position, sometimes assuming a native person's familiarity with the topic, and, at most others, adopting the distant tone of a commentator.

At the time Madhusudan wrote Captive Ladie, while he was in Madras, he was interested in cultivating his knowledge of the Indian classics and epics. He mentions, in a letter: 'I taught myself Sanskrit at Madras... I know enough to read Kalidasa, and that, I think, is quite enough for me'.⁷⁸ This mention of having learnt Sanskrit at Madras has a direct bearing on the composition of Captive Ladie, and the interests that lay behind the Orientalist insertions in it. His avowal of a liking for Kalidasa, a classical Indian poet

⁷⁷Letters [37] Madras, 19th March, 1849, 533. Bhoodeb Mukhopadhyay was a fellow Hindu College classmate, and a distinguished Brahmin scholar and writer. For a full account of his life and works, see Tapan Raychaudhuri, 'Bhudev Mukhopadhyay (1827-1894),' Europe Reconsidered (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1988), 26-103. Also, the use of "a that" is from Robert Burns, who the Derozians were fond of quoting; Duff writes of them reciting, against the caste system, the lines, 'For a' that, and a' that/Its comin' yet, for a' that,/That man to man, the world o'er,/Shall brothers be, for a' that. 'Duff, India Missions (Edinburgh, 1839), 615.

⁷⁸Letters [60], 551.

initially made popular worldwide by Jones's translation of the *Sakuntala*, (which we know he read), once again emphasises the effect on him of the work being done by the Orientalists, which left almost no educated gentleman in India untouched. Later, when he had returned to Calcutta, we find that he borrowed books from his friend Gour at the Asiatic Society:

The next morning he [Madhusudan] called on me at the rooms of the Asiatic Society for the loan of a few Vernacular and Sanskrit books, dramas specially ...⁷⁹

While in Madras, his interest in the Indian epics was manifested in another letter to Gour, urging him: 'can't you send me a copy of the Bengali translation of the Mahabharat by Casidoss as well as a ditto of the Ramayana,- Serampore edition. I am losing my Bengali faster than I mention...' ⁸⁰ Episodes from both these epics found their way into Captive Ladie, as I shall show, and this interest in Hindu mythology was to prove to be an abiding one, enduring until it found a more prominent role in his important Bengali works.

The Captive Ladie begins with a song sung by a bard, entitled 'The Feast of Victory,' which describes the preparations in the city to celebrate the joyful occasion. These activities include the erection of a silken frame under the trees for performances:

And all around the dazzled eye,
Met scenes of gayest revelrie:-
For, here beneath the perfum'd shade,
By some bright silken awning made,*
Midst rose and lily scatter'd round...⁸¹

In a note that is of great interest to our purposes in this study, Madhusudan provides an explanation for his image of the silken awning under the tree's shade. He writes:

The Hindus have no regularly constructed theatres. All their Dramatic performances are displayed in the open air under awnings put up for the occasion. - This will, no doubt, remind the classical reader of the ancient Roman custom. - Vide Lucret: iv. 73. vi 108. Plin. xix, 1-6. xxxvi 15-24. For further information see Sir W. Jones' preface to "Sacontala" and Wilson's Hindu-Theatre.⁸²

⁷⁹*Rachanabali*, 50.

⁸⁰Letters [36], 539.

⁸¹Captive Ladie, 486.

⁸²Notes on Canto I, 509.

Besides the obvious points to be noted here - that Madhusudan had read both William Jones's seminal translation of Kalidasa's *Sakuntala*, as well as Wilson's popular series on the Theatre of the Hindus that was also extensively used by Kasiprasad - what is also distinctive is the tone Madhusudan adopts towards his audience. In this, he is different from Kasiprasad, who often used, in his notes, personal pronouns such as 'us' or 'we' or 'ours' when referring to any particular indigenous tradition; for instance 'According to us the seasons are in number six.'⁸³ Madhusudan's tone, when he begins, 'The Hindus have no regularly constructed theatres....', is rather that of an objective commentating outsider. Other instances also show a degree of distance, demonstrating the changes in the colonial situation by the middle of the century, compared to Kasiprasad, writing in 1830. Thus, for example, Madhusudan sees no discrepancy in repeatedly desiring to be a famous poet in the English tradition, whereas Kasiprasad had stated clearly his position as a Hindu gentleman writing in English; nor does Madhusudan seem to be conscious of the aloof vantage-point he assumes in commenting upon Indian culture from the outside (perhaps partly because of his Christianity), as if he too were merely a disinterested Western scholar elaborating upon foreign customs. This can be seen in Madhusudan's citation of the classical historians Lucretius and Pliny, and his comparison of the Sanskrit tradition to the Latin and Greek, a hallmark of the work of William Jones. Madhusudan too refers the reader in a similar manner to Roman customs in his own note about the silken awning. Wilson's influence stayed with Madhusudan throughout his career, and he is mentioned again later ('Ours are dramatic poems; and even Wilson, the great foreign admirer of our ancient language, has been compelled to admit this...') in connection with his Bengali play *Krishna Kumari* (1861).⁸⁴

The description of the silken awning in the shade is followed by a longer and more elaborate account of a song sung by maidens about the love of Krishna and Radha.

Bright maidens - fair as those above -
Sang softly - for they sang of Love -

⁸³Kasiprasad Ghosh, 'Stanzas written in Spring,' *The Shair* (Calcutta, 1830), 164.

⁸⁴Letters [80], 591.

How fondly in the moon-lit bow'r
 When midnight came with star and flow'r
 Young Kishna [sic] with his maidens fair
 Rov'd joyously and sported there...⁸⁵

Topics such as these form the content of traditional Hindu songs, as Madhusudan goes on to explain in a note:

[These songs] refer to the "gambols" of the God Krishna with the milk maids, which have furnished almost all the Indian dialects with innumerable lyrical Dramas acted during the celebrations of the Festivals in honour of the numerous gods and goddesses who compose the Hindu Pantheon.⁸⁶

The word 'gambols', used within quotation marks, is extremely interesting because of its previous occurrence in a note attached by Kasiprasad to the poem 'Ras Yatra': 'Or a festival in commemoration of one of the many gambols of KRISHNA, the Indian Apollo, with the milk-women.'⁸⁷ Although Madhusudan does not acknowledge any source, the information contained in this note could have been acquired from reading Orientalist works. The god Krishna was the subject of some of the earliest translations from the Sanskrit, such as Wilkins' *Bhagavadgita* (1775), while William Jones's translation of Jayadeva's *Gita Govinda* (1792) specifically celebrated the love of Krishna and Radha. In 'Hymn to Camdeo', Jones had described a scene identical to that used by Madhusudan :

Can men resist thy pow'r, when *Krishen* yields,
Krishen, who still in *Matra's* holy fields
 Tunes harps immortal, and to strain divine
 Dances by moonlight with the Gopia nine?⁸⁸

Another example of Madhusudan's reading of Jones occurs when the King of Delhi, disguised as a wandering minstrel, is compared to Cama, the god made popular by William Jones's 'Hymn to Camdeo': 'He rose - that bard - and you might deem/ 'Twas Cama - God of Love's gay dream!'⁸⁹ The reference to Krishna is followed by the mention of two more Hindu deities, Indra and Durga. There are sketchy notes attached to each reference to these

⁸⁵Captive Ladie, 487.

⁸⁶Notes on Canto I, 509.

⁸⁷The Shair, 'Hindu Festivals', 'No. II. - Ras Yatra,' 128.

⁸⁸Jones, Poetical Works, 59.

⁸⁹Captive Ladie, 485.

deities, and observations approximating a scholarly tone, for example, in a line explaining the sound of the conch-shell: "The ancient warriors of Hindustan used to challenge their enemies by blowing conch-shells, sanscritis "Sancha-dhunnee."⁹⁰

There are two instances, first from the *Ramayana* and then from the *Mahabharata*, that Madhusudan uses in this section. The first, from the *Ramayana*, tells the story of the abduction of Sita, wife of Lord Rama, by the demon-king Ravana. The poet recounts how this incident precipitates the war between the forces of good and evil, leading to the ultimate destruction of the latter. The note attached to this allusion is similar in tone to the other notes, comparing the Indian epic with the Western:

This is the subject of the Ramayana of Valmiki. The abduction of Seeta - the Indian Helen, and wife of Rama - by Ravana king of Ceylon. Seeta was taken away from the forest where Rama resided during his banishment from his kingdom. The consequence is well-known.

Ilion, Ilion,
Fatalis, incestusque judex,
Et mulier peregrina, vertit
In pulverem.⁹¹

No source is provided for the quotation from the Latin, which indicates an assumption on the part of Madhusudan that his readership would consist of an educated Western audience familiar with the classics. Of course, it could also be that he was using this occasion simply to show off his knowledge of a Western classical language (he had learnt Latin and Greek from his tutors while at Bishop's college) in order to impress his European readers. The second incident, from the *Mahabharata*, is about the final war fought between the Kuru princes and their Pandu cousins, in which a long passage from Wilson, elaborating on the central action of the epic, is quoted from the *Asiatic Researches*.⁹²

In the second canto as well, gods and goddesses from the Hindu pantheon are invoked, and again they seem to have been brought into the poem in a contrived manner, in

⁹⁰ibid.

⁹¹ibid.

⁹²Endnote 'r' reads: 'This is the subject of the well-known "Mohabharut" of Vyasa.-"The Mohabharut details the dissensions of the Pandava and Kaurava princes, who were cousins by birth, and rival competitors for the throne of Hastinapur...." Wilson. As. Res. xvii, 609.' Notes on Canto I, 510.

that they are not integral to the action of the poem in any way. The princess, now wife of the King of Delhi who is fighting the Muslims, dreams that the gods are deserting their side, and one by one, Kali, the goddess of war, Shiva, the god of destruction in the Hindu Trinity, and Lakshmi, the goddess of prosperity and peace, all appear before her and take their leave. This phenomenon is explained by Madhusudan as a 'popular belief, common amongst all heathens, that when misfortune is about to befall a family its Penates desert it.'⁹³ Here, Madhusudan's use of the word 'heathen' is notable once again for its Christian distance from Hindu mores, a distance, ironically, reversed in the next note to the allusion to Kali, where he corrects something his Bengali Hindu experience perceives as an inaccuracy:

This is the goddess Cali. - "She (Cali) is black, with four arms, wearing two bodies as ear-rings, - a neck-lace of skulls, and the hands of several slaughtered giants round her waist as a girdle." &c. British India - Vol. II. There are some inaccuracies in this description, Cali does not "wear two dead bodies as ear-rings." I have in my description omitted the circumstances of her having four arms.⁹⁴

Madhusudan's description of Kali, as we can see above, refers the reader to 'British India - Vol. II'; this was Murray's Historical and Descriptive Account of British India, a work that was also mentioned by Madhusudan in the note immediately preceding the one on Kali in the context of the description of a mirage, where the full title is cited.⁹⁵

Another British historian whom Madhusudan refers to, in his last note to the second canto, is Alexander Dow. The note is an important one, as it provides the only indication of the source from which Madhusudan might have derived the subject matter of his poem:

It was in those days a custom of the Hindus, that whatever Raja was twice worsted by the Mussulmen [sic], should be, by that disgrace, rendered unfit for further command. Jeipal in compliance to this custom, having raised his son to the Government, ordered a funeral pile to be prepared upon which he sacrificed himself to his Gods. Dow's Ferishta, Vol. 45. (Third Edition)⁹⁶

⁹³Notes on Canto II, 511.

⁹⁴ibid, 510.

⁹⁵Notes on Canto II, 510.

⁹⁶Notes on Canto II, 511.

The closing portion of Captive Ladie, accordingly, has the king jump into a funeral pyre after his defeat by the Muslims. This historical event, as related by Dow, might have been taken by Madhusudan as the theme when he had decided, quite consciously, to write an *Indian* poem.

Madhusudan's Bengali poetry, it is well known, was informed by his admiration for 'the grand mythology of our ancestors', his abiding respect for Western classical poets such as Horace or Virgil or Homer, and his deep love for the epic poetry of John Milton.⁹⁷ The Captive Ladie, displaying similar affiliations, written before he had turned to Bengali, and his first step towards publication in book form, may also be read as a nucleus containing the seeds of those trends in his authorial temperament that were to become prominent later in his life. His engagement with the Western canon or with Orientalist translations was never, therefore, confined to the mere status of being an imitative effort. In a letter written in 1859, in conjunction with his Bengali play *Sermista*, he made a comment concerning his use of Western influences, relevant in this context:

I am aware, my dear fellow, that there will, in all likelihood, be something of a foreign air about my drama; but if the language be not ungrammatical, if the thoughts be just and glowing, the plot interesting, the characters well maintained, what care you if there be a foreign air about the thing? Do you dislike Moore's poetry because it is full of Orientalism? Byron's poetry for its Asiatic air, Carlyle's prose for its Germanism? Besides, remember that I am writing for that portion of my countrymen who think as I think, whose minds have been more or less imbued with western ideas and *modes of thinking*....⁹⁸

This boldness of vision is characteristic of his insistence upon the idea, typical of him, that Bengali literature would be enriched if permeated with a Western sensibility. His English poetry seems to represent the opposite end of the same idea, in that it employed Indian allusions in an English poem to, in his conception, the advantage and betterment of the poem itself.

⁹⁷For instance, the first edition of his Bengali poem *Tilottomasambhav*, contained quotations, at its head, from the Sanskrit poet Bhavabhuti, from the Latin of Horace and a line from Milton.

⁹⁸Letters [49], 541.

*

Other Works in English: and Criticism of The Captive Ladie

Visions of the Past was a verse fragment which Madhusudan had actually published before the Captive Ladie, in 1848, in the pages of the same paper, the Madras Circulator. He then put both together and published this in book form in Madras in 1849. Written on a Christian theme, Visions of the Past was his first ambitious attempt at English verse after his conversion to Christianity and flight to Madras. This was a long poem replete with high Christian imagery, illustrative of Biblical themes:

I look'd - the sun had veil'd his dazzling brow -
As when he saw upon thee, Calvarie!
The Pilgrim from His Father's bosom - He -
His God - with blood-stain'd brow and crown of thorn
Die on th' accursed tree - yea - die to save -
And dying pray for those who shed His blood!⁹⁹

The subject of the poem is a vision, seen by the poet in a bower, of two ethereal beings, who vanish; and night returns to the spot once more. This slender plot supports twelve very long stanzas of musings on the primeval moments of creation, descriptions of a throng of angels hovering about the pair, and reflections on the passing of the vision as night is restored.

Besides this fragment appended to the Captive Ladie, Madhusudan's other English work encompasses a lecture entitled 'The Anglo-Saxon and the Hindu', written in Madras and published in 1854. He had also written a dramatic poem based on the Muslim history of India while in Madras, a fragment called Rizia, the Empress of Inde, which had been published in seven instalments in a local paper called the Eurasian in 1849-50. A prologue to an unwritten long poem called Seeta was started while he was in Europe (where he was from 1862-1867, qualifying to be a barrister), and abandoned there. After returning to

⁹⁹'Visions of the Past', 495.

Calcutta, there were two translations into English he made himself of his Bengali plays *Ratnavali* (1858) and *Sermista* (1859), and another translation of the first nationalist play written in Bengali by Dinabandhu Mitra, called *Nil Durpan* (1861).

Rizia was based on a story taken from Alexander Dow, as is acknowledged in a note to the title of the poem, which reads: 'Vide Ferishta - translated by Alexander Dow.'¹⁰⁰ Besides the fact that the theme of the poem was derived from Orientalist sources, there are several other indications of Orientalist reading in the poem itself. In the second scene, one of the characters, Leela, a Hindu woman, sings a song in which a woman stands beside a stream and floats a flower laden lamp on the water, which, if it sinks, indicates death for her lover. The account of this custom, was, apparently, inserted in the poem after Madhusudan had read of it in Lallah Rookh, as the note indicates, which quotes an entire paragraph from Moore's poem describing a Hindu girl on the shores of a river floating a lamp to see whether it sank, for 'If the lamp sunk [sic] immediately, the Omen was disastrous...'¹⁰¹ Another song, sung by the same character, tells the story of the Muslim invasion of India in a tone now familiar to us because of similar passages in the Captive Ladie:

'Twas when the Moslem came,
Like storm-bestrident flame,
With cloud-like hosts in grim - in grim array;
And the crescent's flood-red gleam
Fell on sunny land and stream,
And blasted all-erst beautiful and gay;
When monarch from his festive hall -
And chiefs and lord and vassal all;
Unsheath'd the flashing warrior-brand
For thee, O Inde! their fatherland,
And rush'd in linked steel to the wild battle-call...¹⁰²

The use of the symbolic crescent imagery, the depiction of the Muslims as 'grim' invaders, and the Hindus as inhabitants of a 'sunny' and 'gay' land, dying for their 'fatherland', are all typical of like passages in the Captive Ladie, as we have seen already. References to

¹⁰⁰Rizia, 641.

¹⁰¹ibid, 646. Thomas Moore, Lallah Rookh (London, 1817), 83-84.

¹⁰²ibid, 651.

Persian poets such as Sadi or Hafiz are to be found here as well. Two notes to lines in Scene IX acknowledge the influence of the Persian poet Sadi, and there is a reference, towards the end, to Hafiz, from where an image of a 'warrior-monarch' unfurling a 'banner of earth-conquering victory...' is taken.¹⁰³

The poem ends with a song sung by Leela, which tells the story of 'The Brave King Porus'. The subject is the same as that in the earlier and better-known poem, 'King Porus'. The subject here is not presented as a coherent narrative, but in the form of fragments evoking Persian history, as well as in evocations of dramatic moments before the actual war. A remarkable section of this song sung by Leela, however, is when it invokes India, from Kashmir in the North to the Southern Deccan, as a whole and united geographical and historical entity:

Thus sang the bard from where the tide
Of Indus rolls in sleepless pride....
...
Cashmera land of fount and rose,
Sprung in wild haste from soft repose,
Panchala land of mighty streams...
...
Husteena flung her banner high...
...
Vyodhya fiercely twanged the bow...
...
And from Bengala's sun my vale
Came proud defiance on the gale....
While in the countless-realmed Dekan
Rose many a wild and warrior clan.....¹⁰⁴

This definition of India as one land, bound together by a common history and heritage, was a rare thing in the indigenous poetry of India. In the local languages, poetry had been regional and feudal, and while poetry in English was very recent, it had seen the composition of the first nationalistic Indian verse in Derozio's poems. But there, though it was possible to find abstract representations of India as 'my native land', the sort of concrete evocation we see in this section of Madhusudan's poem sounds a note that

¹⁰³ibid, 662, 663, 664.
¹⁰⁴ibid, 666.

belongs far more to modern India than anything we have come across so far. This image of India, as a nation, mentioning places from the North to the South as part of one whole, immediately brings to mind the Tagore's national anthem for India ('Punjab, Sind, Gujrat, Maratha / Dravida Utkala Banga...), and is typical of the nationalism which came about in later Indian literary sensibilities.

Criticism of the Captive Ladie, while enthusiastic in Madras, had not been as warm as Madhusudan had hoped or expected in the literary capital of India, Calcutta. The editor of the Madras Athenaeum had written of the Captive Ladie that it had passages in it which 'I believe neither Scott nor Byron would have been ashamed to own.'¹⁰⁵ Madhusudan's own perception of its reception in Madras was, therefore, bright:

I wrote it [Captive Ladie] for the pages of a local paper, the editor of which, one of the most eminent in India, has been blowing my trumpet like a jolly fellow. It has excited great attention here, and many persons of superior judgment and acquirements have induced me to republish it in a *bookish* form.¹⁰⁶

Madhusudan had dedicated the Captive Ladie to George Norton Esqr., the Advocate General of the Presidency of Madras, who replied to his request for permission to do so in the most encouraging terms:

You have no idea what a kind and flattering reply I got from him. He says he will consider it an honour to have a work "exhibiting such great powers and promise" dedicated to him. I have great hopes from his patronage. I wonder how the Calcutta-critics will receive me.¹⁰⁷

The critics in Calcutta, however, did not respond with similar enthusiasm. The editor of the Hurkaru, Madhusudan thought, 'has been somewhat severe with me...'¹⁰⁸ He consoles himself with the thought that 'Anything like an acknowledgement of merit *must be wrung out* by patient perseverance.'¹⁰⁹ The Bengal Hurkaru, had, indeed, been unduly severe in its handling of Madhusudan's poem, often adopting a patronising and aggressive tone,

¹⁰⁵J. Basu, 120.

¹⁰⁶Letters [36], 531.

¹⁰⁷Letters [37], 532.

¹⁰⁸Letters [40], 535.

¹⁰⁹ibid.

comparing his work unfavourably with the Dutts of the Dutt Family Album, who were, at the time, publishing individual volumes of poetry in Calcutta:

These verses of M.M.S. Dutt are very fair amateur poetry; but if the power of making has deluded the author into a reliance on the exercise of his poetic abilities for fortune and reputation, or tempted him to turn up his nose at the common place use of the pen, the delusion is greatly to be regretted. We believe that none of our Calcutta Dutts have fallen into this ruinous error...¹¹⁰

The following letter from Madhusudan to Gour acknowledges, 'All right my boy, You seem to consider the "Captive" a failure, but I don't. For look you, it has opened the most splendid prospects for me, and has procured me the friendship of some whom it is an honour to know...'¹¹¹ The editor of the Hindu Intelligencer, Kasiprasad Ghosh, himself the first Bengali poet to write in English, was not kind to the Captive Ladie either, and Madhusudan was dissatisfied with his review.¹¹² The final blow, perhaps, came with the response of the eminent Calcutta educationalist and thinker, John Drinkwater Bethune, whose advice, it is commonly supposed, precipitated Madhusudan's turn towards Bengali. In a letter to Gour Das, who had forwarded Madhusudan's Captive Ladie to him, Bethune wrote:

... he might employ his time to better advantage than in writing English poetry.... he could render far greater service to his country and have a better chance of achieving a lasting reputation for himself, if he will employ his taste and talents, which he has cultivated by the study of English, in improving the standard and adding to the stock of the poems of his own language, if poetry at all events he must write.¹¹³

Gour too urged his friend that Bethune's 'advice is the best you can adopt.... We do not want another Byron, another Shelley in English; what we lack is a Byron or a Shelley in Bengali literature.'¹¹⁴

¹¹⁰The Bengal Harkara, Saturday Evening, May 19, 1849.

¹¹¹Letters [41], 536.

¹¹²Basu, 123.

¹¹³Basu, 125.

¹¹⁴ibid, 126.

Madhusudan's fascination for the English language and Western literature was strong and abiding, a feeling he never lost during his literary career, whichever language he used. In an essay entitled 'The Anglo-Saxon and the Hindu', written in Madras in 1854, long after the adverse criticism from Calcutta for the Captive Ladie, he wrote of his love for the language and literature of the West, and of his conception of the Hindu race as contrasted to the Anglo-Saxon. The Hindu, he said, 'as he stands before you, is a fallen being - once - a green, a beautiful, a tall, a majestic, a flowering tree; now - blasted by lightning! Who can recall him to life?'¹¹⁵ He provides the answer to that question a few pages later, which is that 'it is the glorious mission of the Anglo-Saxon to regenerate, to renovate the Hindu race!', a sentiment derived from his Christianity and the Evangelical rhetoric of missionaries in India.¹¹⁶ The only aspect of the Hindu he had no hesitation in acknowledging and praising is his past:

Volumes could be written on the glories of Old India -
volumes could be written on achievements in love and war
of her heroic sons and lotus-eyed daughters. She is indeed
an exhaustless mine for the Poet, the Romanticist, the
Historian, the Philosopher.¹¹⁷

Fitting neatly, as these attitudes do, into the pattern of ideas generated by Orientalist scholars and historians and British policy makers and missionaries in India, it is notable how deeply such rhetoric had influenced the thinking of poets such as Madhusudan. But this essay is also remarkable for its espousal of the beauties of Western and Indian classical literature, and of the English language:

I acknowledge to you, and I need not blush to do so - that I
love the language of the Anglo-Saxon. Yes - I *love* the
language - the glorious language of the Anglo-Saxon. My
imagination visions forth before me the language of the
Anglo-Saxon in all its radiant beauty; and I feel silenced and
abashed.

I have heard the pastoral pipe of the Mantuan
Swain.... I have listened to the melodies of gay Flaccus.... I
have heard of bloody Pharsalia, and learned to love
Epicurus.... I am no stranger to the eloquence of fiery

¹¹⁵Essays, 'The Anglo-Saxon and the Hindu', 630.

¹¹⁶ibid, 635.

¹¹⁷ibid, 630.

Demosthenes...of calm Cicero... to Livy... to sententious Thucydides.... I have heard the melodious voice of him who sang ... of Rama like a Kokila: I have wept over the fatal war of the implacable Courava and the heroic Pandava: I have grieved over the suffering of her [Sakuntala] who wore and lost the fatal ring: I have wandered with Hafiz on the banks of Rocnabad and the rose-bowers of Mosellay: I have moralized with Saddi [sic], and seen Roustom shedding tears....

... 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!¹¹⁸

This passage is one of the most vivid and extraordinary testaments to the colonial mind educated in English and writing English poetry in nineteenth-century India. Madhusudan's education in Western classical texts, his interest in the Sanskrit poet Kalidasa and the Indian epics, his knowledge of the Persian poets Sadi and Hafiz, and the thread running through the whole, his love for the English language, gives a remarkable indication of the sort of literary mind that came into existence in Calcutta by the mid-nineteenth century.

This essay, written in 1854, was the last independent piece Madhusudan composed in the English language. Subsequently, he translated two Bengali plays into English, *Ratnavali* in 1858, followed by *Sermista* in 1859. The Advertisement to the first play began:

If the reader will look into *Wilson's Hindu Theatre*, he will find an elegant prose version of a Sanskrit Drama, called the "Ratnavali," and ascribed to Sri Harsha Deva, an ancient king of Cashmere. Though the Bengali poet borrows largely from his royal predecessor.... [h]e has engrafted much novel matter on the old stock....¹¹⁹

The second translation, *Ratnavali*, also had an advertisement that the poet wrote himself which began along similar lines:

The work - of which the following pages contain a translation - is the first attempt in the Bengali language to produce a classical and regular Drama. The story of *Sermista* will be found in the First book of the Mahabharata - almost

¹¹⁸ibid, 638-9.

¹¹⁹*Rachanabali*, 76.

immediately after that of Sakuntala - rendered so famous by the splendid genius of Kalidasa.¹²⁰

These advertisements, informing us of the impetus behind the composition of each of these plays, reiterates the point that Madhusudan's Orientalist interests carried over into his Bengali works, since these plays were composed in Bengali. Regarding the theme of a subsequent Bengali play, *Krishna Kumari* (1861), he wrote in a letter:

For about two nights, I sat up for hours poring over the tremendous pages of Tod and about I A.M. last Saturday, the *Muses smiled* ! As a true realizer of the Dramatist's conceptions, you ought to be quite in love with *Krishna Kumari*, as I am. Lord! What a romantic Tragedy it will make!¹²¹

It is not possible, within the constraints of this thesis, to extensively discuss the Orientalist influences in Madhusudan's considerable corpus of Bengali writing, but information such as that contained in the letter quoted above is important in the context of Orientalist influences shaping Madhusudan's literary sensibility in general.

It was in keeping with the spirit of the times that Madhusudan, as an Indian poet, began to compose literature in Bengali instead of English. The year of the Sepoy Mutiny, 1857, had seen national unrest against British rule, and the subsequent years witnessed the birth of Indian nationalism, and its cradle was Bengal, the first outpost of British rule in India. It was befitting a man of Madhusudan's passion and intensity that he went with the current of contemporary affairs in India in the matter of writing in his own language, managing successfully to transmute his creative impulses and his literary interests into compositions in Bengali. His own personal circumstances, in conjunction with popular demand, also contributed to his about face towards Bengali. Writing in English had left him in impoverished circumstances while in Madras; after coming to Calcutta he was wooed by the moneyed Bengali intelligentsia to write dramas for them in Bengali, and each of his plays and translations brought him a considerable income. The translation of *Ratnavali*, for instance, had been commissioned for five hundred rupees by the 'Rajas Pertaub Chunder

¹²⁰ibid, 78.

¹²¹Letters [78], 569.

Singh and Issur Chunder Singh Bahadurs', who had commissioned the work as a token of their esteem.¹²² We might therefore conclude that changing political circumstances in Bengal, financial considerations, popular demand and pressure, failure to achieve critical acclaim or financial viability in English and the prevalent nationalistic mood contributed in part to Madhusudan's abandonment of the composition of English verse.

The last, and perhaps the most important reason for Madhusudan's adoption of Bengali as a medium for literary work -the prevalent nationalistic mood - was enunciated with the greatest clarity of all in Madhusudan's final translation, into English, of *Nil Durpan*.¹²³ Written by Dinabandhu Mitra in Bengali, this play about the oppression of natives in indigo plantations stirred up a storm of nationalistic feeling throughout the country. Rev. James Long took the responsibility for the production of an English translation, and was consequently imprisoned by the British authorities. Rumour attributed the actual translation to Michael Madhusudan, and a contemporary essay on Dinabandhu Mitra by Bankim Chatterjee mentioned having heard that the translation had not only led to insults and harassment for Madhusudan, but had resulted in his livelihood at the Supreme Court as a barrister being threatened as well.¹²⁴ The editor of the *Rachanabali*, Kshetra Gupta, weighs the evidence and concludes that the translation was indeed done by Madhusudan, and consequently includes it in the Collected Works.

By the 1860's, therefore, the trajectory of Madhusudan's creative life was following the same curve as the current mood of the Bengali intelligentsia; his early youthful sighing for 'Albion's distant shore' lost in a welter of activity surrounding contemporary happenings in Bengal. This was overtly unlike the poetical productions of the Dutt family of Calcutta, who continued, through the last decades of the nineteenth century, to produce English verse in a mode that seemingly became more and more distant

¹²²*Rachanabali*, 76.

¹²³Nil Durpan or The Indigo Planting Mirror. A Drama Translated from the Bengali by A Native. (Calcutta, 1861).

¹²⁴'The Life of Rai Bahadur Dinabandhu Mitra Bahadur,' *Bankim Rachanabali*, Vol II (Calcutta: Sahitya Sansad, 1971), 826.

from the mainstream of political and social pressures in an increasingly nationalistic Bengal. However, their poetry too, as we shall see in the next chapter, although following the trademarks of nineteenth-century Orientalist poetry, was involved in an engagement with the colonizer that was neither passive nor one-dimensional.

Chapter Four

The Dutt Family Album (1870)

In an essay on nationalism in Bengal in the latter half of the nineteenth century, it has been remarked upon as an interesting coincidence that the 24th of January, 1857, simultaneously witnessed the foundation of the first Indian University - the University of Calcutta - and the opening episode of the Mutiny in Barrackpore, as reported on the same day by General Hearsey to the Government.¹ The impact of Western education and the creation of political unrest, however, did not interact in the manner in which such a coincidence might imply until the twentieth century. Contrary to all general expectation, historical records state that the Sepoy Mutiny, though undoubtedly a great source of inspiration as the first movement for independence to later nationalists in the twentieth century, left the hearts and minds of the educated Bengali upper class virtually untouched at the time. It was only in 1885, in Bombay, that what was to become the main political party in the independence movement - the Indian National Congress - came into being, and it is worthwhile to consider the recollections of an eminent political leader, Bipin Chandra Pal (1857-1932), on the 'Birth of Our New Nationalism (1875 -1878)':

Politics did not involve in those days any sufferings or sacrifices. The political authorities in the country did not take our infant political freedom movement seriously. They saw no menace to their authority in it. The whole thing was, more or less, as a pastime, though certainly the more serious minded of our youthful intellectuals did not consciously pursue it as such. Our new politics was on the plane of intellection only. The political ideal possessed our mind, its contemplation satisfied our emotions; but there was as yet no call for any strenuous political action such as might bring us into open conflict with the Government and lead to those

¹Sashi Bhushan Chowdhury, 'Pre-Congress Nationalism,' in Atulchandra Gupta, ed. Studies in the Bengal Renaissance (Jadavpur: The National Council of Education, Bengal, 1958), 152.

personal consequences that follow every movement of revolt against constituted and organised political authority.²

It is not for her trampled flag that England bares her
sword;
It is not for a just revenge upon a murderous horde;
It is to prove to blood-stained men, self-blinded of
their sight,
That evil hath no chance with good or darkness with
the light.⁴

This depiction shows clearly that the sympathy of the poet does not lie with the Indians, who deserve a 'just revenge' for being a 'murderous horde', and are not only 'blood-stained men, self-blinded of their sight', but also, in the final line, incarnations of 'evil' and 'darkness'. Instead, the poet quite emphatically supports the British, whose flag has been 'trampled', and who are entitled to a 'just revenge' for their suffering, and who are, ultimately, the forces of 'good' and 'light', against which the evil Indian, sunk in darkness, 'hath no chance.' Lord Canning is apostrophised, in the first verse, as having acted 'True to thy duty and thy race...', revealing a colonial subject's ingrained belief in the superiority and nobility of the master-race. In the light of such sentiments expressed in the verses above, it is not surprising to discover that in fact 'the Mutiny call failed to evoke any active response from Bengal. The landed aristocracy and other moneyed interests of the country were ranged on the side of the authorities and felt no impulsion of hatred for the English during the hectic days of 1857.'⁵

The recognition that the moneyed classes in Bengal did not respond to the Mutiny has historically been acknowledged. However, the current Western perception, as articulated by Edward Said, seems to be that this attitude was an aberration, and that for the ordinary people of India the Mutiny was 'a nationalist uprising against British rule.'⁶ Responses to the Mutiny made by Bengalis prove, however, that poetry such as that quoted above expresses an attitude which was not so much the exception as the rule at the time, as I shall show. What needs to be understood in this context is that the Mutiny gained power and force in the minds of Indians as a symbol of an effort towards independence only in the

⁴The Dutt Family Album (London, 1870), 102.
⁵Sashi Bhushan Chowdhury, 154.
⁶Edward Said, Introduction to Rudyard Kipling, Kim (London: Penguin, 1989), 25.

early twentieth century, when nationalist historians were attempting to rewrite the history of India from their own perspective. The best example of this revision of the British histories of India was the one made by an Indian nationalist leader, Savarkar, who, in his history The Indian War of Independence 1857, said that what the British had called the 'Sepoy Mutiny' was, in fact, the first war fought by Indians in the cause of independence.⁷ Edward Said's comments on the response to the Mutiny in the nineteenth century, therefore, actually misread Indian history:

When in 1925 Edward Thompson published his powerful little tract, The Other Side of the Medal - an impassioned statement against British rule and for Indian independence - he singled out the Mutiny as the great symbolic event by which the two sides, Indian and British, achieved their full and conscious opposition to each other.... The Mutiny, in short, reinforced the difference between the colonizer and the colonized.

In such a situation of nationalist and self-justifying inflammation, to be an Indian would have meant feeling natural solidarity with the victims of British reprisal.... For an Indian, *not* to have had those feelings would have been to belong to the small minority that did exist to be sure, but which was distinctly unrepresentative of majority Indian sentiment.⁸

Said says, yet does not see, in this instance, that Thompson is speaking of the Mutiny as a 'great *symbolic* event' (my emphasis), and that his statement about the two sides achieving their full opposition to each other through the symbol of the Mutiny applies to a later time, the time of Thompson's writing, 1925, by which time Indians had begun to articulate their first complete opposition to British rule, one of the most powerful ideas helping them along this path being the symbol of the Mutiny of 1857. In this context, it is worth giving again

⁷The Indian War of Independence 1857 was completed in 1909 in London, but before it could be published, it was banned by the British Government both in Britain and in India. Printed secretly in Holland in 1909, it reached India, America, Japan and China wrapped in especially printed covers bearing names such as 'Pickwick Papers' or 'Scott's Works'. The book was banned for a total of thirty eight years, and appeared legally in print only on the eve of Indian independence in 1946. See Dhananjay Keer, 2nd ed., Veer Savarkar (Bombay: Popular Prakashan, 1966), 67-68.

⁸ibid.

the opinion of the Bengali nationalist leader, Bipin Chandra Pal, who wrote very clearly of the reaction of the Bengali people to the Mutiny:

The "Sepoy Mutiny," particularly in Bengal, left the general population of the country absolutely cold. They had belonged to a generation that had seen and suffered from the anarchy and disorder of the immediate pre-British rule. During the quarter of a century that preceded the outbreak of the "Mutiny," the life and properties of the people were being increasingly secured against the oppressions [sic] of their stronger neighbours. Law courts were established in increasing numbers for the peaceful settlement of neighbourly disputes. Dacoity was practically suppressed.... Along with these material advantages secured to them by the administration of the East India Company, new intellectual and moral forces came into operation through the introduction of English education, to create new intellectual and spiritual bonds between the generation of English educated Bengalis and their foreign political masters.... This is the real reason why not only the "Mutiny" did not touch our people at all in Bengal, but the suppression of it and the returning prospect of a settled government was hailed with universal delight by them.⁹

Here we see that Said's generalisation about the 'majority' and 'minority' status of an indifferent reaction to the Mutiny among Indians (made without any reference to the responses of Indians themselves) does not hold, for Pal talks clearly about 'the general population of the country' being left 'absolutely cold' by the Sepoy Mutiny. He states categorically that in Bengal, the 'classes and the masses alike' remained loyal to the British during the Mutiny, and goes so far as to assert that its suppression was hailed by every Bengali with 'universal delight.' Such an emphatically opposite point of view to Said's presentation, documented in the form of a native, colonised, and further, nationalist subject's written testimony, needs consideration. The confutation, by Pal, of the current easy Western sympathy with the Mutiny as a popular uprising, affecting all but a few members of the anglicized elite that would have included the Dutts, points to a fact that is usually ignored, and that we have come across repeatedly in this thesis: that the colonised spoke a language that often ran contrary to what they would obviously be expected to say

⁹Bipin Chandra Pal, Memories, Vol. II, iii.

on issues of conflict with the colonisers.¹⁰ Attention to the voiced opinions of colonised Indians, in this case, fill in the blank spaces in Said's discourse that lead him towards a misrepresentation of the impact of the Mutiny on India as a whole, a misrepresentation based on a holistic assumption of an entire India that in any case did not, at that time, exist as such.

If there was any popular agitation in Bengal in the period after the Mutiny, it was the general indignation at the abuses upon peasants in British indigo plantations. As we have seen in the previous chapter, Madhusudan Dutt too became involved in the controversy surrounding the piece of literature that became an outstanding symbol of native grievances against British exploitation in indigo farms, Dinabandhu Mitra's *Nil Durpan* (1861). While it remains true that Bengalis had not as yet felt the need to demand an irrevocable severance from British rule, culturally a wider consciousness of the right to dignity and parity for Indians in their interaction with the British was certainly dominant at this time. The latter half of the nineteenth century was the time of giant personalities such as Vidyasagar, Bankim Chatterjee, and Vivekananda, men of stature and culture who inculcated, in educated Bengalis, a sense of pride in their own identity, history, and tradition. Continuing on the path trodden by Rammohun Roy, this period witnessed the birth of many movements for social reform, including the movements to ban polygamy and child marriage and to initiate the remarriage of widows. The Brahmo Samaj, established by Rammohun in the second decade of the century, came into its own by this time, and, led by Debendranath Tagore (the poet Rabindranath's father) and later, Kesab Chandra Sen, became an established institution against the excesses of superstitious Hinduism. Isolated

¹⁰Regarding educational policy, especially, Indians seem to have gone always against the expected. The initial demand by Indians in 1816, for an English education, as we have seen, went against the British government's Orientalist policies in favour of the old classical Indian education. Subsequently, in the 1870's, there was continuing support for English education (by, among others, Rajendralal Mitra), notwithstanding the strong tide of Bengali nationalism. Thus, Indians opposed a reversal of governmental education policies now favouring the vernacular over English. See Pradip Sinha, 'The Bengal Victorians,' *Nineteenth Century Bengal* (Calcutta: K.L. Mukhopadhyay, 1965), 91-143.

Englishmen led Bengali society in the sphere of education: the evangelist Alexander Duff and the non-believer David Hare were both towering personalities occupying differing ends of the spectrum regarding religion, but signifying, together, impressive advances in the matter of native education; John Drinkwater Bethune took up the cause of the education of Hindu women; D.L. Richardson inspired whole generations of Hindu College students with his teaching and literary activities promoting poetry written in India.

Despite what such facts about campaigns for a more progressive Bengal might indicate, the latter half of the nineteenth century was also, paradoxically, a time of conservatism, the Victorian age in England throwing its stolid shadow upon colonial India. Most of the rich and established Hindu households in Calcutta opposed the reforms to Hindu society being initiated by Vidyasagar, the Derozians, and the Brahmos. For instance, Radhakanta Deb, the acknowledged leader of the orthodox forces in Calcutta, and the man who had also opposed the abolition of *sati* against Rammohun earlier, collected thirty three thousand signatures in a petition against the law allowing widow remarriage proposed by Vidyasagar, who had managed to collect only up to a thousand signatures supporting his proposal to the government, which, however, passed the law in his favour. As a commentator points out:

Even though the Bengali upper and middle classes did not support or help the cause of the Sepoy Mutiny, in the years following the Sepoy Mutiny the contempt increasingly expressed by the English for Indian society, culture, religion, etc., and the conflict that arose between the English and a section of the educated, employed Bengalis over the opportunities and status granted them, resulted gradually in the rise of a nationalist sentiment. As this nationalist sentiment was inextricably linked with religious and community sentiment, various religious, conservative and reactionary elements in society grew in force and domination, and became established in Bengali society from the seventh decade of the nineteenth century. (My translation)¹¹

¹¹Badaruddin Umar, *Iswarchandra Vidyasagar O Unish Sataker Bangali Samaj* [*Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar and Nineteenth-Century Bengali Society*] (Calcutta: Chirayata Publications, 1980), 65.

At the same time, the far sighted editor of the Hindu Patriot was writing, in 1858, about the proposal for transferring the government of India to the Crown, in an essentially modern tone:

Can a revolution in the Indian Government be authorised by Parliament without consulting the wishes of the vast millions of men for whose benefit it is proposed to be made? The reply must be in the negative.... The time is nearly come when all Indian questions must be solved by Indians.¹²

A time of contradictions and paradoxes, this was nevertheless certainly a time of intellectual greatness, social heroism, political awareness and literary flowering amongst the Bengalis themselves, so much so that this age was called, in retrospect, the Bengal Renaissance. This period witnessed the birth of nationalism in so much as nationalism signified a pride in, and an awareness of, an indigenous culture and tradition. The intellectual and well-to-do middle class in Calcutta, which had spoken English in preference to Bengali, and had found its cultural standards and modes of behaviour in the literature and manners of the West now turned towards the Bengali language and a Bengali identity instead. The man who was unquestionably the most powerful force in this movement towards the Bengali language was Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, whose novels, essays, journals and newspaper articles successfully established the position of Bengali as a literary language by the end of the century.

Literary Bengali had been born at the beginning of the century as a result of the work of William Carey, and by the seventh decade (when the Dutt Family Album was being published from London) was accepted as a vehicle of expression for general subjects. Yet its status was low, low enough for Bankimchandra to remark, in 1872, in the introductory article of the first issue of his paper, the *Banga Darsan* :

There is one outstanding barrier to the writing of Bengali by educated Bengalis. Educated people do not read Bengali; and what educated people will not read educated people do not wish to write. If I say to one of them, "Why have you who

¹²Harish Chandra Mukherjee, in the Hindu Patriot, Calcutta, 14 January, 1858.

are a Bengali such a distaste for Bengali books and papers?", he will say, "What Bengali books and papers are there for me to like? If I could get anything worth reading, I should certainly read it." I must admit openly there is no answer. The few Bengali compositions we have can be finished in two or three days, and then we have to wait two or three years before anything else comes out. Thus the distaste of Bengalis for Bengali increases.¹³

Bankimchandra himself wrote his first novel, Rajmohan's Wife, in English.¹⁴ It is said that when Bankim first asked the eminent historian, author and academic R.C. Dutt (a nephew of the Dutts who wrote the Dutt Family Album), to write in Bengali, he said that he did not know how to write literary Bengali.¹⁵ Interestingly, many of the themes of the stirring historical novels that made Bankim's fame were borrowed, like the poems discussed in this thesis, from Orientalist histories. For instance, his first Bengali novel, *Durgeshnandini* (1865), praised as the Bengali equivalent of Scott's *Ivanhoe* (though Bankim said he had not read it before he wrote his novel), borrowed much of its historical content from Alexander Dow's Ferishta.¹⁶

Bankimchandra went on to become the most forceful representative of the emerging identity of the Bengali nation, and R.C. Dutt transformed himself into the most prominent nationalist historian of India and the successful author of many Bengali works. It is an indication of the spirit of the times that men like Bankim at the same time professed admiration for English, and publicly stated it to be necessary for the progress of the people of Bengal. What Bankimchandra wanted was the upliftment of Bengali among the middle

¹³*Bankim Rachanabali* [Collected Works of Bankim], Vol. II (Calcutta: Sahitya Parishad, 1954), 283.

¹⁴Bankim Chandra Chatterjee's, Rajmohan's Wife was completed in 1863 and published serially in the weekly periodical, The Indian Field, edited by Kishori Chand Mitra, in 1864. It was published in novel form only in the next century, ed. Brajendranath Banerjee and Sajani Kanta Das (Calcutta, Centenary edition, 1941).

¹⁵Bankim suggested he [R.C. Dutt] should contribute in Bengali to the *Banga Darsan*... "Write in Bengali!" exclaimed Mr Dutt; "but I hardly know the Bengali literary style." "Style!" rejoined Bankim Chunder; "whatever a cultured man like you will write will be style. If you have the gift in you, style will come of itself." This was a memorable episode in the life of Mr Dutt, for from that day he turned to Bengali literature.' J.N. Gupta, Life and Work of Romesh Chunder Dutt C.I.E. (London: J.M. Dent, 1911), 68.

¹⁶Jogesh Chandra Bagal, Introduction to *Bankim Rachanabali*, Vol. I (Calcutta: Sahitya Sansad, 1965), 29-30.

classes, where its status was degraded as a result of the educated Bengali's indifference to his mother tongue. It is a measure of the cultural ambience of that age that his effort to accomplish his ends through the *Banga Darsan* was a resounding success, and Tagore bears testimony to the eagerness with which the reading public waited for each issue of this paper.¹⁷ Although he was able to run it for only four years, at the end of that time Bankim was able to say, with pride and satisfaction, '*Banga Darsan* appeared four years ago. The greater part of what I intended has been accomplished. There is no longer any need to continue it.'¹⁸ The poetry produced by the Dutts therefore have to be examined in the light of the prevailing atmosphere in Calcutta, where initially the low status of the Bengali language might have led to the use of English for poetic compositions, but where, on the other hand, the prevailing idealism that grew progressively popular regarding the use of the mother tongue made the English poetry of the Dutts seem increasingly out of place.

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Cultural and Colonial Context of the Dutt's Poetry

The historical narrative verse tales of the Dutts are of a type that belongs firmly to the latter half of the nineteenth century, existing concurrently, interestingly enough, with similar developments taking place in Bengali poetry. Critics dealing with the poetry of the Dutts have consistently recognised that the idiom of their poems is an anglicized one, suggestive of a distance from indigenous roots. However, this tone of alienation - present because their medium, English, automatically placed them within the colonial fissure - was not the whole substance of the poems. The Dutt's historical poetry was, in actuality, situated very firmly in the cultural milieu of Bengali society in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Eminent Bengali poets of the time achieved fame and distinction for writing Bengali poetry

¹⁷Rabindranath Tagore, *Jiban-Smriti* [Autobiography], 1912, 120.

¹⁸*Bankim Rachanabali*, Vol. II, 909.

that borrowed from some of the same sources the Dutts had used, such as Sir Walter Scott and James Tod. It is worthwhile, at this point, to recall some details of the scene in Bengali poetry at this time in Calcutta.

It has been universally recognised by commentators on Bengali literature that Bengali poetry before 1830 did not exist in the form in which it came to exist afterwards, and in which it survives until this day.¹⁹ What is meant by such an assertion is that the local, oral, and essentially rural indigenous forms of poetry on the one hand, and devotional forms on the other, gave way, by the middle of the century, to written poetry modified by Western influence, and modelled on Western forms. The earliest Bengali poet of the century of some fame, Iswarchandra Gupta (1811-1858), was the last to remain overtly untouched by the colonial situation, standing between the old and the new in the history of Bengali literature, exhibiting a radical aversion to all foreign influences upon Bengali culture while proclaiming an almost superstitious love for everything indigenous. He was followed, in the second half of the century, by several Bengali poets such as Rangalal Banerjee, Michael Madhusudan Dutt, Hemchandra Mukherjee and Nabinchandra Sen who began the 'renaissance' in Bengali literature with writings that borrowed form and substance from English poets to create a new poetry for Bengal.

The first definite proclamation of Western influence upon a work of Bengali poetry was made by Rangalal Banerjee in his preface to *Padmini Upakhyan* (1858), a metrical romance about a Rajput queen whose great beauty provoked the invasion of Rajputana by the Muslim king of Delhi. In his preface to this work, which was the first long historical narrative poem in Bengali, Rangalal mentions some particulars that were responsible for certain features of the theme and form of the poem. His reasons for attempting to write

¹⁹For an account of the rebirth of Bengali poetry by being infused with foreign influences, see: P. Chaudhuri, The Story of Bengali Literature, (Calcutta: Weekly Notes Printing Works, 1917), 18; S.K. De, Bengali Literature in the Nineteenth Century (1757-1857), revised ed. (Calcutta: K.L. Mukhopadhyay, 1962), 387; P.R. Sen, Western Influence in Bengali literature, (Calcutta: Calcutta University Press, 1932), ch.5.

poetry in Bengali are significant. He started writing Bengali poetry, he mentions at the start, because he was stung by the accusation made by some members of the Bethune Society that Bengali poetry was essentially an inferior poetry, and that long years of subjugation under foreign rule had robbed Bengal of any genuine poet.²⁰ (It is interesting to recall that at around the same time, in a separate development, Madhusudan was commissioned to write plays in Bengali because no suitable plays existed in the Bengali language at that time.) The theme was chosen when he was requested by a patron to produce poetry that was not 'in bad taste' or 'lacking in virtuousness', something composed along a 'purer system' than the poetical works available in the market. Consequently, 'At the request of the aforementioned individual, I selected this tale from Colonel Tod's book describing the Rajasthani provinces, and began work on the composition of this poem.' (My translation)²¹ The reasons furnished by Rangalal for having made use of English poetry for his Bengali poem are clear and unambiguous. Its initial appeal seems to be because it has what his patron too had desired - a 'purer system' of composition.²² He then enumerates the reasons behind his deliberate incorporation of English aesthetic sentiments in the Bengali language so that he may not be thought a plagiarist. 'Firstly, many Bengalis who do not know the English language think there is no superior poetry in that language, and it is important that they be rid of such a delusion. Secondly, the more poems that are composed in the Bengali language along the purer system of English poetic conventions, the more we shall witness the exit of the immodest, mean body of poetry that currently exists...' ²³

²⁰Rangalal Banerjee, *Padmini Upakhyan, Rajasthaniya Itihasa Bishesh*, [The Story of Padmini, Selections from Rajasthani History] ed. Brajendranath Banerjee and Sajanikanta Sen [from the third edition printed in February 1872; first published in 1858] (Calcutta: Bangiya Sahitya Parishad, 1951, 10.

²¹*ibid.*, 11-12.

²²*ibid.*, 13.

²³*ibid.*, 14.

Rangalal's preface is a unique document in the colonial history of India for its proclamation of the influence of English poetic conventions upon indigenous Bengali poetry, serving as a record of the manner in which the people of Bengal engaged, to a profitable end, with the colonial forces that existed at the time. A work such as this shows that colonial domination could be contended with in a dramatic and spirited exchange with the use of materials borrowed from the arsenal of the colonisers themselves. Rangalal's preface is also very much a product of its time in its engagement with his own intellectual milieu rather than the coloniser's, and in its demonstration of the co-existence of patriotic sentiments with an unashamed acknowledgement of the desirability of borrowing elements from English sources in order to breathe life into a moribund indigenous literature and culture. This alloy of nationalism and a vigorous advocacy of the life-giving nature of English influences was, in reality, what almost every prominent Bengali personality of the nineteenth century demanded, from Rammohun to Vidyasagar to Bankimchandra, a fact forgotten in the changing light of the parochialism that often became the order of nationalism through the next century. Bengali poetry following Rangalal through the sixth, seventh and eighth decades of the nineteenth century progressed rapidly along the lines initiated by him of compositions that incorporated English poetic forms, and borrowed its themes from the epics, upanishads, puranas, and historical legends of India.

Rangalal wrote *Padmini Upakhyān* (1858) and *Karma Devi* (1862) based on the chivalric legends of Rajput heroes in the style of the historical romances of Scott; Madhusudan introduced the sonnet and blank verse in Bengali poetry with themes taken from the *Ramayana* in *Meghnadbadh Kavya*, and initiated Western style Bengali drama in one of his plays, *Krishna Kumari*, which borrowed its theme from Tod; Hemchandra wrote *Birabahu Kavya* (1862-66) about the daring exploits of a Rajput hero who renounces the world to regain the lost ground of Hinduism, and borrowed from the stories in the Puranas for his other works; Nabinchandra took some of his material from the *Mahabharata*, while his *Palasir Yuddha* [The Battle of Plassey] (1875) was modelled on the

historical scenes of Byron's Childe Harold, and even written in a metre new to Bengali poetry which was a variation on Childe Harold's Spenserian stanza. Scott and Moore and Campbell, Byron and Shelley and the Romantic movement in England, all contributed significantly to the poetry of these Bengali poets, who nonetheless achieved originality, and distinction and honour for their work, which was successful and popular and went towards the creation of a new beginning in the history of Bengali literature.

Thus, the trend that was such a definite part of the Orientalist poetry under discussion in this thesis, of form and style borrowed from English poetry and themes taken from Orientalist translations of Indian classics or Orientalist rediscoveries of the ancient and then medieval history of India, was actually also a part of Bengali poetry from the latter half of the century onward. These Bengali poets were recognised as using English texts to enrich and recreate their indigenous tradition in poems deemed to be nationalistic and patriotic because of their historical content. The eclecticism and choice they displayed in their borrowing from English literature can be located historically in the liberal humanist tradition, which was then the formative influence on the Bengali intelligentsia. There exists, certainly, a difference between the richness of the cultural and colonial engagement that was taking place in the works of the Bengali poets as they borrowed from English sources, and the same encounter in the poetry of the Dutts. While acknowledging that difference, however, it still remains to be said that critics writing about the poetry of the Dutts have so far been unable to find an adequate vocabulary to deal positively with the colonial interaction as it took place in the poetry of the Dutts, and have also ignored this larger context within which it is placed.

It is necessary, at this juncture, to recognise the importance of this point upon the current evaluation taking place in literary studies of the interaction between English literature and colonialism. The collusion, in a colonised nation, between literature and power (as pointed out by Said), is too widely recognized today for us to be able to ignore important exceptions to that theory provided by instances such as that of the Bengali poetry

discussed above, where the colonised have used language and literature for their own independent ends in order to effect a resistance to the domination of the coloniser. The poetry of a section of the colonised in Calcutta, such as the Dutts, who used the English language towards similar ends, is not acknowledged in present-day discourses such as Said's Orientalism. This point has been made incisively in an essay by Aijaz Ahmed in his book In Theory:

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, overthrown or reproduced by the intelligentsias [sic] of the colonized countries: not as an undifferentiated mass but as situated social agents impelled by our own conflicts, contradictions, distinct social and political locations, of class, gender, region, religious affiliation, and so on - hence a peculiar disjuncture in the architecture of the book.²⁴

The poetry of the anglicized Dutts, written in English strictly along the lines of English poetic conventions, often fascinated with the English landscape or loyal to the English crown, still forms, most noticeably in the historical and Orientalist poems, a body of work that engages with colonisation in an encounter that cannot be reduced to mere imitation. The very act of publishing verse in the English language and therefore laying themselves open to an English audience, from Derozio onward, was an appropriation of the terms of the English themselves, and these poets writing in English from Calcutta took on the colonizers in a form and manner that did not fit in with the latter's expectation of a silent colonized subject. Thus, the Dutts should be recognized also as part of the process of evolution towards the creation of the middle-class Indian, who, while making use of British education, would ultimately effect a practical resistance to British rule. A subtler concept must be created in order to deal with the unlikely, but important, elements such as the Dutts in the formation of independent-mindedness in the Indian ethos. Nationalist sentiments,

²⁴Aijaz Ahmed, 'Orientalism and After,' In Theory (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1994), 172.

trumpeted aloud in the case of a couple of sonnets by Derozio, is denied entirely in the case of the Dutts, where many a verse or individual sonnet expressed exactly the same ideas as were to be found in Derozio, as we shall see in a subsequent section of this chapter.

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The Dutt Family Album

Towards the end of the eighteenth century, Nilmoni Dutt, the original patriarch from whom the poets whose pieces comprised the Dutt Family Album descended, was a respected and wealthy figure in Calcutta society. His eldest son, Rasomoy Dutt (secretary of the managing committees at both the Hindu college and the Sanskrit college, and a judge of the Small Cause Court in Calcutta) was the father of Govin (Govind), Hur (Hara) and Greece (Girish) Chunder Dutt, who, along with their nephew Omesh (Umesh) Dutt brought out their compiled verses in the Dutt Family Album in 1870.²⁵ The youngest son of Nilmoni Dutt, Pitambur, was the father of the two others among the Dutts who also wrote English verse, Ishan Chunder (father of R.C. Dutt), and Shoshee (Shashi) Chunder Dutt.²⁶ Rasomoy's sons, along with Shoshee Chunder, converted to Christianity after the death of their father.²⁷

The Dutts produced two generations of writers of English verse. The first generation consisted of the four contributors to the Dutt Family Album, as well as Ishan Chunder, who was the author of a single compilation of essays and verse, and the prolific Shoshee Chunder, who brought out various works of prose and verse. The second

²⁵I have spelt their names as they did themselves, which are anglicised versions of the original names, and in themselves act as signals indicating their position with regard to the conventional Bengali middle class.

²⁶For a family tree showing the genealogy of the Dutt family, see John B. Alphonso-Karkala, Indo-English Literature in the Nineteenth Century (Mysore: University of Mysore Press, 1970), 104.

²⁷For an account of their conversion to Christianity, see Harihar Das, Life and Letters of Toru Dutt (London: Oxford University Press, 1921), 8.

generation, acknowledged by critics as more successful and skilled, comprised of Toru Dutt, Govin Chunder's daughter, and Romesh Chunder Dutt, her cousin, son of Ishan Chunder.

The poems the four contributors included in the Album do not give any indication regarding the authorship of individual pieces, having been arranged without any acknowledgements, sequence or order. It is only from Dunn's introductory comments in The Bengali Book of English Verse that we come to know that '[Hur Chunder's] part in the Album amounted to eleven poems in all. Greece contributed forty-seven separate pieces...', and that 'the most notable of the four authors were Govin and Omesh, who contributed 66 and 73 pieces out of the total of 197.'²⁸ This estimation, however, is inaccurate, as the Album contains a total of one hundred and eighty-three pieces, plus one poem included in an appendix, bringing the total number of poems to one hundred and eighty four. Since Hur Chunder and Greece Chunder produced separate volumes of poetry that contain the poems they lent to the Album, it is possible to distinguish their specific contributions, but not those of Govin and Omesh, who did not publish any separate volumes of their own. Specifying the individual authorship of the poems, however, does not contribute in any significant way to the aims of this study. Here, as in the previous chapters, the intention is not to treat the examination of the Dutt Family Album poems as a search for 'good' or 'bad' poetry judged through the criterion of literary merit.

Chronologically, the earliest poetical publication by any member of this family of Dutts was Shoshee Chunder Dutt's Miscellaneous Verses from Calcutta in 1848. His career also included a volume called Stray Leaves: or Essays, Poems and Tales (1864), and A Vision of Sumeru and Other Poems (1878), both published in Calcutta. Moreover, he had various works of prose to his credit, mainly essays and articles considering historical and

²⁸Dunn, Bengali Writers of English Verse (Calcutta: n.p., 1918), xix - xx.

cultural aspects of India, a considerable number of which were published from London.²⁹ Shoshee Chunder's brother, Ishan Chunder Dutt, comparatively lesser known, also had a publication to his credit, Essays and Poems (Calcutta, 1872).

Among the sons of Rasomoy Dutt, Hur Chunder published two volumes of verse, both from Calcutta: Fugitive Pieces (Calcutta, 1851) and Lotus Leaves: Poems Chiefly on Ancient Indian Subjects (Calcutta, 1871); he was also a regular contributor to the Bengal Magazine, and the author of some Christian tracts entitled Writings Spiritual and Moral, Heart Experiences or Thoughts of Each Day and Short Discourses on Scripture Subjects.³⁰ His brother Greece Chunder Dutt published his first volume from Calcutta, Cherry Stones (Calcutta, 1881), and then published his second book of poems simultaneously from Calcutta and London, called Cherry Blossoms.³¹ Greece Chunder also produced a commemorative book of verse called The Loyal Hours: Poems Welcoming the Prince of Wales and the Duke of Edinburgh on their Advent to India in 1869 and 1875 (Calcutta, 1876), a volume that gives us a fairly comprehensive idea of the political and cultural position occupied by this family in Calcutta at the time.

The tone in which critics of Indo-Anglian poetry have dealt with the poetry produced by the Dutt family has generally been dismissive and derisory. Not only were the Dutt writing English poetry in an age when the greatest respect was reserved for men like Bankim who were propagating Bengali, but they were, as a family, extolling the virtues of the British royalty and of Christianity in their verse. Whereas Kasiprasad had been applauded in 1830 by Indian reviewers and English critics alike for achieving proficiency in the English language and thus demonstrating the competence that a native could attain in

²⁹His prose works include: A Collection of Historical Studies and Recreations [A collection of works by Shoshee Chunder Dutt, three of which were originally published under the pseudonym of J.A.G. Barton], 2 Vols (London, 1879); India, past and present (London, 1880); The Works of Shoshee Chunder Dutt (London, 1884).

³⁰The first two books are referred to in Lotika Basu, no records of which could be traced in the National Library in Calcutta. The third, Short Discourses on Scripture Subjects (Calcutta, 1870), is available there.

³¹Greece Chunder Dutt, Cherry Blossoms (London/Calcutta, 1887).

this sphere, already by the time of Madhusudan in the middle of the century, with the numbers of English-educated Indians growing greatly, it had become unprofitable to be an Indian writing in English. British reviewers in Calcutta no longer viewed such efforts with the same indulgence accorded to Derozio or Kasiprasad, and, as we have seen, the educated Indian reader was turning, by the last quarter of the century, to Bengali instead.

Comparatively recent critics of Indo-Anglian poetry have not paid much attention to the Dutts, and when they have, they have done so in a cursory manner that ultimately sheds no new light upon their work, summing up their poetry with statements such as:

The *Album*, no doubt, is typical of the earlier school of Indo-English poetry when poets were not daring enough to experiment with European metrical forms, nor were they confident in expressing their attitudes in their chosen themes with any degree of sincerity.... Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that in their enthusiastic attempt to imitate the English poets, they gained a certain fluency in writing verse according to English rhythm and pattern.³²

Such a summary, as we shall soon see, were merely an amalgamation of the opinions of the two earlier critics, Basu and Dunn.

Lotika Basu, the first Indian critic to deal with English poetry of the Dutts in any detail, was completely dismissive in her estimate of the work contained in the *Album*:

The poems contain much facile versification. The verses on historical or romantic subjects are close imitations of Scott and Byron. Although the romantic poems seem the best in the book, they are imitative and superficial and treat the subjects from a Western point of view.... The religious poems are sincere but never rise above the commonplace whilst the poems describing Indian scenes are commonplace and conventional. The *Album* is however typical of the earlier school. The verse is imitative and conventional whilst showing a certain command over the English language and its metrical forms.³³

The most frequently recurrent words, 'imitative', 'commonplace' and 'conventional' sum up Basu's attitude towards the poems. She treats these poems in aesthetic terms,

³²Alphonso-Karkala, *Indo-English Literature*, 106.

³³Basu, 29-30.

ahistorically, as if they were accessible to an automatic comparison to lines written by Byron or Scott, and as if all poetry within the conventions of the English poetic idiom were reducible to the elements of style and form. Consequently, terms such as 'imitative' and 'superficial', which might have some validity within an aesthetic interpretation, in this case risks reducing the complexity of the poems as sites of colonial conflict and interchange. The poems come alive as instances of a dramatic engagement with a ruling culture and its language, and exist meaningfully only within a historical context, points that seem not to have informed the perceptions of critics dealing with this poetry to date.

Before Basu, Theodore Dunn, in his estimation of the verse written by the Dutt family, had employed the same criterion of judgement, albeit to a kinder conclusion, saying that the 'literary merits of this book, carefully judged in the light of the special circumstances of its production, are considerable. The quality of the verse, the range and variety of theme, the command of various metrical forms, and the restraint and dignity of the style, are everywhere pleasing.'³⁴ While it remains irrelevant to the concerns of this study whether critics found the poetry of the Dutt Family Album 'pleasing', as in Dunn, or 'superficial', as Basu did, the key phrase in Dunn's summing up, for the purposes of this thesis, is the qualification he includes before he ventures his opinion of the poetry: '... carefully judged in the light of the special circumstances of its production...' The aim of this study of colonial poetry in nineteenth-century India is to reiterate in every case that this poetry cannot, under any circumstance, be appreciated without being 'carefully judged in the light of the special circumstances of its production', and that to do so would be reductive and without purpose.

Dunn was more accurate, in fact, about the value of the Dutt Family Album when he had said that '[t]his book must be of abiding interest to the student of literary history in

³⁴Theodore Dunn, Bengali Book of English Verse (Bombay: Longmans, Green, & Co., 1918), xix.

India.³⁵ Yet works concerning the literary history of India have not dealt with the poetry of the Dutts, and books such as Gauri Vishwanathan's Masks of Conquest, or Sara Suleri's The Rhetoric of English India, while talking extensively about 'Orientalism' and the discourse of English in India, do not take any account of the phenomenon - poetry written in English in Calcutta in the nineteenth century - that originated, in significant part, from Orientalist scholarship on the history of India. The English poetry of colonial India has always been marginal to both England and India, and even revisions and re-estimations of the role of English under British rule in India have neglected this area. The Dutt Family Album is important as a document that shows a fascinating interrelationship between Orientalist scholarship, British histories of India, the teaching of English and the colonial presence in Calcutta.

The Dutts themselves were aware of the fact that their poems might not be 'good', and yet they ventured on publication, because, as they said in the Preface, they hoped 'that their book will be regarded, in some respects, as a curiosity.'³⁶ This discussion, in fact, shall attempt to contextualise this volume as a 'curiosity' produced by a particular time and situation; a process that immediately brings some meaning to the whole endeavour of the Dutts. The treatment of Indian history, in particular, shall be looked upon as significant in the light of the tradition of Indian poets writing on historical themes whose mantle the Dutts inherited, both those who wrote in English, and those contemporaries of theirs who wrote poetry on similar historical themes in Bengali. The changing influences upon the writers of English verse, from the first close contact of Derozio, Kasiprasad and Madhusudan with the Orientalist research of Jones, Colebrooke and Wilson, to the allusions of the Dutts to subsequent British historians such as Elphinstone, Duff, Erskine and Tod, shall be studied through the medium of the poems themselves.

³⁵ibid.

³⁶Album, v.

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Poems on Varied Themes in the Album

The assortment of poems contained in the Album consist of lyrics, ballads, and most frequently, sonnets, of which there are sixty eight, on varying subjects. Among these, some distinct thematic strands - Christian piety, Indian history, personal reflections - may be discerned. In the title page, the poets insert two separate quotations indicating the nature of their contribution. The first is by Leigh Hunt, 'Not oaks alone are trees, nor roses flowers, / Much humble wealth makes rich this world of ours,' and the second from Trench, symbolising their aspirations: 'I liken thy outgoing, O my book, / To the impatience of a little brook, / Which might with flowers have lingered pleasantly, / Yet toils to perish in the mighty sea.'³⁷ This acknowledgement of their own limitations, this recognition that they were engaged in an enterprise within a certain defining framework which situated their poetry in its own particular location, shows that they were not unaware of their position in history.

Rajnarain Basu, a friend of Govin's and later a well-known educationalist and man of letters in Bengal, wrote of his college days with reference to Govin Chunder:

While we were in college we used to read English poetry so avidly that it would be better to say we devoured it, it was with such eagerness that we approached it. He [Govin] was, in this subject, of the same mind as I was. We used to read volumes of poetry written by the most obscure English poets, both ancient and modern. (My translation)³⁸

This avid reading of both minor and major English poets is self-evident throughout the Album. For instance, the love these poets bore for the great works in English poetry is mentioned in a poem in the Album called 'A Farewell to Romance':

³⁷See Leigh Hunt, 'A Thought or Two on Reading Pomfret's "Choice",' Poetical Works, ed. Thornton Hunt (London, 1860), 271; and Richard Chenevix Trench (1807-86), 'The moments which we rescue and redeem,' Poems, New ed. (London, 1885), 139.

³⁸Rajnarain Basu, *Atmacharit* [Autobiography] (Calcutta: Kuntaline Press, 1909), 28.

...
 Then shall I woo thee with the charms of might,
 And pore intently on some well-loved book -
 Well-loved of old, to be well-loved no more!
 The varied melody of Shakespeare's shell -
 The Doric flute of Milton, or the reed
 Of 'sage and serious' Spenser ever dear,
 In breathless silence heard so oft before
 By thee and me, (thou did'st confess the spell;)
 Or what less deep, of late, thou loved'st to
 hear
 These strains of Scott that stir the soul
 indeed.³⁹

The poems in the Album that reflect personal moods or contain reminiscences are modelled in the form of romantic and Victorian poetry, often with an allusion to a particular poet in mind, sometimes with lines from an English poet included in their own poem within quotation marks. Specifically, an affiliation can be traced to Wordsworth, who is called 'the prince of poets' in a poem, and whose poems are brought to mind repeatedly in the verse of the Dutts.⁴⁰ Poems inspired by certain lines from Wordsworth occur more than once, such as one called 'Lines', which is preceded by a subheading, 'See Wordsworth's Lines Commencing "So Fair, So Sweet, Withal So Sensitive."' ⁴¹ Two poems in the Album, 'Wordsworth's Poems' and 'Wordsworth', are dedicated to him, and constitute remarkably interesting instances of the adoration accorded to this romantic poet by colonial subjects of Britain in remote Calcutta.

The first, 'Wordsworth's Poems', has a sub-heading, 'See Preface to "The Excursion."' The opening verse brings immediately to mind the architectural imagery of one of Wordsworth's well known sonnets, 'Inside of King's College Chapel, Cambridge', in which he had described 'this immense and glorious work of fine intelligence' where 'lofty pillars, spread that branching roof/ Self-poised, and scooped into ten thousand cells,/

³⁹Album, 96.
⁴⁰Album, 'In An Album', 114.
⁴¹Album, 'Lines', 139.

Where light and shade repose....'⁴² Using similar imagery, Wordsworth's poetry is compared by the poet to a Gothic church:

This volume is a Gothic church - no less,
And every separate poem but a part
Of a great edifice, built with rarest art,
A cell, or oratory, or carved recess,
Or but a simple leaf-wreath winding round
A marble pillar, in the sombre light,
Or an emblazoned window flashing bright,
Fair in itself, but fairest where 'tis found;
Each delicately symmetrical - but the whole
Ravishing with loveliness the 'prisoned' soul.⁴³

A fairly long poem of five stanzas of ten lines each, the poem continues in this eulogistic manner, in a tone that is typical of the Dutts, where the invocation of English images and scenes through simple lines such as 'And sitting by my hearth where naught annoys...' obliterates entirely the Indian entity of the poet.

The second poem, 'Wordsworth', however, seems unconsciously to achieve the opposite effect, and, as if to underline the situation from within which these poems were being written, begins with lines that capture acutely the dilemma of the colonial subject:

There are some faces I have never seen
Which haunt my spirit like a music-strain;
There are some places where I've never been
Which stand minutely pictured on my brain.⁴⁴

These sentiments expressing a feeling of affinity for faces not seen or places not visited, are both indicative of the cleft stick in which the colonial subject is caught, and also, as might be expected, a reworking of Romantic themes that Wordsworth, for example, addresses in a poem such as 'Yarrow Unvisited':

We will not see them; will not go,
To-day, nor yet to-morrow.
Enough if in our hearts we know
There's such a place as Yarrow.

⁴²William Wordsworth, 'Inside of King's College Chapel, Cambridge,' Poetical Works (London, 1849-50), 121.

⁴³Album, 14.

⁴⁴Album, 144.

Be Yarrow Stream unseen, unknown!
It must, or we shall rue it:
We have a vision of our own;
Ah! why should we undo it?⁴⁵

Poems illustrative of such reworkings of romantic themes, sentiment, and imagery occur frequently in the pages of the Album, and innumerable instances may be traced that are derivative of famous lines or images in English poetry. For instance, besides the two poems cited above, which invoke Wordsworth in their content as well as their titles, Keatsian echoes may be discerned in the lines 'Who, on the 'viewless wings of poesy,'/ Have poured -ah, not in vain- a mighty tide of song' or 'I see Rebecca by the fountain's side,/ Meek Ruth amid the reapers walking slow.'⁴⁶ The metre of Tennyson's 'Locksley Hall' was put to use in a poem called 'On An Old Romaunt,' which, even more than the other poems, contains the combined elements of fantasy and exoticism derived from textual sources:

Moorish forts in far Granada, portals barred and turbans blue,
Gardens green as blissful Eden, crystal fountains fair
to view,
Divans in the proud Alhambra, fairy mosques of Parian
stone,
Groups of Moors and whiskered Spaniards, tilting
round the Soldan's throne.⁴⁷

This poem is, in fact, about reading. At the poem's start, the poet describes the act of reading 'curious volumes' that 'make the glorious Past return,' a past entirely constituted of the medieval history found in European texts, invoking Normans and Venetians, Spaniards and Moors. Once again, in this poem, it is difficult to fix the identity of the poet as anything other than European or English, because no detail, either in the description of the act of reading or in the images which that reading evokes in the poet's mind, gives away the fact of his Indianness. This characteristic of the Dutts, of writing in the persona of a Western individual preoccupied with 'larks ... shrilling overhead' or 'meek snowdrops, couriers of

⁴⁵Wordsworth, 'Yarrow Unvisited', Poetical Works, 26.

⁴⁶Album, 'Sonnet', 208, 97. See John Keats, 'Ode to a Nightingale,' Lamia, Isabella, The Eve of St Agnes, and Other Poems (London, 1820), 109.

⁴⁷Album, 'On An Old Romaunt', 33.

auspicious spring', church bells tolling, or 'merry elves in laughing groups', showing their fascination with the West, has been commented upon universally in discussions by Indian critics.⁴⁸ One of these, V.K. Gokak, in his introduction to the Golden Treasury of Indo-Anglian Poetry, has questioned whether, on the whole, the entire corpus of nineteenth-century Indian poetry in English was 'nothing more than a waggon [sic] hitched to the engine of English poetry.... [that] would seem to move on its rails as the engine moves, observing dutifully the same bends and curves.'⁴⁹ The answer to that question was replied to in the negative, taking into consideration, among various other factors, the abundance of Indian or Oriental themes used by these poets.

Interest in Indian subject matter is present in the Album not only in the poems concerned with Indian history, which shall be examined separately in detail a little later, but also in many poems that are of a descriptive nature, and elaborate upon an Indian landscape or an Indian scene in much the same manner that the poets have used to describe English nature and English life. So, while in certain poems the poet talks unhesitatingly 'Of English downs with sheepecotes sprinkled o'er,' many other poems describe Indian locations such as 'Vizagapatam', 'The Caves of Elephanta', 'Madras', 'Kala Pahar (Black Rock, Monghyr)', 'Sonnet (Near Nynee Thal)', or 'Sonnet: Rapids of Balasun'.⁵⁰ These are simple descriptive exercises, reflecting upon the landscape, scenery, and distinctive features of the places the poems are about. Others, such as 'Sonnet: Khan Sahib's House, near College Square' stand out because of their piquant evocation of a local history, of specific detail of the daily life in that age:

A Persian's mansion, near the Vacoool trees,
That bound the College green, with its array
Of Ethiop porters, oft in boyhood's day,
When Fancy wove the subtlest webs with ease,
Recalled the age when Sindbad ploughed the seas,

⁴⁸ Album, 'Absence', 77; 'Sonnet,' 69; 'A Charade', 45; 'Absence', 78.

⁴⁹ Vinayak Krishna Gokak, introduction to The Golden Treasury of Indo-Anglian Poetry (Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 1970), xxii.

⁵⁰ Album, 'Sonnet (At Thirty-Five)', 8.

With bales of spicery from far Cathay.
 It was a stately pile of granite grey,
 With carved pilasters, and quaint balconies.
 Exotic plants with gaudy blossoms starred
 Its terraces; a marble dolphin flung,
 In the wide court, a limpid column high;
 The windows of the upper rooms were barred,
 But through the lattice-work, with creepers hung,
 Glanced now and then an arm, or lustrous eye.⁵¹

Other poems that contain personal, reflective material on Indian themes include 'Night on the Ganges', 'No.13, Manicktolla Street', 'Sonnet: Punkabaree', or 'Sonnet: Belghuria.'

One poem among these, 'In An Album: After Having A Room Painted With Holly Leaves in 1862,' stands out for its unconscious portrayal of the displacement in the love these Indians bore for English poets. The poem begins with a sentiment that might remind us, today, of the criticism that was in fact levelled so frequently against these poets by later Indian critics, of their choosing a foreign language to express themselves in verse: 'To paint this room thus was a folly - / In such a clime what need of holly ? /... Why was it done? Was't whim or fate / Thus, then, this room to decorate / With such a clumsy foreign bough?'⁵² (Not only is the plant an alien one, the very practice of painting motifs on interiors, or of using wallpaper, is foreign to India.) The answer, supplied by the poet a few lines later, is simple, 'Holly's the favourite of the poet.' The poets who have written about holly are then invoked, and they are Southey, for his poem 'Holly Tree', Wordsworth, the 'prince of poets', for 'Lines written in Early Spring', and Burns for his poem 'Vision'. The poem resonates today with the subtext enclosed unconsciously in the poem, of the strange displacement that these colonial subjects of Britain experienced when 'fate', or more precisely, the British rule of India, ensured that these Indian poets modelled themselves on Southey, Wordsworth, and Burns. Of these, Southey might have been an Orientalist, but Wordsworth and Burns spoke, paradoxically, for a local England and

⁵¹Album, 32.

⁵²Album, 114

Scotland respectively, and were known especially for their involvement with the common man and his language.

The most notable aspect of the poetry of the Dutts, which places them apart from their predecessors discussed so far (and this in spite of the fact that among their predecessors Derozio and Michael were Christian) is the prominent display of Christian piety in a great number of their poems. Forming a distinct strand in the entire corpus of work enclosed in the Album, these poems about Christian duty, spirituality or morality are expressed in a variety of forms, from sonnets to lyrics to hymn-like question and answer verses such as:

Oh, wretched, trembling soul! before the Lord
 How wilt thou go?
 Trusting implicitly in *His* faithful word,
 Whose truth I know.⁵³

Poems such as 'Lines: Written While On A Visit to Kalighat' embody a convert's zeal against the 'reign of grim Idolatry over India', where temples are consecrated to 'hideous idols', and ends with an invocation to the merciful Lord: 'Open Thou their blinded eyes, / Send freedom to the slave.'⁵⁴ Others such as 'St. John the Baptist's Day', 'Ephesians', 'Whence Knowest Thou Me?' among many others deal with Christian suffering, Christian duty, Christian morality, and above all, Christian love. A poem called 'The Hindu Convert to his Wife' deals with the personal experience of conversion to Christianity, a relatively novel theme in the body of colonial poetry produced in the nineteenth century. Many of these poems, like the historical poems, have subheadings that refer to Biblical texts, such as 'Written under John I. 48' under the poem mentioned above, or 'Revelation II. 17' under a 'Sonnet', or 'Written in Auberlin's "Divine Revelation"' under a poem called 'The Heavens'.⁵⁵

⁵³Album,

⁵⁴Album, 24.

⁵⁵Album, 85; 44; 92

The Album also contains many poems translated from the French or the German, such as 'My World is Dead (from the German of Gaudy)', 'Love and Death (from the French of Lachambaudi)', 'The Child and the Angel (from the French of Reboul)', 'The Past (from the German of Mahlmann)', and others from Racine and Delavigne, Schenkendorf, Prutz, Pehling, Arndt, and Theodore Korner.⁵⁶ The idea of Europe as the source of all superior civilization and culture seems to have been taken seriously by these colonial poets, and an interaction with this culture was an imperative for any man of letters writing in English in Calcutta. This cultivation and nurture of European languages by the Dutts would also bear fruit in the next generation in the publication, by Toru Dutt, of A Sheaf gleaned in French Fields.⁵⁷ A volume of translations from the French romantic poets, this book was instrumental in introducing her to the West through the favourable critical notice it received from Edmund Gosse in England.

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The Historical Poems

The most important aspect to be noted in the historical poems of the Dutts, in comparison with those by the three poets looked at so far, is the shift of emphasis that it shows in its engagement with Indian history. It is noteworthy that all the historical poems in the Album deal with subjects taken from specific moments in the medieval history of Rajputana or Delhi, rather than ancient Indian history, and that they are narrative verse tales in the style of Walter Scott's Scottish ballads ('these strains of Scott that stir the soul indeed').⁵⁸ It should be emphasised that this shift is indicative of a more general and important literary

⁵⁶Album, 13; 22; 71; 99.

⁵⁷Toru Dutt, A Sheaf gleaned in French Fields (Bhowanipore, 1876).

⁵⁸Album, 96.

trend at the time, a movement towards historical novels, plays, and poetry. Thus, Bankim (called, for his historical novels, the Walter Scott of his age) wrote his famous novels, *Durgeshnandini* (1865) and *Rajshingha* (1882), on themes from Rajasthani history, Madhusudan had written his drama, *Krishna Kumari* (1861), after reading Tod, and Nabinchandra, Hemchandra and Rangalal had used the same material for their verse, as I have shown above. Narratives belonging to the legends of Rajasthan continued later to be popular in Bengal; Abanindranath Tagore popularised these tales in his collection *Raj Kahini*, while Rabindranath Tagore had many historical, nationalist lyrics on these themes, as I shall show in the Conclusion.⁵⁹ However, it is also important to note that while the historical narrative poems of the Dutts reflect a move towards works that incorporated Rajput history, they were also, as I shall show later, sites of a colonial displacement peculiar to their milieu and time.

The involvement of Indian poets writing in English with the theme of the golden age of the Hindus, as we have seen, continued up to the third decade of the century primarily through an interaction with the works of Jones, Colebrooke and then Wilson, all of whom had extensive contact with, and influence on, educated Indians in Calcutta. Meanwhile, in London, in 1806, James Mill, the Utilitarian philosopher and writer, began work on his *History of British India*, which he brought out twelve years later in six substantial books. The first comprehensive history of India, this whole work was, in fact, a pioneering attempt that included both Hindu and Mohammedan history, and its chief significance lay in the great influence it exercised on both British as well as Indian writing and thinking on India. One of the main results of its uninformed denigration of Hindu culture and society was that its views lent authority to the extreme chauvinism of Macaulay, the supreme 'anglicist', in India. Although published first in 1817, it was republished with revisions and an extension by H.H. Wilson in 1848, whose intention was to correct the

⁵⁹Abanindranath Tagore, *Raj Kahini*. First published in the magazine *Bharati*, ed. Rabindranath Tagore (Calcutta, 1894).

misrepresentations of Indian society. However, this intention was executed in the form of emendations incorporated in notes to the actual text, as a result of which the main text received an added lease of life. The small type of Wilson's lengthy footnotes and his authority as an Orientalist scholar editing this work only granted an extension to the survival of Mill's rationalist work, which might well have sunk into obscurity by then, but instead went through five more editions up to 1858. Mill's views were in concordance with those expressed in another enormously influential tract on India, Charles Grant's Observations on the State of Society among the Asiatic Subjects of Great Britain of 1794; Grant, from his evangelist position (backed by and backing the missionaries), concluded simply that Indian society was heathen and therefore degenerate.⁶⁰ The theme of imperialism in these two works reflected paternalism and trusteeship in its attitude to India, an attitude shared also by Sir John Malcolm's Political History of India (1826).⁶¹ These three major works represent, in a general way, the 'anglicist' position in the educationalist divide, a position usually held by men with little or no experience in India, looking upon India as an experimental arena through the screens of either Benthamism, radicalism, humanitarianism, or 'free trade'.⁶² This angle of thought among the influential British exerted a subtle yet strong hold upon the sensibilities of the Indian poets we are concerned

⁶⁰Charles Grant, Observations on the State of Society among the Asiatic Subjects of Great Britain, Particularly with Respect to Morals; and on the Means of Improving It. Written Chiefly in the Year 1792. (n.p., n.d.). Other extremely influential histories of India by missionaries include William Ward's A View of the History, Literature, and Religion of the Hindoos: Including a Minute Description of their Manners and Customs, and Translations from their Principal Works, 3rd ed., 4 vols (London, 1817-20); and J.C. Marshman's The History of India, from the Earliest Periods to the Close of Lord Dalhousie's Administration, 3 vols (London, 1867).

⁶¹John Malcolm, Political History of India 1784 to 1823 (London, 1826).

⁶²Eric Stokes has argued, however, that Mill was 'no Anglicist' as he 'was convinced that the vernacular languages were far better vehicles of instruction.' Stokes, p 57. However, the categorization here is as regards the overall qualities of the anglicist position, which Mill fulfils by virtue of his programme for reform allied to a sweeping indictment of Indian culture in spite of the fact that he had never been to India, knew no Indian languages, and had relied on secondary sources for his generalizations against the Indian ethos, as Wilson points out in his discussion of Mill's sources in J. Mill, History of British India, 4th ed. (London, 1840), I, iii-iv.

with, and as has already been shown in the context of evangelical rhetoric, one of the forms in which it appeared in the poems was that of a negative portrayal of Indians as a degraded race, needing to be led forward anew into light and regeneration. While with the other poets, this was often couched in abstract terms and coupled with an evocation of the glories of ancient India, the Dutts, newly believing Christians themselves, spoke didactically in their poems of the salvation of India through Christian faith, as in the poem 'Lines Written On A Visit to Kalighat'.

Opinions on Indian society and history that occupied the 'orientalist' position were represented, after Jones, Colebrooke and Wilson, by the school of historians formed by Monstuart Elphinstone, and Elphinstone's disciples, Grant Duff, William Erskine and James Tod. These later historians followed in the footsteps of administrators and scholars such as Hastings and Jones, who had had long careers in India, knew India and something of its languages and peoples, and showed a sympathetic understanding of its problems. Elphinstone's History of India went through nine editions between 1841 and 1905, and was prescribed reading for university students in India.⁶³ Grant Duff was Elphinstone's assistant at Poona, and to him Elphinstone handed over the Peshwa's state papers and correspondence, stimulating him to write his two volume work, A History of the Mahrattas, a straightforward, sympathetic account, to which Romesh Chunder Dutt recorded his debt for its invaluable effect upon his literary endeavours.⁶⁴ Another of Elphinstone's Bombay officials, William Erskine, completed a translation of the Memoirs of Babur, the first Moghul Emperor, while Captain James Tod collected into three teeming volumes, between 1812 and 1823, the Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan, cataloguing the legends of the 'shepherd states' of Rajputana from the mouths of the Indian peasantry.⁶⁵

⁶³Monstuart Elphinstone, History of Hindu and Muhammedan India, 2 vols. (London, 1841).

⁶⁴Grant Duff, A History of the Mahrattas (London, 1825). See last page of Chapter One.

⁶⁵William Erskine, Memoirs of Zahir-ed-din Muhammed Baber, trans. J. Leyden and W. Erskine (London, 1826); James Tod, Annals and antiquities of Rajast'han, 2 vols. (London, 1829, 1832).

This particular mode of presentation was one that Walter Scott, with his interest in Scottish folk history, might have appreciated, when he expressed particular delight upon reading Tod's work.⁶⁶

The early preoccupation on the part of Orientalist researchers such as Jones or Colebrooke with ancient Hindu history had been reflected in the subject matter of the historical poetry of Derozio and Kasiprasad, who expressed the glories of ancient India, extolling its arts and sciences, its tremendous store of knowledge and its rich cultural manifestation in the poetry of a genius such as Kalidasa. This study has discussed, in the preceding chapters, the innumerable details of Jones's influence on Derozio, Kasiprasad and Madhusudan, while I have shown how Colebrooke's comments on Vedic civilization resurfaced in Kasiprasad's defence against Mill's History eleven years before Wilson himself wrote the emendations to Mill. Another direct consequence of Kasiprasad's reading of Wilson's translations from ancient Hindu drama was his adaptation of the story of Vikram and Urvashi for one of the longest poems in his collection, 'The Hero's Reward'. With Madhusudan we witness an interest in both the earlier and the middle period of Indian history. For instance, 'King Porus' spoke of the glories of ancient India in an attitude similar to that of his predecessors, Derozio and Kasiprasad, while his poem the Captive Ladie incorporated elements taken from Wilson's translations and comments on ancient Hindu theatre. In the Captive Ladie, he moved towards the trend that was to become dominant among the Dutts in the latter half of the century, of writing poems incorporating themes based on narratives taken from the middle period of Indian history, dealing with heroic actions and legends of bravery or romance set in the north Indian kingly houses of Delhi or Rajputana. Consequently, a change came about also in the register of the poems themselves, in that the abstract emotionalism of the earlier Orientalist poetry concerned with

⁶⁶Cited in C.H. Philips, 'James Mill, Monstuart Elphinstone, And The History Of India,' in Historians of India, Pakistan and Ceylon (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), 223.

the entirety of India's Hindu past gave way now to a much more specific involvement in particular historical events or battles taken from the pages of history books dealing with the regional histories of particular peoples such as the Rajputs (Tod), or Marathas (Duff), or Mughals (Elphinstone, Erskine).

The Dutt's connection with the romantic historians of India can be traced by referring to the omnipresent subheadings within parentheses accompanying the titles of the historical poems, such as 'The Flight of Rana Sanga' (Vide Erskine's "India," vol. I. P.474).⁶⁷ Such references in the Album range from histories of India beginning with Dow's Hindostan, and include Erskine's India, Tod's Rajasthan, and Elphinstone's India. This preoccupation with the history of India was explained by one of the contributors to the Album, Hur Chunder, in the Preface to an individual volume of his own, Lotus Leaves or Poems Chiefly on Ancient Indian Subjects:

We have many histories of India from school-histories up to elaborate treatises, but no work embodying Indian historical incidents and characters and older traditions in a poetical form. Yet India is truly the land of romance and poetry.... Turning to its history we find in those gigantic epics the Ramayana and the Mahabharata such an inexhaustible mine of the romantic and the poetical, and to its later history such stirring incidents, such oriental gorgeousness, such rapid rise and extinction of dynasties, such a marvellous development of the plans of Divine Providence, that neither the poet nor the romancer can be at a loss for subjects to write upon.... All that ...[I have] attempted to do is to versify or put into metre certain passages in the history of India arranging them in chronological order, and as metrical compositions exercise a more powerful influence than prose, especially on the young, he trusts his labors [sic] will not be altogether without its uses.⁶⁸

Hur Chunder's volume was dedicated to his children, '[s]o fond of reading the history of India'.⁶⁹ That, and the glowing tribute paid by him to the 'marvellous' nature of Indian history, indicate the interest that had been cultivated among Indians in their own newly-

⁶⁷Album, 166.

⁶⁸Hur Chunder Dutt, Preface to Lotus Leaves (Calcutta, 1871).

⁶⁹*ibid.*

written history. Indians had begun to learn, with the spread of English education, along with many other modern ideas, the value of historical knowledge, for historiography had been practically unknown to Hindus at the beginning of the century. By the middle of the century, therefore, a deep interest in the study of history and cultivation in the art of writing history grew in India, leading to a vigorous school of Indian intellectuals concerned with history in the role of defenders of Hinduism, represented at its best earlier by Kasiprasad Ghosh, and later by Rajnarain Bose, Bhudev Mukherji, Chandra Nath Basu and Bankim Chandra Chatterjee. These men sought to prove that Hinduism, taken in all its aspects of development, was a highly spiritual force, and justified existing practices in Hindu society by giving them a new interpretation and a spiritual significance. Bankim's essays allied the concepts of nationalism and history in the most forceful and effective style (the contribution of his historical novels towards installing a sense of nationhood in the popular imagination was also startling). In an essay in *Bibidha Prabandha*, he questions - 'Why is India a subject country?' - and his answer, in a long dissertation, is that Indians are weak because they have no sense of unity or national pride; and there can be no unity or national pride until Indian history is described and interpreted by Indian historians:

There is no Hindu history. Who will praise our noble qualities if we do not praise them ourselves? When has the glory of any nation ever been proclaimed by another nation? The proof of the warlike prowess of the Romans is to be found in Roman histories. The story of the heroism of the Greeks is contained in Greek writings. The case for Mussulman valour in battle rests only on their own records. The Hindus have no such glorious qualities simply because there is no written evidence.⁷⁰

Fiery speeches and articles such as this contributed in no small way to the overall atmosphere of nationalism in conjunction with an intense interest in Indian history that was so manifest as the century came to a close. It was this ambience that led Hur Chunder to

⁷⁰Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, *Bankim Rachanabali*, Vol. II (Calcutta: Sahitya Parishad, 1954), 236.

write his poems on historical subjects, also creating the excitement that would result in his children's fondness for reading Indian history.

Orientalist institutional growth and development had long since been dealt a series of death blows during the regime of William Bentinck as Governor-General, whose policies were openly antithetical to Orientalist cultural policy and so much subservient to James Mill's ideas that he has been quoted as saying to James Mill, 'I am going to British India, but I shall not be Governor-General. It is you that will be Governor-General.'⁷¹ Under his administration, between 1829 and 1835,

... the College of Fort William was dismantled, the Asiatic Society experienced grave financial difficulties, the Calcutta Madrasa and Sanscrit College came precariously close to extinction, the Calcutta School and School Book Societies were rendered impotent, Serampore College anglicized its curriculum and lost its attractiveness to Indians, and such Bengali socioreligious reform movements as the *Brahmo Sabha* began their long drift to cultural nationalism.'⁷²

This 'long drift to cultural nationalism' came to its culmination in the latter part of the century, as we have shown partly in the earlier section of this chapter. Regarding the historical poetry written by the Dutts, this background of events affecting educated Bengalis is important, because the realisation that active government sponsored Orientalist causes were long since defunct, and that the following years, 1839-1845, saw the ultimate triumph of Macaulayism in India, leads to the fact that these poems contain, not the simple one-to-one equation of a Kasiprasad reacting positively to the ideas generated by a Colebrooke, but rather, a more complex equation, where the Dutts were reacting to a government policy which sponsored the established superiority of Western sciences instead. The Orientalist period, in the minds of the Indian people, now took on a mythical aspect, and began to be invoked in the cause of nationalism. An instance of this nostalgia

⁷¹Bentham to Colonel Young, December 28, 1827, quoted in 'Mill's History,' *Calcutta Journal*, III (June 20, 1819), 1020.

⁷²Kopf, *British Orientalism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), 241.

being expressed in a nationalistic manner is furnished by the writing of a leading journalist in Calcutta, Girish Chandra Ghosh. In 1862 he wrote:

As regards Indian literature ... history, antiquities, the present race of Anglo-Indians [British residents in India] ... are lamentably ignorant.... Jones, Colebrooke, Wilson ... respected our fathers and looked upon us hopefully at least with melancholy interest, as you would look on the heir of a ruined noble. But to the great unwashed abroad today, we are simply niggers - without a past; perhaps, without a future. They do not choose to know us.⁷³

In the last sentence about the British in India lies a wealth of difference from the atmosphere that prevailed at the time of Derozio, Kasiprasad, and partly also, Madhusudan. With the occurrence of the Sepoy Mutiny and the establishment of Crown rule, British attitudes, as I have mentioned before, hardened and rigidified into separate enclosures that did 'not choose to know' Indians; from such enclosures and precincts Raj literature began to be born, a literature out of touch with everyday India or indeed with the heritage of that ancient India which the British themselves had heralded in former years.

The Orientalist poetry under discussion in this study had always borrowed from Orientalist texts, the very existence of certain themes and preoccupations in this poetry having come about because of textual scholarship engendered by the research of the Orientalists in India. Now, too, the Dutts were writing poetry with themes taken from the history of India, the only difference lying in the way that the changing social and political background was reflected in the poetry. Interestingly, the earlier poets, in their personal lives, had been in close contact with the figures leading the Orientalist research project in Calcutta, Derozio and Kasiprasad having had extensive contact with eminent British personalities actively involved in the cultural rediscovery of India. Madhusudan, too, encountered, at first hand, the enthusiasm generated by his predecessors at the Hindu College about ancient India, though he did not interact personally with any of the influential

⁷³'They Hate Us Youth,' Selections from the Writings of Girish Chandra Ghosh, ed. M.M. Ghose (Calcutta: India Daily News Press, 1912), p.434.

Orientalists, the last of whom, Wilson, had left India by 1833. These poets had written about the achievements of ancient India in generalities, as if the India they evoked was closely related to their own past heritage, of which they were justifiably proud. The Dutts, on the other hand, approached the history of India through the works of historians dealing with remote regions at a time when the geographical and cultural distance between the various peoples of India was far greater than they became subsequently, and in the legends and stories generated about kings and generals of times past in inaccessible provinces, the Dutts found the same stirring qualities of romance they had felt in the tales and ballads of far away Scotland.

The romantic quality in the historical verse of the Dutts was evident from the manner in which a typical poem of this sort would invoke, besides the themes taken from the famous historians of India, the ballad form of Walter Scott, complete with the poetic idiom that was so characteristic of poems such as 'Marmion' and 'Lay of the Last Minstrel'. All the poems concerned with history were, without exception, narrative poems, relating incidents of war, or a romance, or stories of ambush, or capture. The poetic idiom of these poems continued in the manner characteristic of Orientalist verse, in that a typical English poetic idiom was to be found in the lines of this verse with regular frequency. So, in attempting to evoke the hilly scrub land of Rajasthan in 'The Chief of Pokurna (Vide Tod's "Annals of Rajasthan," vol.i. p. 188)', the poet uses terms such as 'merry greenwood' and 'glade', words that are reminiscent, rather, of Robin Hood and his merry men in the very English woods of Sherwood Forest, or of Scott's opening lines in the second canto of 'Harold the Dauntless': 'Tis merry in the greenwood - thus runs the old lay - / In the gladsome month of lively May'.⁷⁴ Consider, for instance, the following verse from 'The Chief of Pokurna':

⁷⁴Walter Scott, Scott: Poetical Works, ed., J. Logie Robertson (London: Oxford University Press, 1971), 525.

Within the merry greenwood,
 At dawning of the day,
 Four-and-twenty armed men
 In silent ambush lay.
 They wait like couchant leopards,
 Their eager eyes they strain,
 And look towards the lonely glade,
 Towards the distant plain.⁷⁵

The use of words such as 'couchant', a term the O.E.D. defines as belonging to heraldry, succeeds in adding quaintness to a language that is already loaded with the use of standard English poeticisms such as 'four-and-twenty' (again recalling Scott's 'Nine-and-twenty knights of fame / Hung their shields in Branksome hall...' in the Lay of the Last Minstrel).⁷⁶ Another verse in the same poem begins: 'Oh! grimly turned Pokurna's lord, / And loud and long laughed he...', using a phrase that was a favourite with Scott, recurring in several places throughout his poetry. To mention three instances, we find 'Loud laugh'd the stern Pagan...' in 'Harold the Dauntless', 'Loudly the Beattison laugh'd in scorn...' in 'The Lay of the Last Minstrel', and 'Loud laugh'd they all, - the King, in vain...' in 'The Bridal of Triermain'.⁷⁷ The descriptions in the poem of Indian scenes, expressed in terms that belong to conventional Scottish balladry, sound more Scottish than Indian. Thus, in spite of repeated invocations of 'The sovereign of Marwar' or 'The fortunes of Marwar', the chief of Pokurna is shown riding with

A brave gerfalcon on his wrist,
 The bugle on his breast,
 The sunlight gleaming brightly on
 His nodding plume and crest.⁷⁸

The bugle, the gerfalcon on the wrist, and the nodding plume and crest are all textbookish elements that perhaps belong more rightly to a description of a Scottish chieftain in a Border ballad than to that of a local Rajput tribal chief.

⁷⁵Album, 9.

⁷⁶Scott, Canto First, 'The Lay of the Last Minstrel,' 3.

⁷⁷Scott, 527; 24; 559.

⁷⁸Album, 9.

'The Flight of Rana Sanga' is a typical example of the Dutt's historical poems, dealing with a famous battle in Indian history between the Rajputs and the Muslim invaders:

There was trouble on the monarch's brow, but in his heart
no fear,
As with his mailed hand he brushed a large and bitter tear;
He gazed upon his chiefs and sighed, 'This is a day of woe,
The Chohan flag did ne'er retreat before a conquering foe;
....
Outspake a bearded Rajpoot chief - the fire flashed from his
eye -
'There lacks no true and loyal heart for his home and hearth
to die,
There lacks no true and loyal heart to shed where he doth
stand
The very last drops of his life for his king and father-
land.⁷⁹

This poem deals with one of the princes of Marwar in Rajasthan, Rana Sanga, and tells of his strategic retreat from the field of battle so that he might live to fight the Muslim invader another day. The story is taken directly from Erskine's History of India; this is made evident from the line in parenthesis which precedes the poem itself: 'Vide Erskine's "India," Vol.1. P.474.' The chapter in Erskine, called 'War of Rana Sanga, and of Chanderi', upon which the poem is based, is about the Battle of Kanwa, which was fought between the Mughal Emperor Baber and the Rajput king Rana Sanga. The incident that the poem is about reads:

Rana Sanga himself escaped; it is said, by the devotion of some of his followers, who threw themselves in the way of the pursuers, and sacrificed their lives for his safety; and the regret expressed by Baber for not having urged the pursuit in person has reference probably to the escape of his illustrious rival.⁸⁰

Besides drawing upon histories of India for its theme, the poem is also typical in the way it uses expressions that are evocative of English sentiments, exemplified by phrases such as 'for his home and hearth' and 'for his king and fatherland'. The idea of a 'fatherland' is a

⁷⁹'The Flight of Rana Sanga,' Album, 167.
⁸⁰William Erskine, A History of India under the two first sovereigns of the House of Taimur, Baber and Humayun, Vol.1(London, 1854), 474.

Western notion, and used here by this Indian poet, signifies not only the poet's perception of the Rajput's consciousness of his commitments, but indicates to us today the Orientalist preoccupations of the poet with the history and past of his native country, and with its imagined nationhood.

Another historical poem in the Album, 'The Maid of Roopnagore', written by Greece Chunder Dutt, is closely modelled, as I discovered, on a poem of Scott's called 'Nora's Vow'.⁸¹ The theme as well as the form of this poem (both poems consist of four stanzas of eight lines each, in the rhyme scheme of four couplets, aa bb cc dd) is the same as Scott's, as is the manner of opening. Scott's poem begins:

Hear what Highland Nora said,-
 'The Earlie's son I will not wed,
 Should all the race of nature die,
 And none be left but he and I.
 For all the gold, for all the gear,
 And all the lands both far and near
 That ever valour lost or won,
 I would not wed the Earlie's son.'⁸²

This theme, of an offer of marriage from a person of superior status and wealth being spurned by a woman of lesser status but greater character is echoed in 'The Maid of Roopnagore', with the names and the fact that the characters are located in Indian history being the only difference. Both the poems begin on a similar note, inviting the reader/listener to 'hear' of the deeds of the heroine of the poem, Nora and the Maid of Roopnagore respectively:

Hear how the maid of Roopnagore
 Disdained the friendship of the Moor,
 When forth by royal hest there came,
 With peers and paladins of fame,
 A gay young lordling of degree,
 The pride of Moslem chivalry,
 To win her from her father's side,
 To be a Kaffir sovereign's bride.⁸³

⁸¹Album, 21-22. This poem is also present in Greece C Dutt, Cherry Blossoms (London/Calcutta, 1887), 149.

⁸²Scott, 731.

⁸³Album, 21.

The heroine then proceeds to refuse the hand of the Emperor in terms that duplicate those of the Nora of the Highlands, for like Nora, who will not say yes 'For all the gold, for all the gear, / For all the lands both far and near...', the maid of Roopnagore will not accept this marriage proposal for all the 'gems and gold, / For lordly Delhi's guarded hold, / For power, for state, for lands in fee...' The likeness between the two poems exists to the greatest extent in the respective third stanzas of the poems; in 'Nora's Vow', Nora proclaims:

'The swan,' she said, 'the lake's clear breast
May barter for the eagle's nest;
The Awe's fierce stream may backward turn,
Ben-Cruaichan fall, and crush Kilchurn;
Our kilted clans, when blood is high,
Before their foes may turn and fly;
But I, were all these marvels done,
Would never wed the Earlie's son.'⁸⁴

In 'The Maid of Roopnagore', the princess also replies to the envoy from the Emperor with similes of marvellous instances that would not make her change her mind:

The dun-deer on the mountain's side
May with the panther be allied;
Compelled by bleak December's weather,
The owl and lark may house together;
Or yet by spring inspired the dove
May seek the hawk's protecting love;
But Roopnagore in weal and woe
Shall ever deem the Moor a foe.⁸⁵

The only difference between the two poems lies in the ending, in which the maid of Roopnagore continues in her resolve against the marriage, which was, of course, a historically supported fact, while the end of Scott's poem sees Nora 'wedded to the Earlie's son!'. It is interesting to note how the Scottish/English conflict in Scott's nationalistic poem is replaced in the poem by Greece Chunder Dutt with a Rajput/Mughal opposition. It is also of some relevance to note here that this historical story, of the Emperor Aurangzeb's suit being rejected by the princess of Rupnagar, was the subject of one of Bankim Chandra

⁸⁴Scott, 731.

⁸⁵Album, 22.

Chatterjee's most popular historical novels, *Rajshingha* (1882), showing the currency that the legends of Rajput chivalry had in those times in Bengal.

The historical poems in the Album are concerned either with the history of Rajasthan's kings and chieftains, or with Muslim power in the same middle period of Indian history. Of the two poems discussed above, both belonged to Rajput history, the latter also bringing in Aurangzeb, the last great Mughal emperor. The rest of the poems too might be divided along these lines: 'The Death of Mohammed Ghorī', 'Jehangire's Lament', 'The Flight of Humāoon' and 'Sunjogta' belong to the history of power at Delhi, while 'Samarsi', 'Tara Bae' and 'The Flight of Rana Sanga' belong to the legends of Rajasthan. In the former category, the authorities cited are Elphinstone for 'The Death of Mohammed Ghorī', and Dow for 'The Flight of Humāoon'; 'Jehangire's Lament' has a note, but no historian is acknowledged, and 'Sunjogta' has no historical substantiation attached to it at all, perhaps because of the popularity of the legend of Sunjogta and Prithviraj, a story already treated by Michael Madhusudan in the Captive Ladie. Of the poems based on Rajput legend, 'Samarsi' has no note, 'Tara Bae' has a note taken from Tod, and 'The Flight of Rana Sanga' acknowledges Erskine's India.

The sentiments that are found almost invariably in every historical poem of the Dutts about the travails of a defiant and brave race facing a powerful and aggressive enemy, are presented in vivid, direct language in the writings of James Tod. Tod's Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan represents the history of Rajasthan in a language that is highly coloured with rhetorical flourishes of the sort that are to be found reflected in the verses of the Dutts. It is worth looking at a typical passage - in this instance about the devastation of Hindu culture and literature - in order to gain an impression of his language regarding the Muslim conquest of India :

After eight centuries of galling subjection to conquerors totally ignorant of the classical language of the Hindus; after almost every capital city had been repeatedly stormed and sacked by barbarous, bigotted [sic], and exasperated foes; it is too much to expect that the literature of the country should

not have sustained, in common with other important interests, irretrievable losses.⁸⁶

Another passage, about the conflict between the Rajputs and Muslim power, speaks emotionally of the struggles and sacrifices of the Rajasthani people:

The struggles of a brave people for independence during a series of ages, sacrificing whatever was dear to them for the maintenance of the religion of their forefathers, and sturdily defending to death, and in spite of every temptation, their rights and national liberty, form a picture which it is difficult to contemplate without emotion.⁸⁷

Such passages illustrate the origins of the sentiments expressed by the Dutts in their poems. Consequently, in a poem such as 'For King and Fatherland'. In that poem, the patriotism of a Rajput youth fighting the Muslim invader for king and country is described thus:

It was a Rajpoot young and tall,
Upon whose neck his bride
Hung weeping, that the cruel wars
Should wrest him from her side.
'Nay, weep not, love! high hopes are mine;
Canst thou not understand
'Tis sweet to shed our heart's best blood
For King and Fatherland!'

...

They met the foe, the patriot host
Fought gloriously that day -
Oh, broken was the Moslem's shield,
Dispersed his proud array!
For who could stem the rushing tide,
Resist that fearless band,
Whose battle-cry their purpose told,
'For King and Fatherland!'⁸⁸

In this poem, no particular historical event or battle is named, and consequently there is no citation from any historian, the conflict between the Rajputs and the Mughals being treated here almost as a random instance, a general example from the many actual battles fought between the two unequal opponents. The Rajput is depicted as belonging to a race that believes "'Tis sweet to shed our heart's best blood / For King and Fatherland!'; then the

⁸⁶James Tod, Annals and Antiquities of Rajast'han , ix.

⁸⁷ *ibid.*, xvii.

⁸⁸Album, 119-120.

battle itself is described, where the Rajputs are victorious; at the end of the poem, the youth returns to his bride. It is not only the general theme of the poem that has been taken from Tod's account of Rajasthani history, but also the mood evoked by the style and language. As with all the Orientalist poetry studied in this thesis, however, English poetic idiom produces a jarring effect, for example in the repeated refrain ending every stanza, 'For King and Fatherland!'. The nationalist connotations of 'fatherland', as I have mentioned above in the discussion of 'The Flight of Rana Sanga' (where the same phrase occurs) are entirely Western. The following line, when we are told that the 'knight' 'lightly vaulted on his steed' and rode into war, and, later, lines such as 'Back to the city, laurel-crowned,/The knight returned in state' also conjure up a picture not wholly Indian, and belong, typically, to the paradoxical confluences of Orientalist poetry written by colonials.⁸⁹

All the historical poems seem to owe their form and style to Scott. Examples abound; for instance, in a poem about the Rajput princess 'Tarra Bae', the Rajput princess is described in an idiom that belongs more legitimately to a Border ballad :

She sat upon her palfry [sic] white,
That damsel fair and young,
And from the jewelled belt she wore,
Her trusty rapier hung;
And chieftains bold, and warriors proud,
Around her formed a gallant crowd.⁹⁰

Or yet again, a poem called 'Samarsi' echoes Scott's form and style in 'Lochinvar', from Marmion, as can be seen if the first verses of both are placed side by side. 'Lochinvar' begins:

O, young Lochinvar is come out of the west,
Through all the wide Border his steed was the best;
And save his good broadsword he weapons had none,
He rode all unarm'd, and he rode all alone.
So faithful in love, and so dauntless in war,
There never was a knight like the young Lochinvar.⁹¹

⁸⁹ibid.

⁹⁰Album, 98.

⁹¹Scott, Poetical Works, 142.

A poem called 'Samarsi' in the Dutt Family Album opens similarly:

Samarsi the bold is the pride of his clan,
But he owns not an acre in broad Rajasthan;
Samarsi the bold is the hope of the true,
But his sporran is empty, his henchmen are few,
For the Moors o'er the Jumna in triumph have come,
And Samarsi the bold is an exile from home.⁹²

Besides the almost exact parallel between the theme and form of the two, the use, in Dutt's stanza, of the word 'sporran', defined by the OED as 'a pouch, usu. of leather or sealskin covered with fur etc., worn by a Highlander in front of the kilt. [Gael. *sporan*...]' shows conclusively the derivation of the Dutts' idiom from Scott. Walter Scott's intense concern for, and his knowledge of, the Scottish people, their land, history, culture and tradition, however, gives way, in the poems by the Dutts, to an effect of alienation or distance created as a result of the conflict between the English style and Indian themes of the poems. This distance is a typical by-product of this sort of poetry, which was born largely out of reading, as indeed all the Orientalist poetry discussed in this thesis was. The poetical idiom of Scott, penetrating as it does these poems set in Indian historical landscapes, lend these verses a textbook air, an air that typifies the colonial dilemma between two worlds.

*

Orientalist poetry and nationalism in the Dutts

The older strain of Orientalist poetry, with its concern with ancient Hindu history and mythology, or with translations from the Persian, crops up occasionally in the poetry of the Dutts as well. The Orientalist poems of the older variety in the Dutts seem to be no more than a leftover or residue of a traditional poetic convention in colonial poetry from Jones onward. Thus, one of the poems in the Album, 'Song, From the Persian of Mirza Schaffy', follows the Jones's practice of translating from the Persian; we have already

⁹²Album, 98.

noticed how this practice was common to the Dutt's predecessors, from Derozio to Michael. The only difference seems to be that while the earlier translations were usually from Sadi or Hafiz, the Dutts select a later poet who, in fact, invokes Hafiz in one of the verses:

O, what are all the tender songs by gentle Hafiz sung,
 To the silver accents of thy words, the music of thy tongue?
 What is the chalice of the rose, from which the Bulbul sips,
 Compared with thy soft rosebud mouth, thy dainty, coral
 lips?⁹³

The image of the nightingale and the rose (the *gul-e-bulbul*) forms a continuum within the tradition of the translations of Persian poetry in India discussed in chapters two and three.

One of the most prominent of the older Orientalist poems of the Dutts is 'Hymn to Shiva', which follows the poems of Derozio and Kasiprasad that dealt with similar themes. A subheading illustrates an urge to explain the rites and rituals of Hinduism to a Western audience in a manner reminiscent of Derozio's note to his poem 'The Eclipse':

It is usual with the inhabitants of some of the provinces in India to repair, even from distant stations, to the Temple of Shiva at stated periods, and after having bathed and purified themselves, to lay before the altar offerings acceptable to the deity, with such flowers as the season affords. They there chant hymns, of which the annexed one is a specimen.⁹⁴

This effort to introduce a religious ritual in verse that, in effect, should convey an 'essential Easternness' (though the expectation of an 'essential Easternness' is itself an alienating concept), is hijacked, in the usual way, by an idiom and style that belong to English poetic conventions. So, in this poem, the description of Shiva has more Biblical overtones than Hindu markings:

Thou who art king of all things I see,
 Thou who art clothed in glory and in light,
 Thou from whose tresses sprang, in radiance bright,
 The sacred Ganges rolling wide and free...⁹⁵

⁹³Album, 208.
⁹⁴Album, 56.
⁹⁵ibid.

The disparate elements of Orientalist-inspired themes and an English idiom emphasise the link between the Dutts and the Orientalist poetry of their predecessors in Calcutta, the only difference lying in the predominantly Christian imagery and language of the newly converted Dutts.

The greater part of Shoshee Chunder Dutt's major poetical work, The Vision of Sumeru, was taken up with historical and legendary themes, and included poems such as 'Sivajee', 'The Requiem of Timour', and 'Jelaludeen Khiliji'.⁹⁶ These poems, like the rest of the historical poems in the Album discussed so far, retold romantic incidents and battles from the medieval history of India in English metrical forms. However, the title poem is, like the earlier Orientalist verse, heavily footnoted with references to Bramha, Vishnu, Saraswati, Kali, Narayan and many more gods. The unique narrative that unfolds shows the defeat of these old Hindu gods by the precepts of Jesus; the only true faith on earth is His, and the gods are powerless. Some poems in this collection also exhibit the abstract emotionalism of Orientalist poetry that spoke of India's 'glorious past':

O'er crumbled thrones thy waters glide,
 Through scenes of blood and woe;
 And crown and kingdom, might and sway,
 The victor's and the poet's bay,
 Ignobly sleep below.

 'Twas here the savage Tartar stood

 While quaked with dastard fear
 The children of a haughtier blood,
 No longer now a haughty race,
 Their own, their sires', their land's disgrace.⁹⁷

This sort of evocation of India's splendid past, alongside the 'woes and shame' that are her lot now, resembles earlier Orientalist poetry, where the poets attempted to write about the history and heritage of their country in lines not dissimilar to the ones quoted above.

⁹⁶Shoshee Chunder Dutt, The Vision of Sumeru and Other Poems (Calcutta, 1878), 131; 116; 93.
⁹⁷ibid., 82-83.

A poem by Hur Chunder called 'Sonnet: India', originally published in Lotus Leaves, and reprinted in Dunn's anthology, serves as a very good example of this type of Orientalist poetry.⁹⁸ The poem is remarkable for the similarity it bears to the other examples of addresses to India that we have seen in this study, especially to Derozio's sonnets. It follows the classic format, in that it begins with an avowal of the love the poet bears for his country, followed by a dreamlike vision of grandeur, splendour and achievement in India's past, which slowly fades as the poet returns to consciousness to mourn the state of the present, ending with hope for a brighter future:

O yes! I love thee with a boundless love,
Land of my birth; and while I lisp thy name,
Burns in my soul 'an Aetna of pure flame'
Which none can quench nor aught on earth remove.
Back from the shrouded past, as with a spell,
Thy days of glory memory recalls,
And castles rise, and towers, and flanking walls,
And soldiers live, for thee dear land who fell;
But as from dreams of bliss men wake to mourn,
So mourn I when that vision is no more,
And in poor lays thy widowed fate deplore,
Thy trophies gone, thy beauteous laurels torn,
But Time shall yet be mocked;- though these decay,
I see broad streaks of a still brighter day.⁹⁹

The romantic trope (used, to mention only one instance, by Keats in 'Ode to a Nightingale') of dreaming and waking from a vision, is rewritten here in Orientalist/nationalist terms. While a sonnet like this bears a striking resemblance to Derozio's 'Harp of India', where too, the past glories of India are evoked, the present miseries mourned, and a desire expressed of effecting a rejuvenation, it is worthwhile to remember that although such a similarity might point towards an unbroken line in the tradition of such Orientalist poetry, the social and historical realities outside of the page on which such identical sentiments appear were changed beyond recognition. Derozio, writing his sonnets in 1827, was part of a much more liberal, rational and egalitarian milieu in

⁹⁸Dunn, Bengali Book, 27.

⁹⁹ibid.

Calcutta than the Dutts writing in 1870, after the Sepoy Mutiny and the take-over of government by the Crown. Thus, although Derozio's 'Harp of India' and Hur Chunder Dutt's 'Sonnet: India', appear to be identical in form style, and content, the poems appeared in two different ages, one belonging to a time of abstract idealism regarding India's past that enveloped Indians and Englishmen alike; and the other to a time of growing Indian nationalism when Englishmen did not 'choose anymore to know us', and Bengalis began asserting their own identity in spheres ranging from literature and culture to politics. The Dutt's repeated invocation of the conflict between the Rajputs and the Mughals (parallel to their reading, in Scott, of the English/Scottish conflict), therefore, may be read as a transference of current perceptions of an unequal colonial situation prevailing between Indians and the English in India. Certainly, mixed with the air of the textbook romance of histories and legends expressed in the lines of these poems, there is to be found an unwavering championing of the weak against the strong, the colonised against the invading and colonising conqueror. This strong feeling for the sweetness of independence and the galling nature of subjugation to a stronger power is expressed again and again in their verse:

True patriots they, who inly groan'd
 Their country's woes to see,
 All ready to lay down their lives,
 Once more to make her free.

...

To-day we'll free our country from
 A tyrant's hated reign,
 To-day we'll break, no more to wear,
 Base thralldom's galling chain.¹⁰⁰

Similar sentiments expressed in lines written by Rangalal Banerjee in Bengali ('*Shadhinata hinatay ke bachite chay re?*' [Oh, who would like to live without freedom?]) became a byword for an age that seized eagerly such expressions that defined the insufferable nature

¹⁰⁰Album, 'The Death of Mohammed Ghori (Vide Elphinstone's 'India')', 46.

of life without independence, no matter that Rangalal's lines were borrowed specifically from Moore's Irish melody 'From life without freedom / Oh! who would not fly.'¹⁰¹ Yet although it is possible to find such striking parallels between lines written by Rangalal and the Dutts, and such parallels gain importance in the context of the prevailing denial of all vestiges of nationalistic sentiment in the pages of the Dutts, the Album's enveloping aura of anglicization has succeeded in obscuring from view any traces of nationalism the Dutts might legitimately have harboured, at least, in their historical poetry.

The centre of the publication of English poetry written about India had shifted, by this time, from Calcutta to London. In the earlier part of the century, as we have seen in the previous chapters, the poems of both Englishmen and Indians such as William Jones, Henry Meredith Parker, Henry Derozio, Emma Roberts and Kasiprasad Ghosh were all automatically published from Calcutta itself. By the middle of the century D.L. Richardson published his early poetry in Calcutta but subsequently appeared in print from London, while Michael Madhusudan Dutt nurtured a strong ambition to be published from London but did not succeed. With the advent of the Dutt family in the latter half of the century, we see many individual volumes being published initially at the Calcutta presses, but second volumes later finding publishers in England. When it came to the question of the greatest combined investment that the Dutts made of their poetry - the Dutt Family Album - the place of publication was London. London, by then, had become the primary choice for any poet writing in English hoping to achieve some recognition, as publications from India were no longer ensured the same attention accorded to them in the earlier days of East India Company rule. The compulsions operating at this time, which converted the centre of Indian publications from Calcutta to London, seems even to have compelled an educated upper-class Indian gentleman such as Shoshee Chunder to adopt an English pseudonym for

¹⁰¹This instance of borrowing from Western sources, and several others, cited in H.M. Dasgupta, Western Influences on Nineteenth-Century Bengali Poetry (Calcutta: Chuckervutty, 1935), xxx.

the publication of Historical Studies and Recreations.¹⁰² The title page of this work informs us that it was 'Originally published by the author under the *nom de plume* of J.A.G. Barton', while the volumes of poetry printed at Calcutta bore his own name, a symptom of the falling prestige of Indians in the eyes of the British, who interacted less and less with them with any degree of equality. Alfred Lyall and Edwin Arnold were both based in England when they wrote their poetry about India. Toru Dutt and her cousin R.C. Dutt also, like the previous generation of Dutt, published their works simultaneously from Calcutta and London, and by then, had they not had access to the English world of letters, they might not have achieved the level of success that they did attain.

The difference of Toru Dutt's work, from the poets we have discussed so far in this thesis, is the language in which her poetry addresses all of India, her vision radiating outward and away from the boundaries within which most of the nineteenth century poetry in English was confined. An awareness of her own Indianness exceeds, in her poetry, the confines of Indian historical themes and the reworking of Indian legends, and extends, instead, towards a reformulation of the language in which she attempted to capture the difference of her own experience. Thus, for the first time, we confront in her poetry, a sensibility that belongs to modern India, and a language that is crafted out of the vicissitudes of her individual experience, transcending the idiom of her predecessors and creating, in its place, a personal idiom that reached inward for its appeal. With Toru Dutt, the unique phenomenon of the particular sort of Orientalist poetry that had so far been a major component of the colonial poetry of India in the nineteenth century came to an end. That is not to say that the strain of Orientalist-inspired themes came to a sudden or drastic conclusion - that continued to be present in the poetic translations of Romesh Dutt, and was also present thematically in the poetry of Toru Dutt and Sarojini Naidu and Rabindranath Tagore in the next century, but in a transmuted form, as I shall show in the Conclusion.

¹⁰²Shoshee Chunder Dutt, Historical Studies and Recreations, 2 Vols. (London, 1879).

The difference between the two generations of Dutts is also exemplified by the fact that with the first generation there came to an end an era of poets writing in English who were schooled entirely in Calcutta, not having left their country previous to the publication of their verse.¹⁰³ Of the second generation, R.C. Dutt was educated at University College, London, while his cousins Toru and Aru lived extensively in France and in Cambridge, where they were privately educated. In the next century, Sarojini Naidu was educated in London and Cambridge and Manmohan Ghose at Oxford, while Tagore, who was educated privately, spent some time in England in his youth, and won fame in the West entirely on the basis of the publication of Gitanjali from London in 1913. This factor of an education in England must also, certainly, have accounted for the distinct change in sensibility that came about in the verse of these later poets who wrote in the years between the last quarter of the nineteenth century and the second decade of the twentieth. Meanwhile, Orientalist verse ceased finally to exist with the close of the First World War and the advent of Modernism.

The generation gap between the poetry of Toru Dutt and the older members of the Dutt family was also symptomatic of larger changes that signified the shifts in the political and cultural environment of their time. As we have seen in this chapter, the poetry of the earlier generation of Dutts was definitely a product of the nineteenth century, adhering to the principles that guided the other Calcutta poets writing English poetry in that century, following the same preoccupations and inhabiting the same cultural and political territories, and above all, practising the same inherited uses of the English poetic idiom that created the unique literary ambience that all these poets had in common. Unmistakably, their poetry belongs to that corpus of nineteenth century poetry written in English in Calcutta that began

¹⁰³Dunn, in his Introduction to the Bengali Book of English Verse was the first to remark that 'Up to this date no Bengali writer had been trained in Europe. While it is true that Michael Dutt studied law in London, his production of the *Captive Ladie* belongs to the year 1849, before he had left Madras. The Dutt Family Album, therefore, may be taken to represent the older school of Bengali poetry in English.', xix.

with the work of Derozio, in which 'Indian history, legend and landscape, the picturesque elements of the Christian and Hindu faith, and such ideas as would attract an oriental in his first intercourse with the west, provide the themes of their verse.'¹⁰⁴ Educated at the Hindu College, and supervised by D.L. Richardson in the cultivation of a taste in the English literary idiom, the first generation of poets in the Dutt family were circumscribed not only by the models they followed in choosing the themes and language of their verse, but also more and more by their seeming dislocation from the active nationalism of a new Bengal. That Bengal was witnessing, in the same period as they were writing their poetry (though much of their poetry gives no overt indication of this), a renaissance of indigenous culture and a progressive reformation of social codes.

¹⁰⁴ibid., xix.

Conclusion

The End of Orientalist Verse, 1875-1920

Nationalism and Hindu Revivalism in Bengal

The age of Orientalist poetry began to come to an end by 1875, along with great changes in the social and political climate of Bengal. The last quarter of the nineteenth century veered away in a remarkable degree from the previous years of progressive social reform and the anglicization of thought and ideas among the educated class. The belief in the profit and desirability of an English education remained, but meanwhile a Hindu cultural revival was taking place among the people of Bengal. Bankimchandra led the way with his speeches and writings, and most popularly of all, with his novels, of which *Ananda Math* was more politically volatile than any other. About the impact of this novel on the Bengali people,

R.C. Dutt wrote:

Of all his works, however, by far the most important from its astonishing political consequences was the Ananda Math which was published in 1882, about the time of the agitation arising out of the Ilbert Bill.... The general moral of the Ananda Math ... is that British rule and the British education are to be accepted as the only alternative to Mussulman oppression, a moral which Bankim Chandra developed also in his Dharmatattwa, an elaborate religious treatise in which he explained his views... But though the Ananda Math is in form an apology for the loyal acceptance of British rule, it is none the less inspired by the ideal of restoration, sooner or later, of a Hindu Kingdom in India. This is especially evident in the occasional verses in the book, of which the Bande Mataram is the most famous.¹

The song *Bande Mataram*, in fact, went on to become one of the national songs of independent India, having echoed through the freedom movement at every meeting, rally, demonstration or protest march till 1947. The movement of religious revivalism amongst English-educated Hindus in Bengal in the last two decades of the nineteenth century was,

¹R.C. Dutt, 'Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay,' Encyclopaedia Britannica (11th edition, Vol. VI), 910.

as the above passage mentions in passing, one of the consequences of political agitations such as the Ilbert Bill agitation (1880), which had been preceded by protests against Lord Lytton's Vernacular Press Act (1877) and the Arms Act (1878).² The Ilbert Bill, proposed by Lord Ripon, sought to place Indian judges and magistrates of a certain standing on the same level with their British colleagues. This prospect served to mobilise the entire white community in India into an almost open revolt against the Government of Lord Ripon. In defending their special privileges, the British tried to prove the moral inferiority of Indians by violent and prejudiced attacks against Hindu religious and social institutions. The Act was never passed. This, in turn, drove educated Hindus to stand up boldly in defence of their own institutions and practices, and in this partly lay the psychological origin of the Hindu religious revival amongst the educated class in the last decades of the century. Already, in 1875, Swami Dayananda Saraswati had founded the Arya Samaj, a vigorous reform sect that aimed to re-establish the Vedas as revealed truth, and to revitalize Hindu life and instil self-confidence and national pride among Hindus. Undoubtedly, however, the greatest prophet of this revival was Swami Vivekananda, disciple of Sri Ramkrishna, who internationalized the propagation of the greatness of Hinduism in his triumphant Chicago lecture at the World Parliament of Religions in 1893, captivating his audience with a speech addressed to his 'Brothers and Sisters of America'. National pride in the tumultuous response the West gave Vivekananda's Hindu message reached a peak never

²Lytton's Vernacular Press Act (1877) sought to muzzle the voice of the vernacular press in the country, which it believed was spreading sedition in the community. This Act applied to all of India, but the real cause of offence came from the Bengali press, which stopped publication the very day the Act was passed, thus arousing deeper feeling in the community than anything that they might have published so far. The Arms Act, passed in the following year, prevented the native Indian subject of the British government from carrying arms. As B.C. Pal put it: 'Not only the British subjects in India but the subjects of every foreign state temporarily or permanently residing in India was exempted from the operation of this act. The Hottentot or Zulu could carry arms while walking along the streets of Calcutta or Bombay, but the native Indian subject of the British Government could not do so. Even more than the Vernacular Press Act this Arms Act wounded our national self-respect.' (*Memoirs*, 1932, p.275).

before witnessed in the country, and by the time the nineteenth century turned into the twentieth, the climate and mood of the nation had witnessed a revolution.

In the last two decades of the nineteenth century, then, amongst the educated classes of Indians, a revived Hinduism had sprung into intellectual prominence, along with a belief that India possessed a high standard of cultural civilization in its own right. This state of mind owed a great deal also to the revival of Sanskrit studies, led by F. Max Müller (1823-1900), whose mission had been to resuscitate the attitude towards Indian culture which had been adopted earlier in the century by the Calcutta Orientalists. Settled in Oxford from 1849, he edited the most ancient of the Hindu sacred hymns, the Rig Veda, but, undoubtedly, one of his most significant achievements was the publication of The Sacred Books of the East, begun in 1875. This series consisted of fifty-one volumes, including indexes, of translations of major Oriental, non-Christian scriptures, all but three of which appeared during his lifetime. Through his many publications, and from his platform of authority at Oxford, Max Müller would speak enthusiastically of 'our Aryan brother', of the debt of the Western world to the East without which it might have remained 'a barren and forgotten promontory of the primeval Asiatic continent', and of 'the spiritual relationship which now binds India and England together' as a result of the discoveries made in Sanskrit studies.³

It was Max Müller who provided the introduction to R.C. Dutt's The Epics and Lays of Ancient India in 1903, published initially as Lays of Ancient India from London in 1894.⁴ The epics that were included in the later version were the translations of the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana*, which he had been the first Indian to render, in a condensed form, into English verse in separate publications from London in 1898 and

³F. Max Müller, 'Address to the International Congress of Orientalists', September 1874. Chips from a German Workshop (1880), iv, 333.

⁴R.C. Dutt, The Epics and Lays of Ancient India condensed into English Verse (Calcutta: R.P. Mitra, 1903); Lays of Ancient India: selections from Indian poetry rendered into English verse (London, 1894).

1899 respectively.⁵ Finally, a volume called Indian Poetry appeared in 1905.⁶ R.C. Dutt's endeavour, in presenting these translations of the classical literature of India to the West, was a continuation of the grand tradition initiated by Jones and the Orientalists, rejuvenated in the last decades of the century by Max Müller. The important difference between the work of R.C. Dutt and that of Kasiprasad or Michael, however, is that his was a self-conscious mission to propagate *translations*, rather than creative interpretations, of Indian classics to a Western audience, taking over, in a sense, the role that the English Orientalists filled in the early part of the century. So, while Kasiprasad acknowledges, in his notes, his debt to a translation by Wilson in a poem such as 'The Hero's Reward', R.C. Dutt does not invoke an intermediary British Orientalist scholar any more to lend authority to the Indian poet's presentation of a Sanskrit text. Thus, R.C. Dutt's position indicates a takeover of the role of the earlier English Orientalists by their rightful heirs, Indian scholars. A consciousness of this role and its place in the tradition of Orientalist scholarship is evident in a direct statement that R.C. Dutt made in the Preface he wrote in 1893 for the first edition of the Epics and Lays of Ancient India:

Indian poetry has been made known to English readers by distinguished English writers. A hundred years ago Sir William Jones translated the beautiful play of Sakuntala into English, and for the first time drew the attention of European readers to the beauty of Indian thought and poetry. H.H. Wilson followed in his footsteps, and rendered into graceful English verse some others of the best dramatic works in the Sanskrit language, and also a beautiful poem called Meghaduta. Wilson's English translation of the Rig Veda has since been completed and published; and Mr Griffiths has brought out a commendable metrical translation of the great epic Ramayana. Max Müller has translated the ancient Upanishads and the Buddhist work Dhammapada into English prose; and the genius of Sir Edwin Arnold has made thousands of readers in Europe and America familiar with

⁵The Mahabharata and the Ramayana were first published as a part of the Temple Classics series in 1898 and 1899 respectively, subsequently being republished in 1899 and 1900 by J.M. Dent, London. The two epics were then published together as The Ramayana and the Mahabharata in the Everyman's Library series, London, 1910.

⁶Indian poetry; selections rendered into English verse (London: J.M. Dent & Co., 1905).

the wealth of Indian thought and imagery, and the beauty of Buddhist precepts and doctrines.

The time has come for placing before English readers a carefully prepared book of selections from the entire range of ancient Indian poetry....

I have refrained in this volume from giving any specimens of drama.... Instead I shall consider my labours amply rewarded if the present volume can take humble place by the side of Wilson's Theatre of the Hindus.⁷

Self-evident in the above passage is the desire, on the part of R.C. Dutt, to be placed in the line of the great Orientalists, in recognition of his inheritance of their mantle. Yet the tradition from which Dutt seems to trace his continuance in an unbroken line was, in actuality, by the end of the century, in a fragmented and fractured state. The combined efforts, in the first three decades of the century, of an army of Orientalist scholar-administrators building the ancient Hindu heritage of India brick by brick through the auspices of the venerable Asiatic Society in Calcutta had given way now to the isolated and scattered outputs of poet/journalists such as Edwin Arnold, poet/historians such as Alfred Lyall, and scholar/philosophers such as Max Müller, operating from different centres, Arnold and Lyall from London, and Max Müller from Oxford.

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Departures from Orientalist Poetry in the Verse of Toru and R.C. Dutt

The influence of Orientalist scholarship upon R.C. Dutt and Toru Dutt was marked by the fact that the themes of their work were significantly shaped by their interest in history. Toru Dutt was famous primarily for the fineness of her poetry, but it should be remembered that the themes of that poetry were centred around the ancient mythological tales and stories of India. R.C. Dutt's poetry was only one facet in the many sided achievements of his career as administrator (ICS), statesman, social reformer, authority on agrarian problems, one of

⁷R.C. Dutt, Epics and Lays of Ancient India, 1903, i - iv.

the pillars of the Indian National Congress, historian, novelist, essayist and scholar. He, unlike previous practitioners of Orientalist verse, seems to have considered the English poetical translations he published as academic exercises rather than as creative contributions seminal to his oeuvre, an indication, perhaps, of the ambience of the age, when nationalist sentiments elevated the mother-tongue to an all-important status. This was evident from a comment he made in a letter to his brother apropos his Bengali novels: 'My own mother tongue must be my line, and before I die I hope to leave what will enrich the language and will continue to please my countrymen after I die.'⁸

Whether in his academic or creative capacity, however, R.C. Dutt was always concerned, primarily, with the history of India. Writing about his favourite authors in 1905, he said:

Sir W. Scott was my favourite author forty years ago. I do not know if Sir W. Scott gave me a taste for history, or if my taste for history made me an admirer of Scott; but no subject, not even poetry, had such a hold upon me as history.⁹

His importance as an historian lies in a number of seminal works, the most important of these being A History of Civilization in Ancient India and The Economic History of India.¹⁰ His interest in the history of India was not an isolated or individual preoccupation, but rather an outcome of the spirit of the time; this was an age intensely concerned with the cultural significance of historiography in Bengali society. The end of the century witnessed the coming together of the various strands of nationalist interpretations of Indian history in

⁸J.N. Gupta, Life and Work of Romesh Chunder Dutt C.I.E. (London: J.M. Dent, 1911), 68. He wrote four well received and popular historical novels in Bengali: *Sata Barsa*, *Banga Bijeta*, *Madhabi Kankan* and *Maharashtra Jiban Prabhat*. *Banga Bijeta* was later translated into English as Todar Mull; the conqueror of Bengal, an historical novel, while *Madhabi Kankan* was given the title The Slave Girl of Agra: an Indian historical romance. He also wrote two social novels, *Sansar* (1885) which was translated as The Lake of Palms, followed by a sequel, *Samaj* (1893).

⁹Gupta, 69.

¹⁰R.C. Dutt, A history of civilization in ancient India, based on Sanskrit literature, revised ed. (London, 1893); The Economic History of India under Early British rule, 2nd ed. Trubner's Oriental Series (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner, 1906).

the definitive production of the three compendious volumes of A History of Civilization in Ancient India by R.C. Dutt, which included the scholarship of Indians such as Rajendralal Mitra and R.G. Bhandarkar beside the usual panel of European Orientalist scholars. As in poetry, so in the field of history too, Indians were involved in retrieving for themselves the space that had been hitherto the sole precinct of European scholarship.

Certainly the revival in Sanskrit studies must have combined with the renewed interest among Indians in their history to contribute to the themes the poets of late nineteenth century India chose. In the case of Toru Dutt, for example, this revival might have been responsible for the fact that immediately after the family's return from Europe (where she attended a French school and later lectures for women at Cambridge) in 1873, she began an intensive study of Sanskrit. Yet the source of inspiration that led to the compositions taken from Sanskrit literature is said to be her mother, who 'fed her imagination with the old songs and legends of their people, stories which it was the last labour of her life to weave into English verse'.¹¹

Toru Dutt does not fall into the category of the nineteenth-century Orientalist poetry we have been examining precisely because of this introduction, for the first time in the history of Indian poetry in English, of the personal and cultural dimensions of her experience into her creative output. Her fame rests, in fact, largely upon a handful of lyric poems, such as 'Our Casuarina Tree', that drew upon her personal experiences for their substance in the posthumously published Ancient Ballads and Legends of Hindustan. Of the nature of her gift and her immense talent E.J. Thompson later wrote:

Toru Dutt remains one of the most astonishing women that ever lived, a woman whose place is with Sappho and Emily Bronte, fiery and unconquerable of soul as they.... These verses, intensely personal all, and by that intensity breaking from convention and fetters, show her feeling her way to freer rhythms, and even handling blank verse - of which no Englishwoman has given a satisfactory example - in a way

¹¹Edmund Gosse, Introductory Memoir, Ancient Ballads and Legends of Hindustan (London, 1882), xii.

that promised ultimate mastery, or at least a very great degree of strength and adequacy. These poems are sufficient to place Toru Dutt in the small class of women who have written English verse that can stand.¹²

Her first publication, A Sheaf gleaned in French Fields (1875), had been a selection of translations from nearly a hundred French poets. This brought her to the attention of Edmund Gosse, who subsequently became one of her most enthusiastic champions. In the Ancient Ballads her poetry was, for the first time in the history of Indians writing in English, both accomplished and gifted, but what needs to be noted here is that even her 'Orientalist' poems, which form the bulk of Ancient Ballads, such as 'Savitri', 'Sindhu', 'Prehlad', 'Sita', and so on, are different from the Orientalist poems of her predecessors because of the injection of the personal in their atmosphere. So, while epigraphs to two poems mention the Vishnu Purana, the rest of these poems do not, in fact, bear any subheadings at all, claiming, instead, to be representations of stories heard in childhood at home.¹³ The poem 'Jogadhaya Uma', accordingly, deals with a local legend that has no universal currency among Hindus, and seems to be, rather, a legend attached to some unspecified small town, which is included among the other ancient ballads and legends of Hindustan because of entirely idiosyncratic reasons:

Absurd may be the tale I tell,
Ill-suited to the marching times,
I loved the lips from which it fell,
So let it stand among my rhymes.¹⁴

On the other hand, a poem such as 'Sita', with a subject that did have universal currency among Hindus all over India, was not presented as a translation of any portion of the Ramayana at all, but rather as a childhood memory of three siblings listening to a mother's song:

¹²E.J. Thompson, quoted in Harihar Das, Life and Letters of Toru Dutt (London: Humphrey Milford, Oxford University Press, 1921), 220.

¹³'The Royal Ascetic and the Hind. From the Vishnu Purana. B. II. Chap. XIII.'; 'The Legend of Dhruva. Vishnu Purana. Book I. Chapter XI.' Ancient Ballads, 65, 71.

¹⁴Ancient Ballads, 64.

Three happy children in a darkened room !
 What do they gaze on with wide open eyes?
 A dense, dense forest, where no sunbeam pries,
 And in its centre a cleared spot. - There bloom
 Gigantic flowers on creepers that embrace
 Tall trees; there, in a quiet lucid lake
 The white swans glide....

...

But who is this fair lady? Not in vain
 She weeps, - for lo ! at every tear she sheds
 Tears from three pairs of young eyes fall amain,
 And bowed in sorrow are the three young heads.
 It is an old, old, story, and the lay
 Which has evoked Sita from the past
 Is by a mother sung¹⁵

A glance at the language and idiom of these poems by Toru Dutt is enough to realise the difference between her style and that of her predecessors. The poems her father and uncles wrote, and before them Michael, Kasiprasad and Derozio, all belong to a recognisable school of nineteenth-century poetry by virtue of the characteristics they share. Toru Dutt's poetry transcends that school and transmutes into a separate identity, as the language she uses transforms the mythological content in her poems with their individual voice. The mythological content of her poems does not remain as material to be made use of, as in the case of her predecessors, but becomes a part of her consciousness in the creation of her own style. Gosse recognises this quality when he says: 'The poetess seems in these verses to be chanting to herself those songs of her mother's race to which she always turned with tears of pleasure.'¹⁶

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Indians writing English Poetry after 1880

The era of what we have been calling Orientalist poetry in nineteenth-century Bengal, of English verse written in Calcutta, conforming to certain common themes and styles and

¹⁵Ancient Ballads, 122-23.

¹⁶Gosse, Introductory Memoir, Ancient Ballads and Legends of Hindustan, xxiv.

sharing particular interests and preoccupations, could be said to have begun to come to a close by the year 1875. The following year, 1876, saw the publication of two works that marked definite departures, one stylistic, the other geographic, from the earlier body of poetry. The first was the publication, by Toru Dutt, of A Sheaf Gleaned in French Fields, a work which heralded a radical departure in the context of its reception in the West and the trajectories that shaped its author's sensibility; the other, the first book of poetry to be published in English outside Bengal, Behramji Malabari's The Indian Muse in English Garb.¹⁷ Ever since Derozio had published his poems in 1827, the location of all the poetry published in English in India had remained Calcutta; now, that pristine circle of closely knit literary production that had existed in Calcutta disintegrated due to social and historical forces, and dispersed into a wider arena that encompassed, apart from London (which became the major centre of Indian publications), other areas in India. Following Malabari's publication from Bombay, another work was produced there by Vesuvala C. Nowrojee in 1879 called Courting the Muse, followed by M.M. Kunte's The Rishi, published from Poona in 1890.¹⁸

Publications of poetry by Bengalis continued, however, including those by members of the Dutt family.¹⁹ Others included Saurindra Mohan Tagore's English Verses set to Hindu Music In honour of His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales (1875), P. C. Mitra's The Spiritual Stray Leaves (1879), Jotindra Mohan Tagore's Flight of Fancy (1881), Nabokissen Ghose's [pseud. Ram Sharma] The Last Day (1886), Ramkinoo Dutt's A Genial Anecdote (1884), Songs with Native Tunes (1886) and Lines on Jubilee (1887) as well as Manmohan Ghose's Primavera (1890), Love Songs and Elegies (1898)

¹⁷Toru Dutt, A Sheaf Gleaned in French Fields (Bhowanipore, Calcutta: B.M. Bose, 1876); Behramji Malabari, The Indian Muse in English Garb (Bombay: Merwanjee Nowrojee Daboo, 1876).

¹⁸The only other poetical works produced by non-Bengalis in the nineteenth century were: Hamid Ali Khan, A Farewell to London (London, 1885); and T. Ramakrishna Pillai, Tales of Ind and Other Poems (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1896).

¹⁹Those by members of the Dutt family after 1875 were: Soshee Chunder Dutt's A Vision of Sumeru and Other Poems (Calcutta, 1878) and Greece Chunder Dutt's Cherry Stones (Calcutta, 1881).

and the posthumously published Songs of Love and Death (1926). All these volumes of English verse were published in Calcutta with the exception of Ramkinoo Dutt's, whose works were published from Chittagong, and Manmohan Ghose's, whose poetry was published entirely in England.

In this group of publications, many works exhibit traces of a continuation of the type of the earlier body of Orientalist verse, since no specific date may be set to herald the absolute end of an era. Among these, however, it is the work of Manmohan Ghose (1867-1924) which stands out as a major departure from the corpus of nineteenth-century Orientalist poetry, belonging firmly instead to the beginning of modern Indian poetry in English. This is not only because his poetry was written during a period that encompassed the last decade of the nineteenth and the first two decades of the twentieth century. His poetry heralded a different sensibility and existed in a different relationship with England and the English canon from anything witnessed so far. Educated entirely in England since the age of seven, at the Manchester Grammar School, St. Paul's School in London, and finally at Christ Church, Oxford, he formed a part of a group of poets at Oxford that included Laurence Binyon (a school friend), Stephen Phillips and Lionel Johnson. Primavera: Poems by Four Authors [Stephen Phillips, Laurence Binyon, Manmohan Ghose, and Arthur S. Cripps]²⁰ was the product of an active literary engagement with the contemporary poetry scene in London and Oxford. Here, at last, was an Indian poet writing English poetry from the centre rather than the margins, participating equally in the literary life of the age in England, producing poetry that was published alongside the work of other young English poets at the beginning of their literary careers. Here also was a poet in whose work there are no traces at all of the Orientalist tradition. While his contemporaries in India were caught up in the nationalistic search for inspiration from Sanskrit literature and in attempting to express the traditions of ancient Indian culture in

²⁰Manmohan Ghose, Primavera: Poems by Four Authors (Oxford: B.H. Blackwell, 1890).

their verse, Manmohan Ghose's poetry contained, instead, expressions of individual experience, melancholy, nostalgia and evocations of nature. For him, England remained 'the nursing mother of the imagination and the dear home of the muses'.²¹ An exile in his own country after he returned to it at the age of twenty five, Manmohan's poetry frequently spoke with longing of the England he had left behind, and he dedicated his second book, Love Songs and Elegies, to Laurence Binyon in 'Remembrance of Happy Hours' spent in England. He did not live to see the publication of Songs of Love and Death, which Binyon wrote an introductory memoir to and brought out in 1926, two years after Ghose had died on the very day he was scheduled to sail, at last, for England.

Manmohan Ghose's poetry broke away entirely from the body of Orientalist verse produced by his predecessors because of the technical perfection he sought in his craft, and because the themes of his work did not share any kinship with the historical and cultural interests of the earlier body of poetry.²² In a poem called 'April', for example, he describes, in a rhythmic language which owes something to Hopkins, the season in England:

Haste, April, upon city streets to blow
 Thy purest, warmest breezes; fly beneath
 The flower-girl's rags, poor beggary's basket stow
 With lordliest gold of daffodils aglow.
 I will not love thee, save with sighing breath
 On pale, worn cheeks thou waft reprieve of death.
 Come in a wash of fragrance, let sick eyes
 See leaves bud, bird-song hear through windowed paradise.²³

²¹Manmohan Ghose, Songs of Love and Death, with an introductory Memoir by Laurence Binyon (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1926).

²²Manmohan Ghose's younger brother, Aurobindo Ghose (1872-1950), also wrote English poetry, his early poems appearing in Love and Death (Madras: M. Chattopadhyay, 1921) and Songs to Myrtilla (Calcutta: Arya Publishing House, 1923). His poetry was located almost exactly in the opposite sphere to his brother's. Published in India, all his works, including his best known poem, Savitri, a Legend and a Symbol, 2 Vols. (Pondicherry, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1950-51) incorporated Orientalist themes. Aurobindo was also a leading nationalist and later came to be known as Sri Aurobindo, a saintly figure who preached from his ashram in Pondicherry.

²³Songs of Love and Death, 144-145. It is worth noting that the poetry and predicament of Manmohan Ghose are very like that of a later Indian poet writing in English - Dom Moraes. Moraes was educated at Bombay and then Jesus College, Oxford, where he read English.

As we see from this extract, Manmohan Ghose deployed a considerable skill and subtlety in his use of language, which, like that of Toru Dutt, transcended the boundaries that had contained all of the poetry written by Indians before them. Yet this was not merely a matter of talent, for Madhusudan Dutt had had a great poetic gift, and had exercised considerable skill in his use of English as well. For all that, English had been more of a second language for Madhusudan than for either Toru Dutt or Manmohan Ghose. These later poets also shared a sensibility that could exist only in the last decades of the century, when Indians had begun to assimilate their English education and put the English language to use in a manner not possible earlier, when the distance between the Indian and the English language was far greater. All the earlier poets seem to have been fettered, too, by their excessive allegiance to Orientalist texts and the English canon, which resulted in the actual body of their published verse being manacled to various references and footnotes, explanations and subheadings.

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The Success of Sir Edwin Arnold

Poetry about India had achieved its greatest measure of success in the publications of Edwin Arnold in the last two decades of the nineteenth century. Arnold's fame is founded especially on The Light of Asia, which tells the story of the Enlightenment of the Buddha.²⁴ A prolific writer, his works include a dozen volumes of poems, two plays, two

His first book of poems, A Beginning (1957), published when he was only nineteen, won the Hawthornden Prize in 1958. Moraes's poetry is locked in a similar predicament to that of Manmohan Ghose; Arvind Krishna Mehrotra terms this 'burden' to be one of 'dispossession: the loss, on growing up, of boyhood visions', of 'dawdling' for a very long time in a 'wishful landscape'. [Arvind Krishna Mehrotra ed., The Oxford India Anthology of Twelve Modern Indian Poets (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1992), 88-89.]

²⁴Edwin Arnold, The Light of Asia, or the Great Renunciation (Mahabhinshkramana), being the Life and Teaching of Gautama, Prince of India and Founder of Buddhism, as told in Verse by an Indian Buddhist (London, 1879). In 1837, James Prinsep, successor to Wilson and at the time Secretary of the Asiatic Society, successfully deciphered the Brahmi

ambitious poetic works (The Light of Asia and later its Christian counterpart, The Light of the World), travel writing based on his extensive tours of the Orient, and several volumes of translations from Sanskrit, Arabic, Persian and Japanese. The Light of Asia went through eighty editions in America and sixty in Britain by 1920, and was described by Oliver Wendell Holmes as being comparable only with the New Testament.²⁵ Arnold belongs, chronologically, to the time of Toru and R.C. Dutt, to the closing decades of the nineteenth, rather than to the opening decades of the twentieth century with Naidu or Tagore. Yet his success was founded on principles so similar to those that were later to be applauded in the work of the two Indians that his poetry is more profitably studied as the fountainhead of a particular sensibility that was to be found in the last Orientalist strains present in Indian poetry in English. The success of Arnold, and later Naidu and Tagore, owed something to the receptivity of their audiences to Orientalist elements in their verse, although this verse was different in style and expression from nineteenth-century Orientalist poetry.

Edwin Arnold, in representative publications such as Lotus and Jewel, With Sa'di in the Garden, and Light of Asia, did something never done before by an individual writing poetry about India: he amalgamated all the diverse elements from the Hindu, Muslim, and even Buddhist traditions of India and assimilated this material into one stream whose subject matter became essentially *Indian*.²⁶ In the famous Light of Asia, the attraction lies in the descriptions of the landscapes, with their evocations of flamboyantly tropical colours and smells, and the way of life of Eastern people, which is always luxurious and leisurely.

script and thus was able to read the edicts of the Emperor Asoka. The rediscovery of Buddhist India, thus, was the last great achievement of the Calcutta Orientalists, as later discoveries would be made by Continental Europeans or by Indians themselves.

²⁵Edwin L. Arnold, ed. The Arnold Poetry Reader (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co. Ltd., 1920), 10.

²⁶Edwin Arnold, Lotus and Jewel (London: Trubner & Co., 1887); With Sa'di in the Garden (London, 1888).

In telling the life and parables of the Buddha, for example, he describes the resting place of the Prince and his wife:

All the walls were plates of pearl,
Cut shapely from the shells of Lunka's wave;
And o'er the alabaster roof there ran
Rich inlayings of lotus and of bird,
Wrought in skilled work of lazulite and jade,
Jacynth and jasper; woven round the dome,
And down the sides, and all about the frames
Wherein were set the fretted lattices,
Through which there breathed, with moonlight and cool
— airs,
Scents from the shell-flowers and the jasmine sprays;
Not bringing thither grace or tenderness
Sweeter than that shed from those fair presences
Within the place - the beauteous Sakya Prince,
And hers, the stately, bright Yasodhara.²⁷

This lush landscape and wealth of exotic detail contained in iambic pentameter is repeatedly found in poems describing an eternal India that has always existed and always will. Woven into the lustrous setting is the story of the enlightenment of Buddha; and Arnold established a norm in the Light of Asia which he repeated with a lesser degree of success in all his other Indian works: a pattern involving richly coloured descriptions of nature interspersed with religious evocations of Indian faiths. So, mingled with descriptions of the prince's palace, are passages describing the attainment of Nirvana by the Buddha:

Sakwal by Sakwal, depths and heights he passed
Transported through the blue infinitudes,
Marking -behind all modes, above all spheres,
Beyond the burning impulse of each orb-
That fixed decree at silent work which wills
Evolve the dark to light, the dead to life,
To fullness void, to form the yet unformed....
A Power which builds, unbuilds, and builds again,
Ruling all things accordant to the rule
Of virtue, which is beauty, truth, and use.²⁸

Other volumes of poetry follow the same pattern. For example, With Sa'di in the Garden, while incorporating translations from the Persian of the Bostan of Sadi, is an original poem in the bulk. The cast of characters include a Mirza, a learned Muslim; Gulbadan, a Persian

²⁷Light of Asia, 42-43.

²⁸ibid., 169.

singing-girl; 'dark' Dilazar, who provides the musical accompaniment; a maid attending them; and lastly an Englishman, according to Gulbadan, 'that Saheb I knew, lover of India.'²⁹ The poem is set in the gardens surrounding the Taj Mahal, which are described thus:

The palms rise feathered, and the pipal-boughs
 Whisper men's doings to the listening Gods
 With watchful leaves; citrons and rose-apples
 Keep their bright blossoms and their jewelled fruits,
 And broad bananas flaunt their silken flags.

....

Pink oleander-sprays you mark, fig-blooms,
 Stars of the champak, tulip-cups, and spikes
 Of silver-studded aloes, with red gold
 Of peacock-bushes, and fair deadly bells
 Of white datura.³⁰

These vividly coloured descriptions of the Indian landscape are accompanied by the other strand of essential India: its spiritual and devotional side, the mystical nature of its philosophies. So, interrupting the singing-girl's amorous songs of desire, the Mirza explains Sa'di's vision of Faith, and, here, Arnold gives us the translations from Sa'di in italicised text. This amazing scene, bringing together the sacred and the profane in the presence of an Englishman in the gardens of the Taj, could only have been achieved by Arnold, and epitomizes his presentation of India. Highly romanticized, this scene demonstrates how every element to be found in the text is present in order to exhibit the most exotic Indian costumery, undermining any attempt at 'realism', to present, at the core, a mysticism and sensuous delight that would, in the eyes of a Western reader, seem to represent the 'essential' elements of the East.

If the Buddhist and the Islamic philosophies of India are dealt with in these examples, Arnold was also concerned, overwhelmingly, with Hinduism, in publications such as The Book of Good Counsels, The Indian Song of Songs, Indian Idylls, The Song

²⁹With Sa'di in the Garden, 27.

³⁰ibid., 8.

Celestial, The Chaurapanchasika, and Lotus and Jewel.³¹ This last work was the only one of these that did not purport to be a translated text, and contained poems by Arnold on Hindu themes. Here, in a poem called 'In an Indian Temple', a Brahmin pandit explains the nature of 'Om':

He who is there is Brahman, knowing all-
Not as we know, peeping inside and out-
Not as we understand. 'Wise' or 'unwise'
Are words without a meaning for the Soul
Lifted so high! It seeth, all unseen;
Perceiveth unperceiv'd; not understood,
It comprehendeth; never to be named,
Never made palpable; not limited;
The testimony of it being Itself,
Itself made one with the ONE SOUL, wherein
Those states are each transcended and absorbed,
Changeless, rejoicing, passionless, pervading!

Such presentations, in English verse, of the transcendent nature of the soul as explained by Hinduism, go back, as we have seen, to William Jones.³² Here, this extract is not from any particular text or philosophy, but based generally on Arnold's reading of ancient Hindu scriptures, as there is no reference to a specific source. Arnold could certainly have been termed an Orientalist on the strength of his translations alone, if it had not been for the popularising element in his versions of the Sanskrit texts. His publications, however, as suggested by the non-existence of footnotes and annotations, were not entirely part of the Orientalist scholarly academic canon, belonging more to the sphere of popular poetry, where the details describing India did not need to be particular, accurate, or located in a specific text and context. Arnold's achievement, if it can be called that, in fact, was to

³¹The Book of Good Counsels, from the Sanskrit of the 'Hitopadesa' (London, 1861); The Indian Song of Songs, from the Sanskrit of the Gita Govinda of Jayadeva, with other oriental poems (London, 1875); Indian Idylls, from the Sanskrit of the Mahabharata (London, 1883); The Song Celestial, or Bhagavad-gita, from the Mahabharata, 3rd ed. (London, 1886); The Chaurapanchasika of Bilhana (London, 1896); Lotus and Jewel (London, 1887).

³²Compare, especially, with Jones's 'Hymn to Narayena,': 'Spirit of Spirits ! who, through ev'ry part/Of space expanded and endless time,/Beyond the stretch of lab'ring thought sublime,/Bad'st uproar into beauteous order start,/Before Heav'n was, Thou art.... Poetical Works (London, 1810), 118.

separate the text from its context in his presentations. An Orientalist scholar such as Jones provided lengthy details of the conventions of Sanskrit poetry in which his text was located; similarly Wilson, when publishing the Sanskrit dramas, explained in accurate terms the conventions in which the traditions of Hindu theatre existed. Arnold, however, drew a picture in his poems and translations which abandoned the context and failed to historicize or place the material he used within a culturally specific tradition. Bereft of their background, the Indian details present in his poems then assumed a universal character that 'essentialized' India in a way that had not happened before, creating thus an ahistorical representation that was acceptable on a popular level to Western audiences in a manner denied the works of Jones or Wilson or the Orientalist poets of India.

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The Orientalist Background to the Success of Naidu and Tagore

In his Introduction to The Oxford India Anthology of Twelve Modern Indian Poets (1992), Arvind Krishna Mehrotra says:

The origins of modern Indian poetry in English go no further back than the poets in this anthology.³³ But it would have been different, I think, if one poet in particular had shown as much talent as she did hospitality. Consider the following passage in Noel Stock's Life of Ezra Pound (1970):

During the second half of 1913, at the home in London of the Bengali poetess, Sarojini Naidu, Pound met an American widow, Mrs Mary Fenellosa. After reading Pound's 'Contemporania' and possibly other poems Mrs Fenellosa decided that he was the one to whom she could entrust the literary remains of her late husband Ernest Fenellosa.

³³These include: Nissim Ezekiel (1924 -), Jayanta Mahapatra (1928 -), A.K. Ramanujan (1929 - 94), Arun Kolatkar (1932 -), Keki N Daruwalla (1937 -) and Dom Moraes (1938 -).

How Pound famously transformed the Fenellosa notebooks into Cathay does not concern us here. My interest in the record of that day in 1913 is to point out the opportunity missed.... Unfortunately Mrs Naidu never looked beyond the social fringes of modernism, and whereas the new movement would have benefited her work, she, undistracted by it, continued to write as before, as though nothing had changed.³⁴

Modernism and Imagist verse was, however, to radically change the shape of English verse in India, and modern Indian poetry in English, from then onward, could indeed be said to have become irrevocably different from all that had preceded it. Mehrotra mourns the fact that Sarojini Naidu was oblivious to its influences; he forgets to mention that 1913 was the year Tagore was in London, the object of unprecedented adulation and admiration, winning the Nobel Prize that year for the English translations of his verses in Gitanjali.

Before the advent of modern Indian poetry in English came a season of great world renown for two Indians publishing poetry in English in the opening quarter of the twentieth century. Sarojini Naidu and Rabindranath Tagore were, in fact, the first Indians to gain favourable criticism and wider popularity among English audiences with their verse; Tagore, because of the Nobel prize, on a larger scale than Naidu. Although Rabindranath was a Bengali poet, and was known in the West only through his own English translations (he was helped by Yeats for the Gitanjali, and for later works by C.F. Andrews and Edward Thompson), what makes his example essential is the reception his English verse was accorded by Western audiences. It is to be questioned whether the general reader, or indeed even Yeats or Pound in relation to his later work, realised that they were reading only selected translations from the vast corpus of his Bengali works; they seemed rather to treat what they read by him as original publications, which was then judged on their own individual merits. It is imperative to realise, however, that he was a great poet in Bengali with a variousness of theme and matter that is not reflected adequately in the translations. The references to Tagore in this section, therefore, are in the context of Gitanjali and its

³⁴ Mehrotra, Twelve Modern Indian Poets, 1-2.

appeal for Western readers, which exhibited certain identifiable elements of mysticism, spiritualism, exoticism and Easternness, as I shall show briefly. Sarojini Naidu too, though not as popular as Tagore, was never the less championed by literary critics such as Arthur Symonds and Edmund Gosse (two important exponents of Symbolism in *fin-de-siecle* Britain), who wrote the introductions to her first and second books respectively.

That the poetry of Naidu and Tagore was spectacularly successful in obtaining an attention and audiences such as never before is well recognised. What is not realised, however, is that this success was built on the dead body of Orientalist nineteenth-century verse; that although their poetry was fundamentally different from the earlier corpus of Orientalist verse, certain features of their poetry could be traced directly to particular traits of the earlier age; that their popularity fed off a taste already created among readers for descriptions of an 'essential' India. It is in this last context that it is worth remembering that the way towards mass popularity had already been paved by Edwin Arnold.

Arnold's packaging of India, as I have tried to illustrate briefly above, contained two disparate elements - exotic surroundings and spiritual philosophy - interwoven together to form what became one of the most outstanding commercial successes of his age. It is my contention that Naidu and Tagore's success in the West owed a great deal to these two individual elements, which the post-Arnold audience, consciously or unconsciously, must have identified in their poetry as well. Naidu's verse demonstrates the exclusive use of the first element - colourful settings - while the second - Eastern spirituality - is to be found in Tagore's poetry; the second element, especially, was integral to the hysteria surrounding his verse in the West (some readers identified his flowing robes, beard, and gentle appearance as Christ-like).³⁵ This demand for the 'essential' elements of India was best articulated by Edmund Gosse in the context of Sarojini Naidu's poetry:

³⁵For example, the poet Frances Cornford said: 'He is like a saint, and the beauty [and] dignity of his whole being is wonderful to remember.... I can now imagine a powerful and gentle Christ, which I never could before.' Cited in Mary Lago and Ronald Warwick, ed., Rabindranath Tagore: Perspective in Time (London: Macmillan, 1989), 6.

Tunics of purple brocade,
Mirrors with panels of amber,
Daggers with handles of jade.

What do you weigh, O ye vendors?
Saffron and lentil and rice.
What do you grind, O ye maidens?
Sandalwood, henna and spice.
What do you call, O ye pedlars?
Chessmen and ivory dice....³⁹

The haze of rose-coloured glass through which India is seen in Naidu's poems seems to follow Arnold's romanticized descriptions considerably, and typifies a trend that had developed by this time in English writing about India. The excessive romanticism, the deliberate use of colour, the conjuring up of exotica such as jade, ivory, brocade and spice, all these elements were to be found in Arnold and were in demand (as Gosse's directive sets down) in the West, and point to the increasing gulf between the English and Indians. The rapidly disintegrating relations between the coloniser and the colonised changed the equation between the two peoples, resulting in a representational change as well. Consequently, the serious scholarly work of the Asiatic Researches, for instance, which had been so much in demand at the beginning of the nineteenth century in Europe that pirated editions had appeared there, was replaced, now, with a demand for the exoticization of India as personified, for example, in Raj literature, which reduced India to an eventful location for adventurous escapades.

Gosse's demand for 'some revelation of the heart of India... of the principles of antique religion and such mysterious intimations as stirred the soul of the East...' was met not so much by Naidu, but much more comprehensively by Tagore with the publication of the Gitanjali.⁴⁰ In this publication, Yeats thought that 'Mr. Tagore, like the Indian civilization itself, has been content to discover the soul and surrender himself to its spontaneity.'⁴¹ The devotional lyrics in the Gitanjali, poorly translated though they were,

³⁹Bird of Time, 62.

⁴⁰Gosse, *ibid*.

⁴¹W.B. Yeats, Introduction to the Gitanjali, xx.

gave to the West, and Yeats, a flowing text of sequentially numbered short prose-poems which conveyed a seamless, radiant and mystical sensibility that seemed to embody the 'soul' of the 'Indian civilization itself'. The first poem on the first page of the book presented the following lines:

Thou hast made me endless, such is thy pleasure. This frail
vessel thou emptiest again and again, and fillest it ever with
fresh life.

This little flute of a reed thou hast carried over hills
and dales, and hast breathed through it melodies eternally
new.

At the immortal touch of thy hands my little heart
loses its limits in joy and gives birth to utterance
ineffable....⁴²

Poem after poem continued along similar lines:

On the seashore of endless worlds children meet. The
infinite sky is motionless overhead and the restless water is
boisterous. On the seashore of endless worlds the children
meet with shouts and dances.⁴³

Here, it must be mentioned that the appeal of Tagore's spiritual verses also lay in the Christian, Protestant affiliations of the Brahmo god he addressed, distinct from the traditional Hindu gods of India. The Brahmo Samaj, a socio-religious reformist movement founded by Rammohun Roy in 1828, (given an identity affiliated to the 'high' Hinduism of the Upanishads and Vedas by, in fact, Tagore's father Debendranath), called itself a Church, believed in the unity of the Godhead, and that Hinduism was in actuality a monotheistic tradition. Its campaign against idolatry was one of its founding principles, and Tagore incorporated its ideology in lines such as: 'Deity of the ruined temple! The broken strings of *Vina* sing no more your praise', or 'Leave this chanting and singing and telling of beads! Whom dost thou worship in this lonely dark corner of a temple with doors all shut? Open thine eyes and see thy God is not before thee!/ He is there where the tiller is tilling... where the pathmaker is breaking stones... in sun and in shower, and his garment

⁴²Gitanjali, 1.

⁴³ibid., 54.

Beautiful is thy wristlet, decked with stars and cunningly wrought in myriad-coloured jewels. But more beautiful to me thy sword with its curve of lightning like the outspread wings of the divine bird of Vishnu, perfectly poised in the angry red light of sunset.⁵⁰

Translations from ancient texts had provided serious readers with an idea of Oriental spirituality, and intimations of the sublimity of India had been communicated to the general reader most recently in Arnold's verse. Now, in Tagore's poetry, the West found at last an embodiment of its desire, written this time from 'inside the magic circle' - a phrase Edmund Gosse used of Sarojini Naidu's poems, when he said that they had 'the astonishing advantage of approaching the task of [the] interpretation [of the East] from inside the magic circle...'⁵¹

The use of the term 'the magic circle' for the subcontinent of India was not arbitrary on Gosse's part. Indian mysticism, magic and myth had been popularized in nineties England through the modern cult of Theosophy, first taught in America by Madame Blatavsky in 1875, whose two major works, Isis Unveiled (1877) and The Secret Doctrine (1888), 'attempted to synthesize the religious, philosophical and scientific traditions of the East and West and of the Ancient and Modern Worlds'.⁵² The influence of Indian spiritual thought on this movement was tremendous:

The widespread belief that a knowledge of Eastern literature was necessary for true self-understanding, a belief evident in the popularity of translators such as Edward Fitzgerald and Edwin Arnold, in the monumental labours of Max Müller, and in the pervasive influence of Schlegel, Hegel, Schopenhauer, and Schelling, all of whom drew heavily on the *Upanishads*, was adopted as one of the fundamental tenets of Theosophy.⁵³

Madame Blatavsky's theories were set out in two books, The Occult World (1881) and Esoteric Buddhism (1884), both written by A.P. Sinnet, an English journalist she had met

⁵⁰ibid., 48.

⁵¹Gosse, Introduction to Bird of Time, 6.

⁵²Peter Kuch, Yeats and A.E. (Gerard's Cross: Colin Smythe, 1986), 9.

⁵³ibid.

in India. Yeats had associated magic, myth and intuition with poetry throughout his career, but his early poems, especially, showed the influence of Eastern philosophy. George Russell represented Yeats as being enthusiastic about The Occult World, while Yeats had read Esoteric Buddhism and shown it to Russell. Yeats, however, converted to Theosophy only after he had met the Theosophist Mohini Chatterjee, followed by Russell after two or three years. For Yeats, the meeting with Mohini Chatterjee was dazzling, resulting in his adoption, for a short time, of the philosophy of Sankara, whose system of metaphysics Chatterjee expounded; he said Sankara helped give his 'vague thoughts shape'.⁵⁴ Several short poems came out of Yeats's absorption of Chatterjee's exposition, and one poem, 'Anashuya and Vijaya', contained a description of Madame Blatavsky's Tibetan Masters, in whose ancient Himalayan beards the birds built nests; the poem's setting was modelled on an image in Kalidasa's *Sakuntala*.⁵⁵ Yeats told T. Sturge Moore that he 'believed [Sankara] until Blake drove it out of [his] head'.⁵⁶ This background of Theosophy and magic permeating the literary lives of Yeats is important in this context in order to show how Yeats's enthusiastic championing of Tagore's Gitanjali had its roots in his own absorption with Indian mysticism before the advent of Tagore. The preoccupation of literary men such as Yeats and Russell with Indian spiritualism and magic was a direct consequence of the fashion for Orientalism in the 1890's in England, a movement which derived its thrust from Max Müller and Edwin Arnold, Theosophy and Madame Blatavsky, men and movements that presaged Rabindranath Tagore's success in the West.

Tagore's success also owed much to the prevalence of Aestheticism and *fin de siècle* verse in England at the century's close. In an early essay interpreting the 'aestheticism' of Tennyson in The Lotos-Eaters, George Brimley had commented:

⁵⁴W.B. Yeats, 'The Way of Wisdom,' The Speaker, 14 April 1900, 40.

⁵⁵For a comprehensive discussion of Yeats's Indian poems, see H.B. Bachchan, W.B. Yeats and Occultism (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1965).

⁵⁶Ursula Bridge, ed., W.B. Yeats and T. Sturge Moore: Their Correspondence, 1901-1937 (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1953), 67-69.

The Lotus-Eaters [sic] carries Tennyson's tendency to pure aestheticism to an extreme point. It is picture and music, and nothing more..... If music and picture - the feelings of imaginary beings, in a pure reign of imagination, perfectly presented in rhythmical language that takes the formative impulse of the feeling, as falling water does of the forces that draw it into a flashing curve - have no charm for any mind, that mind can find no interest in *The Lotus-Eaters*.... A mood of feeling, of course, it represents, and feeling dependent on, and directed to distinct objects, - in this latter respect, alone, differing from music.⁵⁷

Tennyson's poem was also read by another critic as 'little more than anchorage for a mood that constantly tends to cut adrift into something like the "suppression or vagueness of mere subject" that Walter Pater was to regard as the condition of musical quality in poetry'.⁵⁸

Yeats's introduction to the Gitanjali spoke almost identically of the appeal of the musicality of Tagore's verses:

These lyrics - which are in the original, my Indians tell me, full of subtlety of rhythm, of untranslatable delicacies of colour, of metrical invention - display in their thought a world I have dreamed of all my life long.... When there was but one mind in England Chaucer wrote his *Troilus and Cressida*, and ... he was sung by minstrels for a while. Rabindranath Tagore, like Chaucer's forerunners, writes music for his words.... as the generations pass, travellers will hum them on the highway and men rowing upon rivers...⁵⁹

Tagore, like Swinburne or Dante Gabriel Rossetti, or Tennyson in the Lotos Eaters, was perceived by Yeats to have carried musicality to a point where he 'writes music for his words', corresponding thus to the aestheticist's striving towards poetry that was 'a purely musical impulse'.⁶⁰ Another development of aestheticism, 'a divergence' of art 'from the mainstream of contemporary life and thought', manifested itself in Victorian poetry through an escape into the past.⁶¹ The past frequently provided materials for a fantasy-world to

⁵⁷George Brimley, 'Alfred Tennyson's Poems,' Cambridge Essays, contributed by Members of the University (London, 1855), 237.

⁵⁸R.V. Johnson, Aestheticism (London: Methuen & Co Ltd., 1969), 27.

⁵⁹Yeats, Introduction to Gitanjali, xiii-xv.

⁶⁰George Brimley, *ibid.*

⁶¹R.V. Johnson, *ibid.*, 24-5.

which poet and reader could turn; 'thus William Morris, in The Life and Death of Jason, retells a classical legend in a quasi-Chaucerian style', while, 'more subtly', 'Dante Gabriel Rossetti, in The Blessed Damozel... creates a Heaven that is neither Christian nor pagan... dream-like and misty... closed upon itself'.⁶² Tagore's appeal conformed powerfully to this aestheticist desire for a time and location far-removed from contemporary life; thus Yeats refers above to his poems as belonging to Chaucer's time, or imagined himself, while questioning his Indian friend about Tagore's relevance in Bengal, as an 'Englishman living in London in the reign of Richard the Second... [being] shown translations from Petrarch or from Dante... [who] would have questioned some Florentine banker or Lombard merchant as I question you.'⁶³ The pristine, always European, past that Yeats evoked in relation to Tagore's poems also seemed to gesture towards a lost ideal, a pre-lapsarian time which the modern European could no longer inhabit. The poems spoke to Yeats not only as embodiments of a purer time, but also as the songs of another place, of 'A whole people, a whole civilization, immeasurably strange to us,' a place both exotic and distant.⁶⁴

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Orientalist influences on Naidu and Tagore

The traces of Orientalist concerns in the poetry of Arnold, Tagore and Sarojini Naidu are obvious only when the themes of Orientalist verse in nineteenth-century India are illuminated as the foundation from which their poetry arose. The success of these poets was due to what I have called their separation, as with Arnold, of the text from the context. They extracted the fundamental tenets of 'Indian' thought and presented them in a form that

⁶²ibid., 29.

⁶³Yeats, *ibid*, viii.

⁶⁴ibid., xvii.

disengaged them from their sources in the culturally specific locations of texts and traditions. Their poetry, therefore, retained its Indian content, but free from its moorings in specific contexts, was now enveloped in a vague, romantic and individualistic style which made it more 'universal' and immediately accessible to the lay reader in the West. The connections of their poetry with Orientalist poetry of the nineteenth century has not been acknowledged, as Orientalist verse did not have an identifiable tradition, never having been studied in any detail. Consequently, the distinct trends that set it apart - as a corpus of work that holds together because of its internal bonds of shared characteristics - have never been identified. Once these common tendencies have been marked, however, it is easy to see the links that join the later, very different, poetry of Arnold, Tagore and Naidu to the earlier body of nineteenth-century Orientalist verse.

Arnold's proximity to nineteenth-century Orientalist verse was too great for there to be any difficulty in relating him to it. His numerous translations from the original Sanskrit, Persian and Arabic in themselves speak of his inheritance of the Orientalist tradition. His own verse, too, harks back repeatedly to concerns that may be traced back to Jones or Wilson, as can be seen in the portions incorporating Indian philosophy in his verses. Even the later concerns of Orientalist poetry - the preoccupation with Rajput legends of chivalry - may be found in Arnold in a poem such as 'A Rajput Nurse', which describes the legend of a Rajput maid who saved the Prince of the realm by sacrificing her own baby son.⁶⁵

Poems such as 'Zanouba's Song. From the Persian', 'Grisma; or The Season of heat. From the Ritu Samhara of Kalidasa', 'A Queen's Revenge. From the Virata Parva of the Mahabharata', which are all shorter individual poems in Lotus and Jewel, his only book of original poems about India, indicate, from their titles, the Orientalist nature of his verse.

Even with Sarojini Naidu, it is possible to find poems that belong directly to the Orientalist tradition in theme and purpose. The Golden Threshold contains many poems

⁶⁵Lotus and Jewel, 181.

with Orientalist subject matter, such as 'Humayun to Zobeida. From the Urdu', or 'The Song of Princess Zeb-Un-Nissa In Praise Of Her Own Beauty. From the Persian', or 'Damayante to Nala In The Hour Of Exile. A Fragment'. One poem, especially reminiscent of Orientalist verse by Indian poets writing in English, is the familiar address to the native country. Called 'To India', Naidu's poem reminds us of her outstanding role in national politics because of its vehement patriotism, its personification of India as Mother (a common usage in nationalist literature of the time), and its use of phrases reminiscent of familiar nationalistic slogans such as 'Arise and awake!', coined by Swami Vivekananda.⁶⁶ Traces of the tradition in Orientalist poetry, of poems addressed to India, are, however, still discernible :

O Young through all thy immemorial years!
 Rise, Mother, rise, regenerate from thy gloom
 And, like a bride high-mated with the spheres,
 Beget new glories from thine ageless womb!

The nations that in fettered darkness weep
 Crave thee to lead them where great mornings break....
 Mother, O Mother, wherefore dost thou sleep?
 Arise and answer for thy children's sake!

Thy Future calls thee with a manifold sound
 To crescent honours, splendours, victories vast;
 Waken, O slumbering Mother and be crowned,
 Who once wert empress of the sovereign Past.⁶⁷

The picture of India, surrounded in 'gloom', and 'slumbering', the vision of a future full of 'new glories', 'crescent honours, splendours, victories vast', and the personification of India as a country that 'once wert empress of the sovereign Past', are all elements that sound a familiar chord to a reader conversant with the tradition of such poems to India in nineteenth-century Orientalist verse. Tagore, in Gitanjali, also addressed a famous poem to India, but here the style, imagery and manner of presentation are transformed entirely from the old Orientalist format. Tagore's 'Where the mind is without fear' does not contain any

⁶⁶Note that the Christian characterization of India as 'fatherland' in Michael Dutt and the Dutt Family Album that we have seen in Chapters 3 and 4 gives way, in Naidu, to the more realistic usage of 'Mother' in this poem.
⁶⁷Naidu, 'To India, ' Golden Threshold, 94.

of the visions of the glorious past or the expressions of present misery that the Orientalist poems did; rather, the poem constructs itself around images of the strong and independent future of the nation, which shall be a land where 'the head is held high;/ Where knowledge is free;/ Where the world has not been broken up into fragments by narrow domestic walls....'⁶⁸ The goal prayed for - a 'heaven of freedom' - is nationalistic, but the poem is no longer directed straightforwardly to 'my country', but addressed, rather, to 'my Father', who shall grant that ideal vision into which 'my country' shall 'awake'.⁶⁹

Tagore's link with Orientalist poetry in the Gitanjali has been shown above; interestingly, however, it is possible, once this background of Orientalist scholarship and poetry has been understood, to explore areas in his entire output of Bengali verse that have never been looked at before. The subject of innumerable studies and discussions in Bengal, Tagore's verse, however, is startlingly illuminated by tracing its roots to the tradition of nineteenth-century Orientalist preoccupations. These preoccupations had influenced the origins of Bengali poetry as well, and as we have seen in the previous chapter, from founder Rangalal Banerjee to the group of popular patriotic poets such as Hemchandra, Nabinchandra and Michael Madhusudan, poetry in Bengali had been strongly influenced by the currency, in that age, of the histories and mythologies of India as presented by the Orientalists. By the time of Rabindranath, the direct nature of the interaction between Orientalist research and Bengali poetry had, however, become more diffuse. The lingering presence of Orientalist enthusiasms in Tagore, in poems which were quite prominent for their general popularity, is therefore notable.

Without going into a detailed study of the entire corpus of Rabindranath's Bengali work, it should suffice, for the purposes of this Conclusion, to point out, from the standard definitive collection, the *Sanchaita*, some of the poems that seem to have a direct correlation with nineteenth-century Orientalist concerns. Poems inspired by the Sanskrit

⁶⁸Gitanjali, 27.

⁶⁹*ibid.*

tradition abound. Thus we have '*Meghduta*' twice in the collection, as well as '*Urvashi*', '*Ritusanghara*', '*Kumarsambhaver Gaan*' [Song of Kumarsambhava], '*Savitri*', and two consecutive poems entitled '*Madanabhasmer Purbe*' [Before Madana's Reduction to Ashes] and '*Madanabhasmer Por*' [After Madana's Reduction to Ashes].⁷⁰ *Meghduta*, as we have seen in Chapter 2, was first translated by Wilson, and Wilson was following in the tradition of Jones, who had presented to the world the genius of Kalidasa. Wilson had also translated the drama *Vikrama and Urvasi*, where the character of Urvasi is to be found, upon which Tagore's poem is based. *Ritusanghara* had been first published by Jones in the Sanskrit at his own expense, in Calcutta in 1792, as the Ritusamhara or Assemblage of Seasons, in order to save the original from extinction and make more commonly available a complete Sanskrit work; '*Kumarsambhaver Gaan*' has also been borrowed from Kalidasa by Tagore. The first English poem that presented the theme of Madana's being burnt to ashes was Jones's 'Hymn to Camdeo', Cama being another name for Madana, where Jones described the incident in which Shiva, angered at Cama's audacity in aiming the arrows of love in his direction, reduces him to ashes.

Poems taken from the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* were common source material for every writer concerned with India. The first English translation from the Sanskrit, Charles Wilkins's Bhagavadagita in 1785, dealt with a central passage in the *Mahabharata*, while Jones's long narrative poem 'The Enchanted Fruit', used a story from the epic for its theme; closer to Tagore's own time, Edwin Arnold, too, published translations from the *Mahabharata*. While this tradition of Orientalist translations most definitely did not form the only reason for Tagore's use of subject matter from the epics, it was, none the less, one of the contributing factors to the popularity of these themes. Poems such as '*Ahalyar Prati*' [For Ahalya], and '*Gandharir Abedan*' [Gandhari's Request] or '*Karnakunti Sangbad*'

⁷⁰Rabindranath Tagore, *Sanchaita* (Calcutta: Vishwabharati, 1982), '*Meghaduta*', 99 and 240; '*Urvashi*', 250; '*Ritusanghara*', 279; '*Kumarsambhaver Gaan*', 287; '*Savitri*', 591; '*Madanabhasmer Purbe*', 300; '*Madanabhasmer Por*', 302. All the following Bengali poems refer to this edition of the *Sanchaita*.

[News of Karna and Kunti] are taken from the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* respectively, as were many others.

Of greater interest are Tagore's historical poems, of which there were plenty. '*Shivaji-Utsav*' and '*Shah Jahan*' deal with the kings indicated by the titles, while '*Bandi Bir*' [The Captive Hero] deals, interestingly enough, with Sikh bravery.⁷¹ The earliest instance of an Indian writing about Sikh power seems to be the prose piece composed on the Maharaja Ranjit Singhji of Punjab by Kasiprasad Ghosh as early as 1830.⁷² Another interesting subject for Rabindranath's historical poetry was Buddhism, lately made popular worldwide by Arnold, and never before dealt with in nineteenth-century Indian verse. '*Pujarini*' [The Woman Devotee] and '*Abhisar*' [Love-tryst] are popular examples of poems based on Buddhist parables.⁷³ Tagore's poems on Rajasthani legend and history are also extremely popular and well known, anthologised repeatedly and included in Bengali textbooks for schoolchildren. '*Horikhela*' and '*Ponrokkha*', for instance, deal with stories of heroism and chivalry in the history of the Rajputs, subject matter that had echoed a thousand times in the poetry of nineteenth-century India, in the English verse of the Dutts as well as the Bengali poetry of Rangalal, Nabinchandra, Hemchandra.⁷⁴

What needs to be emphasised at this point, however, is the dissimilarity between the work of the Orientalist poets who borrowed their subject matter from Rajasthani histories, and Rabindranath's poems on the same themes. Rabindranath's poems, while narrating historical episodes based on similar thematic grounds, were dramatic moments contained in lyric form; the source material was transformed by virtue of Tagore's individual style that he evolved. How the direct correlation between Rajasthani history and a poem's subject matter was transformed entirely by Rabindranath's own poetic sensibility

⁷¹'*Shivaji-Utsav*', 475; '*Shah Jahan*', 539; '*Bandi Bir*', 357.

⁷²Kasiprasad Ghosh, 'Sketches of Ranjit Singh,' Calcutta Monthly Magazine, 1830.

⁷³'*Pujarini*', 339; '*Abhisar*', 341.

⁷⁴'*Horikhela*', 360; '*Ponrokkha*', 65.

is demonstrated interestingly in a poem called '*Jhulan*'.⁷⁵ The poem is remarkable for the way in which it takes a local Rajasthani festival celebrating the rains, the *Jhulan* [swing] *purnima* [full-moon] - indicated in the poem only by the title and a reference in the end to sitting on a swing (the traditional manner of celebrating the festival) - and turns it into a metaphor for a meditation on the nature of the soul, love, life and the monsoon in Bengal. This sort of transfiguration, in fact, was what turned the poetry of Tagore, one of the last poets who had a link with Orientalist concerns, into some of the most original verse produced about India so far.

*

Kipling: and the end of Orientalist influences

Nineteenth-century Orientalist verse had not only contributed to a colonial engagement on a scale and range of unexpected richness, but had also formed the base for the triumphant conclusion achieved, by these writers, in commercial, political, and, in Tagore's case, artistic terms, by these writers in the first two decades of this century. By the nineteen twenties, after the Great War, the literary ambiance changed immeasurably. Kipling's early verses about colonial India, which had already won acclaim since the last decade of the last century, were of a radically different nature from Orientalist poetry. Departmental Ditties and Other Verses appeared in Lahore and then Calcutta in 1886, followed by the even more successful Barrack-Room Ballads and Other Verses in 1892, and they owed their huge popularity to the vivacious and bold, if somewhat crude or brash, light verse that combined exotic subject matter with marching rhythms and comic Cockney dialect.

What is not generally pointed out in this context is that here Kipling was following a time-honoured tradition, his satirical, sharp and humorous poems on the daily comedy of

⁷⁵'*Jhulan*', 150. The festival of *Jhulan-purnima*, interestingly, was described evocatively in its Rajasthani setting by Abanidranath Tagore in the first story in *Raj Kahini*, '*Bappaditya*'. First published in *Bharati*, ed. R. Tagore (Calcutta, 1894).

Anglo-Indian life bringing to a successful culmination a well-established strand of colonial poetry written by the English in India. Incidental verse printed in ephemeral journals, magazines, and newspapers, dealing with the trials and trumpery of a life in exile in a foreign land, had been popular from the beginning of the nineteenth century. In a literary journal such as the Bengal Annual, it is possible to find a comic/satiric piece whose title, 'From the Persian of Meer Abdul Huk', mocked Orientalist enthusiasm for translations from the Persian:

A person came from Georgia around our town to stray,
And wished to be a Cazy, but the Gov'rnor answered nay;
He bribed him with a donkey, and he brought his wish to
pass,
And there had not been a Cazy, if there had not been an ass.⁷⁶

Poems by Henry Meredith Parker - for example in the collection Bole Ponjis - contained comical and satirical sketches of life in India which displayed an attention to detail and the dailiness of colonial life which came to be associated, for readers, with Kipling's Indian verse. Parker's poems establish the antecedents to Kipling in such apt parallels, and this tradition in Anglo-Indian verse has been so little noticed by commentators, that I shall, over here, use some extended quotations in order to briefly establish my point. A poem called 'Chateaux En Espagne', for instance, incorporated exactly those elements that characterize Kipling's comic satires on life in India. An Englishman describes his fascination for, and ultimate disappointment in, life in Calcutta. He came with visions nurtured at a young age:

As for myself, my fate was doomed,
As soon as I could totter,
By tales of golden realms, perfumed
With cinnamon trees and ottar:
And thus the sapling of my youth
Was trained to point to India,
Where I'd an uncle, that's the truth,
With Maha Rajah Scindiah.⁷⁷

He describes, after arrival, the 'Palace City' [Calcutta] which he sketch'd / Into vast splendour starting':

⁷⁶David Lester Richardson, ed., Bengal Annual (Calcutta, 1830), 264.

⁷⁷Henry Meredith Parker, 'Chateaux En Espagne', Bole Ponjis (Calcutta, 1851), 206-215.

He finds half rubbish and half glare,
 Whitewash, and green venetians,
 Straw roofs, and orders which I swear
 No Romans knew nor Grecians.⁷⁸

Satire and pungent detail attend his evocations of an Anglo-Indian's pursuits and privileges:

All this we bear as best we may;
 But there are greater evils,
 Which all, ten thousand times a day,
 Give to ten thousand devils:
 I don't mean dinners for threescore,
 Thermometer a hundred,
 Or an evening drive, though that's a bore,
 On which I've often pondered.

I don't mean Horticultural shows,
 Where peas and new potatoes
 Lie sad and sickly "dos a dos;"
 I don't mean the mosquitoes;
 I don't mean what is called a hop,
 Dramatic recreations,
 Or even men who talk of shop,
 And quote the regulations.⁷⁹

The ultimate woe, 'the *true* griefs', are those concerning the wealth and glitter that had dazzled the Englishman before he ventured out: for 'woe is us! the Rupee tree, / With all its jingling glories, / Has now no more reality / Than Scheherazade's stories.'⁸⁰ This poem is immediately followed by another ditty called 'Of the Late Mr Simms', which describes the life and manners of Mr Simms, of 'Messrs. Sheringham, Leith, Badgery and Hay':

And when his tiffin it was done, he took a pint precise
 Of well cooled soda water, but it was not cooled with ice,
 And a little ginger essence ('Oxleys') Mr Simms did say
 It comforted his rheumatiz' - Alas, and well-a-day!

...
 And every Doorga Poojah would good Mr Simms explore,
 The famous river Hooghly up as high as Barrackpore,
 And visit the menagerie, and in his pleasant way,
 Declare that all the bears were bores - Alas, and well-a-
 day!⁸¹

⁷⁸ibid., 211, 212.

⁷⁹ibid., 212-213.

⁸⁰ibid., 213

⁸¹ibid., 219; 220-21.

As we see from these brief extracts, Parker's poems (the first of which uses the ballad form and the second Kipling's favourite fourteen syllable line), when compared to Kipling's 'A Legend of the Foreign Office', 'A Code of Morals', 'The Ballad of Fisher's Boarding House', or 'Pagett, M.P.', demonstrate similar qualities in the form, style, language, description and delivery.⁸² Kipling's Indian verse, therefore, found a success (related, perhaps, to the concurrent meteoric rise of his reputation as one of the greatest English short-story writers) denied his predecessors such as Parker or Walter Yeldham, who wrote the popular Lays of Ind (Comical, Satirical and Descriptive Poems illustrative of English Life in India) under the pseudonym, 'Aliph Cheem'; this was a volume of satirical light verse that had appeared in India in 1871 and run through seven editions by 1883.

Though a contemporary of the aesthetes and the decadents, Kipling was not of their party. His poetry, on the contrary, revealed such energy of style that it has been described as being 'like a gust of fresh air in the close, stale atmosphere of much English writing of this period. There was nothing *fin de siècle* about Kipling except the dates of his early appearances...'⁸³ Indeed, Kipling's verse bore more affinity to the rumbustious low-life music hall than to the great English poetic canon, and as Henry James complained of The Seven Seas (1896), 'It's all *violent*, without a dream of nuance or a hint of "distinction"; all prose trumpets and castanets and such - with never a touch of the fiddle-string or a note of the nightingale.' Yet for all that, James concludes, 'But it's magnificent and masterly in many ways, and full of the most insidious art.'⁸⁴ T.S. Eliot, defending Kipling's verse in the modernist age, found himself in an unusual predicament: 'We expect to have to defend a poet against the charge of obscurity: we have to defend Kipling against the charge of excessive lucidity.'⁸⁵

⁸²Rudyard Kipling's Verse: Definitive Edition (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1940), 8-9, 12, 40, 26.

⁸³Norman Page, A Kipling Companion (London: Macmillan, 1984), xii.

⁸⁴Henry James, letter of 5 November, 1896, cited in Page, 173-4.

⁸⁵T.S. Eliot, Introduction to A Choice of Kipling's Verse (1941), expanded and reprinted in 'In Praise of Kipling', On Poetry and Poets (London: Faber and Faber, 1957).

'Excessive lucidity', in fact, was among the rarest of commodities in the Modernist movement, whose most widely admired poets practised paradox, ambiguity, allusiveness, obliquity, and startling new ways of using language. While Eliot tried to find the terms with which to appreciate Kipling's verse, treating it as a special case, the literary taste of the time changed to accommodate new forms and styles. One of the effects of this shift was the passing away of various poetic modes and styles - for instance, Georgian and pre-Raphaelite poetry; Orientalist-inspired verse written in England (by poets from Beckford to Yeats) was also a school of poetry which quickly became dated. Imagist principles emphasised concision of style, and in the March 1913 issue of Poetry, the famous brief statement of Imagist principles and a list of tips composed by Pound appeared. Richard Aldington's Preface to the Imagist anthology of 1915 was, according to David Perkins, the single most influential statement produced in the whole course of the movement, and the qualities of 'all great poetry, indeed of all great literature' were listed here.⁸⁶ In six points, Aldington underlined how important it was 'to employ always the *exact* word'; to 'create new rhythms.... fight[ing] for it [free verse] as a principle of liberty'; to 'allow absolute freedom in the choice of subject'; 'To present an image (hence the name: "Imagist")'; to 'produce poetry that is hard and clear'; and to believe 'that concentration is the very essence of poetry'. Modernist poetry as practised by the Anglo-American generation of Pound, Eliot, Williams, H.D., Marianne Moore and Stevens, was substantially different in its concerns from Kipling's verse, and diametrically on the other side, for instance, of Yeats's Indian poems or Tagore's Gitanjali; both of which would be criticized, in light of the Modernist requirement for exactitude, as 'vague'. The age when Orientalist concerns and enthusiasms directly influenced poetry written about India came to a gradual end. Eliot's The Waste Land, published in 1922, was the paramount example of the 'modern' in poetry, and preoccupied the attention of the age. Although it ended with the Hindu chant,

⁸⁶David Perkins, A History of Modern Poetry (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1976), 7.

'Shantih Shantih Shantih', the sensibility and the ethos surrounding the use of those Sanskrit words in that poem had kept only a vestigial trace of the old Orientalist concerns.

Indian poetry written in English after the First World War also grew apart from the old body of nineteenth-century Orientalist verse. Always mindful of English poetic idiom, Indo-Anglian poetry, on the one hand, responded to the change in the English literary ambience with the advent of Modernism, but on the other, the powerful influence of the ideal of a nationalist literature in the mother-tongue justified the reservation of the most sustained efforts of the intelligentsia for indigenous languages. Years of living in Europe had taught Michael Madhusudan to question: 'Do you think England, or France, or Germany or Italy want Poets and Essayists?'⁸⁷ Writing from France as far back as 1865, Madhusudan, characteristically invoking his favourite English poet to make his point, had continued:

I pray God, that the noble ambition of Milton to do something for his mother-tongue and his native land may animate all men of talent among us. If there be anyone among us anxious to leave a name behind him, and not pass away into oblivion like a brute, let him devote himself to his mother-tongue. That is his legitimate sphere - his proper element. European scholarship is good in as much as it renders us masters of the intellectual resources of the most civilized quarters of the globe; but when we speak to the world, let us speak in our own language. Let those who feel that they have springs of fresh thought in them, fly to their mother-tongue.⁸⁸

The movement towards a successful, skilled and accomplished Bengali literature, begun by Madhusudan in his self-appointed capacity as 'a tremendous literary rebel', sweeping away the old Bengali taste for a Sanskritized literary style and bringing in fresh winds of change in forms new to Bengal, was consolidated and given shape and substance by Bankim Chandra Chatterjee.⁸⁹ Bankim's agenda was self-conscious and clear: he wished to rejuvenate Bengali literature in order to give the Bengali people their own identity, and he

⁸⁷Letter to Gour Das Basak, 12 Rue des Chantiers, Versailles, France, 26th January, 1865. *Madhusudan Rachanabali* (Calcutta: Sahitya Sansad, 1993), 599.

⁸⁸ibid.

⁸⁹Letter to Rajnarain Bose, no date, *Madhusudan Rachanabali*, 550.

accomplished his mission with spectacular success. Speaking at a meeting in 1870, he famously declared the need for 'A popular literature for Bengal', the title of his lecture, in which he commented on the action and reaction between 'the national character and the productions of the national intellect':

To me it seems that a single great idea, communicated to the people of Bengal in their own language, circulated among them in the language that alone touches their hearts, vivifying and permeating the conceptions of all ranks, will work out grander results than all our English speeches and preachings will ever be able to achieve.⁹⁰

That 'single great idea', unnamed in the speech, undoubtedly stood for the formation of a national identity and an independent national mind. Bankim Chandra handed over his mantle to Rabindranath Tagore, the author of India's national anthem, who carried on his work and brought it to a flourishing so spectacular that it revolutionized Indian national life. The emphasis, by the ^{mid to late} second quarter of the nineteenth-century, was firmly towards nationalism and away from any affiliations with any aspect of the English rulers of India, a parting of ways aptly symbolized by Rabindranath himself, who had consented to being feted in London, and rewarded with the ultimate prize in literature in 1913, but who, in 1919, made a public gesture of protest when he returned the knighthood the British awarded him in outrage over the horrors of the Jallianwala Bagh massacre at Amritsar.

⁹⁰Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, 'A Popular Literature of Bengal', paper read before the Bengal Social Science Association on 28 February 1870. Jogesh Chandra Bagal, ed., *Bankim Rachanabali* (Calcutta: Sahitya Samsad, 1990), 97-98.

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