

## H. H. WILSON AND THE HINDU COLLEGE (1823-1832)

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The administration of the Marquis of Hastings (1812-23) witnessed a conscious attempt on the part of British Orientalists to reach the Bengali elite of Calcutta and work together for the cultural regeneration of the country. The formation of the Hindu College (20 January 1817), the Calcutta School Book Society (4 July 1817) and the Calcutta School Society (24 July 1818) was an expression of this spirit of collaboration. Horace Hyman Wilson, the translator of *Meghdoot* (1813) and the author of the *Sanskrit and English Dictionary* (1819), emerged during these years as the chief promoter of Sanskrit language and literature. As the Secretary of the Asiatic Society he enlarged and directed its activities to the unravelling of the history of Hindu, as distinct from Vedic, India. The older Orientalist pre-occupation with Vedic India had inspired Rammohun Roy but was unpalatable to most caste Hindus, who considered the post-Vedantic period to be the real seed-time of Hindu religion and culture. Wilson also defended the departure in legal customs etc. in Bengal from the classical code as a normal regional variation and not a perversion.<sup>1</sup> No less important was his role in the foundation of the Sanskrit College in Calcutta. All these factors endeared him to the educated and respectable Hindus of Calcutta, "who saw in him a kindered spirit in their evocation of an embracing Hindu Renaissance".

Wilson's relationship with the Hindu College dates from the year 1824. A few words on the previous history of the College will not be out of place here. The College is generally believed to have been founded with a bias for "secular education" and for "European literature and European Science". But the original charter of the College does nowhere emphasise western education. "The primary object of the institution is, the tuition of the sons of respectable

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1. David Kopf, *British Orientalism and Bengal Renaissance* (Calcutta, 1969), Chap XI p. 167-177.

Hindoos in the English and Indian languages, and in the literature and science of Europe and Asia".<sup>2</sup> The charter provided for the teaching of English, Bengali and Persian ; perhaps it laid a little more emphasis on Bengali in the junior classes and definitely on English in the senior classes. But English was not to be taught to the boys below eight years of age without the permission of the managers in each particular instance.<sup>3</sup> The syllabus of the college did not include theology but neither did it specifically exclude it. The *Pathsala* was the lower school and the *Mahapathsala* or Academy was the high school. The institution was referred to variously as the Hindoo College, Anglo-Indian College or the *Vidyalaya*. Under the indifferent management of the native directors, the college was little better than other schools of the time. It was financial bankruptcy that induced the native managers to seek the assistance of the General Committee of Public Instruction in January 1824. They applied for house rent and allowance for a scientific instructor for the senior classes ; they also wished to have the occasional assistance of Dr. Wilson, at that time the Junior Member and Secretary of the General Committee, in the management of the *Vidyalaya*.<sup>4</sup> Wilson, on his part, was evolving his own schemes of education by envisaging a combination of the Hindu College and the proposed Sanskrit College.<sup>5</sup> In fact the two Colleges very soon came to share the same buildings and scientific laboratory and held certain classes jointly. The government readily granted the house allowance (Wilson personally selected a spacious house for the *Vidyalaya*) and appointed Mr. Ross the philosophical professor, and at the time "suggested the propriety of the Committee's possessing a certain share in the management of the Institution."<sup>6</sup> While expressing grateful acknowledgement and proposing a joint committee for management, the Hindu Directors were not without apprehension about the nature and extent of the General Committee's control. As they write :

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2. *Presidency College Register*, Part 1, 1927, p. 2.

3. *Ibid*, p. 2.

4. Hindu College Managers to Harrington, 30 January 1824, Copybook of letters, G. C. P. I., 31 July 1823-3 December 1824.

5. David Kopf, *op. cit.*, p. 179.

6. Persian Secretary to G. C. P. I., 14 May 1824, Copybook of Letters, G. C. P. I. 31 July 1823-3 Dec. 1824.

It is scarcely to be apprehended that any question would arise in which the opinion of the native and European Managers would be exactly balanced, and should such an event occur, we hope it will not be thought unreasonable in us to propose that a negative voice may be allowed to the Native Managers, that is to say that any measure to which the Natives express an unanimous objection shall not be carried into effect.

We beg further to observe that in thus expressing our readiness to place the Vidyalaya under the joint management of Natives and Europeans we do so in the full confidence that not only an improved course of study but the satisfaction of the Native Subscribers and Managers of the Hindoo Community will be equally the object of both and we entertain no doubt therefore that in all modifications of the rules of the College it will never be forgotten that it is a Hindoo Institution for the purpose of cultivating especially English literature and science alone,<sup>7</sup> that the admission of persons likely to injure that respectability and consequently to contract the utility of the College will always be strictly prohibited and that works directed against the character or principles of our countrymen will also be excluded.<sup>8</sup>

The signatories to the letter were Chundra Coomer Tagore, Gopeemohun Deb, Radhacant Deb, Gooroo Persaud Bose, Radha Madhab Banerjea, Comolacant Das, Ramcomul Sen, Rajkissen Singh, Russomoy Dutt and Ladley Mohun Tagore. Thus, in spite of their deep faith in Dr. Wilson, the Hindu Managers had some uneasiness about the motives of the General Committee. The way they emphasise the "Hindoo" character of the institution takes away much lustre from their image as projectors of "secular education". As we shall see it was Wilson, who (with occasional assistance from David Hare, Mr. Ross, Dr. Tytler, Mr. D'Anselme and Mr. Derozio) built up brick by brick the educational system of the College. It was he, again, who firmly defended it, when in 1830-31, a determined effort was made by the conservative Hindu Managers to destroy that system. On 6 August 1824 a resolution was passed making Dr. Wilson

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7. Thus they guard against the teaching of Western religious ideas.

8. Hindu College Managers to G. C. P. I., 1 July 1824, Copybook of letters, G. C. P. I., 1823-24.

the Vice-President and ex-officio member of the Sub-Committee of the Hindu College. Wilson infused new life into the young yet dying *Vidyaiaya*. "The hours of study were increased from four to seven, the curriculum was overhauled and enlarged, quarterly and annual examinations were held and the teachers were kept under strict control. Students were attracted from as far as Patna, Assam, Visaqapatnam..."<sup>9</sup>

## II

In January 1825 Wilson wrote the first of a series of annual reports on the progress of education at the Hindu College.\* The distant personality of Horace Hyman Wilson, a scholar lost in the depths of Sanskrit studies, comes alive in these reports. Wilson conducts the reader from class to class, holding examinations, examining papers, appreciating talents, suggesting improvements in the course of study and selecting books for prizes as well as for the college library. His attachment to and concern for the institution was unbounded, the success and failure of the students were very personal matters to him. Wilson invited eminent scholars of different subjects to examine his students. The College boys in their turn took every opportunity to develop an intimate contact with him. Closely associated as he was with the administration of the Sanskrit College as well, Wilson was not much attracted to the boys of that institution, who were rather older; he considered them already past the age at which new impressions are easily received.<sup>10</sup> He often praises the youthful curiosity of the Hindu College boys and held high hopes about many of them. Dr. Wilson sets the goal for the Hindu College in very clear terms :

The General result of the operation of the Vidyalaya is to give the students considerable command of the English language, to extend their knowledge of history and geography and to open to them a view of the objects and means of science. There can be

9. *Presidency College Register*, Part I, 1927. p. 7.

\* J. C. Bagal gives an account of Wilson's administration at Hindu College basing on MSS. Proceedings of the Managing Committee which he found in Radhakant Deb's library. *Modern Review*, 1955.

10. Wilson's report to the Sub-Committee of the Hindu College, 6 January, 1825, op. cit.



no question of the vast improvement which education under such a system offers over that system which restricts the sphere of ideas to the narrowest limits of India and substitutes monstrous exaggeration for physical truth. At the same time the Vidyalaya is not in my estimation what it ought to become and what I conceive, with proper support, it might easily be made.<sup>11</sup>

The first requisite was a library amply provided with books on science, geography, history, mathematics, and of course, English literature. "A taste for reading might be formed which would be an invaluable preparative for a course of advanced study."<sup>12</sup> We find carefully selected lists of books, some of them attached to the annual reports, being ordered from England for the Anglo-Indian College. The lectures of Mr Ross on Chemistry were a success,<sup>13</sup> being attended not only by the two advanced classes but also by ex-students employed in public offices. Wilson observes,

It is not to be expected that very precise ideas should have been gleaned from a first course of lectures on novel and abstruse subjects, but the glimpses of truth, however imperfectly or partially caught, cannot fail to prepare the faculties for perfect vision hereafter.<sup>14</sup>

As successful experiments were the best means to knowledge in this field, Wilson ordered better equipment for the laboratory. The very low standard of mathematical study at the College was another of Wilson's worries. Hutton's *Mathematics* and Keith's *Arithmetic* were introduced and Wilson's search for a competent instructor ended in 1827 with the selection of the controversial Dr. Tytler. But Wilson's supreme dissatisfaction was with the state of English studies. Boys of the top classes, who were "sufficiently versed in the language to

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11. Wilson's Report on the Anglo-Indian College, 26 January, 1825, G.C.P.I., Copybook of Letters, 1 January—18 July, 1825.

12. Ibid.

13. The funny stories about Mr. Ross' inefficient teaching seem to have circulated from Rajnarayan Bose's *History of the Hindu College* (Calcutta, 1953). It is repeated in *Presidency College Centenary Volume*, 1955, p. 3. But Wilson calls his classes "interesting".

14. Wilson's report, 26 January 1825, op. cit., 1 January—18 July 1825.

understand the best writers in it and to appreciate thought as well as words", were kept confined to Enfield's *Speaker* and Blair's *Exercises*.

Reflexion can be rarely if ever awakened, and interest can never be excited by such a detached and unconnected series of isolated specimens. It is therefore, I conceive, highly expedient that the upper classes at least should lay aside all miscellanies and enter boldly upon our best writers in prose and verse.<sup>15</sup>

He admitted the need for better masters to teach original composition and correct "errors of thought or illustration as well as of expression".<sup>16</sup> So from the beginning Dr. H. H. Wilson had set to work with the conscious aim of "rendering the Hindoo College the main channel by which real knowledge may be transferred from its European source into the intellect of Hindoostan".<sup>17</sup>

Wilson's proposed course of study necessitated administrative changes as well. The monitorial system, so long extensively used for the six junior classes, was discontinued as it interrupted "the studies of a number of the most promising scholars" and provided inadequately for the instruction of the younger boys.<sup>18</sup> One more teacher was recruited and, in return for better salary scales, the teachers were entrusted with more classes. Two permanent monitors, at a monthly allowance of Rs 16, were chosen from the outgoing students to look after the newcomers. Apart from an inducement to keep those two scholars attached to the college and their studies, it was one means of training up native teachers. The managers hoped to meet most of the increased expenses from a rise in the number of paying scholars, an expectation more than fulfilled in the coming years.<sup>19</sup>

Wilson's report on the second annual examination of the Anglo-Indian College (January 1826) is missing. We only have the Governor-General's observations on it.

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15. Ibid.

16. Ibid.

17. Ibid.

18. Wilson to G. C. P. I., 7 July 1825, Copybook of Letters, G. C. P. I., 1 January—18 July 1825.

19. Ibid.

His Lordship-in-Council desires also to especially acknowledge his sense of the zeal and intelligence manifested by the Visitor, Mr. Wilson, in superintending the affairs of the College, to which and to his many suggestions for advantageous results exhibited by the late examinations must be mainly ascribed.<sup>20</sup>

Presumably it was at Wilson's suggestion that donations made by Rajas Baidyanath Roy, Hurrinath Roy and Kalishankar Ghosal were henceforth to be utilized for the foundation of scholarships at the Anglo-Indian College.<sup>21</sup>

In March 1826 the Sanskrit College building, the school houses and the out offices (along with the famous railings) were complete.<sup>22</sup> On 1st May that year, the Hindu College classes shifted to the out offices while the main building was occupied by the Sanskrit College boys. On the date of the transfer, Henry Louis Vivian Derozio, a young man of barely eighteen, was appointed teacher. At this time there were eight teachers on the College staff, Derozio being appointed the fourth teacher. The system of instructing boys by those of the upper classes, called 'monitors', was abolished. The staff must have been augmented during the latter half of the year, because we find as many as fourteen teachers on the establishment by January following including two for Sanskrit and Bengali and two Persian.<sup>23</sup> According to the testimony of Krishnamohun Banerjea, the year 1826 marked a turning point: "diligence and industry" replaced "carelessness and indolence" and before the

20. Persian Secretary to G. C. P. I. 3 January 1826, Copybook of Letters, 1 January—18 July 1825.

21. Ibid.

22. Burn & Co. to Wilson, 8 March 1826, Copybook of Letters, G. C. P. I., 1 January—18 July 1825.

23. J. C. Bagal, "Hindu College - The Second Phase" *Modern Review*, Dec. 1955, p. 461.

David Kopf following *Presidency College Centenary Volume* dates the change of residence in or about May 1827, op. cit., p. 179, footnote 8. *Presidency College Register*, Part I, 1927, p. 7, gives the same date. Wilson reports for the year 1826, "During the first half of this year the change of residence and various modifications delayed the introduction..." Wilson's Report to G. C. P. I., 15 January 1827, Copybook of Letters, 1 September 1826—27 February 1827.

end of the year "palpable marks could be observed of the future intellectual advance of the boys."<sup>23A</sup> From 70 in January 1825, the number of paying scholars rose to 223 in January 1827. It is not without a feeling of pride and self-satisfaction that Wilson writes in January 1827 :

If popularity may be considered as a test of merit of any institution, it may be confidently appealed to on the present occasion... To the evidence furnished by the credit which the Seminary enjoys with the native community, I am happy to add my own conviction of the progressive improvement of the Institution, as derived from a very minute and rigorous examination of the classes... those of the Second [Class] occupy a place equal if not superior to that in which the scholars of the First Class stood at the last examination .. The chief improvements of the two senior classes are in the use of the English language and familiarity with physical science. Original composition in English was last year [1825] confined to the First Class and was then recently attempted. .. [B]ut during the last six months [i.e. July-December 1826], it has been regularly maintained in a theme once a week alternatively upon a historical and ethical subject. Latterly the exercise has been extended to the Second Class...<sup>24</sup>

The students had also acquired some insight into the elementary principles of Chemistry from the "valuable instructions" of Mr. Ross. Under the inducement of the College Committee and with a view to qualifying themselves for public service, scholars of the first class (as well as of lower classes) had applied themselves to the study of the Persian language. While there were 41 boys in the Persian Class, the Bengali Class comprised only 50 students. These boys were just beginning to form some idea of the grammatical structure of the language. Early in 1826 the Managing Committee of the College had passed an important resolution regarding Bengali and Sanskrit Classes at the College. At a meeting on 24 February, 1826, it resolved :

23A. *Enquirer* quoted in *India Gazette* of 16 May 1832.

24. Wilson's Report to G. C. P. I. 15 January 1827, op. cit., 1 Sep. 1826—27 Feb. 1827.



"That the free boys and S. C. [School Society] boys of the three first classes may learn Sanskrit instead of Persian if they wish.

"That the free boys and S. C. boys of all the classes below the 3rd as far as the 8th be obliged to study Bengali.

"That the attendance of the pay scholars on either of the classes, Bengali, Persian or Sanskrit be regulated by the wishes of their parents.

"That a Sanskrit class be formed of the following lads if they wish : Krishnamohun, Gangakant Pattak, Badan Chandra Ghose, Nasiram Mitra.

"That the Bengali Grammar be substituted for the Mugdhabodha in the Bengali class".<sup>24A</sup>

But the new curriculum of studies does not seem to have effected much improvement. Wilson seems to be deeply worried about teaching Bengali in early 1827 when he writes :

Even the Senior classes, habituated as they are to translate into Bengali, commit very commonly the grossest solecisms, and in general they express themselves in writing much more correctly in English than in their native tongue. Great difficulty prevails in remedying this state of things [ : ] prejudice of the parents, who think it idle in their children to study a language which they speak [ ; ] the perverseness of the teachers, who have been accustomed to conceive that no language has a grammar except Sanskrit [ ; ] and especially the want of good elementary books. The first obstacle must be left to time, and the gradual diffusion of correcter notions [ ; ] the second we have succeeded tolerably well in overcoming [ ; ] and the third had been brought to the knowledge of the School Book Society ...<sup>25</sup>

Wilson also found that the Pandits and Moonshis were unable to control their classes ; these were scheduled after school hours, when the English teachers had left. He therefore proposed to place them

24A. J. C. Bagal, "Hindu College : The First Phase" *Modern Review*, Sep. 1955, p. 234.

25. Wilson's Report, 15 January 1827, op. cit.

in the routine of the day and to lengthen the classes upto 5 o'clock. Two years later, in January 1829, Wilson was yet to decide on the proper means of teaching the vernacular. He found the teaching of the Pandits and Maulavis too tedious and time-consuming for the college boys. At the same time, presumably under the influence of the Sanskrit College Pandits, he was thinking of teaching Sanskrit as a preliminary to Bengali. As he writes :

"I am also convinced of the justice of an opinion common to the natives and which I have hitherto been disposed to question that the study of Bengali is only to be profitably prosecuted through the study of Sanskrit My view however is not exactly the same as theirs. The construction of the Bengali language and correct composition in it on ordinary topics may be acquired without Sanskrit but Bengali has no language of reasoning. . . The terms are in no instance translated correctly ; a knowledge of Sanskrit might have supplied equivalents. We can only hope therefore to have English works of the highest class rendered into the language of Bengali classically and closely when the translators combine Sanskrit with English. At the same time I cannot recommend that the students of the College should attempt to acquire Sanskrit until it can be learned by a less prodigal waste of time and labour than at present. Perhaps some of the English students of the Sanskrit College may be found hereafter qualified to teach Sanskrit and English to those of the Anglo-Indian College but a short grammar and [a] Dictionary of Sanskrit and English should in the meantime be prepared."<sup>26</sup>

The General Committee was in entire agreement with Wilson and suggested that every facility should be given to him to prepare the proposed compilation.<sup>27</sup>

When Wilson turns to the English Classes his tone changes completely. He proudly compares his first report with the report for 1827. Paying scholars numbered 300, which was twelve times what

26. Wilson's Report to G. C. P. I., 23 January 1829, Copybook of Letters, 1 January—26 June, 1829.

27. Bagal, "Hindu College : The Second Phase", p. 465.

they were in 1825. What was more remarkable was the difference in acquirement :

The First Class, several of the boys of which then [ in 1825 ] quitted the College as having learnt all it could teach, was engaged in Tegg's *Book of Knowledge*, Enfield's *Speaker*, Murray's *Grammar* and Goldsmith's *Grammar of Geography*.<sup>28</sup> The Fourth Class was in Murray's *Grammar* (abridged) and all below the Sixth were confined to the spelling book. Arithmetic was scarcely taught at all and the Rules of Three were the utmost limits of proficiency. I consider the Fifth Class now to be fully on a level with the First of that time and the Eighth to be nearly if not quite equal to the Second. The acquirements of the classes above the Fifth are in general much superior to those of the First Class of the earlier period, while those of the present First Class admit of no comparison with anything yet effected by the College, and far exceed the expectations which a reference to my former report will show I had then expressed or entertained.<sup>29</sup>

A total of 105 boys were awarded prizes that year. While the junior boys were awarded school books, the prizes given to the outgoing boys were "such as have been thought likely to be of use to them or to keep alive an interest in their past studies".<sup>30</sup> Apart for suitable books, the prizes included globes, microscopes, thermometers, magnifying glasses, electrical bottles and cases of instruments.<sup>31</sup>

Wilson personally guided the students in the matter of their English composition in prose and verse.<sup>31A</sup> He found the original composition of the first year boys was "considerable" but not "so perfect as it ought to be" ; that "offences against grammar and

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28. Wilson's Report to G. C. P. I., 8 January 1828, Copybook of Letters, 1 September 1827—28 February 1828. In 1827 the First Year Class read a considerable portion of Pope's *Poems*, his translation of *Iliad*, *Vicar of Wakefield*, *Paradise Lost*, *Julius Caesar*, *Cymbeline* and *Merchant of Venice* ; also part of Blair's *Lectures* and Kame's *Elements of Criticism*.

29. Ibid.

30. Ibid.

31. Ibid.

31A. *Hand Book of Bengal Missions*, p. 508, 1848, quoted in J. C. Bagal, "Hindu College" p. 463.

idiom are observable to a greater degree than could be wished".<sup>32</sup> Wilson held the teachers fully responsible for such faults. In 1830 one junior teacher was dismissed for incompetent teaching.<sup>33</sup> Besides the want of good teachers, there was an acute shortage of books. "I beg to state that most of the first class were obliged to write out the *Merchant of Venice*, in consequence of the want of printed books."<sup>34</sup> Wilson, in fact, was thinking of preparing a graduated series of school books for this and other schools and colleges of India and only awaited the Government's approval.

In January 1829 Wilson made a proposal which, in the light of future events, assumes great significance: "In communication with Mr. Tytler I propose having the students of the first class introduced to some knowledge of metaphysics in the course of the following year".<sup>35</sup> We do not know for certain but we guess that Mr. H. L. V. Derozio must have been entrusted with this class. For the first time in 1829, the following books, among others, were procured for the Hindu College:

David Hume's *Essays: Moral, Political and Literary* and *A treatise on Human Nature*; T. R. Malthus's *Definitions of Political Economy* and *An Essay on Population*; J. S. Mill's *Principles of Political Economy*; William Paley's *Natural Theology* and *Principles of Moral and Political Philosophy*; Thomas Reid's *Enquiry into the Human Mind* and *Essays on the Powers of the Human Mind*, David Ricardo's *Principles of Political Economy and Taxation*; Charles Montesquieu's *The Spirit of Laws*; Sir William Blackstone's *Commentaries on the Laws of England*; Lord Byron's *Poetical Works*.<sup>36</sup>

"The library was liberally resorted to by the pupils of the college and its benefit is evinced in possession of an extent and variety of informa-

32. Wilson's report to G. C. P. I., 8 January 1828, op. cit., 1 September 1827—28 February, 1828.

33. Wilson's report to G. C. P. I., 14 January, 1830, Copybook of Letters, 1 January—28 December, 1830.

34. Wilson's report to G. C. P. I., 8 January 1828, op. cit., 1 September 1828—28 February, 1828.

35. Wilson's report to G. C. P. I., 23 January 1829, Copybook of Letters, 1 January—26 June 1829.

36. Ibid.



tion which their class books do not supply.<sup>37</sup> Kashipersaud Ghose left college in 1828. Krishnamohun, Russickrishna, Madhubchandra, Harachandra, Amritolal, Radhanath, Shibchandra, Gungacharan, Krishnadhon, and Ramchandra among others composed the first class of 1829. There is evidence to show that Krishnamohan and Russickrishna were Derozio's direct students but Peary Chand Mittra, being junior by five years, most probably did not attend his college lectures. The lectures on metaphysics, whoever delivered them, were eagerly received. Some time in 1830 or 1831, writes P. C. Mittra, "Hare, seeing the tendency of the Hindu mind, arranged with Derozio to deliver a course of lectures on metaphysics at his school which was open to the public. Some four hundred young men used to attend the lectures which were continued for some time."<sup>37A</sup> The year 1829 may be taken as the beginning of Derozio's ascendancy over the minds of the college boys. Though Wilson does not mention it, we know from other sources that about this time the Academic Association and other debating societies were formed. From about this time the senior boys of the college took to writing for journals; they also undertook translation of standard English works into Bengali.

In July 1829 several first year boys applied to Wilson for teaching posts in the colleges of Benares, Delhi and Agra. Gooroochurn Mittra and Iswarchandra Dey, both students of average ability, were appointed assistant teachers<sup>38</sup> at the Benares Anglo-Indian Seminary at the end of 1829. Krishnamohun and Russickrishna<sup>39</sup> left the college and joined the Patuldanga School sometime in 1830 and from there they kept in close touch with Derozio and the College. But Krishnamohun was yet to become the desperate character he was in 1831. In a courteous letter to Wilson asking for a teaching post in Delhi, Krishnamohun expressed his apprehension that his parents would not consent to his leaving home in the month of Bhadra. He

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37. Ibid.

37A. P. C. Mittra, *A Biographical sketch of David Hare*, (Calcutta 1949) p. 37.

38. G. C. P. I., Accounts Book of Benares Anglo-Indian Seminary (1830-1839).

39. Krishnamohun came First with 73% marks while Russickrishna got 67% at the examination conducted by Wilson in December 1829.

also made a condition that 50 rupees from his salary should be paid to his family through David Hare.<sup>40</sup>

### III

On 4 December 1829 came Bentinck's Sutte Abolition Act. The petitions and counterpetitions which followed revealed the breach that divided Hindu society in Calcutta. The staff and students not only of the Hindu College but also the Sanskrit College took sides in the controversy. It is especially worth noticing that the *Sumachar Chundrika*, the spokesman of the conservative Hindus, while mainly hitting out at the anglicizing education at Hindu College, did not wholly spare the Sanskrit College. The radicals among the college youth were vocal but more outspoken perhaps was Derozio through the editorial columns of the *India Gazette*.<sup>41</sup> The whole of the year 1830 was marked by debate and controversy. The Hindu Managers of the *Vidyalaya*, some of whom were members of the Dharma Sabha, put in their combined weight to pass measures supposed to maintain the "Hindoo" character of the institution. The *Parthaenon*, brought out by the Hindu College boys in February 1830,<sup>42</sup> was discontinued by a sudden order from the College authorities. The *Chundrika* of 13 March 1830 commented: "We hear that the boys have desisted from publishing the paper owing to their fear of the Dharma Sabha."<sup>43</sup> When the Hindu Directors of the College made arrangements to honour Sir Edward Hyde East as the founder of the Hindu College and Dr. Wilson for his services to the College, Derozio protested publicly: "As long as Hindu Gentlemen continue insensible to the claims of Mr. Hare, the statue of Sir Hyde East and

40. Krishnamohun to Wilson, 4th August 1829, G. C. P. I., Copybook of Letters, July to December, 1829.

41. The articles which came out in middle months of 1830 are unsigned, but *Bengal Hurkaru's* comment that the writer is a 'radical' and 'poet', as also the tone of the writing, point to Derozio.

42. The Delhi College authorities were eagerly wanting copies of *Parthaenon* for their college students.

43. Editorial of *Chundrika*, 13 March 1830, *Sambad Patre Sekaler Katha*, B. Banerjea, (henceforth to be referred as S. S. K.) Vol. I, Calcutta, B. S. 1344, p. 92.

the portrait of Mr. Wilson will be sad monuments of subservience and sycophancy.”<sup>44</sup> Derozio offended the authorities even more when he protested against their directives asking boys not to attend the lectures of Duff and Hill on Christianity.<sup>45</sup> Derozio, of course, did not spare the sectarian narrowness of Duff and Hill ;<sup>46</sup> he merely declared that the order of the Hindu Managers prohibiting the attendance of Hindu College boys at religious and political discussions would have effects the very opposite of those intended. As an example he pointed out the resolution passed at a Native Literary Society (Academic Association) to include henceforth “religious and political discussions” in their agenda. “The best means of exciting public attention to any particular set of opinions is to prescribe them ; and the most powerful instrument for ripening the youthful mind to habit of sturdy independence is, first to initiate it into liberal studies and then by a tyrannical and ineffectual use of usurped power to repress its exertions in some particular direction.”<sup>47</sup> It is worth noting that Derozio did not fail to criticise Dr. Wilson and David Hare for their roles in college management. The authorities retaliated by “nipping” the Academic Association “in the bud”.<sup>48</sup> However, the students of the Hindu College, the schools of the School Society and Rammohun Roy’s school formed at least seven associations on the same model.<sup>49</sup> That the love of learning English had spread amongst Sanskrit College students as well is evident from the steady rise in the number of students in the English class since 1827.<sup>50</sup> The *Chundrika* of 27 March 1830 commented that it was harmful for Brahmin students to study English ; if it is necessary to teach both languages, Hindu College boys should rather be taught Sanskrit.<sup>51</sup> The *Chundrika* of 8 May 1830 said that Sanskrit College students

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44. Quoted from *India Gazette* in *Calcutta Monthly Journal*, June 1830, No. 428, p. 77.

45. *India Gazette* quoted in *Calcutta Monthly Journal*, September, 1830, No. 431, pp. 87-91.

46. *India Gazette* quoted in *ibid*, pp. 123-27.

47. *India Gazette* quoted in *ibid*. p. 263.

48. Native Improvement from a Native Correspondent, *Calcutta Monthly Journal*, December 1830, p. 59.

49. *Ibid*, p. 60.

50. W. W. Woolaston’s application to Wilson, July 1827.

51. Editorial of *Chundrika* ; 27 March 1830, S. S. K., Vol. I, p. 27.

were being taught English against their will ; that the college was no longer of much benefit to society.<sup>52</sup> In his half-yearly report on the College in 1830, Mr. W. Price, Secretary of the Sanskrit College, speaks of discontent in the medical classes. The replacement of Professor Khudiram Bisarad by a senior student, named Madhusudan Gupta, offended senior medical students, who left college *enbloc* without informing the authorities.<sup>53</sup> On 15 May the *Chundrika* complained that the Medical Professor was dismissed to force the students to study Western medicine, anatomy etc. under the European Professor and apothecary ; that this was the first step to the dismissal of native professors in other departments as well.<sup>54</sup> A feeling of distrust for Westernizing education in every form pervaded Bengali Hindu society in 1830. The Bengali-Orientalist cooperation for cultural regeneration was nearing an end. Bengali support for the Calcutta School Book society seems to have ceased from after 1829.<sup>55</sup> The number of Pathshalas under the Calcutta School Society was falling steeply.

In the report Wilson presents in January 1831 we have no indication that the storm was gathering with its epicentre on the Hindu College and Derozio. Wilson is full of praise for Derozio. For most of the year in 1830 the college was deprived of the services of Mr. Halifax, the second master. "That the Second, Third and Fourth classes have acquitted themselves as well as they have done under these circumstances is ascribable to the unwearied and able exertions of Mr. Derozio", writes Wilson. Indeed, so convinced was he of the ability of Henry Derozio as a teacher that he wanted to extrust the senior boys more and more to his care. The alumni of the College had also expressed their wish to attend lectures on various subjects in their leisure hours.

It may therefore seem desirable to take advantage of this feeling and introduce some course or courses of a higher description of study. One subject to which the attention of the young men

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52. Editorial of *Chundrika*, 8 May 1830, S. S. K., Vol. II, p. 3.

53. Half-yearly Report on Sanskrit College by Mr. W. Price, July 1830.

54. Editorial from *Chundrika*, 15 May 1830, quoted in S. S. K., Vol. II, p. 7.

55. David Kopf, *op. cit.*, p. 186.



might be beneficially directed is Law, commencing with the chief points of English jurisprudence and proceeding through such parts of Mohammedan and Hindoo Law as are in force, to the principal civil and criminal regulations of the Indian Government. Mr. Derozio, I have ascertained is willing to undertake tuition in this branch also,<sup>56</sup> if relieved from his daily duties in the school. That the task should be at first imperfectly accomplished is unavoidable, but ample books now exist for collecting the requisite information without the labour of learning any oriental language, and I have the fullest confidence that after one or two courses Mr. Derozio's legal lectures would be a source of much valuable instruction. Mr. Derozio is also prepared to give lectures on another important topic, Political Economy.

I should beg therefore to suggest that Mr. Derozio be engaged at a salary of 300 rupees a month as lecturer on Political Economy and Law, giving two lectures a week on each of these subjects and in intervals superintending the studies of his pupils, or assisting in correcting their English compositions, a duty he is likewise willing to undertake.<sup>57</sup>

Wilson did not know that his proposal would be as welcome to the college boys as it would seem dangerous to the majority of the Hindu Managers.

Again we have to refer to Wilson's report of February 1832 to know how the situation developed in the first four months of 1831 :

It has always been my wish and that of the majority of the managers to accustom the friends of the pupils gently and insensibly to the altered principles and conduct by which extended and sound knowledge must infallibly be followed. Until the close of year [i.e. 1830] this plan had been attended with the happiest effects and nothing like dissatisfaction or disapprobation had been

56. The use of "also" is significant. Derozio was already teaching important subjects at the college, certainly English literature and most probably metaphysics. Hindu law taught to the boys by Derozio was something Radhakanta Deb or Ramcamul Sen could hardly digest.

57. Wilson's Report, 31 January 1831, G. C. P. I., Copybook of Letters, Jan-Dec 1831.

indicated or expressed.<sup>58</sup> At that time much uneasiness was created in the minds of the native community by the measures of some missionary gentlemen or some rather intemperate discussions in the newspapers regarding Hindu College. It was not however till the beginning of this year that this feeling was unequivocally manifested. A report prevailed that some of the former pupils of the College proposed being present at a public dinner at the Town Hall. In the course of a week 160 boys were withdrawn and the decrease still continuing the management found it necessary to adopt measures to allay the panic. The chief of these was the required resignation of an exceedingly zealous and able teacher, the late Mr. Derozio, to whose influence and instructions the disregard shown by the young men to the sentiments of their forefathers was generally ascribed. In consequence of this and other arrangements an alarm which threatened the very existence of the institution was suppressed and some of the boys returned to their studies. The college however has not recovered its full complement of pay-scholars, nor is likely to do so as its operations are still viewed with distrust and several of the native papers take care to keep alive the attention of their readers to the effects it has produced and is producing. In order to give it the opportunity of accomplishing all the good it is capable of rendering, it is absolutely indispensable to persevere in a cautious and prudent course and avoid as much as possible the violation of the prejudices and feelings of the parents whilst we prevent the same from taking root in the minds of the rising generation.”<sup>59</sup>

It is well known that Wilson, as also David Hare, voted against the motion when it was proposed to dismiss Derozio as “an improper teacher of youth”. But when the proposition was altered and it was proposed to dismiss him considering the feeling in Hindu society, Wilson and Hare refrained from voting and the motion was carried. Wilson did not hold Derozio personally responsible for the crisis of the college in 1831. He rather blamed the radicals among the college students for raising the alarm in society. As he writes :

58. Was it possible that Wilson did not know of the deep-seated tensions within Hindu Society ?

59. Wilson's report, 31 January 1832, G. C. P. I., Copybook of Letters, Jan-Nov 1832.

The injudicious proceedings [ meaning the plan to attend the Town Hall dinner ? ] of some overzealous friends to native improvement have contributed materially to the reduction in the number of the pupils. The diffusion of liberal feelings among the Hindoos is yet only in progress and there are not only still many who are opposed to all deviations from established usages but even of those who are less influenced by former prejudices there are many who are unprepared for and are afraid of an abrupt and total change. In fact the Native Society of Calcutta is not yet prepared, nor fit for such a change and the attempt to accelerate it, only defeats its object by rousing alarm and opposition.<sup>60</sup>

The other factor which Wilson held responsible for the events of April 1831 were the "Native Papers" which not only made "Intemperate discussions" regarding the College in 1830-31 but even afterwards "take care to keep alive the attention of the readers to the effects it (i.e. the College) has produced or is producing". The 12th number of the *Sambad Prabhakar*, dated 15th April 1831, published a letter which contained adverse comments on the character of a particular teacher.<sup>61</sup> Wilson does not mention the letter but most probably it contained among other charges those allegations against Derozio which were later discussed in the correspondence between Wilson and Derozio. The College Secretary's threat<sup>62</sup> to take legal measures against Iswar Gupta, the Editor of the *Prabhakar*, was not effective ; neither was it meant to be so. For throughout 1831, the *Prabhakar* continued to vilify the Hindu College education. More questionable, however, were the comments of the *Chundrika*, the paper of the Dharma Sabha. The *Chundrika* declared that it was idle to hope that the Hindu College would benefit the country any more. In the months following Derozio's dismissal the paper repeatedly advised parents to send their sons to the Oriental

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60. Ibid.

61. The editor argues that the correspondent in his paper did not abuse the college teachers "as a body". Proceedings for the dismissal of Derozio, *Presidency College Magazine*, Vol. 41, April 1959.

62. Ibid. p. 6.

Academy, run by Gourmohun Addy, where English was taught but Hinduism was not violated.<sup>63</sup>

As the organ of the Dharma Sabha, the *Chundrika*, had very obvious links with men like Radhakanta Deb, Ramcomul Sen and Radhamadhab Mookerjee their motive in the dismissal of Derozio is often said to be the preservation of the good name of the College.<sup>64</sup> But what did they do to check the exaggerated propaganda against the college in the *Chundrika*? Absolutely nothing. By temporary withdrawal of their sons<sup>65</sup> from the College, the Deb family only set a trend for others to follow. In addition the Dharma Sabha was ostracizing parents whose sons had radical leanings in the College.<sup>66</sup> Strangely enough, Wilson has not a word of criticism to utter about the attitude of these conservative Hindu Directors. Rather he defends them in his letter to Derozio: "I could have wished you had been less severe upon the native managers, whose decision was founded upon the expediency of yielding to popular clamour, the justice of which was not incumbent upon them to investigate".<sup>67</sup> What could "popular clamour" really mean in a society dominated by the Dalapatis and the Dharma Sabha, where all opinion was moulded by the *Chundrika*? Wilson misjudged the situation so far as to take Derozio's dismissal to be a temporary measure; he had hoped for his return to the institution as soon as the rumours subsided. Derozio knew his adversaries better. "Excuse my saying so," he wrote, "but I believe that there was a determination on their [the manager's] part to get rid of me; not to satisfy popular clamour but their own bigotry."<sup>68</sup> He added elsewhere, "[a]s the intemperate spirit displayed against me by the native managers of the College is not likely to subside as completely

63. Editorials of *Chundrika*, 16 May 1831, 12 Sept 1831, 25 Feb 1832, S. S. K. Vol. II, pp. 664-667, pp. 57-58.

64. *Sahitya-Sadhak-Charitmala*, Radhakanta Deb, by Jogesh Chandra Bagal, B. S. 1349, p. 13.

65. Editorial of *Chundrika*, 26 April 1831, S. S. K., Vol. II, p. 15.

66. Letter published in *Prabhakar*, 14 May 1831, S. S. K., Vol. II, pp. 237-238.

67. Wilson to Derozio, 25 April 1831, letter quoted in *A Biographical Sketch of David Hare*, P. C. Mittra, (Cal, 1949), p. 23.

68. Derozio to Wilson, 26 April 1831, in *ibid*, p. 30.



to admit of my return to that Institution as speedily as you expect ; ...I cannot permit this opportunity to pass without recording my grateful acknowledgement to you for all the kindness you have shown me, since I have had the honour and pleasure of being known to you."<sup>69</sup> It is a matter of regret that we have so far no further details on the relationship of Derozio and Wilson.

Wilson gave up Derozio, but he stood firmly by the ideal of secular education which the college then stood for. The Memorandum presented by the conservative Hindoo Directors at the College Meeting of 23 April 1831 were plainly meant to establish the "Hindoo" character of the institution by curbing all tendencies against it. The proposed Rule 3 ran thus : "All students who are publicly hostile to Hinduism and the established custom of the country and who have proved themselves as such by their conduct, should be turned out".<sup>70</sup> We are not acquainted with the course of debate on this point but it was ultimately resolved with regard to Rule 3 that the regulation of the conduct of the boys in this respect was best left to the parents themselves who if they had reason to think that the college was the cause of hostility to Hindooism in their children, could any time withdraw them from it.<sup>71</sup> Wilson, David Hare and the liberal Hindu Directors also resisted the conservative proposal that "[i]f any of the boys go to see or attend private lectures or meetings, [they are] to be dismissed."<sup>72</sup> The conservatives gave vent to their anger in the pages of the *Chundrika* of 28 April 1831, which writes thus about the college meeting :

While discussions were proceeding on the problem of atheistic tendency among College boys, Dr. Wilson said that the books read at the college will never respect Hindooism ; after this parents are free to send or not to send their boys to the college ... we thank Dr. Wilson for his farsightedness and plain speaking ... we should henceforth communicate our opinions to the guardians.<sup>73</sup>

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69. Derozio to Wilson, 25 April 1831, in *ibid*, p. 20.

70. Extracts from "Proceedings for the dismissal of Derozio, 23 April 1831," *Presidency College Magazine*, Vol. 41, April 1859.

71. *Ibid*.

72. *Ibid*.

73. Editorial of *Chundrika*, 28 April 1831, S. S. K., Vol. II, pp. 15-16.

The ostensible purpose of dismissing Derozio was to please the guardians of the college boys. The withdrawal of fifteen more boys within a fortnight of Derozio's dismissal only goes to prove that Derozio's teaching was not the sole cause of the uproar.<sup>74</sup> As a matter of fact, the popularity of the college had passed its peak in 1828, and from 1829 its student strength was gradually falling. In December 1830 students totalled 409, "being 12 fewer than last year and 27 fewer than in 1828", reports Wilson<sup>75</sup>. "This diminution is in the number of paying students ... we can not calculate upon any large addition to this number from the native youth of Calcutta who are able to pay for their education".<sup>76</sup> Also by 1830 several schools giving gratuitous education were in operation. So when the commercial crisis set in with the fall of the Palmer and Co. in January 1830, many Bengalis with commercial links must have found it necessary to curtail educational expenditure by transferring their sons to free educational institutions. The Accounts Book of the Hindu College of 1830-32 makes repeated mention of legal action against guardians for outstanding tuition fees.<sup>77</sup> When to the gloom of deepening commercial crisis was added the threats of excommunication of the Dharma Sabha the effect was disastrous for the college. One interesting fact however emerges from the Accounts Book of the College. It shows that in the course of 1831 not a single boy was actually withdrawn from the College by the following persons: Radhakanta Deb, Ramcomul sen, Raja Kalikishen, Raja Shibkishen, Umanundun Tagore, Biswanath Motilall, Russomoy Dutta, Rajkrishna Singh, and Dwarakanath Tagore. On the other hand, Raja Kalikishen sent in two more boys from March 1831, Radhakanta Deb and Biswanath Motilall one each from August 1831. Yet, at the end of 1831, there were 75 students fewer at the College than in the previous year.<sup>77A</sup>. It is very likely therefore that the threats of the Dharma Sabha might have caused mass absences from the College in

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74. "Proceedings for the dismissal of Derozio," *Presidency College Magazine*, Vol. 41, April 1959. The point is made by Professor Sarkar.

75. Wilson's Report, 14 January 1830, G. C. P. I., Copybook of Letters, 1 January—28 December, 1830.

76. Ibid.

77. Accounts Book of Hindu College, 1830-32

77A. Ibid.

April 1831, but permanent withdrawals took place more for financial than for any other reason. A similar attack was made by the *Chundrika* on Duff's school in the first months of 1832. But education being gratuitous there, the student strength returned to normal in seven days. In 1832 there was a further loss of 15 students. In January 1833 James Prinsep, Acting Visitor after Wilson's departure, makes the following important comments :

"But the principal cause of a diminution in the number of pay scholars may be traced to the recent severe calamities in the commercial world which must have put it out of the power of many native supporters of the Institution to contribute to the same grade of payment for the education of their children. This cause will no doubt continue to operate to the disadvantages of the college while commerce is at so low an ebb."<sup>78</sup>

#### IV

The "Wilson Era" at the college came to an end in December 1832. The rapid advance made under him in western education is a point too often repeated. To Wilson, however, the handful of highly educated Bengali boys were the means to a greater end : the spread of "useful learning" through the vernacular medium. Unless the Hindu College boys could transmit to their countrymen their knowledge of history, geography, mathematics, science etc. through the vernacular, the process of the transfer of "real knowledge" from "its European source to the intellect of Hindustan" would be largely incomplete. In 1828, several alumni of the Hindu College formed the Calcutta Indigenous Literary Club and submitted to Wilson a proposal to translate the following works into Bengali to serve as school texts :

- (1) Robinson's *Grammar of History* (upto page 105)
- (2) *British Empire*.
- (3) *Universal Travellers*.
- (4) *Wonders of the World*.
- (5) Tytler's *Elements of General History*.

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78. James Prinsep's Report on Hindu College, G. C. P. I., 28 January 1833.

Some of the members of the club are quite well-known : Shibchandra Thakoor, Amalchandra Gangulee, Abinashchandra Gangulee, Herambanath Thakoor, and Kshettromohun Mookerjea. The General Committee of Public Instruction was requested to subscribe and help in their effort.<sup>79</sup> The Fifth Report (1820) of the Calcutta School Society proudly reports that its scholars were engaged in translating three works, *Elements of General History*, *Wonders of the World* and *Grammar of History*.<sup>79A</sup>

From 1831 Wilson was flooded with proposals from College boys for bringing out Bengali works, mainly in translation. In March 1831, Kshettromohun Mookerjea sought the Committee's patronage for publishing the Bengali translation of Goldsmith's *History of Greece*.<sup>80</sup> W. A. Pearce of the Baptist Mission Press introduced him as "one of the first scholars admitted into the Hindoo College at the expense of the Calcutta School Society ... has been always studious as well as an intelligent youth ... presents the result of two years of labour in what I may venture to call ... a good idea of native popular translation of ... useful works ...".<sup>81</sup> Wilson recommends subscription of 100 copies with the following comment : "This fine attempt at translation of a classical work by a pupil of the college is more specially interesting".<sup>82</sup> In December 1832 came Kshettromohun's second proposal : he had completed translation of Goldsmith's *History of Rome* of which another 100 copies were subscribed. Questions and hints to answers were added at the end of the book to help learners.<sup>83</sup> Records show that both books were published by the School Book Society. In September 1831 Krishnadhan Mitra and Ramchandra Mitra, both educated at Hindoo College as School Society scholars, sent the prospectus of a "series of Bengali works of

79. Literary Proceedings, vol. I (1823-30), G. C. P. I., letter to Wilson 2 Sep. 1828.

79A. Fifth Report of Calcutta School Society quoted by Bagal, *Modern Review*, December 1955, p. 464.

80. Literary Proceedings, Vol. II (1830-41), G. C. P. I., Kshettromohun to Wilson, 31 March, 1831.

81. Pearce to Wilson, 28 March 1831, Literary Proceedings, G. C. P. I., Vol. II (1830-41).

82. Kshettromohun to Wilson, 31 March, 1831, in *ibid.* Wilson's notes at the end of the letter.

83. Kshettromohun to Wilson, 11 December 1832, in *ibid.*

a literary and scientific character". The prospectus declared : "to suit them to men of the most ordinary capacity we shall endeavour to express our sentiments in the most simple yet intelligible style. To render the magazine in every respect useful and serviceable to our countrymen will be our primary object ... patronage and support are all we solicit from the public ... that our magazine may be widely circulated we have fixed the price of it at eight annas per number".<sup>84</sup> Wilson strongly recommends the publication, subsequently named the *Gyanodoy*, because of "the very steady and respectable character of both projectors".<sup>85</sup> Interestingly, he adds, "although liberals, Krishnadhan and Ramchandra are not radicals".<sup>86</sup> That his confidence was not misplaced is evident from Ram Chandra Mitra's later work, a series on animal biography, which was very ably translated and compiled and became a standard school text in those days. By 1834 the *Gyanodoy* was supplied from nos. 1 to 10 to Hindu College and other seminaries. In July 1832, Radhanath Paul and Sureshchandra Mukerjea, "Late students of the Hindoo College", submitted a prospectus for publishing a series of dialogues on the elements of history and natural philosophy extracted from English authors.<sup>87</sup> In August 1832, Srigopal Mukerjea submitted his plan for translating Mill's *Political Economy* into the vernacular of which 100 copies were subscribed.<sup>88</sup> In September 1832, Bhubanmohan Mittra sent Wilson an elementary work on geography useful to beginners and compiled from the best authors.<sup>89</sup> By 1834 Bhubanmohan, with the assistance of his friends completed a Bengali translation of Mackenzie's *Experimental Chemistry*.<sup>90</sup> Within two months we find him forwarding to the Committee a copy of the first book of Euclid and proposing to continue the whole in a series of numbers.<sup>91</sup> In 1837, Mr. Sinclair of Dacca School was asking

84. Copybook of Letters, January to December 1831, Letter to Wilson, 15 September 1831. 'Prospectus' follows letter.

85. Letter to Wilson, 15 September 1831, Literary Proceedings Vol. II. Wilson's notes added to the end.

86. Ibid.

87. Radhanath Paul and Suresh Chandra Mukerjea to Wilson, 23 July 1832, in Ibid.

88. Srigopal Mukerjea to Wilson, 27 August, 1832, in Ibid.

89. Bhubanmohan Mittra to Wilson, 19 September 1832, in Ibid.

90. Register of Letters Received (1829-35), G. C. P. I., 27 September 1834.

91. Ibid, 4 November 1834.



specifically for 40 copies of Bhubanmohan's edition of Euclid, book I.<sup>92</sup> Hindu College students under the overall guidance of Dr. Wilson formed the Society for Translating European Sciences with the declared object of translating a series of European scientific works into Bengali on a plan similar to that of the Library of Useful Knowledge. The society's first number (*Bignana Sebadhi*) contained a part of Lord Brougham's *Discourse on the Objects, Advantages and Pleasures of Science*, rendered into Bengali by Amalchandra Gangulee and Kasipersaud Ghose. A correspondent of the *India Gazette* comments :

It is an opinion, the justness of which cannot be disputed by an unprejudiced mind, that the improvement of the people can best ... be effected through the medium of their vernacular language. Taking into consideration the difficulties with which, in consequence of the lamentable deficiency of the Bengali language in respect to scientific expressions, an attempt of the present nature must be attended in its commencement, the translation appears to have been well-executed ; but it might be worth the consideration of the society, whether it could not be made more free ... . The undertaking is in itself highly laudable, and if the society, undaunted by the difficulties which must necessarily present themselves, will firmly persevere, there is no doubt that their endeavours will be crowned with success, and the benefits which they will confer on their countrymen duly appreciated by posterity.<sup>93</sup>

Thus talent and willingness were by no means lacking among Hindoo College boys in the early eighteen-thirties. It must be said to the discredit of Wilson and the General Committee that the translators received little financial encouragement for their labour beyond the promise of a subscription of 50 or 100 copies. And this at a time when the Committee was spending lavishly on the printing of Sanskrit, Arabic and Persian books. The School Book Society published a few but most scholars were left to print and distribute

92. Miscellaneous Accounts (1823-1142) G. C. P. I., Sinclair to G. C. P. I., 25 July 1837.

93. *India Gazette*, 30 April 1832.

their works privately, which could hardly encourage new scholars. When Shibchandra Deb applied for aid<sup>94</sup> in publication of some stories from the *Arabian Nights*, Wilson proposed "encouragement to a limited extent"<sup>95</sup> as it was not a class book or standard classic. When Tarachand Chakravarti solicited support to publish a bilingual edition of the "Laws of Manoo" which would serve to "remove many absurd notions and prejudices which have gained strength among our countrymen",<sup>96</sup> Wilson was not much impressed. Had he been less obsessed with printing and editing of Sanskrit works he might have been able to utilize the talents of the Hindoo College to serve the cause of vernacular education. Yet with his departure and with the Anglicists in the ascendant even this little encouragement was gone. The animated discussions, comments etc which accompanied applications for assistance were henceforward missing. Requests for subscription came, but in lesser numbers, and we do not know what their fate was.

## V

About the middle of 1832 the *Calcutta Courier* announced the resignation of Dr. Wilson from the Secretaryship of the Hindoo College. The announcement evoked a response from the pen of Krishnamohun Banerjea, the editor of the *Enquirer*, which is worth quoting at least in parts :

Dr. Wilson's superintendence of this institution began in 1824 ... a strong impetus was given to the attention of the teachers and students by the doctor's examining in person monthly the specimens of translations (from Bengali to English) and essays which were required positively to be produced before him. ... The first private examination he took ... was in 1825 ... ; the critical notice taken of the progress of every boy in the school of Reading, Writing, Explanation, History, Philosophy, Arithmetic, Geogoraphy, nay, every department of study forces us by its

94. Literary Proceedings (Vol. II) G. C. P. I., Sibchandra Deb to Wilson, 7 Sep. 1831.

95. Ibid.

96. Literary Proceedings (Vol. II) G. C. P. I., Tarachand Chakravarti and Visvanath Sharma to Wilson, 1 March 1832.

very recollection to thank him as much as during our school boyhood it puzzled us. ... The practice of entertaining the public audience with speeches delivered by the students was commenced in 1827, and about the same time the teachers and pupils were brought to a sense of the usefulness of the learning of history of the past, and man's gradual rise to civilization in manners and customs. ... All the Teachers were invited during the holidays after the examination and consulted upon the best and the most practical means of aggrandizing the intrinsic merits of the institution. The salutary results of these plans were such that the deserved reputation of the Hindoo College was at once established on a firm footing in 1829, and the very name of the college boy was adequate to procure regard and respect from every lover of knowledge. The nature of the private examination of this year (1829) may be apprehended by the reader when he hears that the examination of the First Class lasted for one whole week without any other intermission but that of the evening, the night and the morning ... The college boy of 1824 cannot even approach the shadow of his subsequent successor of the present day. ... It is they [the pupils] who have reaped the real harvest, and therefore it is they who should now be the foremost in acknowledging obligations. They have known from the immediate testimony of their senses the indefatigable exertions of their superintendent who sat continually for fortnights from ten in the morning examining critically the progress of the boys.<sup>96A</sup>

In response to the advertizement for Boden Professorship, Wilson sent an application through the columns of the *India Gazette* of 26 June 1832, which is interesting in its own way. Wilson's selection<sup>9</sup> as the Boden Professor of Oxford and his consequent resignation from the visitorship of the College was simultaneously a happy and a sad occasion for his young friends of the Hindu College. The preparations for the farewell meeting were marked by underlying tension among different groups of Hindu College students, which fortunately did not find expression on 2 January 1833, the day of the meeting. The *India Gazette* of 4 January 1831, reported on the meeting :

96A. *Enquirer* quoted in *India Gazette* of 16 May 1832.

Baboo Russickrishna Mullick, before reading the address of the College students briefly alluded to the benefits for which they were indebted to the benevolent, well-judged, and indefatigable exertions of the Doctor, particularly to the institution of lectures in natural philosophy, mathematics, political economy and law and morals; lectures, which had, according to the speaker, contributed in a material degree to the promotion of the best interests of the Hindoo community; and also referred to the aid which the Doctor had given to the restoration of Sanskrit literature, and in the improvement generally of Hindoo Society. ...<sup>97</sup>

The inscription on the silver vase presented to Dr. Wilson reemphasised the last point: "it is to you that we are chiefly to attribute the restoration of ancient literature and philosophy in this country...."<sup>97A</sup> James Prinsep, who was present at the ceremony, writes: 'Mr. Wilson was moved even to tears and replied with the affectionate regard of a parent for the interests of his young friends and with the sincerest prayer for the prosperity of the Institution.'<sup>98</sup>

In its account of the farewell meeting, the *Calcutta Courier* made an able assessment of Wilson's services to the college. "This College is certainly the monument most calculated of all his works, ...". According to the paper the dual principles on which he laid the foundation of the college were, first, the able combination of the study of English language with native languages, both vernacular and classical; and secondly, the exclusion of all religious instruction from the course of the college.<sup>99</sup> At the farewell meeting Wilson alluded to the second point with marked feeling:

H[e] said great opposition had been made to it, and fears had been entertained that such a scheme must subvert all religious principles in the boys — but he appealed to them all present — to the character they bore with their teachers, and with the parents

97. *India Gazette*, 4 January 1831.

97A. *Ibid.*

98. James Prinsep's Report on Anglo-Indian College, 28 February 1833, Copybook of Letters, G. C. P. I., 4 Jan.-Dec. 1833.

99. *Calcutta Courier* quoted in *Calcutta Magazine and Monthly Register*, Vol. III, 1833.



and friends — whether they had not acquired an expansion of goodly feeling — and ennoblement of mind — and a real sense of moral principle and virtue by their education in that college : — and, the shouting assent of all seemed to prove enthusiastically the truth of his estimation, as well as the entire sway which his parental care had established in their heart.<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>100</sup>. Ibid.