Until Job Charnock and his men had settled down at the swamp-girt village of Chuttannutty in the last decade of the seventeenth century, there was hardly any occasion for the Bengali to use the English language as a medium of expression, far less to use it for creative purposes. We have no documentary evidence to indicate how in those early days Britons and Bengalis communicated with each other, but we shall not perhaps be far out of truth if we imagine that the initial language of gesture soon yielded place to a verbal mode of communication, rather crude and clumsy, but nevertheless serviceable, based on a set of essential glossary and limited syntax. Throughout the eighteenth century, such an interlingual contact grew in both volume and depth; the demand for some training in the English language for Bengalis increased in both depth and volume and the demand was utilitarian rather than cultural. During the fin-de-siecle decades of the eighteenth century and the early decades of the nineteenth, there was quite a crop of schools where Bengali boys could pick up some English. Pyarichand Mitra (pen-name, Tekchand Thakur) begins the fourth chapter of his novel, Alaler Gharer Dulal (1855) with a paragraph that describes the early days of these schools:

When the British first came to Calcutta to carry on trade, the mercantile profession was in the hands of the baboos of Sett and Basak families, but there was none in Calcutta who knew the English language. Negotiations of trade with Englishmen used to be conducted by means of gestures. Necessity, however, is the mother of invention, and within a short period, the local people began to learn English. When presently the Supreme Court came to be established, the cultivation of English too grew. In those days, Ramram Misra and Anandiram Das learnt a good deal of spoken English. Ramram Misra’s pupil Ramnarain Misra, a lawyer’s clerk, used to draft petitions for many litigants; he ran a school where the pupils had to pay monthly fees of Rs. 14 to Rs. 16. At a later time, Ramlochan Napit, Krishnamohan Basu and many others took up the pedagogue’s profession. The boys read Thomas Dyce and memorized meanings of words. A youngster who, at a wedding function or a dinner party, could rattle forth compound words, became a much-admired cynosure of the gathering. Following Franco and Arratoon Petres, Mr. Sherbourne too started a school which was attended by boys of wealthy and respectable families. (My translation.)

The story of schooling in English in Bengal is an integral part of the story of modern education in Bengal and India. Contemporary records
(such as Ramcomal Sen's *A Dictionary of English and Bengali, 1834*, and extracts from newspapers collected in the two volumes of W. H. Carey's *The Good Old Days of Hon'ble John Company, 1882*) mention schools set up in the late eighteenth century and the early nineteenth, by Archer, Farrell, Drummond, Sherbourne, Browne, Martin Bowles, Cunningham, Halifax, Lindstedt, Draper, Mackinon, Arratoon Petrus, Franco, Yates, Furly, Gaynard and one Rev. Mr. Holmes. "Every Englishman," it has been said,¹ "in straitened circumstances—the broken-down soldier, the bankrupt merchant and the ruined spendthrift—set up a day school." There were schools run by Bengalis too—Gour Mohan Addy's school made a name for itself and Sherbourne who had a Bengali mother, considered himself a Bengali—and if some of the pedagogues were passing adventurers, others (such as Drummond and Cunningham) proved themselves to be excellent and inspiring teachers. Some of these schools—Drummond's Academy in particular—organized recitations, debates, stage performances of scenes from Shakespeare, thus communicating a sense of literary excellence to the students many of whom were Bengali boys.² Already, during the last quarter of the eighteenth century, several plays of Shakespeare were staged in Calcutta and there was quite a spate of Shakespeare performances during the first quarter of the nineteenth.³

Presently, the efforts of Rammohun Ray, Radhakanta Dev, David Hare and others to organize and disseminate 'English' education; the establishment of the Hindu College on 20 January, 1817; and the inspiring teaching of that amazing enfant terrible, Henry Vivian Louis Derozio, transformed the significance of English for the Bengali from a medium of merely utilitarian communication to a potent vehicle of progressive thought and passion and the Renaissance of Bengal commenced its century-long course. An aspects of this Renaissance was the choice of the English language by some Bengalis as the medium of their creative aspirations.

(II)

The earliest among the Bengalis (Derozio was a true Bengali and knew the language although English was his mother tongue and he was of Portuguese descent) to write imaginatively in English was Derozio who was born in 1809, the wonderful year that witnessed the birth also of Darwin, Abraham Lincoln, Gladstone, Tennyson and Mendelssohn. His volume of *Poems* was published in Calcutta in 1827, four years before his untimely death, years of turmoil and strenuous struggle for him. For a teen-ager, it was creditable to write as competent verses as Derozio did and the discerning reader will not find these verses notably inferior to the verses of Chatterton and the Great English Romantics written at a comparable age. Charged with a rare intensity of passion and embodied in hardly improvable diction, imagery and rhythm, Derozio's poetry, at its best, impresses one with a sense of fulfilment and maturity astonishing for a man of his age. Had Derozio lived on, his poetry would have, without
doubt, opened itself out to wider and deeper vistas of experience and he might have grown into one of the greatest poets of Bengal, irrespective of the language used. (Jayadeva, the great poet of medieval Bengal, let us remember, wrote in Sanskrit.) The phrase, 'a poet of promise', signifying immaturity, unfulfilment, failure, is unfair to the actual quality of Derozio's poetry; the only justification for using the phrase in the context of Derozio's poetry would be to suggest that this short-lived poet had within him a capacity for yet-untapped complexities of self-development. As it is, his poetry offers us two major themes: a pulsating love of the motherland, and a proud and hopeful confidence in youth, the themes merging into the passion of a total vision of life which has for its sources the modern philosophy of Reason and that defiance of the Caves of Idols which stemmed from Bacon, that profound faith in the equality of man and his right to liberty which characterized the revolutionary urge of late eighteenth century Europe. Consider his well-known sonnet:

My country! in thy day of glory past
A beauteous halo circle round the 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 are 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!

This is not great poetry but it is assuredly good poetry, distinguished by a controlled expression of a strong passion in words that refuse to deck themselves in dispensable rhetorical embellishments. Derozio's name has been linked with Keats's. This class-room parallel is unreal and unnecessary. If at all a British parallel must be found, the Byronic parallel (especially in the diction and rhythm of Derozio's romantic verse-tales such as 'The Fakeer of Junghheera' and 'The Enchantress of the Cave') stares the reader in the face and, as Thomas Edwards maintained years ago in his essay on 'The Poetry of Derozio', the spirit of Philip Sidney and Shelley is not far removed from that of the less known Indian. But let us give every true poet—and who is a true poet if Derozio be not?—the credit of being himself rather than some one else's shadow. In our Father's mansion, there are as many chambers as there are dwellers. This sonnet, like so many others of his poems, is an authentic, underivative poem. Correlated to this theme of patriotism is the theme of confident hope for
the future of the land. In envisioning the burgeoning of the minds of his
teen-aged pupils (a few of whom were in fact older than him), Derozio
expresses the idealism of all teachers, anticipating the Carlylean concept
of the Teacher.

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, 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 are yet to gain,
And then I feel I have not lived in vain.

Whatever his stature, Derozio was the first poet of modern Bengal,
and a true poet. In the works of the next Bengali poet to come out in print,
Kashchiprasad Ghosh (1809-1873), there may be some minor accomplish-
ments but there is hardly any genuineness of poetry. His The Shair, and
other poems (1830) was noticed in several contemporary literary journals\(^5\)
of Britain including the influential The New Monthly Magazine (June,
1831, p. 253) and the Athenaeum (1831, p. 382). The Fraser's Magazine
(November, 1834, p. 608) referred thus to Kashchiprasad:

We may particularly notice the picture of that amazingly clever
lad, Kashhiprasad 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. Kashhiprasad ought therefore to
feel much honoured. We are told he is a very excellent and worthy
young fellow, who drinks brandy pawnee as orthodoxally as if he
were a Christian.

The supercilious pat-on-the-back of this coarse witticism continues in
many British reviews of much later Indo-English poetry. However,
Kashshiprasad's principal merit lies in the historical fact that he was the first
Bengali-speaking person to have written verses in English. He was soon
followed by Rajnarain Dutt (1824-1889), the author of the unadmirable
Osmyn, an Arabic Tale (1841), a Byronic verse-tale.

(III)

To these early days of Bengali Writing in English, belongs the first
(and for a long time, the solitary) English drama written by a Bengalee,
The Persecuted (1831) by Krishna Mohan Banerjea, a product of the Hindu College, a Derozian, a Christian convert and afterwards the Reverend. It is a play in stilted prose, quite obviously and even flagrantly motivated, based partly on the author's own experiences of conflict with orthodox Hindu neighbours, presenting insufficient action and wooden characterization, lacking in dramatic tension. The Persecuted nevertheless deserves a place in a chronicle of Bengal as the earliest evidence of the fact that in a changing social pattern, the Bengali's instinct for dramatization of a social situation found an adequate form in the English rather than in the indigenous drama.

Another first was a work of fiction—the first novel ever written by a Bengali in his own language of English—entitled A Journal of Forty-eight Hours of the year 1945, written by Kylash Chunder Dutt, Toru's uncle, published in D. L. Richardson's Calcutta Literary Gazette of 6 June, 1835. This is truly a novel, unlike several previous English works written by Bengalis, re-telling old stories, such as A Selection of Tales from Persian (1816) by Mohunpersaud Thakoor, Beauties from the Arabian Nights (1816) by Ramtanoo Gongoley, and A Tale 3,000 Years Old (1834), Richardson's Bengal Annual and Literary Keepsake by Two Collegians. Kylash Chunder's novel envisages an armed uprising of Bengalis against oppressive British rule a century ahead in 1945; the rebellion, led by the hero Bhubanmohan, is too soon put down. The plot is thin and the characterization superficial, but the author's ability to tell a story is beyond question, nor is there anything derivative in the conception and construction of the story. Another work of fiction on a similar theme and similarly forward-looking was The Republic of Orissa: annals from the pages of the twentieth century by Shoshee Chunder Dutt, also of the Dutt family, published in the Saturday Evening's Harcaru of 25 May, 1845. These novels dealing with the theme of armed rebellion of Indians against the British were followed up many decades later by S. C. Dutt's Shankur: A Tale of the Mutiny of 1857 (1892) and S. M. Mitra's Hindupore (1909).

(IV)

The contribution of members of the Dutt family to Indian Literature in English was mostly in poetry. In 1844, the well-known Annual, Friendship's Offering, published "Stanzas" by Baboo Govin Chunder Dutt (A Native of Bengal). Govin Chunder occasionally wrote colour-less verses but never published any volume of his own (unlike several members of the family) and his claim to a place in our chronicle rests principally on the fact that he was the father of the two gifted sisters, Aru Dutt and Toru Dutt. He was also one of the four contributors to that interesting collection of verses, The Dutt Family Album, which was published in 1870 in England. The volume contains 183 pieces, assembled without any sense of plan and sequence, plus a poem entitled "A Counter-
Meditation (Appendix)', presumably a last-minute insertion, stimulated perhaps by the poem 'The Heavens (Written in Auberlen's "Divine Revelation", pp. 92-94).'

There are as many as 68 sonnets in the volume, following both the Italian and the English structural patterns, —a fact that, along with the predilection for the form that we notice in Derozio and in the English verses of Michael Madhusudan Dutt, indicates the popularity of the form among the Bengali students of European poetry and furnishes a background to Michael's transplantaion of the form into Bengali. Besides the sonnets, there are, as may be expected in a volume of very minor verse of those days, several ballad-like pieces of a historical-romantic nature, jogging along the dusty road of the heavily-trodden rhythm and diction of the Scott-Byron school of verse-narratives, pieces such as 'Samarsi,' 'Jehangir's Lament', 'The Death of Mahmud Ghor', 'The Chief of Pokerna', and 'The Maid of Roopnagar'; the last piece anticipates Bankim Chandra Chatterjee's treatment in Rajsinha of the story of the princess of the small Rajput state of Roop Nagar who spurned Aurangzeb's offer to marry her. (These ballad-like poems, resorting occasionally to Tod's Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan, partly furnish a background to the historical novels in Bengali of Ramesh Chunder Dutt and Tagore's poems on Rajput legends). There are a few vers d'occasion pieces but several verses are commonplace paraphrases of Biblical texts or are inspired by pious European authors. These Bengali poets are plainly out to exhibit their Christian piety; the exception is Omesh Chunder Dutt whose Christianity does not prevent him from composing a 'Hymn to Shiva' and the dramatic monologue of 'The Hindu Wife to her Husband'. The Dutt poets are unabashed admirers of English Romantic and Victorian poetry and one meets such Keatsian echoes as,

(1) Who, on the 'viewless wings of poesy,'
    Have poured—ah, not in vain—a mighty tide of song. (p. 208)

(2) I see Rebecca by the fountain's side,
    Meek Ruth amid the reapers walking slow. (p. 97)

(3) Who hath not seen thee in his chamber still
    At dead of night? For me, I've seen thee oft (p. 95)

and such lines as the following which not only employ the 'Locksley Hall' metre but, further, distil the romantic, escapist and rather adolescent spirit of the quartette of poets:

Moorish forts in far Grenada, 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. (p. 33)
The two other contributors to the Album, other than Govin and Omesh, were Greece Chunder whose Cherry Stones came out in 1857 and Hur Chunder whose two volumes, Fugitive Pieces and Lotus Leaves, were published in 1851 and 1871 respectively. Another Dutt, Shoshee Chunder, who has been already mentioned as the second Bengali to write a novel, published his poetical volumes, Stray Leaves (1864) and A Vision of Sumeru and other Poems in 1878. Shoshee Chunder had more intellectual vigour than the other Dutts but to enthuse over the verse of these volumes is to betray a lack of poetic sensibility.

(V)

The versifying passion of the Dutts reached a rich flowering in the poetry of Toru Dutt, perhaps the best-known Bengali writer of English verse. In understanding certain facets of Toru's genius, it is important to remember the problem of emotional and moral identity that she, a member of a Christian and a carefully anglicized family, felt within the context of the social values of neighbouring Bengali Hindus (as her letters to Miss Martin indicate). One has also to remember the fact that her mother's devoted readings from Bengali epics and Puranas left a deep impress on her mind (as the poem "Sita" unambiguously indicates). It is necessary to remember further that on her return from Europe, she developed an understanding of some of the higher ethical values of the Indian tradition. And, finally, one has to realize that this young tubercular woman, witnessing the death of her young brother and young sister; watching, fascinated, her own blood-vomits that brought the shadow of death nearer and nearer to her; must have undergone that swift, telescoped psychological maturity, that heightened intensity and energy of intellect and emotion that all talented persons who die early (for example, Keats and Emily Bronte) experience. It is this swift maturity that lends naturalness to Toru's precocity. Her earliest work, A Sheaf Gleaned in French Fields (1876), contains 166 poems translated from various French poets as well as some notes and appreciations which are an index to her literary tastes. In addition, there is an original French sonnet dedicating the volume to her mother, and another sonnet at the end addressed to her father. Some of the poems read like original works; one of the finest pieces in the collection, a translation of Victor Hugo's 'Morning Serenade', was, till lately, thought to be Toru's work though actually it is Aru's:

Still barred thy doors!—the far east glows,
the morning wind blows fresh and free,
Should not the hour that wakes the rose
Awaken also thee?

After Toru's death in 1877, some of her poems were published in the Bengal Magazine; next year, her English novel, Bianca, was published in
the same magazine; in 1879, her French novel, *Le Journal de Mademoiselle d'Arvers*, was published in Paris by Didier and evoked the comment of a well-known poet, Madame de Saffray, "She is a French woman in this book, and a French woman like ourselves! She thinks, she writes, like one of us." Her second book of poems, *Ancient Ballads and Legends of Hindustan*, was published in London in 1882; meanwhile, two enlarged editions of *A Sheaf* were published in London. Both *Mademoiselle d'Arvers*, the earlier of the two works of fiction, and *Bianca*, are tinged with the young writer's wistful personality, especially in respect of the central event of frustrated love. The French novel is remarkable for its psychological insight; there is nothing immature and tentative in the presentation of wedded love and maternity although Toru herself did not live long enough to be a married woman and a mother. *Bianca* appears to be an uncompleted draft in which the author is anxious to jolt down the outlines of her story rather than fill it up with those subtleties of feeling and thought of which she had proved herself an admirable portrayer in the earlier novel. *Ancient Ballads* is her enduring original work. In several memorable poems of the volume she is concerned with ancient ideals of personal relationship—the ideal wife ('Savitri'), the ideal son ('Sindhu'), the ideal brother ('Lakshman'), and the ideal disciple ('Buttoo', i.e., Ekalavya). 'Jogadhya Uma' is powerful rendering of a familiar Bengali legend in which Uma, the consort of Shiva, passed herself off as the daughter of the priest of the temple where her image was worshipped. Toru's own readings in Sanskrit as well as her mother's instructions enabled her to perceive the ethical meaning with which many of the ancient legends were charged and she wrote to Miss Martin, "How sublime, how pathetic our legends are!" In *A Sheaf*, Toru had gone through salutary discipline of mastering verscraft; in *Ancient Ballads*, she turned from the Western world to her native heritage, her mind enriched however by Western sentiments of democracy and love of liberty. Such a stanza as the following unfolds, no mere promise, but a fulfilment:

Not in seclusion, not apart from all,
Not in a place elected for its peace,
But in the heat and bustle of the world,
'Mid sorrow, sickness, suffering and sin,
Must he still labour with a loving soul

Who strives to enter through the narrow gate.

Toru's minute observation of nature and her tender love for birds and beasts are striking features of her poetry which does not show any wide and complex gamut—but who would demand such a gamut in the poetry of a twenty-year old poet?—but within the limits of her range she is flawless and if we go by Coleridge's wise words, 'poetry, the best words in the best order', Toru is a poet, for she is unquestionably the mistress of the verbal medium of her choice.
With Toru Dutt we are in the third quarter of the nineteenth century rolling on to the fourth; the story of the Dutts of Rambagan has led us decades ahead of the time when the Derozian flush of Promethean visions was still very much aglow. Let us retrace our steps to the eighteen forties to consider the English works of Michael Madhusudan Dutt. Michael's was the strongest genius among Bengali men of letters to have aspired to self-expression in English and to have persisted for some time in that aspiration; it is not without meaning that the aspiration presently fulfilled itself through the medium of the mother tongue. Madhusudan began writing early, while he was in the Hindu College, and it is important to note that it was as a poet in English and not as a poet in Bengali that he began his career. His poems were published in some of the numerous periodicals of Calcutta in the eighteen thirties—The Bengal Spectator, The Calcutta Literary Gazette, Jnananweshan, The Gleaner, The Blossom, The Comet and so forth—and the young poet wrote facetiously:

Return, before our Monthlies all,
The 'Gleaner'—'Blossom'—'Comet' tempt
Me to scribble for them all.

When after conversion, in search of employment, Madhusudan moved on to Madras, he continued to persist in his aspiration, using the pen-names Timothy Penpoeum and Disjecta Membra Poeta (a legend taken from Horace). His seven years in Madras produced a good deal of writing in English in both prose (almost entirely journalistic) and verse; he wrote for the Madras Circulator and General Chronicle, The Athenaeum, the Spectator, The Hindu Chronicle, and was for some time connected with the three last-mentioned periodicals in an editorial capacity. The Captive Ladie (on the story of Prithviraj and Sanjookta) and Visions of the Past (recalling Biblical figures), his two substantial contributions to English verse, were published originally as parts of a series of poems in the Madras Circulator and were afterwards yoked together in book form in 1849. At Madras, he also wrote an unpublished verse-play, Rizia, and published a lecture entitled The Anglo-Saxon and the Hindu of which the thesis is indicated by two paragraphs:—

The Hindu, as he stands before you, is a fallen being—once—a green, a beautiful, a tall, a majestical, a flowering tree; now—blasted by lightning! Who can recall him to life?

It is the glorious mission, I repeat, of the Anglo-Saxon to renovate, to regenerate, or—in one word, to Christianize the Hindu.

On return to Calcutta, Madhusudan undertook and completed several works of translation from Bengali into English: Ratnavali, translated in
1858 from Ramnarain Tarkaratna's Bengali translation of the original Sanskrit drama, for purposes of performance on the Belgatchia theatre; Sermista, translated in 1859 from the poet's own Bengali drama for the convenience of the European members of the audience; Nil Darpan, translated in 1861 from the powerful and controversial Bengali play of Dinabandhu Mitra.

The Captive Ladie consists of an Introduction (eleven stanzas of the rhyme scheme, a b a b b, the last line being an Alexandrine) and two tetrametric cantos. The impress of Scott, Byron and Tom Moore (the two latter have provided our poet with mottos for the cantos) is visible on the verses, while there are faint echoes of Keats ("As if his heart's deep fount were burst and overflowed!", 'The Upsori') and unconcealed rhythmic effects of Byron's lyrics ("Comest thou as one in beauty's ray"). For one who knows Michael Madhusudan's Bengali verses, it is not possible to take much delight in the imitative, halting, inhibited verses in English. Drinkwater Bethune who read these verses was entirely justified in advising the poet to turn to the mother tongue. Indeed, the proper way to evaluate Michael's English writings is to consider them as some stepping stones to the splendid edifice of his Bengali poetry. It was through the medium of English that Michael acquired his early mastery of the sonnet form and the blank verse (with its enjambment, flexible caesura and stress variation within the foot), learnt the technique of the European epic simile, and also learnt several features of the form of the European epic (e.g., the Invocation, visions, descent into hell, admixture of classical and romantic elements, and so on) and acquired a proper sense of poetic architectonics. During his 'English' period, Michael, like his contemporary Tennyson at Somersby and his predecessor Milton and Horton, was preparing himself for the noble vocation of a poet, reading Tamil, Telegu, Hebrew, Greek, Sanskrit and English and, above all, the great Bengali epics. It was at Madras that he wrote as follows:

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. But let me pass on—let me turn away my eyes from the dazzling and tempting field—let me close my ears against the syren-music which ravish my soul and softly call me to wander away from the path I am pursuing!

(The Anglo-Saxon and the Hindu)

Taken objectively, the name of Michael Dutt, the poet in English, is writ in water, but the name of Michael Madhusudan Dutt, the poet in Bengali, is engraved indelibly on the perennial memory of his admiring countrymen. The hiatus, in respect of artistic achievement, between Michael's English and Bengali writings is about the same as that between Milton's Latin writings and English writings.
The great name of Bankim Chandra Chatterjee is linked up with the theme of Bengali Writing in English in a way comparable to Michael's. Bankim Chandra's very first sally in fiction was in the English medium. His novel Rajmohan's Wife, written when he was twenty-seven, completed in 1863, was published serially in 1864 in the weekly periodical, The Indian Field, edited by Kishori Chand Mitra. It is a clumsy story of a spirited and pretty woman being married to a rascal, loving a good man whose properties are threatened by robbers in association with his relatives, and, of course, at the end, we have triumph of virtue and downfall of vice. As the editors of the modern edition of this novel have rightly commented, 'Strangely enough, Bengal's first great novelist, like Bengal's first great modern poet, made his debut in the field of literature in the English language.' It is possible to find several motifs in Rajmohan's Wife which recur in the later Bengali novels, and perhaps the technique of the dialogue is already distinguished for its verve but this morning of an English novel shows the day of the Bengali novels in only the dimmest outline.

(VII)

The atmosphere and quality of English literature underwent a notable change during the Victorian sunset of the last two decades of the century. There is no tinge of this sunset in most of the Bengali Writing in English of this period. Nobo Kissen Ghose who wrote under the pen-name of Ram Sharma, assiduously published his unpoetical verses (not unoften adulatory verses addressed to British administrators of the country) in numerous magazines between 1878 and 1901, producing, in the meantime, a work in blank verse, The Last Day (1886); a musty odour of the diction and rhythm of the feeblest verse of the eighteenth century clings unpleasantly to Nobo Kissen's compositions. Other publications in verse of the period were Maharajah Sir Jotindra Mohan Tagore's Flights of Fancy (1881); Greece Chunder Dutt's two volumes, Cherry Stones (1881) and the companion volume, Cherry Blossoms (1887); Gooroo Churun Dutt's The Loyal Hours (1886), and Romesh Chunder Dutt's Lays of Ancient India (1894), too emphatically reminiscent of Macaulay. As undistinguished as these works of verse are two works of fiction of the period: Kalikrishna Lahiri's Roshinara (1881) and H. Dutt's Bejoy Chand (1888). Far more interesting, because of their nationalistic slant, are Shoshee Chunder Dutt's novels, Shankur: A Tale of the Mutiny of 1857 (1884) and Young Zemindar (1885). Bankim Chandra Chatterjee's The Poison Tree: A Tale of Hindu Life in Bengal (1884), Kapal-Kundala and Sita Ram (both 1885) and Krishna Kanta's Will (1895), all translations from the original Bengali, indicate, even in their translated form, the wide gap between the contemporary novel in Bengali and the Bengali's novelistic effort in English.

Two distinguished Indian poets writing in English at this time, Manmohun Ghose and Sarojini Naidu, were touched by the aestheticism and
neoromanticism of the Nineties. Sarojini's is a big name in the recent political history of India, and her parents were Bengali, yet it is not proposed to include her in this chronicle for two reasons. First, though she had begun writing verses in English in the Nineties, and had indeed shown them to Edmund Gosse while she was in England, her first volume of poems, The Golden Threshold (1905), does not fall within the nineteenth century. Second, and this is the far more important reason, Sarojini, in spite of her parentage, did not know Bengali nor did she have any identity with Bengali tradition and Bengali values.

Manmohan Ghose who too did not know Bengali, lived however in Bengal and although he pined for the wayside roses of England ('the sweetest country'), he responded throbbingly to the land of his birth and choice. Perhaps the one Bengali (apart from Toru Dutt) for whom English—and no other language—was a natural and authentic medium of poetic construction, Manmohan spoke with the voice of the native Englishman but his poetry bears the stamp of Indian psychology. Manmohan's first publications in book form were in Primavera (1890), a joint production of Stephen Philips, Laurence Binyon, Arthur Cripps and our poet whose share entailed five poems out of the total of sixteen; the book published by Blackwell of Oxford ran into a second edition. His second work, Love Songs and Elegies, was published in 1898 by Elkin Mathews. He published no other volume during his life time although many poems were included in different journals. The posthumous volume, Songs of Love and Death (1926), shows no remarkable variation of mind and art wrought by the passage of a quarter century. For the sad introspective personality of Manmohan Ghose, time seemed very much to have had a stop somewhere in the Nineties when he imbribed—never to deviate from them, his personal experiences rather confirming them—his aestheticist view of life and art, his Virgilian and Parnassian feeling for and employment of words. Manmohan, however, never ceased writing and the manuscripts that he left behind him and which are now in the possession of the University of Calcutta, awaiting some one's devoted and strenuous editorial service (the Mss are clumsy and sometimes appear to be impossible to decipher), contain the draft of Perseus, which (when edited and published) should establish Manmohan's reputation as a poet, not of the lyrical imagination alone but of the epic imagination too.

The dominant note of Manmohan's lyrics is elegiac. A Primavera poem sets the tone:

In the deep west the heavens grow heavenlier
Even after eve: and still
The glorious stars remember to appear;
The roses on the hill
Are fragrant as before;
Only thy face of all that's dear
I shall see never more.
'Never more' has all the poignancy here that Alfred Tennyson and Edgar Allan Poe found in the phrase. In another poem, there is a sense of passion and colour that would have delighted a Leconte de Lisle or Gerard de Nerval:

Heap ruby upon amethyst
Exhaust the deep seas of their pearl:
My lips are rosier being kissed
By the rosy lips of a girl. \textit{(Love Songs and Elegies)}

And in another poem, we have evidence of the splendid power of manipulating diphthongs and long vowels possessed by this gentle person, 'an exile but in the East and in the West', this lost waif a Bengali who never found an identity anywhere:

Farewell, sweetest country; out of my heart, you \textit{roses},
Wayside \textit{roses}, nodding, the slow traveller to keep.
Too long have I \textit{drowsed alone} in the \textit{meadows} deep,
Too long \textit{alone} endured the silence Nature \textit{espouses}.
This is London. I wake as a sentinel from sleep.

\textit{(Italics mine)}

The assonant melody of the words in italics of these lines would do credit to the art of a Tennyson or a Swinburne.

(VIII)

If our balance-sheet for Bengali creative writing in English in the nineteenth century does not indicate any outstanding achievement on the credit side, nothing that can hold its head high in the company of the Bengali prose, verse and drama of the great writers thrown up by our Renaissance, the discrepancy has to be accepted as natural. The creative energy of the nineteenth century must be assessed by its expression in the native language. English could, at best, provide an occasional detour, the high road was indubitably that of the Bengali language. A parallel can be found with Renaissance England. Latin and some other European languages (Italian and Spanish in particular), provided the English imaginative mind with extensive possibilities of experimentation and adaptation and though a Sir Thomas More and a Bacon might use Latin for their metaphysical treatises, no one (not even Bacon himself) would use any other language than English for creative purposes. For law, for diplomacy, for mathematics, Latin was all right, but for the universe of \textit{Faerie Queene, King Lear, Paradise Lost and Religio Medici}, there never was a question of employing any language other than English. The Bengali of the nineteenth century took to English with avidity, of his own accord. He learnt the language well, as well as it is possible to learn an alien language (in spite of the malicious gibes of Kipling and 'Baboo Pitchy
Loll and other Englishmen of their ilk whose own Hindustanee or, for that matter, French or German, has been notoriously comic. The Bengali wielded the English language with consummate ease and power in ever so many areas of life; in law, administration, medicine, engineering, the sciences, pedagogy, politics, journalism. The Bengali responded sensitively to the beauty and the glory of English literature, but when it came to the question of writing creatively, he went to the mother tongue. Michael Madhusudan and Bankim Chandra, in abjuring English for Bengali, have been the great exemplars for other writers. Of the three who wrote true poetry in English and not merely literary exercise, Derozio's mother-tongue was English, Toru Dutt lived in environments where not much Bengali was used, and Manmohan Ghose knew no Bengali. English was for them, therefore, the natural medium of expression. Derozio and Toru died prematurely. For Toru, the problem of identity was relieved through devotion to the Indian heritage; Michael realized that English would stand in the way of his identity and gave it up. Bankim Chandra spent little time in the company of the alien medium. Manmohan Ghose, one of the best-gifted among Bengali poets, was worn down by a constant sense of cleavage between his own personality and the identity of his people.

Bengali Writing in English ought to be assessed, in a full scale study, within four contexts: (a) the context of contemporary English literature produced in England; (b) the context of contemporary Bengali Writing in English; (c) the context of Bengali literature influenced by English literature, and (d) the context of Bengali literature untouched by much or any external influence. And beyond these four contexts, there is, of course, the context of enduring worth, transcending time and social pattern. Considered within the framework of any of these contexts, Bengali writing in English has shown fluctuating directions. Kashipurasad Ghosh and the Dutts never succeeded in integrating their own values with the Western; their English cloak gives them an unreal appearance, stilted and painfully self-conscious. Toru certainly was on the high road to integration when death intervened and cut was the branch that might have grown full straight. But judged within the framework of contemporary literature in Bengali, the versecraft of Derozio, Toru Dutt and Manmohan is superior to the versecraft of Bengali writers and the versecraft of even small poets such as Kashipurasad and Omesh Chunder and Shoshee Chunder reveals a certain competence that the emergent poetic diction of contemporary Bengali had not yet attained.

REFERENCES

2. Derozio's acting as Shylock in Drummond's Academy was praised by Dr John Grant in the *India Gazette* of 20 December, 1822; for good acting in the same part in the same Academy, a boy called Klassen Chunder Dutt was praised in the *Calcutta Monthly Journal* in 1828.
3. Such contemporary journals as Hickey's Gazette, the Calcutta Gazette and the Calcutta Monthly Journal and such a compendium of historical records as Carey's The Good Old Days provide the curious investigator with numerous references to Shakespeare performances in Calcutta. See also Calcutta Essays in Shakespeare, ed. Amalendu Bose (Calcutta University, 1966), the following essays: Arabinda Poddar, 'Shakespeare in John Company's Calcutta'; Krishna Chandra Lahiri, 'Shakespeare in the Calcutta University'; Pallab Sen Gupta, 'Shakespeare in Calcutta theatres'.

4. Srinivasa Iyengar (Indian Writing in English, Asia Publishing House, Bombay & Co., 1962, p. 34) approvingly refers to E.F. Osten's unintelligent linking up of Kota's name with Derozio's.

5. There is a curious, hitherto unnoticed, incident connected with Ghosh's poetry. I find in the Forget-Me-Not of 1835, p. 198, the best-known among the fashionable literary genre of the period, a footnote to a poem "The Love-suit' by one Captain McNaghten: "I gather from a poetical volume by Kasiprasad Ghosh, a young and high-caste Hindu 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 brhamer [sic] is fabled by his countrymen to be enamoured of the lotus [sic] flower."

This McNaghten must have been the Captain McNaghten, editor of John Bull, who thrashed Derozio in September 1831; see the Indian Gazette, September, 1831.

Quite obviously, this John Bull's aim was to boost up the docile native imitator, Ghosh, as against the rebellious Ferrughee, Derozio.

6. Students of Indian Writing in English owe their knowledge of Kylas Chunder's fiction—lying forgotten for over a century in the old files of the Calcutta Literary Gazette—to Pallab Sen Gupta's competent essay, 'Armed Struggle, aspiration for freedom and Young Bengal', a work of original and valuable research published in the Bengali Journal, Chatuskhone, Asvin 1372 of the Bengali Calendar.

Cherry Stones, /By./Greece. C. Dutt."'Trifles light as air,"/Shakespeare./A New Edition/ Calcutta:/Printed by P. S. D'Rozario And Co., 12,

7. I have not seen the first ed. of Greece Chunder's volume; the title-page of the second edition runs thus:

Cherry Stones./Ry./Greece. C. Dutt."'Trifles light as air,"/Shakespeare./A New Edition/Calcutta:/Printed by P. S. D'Rozario And Co., 12, Waterloo Street.—11881.