

# Presidency University, Kolkata

Coordinates: 22°34′35″N 88°21′44″E﻿ / ﻿22.57639°N 88.36222°E﻿ / 22.57639; 88.36222

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**Presidency University, Kolkata**, formerly **Hindu College** and **Presidency College**,<sup>[1]</sup> is a public state university located in Kolkata, West Bengal.<sup>[2]</sup>

It was established in 1817, making it one of the oldest educational institutions in India. It was founded by Raja Ram Mohan Roy, and a number of other eminent personalities of Bengal, such as Raja Radhakanta Deb, Maharaja Tejchandra Ray of Burdwan, David Hare, Justice Sir Edward Hyde East, Prasanna Coomar Tagore and Babu Buddinath Mukherjee<sup>[citation needed]</sup>.

Initially established as the *Mahapathshala* wing of Hindu College, it was renamed Presidency College, i.e. the college of the Bengal Presidency, in 1855. In 2010, under the Chief Ministership of Shri Buddhadeb Bhattacharya, a former student of the college, it was upgraded to the status of a full university by the Presidency University Act, 2010 passed in the West Bengal Legislative Assembly. The Governor of West Bengal, Shri M.K. Narayanan, gave his consent to the bill on 7 July 2010.

The longest serving Principal of Presidency College was J. Sutcliff, who was its Principal intermittently for 20 years, from 1852-1875. He was the Principal of the college when the college was renamed in 1855 and the new building at 86/1, College Street was built a few years later. The first Indian (acting) Principal of the college was Prasanna Kumar Ray (1902; 1903 and 1905–1906) and the first Indian (full-time) Principal of the college was B.M.Sen (1931-1934 (acting) and 1934–1942).

## Presidency University



<b>Established</b>	20 January 1817
<b>Type</b>	Public
<b>Vice-Chancellor</b>	Malabika Sarkar
<b>Students</b>	2202 (in 2004) (951 male, 1251 female)
<b>Location</b>	Kolkata, West Bengal, India
<b>Campus</b>	Urban
<b>Affiliations</b>	UGC, NAAC, AIU
<b>Website</b>	presiuniv.ac.in ( <a href="http://presiuniv.ac.in/">http://presiuniv.ac.in/</a> )

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## History

### Origin

With the creation of the Supreme Court of Calcutta in 1773 many Hindus of Bengal showed eagerness to learn the English language. David Hare, in collaboration with Raja Radhakanta Deb had already taken steps introduce English education in Bengal. Babu

### Principals of Presidency College

- J. Kerr, 1842–1848
- David Lester Richardson, 1848–1849
- E. Lodge, 1849–1852
- J. Sutcliff, M.A., 1852–1856
- Leonidas Clint, 1856-1857
- E. Lodge, 1857-1858
- J. Sutcliffe, M.A., 1858–1863
- W. Grapel, 1863-1864
- J. Sutcliffe, M.A., 1864–1875

Buddinath Mukherjee advanced the introduction of English as a medium of instruction further by enlisting the support of Sir Edward Hyde East, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court who called a meeting of 'European and Hindu Gentlemen' in his house in May 1816. The purpose of the meeting was to "discuss the proposal to establish an institution for giving a liberal education to the children of the members of the Hindu Community". The proposal was received with unanimous approbation and a donation of over Rs. 100,000 was promised for the setting up of the new college. Raja Ram Mohan Roy showed full sympathy for the scheme but chose not to come out in support of the proposal publicly for fear of "alarming the prejudices of his orthodox countrymen and thus marring the whole idea".

The College was formally opened on Monday, January 20, 1817 with 20 'scholars'. The foundation committee of the college, which oversaw its establishment, was headed by Raja Rammohan Roy. The control of the institution was vested in a body of two Governors and four Directors. The first Governors of the college were Maharaja Tejchandra Bahadur of Burdwan and Babu Gopee Mohan Thakoor. The first Directors were Babu Gopeemohan Deb of Sobhabazar, Babu Joykissen

- H. Woodrow, 1875
- C. H. Tawney, 1875
- J. Sutcliffe, M.A., 1875
- Alfred Croft, 1876
- C. H. Tawney, 1876–1881
- G. Bellet, 1881–1882
- John Elliot, 1882–1883
- Alexander Pedler, 1883
- John Elliot, 1883
- G. Bellet, 1883
- John Elliot, 1884-1885
- C. H. Tawney, 1885
- W. Griffiths, 1885-1886
- C. H. Tawney, 1886–1887
- Alexander Pedler, 1887
- C. H. Tawney, 1887
- Alexander Pedler, 1887-1889
- C. H. Tawney, 1889
- Alexander Pedler, 1889
- Frederick James Rowe, 1889
- C. H. Tawney, 1889
- W. Griffiths, 1892–1896
- Alexander Pedler, 1896–1897
- J. H. Gilliland, 1897
- Frederick James Rowe, 1897-1898
- J.H.Gilliland, 1898
- Frederick James Rowe, 1898
- William Booth, 1898
- A. Clarke Edwards, 1899-1902
- Prasanna Kumar Roy, 1902
- A. Clarke Edwards, 1902–1903
- Prasanna Kumar Roy, 1903
- A. Clarke Edwards, 1903
- M. G. D. Prothero, 1904-1905
- Prasanna Kumar Roy, 1905-1906
- Alexander Macdonnell, 1906
- A. Clarke Edwards, 1906–1907
- Henry Rosher James, 1907–1909
- Hugh Melville Percival, 1909
- Henry Rosher James, 1909–1911
- C. W. Peake, 1911-1912
- Henry Rosher James, 1912–1916
- William Christopher Wordsworth, 1916–1917
- John Rothney Barrow, 1917-1924
- William Christopher Wordsworth, 1924

Sinha, Babu Radha Madhab Banerjee and Babu Gunganarain Doss. Babu Buddinath Mukherjee was appointed as the first Secretary of the college. The newly established college mostly admitted Hindu students from affluent and progressive families, but also admitted non-Hindu students such as Muslims, Jews, Christians and Buddhists.

At first the classes were held in a house belonging to Gorachand Bysack of Garanhatta (later renamed 304, Chitpore Road), which was rented by the college. In January 1818 the college moved to 'Feringhi Kamal Bose's house' which was located nearby in Chitpore.<sup>[3]</sup> From Chitpore, the college moved to Bowbazar and later to the building that now houses the Sanskrit College on College Street.

## Early 19th century

The increasing realization of the value of western education made the college a coveted destination for scholars from all over the subcontinent. Pupils have come from almost all parts of the country, most notably from Bihar, Andhra Pradesh and Orissa. By 1828 enrolment of students steeply rose to 400. The obvious question, that then arose, was whether it would not be wiser for the Government of Bengal to establish a new 'English College' open to all classes and community of students. The Committee of Managers of Hindu College had soon after the inception of the

- H. E. Stapleton, 1924-1926
- T. S. Sterling, 1926-1927
- H. E. Stapleton, 1927–1928
- R. B. Ramsbotham, 1928–1929
- John Rothney Barrow, 1929–1930
- Jahangir Cooverjee Coyajee, 1930–1931
- Bhupatimohan Sen, 1931-1934
- Bhupatimohan Sen, 1934–1936
- Prasanta Chandra Mahalanobis, 1936
- Bhupatimohan Sen, 1936–1942
- Prasanta Chandra Mahalanobis, 1942
- Bhupatimohan Sen, 1942–1943
- Apurbakumar Chanda, 1943
- Jyotirmoy Ghosh, 1943-1944
- Apurbakumar Chanda, 1944
- Prasanta Chandra Mahalanobis, 1945-1946
- Prasanta Chandra Mahalanobis, 1946–1947
- Muhammad Qudrut-i-Khuda, 1947
- Prasanta Chandra Mahalanobis, 1947
- Jogischandra Sinha, 1947
- Prasanta Chandra Mahalanobis, 1948
- Jyotirmoy Ghosh, 1948–1950
- Jyotishchandra Sengupta, 1950
- Jyotirmoy Ghosh, 1950–1951
- Jyotishchandra Sengupta, 1951–1956
- F.J.Friend-Pereira, 1956–1958
- Sanat Kumar Basu, 1958–1967
- Rajendralal Sengupta, 1967–1969
- Samerendranath Ghoshal, 1969–1970
- Sudhir Chandra Shome, 1970
- Pratul Chandra Mukherjee, 1970–1975
- Sudhir Chandra Shome, 1975–1976
- Pratul Chandra Mukherjee, 1976–1979
- Bijoy Shankar Basak, 1979–1982
- Achinta Kumar Mukherjee, 1982–1986
- Sunil Kumar Rai Chaudhuri, 1986–1991
- Amal Kumar Mukhopadhyay, 1991–1997
- Nitai Charan Mukherjee, 1997–2000
- Amitava Chatterjee, 2001–2005
- Mamata Ray, 2005–2008
- Sanjib Ghosh, 2008–2010
- Amitava Chatterjee, 2010,

## Vice Chancellors of Presidency University

- Amita Chatterjee, 2010–2011

college become dependent on government subsidy, due to serious shortage of funds. The government had began to play a greater role in the administration of the College.

- Malabika Sarkar, 2011–present

By the middle of the 19th century the college had outgrown the plans made by its founders. Not only did it attract an ever-increasing number of scholars from the province and the rest of the Bengal Presidency, but it had also introduced courses in Law, Drawing, and Engineering, which catered to the needs of all classes of students - Hindus as well as non-Hindus. The government had also to consider whether this growing institution, spending a good deal of public money, could be retained as a non-governmental institution, particularly when Calcutta had no general college managed exclusively by the Council of Education. When other towns in Bengal had government colleges, it was felt in official and non-official circles that Calcutta should also have one.

## From Hindu College to Presidency College

The proposal to set up a new college called the Calcutta College, or the Metropolitan College, open to students from all communities had already been mooted, but this would have meant greater financial liability for the government, which would also have to provide it with a competent faculty. A viable alternative seemed to be the conversion of Hindu College into a general institution open to all communities, managed by the government. On 21 October 1853, Lord Dalhousie, the Governor of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, suggested that

“ a new general college should be established at Calcutta by the government and designated "The Presidency College" .. the College should be open to all youths of every caste, class or creed. ”

The new name, 'Presidency', referred to the Bengal Presidency, which was the local administrative unit of British India. Accordingly, the Committee of Management for Hindu College met for the last time on 11 January 1854. The Court of Directors renamed the College as Presidency College. The College started functioning on 15 June 1855. The 'scholars' of the College Department of Hindu College were transferred to Presidency College and 101 new students were freshly admitted. Of these 101 pupils, two were Muslims, while the rest were Hindus.

Initially, the Civil Engineering College and Medical College, that were located nearby, were associated with Presidency College. But with the formation of the University of Calcutta, also located close by, the Council of Education shelved plans for allowing the expansion of the these three premier institutions into a full fledged university. The college was formally placed under the control of the University of Calcutta in 1857.

## Expansion of Presidency

The college continued to grow rapidly after its renaming and relocation. In 1856, it had 132 students on its rolls. 94 students were in the General Branch and 38 students were in the Legal Branch. Of them, 82 students had paid tuition fees, 43 were scholarship holders, and 7 enjoyed free studentships. The Legal Branch was given a measure of autonomy: its students were subject to examination by held by the branch itself. Two years later Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay, a student of the Law Department earned the distinction of being one of the first two graduates in Arts of the University of Calcutta.

The college became an institution preparing candidates for the BA examination under the aegis of Calcutta University. At the first Entrance Examination, held in 1857, it sent 23 students. The MA degree was conferred for the first time on six students of this college in 1863.

The College authorities were faced with space shortage even after the expansion of the Sanskrit College building. The process for acquisition of land for building a separate building and grounds started in September 1865 and in 1870 the principal of the college submitted a plan for the construction of a new building on the premises where it is presently located. The new building was opened on March 31, 1874 by the then Lieutenant Governor Sir George Campbell in the presence of His Excellency, the Viceroy of India. The finishing touch was given by Babu Nuffer Chandra Pal Chaudhuri, who provided it with a turret clock, at a cost of nearly Rs. 5000 soon after the new building's inauguration. Professor J. Sutcliffe was the principal of the college when the new building was opened.

The First Arts or F.A. Examination was introduced in 1861. The first candidate to qualify in this examination from the college was Gooroodas Banerji, who later became the first Indian Vice-Chancellor of Calcutta University. The ever-increasing rolls of the college demonstrated the keen interest shown by students from all over the Bengal Presidency. The prestigious award of Gilchrist Scholarship for pursuance of further studies in England went to students of this college for four successive years since its introduction in 1868. Between 1868 and 1900, 25 students of the college were awarded the Premchand Roychand studentship, the highest honour for academic excellence awarded by Calcutta University. The college soon expanded its premises and the present edifice was officially opened by the Lieutenant Governor on 31 March 1874 in the presence of the Viceroy.

The construction of the new building was beneficial for the science departments which now had adequate space for holding classes and carrying out laboratory work. The chemistry department introduced practical classes in the new building in 1875. Engineering classes, until then held at the college, were discontinued in 1880 when the Bengal Engineering College, Shibpur (now known as Bengal Engineering and Science University, Shibpur) was set up. In order to augment the Faculty of Science, a professorship in Geology was instituted in 1892. The Department of Biology was founded eight years later and Subodh Chandra Mahalanabish was made a professor there. The last two decades of the 19th century saw the appointment of distinguished scholars to teaching positions in the college. For instance, H.M.Percival joined in 1880, Bipinvihary Gupta in 1883, Jagadish Chandra Bose in 1885, Prafulla Chandra Roy in 1889, and Monomohun Ghose in 1896.

In 1897 the colleges admitted female students for the first time.

The Baker Laboratory, named after Edward Norman Baker, the then Lieutenant Governor of Bengal, was formally opened on 20 January 1913 and the Departments of Physics, Physiology, Botany and Geology were transferred to the new establishment. One of the biggest rooms in the Baker Laboratory accommodated the science library (the Peake Library, named after Professor C.W. Peake). Commerce classes were started in 1903.

The outbreak of World War I in 1914 interrupted plans for the building of an additional hostel and other facilities but the college continued to cross important milestones in the advancement of teaching and higher learning. New dimensions were added to the college with the reorganisation of the college library in 1908 and the introduction of a College Union in 1914. The 1920s continued to see eminent teachers such as Professor Wordsworth, Professor Sterling, Professor Home and Dr. Harrison increase the reputation of the college.

## Presidency during the Indian freedom struggle

During the Non-Cooperation Movement and the Civil Disobedience Movement J.R.Barrow was the principal of the college. He set the highest standards of discipline and academic excellence, but also meted out punitive action to students participating in the National Movement. His objective, of increasing the academic standards of the college and its reputation, however, was never in doubt, and he earned the deep respect and appreciation of teachers as well as students. This was the period when the Oaten Affair, in which Subhas Chandra Bose, then a student of the college, insulted by Professor Oaten, happened. Bose, responding angrily to a racial insult made by Oaten, had

pushed the professor down the main building's staircase.

From the early 1930s, Indian principals headed the college, though the Education and English Department formally retained the services of British officers until 1943, Professor Ahmed Ali, the co-founder of the Indian Progressive Writers' Movement and Association (1933–36) and author of the famous *Twilight in Delhi* was the first Indian to be appointed Head of the English Department in 1944 up to 1947 when India was divided. From the 1920s to the end of the 1940s the college remained an important centre of nationalist activities. Throughout this period the college continued to enjoy a great deal of popularity and prestige in *bhadralok* society.

## Presidency after independence

The college's continued presence in Bengal's higher education was evident in its predominance as an undergraduate and postgraduate institution even at the time of India's independence. Before 1947 and soon after, especially in the 1950s the college was still the *numero uno* of Indian education. Anybody who was somebody in India *had* to be a student of this college. In 1956 the centenary celebrations of the college were organised. The building in which the economics, political science and sociology departments as well as the Derozio Hall are presently located was built during the centenary celebrations under the stewardship of the then principal, Professor J.C. Sengupta.

In the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s the college became a centre of leftist and then far-left politics. Through the 1970s and 1980s the college fought off repeated attempts to control it from outside, especially by the government as well as dominant political parties. An important change that was brought to the college in the post-independence period includes the appointment of Mamata Roy as the first woman principal of the college in 2005.

## Becoming a university

In 1972, an unsigned article was released by the faculty members of the college demanding that the college should be given full university status. It is an open secret that the author of the article was Prof. Dipak Banerjee, the legendary economics professor of the college. The state government, then under the chief ministership of Sh. Siddhartha Shankar Ray, showed the willingness to listen to the demands of the faculty members, but it was still too early to grant full autonomy to the college. In 2007, the state government, under the chief ministership of Sh. Buddhadeb Bhattacharya and Higher Education ministership of Sh. Sudarshan Raychaudhuri, appointed a seven member committee, under the leadership of Justice Chittotosh Mookerjee, and composed of Prof. Barun De, Dr. Bimal Jalan and Prof. Subimal Sen, to look into the possibility of upgrading the status of the college. The report of the committee suggested that the state government should grant the college partial autonomy.



The main entrance of the university at College Street.

In 2009, the Governing Body of the college unanimously adopted the proposal that the college should be given full university status. On 16 December 2009, the Left Front government tabled a Bill, entitled the Presidency University Act, 2009, in the West Bengal Legislative Assembly which granted the college full university status. It was stated in the Bill that once the college becomes a full state-aided university it will be renamed Presidency University.

On 19 March 2010 a new chapter was opened in the history of the college when the West Bengal Government passed the Presidency University Bill, 2009 in the State Legislative Assembly.<sup>[2]</sup> On 7 July 2010, the governor of West Bengal, Sh.M K Narayanan gave his assent to the Presidency University Bill.<sup>[4]</sup> On 23 July 2010, the



Government of West Bengal published the gazette notification completing all the legal formalities for Presidency to become a full university.<sup>[5]</sup> Prof. Amiya Bagchi was given the responsibility of chairing a committee set up to select and appoint the first vice chancellor of the university. Prof. Amita Chatterjee, a retired professor of philosophy at Jadavpur University, was appointed as the first vice-chancellor of Presidency University on 5 October 2010.<sup>[6]</sup>

In 2011, Higher Education Minister, Sh. Bratya Basu suggested that a mentor group, along the lines of the Nalanda mentor group, would be formed to oversee the work of the university. At the beginning of June 2011, the chief minister of West Bengal, Km. Mamata Banerjee, announced that a committee would be formed with Prof. Amartya Sen as its chief mentor, and Harvard-based Prof. Sugata Bose as its chairman to oversee the running of the college and perform the task of appointing all its officials and faculty members. The committee includes as its members Prof. Bikash Sinha, Prof. Sukanta Chaudhuri, Dr. Isher Judge Ahluwalia, Prof. Amal Mukhopadhyaya, Prof. Swapan Kumar Chakravorty, Prof. Abhirup Sarkar, Prof. Sugata Marjit and Prof. S.P. Mukherjee.

## Departments

Bengali - Botany - Chemistry & Biochemistry - Economics -English - Geography - Geology - Hindi - History - Law - Mathematics - Molecular Biology & Genetics - Philosophy - Physics - Physiology - Political Science - Sanskrit - Sociology -Statistics - Zoology-Biotechnology

### Department of Economics

It is one of the most illustrious departments of the college. Many former students and teachers of this department are internationally renowned. Some of them are: Amartya Sen, Bhabatosh Dutta, Tapas Majumdar, Amiya Kumar Bagchi, Abhijit Banerjee, Amitava Bose, Asim Dasgupta, Amlan Datta, Dipankar Dasgupta, Dhritiman Chatterjee, Abhirup Sarkar, Alak Ghosh, Amit Mitra, Amit Bhaduri, Partha Sen, Anindya Sen, Arjun Kumar Sengupta, Ashok Rudra, Bhaskar Dutta, Bibek Debroy, Bimal Jalan, Debraj Ray, Dhires Bhattacharyya, Sundar Chatterjee, Jagdish Bhagwati Dilip Mukherjee, Dipak Banerjee, Gautam Bose, Isher Judge Ahluwalia, Kalyan Sanyal, Mihir Kanti Rakshit, Mukul Majumdar, Pranab Bardhan, Ratan Lal Basu, Sanjit Bose, Satyen Sen, Souymen Sikdar, Partha Gangopadhyay, Sugata Marjit, Maitreesh Ghatak, Sambuddha Ghosh, Sukhamay Chakravarty, Sujoy Mookerjee, Sukanta Bhattacharya, Tapan Mitra. Noted film Directors like Satyajit Ray, Srijit Mukherji used to be a student of this department.

### Department of English

The history of English teaching at Presidency can be traced back to 1828, when it was known as Hindu College. Henry Louis Vivian Derozio was appointed Master of English Literature and History. The Department of English owes its distinct identity to the efforts of Principal H R James, who in 1909-10 separated the various disciplines in view of their specialized requirements. A long line of distinguished scholars and eminent teachers contributed to the Department's heritage. Among the luminaries were D L Richardson, C. H. Tawney, Hugh Melville Percival, F J Rowe, Manmohan Ghosh, P C Ghosh, Srikumar Banerjee, Rabindra Kumar Dasgupta, S C Sengupta, Tarapada Mukherji and Taraknath Sen.

Among the most well-known departments in the country, Presidency has contributed several notable thinkers and critics from the English department: Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Ahmed Ali, British Council Visiting Professor of English, The National Central University, Nanking, Jasodhara Bagchi, Former Chairperson, West Bengal Women's Commission, Calcutta, Swapan Kumar Chakravorty, Director-General, National Library, Kolkata, Sukanta Chaudhuri, Emeritus-Professor of English, Jadavpur University, Calcutta, Supriya Chaudhuri, Professor of English,



Jadavpur University, Calcutta, Nabaneeta Dev Sen, Former Professor of Comparative Literature, Jadavpur University, Calcutta, Peary Charan Sarkar, Former Headmaster, Hare School, Calcutta. Distinguished alumni also include Rajendra Prasad, former President of India, Syama Prasad Mookerjee and Humayun Kabir.

The department has traditionally been strong in canonical British literatures, American Studies, cultural studies, and postcolonial studies, making it among the most competitive programs in the country.

## Department of Geology

Geology Department of Presidency College was founded in 1892. This was the first Geology department of India as well as in South-East Asia. Founded on July 17, 1892, it is the earliest independent department of teaching and learning geology in any educational institution in India with only the Madras Presidency College teaching geology earlier, albeit as a part of its courses of the Botany Department.

The Department has a long tradition of teaching and research in geology. The notable alumni of this department includes several renowned Indian geologists in both academia and industry in India as well as abroad.

Among various distinguished alumni of the department, Hem Chandra Das Gupta, Santosh Kumar Ray, Nirmal Nath Chatterjee, Abani Kumar Dey, Sib Sundar Deb, Ajit Kumar Saha, Ajit Kumar Banerjee, Mihir Kumar Bose, Subir Kumar Ghosh, Dhruvajyoti Mukhopadhyay, M.N. Ghosh, Sarat Chandra Roy Choudhury, Sanjib Kumar Biswas, Gopal Chandra Chatterjee, Bhabesh Chandra Roy are notable.

## Department of History

This is one of the most notable departments of the college. Some of its eminent students and teachers in the first half of the 20th century include Hem Chandra Raychaudhuri, Kiran Shankar Ray, Kuruvilla Zachariah, Susobhan Sarkar, Hirendranath Mukherjee, Amalesh Tripathi, Pratap Chandra Chunder, Pratap Chandra Sen and Tapan Raychaudhuri. Eminent students and teachers of the department in the second half of the 20th century include Mohit Sen, Sipra Sarkar, Ashin Dasgupta, Hirendranath Chakrabarty, Parthasarathi Gupta, Benoy Bhushan Chaudhuri, Barun De, Nitish Sengupta, Sumit Sarkar, Rajat Kanta Ray, Tanika Sarkar and Sugata Bose. The department has a Seminar Library of its own with a seminar secretary and a seminar librarian elected by the students of the department from amongst themselves. In 1990, a lecture series entitled P.C. Sen Memorial Lecture, named after Pratap Chandra Sen, another former student of the department, was started with an endowment given by the members of his family. In 2004, Gopal Krishna Gandhi, the then Governor of West Bengal, attended a class taken by Rajat Kanta Ray.

## Department of Mathematics

This department, since the inception of the Hindoo College in 1817 has produced brilliant teachers and excellent students. The Department runs undergraduate (40 seats) and postgraduate courses (as constituent college under the University of Calcutta) (2 seats).<sup>[7]</sup> Once most prestigious course to adhere in India was Presidency College Mathematics. This is comparatively small department providing the base to all other department from early age of the college. Most notable student of this department was Satyendra Nath Bose.

## Department of Law

The college until the beginning of the 20th century had a separate Department of Law. This was not one of its

original departments, but as mentioned above it had been started soon after the inception of Hindu College. Two of its more prominent students were Bankim Chandra Chatterjee and HH Maharaja Nripendra Narayan Bhup Bahadur of Coochbehar.

## Department of Physics

This department is one of the best known departments of the college. The department has had as students or as teachers several eminent people, including Sir Jagadish Chandra Bose, Satyendra Nath Bose, Meghnad Saha, Amal Kumar Raychaudhuri, Bikash Sinha and Ashoke Sen. The Baker Laboratory and the Physics Lecture Theatre, in the majestic new building built in 1913 are two of the most famous features of the college. Since 2004 the department started an autonomous post-graduate course in physics recognised by Calcutta University. Earlier, the department's course in post graduate studies was carried out at the University College of Science and Technology of Calcutta University in Rajabazar. On 27 February 2009, the department organized a one-day symposium on the 150th birth anniversary of Sir J.C. Bose.

## Department of Physiology

This department was founded in 1900. The first phase of the development of this department which coincided with the founding of physiology as a discipline in India took place between 1900 and 1913. Subodh Chandra Mahalanobis returned to India from England in 1900 and joined the Bengal Education Service. He was posted at Presidency College as the Head of the Department of Biology, which was at that time composed of Human Physiology and Botany, in the same year. In 1902, study of Human Physiology started as a separate course at this college, which was officially recognized in 1903 by the University of Calcutta. On the Founders' Day, i.e. 20 January, in 1913, the new building for science subjects, later named as Baker Laboratories, was formally inaugurated and the Department of Human Physiology was shifted to the second floor of the new building. In 1915, the Calcutta University started the M.Sc. in Human Physiology in this department. In 1923, during the tenure of Dr. N.M. Basu as Head of the Department, E. H. Starling visited this department. In 1939, Dr. Syama Prasad Mookerjee, as Vice-Chancellor of Calcutta University, convened a historic meeting and passed two important resolutions in favour of this department: (a) PG teaching in Physiology at Presidency College should continue as before; and (b) the university should not open Honours course in Physiology as this was running at its best at Presidency College. In 1944, Sir A.V. Hill visited the department. From 1947 to 1959, the department was guided under the able stewardship of Prof. Sachchidananda Banerjee, the first D.Sc. in Physiology from Calcutta University. In 1960, Dr. Achintya Kumar Mukherjee joined as Professor and Head of Department. Dr. Haripada Chattopadhyay worked as an interim Head of Department from 1984-1987. In 1988, Dr. Chandan Mitra joined as Professor and Head of Department. In 2001, the department celebrated 100 years of UG teaching. The Centenary Postgraduate Wing was inaugurated during that celebration and in the same year the department was affiliated for independent postgraduate teaching by Calcutta University. In 2004, the department was given full academic autonomy for postgraduate teaching. The department organized The XVIII Annual Conference of the Physiological Society of India between 8–10 December 2006.

## Department of Political Science

This department emerged out of the Department of Economics and is in the early 21st-century one of the finest departments of Political Science in India. A creation of the second half of the 20th century, it already boasts of an alumnus which is world famous. Among its ex-students are Partha Chatterjee and Sudipta Kaviraj, both extremely well known in Indian political studies. Yet another student was Amal Mukhopadhyaya, who was a Professor and Head of this department and also one of the better known Principals of the college at the time of its 175th birth

anniversary. The department celebrates yet another milestone on 12 March 2011 for its completion of 50 glorious years of existence.

## Department of Statistics

Department of Statistics was established by Prasanta Chandra Mahalanobis in the decade of 1940's to cater under graduation studies in Statistics. The department is the oldest among its counterparts in this country and is the pioneering department in introducing Statistics as a separate and distinct discipline of study at under graduation level. From the inception, it has always been one of the premier undergrad statistics departments in the country.

Through the second half of the 20th century, the department grew in stature under the tutelage of Professor Bhattacharyya and Professor Atindra Mohan Gun. Some of its famous alumni include Jayanta Kumar Ghosh, Pranab K. Sen, Malay Ghosh, Rahul Mukerjee, Bani Kumar Mallick and the 2011 Mortimer Spiegelman award winner Sudipto Banerjee among others.

## Department of Zoology

It is one of the best departments in the college with a rich museum and well equipped laboratories. It has both postgraduate and undergraduate courses. Research fellows are also recruited through various examinations. The department was built by Sibatosh Mookerjee. The present Head of Department is Dr. Kamal Kumar Banerjee. The department has a good teacher-student ratio. Well-equipped laboratories, rich faculties and educational excellence are the three main characteristics of this department. It has a Central Computer Room with ultra-modern servers, a rich-with-books Seminar Library and an state-of-the-art laboratory for modern researches. All forms of modern biochemical and biotechnological researches can be done in these laboratories.

## Department of Chemistry & Biochemistry

The department of chemistry in this University holds some prestigious history. It is situated at the Derozio Building of the university. Currently this department is headed by Professor Dipak Mondal. This department started in earlier Presidency College in the mid-19th century. There are 52 seats (42 in chemistry and 10 in biochemistry) in undergraduate course and few lesser seats in post graduate course currently. The admission to undergraduate courses is in particular, very competitive. Legendary scientist Prafulla Chandra Roy was an associate professor in this department in the late 19s.

As of 2010, there were 18 full-time faculty members in this department. The department is well-equipped to carry out research in frontier areas of Chemistry & Biochemistry in the newly upgraded university. Dr. Gandhi Kumar Kar has been appointed as the Head of Department of Dept. of Chemistry and Biochemistry of Presidency University.

## Chaired lectures

- Foundation Day Lecture: 194th: Delivered by Barun De.

## Institutions that were started in Presidency

This college, being the oldest educational institution in the country, boasts of a number of prestigious institutions of

primary, secondary and higher learning that were started under its aegis.

The Hindu School, initially the *pathshala* wing of Hindu College, was the college's school when it was established, although it is now independent. The Hare School has been from the middle of the 19th century located inside the premises of the college and has been traditionally associated with it. Its students used to complete their higher education in this college in the 19th and early 20th centuries. A large majority of the students of these two schools came from the landed aristocracy and the urban upper middle classes. The importance of these two schools is evident in a verse written by Phani Bhushan Chakrabarty, a former student of the college and the first Indian Chief Justice of the Calcutta High Court. He wrote: *Prathom jakhon collegey elam/Bollam bahabaharey/Aschi hotey Hindu-Hare/Koriney care kaharey* (When I first came to college,/I said, "Oh! Wow,/Have come from Hindu-Hare,/Don't care for the high-brow).

The Bengal Engineering and Science University, Shibpur was founded in this college as its engineering department. It remained in the college from 1865 to 1879. The Indian Statistical Institute, Calcutta was founded in the Statistical Laboratory of this college by Prasanta Chandra Mahalanobis in 1931.

## Administration

The college is administered on a daily basis by a principal, a bursar, a deputy controller of examinations and the respective heads of departments. It offers several scholarships to meritorious students, such as B.C.Law Free Studentship (185), Book Prizes (50), Cash Prizes (33), FAEA Scholarships (5), Hindi Scholarship (6), Hostel Stipend (14), Lump Grant (9), Medals (19), National Scholarship (14), Presidency College Graduate Scholarships (6), T.S.Sterling Onetime Grant (17), T.S.Sterling Scholarships (16).

## Hostel facilities

The college has two halls of residence, one each for boys and girls. The boys hostel is the famous Eden Hindu Hostel, which was started in 1886. It started functioning fully from 1895-96. It stands on Peary Charan Sarkar Street, which separates the college's premises to the south from the hostel, which is next to the central premises of the University of Calcutta, called the Ashutosh Shiksha Prangan, that includes the Ashutosh Building and Darbhanga Building. After 1990, the college administration also built a girls' hostel in Salt Lake in Calcutta.

## Extra-curricular activities

### Students' Union

The Students' Union room is located behind the main building. The Union has been active since the first half of the 20th century. It is run by a President and a General Secretary. It plays a constructive role in the day-to-day running of the students' affairs. It is pertinent to note that the Union has always been controlled by elected students' groups that seek to challenge and question policies framed and actions taken by the establishment, both inside and outside the college, especially at the state level. In the first decade after independence, when the college was starting off as a centre of excellence, wholly managed by Indians, and more specifically by Bengalis, the Union was firmly in the hands of forces not always



The Main Building Corridor

friendly towards the Students Federation (SF). From the 1960s until the end of the 1980s, the Union was controlled by the Marxist-Leninists. After a brief period of students' apathy and indifference towards politics in the late 1980s, the Union, in 1989, came under the control of a loosely formed platform called Independents' Consolidation (IC), formed by an assortment of progressive democratic elements, which does not owe allegiance to any mother-party. Barring a brief spell of a few years at the end of the last century and the beginning of this century, the IC has kept control of the student body. The Union was under the control of SFI during the session 2009-2010. From the 2010-2011 session onward, the students' election has not been held in the newly formed university, and the students' union is now officially defunct.

## Sports

The college has a long history of excellence in sports, especially in cricket and lawn tennis. Until date it has a strong cricket team. Until the mid-1950s the college used to have a lawn tennis court to the west of the premises, which was later replaced by the new building housing the economics, political science and sociology departments as well the college's auditorium, Derozio Hall. Until the mid-20th century the college's sporting facilities were managed and maintained by a Sports Secretary elected from the student body. There is a table tennis board in the Junior Common Room of the college on the ground floor and a badminton court in a room close to the Student's Union Room.

The college has a long association with Mohun Bagan AC, the first Bengali football club, whose history is closely linked to the rise of the Indian national movement. One of the preliminary matches played by Mohun Bagan was against Eden Hindu Hostel's team. Some students of the college who had joined this club earlier invited Professor F.J. Row, a grammarologist, to visit the club ground, then at Mohun Bagan Villa, on the day it was founded, i.e. 15 August 1889. At this occasion Row suggested that the Club could be called 'Athletic', due to its excellent infrastructural facilities.

In the 1970s the college organised a past vs. present cricket match, where Shri Siddhartha Shankar Ray played for the former students of the college.

## Cultural events

Presidency has an annual festival organised by the students union called the 'Milieu' which hosts events in which students of all other colleges and universities of West Bengal participate. The events of the festival comprise of a wide variety of activities such as outdoor sports and literary events including debates and quizzes.

## Debates

The college always had a great tradition of debates. Amartya Sen's first lecture entitled 'Bigyaponer Arthoniti' ('The Economics of Advertisement') was delivered at a debate organised by the Student's Union, when the Debate Secretary of the college was Barun De, soon after Sen joined the college in 1951. Presently, the Presidency University Public Speaking Society conducts debates on campus and organizes the **Derozio Memorial Debate** annually. It is the most prestigious debating tournament in Eastern India, and one of the best in India.

## Canteen

The college also has a students' canteen situated at the back of the main building, beyond the Students' Union room and next to the badminton Court. In the 1940s the college's canteen was called "Ray Babur Canteen". A decade

later in the 1950s the students of the college frequently visited the neighbouring Coffee House, on the lane that is now called Bankim Chatterjee Street, which soon became a hub of both academic and political activities and discussions and is now famous for its debates. Several eminent academics of the second half of the 20th century, many of whom joined the government and/or have or still are teaching in the finest world universities were regulars at the Coffee House. Later, in the last quarter of the 20th century, the students of the college began to return to the college's canteen, which has been run by Pramodda since the 1980s and is now called "Pramoddar Canteen".

## Building and grounds

The main building, housing the English, History, Geography, Bengali and Philosophy Departments of the college, which also has a clock tower, was built in the 19th century and is representative of the architecture of the middle of that century. It has a quadrangle in the middle, next to the central library of the college which is located on the ground floor. The science building, which has the Physics Lecture Theatre in it, is situated to the south of the college premises and opens out on to Peary Charan Sarkar Street. It was built in 1913. The new building housing the Economics, Political Science and Sociology Departments and the Derozio Hall was built in 1956, while the newest building built to the west of the main building for the holding of post-graduate classes, was built in 1990.



A part of the university.

## Alumni

### Alumni Association

The college has an active Alumni Association.<sup>[8]</sup> It works from within the main building of the college. Some of the eminent past Presidents of the Association were Radhabinod Pal and Pratap Chandra Chunder. Dr. Shyamaprasad Mookherjee was a past Vice President of the Association. The Association publishes an yearly journal entitled the 'Autumn Annual'. Professor Subodh Chandra Sengupta was the longest serving editor-in-chief of the journal.

### Notable alumni

#### List of Kolkata Presidencians

Until the middle of the 20th century this college was widely considered to be the very best in higher education in the country. In the second half of the 20th century it can still claim to be among the top five colleges in the country and is clearly still the most famous of all the Indian colleges. That the college continues to be the alma mater of eminent professionals, including senior politicians and industrialists, who are still working gives evidence of its relevance today and also shows that it is still at the height of its powers. Students of this college have continued to be awarded all the major scholarships, such as the Rhodes Scholarship, the Commonwealth Scholarship, Inlaks Scholarship, Radhakrishnan Scholarship and Government of India and State Scholarship to study in either Oxford or Cambridge.

The college started with the expressed objective of encouraging boys of landed and aristocratic families of the Bengal Presidency to join it, but has also traditionally attracted extremely meritorious students from district schools and colleges to it since the 19th century. It has the distinction of being the college where Academy Award winner

Satyajit Ray and the Nobel Laureate Professor Amartya Sen studied. Rabindranath Tagore was admitted into the college, but spent only one day there. Other distinguished scholars in the humanities and social sciences who studied at Presidency include literary theorist Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, political scientists and historians such as Sudipta Kaviraj, Partha Chatterjee and Dipesh Chakrabarty; Sir Azizul Haque, the famous lawyer and intellectual; and historians such as Sir Jadunath Sarkar, Susobhan Sarkar, Sumit Sarkar, Tanika Sarkar, and Tapan Raychaudhuri. Eminent scientists and mathematicians include Sir Jagadish Chandra Bose, who pioneered the investigation of radio and microwave optics and laid the foundations of experimental science in the Indian subcontinent, physicists Satyendra Nath Bose (after whom Boson particles are named), Meghnad Saha and Ashoke Sen (winner of the 2012 Fundamental Physics Prize), Ashutosh Mukherjee, and India's first planner, Professor Prasanta Chandra Mahalanobis. In literature, it has amongst its students novelists Bankim Chandra Chatterjee and Manik Bandopadhyay, poets such as Michael Madhusudan Dutt, Jibanananda Das, and Shakti Chattopadhyay, and eminent children's writer Sukumar Ray (father of filmmaker Satyajit Ray). Noted journalists such as Avik Sarkar, M. J. Akbar and Pritish Nandy studied here.

In politics, it has amongst its students, some of the biggest names of the Indian national movement, such as five Presidents of the Indian National Congress, including Surendranath Banerjea, Romesh Chunder Dutt, Bhupendra Nath Bose, Lord Satyendra Prasanno Sinha and Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose. The first President of India, Dr. Rajendra Prasad studied in this college. The Speaker of the Indian Lok Sabha, Somnath Chatterjee was a student of this college. The first President of Bangladesh, Abu Sayeed Chowdhury and another President of Bangladesh, Abu Sadat Mohammad Sayem also studied in this college. Khuda Buksh from Bangladesh, an icon of Insurance in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh was also a student of this prestigious college. The college has had one Governor of an Indian state, Chandeshwar Prasad Narayan Singh, as its student also. Since elections were first held in Indian provinces in 1937, and after independence, it has had three Prime Ministers, one each of Pakistan, Bengal and Assam, five Chief Ministers of West Bengal and one Chief Minister of Assam as its former students. They are the first Prime Minister of Pakistan, Mohammad Ali Bogra, first Prime Minister of Bengal, A.K. Fazlul Huq, the first Prime Minister of Assam, Saiyid Mohammed Saadullah, the first and second Chief Ministers of West Bengal, Prafulla Chandra Ghosh and Dr. Bidhan Chandra Ray, later Chief Ministers of the same state, Siddhartha Shankar Ray, Jyoti Basu and Buddhadeb Bhattacharya and the second Chief Minister of Assam, Bishnu Ram Medhi. The first Deputy Chief Minister of Bihar, Anugrah Narayan Sinha was a student of this college. The college has had as its students a host of other politicians including central and state level ministers.

Scions of former Indian Princely States and substantial landholding families also studied in this college, such as the former Maharaja of Coochbehar, HH Maharaja Nripendra Narayan Bhup Bahadur and the former Maharaja of Burdwan, Maharaja Uday Chand Mahtab. Other zamindari families from where boys came to study in this college included Burdwan, Susanga, Cossimbazar, Natore, Gouripur, Kalipur, Jhargram, Kirtipasha, and Teota in Bengal, Gauripur in Assam and Sonepur and Jarasingha in Orissa.

There are several senior judges, such as the first Indian judge of the High Court of Calcutta, Gooroodas Banerjee and a Chief Justice of India, Justice Sabyasachi Mukherjee who were students of this college. Several senior civilians, such as the first Indian member of the ICS, Satyendranath Tagore and the first Chief Election Commissioner of India, Sukumar Sen, studied in this college.

This college has also performed equally well in industry. Rajen Mookerjee was its student and Rama Prasad Goenka also studied in this college.

In the entertainment industry, especially in films and theatre, other than Satyajit Ray, this college can boast of figures such as Bikash Roy, Pramathesh Barua, Ashok Kumar, Dhritiman Chatterjee (Sundar Chatterjee) and Aparna Sen.

Amongst eminent sportsmen, Vece Paes, a member of India's hockey team, studied in this college.



# Presidency in film and fiction

## Fiction

- *Shei Somay (Those Days)* by Sunil Gangopadhyaya, a novel on 19th century Bengali society, mentions the college.

## Films

- Harbert (in Bengali), starring Subhasish Mukherjee. Parts of the movie were shot inside the college campus.
- Autograph (in Bengali), starring Nandana Sen and Indraneil Sengupta, shows a couple as students of this college. Parts of the movie were shot inside the college campus.
- *Yuva* (in Hindi), starring Ajay Devgan, Abhishek Bachchan and Rani Mukherjee shows Devgan, as Michael, as a student leader involved in politics.
- 15 Park Avenue (in English), starring Shabana Azmi, who teaches in a class of the Physics department of the college.
- Kaalbela (in Bengali), starring Parambrata Chatterjee and Paoli Dam contains scenes shot inside the college campus. The movie, based on a 1980s novel by Samaresh Majumdar, is set against the background of the Naxalite movement.
- Iti Mrinalini

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## External links

- Official Website (<http://www.presiuniv.ac.in>)

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