



# Derozio

Pallab Sengupta

828.009  
2 D 447 S

Makers of

828.0092

D 447 S





**INDIAN INSTITUTE  
OF  
ADVANCED STUDY  
LIBRARY, SHIMLA**









The sculpture reproduced on the end paper depicts a scene where three soothsayers are interpreting to King Suddhodana the dream of Queen Maya, mother of Lord Buddha. Below them is seated a scribe recording the interpretation. This is perhaps the earliest available pictorial record of the art of writing in India.

From Nagarjunkonda, 2nd century A.D.

*Courtesy* : National Museum, New Delhi.

# Derozio

Pallab Sengupta



Sahitya Akademi

SAHITYA AKADEMI

Rabindra Bhavan, 35 Feroze Shah Road, New Delhi 110011

Salas : Swati, Mandir Marg, New Delhi 110001

Jeevantara Bhavan, 23A/44X, Diamond Harbour Road, Calcutta 700053

Guna Buildings, II Floor, 304-305 Anna Salai, Teynampet, Chennai 600018

172 Mumbai Marathi Grantha Sangrahalaya Marg, Dadar, Mumbai 400014

Central College Campus, University Library Building,

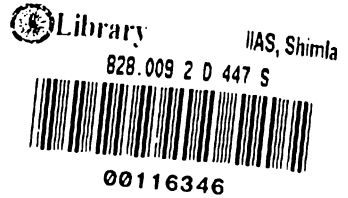
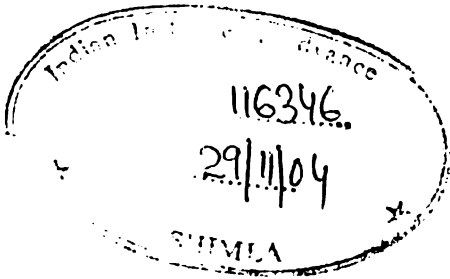
Dr. Ambedkar Veedhi, Bangalore 560001

©Sahitya Akademi

ISBN 81-260-0851-2

In  
828.009 2  
D 447 S

First Printing 2000



Price : Rs. 25

Published by the Sahitya Akademi

Typesetting at Calcutta Creative Printer, 61B, Palm Avenue, Calcutta 700019

Printed at M/s. ATS Grapho Laser, 17B, Lake View Road, Calcutta 700029



Tapobijay Ghosh  
*in memorium*



## Contents

The Preview	1
His Life and Struggle	2
The Teacher and the Poet	17
'Harp of my country! let me strike the strain'	25
'Daughters of Europe! by our Ganges side'	36
Poems for Lassic, Amelia, Self and the Young Flowers	39
'The lights the alter of the soul'	44
Thoughts on Various Subjects and Other Essays	48
The postscript : 'I feel, I have not lived in Vain'	54
Selections from Derozio's Writings	57
Appendix : Derozio's letter to H. H. Wilson	70
Select Bibliography	75



## Preface

In this monograph an attempt has been made to account for the life and contribution of Henry Louis Vivian Derozio to place him in his rightful position in our socio-cultural history, as the pioneer of many a modern idea and ideal that emerged in this country in the nineteenth century. His influences, which are still discernible in our social polity, have also been taken note of.

The author is grateful to the Sahitya Akademi for offering him this unique opportunity. He thanks Shri Rousseau Mitra for his kind co-operation in preparing this treatise. Prof. Kshetra Gupta, late Dr Rabindra Gupta, Dr Sanatkumar Mitra, Dr Chidananda Bhattacharya, Shri Anup Mahindar, Shri Shantanu Gangopadhyay and Shri Pradipta Sen often offered their wise suggestions and sincere help. He expresses his humble gratitude to them all on this occasion of the 190th Birth anniversary of H. L. V. Derozio.

Department of Bengali,  
Rabindra Bharati University  
April 18, 1999

Pallab Sengupta



## The Preview

It is often surmised that the initial streak of modernism in idea and practice of the Indian social polity started emerging during the early decades of the nineteenth century. With the establishment of a new educational system modelled after the European (to be more precise, English) academic institutions, a new generation of intellectuals came into being mainly in the major urban settlements of British India. An educated middle-class gentry evolved as the obvious corollary of this new socio-economic pattern. Calcutta, being the premier city of the country and the capital of British India, became the epicentre of an unprecedented upheaval, social as well as cultural, which had its origin in the newly emerged economic scenario, developed primarily to serve the interests of British colonialism.

But the cloud of colonialism had at least one silver lining. Though the economic infra-structure was rigidly set-up by the colonial rulers to serve their interests, yet, by the same token, the corresponding new administrative structure did require a modern academic orientation and a new stratum in the Indian social edifice, so that the administration could be run quite smoothly.

This new stratum, i.e. the intelligentsia, was the vanguard of a number of social reformation movements, such as the abolition of the 'Satee', initiation of the remarriages of Hindu widows, and putting an end to polygamy, and so on.

Against this backdrop a number of stalwarts pioneered the movements of social progress in Bengal. Henry Louis Vivian Derozio, a younger contemporary of Raja Ram Mohan Roy and a forerunner of Pandit Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar, Michael Madhusudan Dutt and Bankimchandra Chatterjee, was one of the stalwarts of modernism in the history of our nation. As a teacher, as an intellectual, as a poet and also as a social avantgarde, this young man who lived even less than twenty-three years made a lasting contribution to our cultural and intellectual heritage.

## His Life and Struggle

Henry Louis Vivian Derozio was born on April 18, 1809, at 155 Lower Circular Road (presently, Acharya J. C. Bose Road), near Moulali in the central district of Calcutta. His grandfather, Michael Derozio, a businessman with Portuguese lineage, was a protestant by faith. His second son Francis was Henry Louis Vivian's father. Sophia, Derozio's mother, was of British parentage. She had five children, of whom Henry was the second, while the others were Frank, Claudius, Sophia (Jr) and Amelia. When Henry was only six, his mother died. After a few months Francis Derozio married once again. His second wife, Anna Rivers, was also of English origin. She had no issue. With her demise in 1851, the Derozios ceased to be heard of any more.

Henry Derozio had his education in David Drummond's Dharamtalah Academy, where he was enrolled in 1851. Henry was the best student that Mr Drummond ever had.

At the tender age of fourteen, young Derozio was somewhat compelled to leave his studies to take up a job in M/s Scott & Co. where his father earlier had worked to maintain the family. This was necessary because his father had suddenly expired and the entire family was in great distress. After working here for sometime, he joined his uncle-in-law's firm in Bhagalpore. Arthur Johnson, Derozio's uncle-in-law, owned an indigo plantation there. Young Henry Louis managed to adjust himself with this new environment very soon and ultimately it became the place of initiation of his literary endeavours as well.

Dr John Grant, the editor of 'India Gazette', knew this literary aspirant ever since he was a student in Mr Drummond's school. This learned old man used to encourage him in his literary pursuits, and at his behest Derozio began to write poems and ventured to send them to the 'Gazette' for favour of publication.

Some of these were published, but they secured little response from readers. But that was somewhat less



disheartening for him in comparison to what he had to bear emotionally. He had an emotional affair with a young woman (probably her nickname was Lassie) though ultimately the relationship could not blossom into marriage for some unknown reasons. This had lasting effects on his mind and creations.

Henry finally left Bhagalpore in 1826 and returned to Calcutta. This he had done partly being encouraged by Dr Grant, and partly to seek a better job. A small news item in the 'Samachar Drapan' (a Bengali newspaper) on May 13, 1826, read like this: "An Englishman, Mr Dearman by name and one Mr Deroze (sic) have been appointed as teachers in the English-medium school (i.e. Hindu College)" [Translated]

But nobody could imagine the things that were about to take shape in the ensuing days. Even those who had noticed the news item could not guess the great social turmoil that was going to take place within a very short time.

In Hindu College Derozio found a bright set of boys, many of whom were of his age-group. These students in no time became his ardent admirers too. They were his 'disciples' in the truest sense of the term. His erudition, personality, intellect and creative faculty made him a real Guru to them : a guru in the sense of ancient Indian tradition. These young men, popularly grouped as the 'Young Bengal' activists, gradually began to take the role of vanguards of social progress. 'Truth' was the watchword of their lives : it was an integral part of their intellectual, as well as social existence. And this was possible only on account of Derozio's teachings. An interesting situation had been very aptly portrayed in a story, 'Bhai Phonta' written by Rabindranath Tagore in the form of a personal monologue of the hero, a passage suddenly reveals the place of truth in the lives of Derozians : "My father Sanatan Dutt was a student of Derozio; he was greatly addicted to wine but his addiction for the truth was somewhat greater." (Translated from Bengali). In reality adherence to the truth was the guiding force for the Derozians.

The intensive quest for truth was naturally counter-productive as well. The conservative elite of the Bengali society

did not withstand such an urge-extraordinary! An adherence to the logical approach and thereby the explorations of truth by the "Young Bengal" group made the elders of the society apprehensive : they felt the age-old citadel of social conservatism was being eroded at the base. They began to hit back fiercely:

In this context, we should make a close scrutiny of the situation that prevailed then in the socio-cultural life of Calcutta. There has been three distinct social forces : the conservatives, the progressives (i.e. the Derozians) and the centrists. The conservatives were the most powerful group, for many a rich and elite people of the city belonged to their ranks, including men like Raja Radhakanta Dev, Raja Prasanna Kumar Tagore, Dewan Ramkamal Sen, well-known journalists like Iswar Chandra Gupta and Bhavani Charan Banerji and some others. These people were opposed to most of the reformative demands like abolition of 'Satee' (i.e. burning of the widows alive in the same pyre with their deceased husbands). Many of them were bitter critics of women's education too. This group was an ardent adherer of all sorts of medieval superstitions in the name of keeping up the cultural tradition.

On the other hand, the progressives led by Derozio, held a radically opposite view regarding such questions. They were the vanguards of new social ideals. This group included a number of bright youngmen, who in their maturer days became quite famous for erudite contributions to the field of education and culture of Bengal. We may mention the names of Krishna Mohan Banarjee, Radhanath Sikdar, Ramgopal Ghosh, Tarachand Chakravarty, Dakshina Ranjan Mokerjee in particular.

This group was also known as the 'Academic Association', which used to meet both within and outside the Hindu College campus regularly. To form an idea about this organisation and its objectives as well as activities, a few lines may be quoted from Hara Mohan Chatterji's memoir. Mr Chatterji was an office clerk in Hindu College and had known Derozio and

his pupils quite intimately. He wrote : "The students... had the advantage of attending a conversazione established in the school by Mr Derozio, where readings in poetry, and literature and moral philosophy were carried on ... (Derozio) fostered their taste in literature; and so formed their moral conceptions and feelings, as to place them completely above the antiquated ideas and aspirations of the age ... The degraded state of the Hindoos formed the topic of many debates; their ignorance and superstitions were declared to be the causes of such a state, and it was then resolved that nothing but a liberal education could enfranchise the minds of the people. The degradation of the female mind was viewed with indignation." (Extract taken from Thomas Edward's book, 'Henry Derozio : The Eurasian Poet, Teacher and Journalist' 1884; pp. 66-68)

On Mr Chatterji's testimony, it may be concluded that, this group of young radicals (though ultimately fizzled out after the demise of their mentor) fostered many new ideas and ideals in our time-worn social polity, and these had lasting influences. A rational approach towards the social problems led to the radical movements in order to eradicate them—this was the motto of the Derozians. In this process, they had made a direct affront to the conservatives.

The third group, led by Pundit Iswarchandra Vidyasagar, ultimately became closer to this radical group of youths. This was but a natural consequence of the social dynamics of the period concerned. A very realistic depiction of this complex socio-cultural matrix of the third and fourth decades of nineteenth century Calcutta, could be found in Krishna Mohan Banarjee's dramatic sketch, 'The Persecuted' (1831) which however, was somewhat autobiographical in nature and thus should be regarded as quite authentic.

In order to wage a fierce intellectual battle against the conservatives, the 'Young Bengal' boys proposed to publish a newspaper, 'Parthenon'. The key figures in the venture was Krishna Mohan and two of his closest compatriots, Ramgopal and Dakshina Ranjan. They felt that through this newspaper, their campaign against the reactionaries could be intensified in a more organised way.

The overlords of Calcutta's conservative Bengali society offered a stiff resistance so that the proposed journal might succumb under pressure and they ultimately succeeded in this regard. 'Parthenon' ceased to exist very soon, for the conservative chieftains managed to stifle its circulation. They felt it absolutely necessary to utilise their moneypower and social influences to meet this end.

The second venture of the Derozians with another journal, 'Hesperus' too, met a similar consequence. But in their third attempt, Derozio and his students were a little bit fortunate : this journal, 'Kaleidoscope' had a longer tenure in comparison with its predecessors. Thus, the Academic Association, the public forum of the Derozians, was finally able to establish a journal, a medium to express their ideas and ideals. But, the social conflict become more intensified as a consequence of all these.

The vitalmost point here was, what really were the underlying reasons of this wrath vented upon the young teacher and his followers by the majority of the elders in the contemporary Bengali society? The answers to such simple questions were but quite complex in nature.

The apprehension of the elders that the campaigns launched by the Derozians might upset the equilibrium of the nation's age-old social order, was no doubt farsighted. What really the teacher did try to preach both inside and outside the class room, were : infusion of the spirit of nationalism vis-a-vis patriotism; universal attitude towards the problems concerning the self and the society; atheistic, as well as, logical approach to every aspect of life and the world; and finally, a spirited confidence that might prove equal to fight against the beliefs and customs detrimental to social progress, and derogatory for the humane values.

It may not sound hollow, if we say, that he wanted to build up an 'Age of Reason' with all these ideas and aspirations. He had read Thomas Paine, the foremost philosopher and magnanimous philanthropist of his time. Derozio's social and moral attitudes resembled to a great extent those of Tom Paine.

This sort of positivist 'blasphemy' was not to be tolerated, however, by the leaders of the conservative Hindu echelon, because the propagation of such ideals were but a kind of direct affront to their interests vested in the social structure. If the 'age of reason' were to dawn really, the darkness of the middle age, in the guise of traditions, could no longer stay. The cultivation of reason would erode the basement of insipid loyalty towards all that were eulogised as 'tradition' and 'heritage', though in reality in most cases these were a complex conglomeration of superstitions and reactionary ideas. Hence, the 'age of reason' could not be allowed to emerge and thus the conservatives had to fight the Derozians fiercely; for them it was a sort of struggle for existence and power.

While the Academic Association had been regularly offering bitter criticism against superstitions, and thoughtless obedience to rituals that were practised in large scale in the name of Hindu traditions, a counter offensive was launched by the elders of the community. They too, had organised themselves in a body named 'Dharma Sabha'. Though this association of the conservatives was overtly formed to resist the Bramho ideals propagated by Raja Ram Mohan Roy and his 'Atmiya Sabha' and the religious propaganda made by Rev. Alexander Duff along with other Christian missionaries, still in the final analysis, all their weapons were pointed towards Derozio and his students only. Thus, the management of Hindu College signalled their first warning in the garb of an administrative circular in February 1830, at the behest of the organisers of the Dharma Sabha (incidentally there were a few common members, serving in both the bodies). A portion of the circular is quoted below :

"The teachers are particularly enjoined to abstain from any communication on the subject of Hindu religion with the boys or to suffer any practices inconsistent with the Hindu notions of propriety such as eating and drinking in the school or class rooms. Any deviations from this injunction will be reported by Mr D. Anselme to the visitor immediately and should it appear that the teacher is at all culpable he will forthwith be dismissed."

Clearly, this hue and cry in name of the defence of Hinduism was motivated not against the preachings of the Christian clergies; the sole target was some 'teacher', who should be outrightly dismissed, if found guilty in the eyes of the managing committee, or for that matter, Dharma Sabha members.

For nearly one year, the management was eagerly taking time to spell out the opportune moment to pounce upon the teacher who often used to proclaim that he did not know about the absoluteness of God or any religion, and his quest for the sublime truth in these regards were still incomplete.

Consequently a second order was promulgated in January 1831, this time the prime target being the student community. The order informed :

"The management of the Anglo-Indian college having heard that several of the students are in the habit of attending societies at which political and religious discussions are held, think it necessary to announce their strong disapprobation of the practice and to prohibit its continuance. Any student being present at such a society after the promulgation of this order will incur their serious displeasure."

This warning to the 'erring' students was of no avail. On the contrary, most of the English language newspapers severely criticised this high-handedness on the part of administrators of the college. Even 'John Bull', which was quite elated when 'Parthenon' was forced to close down, (the 'fault' with the latter journal was apparently being harsh in criticism against the police and the East India Company!) had lent its voice in this chorus of disapproval. The most fierce attack appeared in the columns of 'India Gazette', which incidentally gave the college management the much desired pretext to take some drastic actions against Derozio. Though the write-up in the Gazette was unsigned, never the less, because of Derozio's well-known connections with the journal and its editor, Dr Grant, a general notion could very easily be formed that it was nobody else but Derozio, who alone could be the author of the dissenting article. Some over-enthusiastic people even claimed to have found this 'truth' out from the language-style et-al!

That the post-editorial was no doubt very fiery, has to be admitted without hesitation. Derozio or whoever had been the author of the article, was highly sympathetic towards the students. The very approach of the write-up would confirm this notion :

"We regret much to see the names of such men as David Hare and Rassomoy Dutt attached to document which presents an example of presumptuous, tyrannical and absurd intermeddling with the right of private judgment on political and religious questions. The interference is presumptuous for the managers, as managers have no right whatever to dictate to the students of the institution, how they shall dispose of their time out of college. It is tyrannical, for although they have no right, they have the power, if they will bear the consequences to inflict their serious displeasure on the disobedient. It is absurd and ridiculous, for if the students know their rights and had the spirit to claim them, the managers would not venture to enforce their own order and it would fall to the ground, an abortion of intolerance."

This angry rebuff was published in the last week of February, 1831. The college authorities took a few more weeks before it started 'Operation-Retaliation' against the youngest, ablest and most popular teacher of the institution. On April 23, that year, a meeting of the governing body was convened where it was declared by the secretary, that the sole purpose of the gathering was to discuss the 'conduct' of a particular teacher and to take necessary steps there after. About a dozen resolutions were moved by one section of the managers who had an avowed desire to settle scores with the rebels. The most important of these was the following one : "Mr Derozio being the root of all the evils and cause of public alarm, should be discharged from the college, and all communication between him and the pupils be cut off".

Besides this prime resolution, several others were mooted to drive out the 'culprits' (i.e. senior students who were under a deep influence of Derozio) from the college; some positive checks too, were proposed, to thwart the practices of free

thinking and free expression among the students. But all these were mere subsidiaries to the foremost proposition, i.e., the retrenchment of Derozio.

The proposal could not be carried out smoothly. The majority of the members in the committee did not agree with the sinister suggestion "to render him an improper person to be entrusted with the education of youth". Six of the nine members present in the meeting were of the opinion that the competence of Derozio as a teacher could not be challenged; his erudition and other necessary qualifications were beyond any reproach. Chandrakumar Tagore, the Governor of the college, H. H. Willson, the Vice-President, Russomoy Dutt, Prassanna Kumar Tagore, Shrikrishna Sinha and David Hare were of the opinion that, on the contrary, Derozio was a very eligible teacher. On the otherhand, Radhakanta Dev, Ramkamal Sen and Radhamadhab Banerji firmly declared their conviction of Derozio's noncompetence as a teacher.

Thus, in their first attempt, the conservatives were outwitted by the majority decision. As a consequence of this failure, a fresh proposition was moved, which suggested : "it was expedient in the present state of public feeling amongst the Hindu community of Calcutta to dismiss Mr Derozio from the college."

This was a master stroke. For, the moment the question of "feeling amongst the Hindu community" was raised, Mr Wilson and Mr Hare had no other option left except abstaining from voting : surely they could not give any opinion about the feeling of resentment "among the Hindu community." In addition to this successful design to mute the voices of Hare and Wilson, the conservatives, this time, could muster the support of all other 'Hindu' members in the committee except Shrikrishna Sinha. His was the lone dissenting vote against the proposal for removal. Thus, the resolution "of Mr Derozio's removal" was "carried into effect with due consideration for his merits and services."

Inspite of so many invectives and abuses, the committee hesitated to issue a dismissal order outright. At the behest of



the majority of members, Mr. Wilson requested Derozio to resign from his position after letting him know the entire background. Derozio readily understood the situation and sent his letter of resignation.

He resigned but did not surrender. In a firm but very polite letter, he explained his convictions once more and thanked Mr. Wilson earnestly for his affectionate guidance. Simultaneously, the official letter of resignation that he sent to the college authorities was full of righteous indignation and appropriate retorts. He wrote, "Firstly, no charge was brought against me. Secondly, if any accusation was brought forward, I was not informed of it. Thirdly, I was not called up to face my accusers, if any such appeared. Fourthly, no witness was examined on either side. Fifthly, my conduct and character underwent scrutiny and no opportunity was afforded to me of defending either."

Derozio very aptly called the procedures of the meeting as "the mockery of trial," and therefore "not a word of comment" was offered by him : he relinquished his post after formally thanking Hare, Wilson and Sinha for the "part" they played in the meeting. The dateline of this letter was April 25, 1831.

Though the formal connection of Derozio with the college was thus severed, still the dust caused by this turmoil was yet to settle. Mr. Wilson wrote a personal letter to him in which he agreed with Derozio's sentiments though not with the retorts. He had also informally let him know the nature of the major charges that framed the resolution for dismissal. The three most vital questions raised in the form of allegations were : whether Derozio was an atheist or not, and if so, did he teach such doctrines to the students; whether or not he encouraged disobedience among his students towards their parents; and whether he thought the wedlock between brothers and sisters were morally allowable and could be propagated. Wilson was not forwarding any chargesheet of course. He, on the contrary, very affectionately wrote to Derozio : "I have no right to interrogate you on these or any other of your sentiments,

but these are the rumoured charges against you and I should be very happy if I could say boldly they were false."

A bold and matching reply came from Derozio. The letter he wrote to Mr. Wilson could be regarded as the testament of his philosophy as well. (The entire text of this letter is given in the Appendix of this monograph.) Summarily he did reject the third 'rumour', the second 'allegation' was refuted with the help of a number of evidences; and the first 'query' was critically argued and analysed with logical premises and some consequent corollaries and thereby his philosophical ideals were fully vindicated.

His ideas regarding the existence of God was really thought-provoking. Not only his position vis-a-vis the charges levelled against him, was absolutely made clear by this exposition, but at the same time his evaluation of a question which had supreme philosophical importance throughout the intellectual history of mankind, were made quite distinct also. A few of his biographers ofcourse, tried to prove that he ultimately breathed his last as a "Faithful and devout Christian" and thus concluded that Derozio was never a nonbeliever. Hence, his personal testament concerning this vital question needs a very close scrutiny.

The basic points he made in his letter were these : he never had campaigned for or against the existence of God but always encouraged a debate over the issue; he did not regard any philosophical tenet as 'absolute' nor did he try to make the students feel so; he never did impose his personal premises upon any one of them. What the atheists like Hume and others had said, he had let them know; at the same time, the propositions forwarded by believers like Reid and others were also exposed to them. Thus each of them has formed his personal position regarding this vital issue. Derozio's sole intention was to make them free thinkers, free from any inhibition on either side. Thus, some of the students became dedicated and staunch atheists, and some others devout believers.

Obviously, this vindication of his position was least agreeable to the authorities of Hindu College. Thus, his

'resignation' was accepted smoothly by them after a sartorial praise for his "services to the institution".

This resignation alias retrenchment did not satisfy the conservative social overlords. Their wrath and vengeance against Derozio and the Young Bengal group were yet to be quenched. Being successful in removing the teacher from the college, it was time for them to settle their scores with the students. The Derozians too, in their turn, did not relent; rather some of them, in their youthful pranks perhaps, felt it obligatory on their part to tease the patrons of 'Gurum Sabha' (the sarcastical nomenclature of Dharma Sabha à la Young Bengal's vocabulary). One such incident caused much tension amongst the middle class gentry of Calcutta, in consequence of which, Krishna Mohan Banerji had to leave his home and family for good, though he was not responsible for the untoward incident.

This was not an isolated instance. The dimension of the wrath and anger vented by the conservatives could be measured from the following lines :

"Persecution is high for we have deserted the shrine of Hinduism. The bigots are violent because we obey not the calls of superstition... conspiracies are daily formed to hurt us in every possible way. Circulars stuffed with falsehoods have been issued to defame our character, and all cruelties which the rage of malice and the heat of fanaticism can invent, have been exercised upon us. But we will stand persecution. A people can never be reformed without noise and confusion." (Editorial article published in the 'Enquirer', July, 1831.)

A vivid description of this social conflict was also available in Krishna Mohun Banarjee's playlet, 'The Persecuted'. His personal experiences were translated into the incidents of this drama. The Derozians were subject to social persecution, fierce intimidation and what not ! But inspite of all such rabid fulminations, the 'Guru' and his pupils did not show any sign of surrender or submission. On the contrary, they braved the storm, as they knew : "A people can never be reformed without noise and confusion."

But as misfortune would have it, some of the English-language journals of Calcutta began to criticise, even oppose, the Derozians as well as their mentor. Even 'India Gazette', a longtime ally of Derozio, could not see eye to eye with the youths always. Not that this journal took sides with the conservatives, but because of certain prankish instigations by a section of the young rebels, even Dr. Grant became a little annoyed with them.

Capt Macnaghten, the editor of 'John Bull' was never sympathetic to Derozio or his avowed ideology. Sometime during the month of September, 1831, on a flimsy pretext, he rushed to Derozio's house and physically assaulted him and boasted of this ugly incident in the form of a letter that was published in the columns of 'India Gazette' on September 26, 1831.

Whilst the conservatives were angry with Derozio for his radical ideas and their impact upon the student community, the English-language journals (except Dr Grant's) started hating him for his overt patriotism. Thus, in the final analysis the twenty-two year old intellectual ultimately found himself caught between a crossfire of resistance offered by two absolutely different sections, whose intentions coincided, however.

But despite such 'rough weather' the 'guru' with his 'shishyas' sailed through their chartered route of ideology. Derozio published a new journal, 'The East Indian' in order to "advocate the just rights of all classes of the community", as enumerated in its prospectus published in 'Calcutta Gazette', May 16, 1831. This journal too, had a very short life-span : it was winded up immediately after Derozio's sudden death in December of the same year.

Although a section of Derozio's biographers felt elated to declare that during the last few months of his life, Derozio had been fighting for the causes of the 'East Indians' (in present-day vocabulary, Anglo-Indians) only, yet, it would be obvious from the above quotation that their contentions were nothing but figments of imagination : Derozio never stood to plead for one single community; he with his followers fought

for "all classes" of the society. Never in his life, he retracted his steps from this distinct position.

After his formal dissociation with Hindu College, Derozio was compelled to earn his livelihood from writings only. He began to write, not only in his *East Indian*, but also in '*Bengal Journal*', '*Calcutta Magazine*', '*The Calcutta Literary Gazette*', '*The Indian Magazine*' and a number of contemporary other periodicals, notwithstanding '*India Gazette*' and '*The Enquirer*'. Though the doors of the classrooms were shut for him, yet his teaching pursuits did not come to a standstill; the students regularly used to visit his house at Moulali to take lessons in philosophy, history, literature and humanism. The sessions of the Academic Association were regularly being held at Maniktala under the chairmanship of Derozio. No one could stop them. The followers of '*Gurum Sabha*' at their best, were able to spread false scandals against Derozio, his sister Amelia and some of his students only to syphon their vengeance.

Derozio had to fight not with his detractors only; a fiercer enemy appeared—it was poverty. Many of his students, no doubt, came from well-to-do families; but because of their ideological positions they were not able to help their mentor, for most of them found themselves awkwardly cornered even within their own families. Still, the '*Guru*' braved all odds, and patiently performed everything that he felt to be his duty.

During the middle of December, 1831, he was invited to act as the external examiner to conduct the annual examination of the Parental Academy. On the seventeenth of the month he wrote (for the last time in his life) about it in the '*East Indian*' concluding that "the most pleasing feature in this institution was its freedom from illiberality".

In the article concerned, he called upon the Eurasians (i.e. the '*East-Indians*'/*Anglo-Indians*) to consider themselves as the integral part of Indian nation as a whole. He also expressed his opinion that only by that process of assimilation, the ultimate upliftment of the entire nation would be possible.

This fervour of patriotism had never left him, not even when he breathed his last. He felt seriously ill on that very

night of December 17, 1831. At that time an epidemic of cholera morbus had attacked the city of Calcutta and its suburbs. Derozio too, became one of its victims. But his mind was as powerful as ever. He had a soul that never knew what defeat was; he had a mind that was permanently optimistic. This indomitable optimism was perhaps reflected even in his last wishes; he requested one of his students to recite some stanzas of Thomas Campbell's poem "Pleasures of Hope". Thirty-two-years earlier, Campbell had dreamt of a free India, an independent Indian nation. Amidst a dream of freedom and independence, Henry Louis Vivian Derozio, the patriot and poet breathed his last at a very tender age of twenty-two years and eight months. The fateful date was December 26, 1831. But ever after a lapse of more than hundred and sixty-eight years, his inspiration is still alive within the souls of millions of Indians, who are faithful to the causes of patriotism, humanism, secularity, truth and reason.

## The Teacher and the Poet

What sort of a teacher was he? a few lines from the recollections of one of his colleagues serving in the non-teaching sector of the Hindu College is being quoted here :

"... Such was the force of his instructions that the conduct of the students out of college was most exemplary, and gained them the applause of the outside world, not only in a literary and scientific points of view, but what was of still greater importance, they were all considered men of truth." (Memories of Har Mohun Chatterji; quoted in 'Henry Derozio : The Eurasian Poet, Teacher and Journalist' by Thomas Edward, 1884; pp 67-68)

In order to make all his students "Men of Truth," Derozio used the influence of his personality as a whole upon their receptive minds. The favourite method that he used and adopted, was the arrangement of a debate among the students after the completion of a particular lesson. He took the role of the moderator himself. Thus through this method of dialectics, as it was practised in the ancient academies of Athens, his students became experts par excellence, because after one such debate they were fully aware of all the arguments, for and against, the particular proposition.

As curriculum units Derozio used to teach the following in Hindu College :

Goldsmith's History of Greece, Rome and England; Russell's Modern Europe; Robertson's Charles the Fifth; Gay's Fables; Dryden's edition of Virgil's Aenid; Pope's editions of Homer's Iliad and Odyssey; Milton's Paradise Lost and one of the tragedies by Shakespeare.

As would be evident from the above list, he was entrusted with the teaching of history and the classics only. But the dimensions of his lessons went far beyond the prescribed syllabus. We have already mentioned Thomas Paine's 'The Age of Reason'; apart from this book, he taught the basic

premises of such intellectual stalwarts as Rousseau, Voltaire, Bacon, Locke, Berkley, Hume and Reid as well. Thus, the philosophical structure of the mind of his students were laid upon very solid foundation no doubt. He had dealt even with Maupertuis (a less famous one in comparison with others mentioned just now) and in order to teach his premises on morality, Derozio translated a sizable article into English from the original French.

Although there is no evidence that he taught his students about the contemporary English poets—the Romantics and others, yet he was a dedicated reader of them all. Occasional resemblances and casual references of the contemporary English-language poets, both British and Indian, could be discerned very easily from his own writings. But from few such instances only, one should not conclude that he was convincingly influenced by them. Anyway, it is a debatable point, which would be dealt with at a latter stage of this monograph.

To conclude the assessment of Derozio as a teacher, a couple of recollections by his students, who themselves became men of eminence in their own rights afterwards, may be taken note of. Radhanath Shikdar wrote in his autobiography :

Primarily he used to preach us the objects of knowledge. Such lessons were invaluable. ...From him, I have been able to form a few liberal and moralistic ideals, which have influenced all my activities since them ...I can assure that, the urge for the truth and hatred for the misdeeds which have become so dominant now-a-days among the educated sector of the society, were originated from him alone. (Translated; quoted in J. C. Bagal's 'Unabingsha Shatabdir Bangla', 1958, p. 139.)

Piarichand Mitra (alias Tekchand Thakur) wrote in the same vein; he contended : The way he explained through, made it open for his students to become outrightly inspired. Some were charmed with the examples that he cited from the anecdotes of justices; some got infatuated with stories of truthfulness; some others were submerged with the emotions related to patriotism or philanthropy. (Summarised from 'A Biographical Sketch of David Hare', 1880, p. 35)



Actually Derozio upheld an inherited tradition in teaching, he continued to follow (though to a much greater extent) the mode and methods of teaching that he learnt from his teacher, David Drummond. This gentleman, born in 1785, was an ardent admirer of David Hume and Robert Burns. He became an atheist and a humanist par excellence. Apropos of Hume, he had imbibed a philosophy, the basic tenet of which was not God, but man should be regarded as his own master in accordance with both the connotations of the word, controller and teacher; and by the writings of Burns, he was inspired to believe "A man is a man for all that ...".

Derozio too, inherited similar ideals from his teacher, Drummond. He was admitted to Drummond's school in 1815, two years after it was established. This institution followed a unique method in teaching : Drummond used to organise debates among his students on certain points concerning any branch of knowledge, and helped them to reach the truth through this dialectical process. Derozio also was quite fond of teaching according this method, as we have already noticed.

Drummond intensively taught history, philosophy and literature; he also encouraged his students to express their ideas and inspired them to expose their creative faculties. Thus within a very short time after his arrival in Calcutta in 1813 from Fifeshire, Scotland, his institution had earned a very good name in the academic circle of Calcutta.

Something more is still left to be told about Drummond and his Dharamtalah Academy. Then was a time, when other such institutions confined themselves in teaching the preliminaries of English language through the 'Spelling Book' by Dice of similar other elementary ones; even amidst such an atmosphere of teaching, Drummond had been guiding his students to understand the significance of Shakespearean dramas. He made no colour-or-race discrimination : only in his and in Mr. Sherbourne's schools there were no bars against the **Indian boys being** accepted as students. His stature as a **man and as an intellectual** could perhaps be gauged from **these factors.**

Drummond was successful in building up young Derozio's mind and intellect in a prolonged span of nine years, when he was his student. Undoubtedly, Derozio was the best pupil that he ever had. Even, when he was only an eight-year-old boy, Derozio won gold medals for his academic and extracurricular performances. Once, he recited Shylock's speech during the annual examinations of the institution so convincingly, that Dr. Grant, who was one of the examiners, wrote very highly about it in his 'India Gazette', on December 20, 1822.

The poetic faculty of Derozio also got its earliest initiation in this academy of Drummond. His first poem was written and recited in an elite gathering at the school auditorium on January 1, 1824. A couple of days later, 'India Gazette' was all praise for this "highly appropriate and neatly written" piece of verse.

That was the formal beginning of Indo-English literature, one might say; for, excepting one 'Ram Ruttan Chakerverty,' whose real identity was not beyond doubts, no Indian had ever written anything 'literary' in the English language before Derozio. Thus, this poem might be regarded as a pioneering piece in the realm of Indo-English literature.

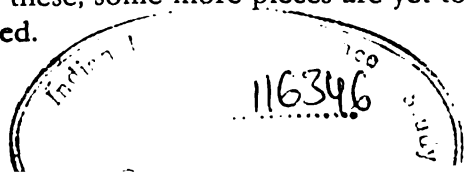
It has to be admitted of course, that the literary merit of the poem was not of any high magnitude; it was not to be expected either. But, it had a great relevance to one of Derozio's later poems : 'Sonnet, to the Pupils of Hindu College'. Certain imageries and a few metaphors and similes used in the latter poem (regarded as one of his best) had their earliest expositions in this primary poetic adventure of Derozio. A few lines may be quoted here for illustrating this point only :

As new fledg'd birds, while yet unus'd to soar  
Tremble the airy regions to explore,  
Mistrust their pow'r, yet doubting dare to fly,  
And brave the dazzling brillance of the sky ...  
Though this 'Prologue' was addressed in 1824 to the members of an elite audience, yet it really was an exposition of talents of the young students of the academy. Similar

imageries concerning young students reappeared in 1829 in the sonnet addressed to the students of Hindu College. The spokesman for the students in 1824, had become a teacher himself by then.

Within a few months of this occasion, Derozio had to leave the academy in search of a job. Finally, he went to Bhagalpore to join his uncle-in-law's firm. The actual literary pursuit of Derozio begun here. The calm environment of this small north Bihar town upon Ganges, the scenic beauty of the surroundings, a quiet neighbourhood—all these contributed to nurturing his creative faculty. Derozio had started to write poems in a regular manner; some of these were sent for the favour of publication to 'India Gazette' expectantly. Dr Grant did not fail to recognise the talent of the young poet, whom he had known quite well for a pretty long period. These poems (and a few prose compositions too) were published under pseudonyms like 'Juvenis', 'Henry', 'East Indian' and the like. The readers, in general, welcomed the young poet.

After coming back from Bhagalpore, Derozio cared to collect the poems and published them in two successive volumes : 'Poems' (1827) and the 'Fakcer of Jungheera and other Poems' (1828). Besides these two books, he wrote a good number of poems in different periodicals published from Calcutta in between 1826 and 1831. A few more pieces were collected and published by his friends and students from his unpublished manuscripts when he was no more. Many of such poems were composed simultaneously along with the published ones, appeared in some subsequent anthologies. Aratoon's edition of Derozio's poems (1872) was the earliest of such ventures, followed by B. B. Shah's and Bradley-Birt's editions (1907 and 1923, respectively). Thomas Edward's 'Henry Derozio : The Eurasian Poet, Teacher and Journalist' (1884), Benoy Ghosh's 'Bidrohi Derozio' (1960), and this author's 'Derozior Kabita' (1970) and 'Jharher Pakhi : Kabi Derozio' (1985), also contained some of the hitherto uncollected poems of him. Still there is every reason to believe that, besides all these, some more pieces are yet to be traced out and compiled.



There had been a school of thought during the lifetime of Derozio and even afterwards, that he was greatly influenced by the popular English poets of the period like Byron, Campbell, Moore, L.E.L. and in a lesser extent, by Wordsworth, Shelley and Keats and only occasionally, by Burns. But any keen reader would agree with the contention that such influences were only secondary and, at the very core of his creative faculty he was really original. A 'Basically Indian' character was vital to Derozio's poems; this was absolutely overlooked by the commentators belonging to that particular school. There were only 'casual' resemblances of these well-known poets in Derozio's writings. He used to quote a few lines occasionally from popular poets like Byron or Moore or Campbell, as it was a prevailing literary fashion of the time; this factor too, perhaps, was somewhat instrumental behind the formation of such a widely-spread proposition.

The western impact that was to be traced in Derozio's writing, had an altogether different dimension : it was ideological per excellence. His ideas of history and concepts of philosophy were based on the theories propounded by Hume, Bacon, Maupertuis and some other leading European scholars. The origin of the humanistic approaches in his writings were indebted to such influences. Moreover, as we have already noticed, he used to teach European history and literature in Hindu College. So the finest essence of European intellect became inseparable to his intellectual existence as well. This influence was always there and it had left its impact upon his creative writings too. But that, however, could not amount to be called 'imitations'.

In the light of the proceeding discussion, a classification of his poems could be done. In the main, his poetical pieces might be divided into the following categories :

- a. Those which were absolutely Indian in their context and perspective : only the language was English;
- b. Those that had certain European backdrop: historical, literary or otherwise;
- c. Those which had some universal appeal, such as, humanism or urge for freedom;

- d. Those with some very personal emotions like love, affection, hope, despair etc; and
- e. Those poems which could not be grouped into any of these four categories; such poems constitute a motley, miscellaneous section.

It is rather important to note that nowhere in his poetry, God or divinity or any religious sentiment could be found. Both the facets of nature, beautiful and fierce, had their impacts upon his creative mind; quite a number of poems bore its testimony.

The 'Fakcer of Jungheera' (a long verse-narrative with a little bit of balladic element in a sense), his 'magnum opus', was the finest example of the first group. Besides this poem, 'To India, My Nativeland', 'The Harp of India', 'Enchantress of the Cave', 'The Ruins of Rajmahal', 'Song of an Indian Girl', 'Songs of Hindustani Minstrel', 'On the Abolition of Satee', 'David Hare' were the most notable representative pieces of this section.

The important specimens with European backdrop were the following ones :

'Thermopylea', 'Greec', 'Greeks at Marathon', 'The Grecian Sire and the Son', 'Address to the Greeks' and 'Sappho' (Written under an inspiration derived from Greek history and culture).

Besides, 'Italy', 'Tasso', 'Anecdote of Francis I' were based on political and cultural histories of Italy and France.

There were some others like 'A song Tuned in Portuguese Air' and 'A Portuguese Song'. 'Romeo and Juliet' and 'Yorick's Skull' were poems composed after taking cues from some delicate emotional and philosophical problems raised in Shakespearean plays. 'New Atlantis', 'Love's First Feelings', 'Golden Vase'—these and only a few other poems had been written in the styles somewhat resembling some contemporary British poets.

The poems belonging to the category of having a universal appeal were many, of these 'Freedom of the Slave', 'Morning After a Storm', 'Poetry of Human Life' and 'Independence'

deserved very special mention. Among the pieces written in the context of certain personal feelings, the following ones had some special significance: 'Here's a Health to Thee, Lassic', 'Addressed to Her, Who'll Best Understand Them', 'Sister-in-law', 'Sonnet to the Pupils of Hindu College', 'The Poet's Grave (I)' and 'The Poet's Grave (II)'. These poems were important for a number of reasons, which will be duly discussed. Finally, among the verses belonging to the miscellaneous category, the following pieces might be mentioned: 'Ode from the Persian of Hafiz', and 'A Walk by Moonlight.'

Even when more than half a century had passed after his death, he was considered as someone who might "only claim to rank among the minor poets of his day." [Henry Derozio: *The Euresian Poet, Teacher and Journalist*: Thomas Edwards, 1884; pp. 220] But the irony is this, that even after a further lapse of more than a century, this 'claimant of a rank among the minor poets' is still being discussed, whilst many of the others (such as H. M. Parkar or Thomas Campbell or Robert Burns or L.E.L.), whom he allegedly had 'imitated,' have gone deep into the dust of oblivion. It is true, that the study of Derozio, as it is being conducted presently, is not confined to the impact of his teachings only; as an inseparable part of this study, his poems (and other writings too) could and should not be overlooked or neglected either.

'Haip of my country! Let me strike the strain.

'The Fakeer of Junghera' (written in 1828) had often been regarded as the best poetic endeavour of Derozio. Any serious reader of this long verse-narrative would be compelled to take some special note of it for multiple reasons. First of all, the story-line of this narrative poem was somewhat unique, because the social background of the period during the composition of this piece took shape, was least congenial to its writing. The story, based on the ideological tenets believed by Derozians, which had hit a severe blow to the religious fundamentalists was something really very daring in its contemporary context. There had been other aspects as well.

The poem was divided into two parts. The first canto began with a sequence of 'Sattee'-rites : a young Brahmin woman, Nulinee, was being led to the pyre of her deceased husband amidst ritualistic incantations. She was being psychologically tormented by two mutually opposing emotions : primarily she had a passionate urge to live and enjoy life like all other young women of her age; on the other hand, there was the age-old fanatical faith in 'Sattee', which taught her to believe since her childhood that it would lead a Hindu widow to the 'heaven'! Ultimately, religious faith won over the spontaneous urge for life; Nulinee slowly climbed upon the pyre of her husband, which was yet to be lit. She began to offer her prayers to the gods. Right at this juncture, Nulinee's former lover, a Muslim youth who had become the leader of a gang of desperados after being refused by the girl's family, reached the cremation-ground with his followers. He did not hesitate even for a moment to rescue his beloved from the ensuing ordeal and fled away with her.

In the second canto of the poem, Nulinee's father felt that he was wronged and humiliated on account of this incident and thus prayed to the Nawab of Rajmahal for a redress. The royal forces, in order to protect the sanctity of religious

sentiments of a loyal subject began to search for the 'culprits', whilst Nulinee and her lover were spending a merry time. When the confrontation between the two forces became imminent, the brave youngman made a promise to his lady, that he would surely come back after inflicting a massive defeat upon the enemy and henceforth, would renounce this desperate life of a bandit, only to build up a peaceful 'home' with her.

The royal army was given a crushing defeat. But that was not all : in the ultimate sequence of the narrative it was found that the lifeless bodies of the two lovers were lying on the battlefield in a close embrace. Death had united them forever, perhaps. The anxious moments were waived away permanently.

Derozio appended some informations concerning various portions of this poem in the form of footnotes, when it was first published in 1828. From one such reference, we could find out the actual source of inspiration that led him to write this poem. He wrote : "Although I once lived nearly three years in the vicinity of Jungheera, I had but one opportunity of seeing the beautiful, and truly romantic spot. I had a view of the rocks from the opposite bank of the river, which was broad and full, at the time I saw it during the rainy season. It struck me then as a place where achievements in love and arms might take place; and the double character I had heard from the Fakeer together with some acquaintance with the scenery, induced me to fund a tale upon both these circumstances." From this vivid statement, the trace of a romantic legend which had originated in the neighbouring Rajmahal area, could be ascertained. No doubt, this legendary story was the archetype of Derozio's poem. Besides, the justification of its very title also could be taken into account from this reference.

This poem was significant for a number of reasons. The essence of patriotism was overwhelmingly present in it. The famous sonnet by Derozio :

My country in thy day of glory past  
 A beauteous halo, circled round thy brow  
 was incorporated right at the outset of this verse-narrative.



This sonnet was one of the earliest pieces written on the theme of patriotism, in the entire span of literature produced in this country. Incidentally, the earliest patriotic poem too, was written by Derozio only about a year earlier; it was included in his first anthology, 'Poems'.

Besides 'To India My Native Land', there was another piece in this verse-narrative which also was full of patriotic emotions. A few lines from its initial stanza may be quoted here to corroborate this statement :

O lovely is my native land  
 With all its skies of cloudless light :  
 But there's a heart, and there's a hand  
 More dear to me than sky most bright.

It should be recollected that, similar patriotic poems and songs were composed by Rabindranath Tagore, Dwijendralal Roy and Subramanya Bharathi in the early years of this century only, that is, about seventy-five years later. Even the spark of patriotism that was discernible in Rangalal Banerji's "Swadhinata hinatay ke banchitey chay he, ke banchitey chay?" (who would like to live without independence?), too, was a distant cry, for his book 'Padmini Upakhyān' was written in 1852.

There were certain portions in the 'Hymn' contained in this narrative which resembled some Vedic imageries. This 'Hymn' was addressed to the 'Sun-God' in connection with the 'Satee'-rites as narrated in the poem. This very idea of the Sun-God was derived from the Vedic pantheon. Besides, there were several other allusions that corresponded with similar Vedic concepts. Thus, the reference to the "eternal seven" and "whirling minstrels of the court above", "giver of good", "God of immortal mind", the god who sits on a "golden throne", the god who had devastated the cloud, thunder and darkness and created rainbows, fragrance of flowers, sylvan shades of the forests and the beauty of the women—all had their comparable counterparts in Rgveda. An interested reader may search for them accordingly in the following 'sooktas' (verses) of the Rgveda and also in certain parts of the Upanishads. (RV. 1/50/8-9; 1/35/2-15; 10/37/1-12; 6/71/13;

7/1; 7/45; 1/22/5-8; 1/115/4; 4/46/6; 1/164/52; 5/41/2;  
5/82/1-6; 7/73/1-4; 7/63/4;

Brhadaranyak Upanishd : Janak-Yajanbalkya Sambad;  
Chhandygyopanishad : Shwetketu Upakhyan.)

In most of these portions of Vedic and poet-Vedic literature, a good number of tributary descriptions of Surya, Mitra and Pushan, the triad of the Vedic gods of light, could be found, which had their comparable counterparts in this 'Hymn'. Incidentally, there were two more portions in 'Jungheera', where similar images and allusions could also be traced out by and large.

In an explanatory note appended to this 'Hymn', Derozio distinctly mentioned about the Vedas :

"The Vedas, which are supposed to contain the essence of wisdom, declare in various places, wherever language of praise is employed, the object of such praise is the Deity of Brihm. Thus fire is Brihm, water is Brihm; a number of other substances and defined in the manner. It is necessary to state that all prayers in the ceremony of female immolation are addressed to the Sun". ... One may find some identical ideas in the well-known 'Purush Sookta' (Rgveda 10/90) as well.

But how Derozio mustered up such ideas, is a pertinent question. There is still no record that he had read the Vedic literature in original. Till then no complete translation of the Rgveda was available; only a few Upanishads were translated by Raja Ram Mohan Roy into English and Bengali. Sir William Jones in his 'Extract from a Dissertation of the Primitive Hindus' (1784), incorporated a few translated lines from the Rgveda, and he too, had composed a few 'Hymns' addressed to some of the Hindu deities, including 'Surya' which again, in turn resembled Vedic hymns addressed to the Sun-god, both in nature and expression. A. Duperron had written a couple of volumes in French ('Oupnekhat') during 1801-2, that dealt with the philosophical aspects of the Upanishads. H. T. Colebrooke also, wrote an article in 1805, 'On the Vedas or Sacred Writings of the Hindus'. Perhaps all or some of this materials might have had helped and inspired him to write such a piece imbued with Vedic ideas.

Another probability could not be ruled out also. Horace Heyman Wilson, with whom Derozio had a very close association as we have seen already, was a noted Vedic scholar himself. His English translation of the Rgveda, was published in the middle of the last century. Though the very process had surely begun much earlier. Thus, Derozio might have had obtained some help in this regard from Wilson as well.

Krishna Mohan Banerjee, Derozio's student and a very close associate, too, became a noted Vedic scholar in his later days. His zeal to help his 'guru' also, might have been another probable source of Derozio's interest in Vedic ideas. The students often supplied him necessary material for his writing.

There are a few more points that remain to be discussed about this poem. The heroine was a Hindu, whilst the hero (though his name had not been mentioned anywhere) was a Muslim. This was clearly evident from the statement that he made after being reunited with his beloved :

No more to Mecca's hallowed shrine  
Shall wafted be a prayer of mine  
Henceforth I turn my willing knee  
From Allah, Prophet, Heaven, to thee.

Thus, the bare-structure of the narrative was something like this : an uppercaste Hindu girl and a Muslim youth fell in love, though she was compelled to marry someone else, and he out of frustration became a lawless tough. They were reunited dramatically after she was rescued by him from the funeral pyre of her deceased husband. Both of them then renounced their respective religious faith. Here, Derozio had bravely drawn a sequence where religious conservatism was overcome by, what we may very candidly call, 'the lust for life.'

On the other hand, this too was an important point to be noted that, a Muslim ruler did not hesitate to help a Hindu subject (Nulinee's father) to get his grievances redressed against a Muslim 'outlaw'. Thus by this count also Derozio had shown an approach devoid of any religious narrowness. Only in some of the medieval folk-ballads of Bengal, we find this sort of liberal and secular attitude.

This verse-narrative had a few other ballad-like elements also. A medieval atmosphere full of horrid religious rites, adventurous incidents of romance, chivalry and warfare and the tragic end of the young lovers—all these, if taken together, constituted an ideal plot-structure for a ballad.

In fact, 'The Fakeer of Jungheera' was a compendium of several dimensions. Sometimes the echo of Vedic hymns had given it a sombre maturity of classicism; some other time, it resembled a medieval ballad-like episode of love, heroism and war. Again, it heralded modern ideals in so far as the spirit of patriotism, humanism and religious biaslessness were concerned.

Before concluding the discussion on this poem, a few more points should be cleared. It is not that, this piece was absolutely free from any influence of the European literature. The balladic nature of this narrative might have been influenced by Scott. The intimate relations between man and nature, as portrayed in between the tenth and the eighteenth stanzas of the second canto, resembled some similar ideas in Wordsworth's poems. Of course, Sir William Jones' translation of 'Shakuntala' was not beyond his reach. Even Shakespeare too, had an influence on him. The final sequence had a close resemblance with the last scene of 'Romeo and Juliet'. It is noteworthy that, during the very same period when this verse-narrative was being composed, Derozio wrote a beautiful sonnet named 'Romeo and Juliet', and thus a close connection between the two was not at all far-fetched.

But inspite of all these, there was still something more. Derozio had an attraction for the folk-culture. A sub-plot in the narrative, as envisaged and narrated by him would bear out this premise. A determined lover began a grim meditation in the cremation ground by the side of the lifeless body of his fiancée. His sole aim was to bring her back to life. In this endeavour he had achieved his goal ultimately. Such stories were quite common on Indian folk literature. Besides, this folktale-like side-plot, there was also a sequence in the poem when 'Pretini'-s (female ghosts) appeared and tried to allure

the meditating youngman in many ways which included singing seductive songs, which resembled the 'tappa' (a form of quasi-folk songs, quite popular in Bengal at that time) both in the spirit and in words.

In the annotative appendix of 'Jungheera', Derozio had collected a story from 'Betal Panchabingshati', which was brought to him by a student of Hindu College. In all probabilities, this story was a part of the English translation of the 'Betal,' which was done by one Chhidam Chandra Dass in 1817. This also indicates his attraction towards the folk genera of literature.

Derozio had written another verse-narrative named 'Enchantress of the Cave' though it was quite short in length in comparison with 'Jungheera'. The story of this poem too, was no less interesting. It was not based on any historical legend like Nulinee's story, although its backdrop was also almost same, i.e. the Medieval period of Indian history.

Just on the eve of a crucial battle between a Muslim nawab and a Hindu raja, Nazim, the chief of the former's army, went to an enchantress who used to live in a cave of a nearby hill. He was very anxious to know the probable outcome of the ensuing war. He was also eager to have some information about Jumlee, his wife, whom he had left behind in his home.

Suddenly, Nazim found that the newly-recruited young boy, who had been working as his attendant for the last few days, was missing. The enchantress replied to all his queries in an evasive tone and in a somewhat puzzling way. Nazim felt a little non-plussed. But his astonishment was really great, when he finally found out that the mysterious enchantress was none but Jumlee herself. And throughout the period of war, she had accompanied her husband in the guise of the attendant boy.

Undoubtedly, the plot of this verse-narrative was quite romantic. In contrast to the tragic love-episode depicted in the previous poem, the happy orientation of this one exposed a newer dimension in Derozio's writings. A typical Shakespearean technique of sex-concealment had been aptly utilised here.

One would find a similar situation in Bankim Chandra Chatterji's famous historical novel 'Rajsingha' (1891), where one of its main female characters Daria Bibi too, went to the battlefield in the guise of a young boy, only to remain by the side of her husband, Mubarak, the Mughal army commander.

Further more, this narrative poem was written through the medium of dialogue between the main characters. Thus, it contained the elements of a verse-drama as well. Derozio had shown an intense alertness regarding the language of this piece. In order to depict the typical background of Mughal-ruled medieval India, he had carefully chosen the words to build up the images that contributed to the very atmosphere of the story. He loaned a number of words from the Arabic and the Persian, dealt with Muslim mythological references and described or suggested the manners and customs which a Muslim noble and his consort might practise or take resort to.

He had frequently utilised words like 'Mehtab', 'Iblish', 'Israfil' and many other similar ones, though he could have easily used their English counterparts. At one stage of the poem Derozio wrote :

And on his blade the Koran verse  
Bespeaks for the very foe is a curse

This description was a positive instance of his genuine urge for creating a perfect atmosphere of Muslim gallantry of the medieval age. That, Derozio had a thorough knowledge about the Muslim religion, mythology and history, was absolutely evident from the detailed notes that he appended to the verse. This poem could well be regarded as a fine specimen of his scholarship as-well-as literary faculty.

Like this 'Enchantress of the Cave', Derozio had written one more verse-dialogue : 'A Dramatic Sketch'. The backdrop of this piece, as had been portrayed, was a cave, somewhere in a remote corner of the western Himalayas. A rivulet was flowing nearby, and it was dawn. A Saint completed daily prayers to the God of light. Then he began to preach his disciple, who incidentally, came from the 'holy' city of Rome. Though the guru was absolutely absorbed in preaching the

sublime concept of Brahma and the bliss of the life beyond death, yet on the other hand, his disciple expressed his eagerness to live amidst the worldly woes of love and compassion. The mentor was somewhat cross with his pupil for such material urges. He rebuked him, only in vain, for the disciple began to describe the exquisite beauty of a certain woman he knew in Rome. For him, conjugal love too, was a means by which one might attain divinity. The guru felt himself lost, though he did not relent, neither did the disciple.

This in short, was the abstract of the story-line of this dramatic poem. One might correctly feel that there was no story in the true sense of the term. Actually, this piece exposed a dialectical discourse between the two opposing philosophical approaches : the guru as an adherer of Vedantic principles, whilst the Roman disciple perhaps taking a fancy to Epicurean philosophy; his attitude almost was in conformity with what the 'Charvakpanthis' had said. However, the poet's sympathy overtly tilted towards the Roman; the Vedantic Saint could not claim even a minimum sympathy from him. A very important aspect of Derozio's attitude towards life had thus been reflected in this less-known poem.

Besides these longer pieces, Derozio had written quite a few shorter poems as well which would come into the category that had a typical Indian essence. 'Ruins of Rajmahal' belongs to this group. It was written from the inspiration he derived from the contemporary Indo-British poet H. M. Parker's 'Ruins of Babylon'. A nostalgic feeling that crept into his mind at the sight of the dilapidated condition of an ancient seat of power, formed the core of this poem.

In spite of being somewhat nostalgic by nature, Derozio did not lack in optimism for the future. A sonnet 'The Harp of India' was an exquisite example of this genre. In this poem an ardent passion to see the country's brighter days in future is expressed. True, it imbibed something from Moore's 'The Harp of Erin'. (If nothing else, then the title of the piece, at least!) A fiery passion to see his motherland free was the central theme to the poem. This very spirit was found in the

writings of many of the Bengali writers of the latter years : Rangalal Banerji and Hemchandra Banerji were notable among them. That, Derozio preceded them as a patriotic poet, is an unquestionable premise. The ultimate desire of the poet, as expressed in the poem was "The Harp of my Country ! let me strike the strain!" This passionate utterance formed the very core of his patriotism.

A really significant poem belonging to the first group was 'On the Abolition of Sattce.' Towards the end of 1829, Lord Bentinck, then Governor General of India, outlawed the custom of 'Sattce' by proclaiming an administrative order. Raja Ram Mohan Roy's sustained fight in this regard, thus achieved success. The Derozians too, were totally opposed to such practices. The opposition towards these rites could be seen in 'Jungheera' too, which we have already noticed. 'On the Abolition of Sattce' was one of most important pieces of Derozio. The poem begins in this way :

Red from his chambers came the morning sun.

And frowned dark Ganges on thy fatal shore

Journeying on the high; but when the day was done

He sat in smiles, to raise in blood no more.

Hark! heard ye not ? The widow's wail is over ...

The poet then describes the ugliness of the priestly rites :

The priestly tyrant's cruel charm is broken

And to his den alarmed the monster creeps ...

and then he paid his tributes to Bentinck in a crisp but emotional language :

Bentick, be thine the everlasting mead !

He further continued in the same vein :

He is the friend of the man who breaks the seal

The despot custom sets in deed and thought

He labours generously for human weal

Who hold Omnipotence of fear as nought...

After attributing all these compliments, Derozio hailed the victory of the new order and then, in the concluding stanza, he had visualised the entire perspective : the storm was over, the rainbow dazzled on the vast horizon; darkness was fast



fading out; a mild southerly breeze seemed to be caressing  
the child of dawn; and

...Morning's Herald star

comes trembling into day : O, can the sun be far ?

*INDIA .*

It is really very significant that the name of the motherland  
was uttered by the poet even after the actual poem was over.

This very theme of the widow's misfortune was reflected  
in another poem of Derozio : 'Song of the Indian Girl'. Besides,  
a sonnet written to felicitate David Hare and another lyric  
'Song of the Hinduatani Minstrel' deserve special mention  
amongst the poems belonging to the group that had certain  
typically Indian essence and perspective.

## 'Daughters of Europe! By our Ganges side'

The next major category of Derozio's poems, was one that had either an European setting as the background, or a direct inspiration from the occidental culture. Among such pieces, Greece and the Greeks had some very special position. The Hellenic people, their history and culture together made quite an impact upon him.

Derozio used to teach Greek history and the two Homeric epics in Hindu College. Even prior to that, during the formative period of his poetic career, he wrote a number of poems, which derived a lot of inspiration from the brave and patriotic anecdotes of the Greek history. In this connection one may refer to the following pieces : 'Thermopylae', 'Greeks at Marathon', 'Address to the Greeks', 'The Grecian Sire and the Son', and 'Greece'. It may also be recollected here that he wrote a brief but beautiful article on 'The Greeks, and what we have received from them'. The very title of this essay would suggest the nature of its content.

In 'Thermopylae' Derozio had written some really significant lines that reflected his philosophy of life. He wrote :

Let them rest nought could appeal  
Those who armed at Honour's call :  
Feel they not as hero's fall

For Liberty?

That, Derozio had attached some special importance to 'Honour' and 'Liberty', would be absolutely obvious from the above quotation. His life and works bore the testimony of this statement.

Derozio's likings for the Greek culture could be measured in his poem, 'The Bridal', where the underlying plot could be easily compared with that of the Indian mythological story of Sunda, Upasunda and Tilottama. Besides this lyric, based upon a Maltese folk-tale, he wrote a sonnet as a homage to the

ancient poetess of Greece, Sappho. In another poem, 'The Poet's Habitation', he had expressed a desire to live in an unnamed island in the Aegean Sea forever.

In a couple of lyric based upon the French history too, the idea of 'Honour' and 'Liberty' was made absolutely explicit by Derozio. The title of the poem 'All is lost, save Honour!' would bear out the best evidence in favour of this premise. In 'Anecdote of Francis I' the poet worshipped the spirit of 'liberty'. The French emperor, Francis I, was released from Spanish captivity and he was entering his own country. This was the background of the poem. The very sequence was portrayed by the poet in a spirited manner :

Now broken was his chain;  
What were his feelings when he cried  
I am a king again ....

The universal truth, that freedom is the most coveted right of any human being, was expressed in many of his poems. This particular piece too, was a fine example of that genre.

There were a few poems, which had an Italian background. These were mainly romantic in nature. The poem named 'Italia' was the finest of them all : to Derozio Italy was "the land of the lover and the poet." In this regard one might recollect Michael Madhusudan Dutt's Bengali sonnet on Italy, where he described the glorious ancient country as the "garden of poetry" ("Kavyer Kanan" in Bengali). Dutt's poem was tacitly inspired perhaps by his illustrious predecessor's imageries. In this context Derozio's lyric on Tasso too, should be recalled.

Derozio had written only two poems that had a very faint relation with the fatherland of his grandparents, that is, Portugal. These were of very little significance. Most probably he only wanted to clear the little debt that he had to that country by still continuing to bear a Portuguese surname!

In the course of the discussion on the 'Jhungheera' and the 'Enchantress', we have noted that certain Shakespearian influences could be traced in some of those pieces. There had been a couple of sonnets too, written along these lines.

Of these two pieces 'Romeo and Juliet' was written in a direct manner, while the other one, 'Yorick's Skull' was perhaps composed as if it was a monologue of Hamlet.

In the former piece, Derozio had expressed his idea about love; and in the latter, the philosophy of life and death was dealt with at length. In some of his earlier poems, Derozio had expressed some romantic feelings. The pieces like 'Love's first feelings', 'The Golden Vase', 'Here's a health to thee, Lassie!' were full of some stray ideas about love and romance. But a complete view of the same would be found in 'Romeo and Juliet' only. Derozio wrote :

It was something higher

Than ought that life presents; it was above

All that we see, 't was all we dream of love.

Any careful reader of Derozio's poems would not hesitate to concur with this opinion, that there was a very delicate and subtle sadness prevailing in most of them. Except for a very few occasions, a sombre, lonely and pensive mood could be found almost always. In 'Yorick's Skull' his personal sensitiveness was clearly discernible in the monologue recited by the hapless Prince of Denmark :

Behold! this is the human face divine.

One would find an isomorphic expression in his poem entitled 'Dust', where he described how after collecting a handful of dust from the deserted and broken tomb of some unknown aristocrat, Julian (perhaps a companion of the poet) told him "See this is man." This sort of detachment was really unique for a young man of his age. He was only eighteen years old then.

The other poems that might come into the 'European category, were 'Good Night', 'Canzonet I & II,' 'A New Atlantis', 'Golden Vase', 'Love's First Feelings', 'An Invitation and etc.'. These — written somewhat in imitation of the contemporary British poets, were weaker compositions in comparison with his other poems.

On the contrary, a good number of poems belonging to the 'personal' and 'universal' groups, were really exquisite pieces. These, along with those belong to the already discussed in the 'Indian' section, formed the best part of his poetic creations.

## Poems for Lassie, Amelia, Self and the Young Flowers

The 'personal' poems of Derozio were somewhat autobiographical. In a sense, such a nomenclature could be given to every piece of poetry that has ever been written by anyone, because a poem always reflects the poet's personal emotions.

Derozio's poetry was no exception to this universal truth. But his 'autobiographical' poems often directly reflected the corresponding reactions to certain major incidents of his life and expressed sentiments about some near-ones related therewith. His hopes and despair, joys and sorrows, every subtle sentiment was mirrored in these personal effusions.

Among these poems, his 'Sonnet to the Pupils of Hindu College' had a very special position. We have already noticed that in his earliest poem Derozio compared young learners like himself with the "new fledg'd birds". The image reappeared in this sonnet once more albeit in a maturer and subtler form :

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 the young birds in soft summer hours)  
Their wings to try their strength ...

It was written when he was no more a student, by then he had become a teacher, who used to love his students very dearly. This tender affection for the students was imparted upon him most probably by his mentor, Mr Drummond. This, too, was a sort of inheritance for him. His students were almost like family inmates. Even on his deathbed, none else but these 'newly-stretched-winged ones' recited some lines from Thomas Compbell's 'Pleasures of Hope'. Not only the title of this poem was significant, but in it the poet had expressed an ardent desire to see India free in the near future. And hence that had made the sequence more significant.

In a small article, delivered as an address to his students on a particular occasion, Derozio wished them all, that in future they should be full of human-love, knowledge and capabilities. The sonnet concerned too, should be viewed from this very angle as well; the concluding lines were of quite importance, if judged in this light :

... When I see

Fame in the mirror of futurity,

Weaving the chaplets you have yet to gain.

And then I feel I have not lived in vain.

And, really he did not! what he saw in the mirror of futurity by his poetic (not prophetic) insight, came true. Many of his pupils became famous personalities afterwards.

Another of his 'personal' poems, 'Sister-in-law', had a very special significance in his life. Derozio's younger sister, Amelia, often argued with her brother, so that he might agree to marry. A story ran thus: one fine morning Amelia found a piece of paper under the breakfast-plate with this nice poem scribbled on it by her elder brother perhaps in an attempt to evade her pressing requests. He started the poem in a very affectionate from :

A sister-in-law, my sister dear

A sister-in-law for thee?

I will bring thee star from where angels are

Thy sister-in-lad to be.

Thereafter, his poetic fancy expanded its wings. Imageries came in galore and most of them had some fairy-tale touches. Derozio equated Amelia's future sister-in-law with "an urn containing the essence of purity", and then, with a hue from a rainbow in the horizon, with a jewel lying in a coral cave in some distant sea, and even with the fragrance of all the celestial 'amaranths'. Obviously such a fanciful promise to let Amelia have a sister-in-law, was not at all a serious one. It should be taken for certain, that, there were some distinct personal reasons behind this unwillingness of Derozio to get married. This was evident from his attempts of taking refuge amidst the fairy-tale fancies only to resist a demanding younger sister. But the question was, why?

According to Thomas Edwards, during his stay at Bhagalpore, Derozio had an involvement with a girl, which, however, did not blossom into marriage. Edwards did not forward any evidence to strengthen his contentions. But if one attempts to analyse a few of his 'personal' poems, then, this unexplored side of his life could be brought into light, perhaps.

From, Bhagalpore, the poems that Derozio sent to Dr Grant's 'India Gezette' for publication, were mainly romantic. But afterwards, Derozio himself did not include most of these poems in his two anthologies, although many of them were quite well-written. The main tune of such poems was the sensitive feelings of an early youth's romance, somewhat hesitant, as-well-as sad. A keen study would reveal that in all probabilities, the inspiration behind these poems came from the very existence of some young woman. 'Elegiac Stanzas,' 'Love me and leave me not', 'Lines written at the request of a young lady' and few more would subscribe to this premise.

All these pieces were composed in 1825, between January and October. Sometime during the earlier months of the next year, Derozio had to come back to Calcutta to settle permanently over there. In March, 1826, he wrote a poem in Calcutta, titled, 'Here's a health to thee, Lassie'. One specific imagery in this piece would lend support to our proposition that he was in love with someone in Bhagalpore :

Though wild waves roll between us now

Though Fate severe may be Lassie ...

The 'waves' that separated the poet from 'Lassie' suggested a multi-dimensional imagery : these were the waves of fate, time and river too. This third suggestion vindicated the existence of a real girl, separated from the young poet and the barriers between them were set up not only by fate, nor time, but a river also. The girl living in Bhagalpore and the poet, living in Calcutta, were in fact separated by the river Ganges as well. Thus a frustrated lover that he was, the young poet plausibly picked up an image of rolling waves as the symbol of the painful separation.

The consequent pieces were more significant. Till then, he used to write under a pen-name : Juvenis, or simply 'J'; but from this period, though he continued to write essays and other sort of poems in the familiar alias, yet all the love-poems that he wrote bore his actual first name, Henry. Moreover these poems had a common nomenclature : 'Addressed to her, who will best understand them'.

Two other pieces belonging to this group of poems should be taken note of. Both had a common heading 'The Poets Grave'. The former was written during his Bhagalpore days; and other was composed few weeks before his demise. The latter piece was a sonnet and it bore a soft, sad and restrained note :

Be it beside the ocean's foamy surge  
 On an untrodden, solitary shore  
 Where the wind sings and everlasting dirge,  
 And the wild wave, in its tremendous roar  
 Sweeps o'er the sod. -- There let his ashes lie  
 Cold and unmourned ....

In comparison, the earlier piece was much weaker :

How sweet the spot is the poet's tomb.  
 There ling'ring fancy silently weeps.  
 And there eternal laurels bloom  
 To mark the spot where Genius sleeps.

The latter poem was somewhat philosophical in tone which the concluding lines would reveal :

There, all in silence, let him sleep his sleep.  
 No dream shall flint into that slumber deep  
 No wandering mortal thither once shall wend.  
 There, nothing, o'er him but the heavens shall weep  
 There, never pilgrim at his shrine shall bend  
 But holy stars above their mighty vigils keep.

We have already noticed Derozio's detached approach vis-a-vis death during the discussion of 'Yorick's Skull'. Several other reflections of the same could be found in his 'Dust', 'The Tomb' or in 'Lines Written on the Grave-stone'. But here we find something more : the poet had visualised death in the light of his own feeling arising out of the preconscious level



of mind. And thus, this particular sonnet would rightfully claim a coveted position in the course of any discussion about Derozio's life and poetry.

Before concluding this chapter a few lines should be allotted for a poem, published posthumously two years after his death. This fine lyrical piece, though would generally fall in the category of poems with a universal appeal, yet its content exhibited a basic feature of the poet's very personal self also. In this poem, 'Independence', Derozio drew a simile between a burning "little lamp" and his own "heart". As the "tyrant wind" started blowing, the lamp began to flicker. Describing the sequence the poet asked himself in the final stanza :

And wilt thou tremble so my heart,  
When the mighty breath on thee ?

In the ultimate line of the poem, he himself gave the expected reply to this query :

Away, it cannot be!

Derozio had profound respect for the freedom of 'Man'. It has already been pointed out partly during the discussions of his 'European' poems. This left a deep impact upon his poetry that came under the purview of the 'Universal' section.

The outstanding pieces belonging to this particular section, were the following ones : 'Independence' (about which, we have already made certain observations), 'Freedom to the Slave', 'Morning After the Storm (I & II)' and the 'Poetry of Human Life'.

At the outset of 'Independence' Derozio had compared the inherent human urge for freedom with the flame of a tiny earthen lamp. The flame, after glowing temporarily, at last succumbed to a stormy wind and was out. At this point, the poet says, "My glorious image be... My heart and shall that little lamp". He visualised the universal spirit of independence in the mirror of his own heart. And as his "heart" "wilt" not "tremble", thereby, the spirit of 'fearlessness' would be intertwined with the emotions for independence.

The very same indomitable spirit of independence was reflected through another poem, 'The Freedom to the Slave'. In 1827, when it was written, the ugly system of slave-trading was in full swing in a number of countries, not excluding ours. Contemporary newspapers in Calcutta regularly carried advertisements of selling and purchasing of slaves in and around the city. The employees of the East India Company serving in different categories were the active participants in this nefarious trade and so were others including the moneyed gentry of the city.

Such was the background of writing this poem. Some sixteen years later, the system of slavery was abolished in the British Empire: 'Uncle Tom's Cabin' (considered as the greatest testament against slavery ever written) was written exactly twentyfive years after. And the movement launched by Abraham Linclon was successful at a still later date.

In the beginning of the poem, Derozio quoted a line from Thomas Campbell :

And as the slave departs, the Man returns.

That, Campbell was a very special source of inspiration of Derozio, we know. Here too, he took a cue from him and thereby echoed the spirit of humanism. A slave was told that he had ceased to be a slave hereafter. Henceforth he won't have any master and would be regarded as a free person. From this point, the poet began to describe the different feelings which gradually overtook the mind of the erstwhile slave. His immediate reactions were narrated by the poet in an emotional 'yet sombre and resolute language' :

He knelt no more; his thoughts were raised;

He felt himself a man

He looked above the breathe of heaven

Around him freshly blew;

He looked upon the running stream

That 'neath him rolled away

Then thought of winds, and birds and floods

And cried, 'I' m free as they!'

Then the poet paid a high tribute to the men who all over the world had been fighting against slavery at that time :

And glory to the breast that bleeds

Bleeds nobly to be free

Blest be the generous hand that breaks

The chain that a tyrant gave,

And feeling for degraded man

Gives freedom to the slave.

This note of humanism formed the core of Derozio's progressive philosophy and his world-view too, which had been very distinctly reflected in these lines.

In this 'Universal' section, another very noteworthy poem was 'Morning After the Storm'. This piece was written in two sections. Its immediate inspiration was somewhat of a personal experience of a natural devastation. In the first section of the poem, the poet felt the power of destruction that was hidden within the forces of the natural elements. In the second part

of the piece, he suddenly came to realise a marvellous truth. that the seeds of a new creation remained underlying the debris of calamity. This deep philosophical understanding made him write.

O, there

I learned a moral lesson, which I'll store

Within my bosom's deepest inmost core.

Like 'Independence', 'Poetry of Human Life' was published posthumously in a journal. In this poem a total perspective of life and the world was reflected; it portrayed the full conceptual orbit of the poet about matter and idea and their mutual relations, too. Thus, one should accept that, this particular poem was the epitome of Derozio's philosophical understanding.

The basic formulation of this philosophical understanding was something like this : every tear and smile, hope and despair, light and shade of life silently contribute to a sublime state of poetic sensitivity. This sensation had its echoes in the rustlings of the leaves of the tree, in the murmurs of the evening breeze, in the music created by the rolling rivulets. Derozio described them all as "mystic elements of life," and accordingly the "holiest poetry" was 'rife' with such elements only.

This unison between the nature and man created a "music strange and sweet" within the universe; and note of blissful feelings pervaded the cosmos, the earth and the human heart all alike.

In the final stanza, Derozio wrote :

But *man* has thoughts to which he giveth from

In words, that sometimes thunder like the storm,

And sometimes like the brook's melodious flow

Melt into song ...

This was the 'summum bonum' of Derozio's entire penance for learning and of creation. 'MAN', though was an inseparable part of nature, yet it was 'he' who would curve out the forms from the 'ideas'. This materialistic approach of the mind signalled something unique no doubt. As because 'Man' was there, there was 'thought', too; and again, it was that very

'Man' who would turn the 'thought' into form. He had thoroughly studied Maupertuis and raised his objections against Kant, and thus, had a definite mooring of a materialistic concept. But one particular point should be noted here unfailingly : any 'form' that man had created out of his 'thought', must have had a causal connection with the processes of productions; but this aspect of historical development of materialism could not have occurred in his mind, if we consider the then prevailing state of studies in materialism.

Now, a few lines about the poems belonging to the 'miscellaneous' section. Some of these pieces were free translations from classical Persian poetry ('Odes from the Persian of Hafiz'). One was inspired by the Arabian folklore ('Song of Antar'). There was a long bardic verse (Maniac Widow). One or two of these poems had reflections of his personal feelings albeit indirectly ('Poetry', 'Don Juanics'). A few more poems could have been mentioned here : but that does not seem to be necessary.

Besides the two books that were published during his lifetime, a good number of poems remained scattered in the pages of many of the contemporary journals. A sizable portion of these are still not collected and perhaps are lost into oblivion. In this dissertation, some of those hitherto uncollected poems have been discussed along with the easily available ones. All these, taken together, would reveal the total image of Derozio as a poet, though the technical points of rhetoric or prosody have not been explored here, because such exercises are not quite necessary for this sort of a study which is meant for a general readership.

## Thoughts on Various Subjects and other Essays

In spite of the fact that Derozio was primarily a poet, his contributions to prose writing were not insignificant either. For all these 168 years after his death, some stray attempts were made for the evaluation of his poetry, but almost nothing has been said about the articles and the elaborate notes that he wrote simultaneously with poems. Often, his prose writings would supplement the analyses of his poems. Any assessment of Derozio's literary contribution would remain incomplete without a discussion of his prose.

The earliest available specimen of prose written by Derozio was a small letter, which he sent to Dr Grant of 'The India Gazette' on January 8, 1825. This letter and a few similar ones sent afterwards, were written as the forwarding notes of his poetic contributions to Dr Grant's journal. In a short time, he regularly started writing articles as well, though they were much less in number than his poems.

A complete list of Derozio's articles and other prose compositions that we could collect or notice as references in journals and is being given here :

1. 'The Modern British Poets'; 2. 'Torn-out Leaves of A Scrap Book'; (a) 'Beginings'; (b) 'Literature in India'; (c) 'Polemics'; (d) 'Chit-Char'; (e) 'Scandal'; (f) 'Tea-Parties'; (g) 'Education in India'; 3. 'Thoughts On Various Subjects': (a) 'Acknowledgement of Errors'; (b) 'Definitions'; (c) 'Titles'; (d) 'Locke's Style & Reasoning'; (e) 'Human Action'; (f) 'The Greeks and what we have received from them'; (g) 'Conclusion Of My Address To My Students Before The Grand Vacation in 1829'; 4. 'On Moral Philosophy': (a) 'What Is Happiness And What Is Misery'; (b) 'In Ordinary Life, the Sum Of Evil Exceeds That Of Good'; (c) 'Reflections On The Nature Of Pleasure And Pains'; 5. 'Objections To The Philosophy of Emanuel Kant'.

Besides the prose pieces, the prolonged notes appended by Derozio along with his two verse-narratives 'Jungheera' and

'Enchantress', too, should be considered as small articles at times, for some of them were so rich in matter and treatment, that they could rightfully claim such a nomenclature. The essays on 'The Modern British Poets' and 'Objections to the Philosophy of Emanuel Kant' are presently not available; one would find only their references in the pages of the old journals.

Derozio's articles may be classified into three groups. The first group deals with literature, history and other branches of social studies; the second group deals with philosophical formulations and the third group of articles are written in a lighter vein about commonplace day-to-day affairs.

Among the serious writings 'Education in India' was really thought-provoking. Being an educationist, Derozio knew all the pros and cons of the system prevailing in the country at that time. Because of an intimate understanding of the various problems concerning education, he could focus on them in a direct way and was able to find out their roots. In so far as the solutions were concerned, his observations were not concurred by all, still, this had to be admitted that he was positively specific.

Primarily this article was written about the problems of imparting education on the East Indians ('Anglo-Indians' according to modern vocabulary) in general and on his younger brother Claudius, then pursuing his studies in Scotland, in particular. Here he pointed towards certain socio-economic aspects, which do have some relevance in the perspective of our social polity even today. The fundamental proposition of Derozio in this essay was that the education system of a country must be based upon the nation's necessities and aspirations. But at the same time the newer elements that had been emerging in several disciplines of knowledge in other countries should be given their proper position in the curriculum. Thus, the best course of an academic discipline could be formed only if an equilibrium between the two aspects was maintained. His own method of teaching was a fine example of such a precept. Ram Mohan Roy's famous letter to Lord Amherst about the ideal structure of education for the Indians (1823) was a forerunner of this essay and Macaulay's reforms in this

country's educational system (1835) were yet to take place. Hence, between these two very important events in the history of education in modern India, this article was really significant, particularly in the wake of the controversy prevailing at the time between the 'Orientalists' that is, those who wanted to educate the younger generation only through the medium of traditional Indian forms of learning and the 'Occidentalists' that is, those who maintained that, only modern western education would benefit the up-coming youths of this country.

The small articles written under a general heading, 'Thoughts on Various Subjects' were probably some stray notes of his personal diary. But if that be so, it was a diary with some difference. History, philosophy, social behaviour and other disciplines formed the basis of these tiny prose writings. More intensive exercises were done in his longer essays on the ideas of Maupertuis or Kant. The smaller ones varied with them not only in size, but in approaches also. Among these stray notes, 'The Greeks and What We Have Received from Them' was quite significant. We have already noticed that Greece and her culture, valour and grandeur had left a very deep and impressive mark upon the mind and the creativity of Derozio. This small essay was a subsequent supplementary to his poems written on Greek subjects. Derozio's idea about the nature of teacher-student relationship could be visualised in his 'Acknowledgement of Errors', where he wrote : "I on this day (October 19, 1829), most rashly told one of my students that I disbelieved him— a circumstance which has given me much sorrow. It appeared afterwards, that I was mistaken, and I confessed my indiscretion before the whole class."

A few other noteworthy articles in this particular series were 'Definitions', 'Titles', and 'Lock's Style and Reasoning' had some distinct marks of his scholarship.

The dissertation which Derozio had written about Emanuel Kant, earned high praises from different corners. While Introducing an edition of Derozio's poetical works, E. W. Madge wrote : "...His Objections to the Philosophy of Emanuel Kant, which Rev. Dr W. H. Mill, Principal of the Old Bishop's



College, declared before a large audience, were perfectly original and displayed powers of reasoning and observation which would not disgrace even the gifted philosophers". (Poetical Works of H. L. V. Derozio, Vol I, Ed. B B. Shah; Introduction by E. W. Madge, 1907; p.iv). It could not be ascertained whether this treatise was ever published or not. Even as far back as 1884, Thomas Edwards was unable to trace out this article in spite of a thorough and painstaking search for it.

Derozio had translated three small articles into English from the eighteenth century philosopher Pierre Maupertuis' original French, under a general heading 'On Moral Philosophy'. He had prefixed different subheadings to those three essays : 'What Is Happiness and What is Misery', 'In Ordinary Life the Sum of Evil Exceeds that of Good' and 'Reflections on the Pleasure and Pains'. Maupertuis was called "one of the early precursors of the evolutionary hypothesis." ('A History of Philosophy' : Part 2 : B. A. G. Fuller, 1935; p. 107). He also used to study the Newton's laws. Though basically a scientist, yet his intellectual quests touched the boundaries of philosophy quite often. Such informations about Maupertuis would surely serve as an indication of his translator's mind also, because Derozio undertook this task only to get his pupils acquainted with the ideas of this scholar. He would have not undertaken the trouble of translating such difficult essays if he had not found them absolutely necessary. Surely Derozio had found certain homologous elements between his ideas and those of this French scholar of the previous century.

Before the conclusion of this chapter, a few lines as an estimation of Derozio's journalistic writings also may be appended. His interests were manifold; his range of knowledge was vast and social consciousness very receptive. In addition to all these qualities he was a good scholar too, and thus, his journalism became somewhat different.

After the dismissal from Hindu College, journalism was not only the means of subsistence for him, but it was a sort of

weapon as well, with which he could fight for his social ideals. At the same time, journalism for him was the forum through which he could propagate his ideas and ideals since his original arena, that is, the college polity was denied to him then.

An immediate observation about his journalism was made in a Bengali periodical within a few days after his demise. : "Drozoo ( i.e.Derozio) sahib used to publish newspapers since his early days. At the outset, he published a weekly called 'Parthenon'; only two issues of this journal could be published by him and then he had to forsake the project. Thereafter, this time annually, he had tried to run another journal named 'Hesperus'; but this endeavour too had to be given up. Finally he had established yet another newspaper, 'The East Indian' after publishing a few numbers of the same, he had passed away". ('Sambad Ratnakar', 7-1-1832; translated)

Another report in the 'Bengal Spectator' is worth quoting, "The English journal Parthenon was initiated by some Bengali youngmen coming from respectable families. In the first issue of this newspaper, an article on female education was published and another one dealt with the problems of the Britishers residing in this country. Some aspersions were cast upon Hinduism in a third article while the fourth was critical about the volume of expenses that one was compelled to bear in the law courts. The members of Hindu gentry being disturbed by all these tried their best to prevent the circulation of this issue, using whatever resources they had at their perusal and ultimately managed to confiscate all the copies of the next issue and thus, these could not be sent to the subscribers. Despite all such difficulties, the young Hindu publishers of the journal did not give up their quest of the truth." ('Bengal Spectator', 7-9-1842; translated from the Bengali section of this bilingual periodical).

That Derozio regularly contributed to the 'India Gazette' was well-known, though his prose writings in this journal were unsigned. We have noticed in an earlier chapter the consequence of one such unsigned article. He also used to write in the columns of 'Enquirer', edited by his student and

comrade-in-arms against social evils, Krishna Mohan Banerji. He was very closely connected with yet another contemporary periodical 'Kaleidoscope', to which he contributed occasionally.

But in spite of everything, his primary identity was that of a poet and a teacher; these two, again were but the mutually complimentary units of his real self. His personality was multifaceted and his ideas are still relevant in contemporary India.

Although, most of his followers ultimately gave up the relentless fight that they had begun in their youth, yet, it is to be noted that the ideals of Derozio never ceased to exist in our social-ideals and in our literature. The conclusion of this dissertation may not be properly drawn, unless, an evaluation of the influence of Derozio on the Indian intelligentsia is done. We have noticed that, he was the pioneer in spreading ideals of nationalism and universalism in our country. He initiated the struggles against the religious fundamentalism and social conservatism. His relentless quest for 'Truth' and 'Reason' served as the source of inspiration for subsequent generations. And his materialistic approaches of explaining the social and philosophical phenomena had built-up the deep-structure of the progressive ideals within our national psyche. The spirit of patriotism and the ideal of humanism could be distinctly traced out in the creative literature produced by the Bengali writers in the subsequent decades of the last century.

The writers, who expressed their ideas and emotions in English, were the early mantle-bearers in this regard. The patriotic poems written by Kashiprasad Ghosh and Gooroo Churn Dutt, were but clear-tone echoes of Derozio's pioneering poems in this mould. The former's 'The Veena, of the Indian Lute' would surely remind us of Derozio's 'The Harp of India'. Such a comparison may also be made with certain portions of Kashiprasad's 'The Shair and other Poems' (1830). A similar opinion could be formed about some poems of Gooroo Churn's 'School Hours' (1839) also.

This zeal of patriotism was evident in the Indo-English fictional literature, too. In 1835, Kylash Chunder Dutt wrote a novelette 'A Journal of Forty-eight Hours in the Year 1945', where he built-up a story in an imaginary sequence, of an armed revolution against the British rule in India. A comparable story was composed by Shoshee Chunder Dutt,

'Republic of Orissa : Annals from the Pages of Twentieth Century' (1845), where also the idea of armed struggle was manifested in order to liberate the motherland from the rule of the foreign-yoke.

This, of course, was apparently something new in the context of Derozian approach towards patriotism, but after a close observation, one would be sure that this spirit of armed revolution was but a natural consequence of his teachings, for he was the pioneer in our country in raising a protest against any sort of tyranny and oppression, be it social or political.

This patriotic emotion could be found in a more absorbing way in Bengali literature of the later period. The image of nationalism that one may find in Rangalal Banerji's 'Padmini Upakhyan' (1859) or even in Michael Madhusudan Datta's 'Meghnad Badh Kavya' (1861) and 'Krishnakumari Natak' (1861), was an obvious outcome of Derozio's influence.

This tradition was upheld by Bankim Chandra Chatterji, and even by Rabindranath Tagore. Bankim Chandra's 'Anandamath' (1879) and poems as-well-as a series of songs composed by Rabindranath, were full of nationalistic fervour. The patriotism that we may find in Tagore's famous novel 'Gora' (1909) and other fictional writings also would bear out the testimony in favour of this statement.

Actually, an attitude of opposition against all sorts authoritarianism and vested socio-economic as-well-as political interests, was the keynote of Derozio's social philosophy. This spirit of protest, never lost its ground in our social life through all these years since his time. And the continuum of progressive ideals in our nation's history of these one hundred and sixty-eight years, should be regarded as an obvious inheritance (may be indirect, though) of Derozian movement. This is a reality, which can not be denied of its rightful place in our history.

But even then, we often face a reserved attitude towards Derozio's contribution due to some misconceived notion. The bogey of being on 'Eurasian' was partly instrumental for this in the nineteenth century. But the actual underlying reason was perhaps something more serious in nature. What Derozio

wanted to establish, was not at all congenial to the interests of the overlords of our society. Had he been an European by birth, our social psyche would have eagerly welcomed his contributions. Or, had he been an ardently religious man, our predecessors would have eulogised him. And, had he not been a rebel that he was, he would have been made a celebrity even then! Our inherent social conservatism has deprived Derozio the honour he deserved. But, however, presently the overall attitude towards this 'stormy-petrel' is being changed. Thus, we are having some newer thoughts regarding his contributions also. If the social-scientists in our country really feel interested in tracing out the origin of our progressive ideologies that emerged during the last century, they would find a treasure-house in Derozio's life and writings. How the 'age of reason' actually dawned upon our nation, may not be properly analysed if the real evaluation of the this twentythree-year-old intellectual's contribution to our socio-cultural history is left undone.

All his ideas and creations, were tuned to the notations of defiance against any form of superstition of religious fanaticism or social oppression. The spirit of nationalism was but its natural consequence. Thus, when the progressive ideologies in our society, or the socio-economic and cultural evils are to be evaluated, the study of the life and works of the personalities like Henry Derozio becomes all the more important. This small monograph is but only a little step onto that direction.

# Selections from Derozio's Writings

## POEMS

### To India – My Native Land

My Country, in thy day of glory past  
A beauteous halo circled round thy brow  
And worshipped as a deity thou wast.  
Where is that glory, where that reverence now ?  
Thy eagle pinion is chained down at last,  
And grovelling in the lowly dust art thou  
Thy minstrel hath no wreath to weave for thee  
Save the sad story of thy misery.  
Well— let me dive into the depths of time,  
And bring out from 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.

### Sonnet to the Pupils of the Hindu College

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

## On the Abolition of Satee

The practice of Satee, or burning alive the widows of Hindoos, is hereby declared illegal, and punishable by the Criminal courts.

Regulation XVII, 1829

Red from his chambers came the morning sun  
 And frowned, dark Ganges, on thy fatal shore,  
 Journeying in high; but when the day was done  
 He set in smiles, to rise in blood no more,  
 Hark! heard ye not? The widow's wail is over;  
 No more the flames from impious pyres ascend,  
 See Mercy, now primeval peace restore,  
 While pagans glad the arch ethereal rend,  
 For India hails at last, her father and her friend.

Back to its cavern ebbs the tide of crime,  
 There fettered, locked, and powerless it sleeps;  
 And History bending o'er the page of time,  
 Where many a mournful record still she keeps.  
 The widowed Hindoo's fate no longer weeps,  
 The priestly tyrant's cruel charm is broken,  
 And to his den alarmed the monster creeps;  
 The charm that mars his mystic spell is broken,  
 O'er all the land 'tis spread : he trembles at the token.

Bentinck, be thine the everlasting mead,  
 The heart's full homage still is virtue's claim,  
 And 'tis the good man's ever honoured deed  
 Which gives an immortality to fame :  
 Transient and fierce, though dazzling is the flame  
 That glory lights upon the wastes of war  
 Nations unborn shall venerate thy name  
 A triumph than the conqueror's mightier far  
 The memory shall be blessed as the morning star.

He is the friend of the man who breaks the seal  
 That despot custom sets on deed and thought,  
 He labours generously for human weal



The winged mind will not earth be brought  
'Twill sink to clay if it imprisoned be,  
For 'tis with high immortal longing fraught;  
And these are deemed or quenched eternally,  
Until it feels the hand that sets its pinions free.

And Woman hath endured, and still endures  
Wrong, which her weakness and her woes should  
shield

The slave and victim of the treacherous lures  
Which wily arts, to man, the tyrant yield.  
And here the sight of star, of flower, or field  
Or bird that journey's through the sunny air  
Or social bliss from women has been sealed,  
To her, the sky is dark, the earth is bare,  
And Heaven's most hallowed breath pronounced  
forbidden fare.

Nurtured in darkness, born to many woes,  
Words, the mind's instrument but ill-supplied  
Delight, even as a name she scarcely knows  
And while an infant sold to be a bride;  
To be a mother her exalted pride,  
And yet not her's as mothers sigh of smile  
Of doomed in youth to stem the icy tide  
Of rude neglect, caused by some wanton's wile  
And forced at last to grace her lord's funeral pile.

Daughters of Europe! By our Ganges side,  
Which wept and murmured as it flowed along,  
Have wives, yet virgins, nay, yet infants, died,  
While priestly fiends have yelled a dismal song  
'Mid deafening clamours of the drum and gong  
And mothers on their pyres have seen the hands  
Which clung around them when those hands were  
young

Lighting around them such unholy brands  
As demons kindle when they rave through hell in  
bands.

But with prophetic ken, dispelling fears  
 Which haunt the mind that dwells on nature's plan  
 The Bard beholds through mists of coming years  
 A rising spirit speaking peace to man.  
 The storm is passing, and the rainbow's span  
 Stretch from north to south : the ebon car  
 Of darkness rolls away : the breezes fan  
 The infant dawn, and morning's herald star  
 Comes trembling into day; O can the Sun be far?

INDIA

### Independence

Look on that lamp which seems to glide  
 Like a spirit o'er the stream,  
 Casting upon the darkness tide  
 Its own mysterious beam.  
 My heart, and shall the little lamp,  
 My glorious image be,  
 Shall the might so mirk, the stream so damp  
 Be it lit and cheered by thee  
 Lo! in the breath of the tyrant wind  
 The trembling flame looks wan  
 And pale, as if fear had seized its minds  
 It fades, alas, 'tis gone;  
 And wilt thou tremble so, my heart,  
 When the mighty breath on thee?  
 And shall thy light like this depart?  
 Away! it cannot be.

### Freedom to the Slave

"As the Slave departs, the Man returns"  
 – Campbell

How felt he when he first was told  
 A Slave he ceased to be,  
 How proudly beat his heart, when first  
 He knew that he was free.

The noblest feelings of the soul  
To glow at once began,  
He knelt no more, his thoughts were raised  
He felt himself a man.

He looked above – the breath of heaven.  
Around him freshly blew,  
He smiled exultingly to see  
The wild birds as they flew  
He looked upon the running stream  
That 'neath him rolled away  
Then thought on winds, and birds, and floods,  
And cried, 'I'm, free as they!'  
Oh freedom, there is something dear  
Then in thy very name  
That lights the altar of the soul  
With everlasting flame.  
Success attend the patriot-sword,  
That is unsheathed for thee  
And glory to the breast that bleeds,  
Bleed nobly to be free!

Blest be the generous hand that breaks  
The chain that tyrant gave,  
And feeling for degraded man,  
Gives freedom to the slave.

### The Poet's Grave

Be it beside the ocean's foamy surge  
On an untrodden solitary shore,  
Where the wind sings an everlasting dirge  
And wild wave, in its tremendous roar,  
Sweeps o'er the sod. There let his ashes lie  
Cold and unmourned, save, when the seamew's cry  
Is wafted on the gale, as if 't were given  
For him whose hand is cold, whose lyre is riven!

There, all in silence, let him sleep his sleep.  
No dream shall fit into that slumber deep,

No wandering mortal thither once shall wend,  
 There nothing o'er him but the heavens shall weep  
 There never pilgrim at his shrine shall bend,  
 But holy stars along their mighty vigils keep.

### Yorick's Skull

I Clown. ".....This same skull, Sir, was, Sir,  
 Yorick's skull, the King's jester."  
 Hamlet. "This?"  
 I Clown. "E'en that."  
 Hamlet. (He takes the skull) "Alas! poor  
 Yorick! now get to my lady's  
 chamber, and tell her, let her paint  
 an inch-thick, to this favour she  
 must come. Make her laugh at that..."

It is a most humiliating thought,  
 That man, who deems himself the lord of all  
 (Alas! why doth he thus himself miscall?)  
 Must one day turn to nought or worse than nought  
 Despite of all his glory, he must fall  
 Like a frail leaf in autumn; and his power  
 Weighs lighter than his breath in his last hour;  
 And then earth's lord is fragile as flower.

This is a lesson for thee, Pride! thy book  
 Should be the charnel; into it once look,  
 And when thou'st read it, feed upon the thought,  
 The most humiliating thought, that thine  
 And thou shall be unto this favour one day brought  
 Behold! this is the 'Human face divine'.

### Sister-in-law

A sister-in-law, my sister dear,  
 A sister-in-law for thee?  
 I'll bring thee a star from where angels are  
 Thy sister-in-law to be.

For thou art as pure the lights that burn  
In the palace of bliss eternally,  
And thy sister-in-law must be like an urn  
Containing the essence of purity.

I'll borrow fleet wings from the visions of night,  
And when with storms the heavens are dim,  
Like a thought or a seraph, I'll shape my flight  
Until I have reached the rainbow's rim  
And thence I'll bring, my sister dear,  
A sister-in-law for thee,  
A hue from that bow I'll bring here below.  
Thy sister-in-law to be.

I'll shoot like a beam from the golden hired sun  
Down, down to those bright coral caves,  
Where the mysteries dark of old ocean are done,  
And the mermaid her amber locks laves.  
And I'll bring thee a gem from rich diadem,  
On the brow of the queen of the sea;  
That jewel so rare on my bosom I'll bear  
Thy sister-in-law to be.

On the hippogriff-wing of that moon-stricken thing  
Wild fancy, to whom it is given  
With its flight to describe round all nature a ring  
Will I mount up to heaven, to heaven.  
From the amaranth beds that are there I shall bring  
An odour immortal for thee :  
For it's but meet that nought but what's sweet  
Thy sister-in-law to be.

### The Harp Of India

Why hang'st thou lonely on yon withered bough?  
Unstrung for ever, must thou there remain?  
Thy music once was sweet – who hears it now?  
Why doth the breeze sigh over thee in vain?  
Silence hath bound thee with her fatal chain;

Neglected, mute, and desolate art thou,  
 Like ruined monument on desert plain  
 O ! many a hand more worthy far than mine  
 Once thy harmonious chords to sweetness gave.  
 And many a wreath for them did Fame entwine  
 Of flowers still blooming on the minstrel's grave:  
 Those hands are cold – but if thy notes divine  
 May be by mortal wakened once again,  
 Harp of my country, let me strike the strain!

#### Morning After a Storm (I)

The elements were all at peace, when I  
 Wandered abroad at morning's earliest hour,  
 Not to inhale the fragrance of a flower  
 Or gaze upon a sun-illumined sky;  
 To mark the havoc that storm had made  
 I wandered forth, and saw great Nature's power.  
 The hamlet was in desolation laid  
 By the strong spirits of the storm; there lay  
 Around me many a branch of giant trees.  
 Scattered as leaves are by the southern breeze  
 Upon a brook, or an autumnal bay;  
 Cloud piled on cloud was there, and they did seem  
 Like the fantastic figures of a dream,  
 Till morning brighter grew, and then *they rolled away.*

#### Morning After a Storm (II)

Oh! Nature, how I love thy face! and now  
 That there was freshness on thy placid brow.  
 While I looked on thee with extreme delight,  
 How leapt my young heart at the lovely sight!  
 Heaven breathed upon me sweetly, and its breath  
 Was like the fragrance of a rosy wreath  
 The river was wreck-strewn : its gentle breast  
 Was like the heart of innocence, at rest;  
 I stood upon its grass-grown bank, and smiled,

Cleaving the wave with pebbles like a child,  
And marking, as they rose those circles fair  
Which grew, and grew; then vanished : but Oh! there  
I learned a moral lesson, which I'll store  
Within my bosom's deepest, inmost core.

### Romco and Juliet

"Oh, Love! what is it in this world of ours  
Which makes it fatal to be loved?"

—Don Juan, Canto III

I thought upon their fate and wept; and then  
Came to my mind the silent hour of night,  
The hour which lovers love and long for, when  
Their young impassioned souls feel that delight  
Which Love's first dream bestows; — How Juliet's ear  
Drank every soft word of her cavalier!  
And how, when his departing hour drew nigh,  
She fondly called him back to her! —  
Oh! Why did she then call him back? — that it is the same  
With all whom love may dwell with, but the flame  
Within their breasts was a consuming fire,  
'Twas passion's essence; it was something higher  
Than aught that life presents; it was above  
All that we see — 'twas all we dream of love.

### The Poetry of Human Life

Is human life not full of poetry?  
The common sounds we hear, the sights we see,  
Are they not born of human hopes and fears,  
Are not their offspring thoughts, and smiles and tears?  
These are the mystic elements of life,  
And these with holiest poetry are rife.

Enamoured, we the moon's mild glories drink  
And hold communion with the stars that wink  
Enamoured with the vigil they have kept:

Nay, we have heard, the minstrel's soul hath wept  
 Even o'er the fragile flowers that breathe and blush  
 On every bough the very grass we crush  
 At every step, with rash unpitying feet  
 Hath walked the heart to music strange and sweet.

But MAN has thoughts to which he giveth form  
 In words, that sometimes thunder like the storm,  
 And sometimes like the brooke's melodious flow  
 Melt into song, and he hath hopes that glow  
 Visions of glory that ethereal be,  
 Dreams whose least part is immortality,  
 And whose embodying is divinest bliss,  
 Is there not poetry most pure in this?  
 Aye, human life is truly full of all  
 That beauty and that magic which can call  
 Imaginings more sound and glorious forth  
 Then all the stars of heaven and flowers of earth.

#### Chorus of Brahmins

Scatter, scatter flowerets round,  
 Let the tinkling cymbal sound;  
 Strew scented orient spice  
 Prelude to the sacrifice;  
 Bring the balm, and bring the myrrh,  
 Sweet as is the breath of her  
 Who upon the funeral pyre  
 Shall ere Surya sets, expire,  
 Let pure incense to the skies  
 Like the heart's warm wishes rise,  
 Till, unto the lotus throne  
 Of the great Eternal One  
 High ascending, it may please  
 Him who guides our destinies,  
 Bring the pearl of purest white,  
 Bring the diamond flashing light;  
 Bring your gifts of choicest things,



Fans of peacock's starry wings  
 Gold refined, and ivory,  
 Branches of the sandal tree,  
 Which their fragrance still impart  
 Like the good man's injured heart,  
 This its triumph, this its boast,  
 Sweetest 'tis when wounded most!  
 Ere he set the golden sun  
 Must with richest gifts be won,  
 Ere his glorious brow he lave  
 In yon sacred yellow wave,  
 Rising through the realms of air  
 He must hear the widow's prayer  
 Haste ye, haste, the day declines  
 Onward while he shines,  
 Let us press, and all shall see  
 Glory of our Deity.

(*'The Fakeer of Jungheera'* :1/VIII)

### The Last Sequence

Alas! when misery comes, Time clips his wing  
 And walks in fetters, and we hear them ring;  
 While still the vulture in rock-nailed heart  
 Crimsons his beak, and will never depart!  
 The morning dawned upon the sun-steeped plain :  
 What saw the peasant ?—Steed and rider slain!  
 But chief his eye was daunted but a form  
 So bold, in life it might have ruled a storm –  
 And fondly ivying round were it arms  
 Of a fair woman, whose all powerful charms  
 Even death had failed to conquer – her lips seemed  
 Still parted by sweet breath, as if she dreamed  
 Of him in her embrace : but they who thought  
 That life was tenanting her breast, and sought  
 Some answer from her heart to hush the doubt  
 Found its eloquence had all but burned out.

(Same : 2/XXIV)

## Thoughts on Various Subjects

*Acknowledgement of Errors*

It has been frequently maintained, the parents and instructors should behave in such a manner towards children as to lead them to suppose that they are infallible. This is very generally practised and there are few boys who do not think that their masters are the most perfect and accomplished personages in the world. This is fraught with mischief, and should be discouraged. It makes boys take opinions upon trust the cause of all the prejudices and errors that exist.

I, this day, (19th Oct, 1829), most rashly, told one of my students that I disbelieved him; a circumstance which has given me much sorrow. It appeared afterwards that I was mistaken : and I confessed my indiscretion before the whole class.

Who censures me for this, and tells me that I gave the boy an opportunity to triumph? I reply, that it was the least I could have done, after having hurt his feelings, and wounded his honour. Pride and pedantic authority might have directed the adoption of another course; but justice require that even man should have made due reparation to a child whom he had offended.

*Locke's Style and Reasoning*

4th December, 1829. One of my pupils, about fifteen years old, whose acquaintance with the English language commenced about two years ago, made a remark yesterday concerning Locke with which I was struck. I had been just reading to to him and to some others a part of the 'Essay of the Understanding', when he remarked, with reference to Locke's style of writing and the excellence of his reasoning, that he seemed to have the tongue of a child of five years old in the head of a man of a hundred. I never heard anything better said of Locke. The boy's name deserves to be mentioned – it was Ramgopal Ghose.

*Conclusion of My Address to My Students Before the Grand Vacation in 1829*

As your knowledge increases, your moral principles will be fortified; and rectitude of conduct will ensure happiness. My advice to you is, that you go forth into the world strong in wisdom and in worth; scatter the seeds of love among mankind, seek the peace of your fellow creatures, for in their peace you will have peace yourselves.

### Hindu Widow

A mistaken opinion, somewhat general in Europe, namely, the Hindu widow's burning herself with the corpse of her husband, is an act of unparalleled magnanimity and devotion. To break those illusions which are pleasing to the mind, seems to me a task which no one is thanked for performing; nevertheless, he who does so, serves the cause of 'Truth'. The fact is, that so far from any display of enthusiastic affection, Satee is a spectacle of misery, exciting in the spectator a melancholy reflection upon the tyranny of superstition and priest-craft. The poor creatures who suffer from this inhuman rite, have but little notion of the heaven and the million years of uninterrupted happiness to which their spiritual guides tell them to look forward. The choice of immediate death, or a protracted existence, where to be only must content their desire, is all that is offered to them; and who under such circumstances would hesitate about the preference? The most degrading and humiliating household offices must be performed by a Hindu widow; she is not allowed more food than will suffice to keep her alive. She must sleep upon the bare earth, and suffer indignities even from the youngest members of her family. These are only a few of her sufferance. The philanthropic views of some individuals are directed to the abolition of widow burning, but they should first ensure the comfort of these unhappy women in their widowhood, otherwise, instead of conferring a boon upon them, existence will be there of many a drudge and a load.

*Derozio's letter to H. H. Wilson*

H. H. Wilson, Esq.

20th April, 1831

My Dear Sir,

Your letter, which I received last evening, should have been answered earlier but for the interference of other matters which required my attention, I beg your acceptance of this apology for the delay, and thank you for the interest which your communication proves that you continue to take in me. I am sorry, however, that the question you have put to me will impose upon you the disagreeable necessity of reading this long justification of my conduct and opinions. But I must congratulate myself that this opportunity has afforded me of addressing so influential and distinguished an individual as yourself upon matters which, if true, might seriously affect my character. My friends need not, however, be under any apprehension for me; for myself the consciousness of sight is my safeguard and my consolation.

I. I have never denied the existence of a God in the hearing of any human being. If it be wrong to speak at all upon such a subject, I am guilty; but I am neither afraid, nor ashamed to confess having stated the doubts of philosophers upon this head because I have also stated the solution of these doubts. Is it forbidden by where to argue upon such a question? If so, it must be equally wrong to adduce an argument upon either side. Or is it consistent with an enlightened notion of truth to wed ourselves to only one view of so important a subject, resolving to close our eyes and ears against all impressions that oppose themselves to it?

How is any opinion to be strengthened but by completely comprehending the objections that are offered to it, and exposing their futility? And what have I done more than this?

Entrusted as I was for sometime with the education of youth peculiarly circumstanced, was it for me to have made them part and ignorant dogmatists, by permitting them to know what could be said upon only one side of grave questions ?

Setting aside the narrowness of mind which such a course might have been injurious to the mental energies and acquirement of the young men themselves. And (whatever may be said to the country) I can vindicate my procedure by quoting no less orthodox authority than Lord Bacon : "If a man," says this philosopher (and no one ever had a better right to pronounce an opinion upon such matters than Lord Bacon), "will begin with certainties he shall end in doubt." This, I need scarcely observe, is always the case with contented ignorance when it is roused too late to thought. One doubt suggests another, and universal scepticism is the consequence. I, therefore, thought it my duty to acquaint several of the college students with the substance of Hume's celebrated dialogue between Cleathes and Philo, in which the most subtle and refined arguments against Theism are adduced.

But I have also furnished them with Dr. Reid's and Dugald Stewart's more acute replies to Hume, replies which to this day continue unrefuted. "This is the head and front of my attending". If the religious opinions of the students having become unhinged in consequence of the course I have pursued, the fault is not mine. To produce convictions was not within my power; and if I am to be condemned for the Atheism of some, let me receive credit for the Theism of others. Believe me, my dear sir, I am too thoroughly imbued with a deep sense of human ignorance, and of the perpetual vicissitudes of opinion, to speak with confidence even of the most unimportant matters. Doubt and uncertainty besiege us too closely to admit the boldness of dogmatism to enter and enquiring mind; and far be it from me to say "this is" and "that is not," when after the most extensive acquaintance with the researches of science, and after the most daring fights of genius we must confess with sorrow and disappointment that humility becomes the highest wisdom, for the highest wisdom assures man of his ignorance.

II. Your next question is, "Do you think respect and obedience to parents no part of moral duty"? For the first time in my life did I learn from your letter that I am charged with inculcating so hideous, so unnatural, so abominable a principle. The authors of such infamous fabrications are too degraded for my contempt. Had my father been alive, he would have repelled the slander by telling my calumniators, that a son who had endeavoured to discharge every filial duty as I have done, could never have entertained such a sentiment; but my mother can testify how utterly inconsistent it is with my conduct, and upon her testimony, I might risk my vindication. However. I will not stop there, so far from having ever maintained or taught such an opinion, I have always insisted upon respect and obedience to parents. I have indeed condemned that feigned respect some children evince as being hypocritical and injurious to the normal character; but I have always endeavoured to cherish the the sentient feelings of the heart, and to direct them into proper channels. Instances, however, in which I have insisted upon respect and obedience to parents are not wanting. I shall quote two important ones for your satisfaction : and as the parties are always at hand, you may at any time substantiate what I say. About two or three months ago Dakhinarunjan Mookerjee (who had made so great a noise lately) informed me that his father's treatment of him had become utterly insupportable, and that his only chance of escaping it was by leaving his father's home. Although I was aware of the truth of what he had said, I dissuaded him from taking such a course, telling him that much should be endured from a parent, and that the world would not justify his conduct if he left his home without being actually turned out of it. He took my advice, though I regret to say only for a short time. A few weeks ago he left his father's house, and to my great surprise engaged another in my neighbourhood. After he had completed his arrangements with his landlord, he informed me for the first time of what he has done; and when I asked him why he had not consulted me before he took such a step : "Because", replied he, "I knew you would have prevented it."

The other instance relates to Mohesh Chandra Sing having recently behaved rudely to his father and offended some of his other relatives, he called upon me at my house with his uncle Umachurn Bose and his cousin Nondolall Sing. I reproached him severely and told him that, until he sought forgiveness from his father, I would not speak to him. I might mention other cases, but these may suffice.

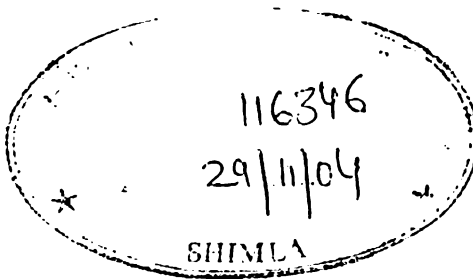
III. "Do you think marriages of brothers and sisters innocent and allowable?" This is your third question. "No", is my distinct reply; and I never taught such an absurdity. But I am at a loss to find out how such misrepresentations as those to which I have been exposed have become current. No person who has ever heard me speak upon such subject could have circulated these untruths; at least, I can hardly bring myself to think that one of the college students with whom I have been connected could be either such a fool as to mistake everything I ever said, or such a knave, as wilfully to mis-state my opinions. I am rather disposed to believe that weak people, who are determined upon being alarmed finding nothing to be frightened at, have imputed these follies to me. That I should be called a sceptic and an infidel is not surprising, as these names are always given to persons who think for themselves in religion; but I assure you, that the imputations which you say are alleged against me, I have learned for the first time from your letter, never having dreamed that sentiments so opposed to my own, could have been ascribed to me. I must trust, therefore, to your generosity to give the most unqualified contradiction to these ridiculous stories. I am not a greater monster than most people, though I certainly should not know myself were I to credit all that is said of me. I am aware that for some weeks, some busybodies have been manufacturing the most absurd and groundless stories about me, and even about my family. Some fools went so far as to say my sister, while others said my daughter (though I have not one) was to have been married to a Hindu young man!!! I traced the report to a person called Brindabone Ghoshal, a poor Brahmin, who lives by going from house to house to entertain the inmates with the news of the day, which he

invariably invents. However, it is a satisfaction to reflect that scandal, though often noisy, is not everlasting.

Now that I have replied to your questions, allow me to ask you dear sir, whether the expediency of yielding to popular clamour can be offered in justification of the measures adopted by the native managers of the college towards me? Their proceedings certainly do not record any condemnation of a man's conduct and character to dismiss him from office when popular clamour is against him? Vague reports and unfounded rumours went abroad concerning me; the native managers confirm them by acting towards me as they have done. Excuse me saying it, but I believe there was a determination on their part to get rid of me, not to satisfy popular clamour, but their own bigotry. Had my religion and morals been investigated by them, they could have had no grounds to proceed against me. They, therefore, thought it most expedient to make no enquiry but with anger and perception to remove me from the institution. The slovenly manner in which they have done so, is a sufficient indication of the spirit by which they were moved; for in their rage they have forgotten what was due even to common decency : every person who had heard of the way in which they have acted is indignant, but to complain of their injustice would be paying them a greater compliment than they deserve.

In concluding this letter allow me to apologise for its inordinate length; and to repeat my thanks for all you have done for me in the unpleasant affair by which it has been occasion.

I remain &c.  
H. L. V. Derozio





## Select Bibliography

### English

English Poetry in India '(Vol.I)' / (Ed.) T. B. Laurence; 1869.

Henry Derozio : The Eurasian poet, Teacher and Journalist / Thomas  
Edwards; 1884.

Henry Derozio, The Eurasian Poet and Reformer / Eliot Walter Madge; .  
1905.

Poetical Works of H. L. V. Derozio (Vol.I) / ('Ed.') B. B. Shah; 1907.

Poems of Henry Louis Vivian Derozio / (Ed.) F. Bradley-Birt; 1923.

### Bengali

Ramtanu Lahiri O Tatkalin Bangasamaj / Shibnath Shastri; 1904.

Bidrohi Derozio / Benoy Ghosh; 1960; 2nd. Ed. 1980.

Unabingsha Shatabdir Swarup / Benoy Kumar Dutta; 1969.

Henry Derozio : Kavi O Prabandhik / Pallab Sengupta; 1969.

Jharher Pakhi : Kavi Derozio / Pallab Sengupta; 1979; 3rd Ed. 1985.

Rammohun – Derozio : Mulyayan / Kumudkumar Bhattacharya;  
2nd. Ed. 1985.

(All books were published from Calcutta)

### English Anthologies and Periodicals

India Gazette / Different issues of 1825-'26

The Calcutta Monthly Journal / January, 1825.

The Calcutta Gazette / 21.8.1829.

Bengal Annual and Literary Keepsake / 1830.

Orient Pearl / 1832; 1835.

Calcutta Quarterly Magazine and Review / July, 1833.

The Calcutta Literary Gazette / 13.10.1833; 3.1.1835.

Bengal Spectator (Bi-lingual) / 1.9.1842.





Henry Louis Vivian Derozio (1809-1831) was one of the pioneers of modern India's renaissance. He was the mentor of the progressive youths during the early decades of the 19th century. Derozio left a lasting impact on the ideas and ideals of younger generations, which is still effectively felt. This monograph deals with his life-story and literary pursuits.

Pallab Sengupta (born 1940) is the Iswarchandra Vidyasagar Professor of Rabindra Bharati University and Vice-President of the Asiatic Society, Calcutta. He is the author of a number of books on Indo-English literature and folklore.



Library

IAS, Shimla

828.009 2 D 447 5



00116346

Price : Rs 25

ISBN 81-260-0851-2

Cover layout : Satyajit Ray