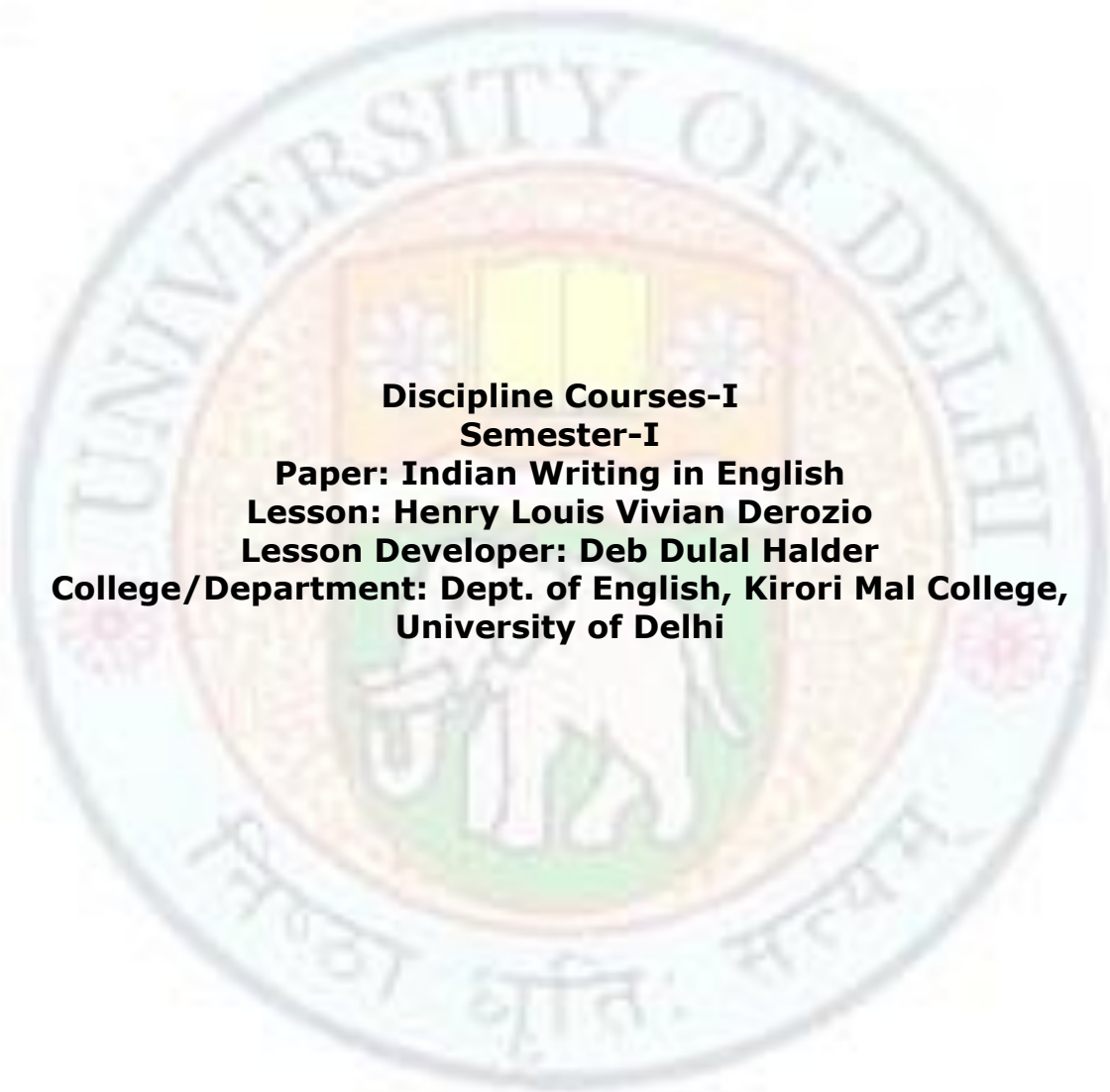


Henry Louis Vivian Derozio



**Discipline Courses-I
Semester-I**

Paper: Indian Writing in English

Lesson: Henry Louis Vivian Derozio

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Objectives:

The Objectives of this chapter would be to get ourselves introduced to –

- Henry Louis Vivian Derozio as one of the early Indian English Poets
- The early nineteenth century backdrop and the Bengal Renaissance
- Derozio as a teacher of Hindu College and his contribution in Bengal Renaissance.
- Derozio's poems "Freedom of the Slave" and "The Orphan Girl"

1.1. Introduction

If there is any teacher in Nineteenth Century India who at a young age could stimulate immense intellectual curiosity in his pupils to question the given things and religious customs and to form a social movement, then it was no other than Henry Louis Vivian Derozio. He may be known today as a poet of extraordinary caliber, sometimes as the father of Indian English Poetry, but his contribution in the development of Modern India with the rationalistic thoughts and freethinking style made him an iconic figure in the history of Modern India. Henry Derozio was a teacher in Hindu College (presently, Presidency College / Presidency University), whose rationalistic philosophy of the age of the Enlightenment and his free thinking style, made a stir in the youths of the institution. His only aim was to broaden and deepen the knowledge of his pupils in Western thought and literature, as he himself notes in the poem "Sonnets to the Pupils of the Hindu College."

"Sonnets 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.

That Derozio found true joy in teaching his students and to observe them bloom to their true potential is evident in the poem. According to Derozio's biographer Edward Thomas "No teacher ever taught with greater zeal, with more enthusiasm, with more loving intercourse between master and pupil than marked the short term of Derozio's connection with the Hindoo College. Neither before, nor since his day, has any teacher, within the walls of any native educational establishment in India, ever exercised such an influence over his pupils" (30).

Origin of Hindu College:

In the beginning of nineteenth century, eagerness was perceived amongst the Hindu Bengalis to learn the English language. David Hare, along with Raja Radhakanta Deb took initiative for the same and in May 1816 a meeting of was held with the intention of introducing English education with the support of Sir Edward Hyde East, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of India and proposal of setting up a college was unanimously decided. The Hindu College was formally opened on January 20, 1817. The foundation committee of the college was headed by Raja Rammohan Roy.

A manually colored photographic print titled "Madrassa [sic, for Hindu College], Calcutta," of Hindu College (now Presidency College), Calcutta



Source:

<http://ogimages.bl.uk/images/019/019PHO0000247S3U00003000%5BSVC2%5D.jpg>

But the influence that Derozio had on his students created a sense of deep admiration for the things European and a deep animosity towards Hindu religion and customs. One of his students Madhab Chandra Mallick asserted in a college magazine – “if there is anything that we hate from the bottom of our heart, it is Hinduism.”(Sarkar, 111) It is true that Derozio initiated the quest for free rational

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thinking into the minds of the early nineteenth century youths, but that affected in giving up all the things Indian by his students and followers. Another famous poet Michael Madhusudan Dutt (though not his student, but someone who was influenced by Derozian thought) in one of his letters wrote "I hate Rama and his rabbles." Another significant person whose life changed because of Derozian influence was Rev. Krishna Mohan Banarjea, who was converted to Christianity because of a silly incident when his family and Hindu society had to outcaste him for throwing a beef bone to the neighbouring orthodox Hindu household when his friends met at his home for some merriment.

Derozio as a social reformer and as a teacher is well documented by historians and literary scholars, but Rosinka Chaudhari in the Introduction to the book *Derozio: Poet of India* is of the opinion that these aspects of Derozio are so highlighted that sometimes people forget to notice him as a poet of extraordinary caliber. His poetic achievements in a short life of twenty two years before he died of cholera are few; but they point out the extraordinary poetic faculty of Derozio which looked at the social customs of the then India and presented it in the poems in rich imagery. The poems "Freedom to the Slave" and "The Orphan Girl" present both the aspect of Derozio – the social reformer and the poet. In both the poems, Derozio talks about the downtrodden people who are victimized by circumstances. Whereas in the poem "Freedom to the Slave" Derozio celebrates the notion of Freedom and what it means to a slave; in the poem "The Orphan Girl" he portrays the hapless situation of an orphan girl and asks the readers to be a benefactor and provide her a shelter.

1.2. Nineteenth Century Bengal

The British domination in Bengal began with the Battle of Plassey (1757), but till the 1820's and 1830's the East India Company in India had only been busy making money and the British sahibs were respectful to the Indian traditions, customs and deities. Till then the only objective of British presence in India was economic exploitation. Even the official language of the Raj was Persian for the first seventy-five years of the British rule. The British rule then was in some way a continuation of the conventions of the Mughal Empire, rather than the application of the European statecraft. (Cohn)

It is only after the emergence of Liberal and Utilitarian thinking and the emergence of the middle class evangelical spirit in Europe that West began to perceive the colonial rule as their religious duty – as their civilizing mission, as their method of appropriation of their drive for mastery over the oriental (semi) barbarians. The scholars like Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill conceptualized that colonialism is "a necessary step to progress and as a remedy for feudalism." (Nandy,12). Thus colonialism proper started in India with the emergence of Modern Europe, as Bipan Chandra says "Colonialism in India was as Modern a historical phenomenon as Industrial capitalism in Britain, the two developed together" (Chandra, 272) or as J. S. Furnival wrote, "Modern India grew up with Modern Europe" (Furnival, 537).

Sugata Bose and Ayesha Jalal are of the opinion that three potent forces of change were unleashed on Indian society in the early nineteenth century –

"First, the heady doctrine of free trade was supposed to jerk Indian society and economy out of their insularity and immobility. Second, the ideology of Utilitarianism through the enactment of good laws was expected to do away with the backward; if not evil, Indian social customs. Third, the impulse of

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evangelism was to have struck a powerful blow to established Indian religions, Hinduism and Islam alike, and Christianize and uplift hapless colonial subjects." (76)

The evangelists believed that it is "their duty to preach the Gospel whose light would dissolve the mists of superstition and cruelty enshrouding the Indian people." (Spear,112). Whether the Evangelists or the Utilitarians – they believed that before the Britishers came socially and culturally India was at low ebb as social diseases and religious superstitions were at its height. Consequently the British sahibs made it their sacred duty to uplift India from its appalling state. John Malcolm, a British Sahib coined a particular slogan – "Let us, therefore, calmly proceed in a course of gradual improvement. (Spear, 123). It is on the 7th of march 1835 that the new law member, Thomas Babington Macaulay declared the resolution that "the great object of the British Government ought to be the promotion of European literature and science" and the available funds should "be henceforth employed in imparting to naïve population knowledge of English literature and science through the medium of the English language." (Spear, 127). The Britishers in order to perpetuate their political domination and economic exploitation thought it necessary to show their cultural superiority, to make the Indian mass understand that their rule is not only a selfish carrying on of their interests but the religious duty of them to make the Indian mass uplift from the chains of superstitions and evils of Hindu customs. Moreover, to carry on with their rule they needed some intermediaries who would help them in their statecraft and consequently they thought of introducing English education. But one must again remember here that initially there was a strain of Oriental learning that dominated the British presence in India when the Britishers even thought of educating the native people in vernacular languages.

Before 1835, the money invested in the education of the native was primarily for vernacular languages and oriental learning, but after Thomas Babington Macaulay's *Minutes on Education* English education become the sole concern of the British regime as they wanted to create a class of people who can work as intermediaries between the ruling few and the ruled many. But the Britishers alone cannot be blamed for introducing English or Western education in India as the Indians too wanted it. The question of English education in India had been discussed as early as 1816, in the founding of the School Book Society and the Hindu College (established in 1817). Ram Mohan Roy protested against the founding of a Sanskrit College, and in a letter addressed to His Excellency Lord Amherst in 1823, he declared, that the teaching of Sanskrit would defeat the objective of the British Government, and it would be a waste of the money which is set apart for the instruction of the natives of India. A seminary of this sort, he says, "can only be expected to load the minds of youth with grammatical niceties and metaphysical distinctions, of little or no use to their possessors or to society. The pupils will acquire what was known two thousand years ago, with the addition of vain and empty subtleties since then produced by speculative men. The Sanscrit system of education would be the best calculated to keep this country in darkness, but as the improvement of the native population is the object of the Government, it should consequently promote a more liberal and enlightened system of instruction, embracing Mathematics, Natural Philosophy, Chemistry, Anatomy, with other useful sciences, which may be accomplished with the sums proposed, by employing a few gentlemen of talents and learning educated in Europe, and providing a college furnished with necessary books, instruments, and other apparatus." (Quoted in Thomas Edwards, 37).

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The Christian Missionaries and Hindu College of Kolkata have very significant role in educating the natives in English and western education, but what would be significant for us to know is that while Christian Missionaries had the dual purpose of educating the native and conversion; the objective of Hindu college was primarily to educate the youth of Bengal in western thoughts and beliefs. Derozio, as mentioned in the Introduction, had a significant role to play in educating the youth with rationalistic thoughts and free thinking at Hindu College. The western education imparted knowledge to the Bengali youth to question the dogmas, customs and superstitious beliefs of Hindu religion and at the same time it paved path for social and religious reforms. Thus the modernization of India, as some historians see it, is related to the westernization of India. Moreover, at this point of time some great Indian minds like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar, Prince Dwarka Nath Thakur and others also started becoming critical about the Hindu religion and society and they tried to reform the Indian society from within.

But as Tapan Ray Chaudhuri says, "The structure of religious consciousness and the emotional affects which went with it did not change overnight in the nineteenth century Bengal" (99). Instead it was a gradual change. It is not that the evangelists were very much successful in converting the Indian mass into Christianity, neither it is that the western rationalist liberal ideas and thoughts made the Bengali Hindus synthesize the western rationalism with the Hindu customs. But it is true that Western knowledge initiated a certain change in the Reformation of the Hindu culture, which is the reason why Tapan Ray Chaudhuri terms the western impact as a "catalyst"; because he thinks, "Like a chemical process, ... the end result was no simple synthesis, perfect or imperfect, of two different traditions nor an uncomplicated triumph of one culture over another. It was a new product essentially different from both the indigenous inheritance and the elements of western civilization, which impinged on it. Bengali religious sensibilities in modern times are striking end products of this catalytic process" (99). Tapan Ray Chaudhuri is right when he talks about the Hindu reforms to be a catalytic effect of the westernization.

Moreover it is westernization and the English education which introduced to the youths of India the notion of 'nation.' In India, prior to colonialism political belonging to territorial state was rather a tenuous affair because the kingdoms and empires collided and expanded at the expense of each other. Sudipta Kaviraj writes that "it was in that sense impossible to achieve the kind of firm identification between people and a form of politicized space which is presupposed in the political ontology of the modern nation state." (Kaviraj, 116.) In that sense the category of Nation State is truly a Western construct which the youths from India came across with their Western education. Thus if English language can be termed as the language of colonization, it is also a language of our freedom struggle as people all over the country found a common language in which the leaders of the country could communicate which could then be disseminated to the masses. Moreover it is in the writing of the western educated writers that the notion of nation found its first voice, as in the poems of Derozio.

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;

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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 my mortal wakened once again,
Harp of my country, let me strike the strain!

That India is a nation on its own; a political unit finds its expression as early as 1827 in the poems of Derozio. Therefore Henry Derozio is often considered as the father of Indian English Poetry as he gave voice to the modern sensibilities of the Indian youth and himself became a voice which could inspire youths to come out of their superstitions and customs to liberate themselves.

1.3. Bio-Literary history of Derozio

Henry Louis Vivian Derozio was born on 18th April 1809 at 155, Lower Circular Road, near Moulali in Central Calcutta to a well off Eurasian Family. His father, Francis Derozio, descended from a Portuguese family and unlike the other Eurasians of that time the family of Derozio were well placed. It is to be noted here that his father used to work for the mercantile house of Messrs. J. Scott and Co. At an age of eight, Derozio was sent to Drummond's school in Dharmatala, Calcutta and he studied under Mr. Drummond, an extremely well-read Scottish gentleman. In school, Derozio got himself acquainted with Mathematics, and read the classics and the metaphysical writings of the day. At the age of fourteen he left school. Thomas Edwards, Derozio's biographer writes – "At the age of 14, Derozio ... ended his school life; but David Drummond, the grim, Scottish, hunch-backed schoolmaster, and Henry Derozio, the sprightly, clean-limbed, brilliant Eurasian boy, admired and loved each other as rarely master and pupil do. None watched with greater interest his short career, and there were few sadder hearts in Calcutta, that followed Derozio to his early grave that wintry afternoon, than David Drummond of Dhurrumtollah."

On leaving school in the year 1823, Derozio became a clerk in the firm of Messrs. J. Scott and Company, the same company for which his father worked. He was sent to Bhagalpur and there he remained in employment for two years. Unlike other Eurasians of the time, Derozio had no fascination for desk job and found it to be too drab. But the natural beauty surrounding Bhagalpur inspired Derozio to use his fertile imagination to write poetry and from there he started sending his poetical sketches (with the pen name of Juvenis) to Dr. John Grant of the India Gazette.

The encouragement and appreciation of John Grant of the India Gazette further stimulated Derozio to collect his verses and publish them as a book in 1827, when he came to Calcutta. Derozio, then a boy of seventeen years old immediately found himself famous. In 1828 his second volume of poems was published. This volume was a reprint of the first, but with some additions. The most notable addition being "The Fakir of Jungheera" for which Derozio is even known today. Bhagalpur became a thing of the past and Derozio became the Assistant Editor of *The India Gazette*, Editor of *The Calcutta Literary Gazette*, and contributed regularly to *The Calcutta Magazine*, *The Indian Magazine*, *The Bengal Annual*, and *The Kaleidoscope*. Soon in

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March 1828, he was appointed as an assistant-master in the senior department of the Hindu College.



Source:

http://www.indianruminations.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/CSC_0848.jpg

As mentioned earlier Derozio's teaching in the classroom and his interaction with the students outside the class won hearts of all his students and they became devoted to him and the ideas he expounded. His sole aim was to broaden and deepen the knowledge of his students in the thought and literature of England – both literary and non-literary. During his stay in Hindu College, Derozio along with his students established the Academic Association where the students of Hindu College would read their papers, discuss and debate over any and every issue they thought to be significant. Not only in the meetings of Academic Association, but also at his own house, Derozio used to meet his students regularly and freely discuss issues that were popular during the day. Thomas Edwards notes "Free-will, fore-ordination, fate, faith, the sacredness of truth, the high duty of cultivating virtue, and the meanness of vice, the nobility of patriotism, the attributes of God, and the arguments for and against the existence of deity as these have been set forth by Hume on the one side, and Reid, Dugald Stewart and Brown on the other; the hollowness of idolatry, and the shams of the priesthood, were subjects which stirred to their very depths the young, fearless, hopeful hearts of the leading Hindoo youths of Calcutta ; but that either Derozio or his pupils reveled, as has been asserted, in the "more licentious plays of the Restoration, and the minor pieces of Tom Paine, born of the filth of the worst period of the French Revolution," or that lawless lust and western vice entered into some, with the secularism and anti-theism of the Hindoo College, that Derozio taught "the non-existence of God," that he admitted it, and that he was "an atheistic and immoral poet," are all of them unproved assertions, and baseless calumnies, which Dr. George Smith, the Biographer of Duff, should have been at some pains to sift, before branding with infamy the memory of the dead." (32 - 33) The association also published a magazine named *Parthenon* (though only one issue was published).

Derozio's belief was that the discussions and debates were not only for the sake of one's own intellectual development, but those ideas should also flow / disseminate in the society at large if some social changed was to be achieved. Thus he motivated his students to write for journals and magazines so that ideas could flow freely. His

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students wrote articles criticizing Hindu practices, emancipation of women and other aspects of British rule. In 1831, Krishna Mohan Banerjee, Derozio's student started an English weekly, *The Enquirer*, while his other students Dakshinaranjan Mukherjee and Rasik Krishna Mallick began Bengali paper called *The Jnananvesan*. It was at that time Raja Ram Mohun Roy set up the Brahmo Samaj which challenged the Hindu orthodoxy and many of Derozio's students joined the Brahmo Samaj to carry forward the socio-religious reforms. The movement that young students of Derozio unleashed is also often termed as Young Bengal Movement, the nomenclature "Young Bengal" derived retrospectively from 'Young Italy'. (Chaudhuri, lxxvi).

YOUNG BENGAL MOVEMENT

The Young Bengal Movement is used to refer to the group of radical Bengali free thinkers in the first half of the nineteenth century who emerged out from Hindu College, Calcutta. Sometimes, they were also called Derozians. The Young Bengal Movement also included Christians such as Reverend Alexander Duff, who founded the General Assembly's Institution, and his students like Lal Behari Dey who renounced Hinduism and was converted to Christianity. Derozio and the Young Bengal group set two establishments and published journals which played a role in the Bengal Renaissance –

- Academic Association: Derozio joined Hindu College in 1828 and within a short period attracted students. The Academic Association, established in 1828 under the guidance of Derozio, arranged discussions on various subjects.
- Society for the Acquisition of General Knowledge, established on 20 February 1838, published many prominent writings of the age, such as: *Nature of Historical Studies and Civil and Social Reform* by Krishna Mohan Banerjee, *Interests of the Female Sex and the State of Hindustan* by Peary Chand Mitra, *Sketch of Bankuja* by Hara Chandra Ghosh, *Notice of Tipperah*, *A New Spelling Book*, *Notices of Chittagong* by Gobinda Chandra Basak, etc.

But as usual, the orthodox Management of the Hindu College under the chairmanship of Radhakanta Deb could not tolerate the activities of Derozio and expelled him as a faculty member. On April 23, 1831, a meeting of the governing body of the Hindu College was convened and among other things it was decided that "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." (Sengupta, 9)

But to a socially and morally conscious person like Derozio it was of no consequence as he had his devoted students who carried on being with him; and they met outside the college now and carried on with their literary and social work. Many scholars (such as Rosinka Choudhari) are of the opinion that Derozio as a social reformer and as a fiery teacher is highlighted so much by the literary scholars and historians, that Derozio as a poet did not get the recognition that is due to him. If this is true to some extent, it is also true that Derozio's poetic sensibilities and consequent poetic endeavours are a result of his deep concern for the society at large and building India as a nation in particular. At the banks of river Ganges in Bhagalpur, Derozio must have got the inspiration to create many of his great works such as "The Fakeer of Jungheera" (based on a Fakeer he met at Bhagalpur), but the poetic creation was not beyond his concern for social reform. For example, in "The Fakeer of Jungheera" (apart from it being a beautiful description of the region around Bhagalpur, following the romantic trend of English poetry) we find a fakeer saving his erstwhile beloved

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from being a "sati." Thus his poetry is a blend of the romantic concern for nature and social consciousness. In the poem "Freedom of the Slave," Derozio emphasizes on the significance of freedom to us, through an imaginary incident of the newly found freedom of a slave.

At the end of the year 1831, Derozio contracted cholera and died on 26 December at the age of 22. Being a Christian renegade, the orthodox Christians denied his body to be buried inside South Park Street Cemetery; instead he was buried just outside it on the road.

1.4. Derozio's Poems: "Freedom to the Slave" and "The Orphan Girl"

Derozio was heavily influenced by the Romantic poets and the ideas (of liberty, equality, fraternity and Rights of Man) of the French Revolution (1789). Like the English counterparts of his time, Derozio thought that without 'freedom' human being has no life of his own. One must remember here that India was under the British rule when Derozio was championing freedom in the poem "Freedom to the Slave." It is interesting to note here that slavery is not just a physical state when one enslaves a person, but there can be slavery of taste, thoughts and beliefs which is also as detrimental as subjugation of a man's physical being.

Derozio therefore did not blindly obey the west or the western thought processes; he is moreover critical of whatever came his way. He renounced Christianity and became an atheist. Similarly he wanted his students to look at their own religious beliefs and customs with a rational mind and question everything before accepting. Therefore he was in favour of free thinking and debate as it is through these that one can be a true human being. In the poem "Freedom to the Slave", Derozio shows what freedom means to a slave. It is only when human beings are free that they can truly enjoy the beauty around them. In the poem we see that the slave felt that he is a man only when he acquired his freedom. He looks at the sky, the winds, the flying birds, the running stream and says "I'm free as they." Nature does not enslave anyone, lets everyone to be free and enjoy themselves. It is human beings who with their cunningness make slave of others and make most for themselves at the cost of others.

Derozio does not go on to portray the life of a slave; but moreover focuses on the slave's emotional response on being free. His soul could now fly like birds, would be like a running stream finding its own course in its journey. Thus the imageries of the poem appeal to us, but what appeals to the readers is also the notion of freedom and how he equates it with nature. Moreover, he points out how the tyrant is a "degraded man" who enchains others and in simplistic terms Derozio blesses the brave soul / the "generous hand" who breaks the chains of the tyrant.

"Freedom to the Slave"
"And as the slave departs, the Man returns" - Campbell
How felt he when he first was told A slave he ceased to be;

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How proudly beat his heart, when first
He knew that he was free!
To 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
As 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
E'en 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,
Bleeds nobody to be free!
Blest be the generous hand that breaks
The chain a tyrant gave,
And, feeling for degraded man,
Gives freedom to the slave.

February, 1827.

Similarly the poem "The Orphan Girl" portrays a young beautiful vulnerable orphan girl and draws a pitiable state in which she is thrown into because of the circumstances. The girl's father died in a war and her mother could not bear the shock of her husband's death and left the world leaving the little girl alone with no one to look after her. The images of the "cold, bleak earth" makes the situation of the girl pathetic as she has no "home or hearth" where she can feel protected and can grow up. The poem is full of language suggesting that a orphan girl would inevitably stray from virtue's way, become an erring woman, wretched, scorned and filled with sorrow, guilt and shame, as it is an "unpitying world." The poem ends with an appeal to the people to provide her a shelter. Thus the poem also has a social message which is poetically presented.

"The Orphan Girl"

She was yet young and fair – but oh she seemed
Marked for much woe in this unpitying world!
Poor Friendless wanderer! –
Her hair was black as a raven's wing,
Her cheek the tulip's hue did wear,
Her voice was soft as when night winds sing,
Her brow was as a moonbeam fair;
Her sire had joined the wake of war; -
The battle-shock, the shout and scar
He knew, and gained a glorious grave –

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Such is the guerdon of the brave! –
Her anguished mother's suffering heart
Could not endure a widow's part;
She sunk beneath her soul's distress,
And left her infant parentless.

She hath no friend on this cold, bleak earth,
To give her a shelter, a home, and a hearth;
Through life's dreary desert alone she must wend,
For alas, the wretched have never a friend!
And should she stray from virtue's way,
The world will scorn, and its scorn can slay.
Ah! Shame hath enough to wring the breast
With a weight of sorrow and guilt oppress'd;
But oh! 'tis coldly cruel to wound
The bosom whose blood must gush unbound.
No tear is so bright as the tear that flows
From erring woman's unpitied woes;
And blest be forever his honored name
Who shelters an orphan from sorrow and shame!

March, 1827.

Thus Derozio's poems have a socio-cultural fervor as he thought poetry to be a medium of spreading social awareness. Most of his poems were first published in magazines and later published as a book. As his critical prose writings (many of which are lost), his poems also significantly contribute to the socio-cultural movement of Bengal which is also known as Bengal Renaissance.

1.5 The Literary Legacy Of Derozio

That Derozio was dismissed from the service of Hindu College within three years of his joining college on the charges that his influence corrupted the youths of the age by making them hostile to Hindu customs is itself a proof that he motivated his students to think freely and to question everything around them. The Hindu Bengalis of the time brought forward the charges against him that his influence was appalling for the Hindu youths and the British officials were similarly antagonistic to him as his secular nationalism was a threat to the British presence in India. The trend that Derozio set – of being influenced by the western ideas and yet at the same time being nationalistic set the tone of Indian English Writing. Immediately after Derozio, we see Rev. Krishna Mohan Banerji, Michael Madhusudan Dutt and others following a similar trend of being fascinated by the west, but at the same time they sang songs of valour of their own land. The students of Derozio with their writings created the necessary awareness in the nineteenth century Bengal. What is significant in Derozio is his native ethos in spite of being influenced by western ideas, which is the trend of much of Indian Writing in English. Pallab Sengupta rightly says – “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.” (54) Sengupta further points out that the patriotic emotion that we could find in Derozio's poems can be found its manifestation in the Bengali literature in Rangalal Banerji's “Padmini Upakhyan” (1859), or even in Michael Madhusudan Datta's “Mehgad Badh Kavya” (1861) and “Krishnakumari Natak” (1861) and in the latter period in the

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writings of Bankim Chandra Chatterji (*Anandamath* 1879) and even in Rabindra Nath Tagore. (55)

1.6 Summary

In this chapter we have come across –

- Henry Louis Vivian Derozio as a poet and a fiery teacher of Hindu College of Calcutta in the early Nineteenth Century.
- The sensibilities of the early Nineteenth Century Bengal which the historians term as Bengal Renaissance.
- The short life of Derozio and his achievements as a teacher, poet and a social reformer.
- The poetic sensibilities of Derozio which embodies itself in his poems along with the social reformist agenda.

1.7 Glossary

- **Eurasian:** A person of mixed European and Asian descent.
- **Evangelical:** Relating to Christian Church believing in personal conversion.
- **French Revolution:** The French Revolution (1789) was a period of radical social and political upheaval in France which laid the foundation of modern democracy as the ideas germinated by the scholars found a place in the hearts of the people of France and they revolted against the oppressive monarchy and religious system. The absolute monarchy of France collapsed within three years and feudal, aristocratic and religious privileges evaporated under the pressure of Enlightenment principles of equality, citizenship and inalienable rights, etc.
- **Renaissance:** 'Renaissance' is an Italian word, meaning re-birth. Renaissance is associated with major social and cultural developments in Europe between the 13th and the 15th centuries. The contribution of the Renaissance to the emergence of modernity in early modern Europe, and especially England, has been for many years an appropriate entry point to the history of the modern world.
- **Romanticism:** Romanticism in literature refers to a movement in literature and arts almost at the end of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth century which is characterized by a special emphasis on the powers of the imagination, a celebration of nature, etc. The age began with the publication of *Lyrical Ballads* by William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge in 1798.
- **Utilitarianism:** *Utilitarian Theories* propounded by Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill emphasized that the dominant striving factor of an individual's life is to attain as much pleasure as possible – to *maximize pleasure and to minimize pain*.

1.8 References

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