

# Chapter – I

## INTRODUCTION

There are good number of critical studies in English and Bengali on the nature and course of 'Bengal Renaissance', on how Vivian Louis Derozio's mind was steeped in the spirit of the Renaissance and on how Derozio's poems reflect this spirit. Yet there is always a room for a serious student of literature and history to look at the subject from his own angle of vision. The proposed study is of a similar nature. This chapter may be treated as an introduction to the proposed study. An attempt is made here to give a clear outline about the nature, objective and scope of the study.

### 1. Title of the Thesis:

The title of the thesis is '*Derozio's Poetry: A Response to Bengal Renaissance*'.

The term 'Renaissance' is used here to mean

- (i) Bengal's awareness of the changing world in the first half of the nineteenth century; and
- (ii) the flowering of social, religious, literary and political activities in Bengal in the spirit of the said awareness.

The period of 'Bengal Renaissance' relevantly covers the period from 1815 to 1833.

By 'Derozio's poem's is meant (i) Poems of Derozio published during his life time and afterwards; and (ii) Poems not published likewise but compiled by some recent editors.

By 'response' is meant the Renaissance spirit as expressed in Derozio's individual poems and collectively.

## **2. Nature of the Study:**

The first part of the thesis deals with the nature, objective, methodology and overview of literature connected with the work (Chapter-1). An attempt is made in the thesis to ascertain (i) the exact nature of the 'Bengal Renaissance'; (ii) how Derozio's mind was moulded by the spirit of the Renaissance; and (iii) what is the distinctive nature of the impact of Bengal Renaissance on Derozio's poems. To that end an attempt is made (a) to examine the different factors that contributed to the growth and rise of Bengal Renaissance (Chapter II); (b) to analyse the different ways in which Bengal Renaissance exercised its influence on Derozio's mind and personality (Chapter – III); and (c) to show the exact nature of the impact on Derozio's poems (Chapter – IV).

Thereafter the study is divided into two parts, namely,  
The Findings of the study (Chapter V) and Bibliography.

## **3. Objective of the Study:**

The proposed study, as already stated, seeks fundamentally to ascertain the nature and significance of the impact of Bengal Renaissance on Derozio's poems.

By way of examining the nature of the said impact, the study seeks to establish the fact (i) that it is not that Bengal Renaissance simply exercised a profound influence on Derozio's mind and personality but Derozio himself was equally a pioneering force in creating an awareness of Enlightenment in the mind of the people of the country which primarily led to the rise of Bengal Renaissance; and (ii) that the works of Derozio consequently reflected the spirit of Bengal Renaissance.

The study arrives at the conclusion that the impact of Bengal Renaissance on Derozio's poems was not deliberate; it was something spontaneous by nature.

#### 4. Research Questions:

While analysing the significance of the impact of Bengal Renaissance on Derozio's poems, the researcher attempts to deal with the following principal questions:

- (i) What was the nature of the background—social, historical, religious and otherwise of Bengal Renaissance?
- (ii) What are the different factors that led to the rise of Bengal Renaissance?
- (iii) What are the different ways in which Derozio played a pioneering role in fostering the spirit of Renaissance in the mind of the people?
- (iv) What are the particular works of Derozio that reflected the spirit of Bengal Renaissance?
- (v) Why should Derozio be regarded as a pioneering force in this respect?

Attempts have also been made to touch the following connected questions:

- (i) What is the implication of the term 'Bengal Renaissance'?
- (ii) What is the condition of the contemporary poetry in Bengal?
- (iii) How Derozio's role as a poet, a teacher and a journalist was a combined force as far as Bengal Renaissance is concerned?

#### 5. Methodology:

The proposed study, literary in approach and content, is essentially based on the text and reference studies. For this the primary sources, i.e., the texts have been collected from original writing or compilation.

Secondly, the whole range of literature on the subject, as far as possible, has been analysed for the preparation of a meaningful framework. To that end, relevant poems have been selected. Chapter III, IV & V constitute the main part of the argument and each of these chapters ends with a concluding portion showing a summary of the observations made in course of the discussion. In the last chapter the focus is concentrated on the new findings. In regard to the collection of primary data and critical references, the libraries and institutes have been utilized in Kolkata and other places.

## 6. Overview of Literature:

Having stated the problem of inquiry and its significance it would be useful to recount the work done in the area of the proposed study. Available literature may be classified into four broad categories.

The first category covers the primary sources, i.e., the texts of the individual poems in original selected for study. The second category covers the studies on the rise and flowering of Bengal Renaissance. Among books consulted for this area mention may be made of a few. In '*On the Bengal Renaissance*' of Susobhan Sarker the critic has highlighted the achievement of the pioneers of Bengal Renaissance, especially of Rammohun Roy, David Hare, Derozio and 'Young Bengal'.

Thomas Edwards's *Henry Derozio* is devoted to Derozio, his pupils, his works, his speeches, friends and his career. There is also a long chapter on Derozio as a journalist and on the poetry of Derozio. We also get a detailed analysis of the influence of David Drummond, of Bhagaulpore, and of Hindu College on Derozio.

'*Studies in the Bengal Renaissance*' edited by Atul Chandra Gupta is a monumental work on the history of the Awakening in Bengal in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. There is a well – written article on 'Derozio and Young Bengal' by Susobhan Sarkar in which he has made an illuminating discussion on the pioneering role of Derozio concluded with an observation of K.C. Mitra: "The youthful band of reformers who had been educated at the Hindoo College, like the tops of the Kanchanjunga, were the first to catch and reflect the dawn".

In '*Dawn of Renascent India*' K.K. Dutt has observed that Bengal Renaissance is essentially a change of spirit and reorientation of outlook of the vast multitude of this continent through various forces in the new world of the nineteenth century. His book is a meaningful study of those forces and changes in Indian society, education and thought.

Ramesh chandra Majumdar's '*Renascent in India First Phase*' deals mainly with the prominent features in Bengal that influenced the literature, trade and industry, cultivation, political idea etc. There are two very useful chapters on Raja Rammohun Roy and Henry Derozio in this book. His '*Glimpses of Bengal in the Nineteenth century*' comprises four lectures – Bengal in the nineteenth century, English Education, Social Reforms and Evolution of Political Ideas.

Nemai Sadhan Bose in his '*Indian Awakening in Bengal*' observes that the principal social, religious and political movements of the nineteenth century emanated from Bengal. He has tried to give a balanced and unbiased account of all these movements.

Shivnath Shastri's '*A History of the Renaissance in Bengal*' by Sir Roper Lethbridge contains a good analysis of the forces and Bengal's responsiveness to the new ideas and the role of the pioneers like Rammohun Roy, Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar, Keshab Chandra Sen and others.

The books consulted for the third chapter mainly constitute of the studies on Derozio as a man of Renaissance. Such books include '*Indian Renaissance and Indian English poetry*' by Subhas Chandra Saha in which there is a well - written article on the nature of Bengal Renaissance. Mr. Saha has noted with interest the intense patriotic zeal and love of India which distinguished Derozio from the other men of letters of his time. Shibnarayan Roy's '*A New Renaissance and Allied Essays*' is an illuminating study of the important Contribution of the persons of intellectual and moral integrity towards the maturing of Renaissance in India. There is a very well – written essay entitled '*From Derozio to Nazrul*' in which he concentrated on radicalism and the Bengal intelligentsia.

Books consulted on Derozio, the teacher, the journalist and the poet are mostly written in Bengali by critics like Benoy Ghosh, Mrinalini Dasgupta, Rabindara Kumar Dasgupta, Annada Sarkar Roy, Mrinal Kanti Nandi, Dr. Sakti Sadhan Mukhopadyay, Amar Datta, Kumud Kumar Bhattacharya etc.

For the fourth chapter of the thesis the researcher mainly depends on '*Song of the Stormy Petrel : Complete Works of Henry Louis Vivian Derozio*' edited by Abirlal Mukherjee, '*Poems of Henry Louis Vivian Derozio : A Forgotten Anglo – Indian poet*' by F.B. Bradley – Birt, 'Henry Derozio's Poems' edited by P.Lal, '*A Survey of Indian English Poetry*' by Satish Kumar, '*Derozio*' by Pallav Sengupta, '*The Poetry of Our Indian Poets* by Thomas Manuel Philip, '*Studies in Anglo – Indian Poetry*' by S.Z.H. Abidi, '*A Golden Treasury of Indo – Anglian poetry*' edited by V.K. Gokak, '*Derozio Jiban O Salitya*' by Safiuddin Ahamed, '*Four Indo – Anglian Poets* by Sontosh Kumar Chakraborty, '*Indo – English Literature in the Nineteenth Century*', '*The Literary Half yearly*' by John B. Alphanso Karkala etc. In all these volumes there are detailed analyses of Derozio's poems in particular and in general.

## 7. Scope of the study:

The researcher, while consulting these critical studies, has noted that

- (i) there are exhaustive studies on Derozio and his poems but they are mostly in Bengali;
- (ii) in most of these studies stress is given on the discussion of the role of Derozio as a teacher and less space is devoted to the discussion of the significance of Derozio as a poet;
- (iii) no allround, systematic and coherent discussion is made on the manifestation of Derozio's genius as a Renaissance man; there are, on the contrary, separate discussions on Derozio, the teacher, the journalist and the poet; and
- (iv) critics have given much importance to the role of Rammohun Roy in the flowering of Bengal Renaissance and justifiably so, but some of them have lost sight of the equal significance of Derozio's role in this respect.

## 8. Conclusion:

The researcher has, therefore, tried in his own way to locate Derozio in the right perspective in the particular age in which Renaissance flourished in Bengal. He has concentrated mainly on the life and activities of Derozio keeping it in mind that Derozio was born and died as a man of Renaissance.

He was not merely a product of Renaissance, but a great force in its flowering in Bengal. And to that end he not only used his class-room and the platform of Academic Association but also used his pen to write poems ventilating his ideas.