

Chapter – III

DEROZIO – THE MAN OF RENAISSANCE

A. Derozio: The Blossoming of his Genius: Henry Louis Vivian Derozio was born on 18th April, 1809 at 155, Lower Circular Road (Acharya J.C. Bose Road), near Moulali in the central District of Calcutta and died on 26th December, 1831. His short career touched the years of the first phase of Bengal Renaissance. Derozio's grandfather was Michael Derozio who was a businessman with a Portuguese lineage and a Protestant. His second son Francis Derozio was Henry Derozio's father. Derozio's mother Sophia was of British parentage. Among Sophia's five children Derozio was the second. Derozio was baptized in St. John's Church in August, 1809 by Rev James Ward. When he was only six, he lost his mother. After a few days Francis Derozio married Anna River who was of an English origin. She was, however, without any issue.

Derozio's formal education started at the age of six at Dharmatala Academy, a secular school run by the Scottish scholar poet, David Drummond. He was deservedly the best student of Drummond who could discover his genius. Though his formal education was meagre Derozio's poetic sensibilities were awakened quite early in life. Before he was fourteen, he had studied widely English Literature, History and Philosophy under Drummond. During his days at Dharmatala Academy, he composed a prologue to a play produced by the pupils of the Academy and recited the prologue at a public performance. This scintillating display of his budding genius secured for him the life-long friendship of John Grant, a classical scholar and the editor of the "India Gazette" published from Calcutta.

At the age of fourteen, Derozio was compelled to leave his studies for his father's death and joined the mercantile firm of Messrs James and Scott Company where his father held the responsible post of the chief accountant.

He had to do so as the burden of maintaining the entire family fell on his shoulder. But as the job did not suit him, he left it and joined his uncle-in-law's firm in Bhagalpore. Arthur Jonson, Derozio's uncle-in-law, owned an indigo plantation where young Derozio managed to adjust himself with the new environment. It was here that he came under the soothing influence of Nature with its rural beauty on the primitive banks of the river Ganges and began his literary pursuit. Dr. John Grant, the editor of 'India gazette', knew this literary aspirant ever since he was a student in Drummand's school. Dr. Grant used to encourage him in his literary pursuits and at his behest Derozio began to compose poem and ventured to send them to the 'Gazette' for favour of publication.

Derozio left Bhagalpore and returned to Calcutta in order to look for a better job on the advice of John Grant. He was subsequently involved with various activities. While working as an assistant of John Grant, he published his 'Poem' (1827) and "The Fakir of Jungheera", a Metrical Tale and other Poems" (1828), both of which were highly acclaimed by poetry lovers. On Grant's recommendation, the young poet was appointed a lecturer in English and History at Hindu College, which by that time, had become the intellectual centre for young Bengalis. Desiring the intellectual and moral progress of his pupils, Derozio conducted group discussion focusing attention on the problems of life. He inspired his students to think for them selves and goaded them to question some of the current social evils and superstitions. As the discussion group enlarged, he set up a formal 'Academic Association' to which many Indian and European intellectuals of the city were drawn. The discussion centred on topics like 'free will, 'fate', 'meanness of vice', 'patriotism', 'attributes of God' and 'idolatry' etc. He attempted to foster in the students a taste for literature, taught the evil effects of idolatry and superstition and tried to further their moral conceptions.

The results of Derozio's activities, however, were catastrophic. As the students began to question some aspects of their Tradition, Orthodoxy quickly denounced the so-called heretical teacher. The Christian Missionaries, scorning Derozio's free thinking discussion group, branded him as an atheist

and immoralist, when parents stopped sending their children to the Hindu College, the Management asked Derozio to desist from his extra-curricular activities. Derozio protested affirming academic freedom. The outraged charged him on the ground of corrupting the minds of the youth and demanded that Derozio, being the root cause of all evil and public alarm, should be discharged from the college. Responding to public pressure, the Management of the college asked Derozio to resign. In a spirited reply Derozio, denying all the charges, affirmed his deep love for intellectual freedom. But his defence was of no avail, for he was dismissed from the Hindu College in 1831.

With the termination of his pedagogic career, Derozio turned to journalism. While teaching at the Hindu college, besides contributing articles to various journals in Calcutta, he had edited 'Hesperus' and the 'Calcutta Magazine'. With the help of some distinguished European and Indian friends, Derozio started a newspaper, the 'East India', which after making its initial brilliant mark unfortunately came to an abrupt end. Derozio died of cholera on 26th December, 1831.

II

The intellectual and poetic faculties of Derozio blossomed under several influences. The most remarkable influence came from David Drummond when he entered the Dharmatala Academy. He studied there from 1815 to 1822. He was the favourite student of David Drummond, the disciple of the famous Scottish Philosopher David Hume. Drummond was exceptional from the common brand of teachers for his attitude to life and art of teaching.

Drummond came to Calcutta in 1813 as he did not join the church conforming to the desire of his father. Highly sceptical about all things in life, he was a free thinker, a rationalist and freedom lover and a man of broad mentality. His attitude to life was materialistic as well as realistic. A humanist to the core of his heart, he never encouraged renunciation in life. Drummond stressed on freeness of mind and self development having no conviction in the supernatural power and the world of Heaven and Hell. According to him,

man is the emperor of his mind; even man has the right to self expression without distorting the accepted human taste but maintaining social harmony. He left the matter of the existence of God to those who had ample leisure in life. But he believed in the dictum that man is equal to God in his life and man is the overall master of his life. He also believed that service to man is synonymous to the service of God. In this world man is the ultimate truth. Drummond used to talk about these ideas with sharp argument and firm conviction not only to his friends but also to his students. Derozio would listen to these stimulating ideas from his teacher. As a philosopher poet Drummond sowed the seeds of literature and philosophy carefully in the mind of Derozio who within a very short period reaped golden harvest. Drummond also initiated Derozio in the philosophy and values of the new age. He himself would never accept any opinion or decision without putting it to the acid test of argument and reason and Derozio inherited the ideals of his teacher which formed background of his career at Hindu college.

Drummond was 'the child of Scottish Renaissance'¹ H.E.A. Cotton in his book '*Calcutta and Old New*' mentioned him as a poet. However, his collection of poetry was "never published".²

Cotton appreciates his poetry and endowed it with delicate feeling and great tenderness. T. Edwards in this connection writes that the few who ever saw it in manuscript like D.L. Richardson found many of the lyrics "charged with great tenderness and delicacy of feeling"³.

Steeped in the humanistic ideas and rationalistic principles of the famous Scottish philosopher, David Hume, Drummond had scant regard for faiths and traditions but put the greatest emphasis on reason. The Scottish national poet Robert Burns was his favourite poet and Burns' great humanism expressed in such lines as "Man's man for a 'that' also influenced Drummond's outlook considerably. The humanistic and nationalistic outlook of Drummond greatly influenced the boy Derozio and whatever he read and learnt later only sharpened and perfected these early acquisitions which included his taste for literature and philosophy, his scant regard for faiths and

hatred for prejudices, his humanism, his stress on reason and free thinking. Derozio's humanistic outlook was thus a direct result of the influence of Drummond. It was under the clear incisive, logical guidance of Drummond that 'the naturally imaginative, impulsive and powerful mind of Derozio was quickened and spurred into action'.⁴

Derozio's "A Dramatic Sketch" contains these twin influences – direct and indirect of Drummond. First, it proclaims the deeply – felt truth of his life that the importance of man is greater than God in the scheme of things and secondly, it shows how he arrives at this truth through his favourite argument – counter argument method. This method of argument oriented discussion was also the method of Hume and Derozio was initiated into it by Drummond.

Drummond's influence on Derozio is felt in the field of journalism also. As a journalist Drummond commanded the respect of the people. He published a weekly periodical named "Weekly Examiner" a journal of politics, news and literature for two years. In this connection Thomas Edwards observes, "under the auspices of Drummond as proprietor, editor, reporter and printer, the "Weekly Examiner" had an existence of nearly two years, 1839-40. To this weekly newspaper both Dr. Grant and D.L. Richardson frequently contributed to help their old friend in his new venture; but the burden of the whole lay heavily on Drummond".⁵ Derozio was himself connected with a few journals in his short career.

III

The study of English literature, particularly of English Romantic Poetry, exercised a deep influence on Derozio's mind. The Romantic Revival of the early 19th century poetry in England was preceded by the epoch making political revolution of France in 1789 namely, The French Revolution. This social and political upheaval in France played a considerable role in influencing the course of English Romantic Poetry. The study of English literature, particularly of English Romantic Poetry exercised a deep influence on Derozio's mind. The major poetry of this period is written under the influence of the new secular, liberal conception of man and his destiny that

had sprung from the French Revolution. The scepticism about existing society engendered by the revolutionary ferment impelled the more imaginative minds into a new communion with nature. Man remained the theme of literature and he (man) was seen in relation to the natural universe of which he was a part. This new awakened sense drew its breath in the prolific humanitarian philosophy of Rousseau. Thus the French Revolution of 1789 breathed a new spirit of aspiration and hope.

The first phase of the French Revolution being a stupendous wonder and an emancipatory idealism, electrified to the depth the imagination of the English Romantic writers and W. Wordsworth, S.T. Coleridge and R. Southey caught the contagious enthusiasm. Truly as Wordsworth claimed,

"Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive
but to be young was very heaven."

Shelley became a full-throated singer of the Revolution. He championed the slogan of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity. The French revolution shook rudely the roots of orthodox ideas and exerted tremendous influence everywhere.

The study of English literature made Derozio acquainted with English poetry especially the romantic poetry of the nineteenth century. The romantic poets were deeply influenced by the ideals of the French Revolution. Derozio's poetic power was aroused considerably under the influence of the English romantic poets. H.M. Williams rightly pointed out; "Contact with British life and literature inevitably brought poetry to India, the poetry of Wordsworth, Scott, Shelley, Keats, Byron. In the explosive influence of English culture, romanticism played an important part"⁶ C. Paul Verghese's comment on Derozio's poetry is worth quoting here: "Even in the expression of high ideals of liberty, freedom and patriotism, let alone his wistfulness, obsession with death and mood of escapism, he echoed his romantic masters".⁷ Writing specifically about Derozio K.R. Srinivas Iyengar observes: "As a poet,

Derozio was obviously influenced by the Romantics, notably Byron, Scott, Moore; he knew his Shelley and Keats also very well".⁸

Two conflicting views are found following the influence of the English romantic poets. According to Pallav Sengupta, the verses taken from the poetry of Campbell, Moore, Byron, Shelley, Wordsworth, Keats and Scott for use by Derozio as introducing verses at the top of many of his poems as per poetic tradition and custom of the age might have encouraged some to guess that Derozio's poetry showed too much influence of the English Romantic Poets. Of course Pallav Sengupta does not entirely deny some inspiring influence from these poets. But he discerns great influence on Derozio's poetry from the humanism of the great European classical literature. C. Paul Verghese, on the other hand, regards Derozio's poetry as no more than a mere echo of his romantic masters.

While Pallav Sengupta traces some influence of the European classical literature and that of the European philosophers in partially moulding Derozio's poetic outlook, C. Paul Verghese stresses the derivative nature of Derozio's poetry, specially in the expression of his subject matter. C Paul Verghese echoes only the general sentiment of the majority of Derozian critics who insist that his style is an echo of Byron, Moore and L.E. Landon. Truly speaking, apart from the expression of his subject-matter, sometimes even regarding the subject itself, he is indebted to his favourite English poets. These poets, indeed, had captured his soul and his love of them even perlocated to the students at Hindu college. It may be mentioned here that in 1831, Sir Walter Scott, Lord Byron and Robert Burns were included in the study of the college.

The introducing verses reveal the range and depth of Derozio's study. Derozio had extensive reading habits and his wide field of study included contemporary poets, ancient history, philosophy, fables, journals etc. His library had all the latest books published from Britain. In this connection Thomas Edwards writes, "There were two palaces in India where the most recent works issued from the press of Britain could be found. These were the

shelves of the most enterprising booksellers, and the library of Derozio, frequently the latter alone."⁹ The introductory verses show the nature of the influence exerted on him by the poets concerned.

Much more than introductory verses, the internal evidence provided by Derozio's poems shows how he was deeply indebted to his favourite poets in his creative process. The nature of his borrowing suggests that they *supplemented his poetic ideas and enlarged his poetic vision. They also helped him in expressing ideas and they influenced his style and diction, as well.* Derozio gave up his soul to the writing of Moore, Byron, L.E. Landon. He read Campbell well, especially his "The Pleasure of Hope" and also Shelley, Keats, Wordsworth, Scott and several other poets. In a sense Byron was his spiritual mentor. Byron's ideals of Freedom and Liberty, his love for the ancient glory of Greece and his journey to take part in the Greek War of Independence against the Turks - all appealed to him greatly. Thomas Moore's ideas and ideals about patriotism and Liberty also influenced him; so did Campbell's love for Freedom and Liberty. Campbell's eulogy of Hope appealed to him, as did L.E. Landon's concept about the inseparability of Love and Hope. Wordsworth sharpened his outlook of Nature and taught him to love nature deeply. Stray passages and lines from a number of poets like Shelley, Keats, Scott etc. occur with little change in his poem. For a number of ideals also he was indebted to them.

It must be said that these poets only enlarged his poetic vision and supplemented his ideas. But the basic ideas and ideals of Patriotism, Liberty and Freedom which are the quintessence of Renaissance were already with him. He derived his own poetic outlook during his stay at Bhagalpore. His ideas on liberty, freedom etc. might be an offshoot of the humanism that he imbibed from David Hume and Robert Burns through Drummond. Susobhan Sarkar hints at the idea when he writes, "It may be safely conjectured that Derozio derived from Drummond his taste in literature and philosophy, his love of Burns."¹⁰ His humanitarianism (as revealed in his sympathy for Hindu widows) could not have been imposed from above or learnt from outside. His study of Greek history kindled his reverential admiration for the glory of

ancient Greece to some extent and his study might have made him an ardent supporter of Greece in her War of Independence, though in this respect Byron's influence cannot be ignored either. Byron's ideal of Freedom and Liberty deeply influenced him and though he studied Greek history very well, it was Byron who inspired him to write verses. Indeed Byron provided the inspiration, but not always the tone and temper of his poems. Byron's mortification at the degenerate condition of the Greeks came from his love of Liberty. Byron's love of liberty and love of Greece culminated in his journey for participating in the Greek war of Independence and Martyr's death at Missolonghi in 1824. Derozio's imagination was greatly kindled by this instance of martyrdom.

Thomas Moore's influence on Derozio is discernible in his expression of patriotism Moore's Irish Melodies had a great impact on him in giving a concrete shape to his ideas on patriotism and liberty. His poems on patriotism, however, were influenced mostly by Tom Moore. E.W. Madge, an early biographer of Derozio, writes; "The brilliant hues of the Byronic sunset flung their glow over Derozio's sky. His style has been termed the echo of Byron, Moore and L.E. Landon. But these were the literary idols of the day and it may well be understood that to break away from fashionable models would for a youthful and inexperienced writer only spell disaster."¹¹

Derozio's hatred of slavery, eulogy of Freedom and his passionate description of the beauty of his motherland and fervent longing for her ancient glory owe to Tom Moore a great ideal. But a close study of the verses shows that Derozio's poems cannot be written off as a mere copy of his more renowned contemporary.

From Campbell Derozio got the ideas of the slave's agonized hankering of liberty and the sense of sublimation that freedom brings. Derozio's poem, "Freedom of the Slave" was inspired by Campbell.

Wordsworthian influence may be noticed in Derozio's love of nature and conception of Divine presence in Nature, as in the choric song of "A

Dramatic Sketch". Keatsian influence is found mainly in a number of images and phrases used by Derozio. The hope - induced prophetic vision of P.B. Shelley expressed in the lines of "Ode to the West Wind".

" O Wind,
if winter comes, can spring be far behind?"

is also Derozio's [of course in a different context ie. in the context of Bentick's banning of the practice of Satee Law.]

Derozio is indebted to Robert Burns for humanistic sentiment and the idea of universal Brotherhood of Man. Scott's metrical romance' form and the flash and spirit of battle action provide inspiration for the form of 'The Fakir of Jungheera' and its description of battle between the man of the Robber-Chief and those of Shoojah.

It may be said that in spite of influence of the romantic poets mentioned above Derozio's poetry had some appeal as it stirred the reader's mind with new characteristic in view of the moribund condition of the age. Though C. Paul Verghese criticizes Derozio for the derivative quality of his poetry, he does not fail to assess his true position: "However, it should be said to his credit that he was the first Indian to attempt to write romantic poetry in English." ¹²

IV

In the nineteenth century Western Education and philosophy came to India through the channel of English education. Since his student life in Drummond's Dharmatala Academy Derozio was familiar with the Western Philosophic ideas as his teacher Drummond had knowledge of it. From Drummond Derozio got the philosophic ideas. Derozio was also familiar with the works the philosophers who influenced the French Revolution of 1789 that spread the slogan of equality, fraternity and freedom in the World. He knew Bacon and Locke known for their rationalism and free thought. He also read French encyclopaedists – Volni, Voltaire, Rousseau, Hallbath, Helvitius, and

La Metri. Among them Voltaire, Rousseau and Volni were monotheists while Hallbath, Helvitiuſ and La Metri were atheists. The latter group did not believe in the exiſtence of God and the immortality of the ſoul. Hume did not believe in miracles. He tried to find out the origin and hiſtory of religion on the baſis of natural and ſcientific method. He regarded religious rites as nothing but the activities prompted of the veſted intereſt of the prieſt and clergymen. Derozio was familiar with the philoſophical thoughts of theſe philoſophers. As a teacher of the Hindu college he tried his beſt to give his ſtudents the knowledge and ideas of the Weſtern Philoſophers. Derozio became a life-long admirer of David Hume and philoſophy of Bacon. The rationaliſtic minded Derozio could not accept Immanuel Kant's myſtic philoſophy and even wrote an eſſay criticizing it. He later acquainted himſelf with the theiſtic views of Dr. Reid, Dugal Stewart and Sir William Hamilton and became ſure of the rationaliſtic view point. Thus the ſeeds that were ſown by Drummond were paramount and later ſprouted into a deep love for Truth. His ardent paſſion for truth may thus be ſaid to have been an indirect reſult of the influence of Drummond. His knowledge of the philoſophy of Bacon, Stewart, Reid, Hume is well pronounced in one of the letters to Wilson. He wrote in that letter, "Entruſted as I was for ſome time the education of youth peculiarly circumſtanced, was it for me to have made them pert and ignorant dogmatists by permitting them to know what could be ſaid upon only one ſide of grave queſtions? Setting aſide the narrowneſs have been injurious to the mental energies and acquirements of the youngmen themſelves. And (whatever may be ſaid to the contrary) I can indicate my procedure by quoting no leſs orthodox authority that Lord Bacon: "If a man", ſays this philoſopher (and no one ever had better right to pronounce an opinion upon ſuch matters than Lord Bacon) "will begin 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 ſuggeſt another, and univerſal ſcepticiſm is the conſequence. I therefore, thought it my duty to acquaint ſeveral of college ſtudents with the ſubſtance of Hume's celebrated dialogue between Cleanthes 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 the day

continue unrefuted. "This is the head and front of my offending". 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 conviction was not within my power and if I am to be condemned for the Altheism of some, let me receive credit for the Theism of others. Believe me, my dear Sir, I am too thoroughly imbued with the 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 an enquiring mind, and far be it from me to say "that is", and "that is not", when after the most extensive acquaintance with the researches of science, and after the most daring flights of genius, we must confess with sorrow and disappointment that humility becomes of his ignorance".¹³

B. Derozio : The Field of his Action

I

The early history of Bengal Renaissance is an illuminating story of the meeting of minds of some exceptionally gifted teachers and their small band of earnestly devoted students. The part played by these teachers is vital in the chonicle of Renaissance in the early part of the nineteenth century. Indeed, it would be no exaggeration to say that the transformation of mediaeval Bengal into modern was made possible by the teachers of the Hindu college, the first centre of western Education that contributed a lot to Bengal Renaissance. Derozio was a teacher of the Hindu College with his head held high and with the lamp of Renaissance in his hand amid the prevailing culture of the middle ages in Bengal.

The objective of the Hindu College was to impart knowledge in the matters of science, philosophy and geography that took place around the World. The utilitarian need was also not neglected as is evident from John Bull's record: "English education, among the inhabitants of Bengal has hitherto had little more than mere language for its object a sufficient command of which for conducting the details of efficient duty, comprehended the utmost ambition of native students. The spelling book, a few reading exercise, a

grammar and a dictionary formed the whole course of their reading, except in a few isolated instances of superior ability and industry little more was effected than a qualification of copyist and an account".¹⁴

At the end of 1824 Horace Heyman Wilson took charge of the post of Inspector of Hindu College and brought about a radical change in the educational system and curriculum. He proclaimed that acquisition of knowledge of History, Geography and English language and literature would be the main objective of the Hindus. As the proclamation reads, "The general result of the operation of the Hindu College is to give the students a considerable command of the English language, to extend their knowledge of history, geography and to open to them a view of the objects and means of science".¹⁵ Again Wilson proclaimed, "Whilst those of the present first class admit of no comparison with anything yet effected by the college, and far exceed the expectations which I then expressed to entertainer".¹⁶ The objective of the new curriculum was not only to attain knowledge of English vocabulary and grammar but also to develop thought and awareness of mind. According to Mr. Kerr, the Principal of the Hindu College, 'Bacon, Milton, Adam Smith and Shakespeare will make him (a student) a normal and intellectual being'.¹⁷

Consequently the students became highly inquisitive about Western knowledge, Science, Philosophy and English language and literature. They were curious to know life in the light of new thought and consciousness, interpretation and judgment. In this newly surcharged atmosphere of education Derozio joined the College and drew the students to him like a magnet by virtue of his knowledge and command of Western literature and philosophy and unique manner of teaching. As curriculum units Derozio used to teach the following in the 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 'Aeneid', Pope's editions of Homer's 'Iliad' and 'Odyssey', Milton's Paradise Lost and one of the tragedies of Shakespeare. He followed Drummond's method of teaching with

emphasis on holding debates among the students on topics concerning national and international matters.

Derozio was different from the common brand of teacher in so far as his intention was not only to impart lessons to the young students on European literature and history in the light of scientific thinking, but also to bring back an awareness of the lost glory of this oppressed motherland through cultivation of proper knowledge and application of it. He also stressed on broadening the mind, heart and soul of the people in order to bring about a progressive outlook and qualitative change. Actually Derozio did not speak only about the education and cultivation of knowledge, he inspired his students to build a new World breaking the old one of superstitions through the application of newly felt knowledge, consciousness and values from the West. Herein lies the true identity and singularity of Derozio as a teacher who combined in him the qualities of a man, master, rebel and an inaugurator of new age. Derozio's method of teaching, excellent in argument and judgment, love for knowledge and truth contributed a lot to the excellent development of the student's character, truthfulness and moral thinking. He led his students along new vistas of learning in the true fashion of a Renaissance teacher and opened up before them new frontiers of beauty. A comment from the recollection of one of his colleagues serving in the non-teaching group of the Hindu college is worth quoting here to prove what sort of truth seeker he was: "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 point of view, but what was of still greater importance, they all were considered men of truth".¹⁸

In his short spell of teaching in the Hindu College Derozio sowed the seeds of patriotism, humanism and nationalism and instilled the essence of the western literature and philosophy in the minds of his students. In this respect he is aptly the pioneer of modern age and an inaugurator of a new age. To Derozio teaching was thus not a mere profession but a mission.

The students of the Hindu college used to be spell – bound by Derozio's ideals and thoughts of education. One of his students Peary Chand Mitra spoke highly of the influence of his teaching when he wrote, "Of all the teachers Mr. H.L.V Derozio gave the greatest impetus to free discussion on all subjects - social, moral and religious. He was himself a free thinker and possessed affable manners. He encouraged students to come and open their minds to him. The advanced students of the Hindu College frequently sought for his company during tiffin time, after school hours and at his house. He encouraged everyone to speak out. This led to free exchange of thought and reading of books which otherwise would not have been read. Those books were chiefly poetical, metaphysical and religious. It was last proposed to establish in 1828 or 1829, a debating club called the Academic Association".¹⁹

P.C. Mirta further wrote, "He used to impress upon them (the pupils) the sacred duty of thinking for themselves – to be in no way influenced by any of the idols mentioned by Bacon – to live and die for truth – to cultivate all the virtues, shunning vice in every shape. He often read examples from ancient history of the love of Justice, patriotism, philanthropy and self – abnegation; and the way in which he set forth the points stirred up the minds of his pupils. Some were impressed with the exultance of justice, some, with paramount excellence of truth, some, with patriotism, some with philanthropy"²⁰

According to Lal Behari Dey. "The young man brought up in the Hindu college began to study the works of Bacon, of Locke, of Berkley, of Hume, of Reid and of Douglas Stewart. A thorough revolution took place in their ideas They began to reason, to question, to doubt"²⁰ The students clustered round him not only in classroom but also at his home and "drank deep into the Western thought and literature, the new fountain which emancipated and intoxicated them"²² and served as the cementing link binding them together so much that they came to be known as "Young Bengal."

Glowing tributes have been paid to Derozio as a teacher by eminent scholars and persons. Professor Susohoban Sarkar says, "Derozio's personality brought a new era in the annals of the college, the youth teacher

drawing the senior boys like a magnet round him".²³ Rabindranath Tagore speaking about Derozio's method of teaching writes, "Derozio, captain Recharadson and David Hare were teachers; they were not dies to education and bearers of the load of notes".²⁴

As to his teaching Derozio's biographer Thomas Edwards writes, "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".²⁵ Derozio taught his students to throw off the fetters of bigotry and superstitions that had kept their ancestors enslaved for generations. The freedom of thought and questioning spirit inculcated by Derozio shook their ancestral faith. They saw in Hinduism nothing but superstitions, hypocrisy and fanaticism. Some like Krishna Mohan Banerjee and Radhanth Sikdar went to the extent of embracing Christianity; others though did not renounce Hinduism, become indifferent to it. Derozio provided the initial impulse. Indeed, it would be wrong to impute to him any superstition. But immature and impulsive as they were, these young reformers in their passion for advancement injudiciously went far ahead of the goal set by their teacher. The fault lay in the system of education that could not attempt a synthesis between the Western culture and the oriental tradition. The balance of mind and the proper scale of values which were the prerequisites of liberal education were absent. The steps taken by the Hindu college Committee to remove Derozio were as hasty and injudicious as some of the actions of the young rebels to prove their progressive outlook. In spite of some lapses in the activities of some of the young students of the Hindu college, they created a stir to root out the traditional inhumanistic age-old tradition and faiths that stood in the triumphant march of renaissance in the early part of the nineteenth century. Derozio's pupil Kishori Chand Mitra observed in 1861: "The youthful band of reformers who had been educated at the Hindu college, like the tops of the Kunchanjunga, were the first to catch the dawn".²⁶

Under the inspiring guidance of Derozio the students were found to discuss topic of Western philosophy and literature. They also started writing scholarly dissertations and participated in recitation, discussion and debate on

the subjects of science, philosophy and literature relating to contemporary life and society. By 1827 a revolutionary change was noticed in the educational field. Apart from study, discussion and debate on contemporary national and international matters were organized in classrooms where Derozio would play a pivotal role. From the subject of the debate competition we get an idea about the student's knowledge, range of study and awareness of contemporary events. As for example, subjects of debate of class I was. The consequence resulting to Europe and Asia by the discovery of the passage round the cape of Good Hope". In class II the subject matter of debate was- "The preference given to the public distinction or to private happiness". The subject matter of the debate in class III was- "The conduct of Cariolanus"; in class IV". The preferable claims to the administration of different Grecian states and in Class V- "Consequences of Briton from Roman conquest".

II

As a result of free discussion prompted by free mind, the number of disciples of Derozio began to go up. The four walls of classrooms were not adequate to accommodate the desirous participants. Consequent upon this situation Derozio formed "Academic Association" in 1828. The president of the Association was Derozio and the Secretary was Umacharan Basu. "Academic Association" played a leading role in moulding the mind of the Bengalis in the realm of society, literature and culture and created a stir. The role it played in the awakening of mind and soul of the Bengalis is only comparable to some extent to the same of the Hindu College.

At the beginning the students of the Hindu College were the members of the 'Academic Association', but within a few months the students of other institutions felt irresistibly drawn to the magnetic personality of Derozio and became members of it and came to be known as "the young Bengal". According to Gopal Halder, "The image of the Young Bengal has been to some extent unjustly tarnished later on. In the history of social and cultural realm they were not comets, but luminaries. Their activities and cultural impact were not negligible in the Bengali society".²⁷ Derozio's role in the Hindu College and Academic Association helped spread the spark of the 'Age

of Reason'. New thoughts, questions and values relating to life came to the minds of man who started glorious adventure. Relating to the emergence of the new thought and awareness of the new age Alfred Martin says, "Men felt that they had at last attained their majority in matters economic, political and intellectual. The new conditions of life brought with them new attitudes, new valuations."²⁸

The youth as well as the educated high-ups were fascinated by the spirit of debate and discussion of the 'Academic Association'. The most remarkable elite included Edward Ryan, the justice of the Supreme Court, Wilson Bard, The Deputy Governor, Col. Benson, the Personal Secretary of Lord William Bentinck and Dr. Mill, the Principal of Bishop College. Alexander Duff has given a beautiful description about the conduct of the meeting: "Opportunities were constantly presented for the advancement of counteracting statements and opinions on almost all subjects. When a topic for debate was selected, individuals were appointed to open the discussion on either side as is customary in this country. Their theory was that, while professing inquiries after truth, they should not do violence to any one's conscience, by constraining him to argue against his own settled convictions. All were, therefore, left alike free in their choice, hence it not frequently happened that more than half a dozen followed in succession in the same side."²⁹

Despite being young in age the members of the 'Academic association' command our respect for their patience in listening to the opinion of others. The conservatives as well as the aged looked down upon the 'Young Bengal' as unruly and undisciplined but the decorum, discipline and the standard they maintained in debate and discussion were unparalleled. As regards the standard of the discussion Alexander Duff observes, "The sentiments delivered were fortified by oral quotations from English authors. If the subject was historical, Robertson and Gibbon were appealed to, if religious, Hume and Thoman Paine; if metaphysical, Locke and Ried, Stewart and Browne. The whole was frequently interspersed and enlivened by passage cited from some of our most popular English poets, particularly

Byron and Sir Walter Scott. And more than once were my ears greeted with the sound of scotch rhymes from the poems of Robert Burns".³⁰ Giving an account of the Association, Thomas Edwards, writes, "Frell 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 Hindu Youths of Calcutta".³¹

Recalling the important contribution of the 'Academic Association' the 'Hindu Patriot' wrote on January 25, 1868 in the obituary of Ramgopal Ghosh, "What the Oxford and Cambridge Clubs are to those universities, the 'Academic Association' was to the Old Hindu college. As the greatest senators and statesmen of England cultivate oratory in those clubs, so did the first alumni of the Hindu College, who have in after life so eminently distinguished themselves, cultivated their debating powers in the Association"³²

The impetus to free thinking and the spirit of inquiry roused by Derozio in the 'Academic Association' led to the foundation of numerous debating clubs all over Calcutta. Thomas Edwards writes, "The establishment of the Academic Association and the full and free discussion rightly carried on at its meetings was followed within a few months by the establishment of between twelve and fourteen newspaper chiefly conducted by natives, advocating views of all sort, from orthodox Hinduism to materialism, and carrying on in print the discussion of question raised by Academic Association numerous debating societies which spring up as offshoots and auxiliaries of the parent society. Duff's lectures on the evidences of Christianity, as well as the rise of about a dozen native schools supported by Hindus, all these were but the outcome of the training of the Hindu school, and the influence and teaching of Derozio".³³

The students of the Hindu College published several magazines during the period between 1828 and 1843. These magazines are- "Parthenon (1830)", "Gyananneshun (1831-1844)", "Pioneer" and "Spectator". These dealt in a general way with the condition of the country, science of politics, science of government and jurisprudence, European colonization in India, female education etc.

The extent of success achieved by Derozio in transforming the minds of his students is fairly indicated by the alarm it created in the Hindu Community and the vile campaign carried by Indian newspaper. The Managing Committee of the Hindu College forced Derozio to resign on 5 April, 1831. The dignified tone of Derozio's letter of resignation and his subsequent correspondence on the subject testify to the real nature and inherent greatness of the man. In his letter of resignation Derozio remarked, "unbiased, unexampled and unheard, your resolve to dismiss me without even a mockery of trial".³⁴ In reply to this letter Dr. Willson wrote to him pointing out that the decision of the committee was on the ground of expediency and that there was no trial intended, "There was no condemnation".³⁵ Dr. Wilson also requested Derozio to answer three charges brought against him. These were: "Do you believe in God? Do you think respect and obedience to parents as part of moral duty? Do you think the inter-marriage of brothers and sisters innocent and allowable?"³⁶

Derozio's reply to these charges, particularly to the first question, remains one of the masterpieces of writing and gives an insight into the mind of the inspirer of the young Bengal Movement. He wrote, "I have never denied the existence of a God in hearing of any human being. If it be wrong to speak at all upon such a subject I am guilty; for 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 those doubts. Is it forbidden anywhere 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?

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 question?"³⁷

After resigning from the Hindu College on 25th April, 1831, Derozio continued his life's mission by starting a daily newspaper, the 'East Indian'. He preached through this paper to make reason the sole guide in life, to have the courage of conviction, practising what they believed to be right.

III

Derozio left his radical ideas and spirit of freedom as a legacy to his students who, distinguished as 'Young Bengal continued to play a prominent role in the Renaissance of Bengal. Professor Biman Behari Majumdar has paid high compliment to Derozio "Derozo was a devoted worshipper of liberty in every sphere of life—social, political and religious. His students regarded him as one of the greatest creatures of modern Bengal".³⁸

Derozio's dedication to the high assignments of teaching is superbly expressed in his 'Sonnet to the pupils of the Hindu College.' In another poem, 'Sonnet David Hare Esq' he writes,

Your hand is on the helm guide on young men.
The Bark that's freighted with your country doom
Your glories are but budding; they shall bloom
Like fabled amaranths Elysian.....³⁹

As a teacher Derozo believed that his students had kindled the flame which he lit for awakening the country from the slumber of ignorance. Thus he expected his students to carry on the torch of light when he says, "Guide on, young men, your course is well begun".⁴⁰

Derozio's firm conviction on the future activities of the students relating to intellectual promotion of the country is well expressed in his address to the

students of the Hindu College on the eve of the grand vacation in 1828. He says, "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 world strong in wisdom and in worth; scatter the seeds of love among mankind, seek the peace of your fellow creature." ⁴¹

The humanists of the Renaissance adopted teaching as their main profession. They were eager to set up schools and at the same time they spent their lives sticking to the ideals of education. Derozio's teaching created a kind of enthusiasm and frenzy among the students of the Young Bengal. Apart from carrying out administrative responsibilities many of them were actively engaged in founding school for spreading the light of education. They would also teach the students. Krishna Mohan Banerjee, Rasik Krishna Mallick, Tarachand Chakraborty, Ramtanu Lahari, Peary Chand Sarker, Rasiklal Sen, Umacharan Mitra and a few other took to teaching and the tradition of it was borne by Ishan Chandra Banerjee, Bhudev Mukherjee, Gobinda Sen, Raj Narayan Basu etc. A student who was an eye witness to the wonderful teaching of Ramtanu Lahiri commented, "Whenever he entered into the classroom, it was felt that a great act was being performed" ⁴² That Derozio's students took an inspiring and laudable role in forming educational institutions is evident from the newspaper of the time. On 10 September, 1831 'Samachar Darpan' wrote, "After establishment these schools are being run by the educated youths of the Hindu College". (Translated) ⁴³

Rasik Krishna Mallik set up a school named "Free School" for the students, free of fees where about eight students used to read.

Peary Chand Mitra set up a school known as 'Hindu Benevolent School' in his ancestral house. Many of the Young Bengal attempted to kindle the light of education in their houses and rural areas during their tenure of Govt Duty "Shib Chandra Dev set up three in his birth place Konnagar". ⁴⁴ Among these three schools "one was English (1854), one was Bengali (1858) and one was for girls (1860)". ⁴⁵ Apart from it Nabin Madhab Dey, Rajkrishna Mitra, Nabin Chandra Mirta, Tarak Nath Sen, Kashiswar Mitra and many other

students of the Hindu College set up schools. There is no doubt about it that Derozio presented a lofty ideal of imparting education to the students of the Hindu College in course of his short spell of teaching and the students followed the ideals in founding schools as well as in teaching different subjects.

Derozio created a new culture of keeping confidence in the youths in stead of the superiors and he said, 'guide on young men..... you course is well begun.'⁴⁶ The young Bengal brought new age to the cultural attitude of the Bengali.

The newly awakened youths made themselves the travellers of universal culture. They intended to be free traveller of the Renaissance crossing the barriers of the religion, caste, language, time and space gifted by birth. In the language of Krishtadas Paul it may be said, "He looks upon the human race as members of one vast family and acknowledges the tie of brotherhood on all".⁴⁷

C. Derozio : His Ideals

According to Derozio useful knowledge should precede amusement and Derozio's students took inspiration from this saying. They played a pivotal role in forming organizations and institutions as well as in publishing several magazines. The establishment of Hindu Free School was the outcome of their sincere efforts. Madhav Chandra Mullick, Radhanath Paul and Gangacharan Sen took active part in it. Commenting on the first examination of the school. 'Calcutta Monthly Journal wrote in September, 1831. 'The rays that emanated from the Hindu College and that are now diverging to other places, must eventually dissipate the mists of ignorance and superstition. When knowledge once begins its march, it cannot, without the greatest difficulty, be retracted in its progress; prejudice and bigotry are hostile to truth and therefore, to knowledge; they cannot reign for any length of time".

The Humanists crossed the geographical bars in their discussion of Greek and Latin Classics. Erasmus, Raphael and other Renaissance

scholars, poets and painters broadened the outlook of man in so far as man could think himself as one not simply confined to his narrow birthland but belonging to the large humanity thinking the whole world as his abode.

Renaissance, is therefore, a cosmopolitan culture. In Symond's words, "The Culture of Renaissance is not native but cosmopolitan".⁴⁸ In Derozio's favourite choice of land, Greece was next to his motherland, ie. India. This love for Greece was for its heroic and cultural tradition Derozio Composed, 'Thermopoli, 'Greece'. 'The Greeks at Marathon', 'Address to the Greeks'. 'Safo' and many other poems in connection with Greece. In the poem entitled 'The poet's Habitation', he desires to take a refuge in the island of the Aegian Sea.

In 'Italy' 'Tasso' and many other poems of Derozio we find the tribute of a Renaissance poet to the birthland of Renaissance. He looked upon Italy as the land of the lover and the poet".⁴⁹

"Oh! How I long to look upon Thy face
Land of lover and the poet; Thou".⁵¹

He touched Germany and France in connection with his discussion of Emanuel Kant and Mupertui's Philosophical thought. (Derozio's objection to the philosophy of Emanuel Kant, T.B. Laurence (ed.), English poetry in India, Vol. I, 1869). By composing two songs in the Portuguese tune he wants to acquaint us with his heritage which is rarely mentioned elsewhere. Excepting thematic similarity with the poems of William Shakespeare (as in the poems, 'Romeo and Juliet', 'Yorick Skull'), his predilection for Bacon, Locke, Hume, Montesquieu, Moore, Byron, Campbell is spread in several poems and writings. He had a great admiration not only for Europe, but also for the language, culture and poems of the Middle east. His 'Ode from the Persian of Hafiz' gets the stamp of Hafiz. The stories of 'Omar Khaiam' and the 'Arabian Tales' frequently occur in his poetry. His profound knowledge of the Muslim society and history manifests itself in the poem, 'The Enchantress of the cave'. He has a fondness for the words 'Kafir', 'Afrit', 'Izrafil', 'Eblish',

'Macca', 'Peer', 'Fakir', 'Allah', in order to create an Islamic tone. The following two lines exemplify how he creates an Arabian atmosphere and spirit in his poem:

"When the Bulbul's loved mate, the Zuleikha of flowers,
Like the young eastern bride, blooms unseen in her bowers"⁵¹

Renaissance removed the barrier of the distinction between one and the other, motherland and the alien land, past and the present. This adventurous spirit that urges Derozio to travel the cultural world marks him as a Renaissance man. If we study 'Hymn to the Sun', a part of Derozio's poem, "The Fakir of Junghera", it will be clear that he was at home in dealing with a matter that is based on the Indian tradition and heritage. Pallav Sengupta has dwelt at length upon this aspect and concludes that 'The description of the Sun and its invocation in the poem show striking similarity with the description of the Sun and its invocation in the 'Rig Veda'.⁵² As a Renaissance poet Derozio does so as he owes allegiance to the ancient culture and tradition.

Derozio believed that **knowledge is power**. He always encouraged those who were sincere in their effort to form association and schools as well as to publish magazines and periodicals; he would also take active role to materialize the plans and programmes of publishing periodicals. He put immense emphasis on knowledge to bring about a change in the society. He translated a lot of original writings, as for example, M. Maupertin's 'On Moral' (From French to English). Derozio belonged to a class of his own and his uniqueness is well expressed by Maxmuller in the following words: "The teacher who chiefly influenced the young men as Mr. Derozio, who though branded by the clergy as an infidel and as a devil of the Thomas Paine School, was worshipped by his pupils as the incarnation of goodness and kindness".⁵³

The Hindu College was turned into a seat of learning for the exceptional method of teaching of Derozio. In order to quench the thirst for knowledge the illustrious students of the Young Bengal rushed from the

'Academic Association' to "Sadharan Gnanoparjika Sabha", 'Parthenon' to 'Enquire' and 'Jnananeswan' to the pirated books of Tom Paine that came by ship to Europe, the most enlightened part of the globe from the point of new knowledge and new discovery. In this respect while dispelling the complaint levelled against the Young Bengal Krishna Das Paul says in a lecture, "Say, who is therein India that pursues knowledge from a love of it.....? If I mistake not, all will to a man answer, 'T is Young Bengal', T is Young Bengal!"⁵⁴

In an address to the students of the Hindu College on the eve of Christmas Holiday in 1828 Derozio said, "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".⁵⁵

Derozio was ever a **searcher for Truth**. He was curious to know, to comprehend and to preach. He had an exhaustive knowledge through study. He quoted extensively from the history of Robertson and Gibbon, Politics of Adam Smith and Jermy Bentham, science of Newton and Davy, Religion of Hume and Tom Paine and Philosophy of Locke, Read, Stewart and Brown. The most striking feature of this discussion was the spirit of freedom which permeated their writings. Derozio had great interest in the progress of the Industrial Revolution and in the ideals of the American War of Independence. He was equally an admirer of the great French Revolution (1789) and the July Revolution of 1830. His favourite author was Tom Paine who would try to make a synthesis of the ideals of the French Revolution and the American War of Independence. Derozio deeply felt the significance of these two international revolutions and their impact in India. He sought to sow the seed of Revolutions in the soil of India. Derozio's students had the knowledge of these revolutions as they read Tom Paine's 'An Age of Reason' and 'Right of Man' with great interest. Alexander Duff, however, thought otherwise. He observed that many students had become or were becoming sceptics and atheists. "He (Duff) witnessed revolution which the minds of the intelligent youth of the city were undergoing; the wildness of their view, the reckless

innovations they were introducing; the infidel character of their religious opinion; and the spirit of unbounded liberty, or their licentiousness which characterized their speculations".⁵⁶ During his days at the Hindu College and in the remaining few months of his later life after his dismissal from the College, a fearless search for truth became an absorbing passion with him. His biographer, Thomas Edwards has rightly observed that he was an earnest seeker after truth he dared to differ from his fellows and seek for truth with a fearless chivalry, a loving charity and an undogmatizing modesty.

Derozio was above all kinds of parochialism, communalism and hypocrisy. He did not attack Hinduism without any reason. He knew well and felt that it would not be an act of pragmatism to say something against conservatism, religious practices and traditions. According to him, responding to reason and conscience in order to perform any work is justifiable. He stressed on accepting truth by reason.

The Englishmen in India, by and large, would look down upon the natives. They themselves would enjoy the facilities and recreations available to them. Native students had no right for taking admission to the schools managed by the English. Derozio on the contrary supported the co-education of the white and black. He was free from any such communal feeling. After leaving the Hindu College, Derozio published a daily paper named the "East Indian". In the prospectus of the paper 'East Indian', Derozio, he assured that the 'East Indian' would not be "exclusively devoted to any particular interest but that it would advocate the just rights of all classes of the community"⁵⁷ On the rights and claims of the natives and the East Indians Derozio delivered a scintillating speech that throws ample light on his anti-communal outlook: "The admissions of East Indians to certain right do not preclude the possibility of other classes of the population also securing for themselves, the privileges to which they are entitled. If the East Indians were permitted to enjoy all privileges they now seek, it would be impossible to withhold the claims of others. The enemies have tried to set both the Europeans and the native community against them by saying that they seek exclusive privilege, well knowing that if they once enter the breach, there will be many to follow".⁵⁸

In this lecture Derozio raised some general problem not limited to any particular community; the problems raised by him were national as well as universal by nature. He held, "Nothing has of late excited more attention, from persons of all descriptions, than the condition and prospectus of the inhabitants of India. The subject was little considered a few years ago; but from various circumstances it has now acquired so much importance, that there seems to be but one opinion on the point that the situation of the people of India may be and requires to be improved. The apathy formerly so general, is rapidly giving place to a lively concern for promoting the true welfare of the people, on the broadest and most solid basis".⁵⁹ The Eurasians wanted to have their right and claims on "East Indian", but Derozio did not think it to represent the hopes and aspirations of the Eurasians only. A controversy cropped up between Drummond and Derozio and his opinion is worth quoting: "It will not be supposed, however, that because the chief object of the society will be welfare of East Indians; there will not be any display of illiberality towards other classes of community. So far from it, that it is specially intended to extend the benefits of the institutions to other portions of the inhabitants of the this country, consistently with the greater wants of the East Indians and consequent stronger claims upon its attention".⁶⁰ During the publication of 'The East Indian' his (Derozio's) anti-communal mentality was well pronounced. His broad anti communalistic and humanistic awareness irrespective of religion, caste, creed and colour is nothing but a manifestation of his universal awareness that is a gift of the Renaissance. A portion of his lecture from the manifesto of 'East Indian' is worth mentioning here; "To prevent any misconception to which the name of paper may give rise, the proprietor begs to state that his journal will not be exclusively devoted to any particular interest, but that it will advocate the just rights of all classes of the community".⁶¹

Derozio was a believer in secular – humanism. Though the cultural meaning of the Renaissance is not secular in the modern sense, it has started receding from the solid base of religion. In the past man was identified with reference to his religion but in the wake of Renaissance his religious identity was not stressed. He is seen as one whose religion counts little. In this

respect credit goes to Derozio who glorified the ideal of secular humanism to the students of the Hindu College. It was alleged that for his teaching and discussions many students become atheists, but it is not true. During his illness that caused his death, students along with his admirers like Dr. Tytler, Dr. Wilson, Dr. Grant, David Hare used to meet him. Mahesh Chandra Ghosh, one of the followers of Derozio, was beside him till his death. It is heard that Missionary Hill met Derozio then and wanted to know from him whether he would think himself a Christian or not. According to Mahesh Chandra, Derozio did not consider himself as a Christian and in reply to it he said, "I do not know the absolute truth about religion or God till today, my enquiry is yet to be completed".⁶²

Mahesh Chandra's comment in connection with this is unlikely to be incorrect. He comments "among the students of Derozio Mahesh Chandra before Krishna Mohan courted Christianity. If Derozio would confess himself as a Christian, he (Mahesh Chandra) would say gladly"⁶³ After Derozio's death 'Indian Registrar' echoes Mahesh Chandra Ghosh's statement about the religious view of Derozio: "That he did not view Christianity as communication from the divinity to fallen man is well known; but it is perhaps impossible to say in what manner he came to fall into such an opinion"⁶⁴ Derozio had deep regard for the ethics of the Christianity, but he did not believe in the divinity or supernaturalism. He expressed this attitude of religion not only in connection with Christianity but also with other religions. He was not satisfied with any interpretation of religion which was not based on reason. So "Derozio should be called a humanist rather than a follower of Christian religion".⁶⁵

After Raja Rammohan Roy and before Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar he (Derozio) was the inaugurator of the humanistic thought of the new age in this country. Derozio's students published periodicals and magazines like 'Parthenon' and 'Enquirer' to ventilate ideas and opinion concerning the burning social issues of that time. The inspiration came from Derozio.

Derozio was not only a thoughtful teacher, he was a man of creative genius at the same time. He is known to us as poet of the period when literature in Bengal started its march with the stamps of the Renaissance. He was a poet of considerable power and he had a distinct view about the mission of a poet. On 22nd January 1830 he wrote an article in the 'Indian Gazette' in which he discussed the function of poetry and the mission of a poet. Poetry to him was something that refined and purified the springs of life; it was an instrument for elevating and improving man's moral and intellectual nature. He wanted to see a radical reform among poets". He wrote, "Let it be the aim of the present age to open new springs; let the mind engage in voyages for the discovery of happiness; let the poet abandon war, misanthropy, romance and false feeling and let his enthusiasm be on the side which espouses man's best interest; let it be his object to improve while he delights and to promote the advance of society, while he scatters flowers along its path, and he may rest assured that fame will not only await his steps but that he will attain a high rank among the best benefactors of mankind".⁶⁶

From this view it is clear that he looked upon the poet as one who must be alive to the duties he owes to the society. As a poet he tried and succeeded to perform his duty towards the society. In view of the transitional period of society and culture his poems made an outstanding contribution. His poems have a genuine stamp of patriotism. He showed his love for his country and looked upon it as his motherland. He not only thought it his duty to instil the love for truth in his disciples but also to foster a love for the country among the countrymen as well. This accounts for his unflinching interest in Indian lore, local customs and legends. Indianness in Derozio's poetry is not a matter of Indian imagery and local colouring; rather it is a fact of his mode of feeling. He was an Indian out and out. So patriotism is one of the chief characteristics of his poetry. He made India's aspirations his own, while he bemoaned its fallen state. Derozio is modern India's first patriot to give expression to that patriotism in verse, the first to sing of freedom that lights altar of soul with everlasting flame, the first to contemplate an intellectual renaissance for an ancient civilization through new perceptions, the first to

exalt reason as an instrument of progress. For the overall progress of India under the British rule he used poems as well as pamphlets.

Derozio's sense of nationalism goes hand in hand with patriotism. It is to be traced in the light of the intellectual renaissance that he wanted to bring about. It was a product of a historical process of the transitional period which includes in its grasp English education with the message of Western idea and philosophy, reassessment of the traditional and orthodox belief and customs in the light of the newly awakened sense, rediscovery of the glorious past of India, emphasis on reason to seek the truth. Derozio felt an impulse of this nationalism that found a passionate outburst in whatever he did and felt in his short career. He felt and reasonably so, that as a Eurasian it would not be feasible for him to instil nationalistic feelings among the countrymen through direct movement, whether social, religious, political or economic. Hence he chose literary weapon to bring about change in the outlook which works at the root of all social movements. In this respect he stood poles apart from Raja Rammohan Roy and Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar, the great reformers, who had recourse to direct social reforms. Thus he wanted to give shape to his vision of a new India. B.B. Majumdar very aptly observed "Western education and Indian Press were the two of the most important agencies destined to infuse into the people of India the spirit of national unity and to inspire them to achieve independence without bloodshed".⁶⁷ Derozio was one of the first thinkers to project his ideas in this line.

Derozio's mind was so steeped in patriotism that he gave a clarion call to the Anglo-Indians to be assimilated with the Indian culture. Because Derozio experienced that the Anglo-Indians under the constant influence of the British would often express impatient temperament and outlook towards the natives; even they forgot to look upon India as their motherland. In a speech delivered on 17th December, 1831, nine days before his death, he said, "In a few years Hindus will take their stand by the best and the proudest Christians; and it cannot be desirable to excite the feelings of the former against the latter. The East Indians complain of suffering from proscription, is

it for them to proscribe? Suffering should teach us not to make other suffer. It is to produce different effect on East Indians? We hope not".⁶⁸

Derozio's poetry is characterized by secular thought as he does not show any special liking for any religion, rather he put emphasis on reason and free-thinking to bring about an intellectual Renaissance in the realm of poetry. His poetic output in the light of Renaissance was the most remarkable part of his patriotic feelings and sang of India's freedom in verse. He made an attempt to think of intellectual Renaissance for ancient civilization through new perceptions. He visualized a new India through the medium of teaching, periodical and above all poetry.

Summing up

As a teacher Derozio was deservedly different from other teachers as he intended not only to impart lessons to the young students on European literature and history in the light of scientific thinking, but also to bring back an awareness of the lost glory of his oppressed motherland through cultivation of proper knowledge and application of it. He laid emphasis on broadening the mind, heart and soul of the people to bring about a progressive outlook and qualitative change. He enthused his pupils to make a new world breaking the old one of superstitions applying newly felt knowledge, consciousness and values from the west. He was also a seeker of truth. He was curious to know, to comprehend and to preach. He was far away from parochialism, communalism and hypocrisy. In view of the prevailing situation he did not attack Hinduism without any reason. He was keen to know, to comprehend and to preach. He would follow the dictates of reason and conscience to do any work. Hence he emphasised on accepting truth based on reason. After Rammohun Roy and before Iswar Chandra Vidyasar Derozio was the inaugurator of the humanistic thought of the new age in this country.