

Chapter V

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

The Renaissance (Bengal Renaissance) element in Derozio's poetry which is the argument of the thesis forms the subject of discussion in the fourth chapter. The discussion is made in 'A', 'B' and 'C' sections. In section 'A' the prevailing note in the contemporary Bengali Poetry is discussed. In section 'B' the factors leading to the flowering of the poetic genius of Derozio and his views on the nature and objectives of poetry constitute the argument. This section is divided in four sub-sections i. Derozio's poetic career; ii. The contemporary social background; iii. Influence of Western philosophers on Derozio; and iv. Derozio's views on poetry. Section 'C' constitutes an analysis of Derozio's poems. An attempt is made here to show how Derozio's poetry bears a response to Bengal Renaissance. This section is divided in the following sub-sections: i. Introduction; ii. Classification of his poems; iii. 'The Fakir of Jungheera' – A Tale of love and romance; iv. The note of Humanistic secularism in 'The Fakir of Jungheera'; v. The note of Mediaevalism in The Poem; vi. 'The Fakir of Jungheera' : Indianness of theme ; vii. The note of Patriotism and Respect for Indian's past glory in 'The Fakir of Jungheera'; viii. The Nationalistic feeling in the Poem; ix. Love for liberty in the Poem; x. Other Renaissance elements in the poem; xi. Renaissance elements in other poems of Derozio.

In the foregoing chapters of the thesis-(chapters II & III) an attempt in made to analyse the distinct nature of Bengal Renaissance (Chapter II) and to show how Derozio acted as a great force in shaping this Movement in Bengal in his role of a thinker, teacher, journalist and poet (Chapter III)

The thesis starts with the discussion of the nature of Bengal Renaissance, a fruit of the union of the two cultures—the West and the East, which signalled a great change in almost all the walks of life. The spirit of

Renaissance in Bengal was keenly felt in the rise of nationalism, in the interest evoked in the mind of the educated people about Western literature, philosophy, and values, in the emergence of secular humanism, in acceptance of the cult of reason and rationality, in developing an intellectual outlook, in the fight against social prejudices, superstitions, cant and hypocrisy and in acceptance of modern learning and quest for Truth. Renaissance is also responsible for creating an urge to rediscover the forgotten cultural treasures of India and to reinterpret the true spirit of her ancient civilization. It also marked a reorientation of her education through a blending of the old and the new and a renovation of her society by purging of those evils and anomalies which had crept into it and accumulated thereunder various adverse influences through succeeding ages, particularly in the eighteenth century.

Derozio belonged to this age of Enlightenment. The intellectual and poetic faculties of Derozio blossomed under several influences. The most remarkable influence came, as we have seen, from Drummond. 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. He also believed that service to man is synonymous to the service of God. In this world man is the ultimate truth.

The study of English literature, particularly of English Romantic Poetry, exercised a deep influence on Derozio's mind. 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. But it should be kept in mind that the basic ideas and ideals of patriotism, liberty and freedom which are the quintessence of Renaissance were already with Derozio.

Derozio was familiar with the Western philosophic ideas. He read French encyclopaedists – Volni, Voltaire, Hallbath, Helvitius, Dederro and La Metri. Among them Voltaire, Rousseau and Volni were monotheists while

Hallbath, Helvitius and La Metri were atheists. Derozio was familiar with the philosophical thoughts of these philosophers.

Derozio grew up in the society still stifled with slavery. His stay in Calcutta and Bhagalpore stirred his revolutionary mind. He saw the inhuman torture inflicted upon the slaves. The inhuman system left an indelible mark on Derozio's mind and he fervently dreamt of the freedom of the slaves in his poetry. Derozio not only protested against the misrule of the company and cruel tyranny and oppression of the indigo planters on the farmers of Bengal but also took his pen against tortures of the landlords on the people. He enthusiastically supported Rammohun's movement to abolish the system of 'Satee' and was highly hilarious when it was abolished on 4th December, 1829.

It should be kept in mind that among the leading figures of early Bengal Renaissance 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. His humanitarianism (in his sympathy for Hindu widows) could not have been imposed from above or learnt from outside. His ardent passion for Truth may thus be said to have been an indirect result of the influence of Drummond. Derozio was different from the common brand of teachers 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 his oppressed motherland through cultivation of proper knowledge and application of it.

During his teaching career 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. 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.

Derozio also stressed on broadening the mind heart and soul of the people in order to bring about a progressive outlook and qualitative change. 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 new man, master, rebel and an inaugurator of new age. 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. 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 and competition we get an idea about the student's knowledge, range of study and awareness of contemporary event. As a teacher Derozio believed that his students had kindled the flame which he lit for awakening the country from the slumber of ignorance. Derozio resigned on 25 April, 1831, but continued his life's mission by starting a daily newspaper, the 'East Indian'. He preached through this paper what he had always insisted upon his students, namely, to make reason the sole guide in their life and to have the courage of conviction, practising what they believed to be right. Thus we find that Derozio dedicated his whole life to the cause of accepting reason and truth as the guiding principles in life. This integration in his character characterises him as the sole figure in the whole range of Renaissance period in Bengal.

A comparison between Derozio and Rammohun seems to be very relevant in this connection. While Rammohun initiated a movement for reform and change, Derozio actively promoted radical ideas among the young Hindu students. *The patriotic ideas and sentiments based on conception of the glory of the Hindus, and a strong dislike to the British rule were expressed by Derozio himself and his students. The love of freedom and liberty of India run through many poems of Derozio and his students. It is true that Rammohun also had a great passion for liberty and freedom but this was confined to countries other than India. It will be, therefore, wrong to regard Rammohun*

Roy as the sole creator of Modern Age in India. The credit should also be given to Derozio.

Derozio had a deep love for the country, despite being a Eurasian. He had an unfailing interest in Indian lore, local customs and legends. His love for his country was free from any sort of parochial outlook. Being a Eurasian he brought the British in power in India to book for their oppression, arrogance and impatience with the natives. It is his poetic output which is the quintessence of his philosophical thoughts and ideas that helped blossom Renaissance in the first three decades of the nineteenth century.

Derozio believed in the core of his mind that knowledge is power. He always encouraged those who were sincere in their efforts to form association and schools as well as to publish magazines and periodicals. During his days at the Hindu college and in the remaining few months of his life after his dismissal from the college, a fearless search for Truth became an absorbing passion with him. 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 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. He was a believer in secular humanism. Though the cultural meaning of the Renaissance is not secular in the modern sense, yet it has started receding from the solid base of religion. After Raja Rammohun Roy and before Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar he (Derozio) was the inaugurator of the humanistic thought of the new age in this country.

Derozio was not only a thoughtful teacher, he was also a man of creative genius at the same time. He is known to us as a poet of the period when literature in Bengal started its march with the stamps of the Renaissance. He had a distinct view about 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. 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. They have a genuine stamp of patriotism. 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. 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. 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. He gave vent to his patriotic feelings and sang of Indian's freedom in verse.

The achievement of Derozio as a teacher is so remarkable that the poet in him is very often overlooked. The reason responsible for this fact is that he is better known as an inaugurator of new age and leader of the group, 'Young Bengal' than as a poet with new perceptions based on the revolutionary ideas of Hume, Bacon, Rousseau, Voltaire and other Western philosophers in the context of India under the British rule.. Besides being an outstanding social thinker, he was, a poet of considerable power. He was tremendously moved by the wave of the revolutionary ideas of the Western thinkers and took a pioneering role to express the revolutionary ideas through the whole gamut of his literary output. What is important in his poem is his theme – his attempt to expose the social evils of a decadent society with greater subtlety than Raja Rammohun Roy's outright denunciation. Derozio depicts the inhumanity of 'Satee', the false morality of the women and the hypocritical chanting of the Brahmins with such an understanding, real yet *manly pathos, imaginative thought and appropriate diction that one wonders whether a Hindu would have written in the way he did.* The absorption of the Western influence acted as a liberating force and the poets of the early part of the 19th century Bengal exhibited reformistic zeal through poetry. Derozio took the pioneering role in this respect. He wanted to expose the hypocrisy of the Brahmins and the women and satirise the social custom that slays human beings in the name of religious practice. His concept of love is a synchronism

of emotional idealism, mediaeval romanticism and renaissance humanism. For Derozio love in its noblest aspect is an ever sustaining power that obliterates our awareness of the harsh realities and agonies of life and death. Its radiance invests man with a feeling of new existence and triumph.

Considering the prevailing social background of Bengal at that time it may be said that Derozio has bravely drawn a sequence of events where religious conservatism is sacrificed at the altar of love steeped in humanistic secularism. Derozio glorifies the stand of the Nawab of Rajmahal who is above religious narrowness in his royal duty of justice and truth. This secularism is an offshoot of his humanistic outlook. Derozio has Indianised his theme of love by relating to a Hindu widow's pitiable plight on the pyre of deceased husband. He beautifully describes the beauty of the Ganges, the flitting butterfly, the honey-sipping melodious bee, the sun-lit stream. This description makes us feel the pulse of the vibrant life of the Indian nature. He for the first time in Bengal expressed the note of patriotism in his sonnet, 'To India – My Native Land'. The first poem of patriotic note is composed in English by Derozio with a profound and reverent admiration for the ancient rich lore of India and in spite of his Eurasian origin he remained wholly Indian in spirit and aspired to be India's national bard. Derozio's intense awareness of greatness of India's past glory is manifest in many of his poems. Out of Derozio's love for India's past glory his sense of nationalism and patriotism got a new lease of life. It made a maiden mark in the journey of Indian Poetry in the dawn of the Renaissance in the early part of the nineteenth century. He was one of the first Indo-Anglian writers to contemplate an intellectual renaissance through literary and philosophical perception. Derozio inspired his students of the Hindu College to build an age of reason that gave a tremendous blow to the foundation of superstition. He equally tried to show it through his poetry.

In the final analysis we can say that the poems of Derozio are historically important because they embody all the salient features of the Renaissance movement – embodiment of the glorification of man, the idea of independence of man, the expansion of the frontiers of human knowledge, the

estimation of the evaluation of love in human relationship. On this account Derozio's poetry claims a universality of appeal. Secondly, in an age when nobody thought of Indian's misery under a foreign rule and Indian nationalism was still unborn, Derozio sang about India's glory and grandeur with a perfect authenticity of patriotic fervour.