

DEROZIO'S POETRY : A RESPONSE TO BENGAL RENAISSANCE



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Acknowledgement

The title of the thesis is 'Derozio's Poetry: A Response to Bengal Renaissance', My aim in this thesis is to provide a systematic, coherent and intelligent study of the different facets of Bengal Renaissance and to show the impact of Bengal Renaissance on the poems of H.V.L. Derozio.

My obligations, in this task, are many and difficult to count. I have consulted the relevant studies of the different critics and historians to find a meaningful framework for the thesis.

I am indebted to my teacher Late Professor. S. P. Sengupta for inspiring me to work on this subject. I must express a sense of gratitude to my guide, Dr. S. K. Chakraborty, Reader in English, T.P.M. Mahavidyalaya, Cooch Behar for his valuable suggestions and guiding inspiration. I am also grateful to the teachers of the Dept. of English, N.B.U., for their time to time suggestion that I got in the preparation of the thesis.

No words are adequate to express my gratitude to the members of my family who have helped me a lot to complete my work. I am equally grateful to the authorities of the N.B.U. Library, National Library, Kolkata, and of other libraries and institutes who permitted me to utilise the relevant books and studies.

PREFACE

The title of the present thesis is 'Derozio's Poetry: A Response to Bengal Renaissance'. My aim in this thesis is to provide a systematic, coherent and intelligent study of the different facets of Bengal Renaissance and to show the impact of Bengal Renaissance on the poems of Derozio.

An analysis of the poems of Derozio shows that his poems reflect almost all the characteristic features of Bengal Renaissance. Derozio initiated the struggle against the religious fundamentalism through his poetry. His relentless quest for Truth and Reason is unfolded in literary outputs and other activities. The note of the spirit of patriotism and the ideal of humanism is to be found in Derozio's poetry. He firmly believed that service to man irrespective of caste, colour, creed and religion is of supreme value. In this world man is the ultimate truth.

It can be said that the poems of Derozio are historically important because they are tinged with the characteristic features of the Renaissance movement, e.g., glorification of man, the idea of independence of man, the spread of the frontiers of human knowledge based on reason and truth, the evaluation of love in the true perspective of human relationship, patriotism and humanism. Thus Derozio's poetry stands the taste of time in its appeal to the readers. Being a Eurasian he thought of Indian's misery under the British rule and wanted to bring back an awareness of India's past glory and grandeur.

The present study is an attempt to trace the spirit of Bengal Renaissance in 'The Fakir of Jungheera', in the main, and in other poems of Derozio, in general. The study is submitted as a thesis for the Doctoral Degree to the University of North Bengal.

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.

Chapter – II

BENGAL RENAISSANCE:

A. Introduction

The impact of British rule in India, bourgeois economy and modern Western Culture was felt first in Bengal and produced an awakening known usually as 'the Bengal Renaissance'. It was a sort of socio-cultural movement in Bengal. The Education policy of the East India Company after the Charter Act of 1813 was considerably influenced by this socio-cultural movement. Bengal's awareness of the changing world was more developed than and ahead of that of the rest of India. In the broad family of people, which constitutes India, the recognition of the distinctiveness of the Bengalis has been in modern times bound up with the appreciation of this flowering of social, religious, literary and political activities in Bengal. The appreciation was possible because Bengal witnessed first the socio-cultural throbbing caused by the interaction of the contact of two cultures-the West and the East. This interaction infuses new learnings into the minds of the people towards society, religion, politics and culture. Such a situation of awakening started with Bengal, the centre of the then commerce and culture of the Government of India. Bengal was then extremely influenced by the West in terms of English language and culture, in the main. The last flickering of the Orient culture was still visible. Thus the contact of these two cultures produced a new cultural milieu that signalled a discernible change in almost every aspect of life in Bengal.

Renaissance, a fruit of the union of the two cultures-the West and the East, signalled a sea-change in almost all the spheres of life. The spirit of Renaissance was keenly felt in the rise of nationalism in Bengal, in the interest evoked in Western literature, philosophy and values, in the emergence of secular humanism, in accepting the cult of reason and rationality, in developing an intellectual outlook, in the fight against social

prejudices, superstitions, cant and hypocrisy and acceptance of modern learning and in the quest for Truth. It (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. Renaissance was also marked by attempts to reorient her education through a blending of the old and the new and to renovate her society by the purging of those evils and anomalies which had crept into it and accumulated there under various adverse influences through succeeding ages, particularly in the eighteenth century.

The period of Renaissance that covers in its sweep in Bengal is very broad. It starts from the early part of the nineteenth century and ends in the early part of the twentieth century. The period chosen by the researcher is from 1815 to 1833. This period may be lengthened at both extremes by a few years for maintaining a link with the origin of Renaissance. The year 1815 marks the settlement of Raja Rammohun Roy in Calcutta. Since then he took up seriously his life's work that heralded the dawn of change in the tradition-bound society of Bengal in particular, and India, in general. He died in England in 1833. In the same period Henry Louis Vivian Derozio (1809-1831) did his revolutionary deeds and published his works and contributed considerably to the growth of Renaissance in the later period with all its splendour and strength.

Derozio was born on 18th April, 1809. He was admitted to Dharmatala Academy of David Drummond, a noted Scottish teacher under whose dynamic personality his mind was moulded with Western Culture. He studied there up to 1823. Later he joined Hindu College as a teacher in 1827 and served there up to 1831. In class and outside the class he taught the students to think freely and rationally. Derozio attempted to foster in the students a taste in literature, taught the evil effects of idolatry and superstitions and thus formed their moral conceptions. He was ultimately forced to resign from Hindu College on the ground of misguiding the students. Derozio was steeped in the light of new education which shocked the conservatives beyond measure. He made India's aspirations his own and bemoaned its fallen state. Derozio is

called modern India's first patriot who gave expression to the spirit of patriotism in his poetry. For the first time he contemplated an intellectual Renaissance for an ancient civilization through new perception. He exalted reason as an instrument of progress.

By the end of the eighteenth century, Bengal witnessed in her social and cultural history a developing confrontation between the dark nadir of a progressive decline and a gradual blazing forth of a new light from the West. Eighteenth century may be termed as the Dark Age of Bengal. Soumendranth Tagore thus graphically depicts this period of Bengal's history. "It was indeed the darkest period in modern Indian history. Old society and polity had crumbled and the ruins of an old social order lay scattered on all sides. As yet there was no force which could clear the debris and there was no attempt made to rebuild on the ancient foundations. Dead traditions, fossilized customs and irrational bigotry had choked the life-stream of the nation, knowledge had been lost. It was a period of unrelenting darkness"¹ K. R. Srinivas Iyengar is of the same opinion: "India during the seventeenth and more specially in the eighteenth century presented the spectacle of decay and misery unimaginable..... vitality and the zest for life were at a vanishing point, spirituality glowed, but in fitful embers, and all intellectual activity was nearly at a standstill. By the end of the eighteenth century, India was to all appearance a Wasteland."² Nemai Sadhan Bose, likewise, remarks, "Actually the eighteenth century, particularly the later half of it, was one of the darkest ages in the long and eventful history of India."³ A survey of the socio-economic, religious and political condition of that age is necessary to understand thoroughly the development of the nineteenth century Bengal Renaissance.

B. Background

With the decline of the Mughal Empire India lost her political unity. The later Mughals were weak and unworthy rulers who governed only in name. The actual power was usurped by the nobles who, taking advantage of the weak rulers, had become very powerful. In the words of H. M. Williams, "At the time of the East India Company's incursion, the Mughal Empire was in

disarray and Hindu culture had sunk to a low level. There was not only a vacuum of power but a vacuum of culture."⁴ The nobles were engaged in all sorts of conspiracies, intrigues and other nefarious activities. The nobles cared only for self-aggrandizement. The French traveller-Jean Law stated in 1759, "I have travelled everywhere from Bengal to Delhi, but nowhere have I found anything from anyone except oppression of the poor and plundering of wayfarers.... The Indian nobles are a set of disorderly inconsistent blockheads, who exist solely for ruining a world of people."⁵

Such a state of affairs was not perhaps altogether new in the history of India. But there was a new factor that made a great difference between the past and the present situation. This new factor was the presence of the foreign traders, particularly the English, who took full advantage of the internal disunion and disorder to consolidate their authority and influence in the establishment of an empire in India. The Battle of Plassey in 1757 provided the English with an unexpected opportunity to get a firm hold in Bengal. The foundation of the future British Empire India was laid without any opposition worth the name. It is not very difficult to explain this rather strange phenomenon. As Dr. R. C. Majumdar has pointed out, "There was no Indian but only Bengalis, Hindustanis, Sikhs, Rajputs and Marathas. The people did not look beyond the horizon of their province. In those days there was no conception of India as a country."⁶

The outcome of the Battle of Plassey marked the beginning of the economic ruin of Indian industries. The causes of this economic ruin were taking over the Diwani of the Company in 1765: the fortunes acquired by the company's servants, the abuse of Dastaks i.e. the company's permits for external trade, and the virtual monopoly enjoyed by the company in matters of trade and manufacturing etc. To this was added the competition of English traders and manufacturers enjoying the fruits of industrialism and capitalism. They were further aided by British legislations and restriction.

The Permanent Settlement of Bengal (1793) ushered in a new era in the socio-economic history of Bengal. With the disappearance of indigenous

industries the people became interested in acquiring landed property. The administration of Lord Cornwallis gave an impetus to this direction and native capital was henceforth invested in land. Consequently, there grew up a class of Zamindars possessing great wealth and influence. Some of them also began to take interest in commercial enterprises. The land system, however, became very complex and the abuses of the Permanent Settlement made the condition of the ryots miserable. Not only the landed aristocracy but also the company's oppressive system of administration and the activities of the English community were responsible for the decline of agriculture in Bengal.

There was another side of the picture. In Bengal the weaver class, with the disappearance of the weaving industry, was turned into the class of cultivators. This created a problem of unemployment among the landless peasants. Poverty and decadence became widespread. The village money-lenders came to occupy an important position in the rural economy of the country. Increase in population made the situation worse. Famine visited the country frequently. Burglary, robbery and other criminal activities were on the increase. The Government was indifferent to the sad plight of ryots. On the contrary, even the police system, being inadequate, failed utterly to maintain peace and order in the country. Acts of cruelty and violence and the general standard of morality had gone down so much that such acts were neither punished nor even condemned. Lord Cornwallis wrote to one of his friends, "Every native of Hindustan is (I really believe) corrupt."⁷ In 1792 Charles Grant described the Bengalis as inferior to the most backward classes in Europe. Even a man like William Carey, who had genuine affection for Bengal, wrote in 1794 that the Hindus were "literally sunk into the dregs of vice."⁸ and were immersed in impurity. In spite of this general decay and degeneration that started, the character of the people at large was not totally vitiated. Bishop Heber, fully aware of the general condemnation of the people of Bengal, by his fellow missionaries and other foreigners, had a liking for the Bengalis. He wrote, "On the whole they are a lovely, intelligent and interesting people."⁹ R. Richards, who lived in India for a period of twenty three years and knew Indians intimately, wrote that they possessed "the most amiable virtues", and were, "capable of all the qualities that can adorn the human mind."¹⁰ We also

have the testimony of Raja Rammuhan Roy who was of the opinion that the peasants and villagers who lived away from the big towns and urban areas, were "as innocent, temperate and moral in their conduct as the people of any country whatsoever."¹¹

Another important result of the East India Company's rule was the birth of a rich trading class in Bengal when the British officers were helped and guided in their works by the Indian, e.g. "Banians", "Sarker", "Munshi" or "Khajanchis". In the absence of a modern banking system the "Banians" played a vital role in the commercial life of the metropolis. The rapid growth of mercantile community, having close link with the European merchants, was a far-reaching phenomenon in the socio-economic history of Bengal. With increasing contact with European merchants as well as Western ideas the need for English Education was being increasingly felt. The Western impact and the new knowledge gave birth to an educated middle class-the intelligentsia, destined to spearhead the Renaissance of the nineteenth century.

The system of education was utterly deplorable. The study of the Sanskrit language, sacred literature or ancient classics had practically become extinct. There were only "Tols", "Maktabs" and "Pathsalas" which taught rudimentary Sanskrit, Persian, Arabic and elementary mathematics for practical use in daily life. The vernacular literature had a little progress. Bengali prose was not yet known in the literary circle. The literature was of low standard. However, according to R. K. Datta, it is wrong to condemn the prevailing system of education as "atrocious and abominable."¹² He holds, "It (the prevailing education) inculcated into the minds of the students "the higher virtues of man."¹³ But there was no escape from the hard fact that education in India, both in its contents and method, had deteriorated immeasurably from the lofty standard of the past. As Dr. R. C. Mujumdar has observed, "While the world outside had made rapid progress in different branches of secular learning during the preceding two hundred years, India practically stood still where it was six hundred years ago."¹⁴ The "intellectual stagnation"¹⁵ was evident in all spheres of life in India.

Decay of knowledge and learning coupled with social degeneration helped the extensive spread of blind superstition and in human social customs. Polygamy, early marriage, satee-rites, killing of female children, throwing of the first child into the holy rivers etc, were some of the most dreadful and inhuman practices performed in different parts of the country in varying degrees. The degeneration was manifest in the terrible suffering and social fetters tied with the womenfolk. In the name of "Kulinism" thousands of girls' lives were totally blasted. William Ward wrote that Kulinism had degraded into "a state of monstrous polygamy"¹⁶ unparalleled in the history of human depravity. Among other evils was the existence of slavery in various parts of the country. Calcutta was one of the slave-markets till the early period of the nineteenth century and it was one of the sources of revenue of the East India Company in 1752. The British Parliament abolished slave trade in 1807 and the practice gradually declined in the first half of the nineteenth century. Besides government regulations, growth and strengthening of reform and humanitarian movements helped to put an end to slavery.

From the journals of the nineteenth Century we get a sordid picture of the socio-religious condition of Calcutta at the time when Raja Rammohun Roy came to settle down there. Sacrificial rites, outward show, lavishness and exuberance marked religious festivals and the people remained contented with such things. They became intellectually backward. The study of the Vedas and the Upanishads had become almost extinct. Superstition and irrational orthodoxy had taken the place of reasoning. None could even dare to raise a voice against social and religious abuses.

Morality and moral standards reached their lowest ebb. So the evil practices went on unabated. In the name of religion many obnoxious practices and objectionable rites were prevalent in the country. The priestly class had strong hold on the society and to strengthen and perpetuate it they encouraged superstitious and wasteful rites and ceremonies. The Christian missionaries vehemently attacked the Hindu religion in order to prove the superiority of their own faith. These attacks were sometimes motivated and biased but they served a useful purpose. They roused the people from their

slumber and lethargy and stirred them up to thinking and thus helped to end their immobility.

The picture of the political, economic and socio-religious condition of the later part of the eighteenth century and the early part of the nineteenth century leaves the impression that Bengal presented a very dismal picture. The decline and degeneration was sadly reflected in every sphere of life. Rabindranath Tagore described the situation in these words. "Her life was dried up, and it showed all those dead and forgotten customs, superstitions and prejudices, all the ignorance and fear, all feuds, all bitterness and separateness, all unreasonable remoteness from the wide world."¹⁷ But it was not an actual death. As another scholar has suggested, "There had been an increase of feebleness, but not absolute inanition."¹⁸ In the midst of general confusion, social and cultural degeneration, a faint but perceptible stream of culture still flowed in certain parts of Bengal, especially in Nadia, patronized by its ruler, Maharaja Krishna Chandra, Nadia, described as the "Oxford of the province"^{19*} was a seat of Sanskrit learning, a centre of intellectual development and an assemblage of men of letters representing various branches of Indian religion and philosophy. Hindu Society, largely dictated and directed by so-called religious injunction and observances, was almost suffocating. Yet it received its sustenance from what little was left of the dominant humanitarian aspect of Hindu religious life. Religion was still the chief source of inspiration to the ordinary Hindus for charities and endowments. The old simple faith had a living "hold on the people and, as N. K. Singha observes", "this simplicity and piety were in rural areas."²⁰

C. Contributory Factors

1. The growth of Calcutta as a metropolis and the rise of the new middle class: The English educated intelligentsia help to bring about a transformation in Bengal. The introduction and spread of English education was one of the potent contributing factors behind the Indian awakening. A new era began with the establishment of British rule, the introduction of English education and growing contact with the West and Western thought that came through different channels – the teaching of Bacon, Locke, Voltaire,

Newton, Burke, Bentham, Mill and others. With gradual stabilization of the Company rule in Bengal, the early period of hesitancy and vacillation, indifference and non-interference in the internal affairs of the people gave way to a policy of cautious and calculated interest which was backed by the growth of a progressive public opinion in the country. Besides, there was another very important factor-inspiration from true ancient traditions and the country's own glorious past. The impact of the West and the urge from within were compiled to produce startling results. In the words of Jadu Nath Sarkar, "The Indian Renaissance was possible only because a principle was discovered by which India could throw herself into the full current of modern civilization in the outer world without totally discarding her past. She could approach the temple of modern art and science not as a naked beggar, not as an utter alien, but as a backward and present impoverished country."²¹

2. Revival of Oriental Learning: Among the most significant developments that took place in the last quarter of the eighteenth and early nineteenth century, with a direct bearing on the awakening of the country, were the revival of oriental learning, growth of Bengali Language and increasing urge for English education. Warren Hastings was very interested in the revival of oriental learning and he patronized many men of letters including Nathaniel Brassey Halhed (1750-1836) and Charles Wilkins Halhed (1750-1836), an able scholar who came to Bengal as a civilian and devoted himself to the Bengali language. His most important contribution was his 'Grammar of the Bengali Language in English which was published in 1778. This was one of the earliest efforts to study the language in a scientific way.

Wilkins came to Bengal in 1770 as a writer in the service of the East India Company. He co-operated with Sir William Jones in the foundation of the Asiatic society in 1784 and he made valuable contribution to the Asiatic Researches. The foundation of the Asiatic Society in 1784 was a landmark in the cultural history of the country. From 1839 it became known as the Asiatic Society of Bengal. A revival of interest in Indian culture and tradition and a growing awareness of India's own rich heritage was one of the salient features of the Indian awakening. For an awakening of interest and curiosity in

their own past, the Asiatic Society founded by Sri William Jones played a conspicuous role. The object of the society was to enquire into the history, antiquities, Arts, Science and Literature of Asia. Indians could not become members of the society till 1829. The publications of the Society created a stir in educated circles and helped the birth and growth of Indology, the finest fruit of which was Rajendralal Mitra, 'the man who raised studies in Indian culture to a scientific status.'²² With great emphasis on rational knowledge the Asiatic Society created all over Europe an interest in the culture and wisdom of the east and in that sense it was "the real mother of all orientalist association which were formed in Europe during the first half of the nineteenth century."²³

3. The Activities of the Christian Missionaries: The Renaissance of the nineteenth century was very closely interlinked with the development of Bengali language and literature and the latter, in turn, was deeply indebted to the Serampore Mission and the Fort William College, both of which were founded in the year 1800.

Missionary activities in Bengal are usually taken to have started from November 1793, with the arrival of the famous missionary William Carey (1761-1834) in Calcutta. Carey along with Marshman and Ward is regarded as the pioneer of the missionary movement in Bengal. On January 10, 1800 the Serampore Mission was founded. This was the beginning of a new era in the history of missionary activities in India which earned for the Serampore Mission of the honorific, "The Cradle of Modern Mission."²⁴

The Missionaries were anxious to translate the Christian scriptures into Vernacular languages of India as it was essential to their ultimate goal of converting the vast multitude of people to Christianity. Before he came to Singapore, Carey had also brought with him an old press he had bought and in February 1801 the New Testament was first published in Bengali. By translating the holy Bible, by publishing the books on various subjects, by reprinting old Bengali Verses and by approaching the people in simple language, the missionaries gave an impetus to Bengali, particularly to the growth of its prose literature. They made a systematic study of the subject



and evolved "a colloquial prose style intelligible to the masses."²⁵

The Missionaries put emphasis on the study of Sanskrit only to serve their purpose. Their main object was to challenge the very citadel of Hinduism i.e. to study and expose the fallacies of the Sacred Hindu texts all of which were in Sanskrit. They translated, edited and published many Sanskrit books which included Bopdeva's 'Mugdhobodh'. 'The Amar Kosa' (edited by Colebrooke), 'Valmki Ramayana' (In four volumes edited and translated by Marshman and Carey). The publication of such works drew the attention of the people to their ancient culture and heritage and helped the revival of Oriental learning.

Relentless missionary crusade against Hindu religion, Society, Customs and Practices was proving a blessing in disguise. A small section of people began to feel that everything was not right with Hindu religion and Society. Moreover, Missionary publication of books on various topics such as History, Geography, Zoology, General knowledge etc. were creating people's interest in the outer world and were enlarging the horizon of their knowledge. This immensely helped to correct the prevailing exclusiveness and the sense of self-satisfaction. In this sphere an important part was played by the Missionary Journals, viz, the English Monthly, 'Friend of India' (1818), the Bengali monthly 'Digdarshan' (1818), and the Bengali weekly 'Samachar Darpan' (1818). These journals published topics of wide interest and the 'Digdarshan' and 'the Samachar Darpan' produced a new kind of Bengali prose literature, widened the people's knowledge and "helped the diffusion of liberal and modern ideas on a wide basis".²⁶ 'the Samachar Darpan', in view of its great popularity among the Bengali youth, was described as "an adult school master".²⁷ The net result of all these missionary activities was that the Bengalis became curious and interested in the wider world. A spirit of self criticism developed and they began to look backward for lessons and inspirations and looked forward to a future of progress and achievement. Existing religion, society, social norms and practices, sense of values were re-examined and re-assured. These were happy indications of a new life in the making.

Besides literature, the missionaries made significant contribution to two other fields—English Education and Social Reform. The pioneering role of the Christian missionaries in the field of education in India was readily and widely acknowledged in contemporary newspapers and journals. In 1816 the Serampore Mission published a document entitled 'Hints Relative to Native Education' which was rightly described as "the first organized plan for the establishment of school devised in India".²⁸ It was emphasized that imparting efficient instruction to any people in a foreign language was 'completely fallacious'.²⁹ To materialize the plan, the Serampore mission set up schools in various parts of the state including rural and backward areas.

The contribution of the Missionaries to the growth of women's education was also significant. Long before the establishment of the Hindu College in 1817, a landmark in the history of new Education in Bengal, many missionary institutions laid the foundation of English education in Bengal. They had played a similar role in the field of women's education before the 'Hindu Balika Vidyalaya' was founded in 1849 on the initiative of John Drinkwater Bethune and Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar.

The Christian missionaries gave a major impetus to the social reform movements in the nineteenth century. From the very beginning of the nineteenth century the Serampore missionaries led by Carey had made a move against the dreadful practice of Satee and drew the attention of the government to ban it. Since 1804 the missionary papers and journals continued to lend support to the marriage of Widows. Carey also raised his voice against the inhuman treatment of lepers being burnt alive. However, missionaries have credited with the beginning of social wisdom among the Indians in the nineteenth century. They also set up examples in organizing charitable activities in India.

An outcome of administrative necessity, the Fort William College was founded in November 1800. It made an important contribution to the cultural life of Nineteenth century Bengal, especially in the field of literature. The first two decades were the golden years of the college. The Fort William College

was founded in Calcutta for training young English civilians. The Governor General Wellesley himself became the patron and visitor of college and posts of professors were created in different subjects. The Fort William college published books on numerous subjects. The general publications of the college had considerable importance. The college in a way became a centre of Oriental learning and culture and gave stimulus to the production of literature in Bengali. Within a few years of its foundation the Fort William College became 'a veritable laboratory where Europeans and Asians worked out new transliteration schemes, and compiled dictionaries in languages relatively unknown in Europe'.³⁰ The college also lent financial support for the implementation of some of the original schemes of William Jones and facilitated the revitalization of the Asiatic Society. Dr. David Kopt has asserted that "the close co-operation between the Fort William College and the Asiatic Society and the scholars attached to these two intuitions helped the promotion of orientalism."³¹

The Serampore mission partly owed its prosperity and expansion to the Fort William College. William Carey was the link between the two institutions. In 1801 he was appointed Professor of Bengali and Sanskrit in the Fort William College. As a professor of Bengali Carey made important contribution to Bengali language and literature. In 1802 Carey considered the Fort William College as an institution of "Public Utility" which was "to be of the most essential benefit to the country, by furnishing the company's servants with knowledge of the languages and manners of India".³² The Fort William College gave Bengali language its grammar and dictionary and also supplied it with book for a preliminary study. Valuable masterpieces of Oriental learning were recovered and preserved in the college library where some of them were edited and published by noted Orientalists. "The college made printing and publishing in the classical and vernacular languages possible in this country in a wide scale. A number of printing press such as the Serampore Mission Press, the Hindustanee Press, the Persian Press and the Sanskrit Press owed their origin and survival to the patronage of the Fort William College".³³

S. K. De has characterised the Fort William college as a "seminary of Western learning in an Eastern dress",³⁴ which helped the diffusion of Western ideas through the medium of the Vernacular. Really the college led a major share in the creation of new environment and the transmission of Orientalistic ideals among the intelligentsia.

The Foundation of the Asiatic Society, the Serampore Mission and the Fort William College and the resulting impact prepared the ground for the inauguration of a new epoch. The Indians with their rich heritage had slipped into mire. But they were already showing signs of recovery. They only needed a guiding hand, a man of vision to come back to light and awake the slumbering class:

4. The Appearance of Raja Rammohun Roy (1772-1833): The appearance of Raja Rammohun Roy, a man of vision of New India, was like a silver lining in the dark sky of Bengal. According to Rabindranath, "He was born at a time when our country having lost its link with the inmost truths of its being, struggled under a crushing load of unreason, in abject slavery to circumstance. In social usage, in politics, in the realm of religion and art, we had entered the zone of uncreative habit, of decadent tradition, and ceased to exercise our humanity."³⁵ Keenly conscious of this degeneration, Rammohun attempted to put an end to the state affairs that was leading the country to total disaster. His activities embraced various spheres of life and everywhere he paved a new way for the future generation of Indians to follow.

The central characteristics in the life and thought of Rammohun Roy were his keen consciousness of the stagnant, degraded and corrupt state into which our society had fallen, his deep love of the people which sought their all-round regeneration, his critical appreciation of the value of modern culture and the ancient wisdom of the East alike, and his untiring many-sided efforts in fighting for improving conditions around him.

In his outlook, Rammohun worked out a synthesis of the best thought of the East and the West. As a young man at Benaras, he had studied the

traditional Sanskrit culture. At Patna he had delved deep in Persian and Arabic lore. During his travels in distant regions, in plains as well as in hilly lands, he had acquainted himself with various provincial cultures and even Tibetan Buddhism and Jainism.

Later in life he mastered English thought and Western Culture. He was quite at home with Christian religious literature and earned the esteem of British and American Unitarians. Western radicals like Bentham and Roscoe greeted him as an equal rally. French savants honoured him. And all the time, Rammohun was no thinker shut up in his own speculations, but a champion of his people, engaged in the daily toil of advancing their conditions with an unfaltering vision of their bright modern destiny.

Rammohun Roy protested against the prevalent perversions of the Hindu religion. Between 1815 and 1817, he published the Bengali translation of the authoritative Vedanta together with an abridgement. He also translated five of the principal Upanishads, to demonstrate to the general public that the Hindu-scriptures themselves preached monotheism. He was plunged, in consequence, in a great controversy with the orthodox pandits like Sankar Shastri, Mrityunjay Vidyalkar and Subramanya Shastri, between 1817 and 1820, and published a series of polemical tracts in which he very ably defended his ground. Rammohun pronounced a scathing criticism of priestcraft which inculcated a superstitious idol-workshop for the masses and discouraged translation of the scriptures. He pointed out that unthinking idolatry had brought about degradation in the character of the common people so that he felt it his duty to rescue them from imposition and servitude, and promote their comfort and happiness. He stressed rationality and exposed the logical absurdities of idol worship which destroys the texture of society and hinders moral reformation. Any particular scripture, he thought, was liable to error and there was an inherent human right to depart from tradition, especially if tradition was "leading directly to immorality and destruction of social comforts".³⁶ Such was the memorable message of the pioneer of the renaissance in India.

5. Liberal Reinterpretation of Christianity: The new liberalism of Rammohun was not confined to a reassertion of Hindu theism. It spread also to his examination of the Christian religion and tradition which had begun to penetrate into our country.

In 1820, he published his Precepts of Jesus in which he carefully separated the moral message of Christ from the specific Christian doctrines and the reliance on the miracle stories. The moral teaching of Christianity, he said, had a far greater appeal than its metaphysical theology. The missionaries were at once in arms against the daring heathen. Rammohun protested against the missionary practice of stressing dogmas and mysteries foreign to the people, their habit of dwelling more on the nature of Christ than on his gospel of love which was the main strength of their religion.

In his 'Brahmanical Magazine' (1821-23), he displayed his deep love for the best traditions of India and on behalf of his country protested against encroachment upon the rights of her poor, timid, and humble inhabitants by proselytizing Christian missionaries who instead of relying on reasonable arguments fell back on ridiculing the native religions and on holding out worldly inducements to converts.

Rammohun was no enemy of Christianity in its best sense which he believed to be good influence on his countrymen. He had assisted some of the Serampore Missionaries in the Bengali translations of the Gospel. But his rational modern mind refused to put up with metaphysical subtleties of missionary preaching and the unfairness in their propaganda.

Rammohun was not satisfied with the discussions of the 'Atmiya Sabha' or the occasional Unitarian services. So he and his followers organized new theistic society, the 'Brahma Sabha' on 20th August, 1828. A regular church was established on January 23, 1830 as the culmination of Rammohun's thought, in the Trust Deed of which were defined the first principles of the famous Brahma movement which worked like a leaven in the life of Bengal for a long time.

Rammohun was not merely a philosopher, critic or religious reformer. He was a stern fighter against social evils. This is illustrated by his historic campaign against the inhuman custom of satee. Rammohun came out in firey denunciation of this murderous practice in Bengal. He quoted the authority of the best religious books against the custom of satee, but coupled this with an appeal to reason and good sense of the community. He combined a spirited defence of the maligned Hindu Womanhood with a tremendous attack on the lack of compassion on the part of the menfolk.

When William Bentinck at last suppressed the rite on 4th December, 1829 in the teeth of Orthodox protests, it was Rammohun who strengthened the hands of the government by organizing a deputation signed by 300 Hindus and by publishing 'Abstract of Arguments' in 1830. Also a petition to Parliament was arranged by him to prevent any repeal of Bentinck's order.

Rammohun Roy was one of the main advocates of English education in India which caused Renaissance. Rammohun was an active force behind opening Hindu college on 20 January, 1817, but for opposition from influential Orthodox Hindus he was excluded from the college committee. Then he helped to establish Anglo-Hindu school where western science, philosophy and literature were taught. He set up a Vedanta college in 1825 where he tried to combine the teaching of oriental learning with western arts and sciences. He appealed in 1823 to the church of Scotland Assembly to send out competent teachers to spread English education in India. As a result of this move Dr. Alexander Duff, the famous missionary educationist, came forward to open the Scottish educational mission in Bengal in 1830. Duff got the influential backing of Rammohun. In his well-known letter to Lord Amherst on 11 December, 1823 he protested against the proposed foundation of a Sanskrit College and pleaded for a government policy of introducing Western education. This practically touched off the historic controversy between the Anglicists and the Orientalists on the question of educational policy to be roused by the government. The stand taken by Rammohun and his severe criticism of the prevailing system of education caused indignation among the majority of the Hindus. But Rammohun, with his great foresight, was preparing

the path of Western education along modern lines which was accepted by the government in 1835.

Rammohun was also one of the makers of Bengali prose. William Carey had already started work in this field. Rammohun came forward as a major force. From 1815, his translation, introductions and tracts, with their clarity and vigour of expression, gave a new dignity to Bengali prose and established its claim as a vehicle of elegant expression in serious subjects. Rammohun's polemics in Bengali were permeated with his care for the enlightenment of the general public and his newspaper articles had the same educative value. Among the papers that he used for enlightening the people was the Bengali weekly Sambad Koumadi. It ventilated public grievances and supported movers aimed at securing social welfare and progress. In December 1830 a radical London Journal paid glowing compliments to the 'Sambad Koumadi' describing it as "The Morning chronicle of India, advocating freedom, civil and religious, opposed to corruption and tyranny and labouring..... effectively and extensively, to eradicate the idolatrous rites of the Brahmins, and to awaken the Hindoos to a sense of degeneration and misery into which they have plunged".³⁷

Inspired with new ideals of life Rammohun was breaking away from the tradition of passivity congenial to feudal times. He held that his movement was reviving public interest in the Vedanta which was prompted by his desire to promote the comfort of the people and to unite the different groups into which society had split up. He considered the forms of direct worship as liberation from priestly tyranny and a means of realization of human brotherhood. He protested against the evil effects of idolatry on the structure of society and against the inconveniences of the caste system, which has been the source of the want of unity among Indian people. He translated the 'Bajra Suchi' in 1827, a text highly critical of the caste system, and in a letter of 1828 he held that caste had deprived people of patriotic feeling and that religious reform was necessary for the sake of their political advantage and social comfort because the present system of religion is not well calculated to promote their political interest.

Rammohun figured in the first constitutional agitations in our country. We find him drawing up a memorial to the Supreme Court and a petition to the King-in-Council against the press conference of 1823 in which he defended liberty of free expression of opinion. He protested against the discrimination involved in the Jury Act of 1827 and against government attempts to tax rent free lands in 1830. He was connected with the agitation on the eve of the revision of the East India Company's trading rights and the removal of heavy export duties. On behalf of the Delhi Emperor during his dispute with the company, he appealed to British national faith and sense of justice and also to world opinion at large.

He was a fearless champion of justice. In a tract on the Ancient of the Females (1822), he denounced the contemporary legal dependence of widowed mother and unmarried or widow daughters on their menfolk and demanded property rights for women. He also attacked the practice of polygamy. We find him defending free alienability of property in another tract 'Rights of Hindus over Ancestral property' in 1813. In England in 1831, he submitted to parliament communications on the revenue and the judicial systems, the condition of the ryots and Indian affairs in general. We find him protesting against miserable condition of the peasants, the misrule of the landlords. He also demanded a fixed rent roll, a permanent settlement for the actual cultivators and a peasant militia. He put forward a programme of administrative reforms which were to become famous in Indian constitutional agitation and included items like Indianisation of the services, separation of the executive from the judiciary and trial by jury.

Rammohun was keenly interested in international affairs and his understanding of and affinity with progressive movements is remarkable. In the twenties of the nineteenth century we find his newspapers regularly discussing current problems like the Chinese question, the struggle in Greece, and the miseries of Ireland under the regime of absentee landlordism. His international links are shown vividly in the fact that a book in Spanish with the new constitution in it was dedicated to him. He could think and talk of nothing else when he heard of the July Revolution in France in

1830. On his way to England at Cape Town, he insisted on visiting French frigates flying the revolutionary tricolour flag though he had been temporarily lamed by an accident.

Rammohun Roy's associates played a pioneering role in bringing about Renaissance in Bengal. David Hare, who came to Calcutta in 1800 as a watchmaker, devoted his life to spread modern education. With the stabilization of British rule in Bengal, a demand for education on western lines was growing up in the country. David Hare thought of organizing a lead on new lines from the Calcutta gentry. He got in touch with Rammohun and moved the chief Justice, Sir Hyde East, to initiate discussions in 1816 which led to the foundation of Hindu College in 1817. He also organized the School Book Society in 1817 to prepare and publish much-needed text books and the School Society in 1818 to establish schools of a new type and grant scholarships to deserving poor boys. The School Society took keen interest in women education in the country and agitated for it. This attracted the attention of the British and Foreign School Society which sent out Miss Cooke in 1821 who organized ten girls' schools with the support of the Church Missionary Society.

Rammohun Roy's another eminent associate was Dwarkanath Tagore who was afterwards called the prince. He represented the new aristocracy linked to business. Dwarkanath was an ally of Rammohun whose associates also included other aristocrats like Prasanna Kumar Tagore who founded the 'Reformer' in 1831 and became an eminent lawyer and also middle class men like Chandra Sekhar Deb and Tarachand Chakraborty, the first secretary of the 'Brahma Sabha'.

Rammohun Roy faced a lot of opposition in his daring steps to reform the Hindu society which paved the path of Renaissance. His heterodoxy aroused vehement protest and a sharp reaction was marked against him. In his own village home he was ostracised by neighbours. The Orthodox group forced him out of the Hindu College Committee. He was thus forced by public opinion to be more cautious.

The Orthodox pandits in their controversy with 'heretic' found their great patron in Radhakanta Deb, the scion of the House of Sobbabazar and the recognised chief of Orthodox society. He was associated with the reactionary petition in 1829 against the suppression of the satee rite in 1830; he was the leader of the Orthodox religious society, the 'Dharma Sabha' which was founded as a counterblast to the Brahma movement. Yet, Radhakanta Deb was not out and out a reactionary. He was a great benefactor of the fountain of Western learning, the Hindu College. He was a member of the school book society and one of the secretaries of the School society. He himself wrote book advocating women's education and was a steady supporter of the movement.

Rammohun Roy's other conservative critics were Gaurikanto Bhattacharya, Bhabani Charan Banerjee, Ramkamal Sen and Mrityunjoy Vidyalkar. Gaurikanto Bhattacharya was the author of a tract, Jnaanjan Sambad Chandrika. The conservative opposition to Rammohun was not blindly reactionary. Yet the conservatives missed the epoch marking significance of the lifework of Rammohun.

In his own life Rammohun Roy experienced the genesis of trend of ultraradicalism which culminated in the name of the 'Young Bengal Movement'. It sprang from the precincts of the Hindu College and created consternation for a period and Rammohun himself was out of sympathy with it. Arising out of the tradition of the French Revolution and English radicalism, this movement had a distinct element of free thought in it which offended Rammohun's sense of decency and theistic idealism. The inspiration of Young Bengal came from one of the important figures in the history of Bengal – an Anglo Indian, Derozio.

Derozio was something of a prodigy. He was educated at one of the private schools of the day, in the Dharmatala section of the city. The school was run by a Scotsman, David Drummond, who had something of a reputation of a poet, scholar and a free thinker. From him apparently the young Derozio got the intoxicating freedom urge of the French revolution, and

a passion for freedom of thought and liberation from the dead weight of all tradition possessed his soul. Even while in his teens, Derozio blossomed out as a poet. Later he composed some sonnets bearing patriotic note. 'The Fakir of Jhungheera' 'the Magnum Opus' of Derozio epitomizes the new perceptions of education and thought that heralded the dawn of Renaissance in Bengal. Appointed as a teacher of the Hindu College in May, 1826, he, like a magnet, at once drew to himself a host of boys in the upper classes who began to adore him and drink deep in the fountain of free thought.

The best boys of the Hindu College rallied round Derozio who encouraged them (the best boys) to debate freely and question all authority. The pupils of the college started ridiculing old traditions, defied the social and religious rites, demanded education for women. In order to flaunt their independence the pupils of the college indulged in wine – drinking and beef taking. The college authorities removed Derozio on 25 April, 1831. Derozio died of cholera before the year was out, but his memory remained green in the hearts of his he loved disciples.

Derozio's followers came to be known as 'Young Bengal'. Some Derozians startled the people of Calcutta by embracing Christianity. Mahesh Chandra Ghosh and Krishna Mohan Banerje announced their conversion in 1832.

The Derozians created a sensation but their stand lacked much positive content. They failed to develop a definite progressive ideology. They were unable to attract new adherents from wider circles. They made some mark in their day which did not leave any lasting impact on the society.

Bengal Renaissance has been essentially a matter of the spirit that produced in its effect remarkable changes in the different spheres of life. This new spirit manifests itself brilliantly in cultural aspect. It vitalized the new spirit of Renaissance in Bengal through the medium of English education.

At the end of the eighteenth century learning and education were in deplorable state. Three types of educational institution --- 'Tols' 'Madrasahs' and 'Pathsalas' and 'Maktabs' --- were in sight. The 'Tols' were the centres of Hindu intellectuals and Hindu learning, the 'Madrasahs' were the centres of Islamic education and the 'Maktabs' emphasized on the teachings of the Holy Koran, completely neglecting the study of arithmetic, the vernacular and any other useful knowledge. Original thinking and aptitude for research were hardly evident in these institutions. Reverence for the past overwhelmed the present outlook and this retarded the growth of education.

Though the English came to India long ago there had been no cultural contact between the Indians and the Englishmen until the last quarter of the eighteenth century, because the East Indian Company was not interested in the case of education in Bengal. Moreover, there was lack of education policy. The Christian missionaries were pioneers in the field of education in Bengal. Their main object was propagation of Christianity and Conversion of the native population. In order to reach that end they were concerned to undertake educational enterprises within the company's territories. But in the 18th century the policy of the company's Government was not to meddle in anyway with the social and religious customs of the Indians. Missionary activities were not permitted within the company's jurisdiction for fear of possible adverse consequence. But evangelists in England continued their efforts to effect a change in the attitude and policy of the East India Company towards missionary activities in India and the question of evolving an education policy in general. Wilberforce and Grant had been trying to draw the British Parliament's attention to their cause. In Bengal, the urge for English education was visibly growing and by the beginning of the nineteenth century the study of the English language among the Indians in Bengal ceased to be confined to clerks and interpreters. There was a reason behind this urge for English education on the part of the Indians in Bengal. There was a growing consciousness in Bengal regarding the utility of English education. A section of enlightened Indians while conscious of the value of their own classical knowledge and deeply proficient in it, had also come to realize the need of linking their country men with the progressive cultural forces of the outside

world in a period of immense transition in history owing to new influences generated and transmitted by great Revolutions like the French Revolution of 1789 and the Industrial Revolution. They rightly felt the attitude of isolationism in a changing world. The creation of a new outlook was needed to enable her to meet the challenge of the new age. Sir Hyde East, the then Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, observed in his letter addressed on the 18th May 1816, to J. Harrington, a brother Judge then in England; "About the beginning of May, 1816 a Brahmin of Calcutta whom I knew, and who is well known for his intelligence and active interference among the principal Native inhabitants and also intimate with many of our own gentlemen of distinction, called upon me and informed me, that many of the leading Hindus were desirous of forming an establishment for the education of their children in liberal manner".³⁸ The immediate result of this spirit was the establishment on the 20th January, 1817, of the Hindu College of Calcutta, out of the which flowed for some years currents of revolutionary thoughts.

As regards knowledge of English, the students of the Hindu College made brilliant progress. While appearing at the examination held in the Calcutta Government House in January, 1828, the students of the Hindu College not only acquainted themselves creditably in subjects like history, geography, etc, but also recited from English dramatic literature with correct pronunciation to the surprise of all present there including Mr. Ballie, Dr. Wilson and some other eminent European ladies and gentlemen. Commenting on this a contemporary newspaper remarked: "Previously the Englishmen thought the Bengalis only learned a little English for clerkship, but now it was clear that they had begun to learn English like our own language".³⁹ The foundation of the Hindu College, in a sense, marked the beginning of liberal education in Bengal and of "organised instruction on modern times"⁴⁰. Referring to the spread of English ideas through English education the committee of Public Instruction in Bengal observed in its report for the Month of December, 1831, "The moral effect has been actually remarkable and an impatience of the restrictions of Hinduism and a disregard of its ceremonies are openly avowed by many more who outwardly conform to the practices of their countrymen. Another generation will probably witness a

very material alteration in the notions and feeling of the educated classes of the Hindu community of Calcutta".⁴¹ But in spite of such immediate disintegrating effects of the new learning, it is admitted that it opened before the Indian Youths the Vista of a new world and sowed in their minds the seeds of intellectual revolution pregnant with weighty consequences. English education helped to give access to English literature and philosophical and political thoughts relating to the international matters. It also gave rise to new thoughts and ideas in connection with social, political and economic matters. The Hindu College of Calcutta gave a new twist to the flow of English education in Bengal.

6. The Hindu College in Calcutta: The Hindu College played a pioneering role in spreading new idea of education, philosophy, science, history, geography, etc. An institution is very much moulded by the personality of its teachers and some famous teachers of this institution like Henry Louis Vivian Derozio and David Lester Richardson exercised a profound influence on their pupils. "Derozio came to be associated with the Hindu College as a teacher when its location was transferred to site on the north of the Goldighi early in May 1826"⁴² Writing in the Calcutta Review of 1881, Mr. Thomas Edward observed significantly, "The teaching of Derozio, the force of his winning manners, his wide knowledge of books, his own youth, which placed him in close sympathy with his pupils, his open, generous, chivalrous nature, his humour and playfulness, his fearless love of truth, his hatred of all that was unmanly and mean, his ardent love of India, evinced in his conversation and recorded in his lines:

My country, in thy day of glory past
A beauteous halo circled round thy brow

His social intercourse with his pupils produced an intellectual and moral revolution in Hindu Society since unparalleled"⁴³

The famous Scottish Missionary, Duff, wrote within a month after his arrival in India, "We fairly came in contact with a rising body of natives, who

had learned to think and discuss all subjects with unshackled freedom"⁴⁴. Owing largely to the effects of Derozio's teaching The 'Samachar Darpan,' a contemporary newspaper of the Christian Missionaries of Serampore, while noticing the premature death of Derozio, observed, "While in the Hindu college he laboured to instil into the minds of the youths under his care the true principles of science and to lead them to think for themselves. The result of his tuition has been that the students brought up under it are vastly superior in acquirements to fellow countrymen; that body of enlightened youths from a monument by which he will long be remembered in Calcutta"⁴⁵

With his pupils, Derozio established the Academic Association, which met for sometime, evening after evening in a garden – house at Manikatala in Calcutta under his chairmanship and with Umacharan Bose as its Secretary was occasionally attended by David Hare. Several debating societies soon sprang up as offshoots of this parent Association. The members of this body had unrestricted and free discussions about literary and philosophical topics and this naturally created in their minds a spirit of challenge to what had been long conventional and static.

It is true that frenzied with the impulse of newness some of the pupils of Derozio attacked Hindu religion virulently, and manifestly expressed hatred of Indian manners and customs and misinterpreted some of the noble fundamentals of Indian civilization. It is recorded in the History of the Hindu College by Harmohan Chatterjee that "the principles and practices of the Hindu Religion were openly ridiculed and condemned, and angry disputes were held on moral subjects; the sentiments of Hume had been widely diffused and warmly patronized. The most glowing harangues were made at debating clubs, then very numerous. The Hindu religion was denounced as vile and corrupt, unworthy of the regards of rational beings".⁴⁶ (R. K. Datta). In an issue of the Athenaeum; a monthly English paper started by the pupils of Derozio, one of them, named, Madhab Chandra Mallik, even went so far as to remark, "If there is anything that we hate from the bottom of our heart it is Hinduism"⁴⁷

The contemporary Hindu Society of Calcutta in particular could not reconcile itself to all those strictures and abuses and held Derozio responsible for the irreligious mood of the students of Hindu College. Derozio was removed from the Hindu College staff in April, 1831. No doubt, Derozio's teaching and examples generated a new spark of fire which aimed at burning all that clogged, as his pupils believed, human progress. But he should not be accused of any mischievous design to propagate immoral ideas. He emphasised on love and rational thinking for realization of truth, on a dynamic process of life furthered by the growth of knowledge. In his correspondence with College, regarding his dismissal, Derozio observed on the 26th April, 1831: "If the religious opinions have 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 atheism of some, let me receive credit for the theism of others. Believe me, my dear Sir, I am too thoroughly imbued with a deep sense of human ignorance and of the perpetual vicissitudes of opinion, to speak with confidence even of the most important 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, "This is", "and this is not", when after the most extensive acquaintance with researches of science and after the most daring flights of genius. We must confess with sorrow and disappointment that humanity becomes the highest wisdom, for the highest wisdom assures man of his ignorance".⁴⁸

If the leading alumni of the Hindu College grew sceptical about some Hindu beliefs and practices, they also showed no cordial leanings towards Christianity, though one of them, Krishna Mohan Banerjee became subsequently zealous member of the Christian community. They refused to receive instructions from the missionaries whom they regarded either as "ignorant fanatics"⁴⁹ as Duff notes. The missionaries naturally deplored this attitude on their part. Duff observes: "About the time already referred to, the Government of Anglo-Indian College of Calcutta had begun to put forth some of its ripest fruits. That institution is the very beau ideal of a system of education without religion. It communicates largely European literature and science: but as far as its regulations extend, neither within nor without its walls

will it tolerate the importation of religious truth. Now the citadel of Hinduism, being from the base to the highest pinnacle, a citadel of error, it can never resist a vigorous onset of true knowledge, however secular. Accordingly, their ancestral faith was completely subverted into the minds of the more advanced *alumni of the Government College, but nothing better was attempted or allowed to be submitted in its room. Many had become or really becoming sceptics; and others direct atheists*⁵⁰. Eager for the propagation of the Christian faith, he left no stone unturned to fill up what he considered to be a "region of vacancy as regards religion"⁵¹. But efforts for the conversion of those educated youths who had declared themselves to be free enquirers after truth were not crowned with much success, though some others were being gradually attracted towards Christianity.

Because of the virulent attacks directed by the recipients for new English education against some of the prevailing Indian customs and practices, it has been said that the "new wine of West went into the heads of Indians".⁵² and made them restless. This was, however, a temporary phase and whatever could be the evil effects of this iconoclastic attitude were ultimately counteracted to a large extent by the Indian reform movements of the second half of the nineteenth century. In fact, some of the activities of a batch of young Indians, known as the 'Young Bengal', imbued with the ideas of a new education, were not path breaking but also of much constructive potentiality. Their indomitable thirst for knowledge, genuine aspiration for reforms and spirit of selfless service for the good of others opened the floodgates of novel thoughts. Which gave new dimension particularly in the fields of education and literature.

(vii) Contact with English Literature: English education brought the Bengal poets into contact with the poets of England. Under the influence of Education and Western culture, a sizable number of enlightened Bengalis, particularly from the upper middle class families, felt drawn to English literature. R.C. Majumdar says, "The contact with English literature and through it, with that of other Western countries, may be regarded as one of the greatest contributing factors to the Renaissance in India in the nineteenth century. For it

revolutionized English – knowing Indians' attitude to life and literature and inaugurated an altogether new phase in Indian literature."⁵³ R.C. Majumdar particularly points to Romantic literature that caused a sea change in Bengali poetry. The comment is no less relevant to the nineteenth century English poetry of Bengal. According to him, "The influence of Romantic literature in Europe changed its (Bengali Poetry's) whole character and individual emotions as well as social and political topics formed its main theme".⁵⁴

Reviewing the impact English literature on the Indians of Renaissance period, K.M. Munshi has remarked. "English literature of the nineteenth century provided new inspiration to the university men in India who took to Shakespeare and Scott, Byron, Shelley and Keats With avid enthusiasm"⁵⁵ We also find the trace of the influence of Milton, Moore and Campbell in the nineteenth century English poetry of Bengal.

H. M. Williams has rightly pointed out: "Contact with British life and literature inevitably brought poetry to India, the poetry of Words- Worth, Scott, Shelley, Keats, Byron. In the explosive influence of English culture, romanticism played an important part"⁵⁶.

V.K. Gokak put the same idea metaphorically: "Indo-Anglian Poetry was born under a romantic stir. It learned to lisp in the manner of Byron and Scott in the verse of Derozio, M.M. Dutta and others. It began with verse romances and lyrics written in the Romantic Vein".⁵⁷

Writing specifically about Derozio, K.P. Srinivasa Iyengar observes: "As a poet, Derozio was obviously influenced by the Romantics – notably Byron Scott, Moore, but he knew his Shelley and Keats also very well".⁵⁸

The influence of the Romantic poets is manifest in Derozio's love of Nature. A.N. Dwivedi says that Derozio "wrote mostly under the spell of Lord Byron and Thomas Moore. His published work, 'The Fakir of Jnnghera' and other poemsis full of Byronic lines".⁵⁹

The knowledge of English language especially through the Hindu College, gave the students an access to modern English literature which produced luminaries like Francis Bacon, known for his scientific and inductive method, Charles Darwin, for his theory of evolution, John Locke, the individualist, J.S. Mill, the best exponent of individual liberty, Adam Smith, the father of modern economic science, Issac Newton, the brilliant physicist, Thomas Carlyle and John Ruskin, the ruthless critics of injustice. It also injected a rational outlook into the mind of the people. It not only contributed to the growth of nationalism in the dawn of Renaissance in the first quarter of the nineteenth century by making the Indian people familiar with the ideas of liberty, democracy, self – government but also indirectly by creating discontentment among the educated class who began to aspire for higher position in the services.

8. The Role of Press: The Press was a cultural product of the contact of the West and East. In the beginning of the nineteenth century press played a vital role in rousing social, religious, cultural and political consciousness that brought about a striking change in the people's attitude to life. Man began to think of life anew owing to the opinions and expressions concerning different aspects of life. Rammohun wrote and published a number of books and tracts to vindicate his views and principles. Being a man of sharp intellect, he realized the immense value of newspapers and journals. His 'Sambad Koumadi' that first came out in December 4, 1821 deserves special mention. It was to include religious, moral and political matters, domestic occurrences. Public good was the paper's main object. Before Sambad Koumadi, The Bengal Gazette of Gangadhar Bhattacharya, came out in May 1818. The Serampore Missionaries started the publication of the Bengali monthly Digidarshan and the Weekly Samchar Darpan (1818) before the beginning of "Sambad Koumadi".

In April 1822, Rammohan started a weekly paper in Persian named Mirat-Ul-Akhbar. The Sambad Koumadi was primarily intended for the common man, whereas the 'Mirat' was for the educated classes. The 'Mirat' contained articles not only on internal affairs but also on international

problems such as the Irish discontent, the national aspirations of the Greek etc. Rammohun was also associated with the news weekly Bangadut which first appeared on May 10, 1829 under the editorship of Nilratan Halder. Rammohun's name is associated with the struggle for a free press in India. His Memorial against the Press Ordinance of 1823 to the Supreme Court and then to the Privy Council, his closure of the publication of the Mirat-ul-Akhbar as a protest against the repressive Government Ordinance have earned for him an esteemed place in the history of the Indian Press.

H.L.V. Derozio's name is associated with the Press in the first quarter of the nineteenth century. Derozio came back from Bhagalpore at the call of John Grant, the Editor of the 'Indian Gazette'. He joined the 'India Gazette' as a sub editor. It is said that in 1826 Derozio started and edited a journal named Indian Magazine. Only five issues of the journal saw the light of the day and received wide appreciation. Derozio had strong connection with Kaleidoscope, a monthly journal which was first published from August, 1829. He had a deep and inspirative connection with 'Parthenon'. One issue of the journal was published but the conservative Hindus restricted the second issue. He began to write in Hesperus but he withdrew himself from the journal as the managers of it would make additions and alteration to his writings. He contributed his writing to Enquirer, edited by one of his illustrious followers, Krishna Mohan Banerjee. Regarding the objective of Enquirer Krishna Mohan Banerjee wrote in the first issue, "Having this launched our bark under the denomination of Enquirer, we set sail in quest of truth and happiness"⁶⁰ Derozio published "The East Indian"; a journal that brought to light the problems faced by the European Community in India.

After Derozio the Derozians carried on the publication of journals and organs which threw ample light on the problem of man's life and paved the way for the public good.

The foreign rulers commented on the immense importance of the native newspapers. The native newspapers are humble in appearance yet like the balladers of a nation. They often act where laws fail. In it questions of

Satee, widow remarriage, 'Kulin' polygamy have been argued with great skill and acuteness on both side: they have always opposed having a foreign language as the language of the court: the atrocities of indigo planters and the blunders of young Magistrates have been laid bare, while the correspondence columns open out a view of native society no where else to be found".⁶¹ In 1822 Thomas Munro in his Minute wrote about the native newspapers: "Where the peopleCountrymen, I would prefer the utmost freedom of the press but as they are, nothing would be more dangerous than such freedom. In place of spreading useful knowledge among the people and tending to their better Government it would generate in subordination, insurrection and anarchy".⁶²

D. Renaissance in Bengal: The Beginning

(i) The Arrival of the English with Western culture of English language:

The Indians have spent a considerable period in slumber. Their knowledge, consciousness, value sense – all these aspects have remained in a state of passivity. No nation can march ahead in this way. The Bengalis must be awakened from within. The new generation has a responsibility in this direction. It must be alive to the new challenges.

The English have awakened the Bengalis from the state of their mental and intellectual lethargy. When the English came to India they brought with them Western culture and English literature. A communication worth the name was established with the outside world in terms of knowledge and culture. The Hindu College, the nursery of English education and Western culture in Bengal came into existence in 1817 in Calcutta. The distinguished teachers like H.L.V. Derozio came forward to educate the students. They found the poetry of Byron, Keats, and Shelley for their study. They studied the philosophy of the European philosophers, acquired knowledge about the French Revolution (1789) and knew about the American Independence. Newspapers in Bengali and in English got printed. English newspaper was first published under the care of Derozio. Then came out 'Hindu Patriot'. During 1820 the Derozians began to write first in English and gradually they

also leaned to write in Bengali. There was no such thing as Bengali prose literature. Bengali epics came to be written. All these emerged in the educational arena centring Hindu college. But later on it was deeply felt that it was a new current of thought. Bengali literature was then no longer a "Panchali" or "rhymes". Many new books on literature were written by those who had profound knowledge of English literature and Western Culture. The wave of the Oriental education and culture also came in with the current of modern thought and culture. A new stream of thought emerged out of the cultural contact of the West and the East.

This awakening was beyond imagination in the absence of arrival of the English with Western culture and English language. With the advent of them the Indians deeply felt that the "Purana" was not history. No native of the country wrote our history, the foreigners wrote history of our country, which gave us an access to our history. There was no trace of science and it came to existence. With the study and research of physics and chemistry a new world was explored. The mystery of lunar eclipse which was unknown before became known to us. The map of the world was beyond our knowledge but a globe came to our hands. Then a series of scientific invention in terms of railway, telegraph were revealed to us. Many changes took place at a time and they made us overwhelmed. There was an urge to make all these things and thoughts our own. This urge led us to evaluate the old culture, tradition, education and history in the light of the new thought of the West. Ramesh Chandra Dutta started translating 'Rigveda'. Common men could not read and grasp the meaning of the Vedas; they were also unable to comprehend Upanishads. The 'Brahma Samaj' took a leading role for the first time to teach Upanishads. The rich store of Sanskrit language and literature was inaccessible to common man and it was open to a select few of the society. In this way man's interest in ancient India gradually grew. An outline of the history of ancient India dawned on those who remained busy with the Western culture and education and the cultivation of the culture and education of the past of our country started in full swing. The European Indologists who came to India devoted their interest and energy to research leading to the discovery of the past history. That there was once a king named Ashoka in the past was

unknown to us. There was Ashokan inscription but it went unnoticed. The credit of exposing the existence of a king named Ashoka goes to James Prinsep.

From Ceylon it was learnt that the King Priyadarshee was no other than king Ahsoka. Later it led to all revelations about Ashoka. A faithful record of Indian history came to our hand. History was written with the help of the account of India of Megasthenes and Fa Hien. Our self - respect dawned. We no longer became desirous of taking knowledge, culture and thought from the west; rather we were interested to contribute something to the store of the knowledge of the West. Vivekananda went to Chikago and preached Vedanta. In this way two streams of culture were operative. One of these two may be called modernization or Westernization. The English brought with them not only the Western education or culture but also modern education or culture. Modern education here means science, technology, politics, democracy and rational thought. These faculties were not possessed by us. We also notice that there were many important and subtle matters about which the people of the west had no profound knowledge. So the detailed analysis of our ancient period was needed. We had a galaxy of sages and seers. Our spiritual treasure counts much to all consideration; hence we should look back and delve deep into the past treasure. The English have Shakespeare but the Indians have Kalidas. Homer may be compared with Valmiki so far as the epics are concerned. Many books were written about the Supremacy of Hindu religion. Many scholars on the contrary were overexcited with the knowledge and science of the modern world.

ii. Revolt against Social and Religious Orthodoxy: India came into contact with the western ideas at a most opportune moment. It was the age of French illumination. Then the spirit of rationalism and individualism ruled European thought. It proclaimed the supremacy of reason over faith, of individual conscience over outside authority and brought in its train new conception of social justice and political rites. A new ideology suddenly burst forth upon the static life, moulded for centuries by a fixed set of religion and a spirit of inquiry into the origin of state and society with a view to determining their proper

scope and functions. According to R.C. Majumder; "The most important result of the impact of Western culture on India was the replacement of blind faith in cultural traditions, beliefs and conventions..... Characteristic of medieval ages.....by a spirit of rationalism which seeks to inquire and argue before accepting anything" ⁶³

The revolt of the mind against the tyranny of dogma and traditional authorities, beliefs and customs, is the first requisite for freedom of thought and conscience which lies at the root of progress in social, religious and political spheres of life. Indeed, this is the reason why progress in all these different spheres is interdependent to a certain extent. In Bengal the rationalizing effect of English education at first manifested itself more in religious and social ideas, but it was not long before it profoundly affected also the political consciousness of the people. The Brahma Samaj was the outcome of the first two, and has contributed largely to the ideals of political freedom. The revolt against the religious, social and political ideas was the result of the rationalistic urge created by Western Culture.

Raja Rammohun Roy was the first and the best representative of this new spirit of rational inquiry into the basis of religion and society. He challenged the current religious beliefs and social practices of the Hindus as they were not in consonance with their own scriptures. He tried to show that the belief in multiplicity and worship of images, which formed the essence of the current and popular religion, were opposed to the teachings of the Vedas. How far his views are historically correct, or morally sound, is of secondary importance. What really matters is his open and public protest against the blind acceptance of the interpretation of scriptures by the priesthood. The standard of revolt he thus raised against medieval tyranny of dogma unleashed forces which created Modern India and made him worthy to rank by the side of Bacon and Luther. His revolt was not a movement B.B. Pal says "He tried really to reconcile individual reason with ancient scriptures and individual conscience with social authority". ⁶⁴

The form of community worship which Rammohun enjoyed in the Brahma Samaj failed to capture the imagination of the masses because it appealed only to intellect and not to emotion. Sivnath Shastri says that common people "were roused and agitated but were not drawn into the movement."⁶⁵

Rammohun's religious reform movement had definitely a social purpose. Intellectual honesty compelled him to admit that the worship of idols which he denounced so vehemently had been permitted for the educated and ignorant masses by the original Hindu "Shastras"⁶⁶. But at the same time, Rammohun was quite clear in his mind that the traditional form of Hindu worship encouraged the growth of various superstitions and immoral practices, helped the domination of the priestly class and led to degeneration in the character of the common people. So he wanted that "some change should take place in their religion at least for the sake of their political advantage and social comfort".⁶⁷ Kishori Chand Mirta rightly characterised Rammohan as "a religious Benthamite"⁶⁸ who evaluated different religious creeds according to their tendency to "promote the maximization of human happiness and the minimization of human misery".⁶⁹

Rammohun opened an era of social reform, concentrating his attention chiefly on the amelioration of the condition of women. He made a cautious approach, basing his argument on scriptural authority, he had an aversion to legislation for social reform and would rather leave it to the growing good sense of the people themselves. The approach of Rammohun Roy is best illustrated in the matter of the abolition of the Satee. The agitation against it had been going on for some time and Rammohun threw himself heart and soul into it. Among other things he wrote pamphlets to prove that the inhuman rite was not sanctioned by the Hindu Scriptures. But when the Governor – General, Lord William Bentinck decided against overwhelming opposition, to pass legislation abolishing the Satee rite, Rammohun did not support him nor did he approve of his action. He preferred steady pursuit of methods to any sudden change by legislation.

Shortly after the departure of Rammohun for England in 1830, followed by his death in 1833, the 'Brahma Samaj' was in the grip of moribund condition. At this juncture Devendranath infused life into it and framed a regular covenant. 'The Brama Samaj' under Debendranath's able leadership grew in strength and soon acquired a position of importance in Bengal life. Devendranath and his associates always tried to emphasise upon the special relations of the 'Brahma Samaj' with Hinduism, abolition of idolatry and superstitious rites being described as merely a step towards the purification of the traditional faith. These activities took place between 1843 and 1850. 'The Brahma Samaj' later drifted away from these activities. The period that followed was marked by a tendency amongst the younger section of the Brahmas under the leadership of Akshay Datta "not only to broaden the basis of Brahminism by advocating new social ideals, but also to apply the dry light of reason even to the fundamental articles of religious belief. They advocated female education, supported widow marriage (which was strongly opposed by Rammohun), cried down intemperance, denounced polygamy, tried to rationalise Brahma doctrines and sought to conduct the affairs of the church on strictly constitutional principles".⁷⁰

The religious ferment in Bengal in the first half of the nineteenth century was partly caused by the activities of the Christian missionaries. Modern missionary work in Bengal really started in November 1793, with the arrival of William Carey in Calcutta. Carey and his brethren of the Baptist Mission were at first not allowed to preach the Gospel in the company's territory, and that is why they had to set up their headquarters in the Danish Settlement of Serampore (1799). Lord Wellesley adopted a more sympathetic attitude towards the missionaries and allowed them to travel and preach freely throughout the country. The charter Act of 1813 removed all restrictions on missionary activities in India and provided for the maintenance and support of a church establishment in British India. The primary object of most of missionary societies was religious conversion and they began to preach the Gospel openly among the Indians and to distribute Bibles, tracts, prayer books etc. in hospitals schools and prisons. From the missionary point of view this proselytizing work was, of course, not very successful. It was the poor

and the low-caste people who sometimes felt tempted to embrace Christianity, primarily with a view to procuring a comfortable subsistence by their conversion. The number of proselytization from the upper-caste people was not considerable. The progressive section of the Bengali society supported the educational activities of the missionaries; still it caused a great alarm in the Hindu Society as many students of the upper-caste of the Hindu Society showed aversion to the beliefs and customs of the Hindu religions. These students came under the banner of the young Bengal. It promulgated the new concepts and values of religions and social ideas into its depth. The reaction of the orthodox Hindu Society to the Brahma Movement, the Christian onslaught and the young Bengal agitation manifested itself through the Dharma Sabha founded in 1830 under the leadership of Raja Radhakanta Deb. The Sabha opposed the Act for the abolition of Satee, tried to prevent the conversion of Hindu students by Christian missionaries and generally defended age-old Hindu rites and usages. But the Sabha failed to stem the tide of social change which came as a result of the new education and contact with the West.

iii. The Origin of Indo-English Poetry: According to French literary historian, Pain literature is the creation of three factors: the race, the milieu, the moment. K.R. Sivniasa Lyengar's remark is worth quoting here. He says, "As regards Indo-Anglian literature, the race is the mixed Indian race, a resultant of invasions, conquests and occupations extending over a period of four or five thousand years; the milieu, the variegated Indian subcontinent, comprising extremes of every kind, heir to a geography and cultural heritage all its own: and the moment, the meeting of the West and India".⁷¹

The Western impact in India is marked. The west in India was no single entity and really meant sundry Portuguese, Dutch, British and French-with a few Danes, Germans and Italians thrown in-who came in different waves, as merchants, as missionaries as soldiers, as adventurers or administrators, and often worked at crosspurposes. The merchants came to make quick money, the missionaries came to save pagan souls, and the soldier-administrator came to achieve the conquest of the country. But the West in India was a self-

divided world – the Portuguese gave no quarter to the Dutch, nor the French to the British, and the Catholic looked askance at the Protestant and his sub-varieties. India too was monstrously self-divided after Aurangzeb's death. The Moghal Empire began to crack visibly and the process went on untouched. As a result, India during the 17th and more specially the 18th century presented the spectacle of decay and misery unimaginable. Vitality and zest for life were at vanishing point, spirituality glowed but in fitful embers, and all intellectual activity was nearly at a standstill. Decadence was found every where but decadence was not death. And there was even a burst of a new flowering in some places. There were Urdu poets at Lucknow and Delhi; there were Sanskrit scholars at Benaras and Nadia. In this and other ways, Mr. Malley observes, "an ethos was maintained which was free from the subversive forces of new ideas and alien systems, and continuity with the past was maintained."⁷²

Apart from the exploitation of the East India Company and others over the years there is an inherent weakness behind the dismal picture of India. India was betrayed by what was false or weak within her. India had become diseased and self-divided. The division and disease had started even before the West turned to the East, perhaps even before Islam came to India in wave after wave of invasion. The real roots of ancient India's greatness were in Aurobindo's words, "an ingrained and dominant spirituality, an inexhaustible vital creativeness and gust of life and mediating between them, a powerful, penetrating and scrupulous intelligence combined of the rational, ethical and aesthetic mind each at a high intensity of action"⁷³. In other words, the spirit the intellect and the life-impulse, all functioning at the highest pitch and yet working in the closest collaboration. Then came the ages of complacency and superficial advance and inner stagnation and decay. The spirit's light receded, the intellect dissipated itself in grandiose nothings and the will to live suffered a strange attenuation. The ascetic, the illusionist, the hedonist all contributed to the havoc. And the series of disasters on the political and economic fronts only hastened the process and completed the natural catastrophe.

By the beginning of the 19th century Britain or the East India Company, was more or less, master of the situation in India. At last, in 1813, the commercial monopoly of the company was ended, and the British in India assumed besides police functions, educative and civilizing functions as well. Missionaries were permitted to enter the country freely and a token of Rs.1 lakh per year was made for education. The missionaries had already helped to establish printing press in different parts of the country. Books in the vernacular, as well as in English were coming out. Dictionaries, grammars and translations were among the first fruits of such missionary enterprise and formal prose in the vernaculars was attempted. The printing press inevitably led to the newspapers and Hick's Bengal Gazette (India's first newspaper) came out in 1780 and others followed in due course. Last came the private schools imparting English education culminating in the establishment in 1817, of the Hindu College at Calcutta. Meanwhile the Serampore College was founded in 1818 by Carey, Ward and Marshman, the missionaries. The colleges imparting Western education were obviously flourishing and the demand was for more and more. Rammohun Roy in his plea for English instead of oriental education, asked Lord Amherst in 1823 to compare the state of science and literature in Europe before the time of Lord Bacon with the progress made since. Rammohun Ray not only wanted English in India; he also wanted more Englishmen in India. Although the orientalist and the Anglicists continued to wrangle, it was clear that the former were steadily losing ground; and Maculay's celebrated Minute clinched the issue at last. He declared that it was both necessary and possible "to make natives of this country good English scholars and that to this end our efforts ought to be directed".⁷⁴ The die was cast, and on 7 March, 1835, Lord William Bentinck resolved that "the great object of the British Government ought to be the promotion of European literature and science among the natives of India, and all funds appropriated for the purpose of education would be best employed on English education alone".⁷⁵ Prof. M.M. Bhattacharjee has shown that not the British rulers, but the earnest desire and repeated representations of Indians were responsible for the introduction of English and Western culture in India.

English education got patronization from the rulers and the ruled. The introduction of Western culture, the study of English literature, the adoption of Western scientific techniques, although they gave a jolt to India's traditional life, served the Indian's nobly by shocking them into a new awareness and alertness in thought and action. The long dormant intellectual and critical impulse was quickened into sudden life—a new efflorescence was visible everywhere and the reawakening Indian Spirit went forth to meet the violent challenge of the value of modern science and the civilization of the West. "Under English rule in India", Writes Mr. Arthur Mayhew, "The impact of two civilizations may have produced unrest. But it has also sustained and stimulated life".⁷⁶ It is an extraordinary story of endurance, assimilation and integral transformation.

Such was the moment that bred Indo-Anglian literature. Indians learned at first to read and speak and comprehend English and they soon started writing also. Indian writing in English was but one manifestation of the new creative urge in India - What is often referred to as the literary renaissance in India. The exhausted, almost sapless, native soil received the new rich fertilizer from the west and out of this fruitful union, a new literature was born. This new literature is Indo—Anglian literature.

Literature evolves through a process of tradition, convention and revolt. The story of the growth and development of Indo-Anglian poetry is also one of tradition and experiment, imitation and innovation. The pioneers of Indo-Anglian literature were men of education who assumed the role of interpreting the ethos and culture of India to West through imaginative literature.

Poetry naturally came first and it was associated with the cultural Renaissance in Bengal where the assault of English on the citadel of Indian culture first took place. In this connection the Hindu College played a pioneering role. It soon proved to be a dynamic of revolutionary thought currents that energized into impetuous movement the youthful minds nurtured by it. "It was a nursery of geniuses", says Aurobindo, "Where the brain of the new Age had worked most powerfully and the heart of the New Age had beat

with the mightiest Vehemence".⁷⁷ That is why in Bengal Indo-Anglian poetry underwent the period of gestation and pangs of birth. Incidentally, a very significant feature of Indo-Anglian poetry is that many early middle masters of Indian poetry in English hailed from Bengal e.g. Kashiprasad Ghosh, Toru Datta, Monmohan Ghosh, Aurobinda Ghosh, Sorojini Naidu and Harendranath Chattopadhyay. They are Bengali poets who wrote poetry in English in early stage of the journey of Indo-Anglian poetry. They were all Bengalis with a difference. Toru Datta spent her formative years in France and England and so did Manmohan and Sri Aurobinda. Sarojini and Harendra were born and grew up in the Deccan. Thus although they were Bengalis, they had grown up in a wider cosmopolitan world and eminently suited to the task of composing poetry. Thus Bengal was the birth place of Indo-Anglian poetry and early Indo-Anglian poetry hailed from this province.

The history of Indo-Anglian poetry began with Derozio, who as a teacher of English in the Hindu College, Calcutta inspired a number of young Indians with a love of the English language and literature Derozio occupies a special position not only for the sake of his historicity but also for the significant verses that he wrote.

The literary influence of Derozio meant much for the growth of Indo-Anglian verse Prof. V. K. Gokak rightly says "The first quarter of the 19th century was one period of incubation for Indo-Anglian poetry and Derozio was the moving spirit then".⁷⁸

He exerted much influence on later Indo-Anglican poets Toru Datta wrote an article about him in the Bengal Magazine of December 1874. However, his immediate influence also produced positive results. Kashiprasad Ghosh who was an eminent Derozian became the first Bengali to have published a collection of his English poems entitled 'The Shair and other poems' in 1830. D. L. Richardson, Principal of Hindu college, himself a poet-critic, wrote about Kashi Prasad Ghose's poems in his famous 'Selections from British Poets' which included a poem of Kasi prasad: "Let some of those narrow-minded persons who are in the habit of looking down upon the natives

of India with an arrangement and vulgar contempt read this with attention and ask themselves if they could write better verse not in a foreign language but even in their own".⁷⁹ Though Kashiprasad was a minor versifier, he is still notable for his historicity in the infancy of Indo-Anglan poetry.

iv) Nationalism: It is well known that there can be no nationalism with out a nation. In the last quarter of the eighteenth century and in the beginning of the nineteenth century there was hardly any sign of political consciousness in the country. There was no sense of unity, no conception of India as a nation or of Indians as a race. Sir John Strachey in 1884 observed: "The first and the most essential thing to learn about India is that there is not and never was India".⁸⁰ Endorsing Strachey's viewpoint John Seeley also denied that India was a nation and described it as "Geographical expression"⁸¹ as Indian people did not look beyond the geographical limits of their province. Dr. R. C. Majumdar writes, "There were Bengalis, Hindustanis, Sikhs, Rajputs and Marathas, but no Indian".⁸² It is generally acknowledged that even before the British Conquest, India was not a nation but a country of continental dimension, composed of various tribes, castes and classes differing in language, race, religion, customs and culture. Common intellectual heritage, tradition and social life created the idea of nationality. It is true that India, before the advent of Islam was one culture, one religion and philosophy, with the same scriptures and Varna Ashrama, the same manners and customs, common civic institutions and social laws and a common historical tradition. Considering these aspects it may be said that nationalism was always a phenomenon of Indian life. Even a Western authority on nationality, Hans John observed: "A true basis of unity-the modern national sentiments-was to be found in a common intellectual heritage persisting through an unbroken tradition and moulding and permeating India's whole social life."⁸³ K. K. Panikkar also maintains that sense of unity existed before the advent of Islam and that it was based on the universal culture of the Hinduism. But after the advent of Islam this sense of unity underlying a common cultural tradition was affected. In Pre-British India there was neither a sense of national identity nor national pride.

Like all social phenomena, nationalism is a historical category. It emerges at a certain stage when conditions, both objective and subjective, attain maturity. In other words, a nation is a product of concrete historical process. E. H Carr is of the opinion that "nation in the modern sense of the word did not emerge until the close of the Middle Ages".⁸⁴ Dr. Tarachand observes that until the end of the 18th century no entity existed which socially, politically or even geographically corresponded to the name 'India'. In fact, before the foreigners had given the name 'Hind to our country, there was no term in the subcontinent to designate it. To quote A. R. Desai, "Indian nationalism is a modern phenomenon; it came into being during the British period as a result of the action and interaction of numerous subjective and objective forces which developed within the Indian Society under the conditions of the British rule and the impact of world Forces"⁸⁵. Nationalism in India drew its first breath and grew in the cradle of the British Raj.

The Process of the growth of Indian Nationalism, however, has been very complex and many sided. The national consciousness in India was the cumulative effect of the operation of a number of factors and elements over a long period of time. Some of these factors are religious awakening, Western Education, the rapid improvement in the means of communication, the rise of Indian press, social consciousness and political consciousness.

Among the factors responsible for the growth of nationalism, religious awakening was the most important. The first phase of national awakening expressed itself in the form of a series of religious reform movements. In other words, the growth of Indian Nationalism started with religious renaissance. To quote Dr. Zacharias, "The Indian National Movement was a part of the Renaissance which manifested itself in the form of a general reform movement and produced striking religious and social reforms long before it issued in a movement for political emancipation"⁸⁶. Some of these movements aimed at revising the traditional religions in the spirit of the principles of liberalism. Others, however, aimed at reforming the pure form in which it existed in earlier times. Further, religious reform movement was national in

content but religious in form. It is only in the later stages that the national awakening deepened and broadened and found increasingly secular forums.

v) Liberty and Patriotism: India's contact with the western ideas and education was found at a most opportune moment. It was the age of French illumination when the spirit of rationalism and individualism dominated European thought. Western education brought in its wake the ideas of liberty, and patriotic feelings English education only accelerated this process quickly among the Indians who wanted to be free from the British yoke. Rammohun Roy played the pioneering role in instilling the ideas of freedom and patriotism into the minds of the Indians. The Young Bengal under the guidance, teaching and inspiration of H.L.V. Derozio started crying for liberty which was the spontaneous outburst of patriotic feelings in the first quarter of the nineteenth century.

Raja Rammohun Roy started political movements on constitutional lines for the first time. In 1823 the acting Governor-General Adam issued a press ordinance taking away the liberty of the Press. Rammohun with a few of his associates submitted a memorandum to the Supreme Court against the Ordinance and sent a petition to the king-in-council. The Memorandum is described as the "Areopagitica of Indian History"⁸⁵ by Collet.

Again as a protest against the press Ordinance Rammohun discontinued the publication of the *Mirat – Ul – Akhbar* in the last editorial of which he made a scathing criticism of the objectionable decree.

In 1826 a jury Act was passed which introduced religious discrimination in the law courts. The Act declared that henceforward any Hindu or Mohammedan could be tried by either European or native Christians, but no Christian either European or native was to be tried either by a Hindu or a Muslim Juror. Rammohun opposed this Act. Through one of his English friends J. Crawford, he submitted petitions against the Act signed by Hindus and Muslims to both the houses of the parliament. The protest against the

Jury Act proved fruitful when the parliament amended Indian Jury Act discriminating cause of the old Jury act of 1826.

Rammohun Roy was against the monopoly rights enjoyed by the East Indian Company and one of his objects of his journey to England was to demand more rights and privileges for the Indians at the time of the renewal of the Charter in 1833. His writings relating to liberty bear to the stamp of his patriotism. His views were influenced by the political thought of Montesquieu, Blackstone, Bentham and other Western thinkers. In his paper 'Sambad Koumudi' public grievances found a place for expression for the first time. Rammohun of course looked upon the British rule in India as a necessary and beneficial period of political tutelage. But at the same time he had the vision of a free India in the distant future, as he said to Victor Jacquemont, the French traveller, "India requires many more years of English domination so that she might not have many things to lose while she is reclaiming her political independence"⁸⁸. "The spirit in which he thought of India's nationalism is different from the spirit of the nationalism and urge for freedom that may be justly regarded as the most characteristic feature of the Modern Age in India. For this type of nationalism we must think of Young Bengal under the leadership of Derozio.

Young Bengal continued the political agitations that started from the time of Rammohun. They were known for their patriotism and advanced political thinking. Among them the most politically minded were Tarachand Chakraborty, Dakshinaranjan Mukherjee, Rasik Krishna Mallik, Ramgopal Ghosh and Pearychand Mitra. These young men were greatly influenced by the revolutionary doctrines of natural rights and 'equality'. It was Derozio who infused in them the spirit of patriotism. Himself intensely patriotic, he was inspired by the ideas of Tom Paine, Hume, Gibbon, Bacon and others. French Revolutionary ideas had made impressions on his mind and he was in favour of liberty in every sphere of life. He had joined the movement for equal rights that was started in his community and said, "I love my country and I love justice and there, I ought to be here"⁸⁹. He identified himself with the Indian ethos and felt acutely about the miserable plight 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. 'To India – My Native Land', 'The Harp of India', 'The Golden vase', 'The Fakeer of Jungheera' and many other poems express patriotic passions. We find an echo of the patriotism of Derozio in a poem written by Kashi Prasad Ghosh, a Derozian.

"But woe me! I never shall live to behold
That day of thy triumph, when firmly and bold".
"Thou shall mount on the wings of an eagle on High"
To the region of Knowledge and blest Liberty".⁹⁰

Of the political and economic views of Young Bengal, the 'Englishman' wrote in May 1835. "In matters of politics, they are all radicals and are followers of Benthamite principles..... They think that toleration ought to be practiced by every government..... with respect to the question relating to Political Economy, they all belong to the School of Adam Smith".⁹¹

They were so excited and elated by the July Revolution of 1830 that some of them even hoped for the outbreak of a similar revolution in India. Rammohun's fight for a free press was continued by the Derozians and the movement bore fruit in 1836 when Charles Metcalfe removed the restrictions imposed on the Press. Another campaign of Rammohun continued by the Derozians was the demand for opening high Government posts to Indians. The Charter Act of 1833 had made provisions for it, but the clause had not been made operative. The Derozians reopened the issue and asked for its implementation. Consequently, English educated youths were appointed as Deputy Collectors and from 1843 the post of Deputy Magistrate was also offered to Indians. From 1830 to 1843 the political, social and other progress made in the country owed much to the Young Bengal associations, papers and journals. In subsequent years, political agitation did not remain confined to any particular group or school of thought and people belonging to all groups and shades of opinion joined hands in the freedom movement.

E. Summing – up

The history of the early English domination of the country is a sordid story of exploitation resulting in the economic ruin of the country. Bengal renaissance manifests itself brilliantly in cultural aspects. Learning and education were in deplorable state at end of the eighteenth century. A change was, however, discernible in the domain of education which vitalised the new spirit of Renaissance in Bengal through the medium of English education. Two great figures played the pioneering role in this respect – Raja Rammohun Roy and Henry Louis Vivian Derozio.

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 Kunchanjungha, 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, i.e. 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', 'Eblis',

'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.

Chapter IV

AN ANALYSIS OF DEROZIO'S POEMS IN THE LIGHT OF BENGAL RENAISSANCE

A. The Contemporary Poetry in Bengal: The Background:

In order to understand the origin of Indo-Anglian Poetry at the hand of Henry Louis Vivian Derozio, the characteristics of contemporary literary scenario in Bengal in the closing years of 18th century and the first quarter of the 19th century should first be discussed in details.

Bharat Chandra of the mid –eighteenth century is regarded to be the last representative of mediaeval Bengali poetry which figures gods and goddesses influencing the lives of the men and women on earth. Between Bharatchandra whose poetic activities ceased by the third quarter of the eighteenth century and Iswar Chandra Gupta of the second quarter of the nineteenth century, there is a big gap which may be termed as the first transition period of Bengali literature for it marks the first great advance from the old to the new. The changes that took place in the period are many and of far-reaching consequences and everywhere transitional in character. In politics and social affairs, the conflict between the old and the new was gradually taking shape, and there was unrest and uncertainty everywhere consequent upon such conflict. In literature although the ancient trend of thought and feeling lingered partially in the popular 'Kavi-Songs', 'Tappa-Songs', 'Panchalis' and other indigenous forms of literature, the British contact with the new wave of ideas and perceptions started bringing about changes in literary matters, form and temper. The domain of literary adventure was enlarged. The literature between the last quarter of the 18th century and the first quarter of the 19th century began to be marked by great urge for individual liberty. The impulse of individual liberty led the poets to respond to contemporary influences felt in the society. Despite access to new ideas and methods, the old tradition in literature still lived on. Poets writing in Bengali

inherited old literary traditions in theme and form. Still their poetry reflected national sentiment which was in link with the socio-cultural background of the period under discussion.

The gap in the range of Bengali Poetry between the death of Bhatat Chandra in 1760 and the rise of Iswar Chandra Gupta as a poet was filled by 'Kavi-songs', 'Tappa-songs', Panchalis'. Rasu, Haru Thakur and Netai Bairagi are some of the remarkable names in this field. 'Kavi-Poetry' is an entirely home – spun production- kindly, genial and indulgent by nature or in spirit. It awakened popular enthusiasm and was characterized by simplicity and lucidity of utterance which drew its strength from language and ideas of the people themselves who begot them. The Kavi poets served literature in their simple and homely way by furnishing a stimulus to the emotional life of the country. They were able very often in piercing through the gauds and trimmings of an effete literary tradition coming direct to the passion and emotion which is found to throb and pulsate in an individual. Some pieces of 'Kavi-poetry' are endowed with fine flash of sentiment. They are not considered poetry of high order with artistic finish or fineness of sentiment. 'Kavi – poetry has in its sweep love- lyric marked by a striking secular strain.

A 'Tappa' is generally taken to be a melodious lyric of the erotic type in which eroticism connotes wanton or ribald sensuality. Tappas are spontaneous and free. The masters of Tappa sang of their own feelings, joys and sorrows, triumphs and defeats. They, so to say, brought the note of subjectivity in the contemporary poetry. The chief marks of their poetry are an outburst of the personal element, an overflow of sensibility, an enfranchisement of the passion and the imagination and introspective element. They were votaries of nature. In the matter of form, ideas and general tone also they did not venture to go beyond certain limits. They preserved in a degree the old posture and the old manner, but in spirit and temper they heralded the new age. They were intermediaries between the old and the new poets; despite casting a lingering look behind they stood at the threshold of the new age of poetry.

During this period devotional songs which marked a departure from 'Tappa' songs began to flourish. While Tappa writers like Nidhubabu, Sridhar Kathak or Kali Mirza often passed on love songs to devotional songs, the writers of devotional songs, like Ram Prasad and Kamakakanta, on the other hand, seldom condescended to the more mundane theme of personal lyrics. The devotional songs, especially of Ram Prasad, got popularity as a reaction to the comparatively arid thralldom of conventional verse. Moreover, these songs were the life-long realization of an intensely spiritual nature. The tone is essentially that of a secular lyric.

Closely allied to 'Kavi' and 'Panchali' as spices of popular entertainment were the 'Yatra' which emerged in the literary realm of Bengal between 1800 and 1825. This form of literature like the productions of the Kaviwalas was extemporized and was meant to contribute to the transient pleasure of its audience and much of it was of the ephemeral type. So the Yatra began to degenerate. This degeneration was almost synchronous with and was, therefore, hastened by the change of taste and literary fashion of the 19th century which came to regard all these forms of literature as out of date and contemptible. With the spread of new ideas and new literary methods, a regular stage was gradually established and dramas written in imitation of European models, tolled the death-knell of the old yatra which still lingered but found the same place in popular favour.

In the history of modern Bengali poetry the contribution of Iswar Chandra Gupta of the second quarter of the nineteenth century is important. His importance as a poet is more historical than intrinsic. In his poetry we find the mantle of mediaeval poetry as he showed his fondness for alliteration and punning and a coarseness and scurrility which he obviously inherited from the 'Kaviwalas', but modern tendencies made their mark in his themes which are rich in social consciousness. Iswar Chandra Gupta was conservative and spared no pains to unlock his unfriendly and, at times, uncharitable reaction against the thinking and doing of a newly evolving anglicised society; and this reaction was the mainspring of much of the satire and banter of his poems. He was popular in his time as a journalist besides being a poet. Naturally his

poems share the merits and demerits of Journalism; the contemporary popularity of his poems is, therefore, no sure index to their intrinsic value. The patriotism in his poems may be noted as a special feature. This patriotic element was novel and fresh and it widened the appeal of his poems. For another reason he is historically important. He was able to attract a group of writers and poets who came to the limelight of literary creation through his journal 'Sambad Prabhakar'. These rising poets and writers include Rangalal Banerjee, Madhusudan Datta and Bankim Chandra Chatterjee. They did their literary apprenticeship in the 'Sambad Prabhakar' under direct patronage from Iswar Chandra Gupta.

Iswar Chandra Gupta introduced the spirit of patriotism in Bengali poetry. This was the motive-force of almost all the narrative poems and literary epics, written during the second and third quarters of the nineteenth century. Rangalal Banerjee, Madhusudan Datta and Bankim Chandra Chatterjee expressed patriotic feelings through their literary works. The urge for patriotic and heroic poetry led to the growth and development of nationalism in the mid-nineteenth century. The themes chosen by the poets had to substantially transform for adjusting to the prevailing conditions and the hopes and aspirations of the people of the country. This transformation or adjustment helped the poets considerably in making old and retold themes acceptable and attractive to the readers of that period.

B. Derozio: The Making of the Poet:

1. Derozio's Poetic Career:

In the beginning of the 19th century the East India Company was more or less the master of the situation in India. In 1813 the commercial monopoly of the company came to an end and the British in India took up educative and civilizing functions apart from administration. The restrictions on the missionary activities were lifted. The demand for English education was on the increase because through it the access to Western thought and philosophy was easy; the study of English literature, history and geography was possible. A wave of change in social, political, religious and cultural plane knocked at the door of Bengal. The writers of the first quarter of the

nineteenth century were influenced by radical changes of thought in different phases of the nineteenth century. A writer lives in the society. Environment, social, economic and religious tensions first influence his life and thought and then pass into the literature he produces. Calcutta as the commercial as well as intellectual centre of British India felt at first the wave of Western thought and culture; because it (Calcutta) received a much greater exposure to the dynamic impact of the modern West than any other Indian city. One reason for Bengal's greater responsiveness to the new ideas was that "the great Brahmanical Tradition of Hindu India never acquired in Bengal the degree of influence which it had in other parts of the country".¹

The modern sensibility which came from Europe found in the Bengal Intelligentsia a deep and sustained responsiveness that was extraordinarily creative. The reason behind it was that Bengal first received the Western education through the medium of English. For being acquainted with the Western, especially with English literature, philosophy, history and geography, a fascination for composing literature in English grew strong. It was quite natural because in matter and manner Bengali literature especially poetry lost its charm. In artistic finish, in fineness of sentiment, in style and temper also the poets who emerged in the literary circle did not feel drawn to Bengali literature. Against this moribund condition of Bengali language and literature novel thoughts, form and manner cast an irresistible charm upon the budding poets and writers of that period. So English Language became the natural choice of literary expression and in this way it heralded the dawn of Indian English literature. Thus Indian English literature was an offshoot of the literary Renaissance caused by the introduction of English education in India. K. R. S. Iyengar writes "A renaissance of Indian literature and culture was the result and creative Indian writing in English was but one of the many forms that this Renaissance took".²

In the wake of Renaissance the creative writing in English was first found in Bengal and Derozio was a pioneer in this field. Rabindranath Tagore's comment in this connection is worth quoting; "Bengal's response

through literature to the call of the West is something unique in the history of the modern East".³

"That call", observes R.K. Dasgupta, "first reached our ears through Derozio..."⁴ Derozio, half –Indian, half - Portuguese was a disciple of David Drummond who had drunk deep of the metaphysics of Scotland and left his country in 1813 because of his proneness to free thinking. He closely watched the precocious and impulsive Derozio with interest and fed him with all that was best in the poetry and philosophy of the West. Derozio imbibed the spirit of free thinking considerably from his teacher Drummond.

When Derozio was fourteen, he lost his father. He was compelled to discontinue his studies for maintaining the family. On leaving school in 1823 he became a clerk in his father's office, but the drudgery of the desk had no fascination for him. Thomas Edwards writes in this connection, "The four walls of an office and a clerk's stool were speedily relinquished by Derozio; and at the age of sixteen in the varied work and life of an indigo –planter at Bhagalpore under the hospitable roof of his uncle Johnson, and the kindly eye of his mother's sister, the lad Derozio for a time found congenial".⁵ In Bhagalpore he came under the soothing influence of Nature. The clam and tranquil environment of this small north Bihar town upon the Ganges, the scenic beauty and idyllic milieu of the surroundings, a quite neighbourhood-all these contributed to nourish his creative faculty. The bud of his literary genius began to flower during the three-year stay in Bhagalpore. Moreover, the stay coloured his attitude to Nature and made him creative. Thomas Edwards writes, "It is here at Bhagalpore, with the ripple of the Ganges in his ear, and the boats of the fisher and the trader borne on the-tide, out of whose broad bosom rose the Fakir- inhibited rock of Jungheera, that the youthful poet drunk in all those sweet influences of nature and much of human nature, which indelibly impressed themselves on his intellect and imagination and stirred him to the production of his most sustained effort in poetry, "The Fakir of Jungheera".⁶ While living at Bhagalpore Derozio witnessed a panoramic view of life which had a lasting impression on his mind. Thomas Edwards gives a beautiful description of that panoramic view of life. He writes, "Here at

Bhagalpore, there fell in Derozio's ear and eye, and lingered in his memory, the splash of oars in the river: the greetings and gossip of women round the well; the creaking of the yoke: the patient toil of the ryots in their fields: the sounds that happy children make at play...."⁷ Again he writes, ".....the glorious panorama of an Indian sunset, when in the west clouds wreath themselves in slow majestic motions and unfold their changeful, chameleon tints, deepening into blackest night, and day and its glories seem like a glorious dream of beauty, swallowed by darkness".⁸ Derozio had realization of love at Bhagalpore. It is here at Bhagalpore that Derozio realized what it is to love and to be loved.

Derozio used to send poems for publication to 'India Gazette' of Dr. Johnson who had well-acquaintance with Derozio's poetic power from his school days. He published his poems under pseudonyms like 'Juvenis', 'Henry', 'East Indian' and the like.

2. The Contemporary Social Background :

Derozio grew up into a society that came into the contact with new ideas. The foundation of Bengal's social fabric began to be tremendously shaken as it was in a very moribund condition. Religious superstition, in the main, ate into the vitals of Bengal. The misrule of the British with economic exploitation, injustice to the natives, and physical oppression for nothing made the people's life miserable. When Derozio grew up in Calcutta, the system of slavery was in vogue which he himself experienced. Most people used to sell their children for poverty. Besides, the system of 'Sati' was prevalent. Rammohun Roy made a movement against it and ultimately he succeeded in abolishing the system through a regulation passed on 4th December, 1829 by William Bentinck. Polygamy and early marriage with their serious and harmful effects created scars on society. The sufferings of the young widows presented a very pathetic story of womanhood. The greatest of the evil from which the women would suffer was the denial of education. References may be made in this connection to two remarkable letters published in the "Samachar Darpan" on 14th and 21st March, 1835: "Still some women manage to get some education and ventilated their grievances".⁹ Some educated

women had knowledge of religious literature; because the study of religious literature was considered to be a pious recreation by the ladies in the respectable families.

Derozio grew up in the society of Calcutta stifled with slavery. While the poor in their desperation would sell their women and children, the rich would keep a good number of slaves as a mark of their status. Open trade of slave was in vogue then in the open market. "In 1785 William Jones in connection with a verdict declared on a suit in the Supreme Court mentioned the miserable plight of the slaves".¹⁰ The social life of Bengal exhibited another kind of malady during the last quarter of the 18th century Bengal which lasted till the first quarter of the nineteenth century. It was infanticide. The family of childless woman would take a vow to sacrifice the first born child as an offering to the Ganges. Such vows were taken on other religious grounds also.

Derozio's stay in Calcutta and Bhagalpore stirred his revolutionary mind. When he lived in Calcutta, he saw the inhuman torture inflicted upon the slaves; they would be sent from Calcutta to other places. In Bhagalpore he had the experience of witnessing the torture inflicted upon the farmers cruelly by the English indigo –planters who used to force them to cultivate indigo against their will and denial of it would bring them unspeakable misery and suffering. The inhuman system left an indelible mark on Derozio's mind and he fervently dreamt of the freedom of the slaves in his poetry. In the magazine, 'East Indian', Derozio directly advocated the right and freedom of all.

The Natives of India did not recognize the British rule, especially the rule of the East India Company; rather they nourished grievance in their heart against the Company's rule. They were in a mood to make revolt against the reign of the company. In an article, 'Colonization', Derozio writes "The most superficial observer must perceive that India is maintained only by Military force. Withdraw it, and the boasted opinion of the natives, instead of supporting, would immediately prove the cause of the utter subversion of the

empire". 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. In an article, 'Cultivation of Hindustan' in 'Kaleidoscope' February, 1830, he spoke about the oppression of the native landlords on the farmers: "Of their cruelties towards the ryots little needs to be said, as they are pretty generally known".¹¹

Derozio enthusiastically supported Rammohun's movement to abolish the system of 'Sati' and was highly hilarious when it was abolished on 4th December, 1829. In reaction to his immense pleasure he composed a poem for 'India Gazette', 8 August, 1831:

"Hark, heard ye not? Widow's wail is over
The storm is passing, the rainbow's span
Stretch from north to south; the eboncar
Of darkness rolls away; breezes fan
The infant down; and worn wing held stir
Comes trembling into decay! O! Can the sun be far?"¹²

Derozio also welcomed Lord Bentinck and Raja Rammohun Roy in his poem, "On the abolition of Sati"

The society in which Derozio grew up was thus chained with a lot of superstitions, social and religious and free thinking was beyond imagination. The soil of Bengal in the early part of the nineteenth century was stained with a lot of negative forces which suppressed man's thought and reason. Derozio drank the nectar of western education, culture and philosophy and brought about a revolution of thought in Bengal.

3. Influence of Western Philosophers:

The nineteenth century, especially the first quarter, is remarkable in the history of Bengal as it saw the emergence of revolutionary thoughts and movements of far reaching results. The last quarter of the eighteenth century offers a picture of decay relating to social and religious superstitions. So the change which was in sight in the beginning of the nineteenth century for

radical ideas associated with society, religion, culture and politics had dazzling effect for the people. The wave of Western education and philosophy came to India through the channel of English education. Derozio acquired the knowledge of Western philosophy from his student life in Dharmatala Academy of David Drummond. Drummond had the reputation of being a poet, a scholar and a free thinker. As sceptive and rationalist he was a staunch follower of David Hume. He doubted the existence of God and expressed his faith in man as his own master. He was also influenced by the humanistic ideas of Hume. From Drummond young Derozio imbibed the intoxicating freedom-urge of the French Revolution, (1789) and a passion for freedom of thought. Liberation possessed his soul. He also knew Bacon and Locke and was familiar with the philosophical ideas of the French encyclopaedists who started investigation through rationalism. The clergymen of the Roman Catholics were his major targets. They include Volni, Voltaire, Rousseau, Hallbath, Helvitiu, Dederu and La Metri. Among them Voltaire, Rousseau and Volni were monotheists while Hallbath, Helvitiu and La Metri were atheists. The latter group did not believe in the existence of God, immortality of soul and punishment consequent upon holy and unholy service. David Hume as an English radicalist did not believe in miracles. He tried to trace the origin and history of religion on the basis of natural and scientific method. He regarded religious rites as nothing but the activities prompted by the vested interests of the priests and clergymen. For about two centuries (17th and 18th) the revolutionary thoughts and ideas regarding social, religious, political and economic life created a stir in the domain of thought of the Western people. The message of this new philosophical thoughts and idea came to Bengal through the channel of Western education. The Hindu College of Calcutta was then the main centre of Western education. According to the founders of this College it was the main channel by which real knowledge may be transferred from its European sources into the intellect of Hindustan.

As a student Derozio was acquainted with the philosophical ideals of the West and as a teacher of Hindu College he tried his best to impart his knowledge to the brilliant students of the Hindu College. Derozio used to teach European History and literature in Hindu college. His ideas of history

and concepts of philosophy were based on the theories propounded by Hume, Bacon, Maupertui, Voltaire, Rousseau and some other leading European scholars. They carefully studied the history and revolutionary philosophy of France and were deeply stirred by the wave of a similar revolution in Europe in 1830.

4. Derozio's views on poetry:

Derozio firmly believed that a poet must have a mission to remove the miseries of the people. This notion of mission grew out of his contact with the current problems of society, the philosophical ideas of the West and his stay at Bhagalpore. On 22nd January, 1830, he wrote an article in the "India 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 the poets. He wrote, "Let it be 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 that side which espouses man's best interest; let it be his object to improve, while he delights and to promote the advancement of society."¹³

It is clear then that Derozio looked upon the poet as one who must be alive to the duties he owes to the society. He had deep love for the country, despite being a Eurasian; 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 his countrymen. 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 criticised the British in power in India for their oppression, arrogance and impatience with the natives. He warned that the English must pay penalty for this attitude to Indians. This warning, no doubt, sprang spontaneously from the spirit of patriotism. In a lecture in 'East Indian', 17th December, 1831, he said, "In a few years the 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 Indian complains of

suffering from prescription, is it for them to prescribe? Suffering should teach us not to make others suffer. Is it to produce different effect on East Indians? We hope not".¹⁴ Derozio's broad outlook became manifest when he placed a proposal in connection with the claims and rights of the Eurasians. He held that "The admission of East Indians to certain rights does not preclude the possibility of other classes of the population also securing for themselves the privileges to which they are entitled. If East Indians were permitted to enjoy all privileges they now seek, it would be impossible to withhold the claims of others. Their enemies have tried to set both the European and the native against them by saying that they seek exclusive privileges, well knowing that if they once entered the breach, there would be many to follow".¹⁵ He had firm conviction that the problems of the deprived as well as the oppressed are common and they must be united to solve their problems irrespective of caste and religions. He gave a clarion call to it in the following words: "All the zeal of a will force would have been employed in vain, if the abolition of slavery had depended upon his individual exertions".¹⁶ During the publication of "East Indian" he strikes the cord of broad and universal awareness which is steeped in humanism irrespective of colour, creed, and religion. In the manifesto of the magazine, Derozio wrote, "To prevent any misconception to which the name of paper may give rise, the proprietor begs to state that his journal will advocate the just rights of all classes of the community".¹⁷

It can, therefore, be well said that Derozio's literary output bears the stamp of his experience and thought. 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.

C. Analysis of Derozio's Poems:

1. Introduction: The achievement of Derozio as a teacher is so remarkable that the poet in him is so often overlooked. The reason 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 however a poet of considerable power. He took a pioneering role to express the revolutionary ideas through the whole gamut of his literary output, especially poetry. Derozio is "modern India's first patriot to give expression to that patriotism in verse, the first to sing Freedom that lights the altar of the 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".¹⁸ R. K. Dasgupta says, "The power of his verse comes from the power of this poetry of life and we may miss that power if we fail to relate it to that life".¹⁹ This is not so with most of the greatest of poets whose poetry needs no gloss from the story of their lives. Derozio was so young that he could not master the art which gives poetry a life of its own, independent of the life of its maker.

Derozio had neither the genius of Keats nor the freakishness of a Chatterton. We should not take into account the fact that his verse is only, "a feeble echo of the voice of Byron and Moore"²⁰ and "his style is marred by an abundance of oriental imagery".²¹ He never concealed his enthusiasm for Byron. In spite of being oriental and derivative in composing poems of English he had a voice of his own. For writing poems in his early twenties he lacked perfection in diction and style. But his verse shows some other qualities. Bradely- Birt characterizes Derozio's poems as "extraordinarily mature considering his years"²² and as "showing a remarkable command of language and beauty of expression".²³ According to him, Derozio's poetry shows "unbounded enthusiasm, wealth of imagery, and a passionate resentment to wrong, though it lacks originality and undoubtedly owes much to Byron and Moore".²⁴ While tracing the influence of Byron, Moore and L.E. Landon on Derozio E. W. Madge comments: "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".²⁵ From E. M. Madge's comment it is clear that Derozio's derivative nature of poetry is quite natural in view of the fashion of the age. As a poet young in age Derozio lacked diction and style. But he did not lack "truth of experience which is the very breath of Poetry".²⁶ R.K.Dasgupta is of the view that there is an intensity of feeling in Derozio's verses which is unmistakable. It is a feeling which gave

his lyrics their power, which gave his conduct its nobility and grace and gave him the courage to hold on to his convictions when they were assailed by his adversaries. He quoted the following lines from Derozio's poetry:

"My mind that wandered once like summer bird
From twisted brake and bush on wildest wing.
Swift as its own desires, must fall at last
Even from those sweet ideal worlds it made:
And, like my native earth, which once a star
Blazed through the pathless ether, must I roam,
Darkness without, within consuming flame."²⁷

This feeling gave Derozio a voice. This voice is the "voice of the new humanity of the new universe"²⁸ that emerged in the early decades of the nineteenth century, "a universe of infinite despair and hope".²⁹ Derozio has expressed this voice in his poems like 'The Fakir of Jungheera' with "a spirit of courage and hope that is found among the poets of the Romantic Movement of English literature in the nineteenth century".³⁰

2. Classification of Derozio's Poems:

Derozio's poetic career was short, lasting only for about six years from 1825 to 1831. During this period he published two volumes of poetry – 'Poems' (1827) and 'The Fakir of Jungheera: A Metrical Tale and other Poems (1825)'. Apart from the poems included in these two volumes of poetry, we also get 19 unpublished poems of Derozio. His poems may be classified into the following categories:

a) Those which are absolutely Indian in their context and perspective: only the language is English 'The Fakir of Jungheera' (a long verse narrative with a little of balladic element in a sense), his 'magnum opus', is the finest example of the first category. Besides, 'To India- My Native Land', 'Enchantress of the Caves', 'The Ruins of Rajmahal', 'Song of an Indian Girl', 'Song of Hindustani Minstrel', 'On the Abolition of satee', 'David Hare' are the most notable representative pieces of this section.

b) Those that have certain European backdrop: historical, literary or otherwise such as 'Thermopylae', 'Greece', 'Greeks at Marathon', 'The Grecian Sire and the son', 'Address to the Greeks', 'and Sappho'. Besides, 'Italy', 'Tasso' and 'Anecdote of Frances I' are based on political and cultural histories of Italy and France.

'A Song Tuned in Portuguese Air', 'A Portuguese Song', 'Romeo and Juliet' and 'Yorick's Skull' are some poems composed after taking cues from some delicate emotional and philosophical problems raised in Shakespearean plays. 'New Atlantis', 'Love's First Feelings', and 'Golden Vase' are the poems which are written in the styles somewhat resembling some contemporary British poets.

c) Those which have some universal appeal, such as humanism or urge for freedom like 'Freedom of the Slave', 'Morning after a storm', 'Poetry of Human Life' and 'Independence'.

d) A few poems are written in the context of certain personal feelings. Mention may be made of '-Here's a Health to Thee Lassie', 'Addressed to Her, who'll Best Understand Them', 'Sister – in – Law', 'Sonnet to the pupils of Hindu College,' 'The poet's Grave(I)' and 'The Poet's Grave (II)'.

e) The poems which cannot be grouped into any category belong to miscellaneous section. 'Ode from the Persian of Hafiz' and 'A Walk by Moon Light' may be mentioned in this connection.

3. The Fakir of Jungheera : A Tale of Love and Romance:

The longest and the most ambitious work of Derozio is 'The Fakir of Jungheera', a narrative idyll often hailed as a classic of the new spirit and voice of the humanity at large. Derozio attempts to tell a long tale combining adventure and romance and exposing the social evil of 'sati'. The theme and setting of this long poem render him worthy of regard 'as a minor but genuine member of the Romantic Movement'.³¹ The Story- line of this narrative poem is somewhat unique, because the social background of the period during the

composition of this long poem was the least congenial. Through the 52 sections of the poem Derozio describes the strange vicissitudes in the unfortunate life of a Brahmin widow, Nulinee. The first canto begins with a sequence of Sati rites; Nulinee is moving towards the pyre of her dead husband amidst ritualistic incantations. Then Nulinee slowly climbs upon the pyre of her husband which is yet to be lit. She starts offering her prayers to the gods. Just then Nulinee's former lover, a Muslim youth who has become the leader of a gang of bandits after being refused by the girl's family, reaches the cremation ground with his followers. He rescues his beloved from the pyre and flees away with her to live a happy life in the rocks of Jungheera.

In the second canto we find Nulinee's father being humiliated at the incident of the bandit's daring act, praying to the Nawab of Rajmahal for a redress. Accordingly the royal forces began to search for the culprit. The confrontation between the royal forces and the followers of the outlawed bandit is imminent. In the ultimate sequence of the narrative it is found that the lifeless bodies of the two lovers are lying on the battlefield in a close embrace.

The story of the long poem is believed to be based on the ideological tenet of Derozio. The theme of the romantic tale is very outstanding. B. Alphanso Karkala's observation is worth quoting here. He writes, "Though Henry uses all the essential ingredients of a romantic tale in the manner of Byron or Moore at times even accepting pre-Wordsworthian poetic diction, what is more 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".³² Derozio depicts "the inhumanity of 'sati', the false morality of the women and the hypocritical chanting of the Brahmins".³³ 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".³⁴ Alphanso Karkala further remarks, "At a time when Eurasians were not accepted either by the Europeans or by the Indians, Henry, a child of two cultures, identified himself with his native land and wrote purely on Indian themes with a reformer's zeal".³⁵ A century later, Edward

Oaten thought of Derozio as a man who sharing the blood of the European and Indian 'put the pathos and passions of his sensitive nature into his metrical tale, 'The Fakir of Jungheera'.³⁶

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. V. K. Gokak remarks: "The championing of the Indian widow starts with Derozio".³⁷ C. Paul Varghese comments that Derozio's ardour for social reform shows itself in this poem, "The Fakir of Jungheera. The first nine sections of the poem, present through a series of evocative images, the picture of the young woman, Nulinee who is taken along in a procession accompanied by horses and trumpeteers to the altar of a pyre. There Nulinee, a young widow, will be burnt to ashes alive, according to the custom of 'Sati'. Nulinee, enrobed in white, approaches the altar which has been idealized by the chorus of women:

"On to the altar, and scatter the flower,
Sweeten the path as ye wander along;
On to the altar I another blest hour.
Bring to her spirit the Kinnura's song."³⁸

The chorus of women justifies the practice of 'Sati':

"Such is the boon that to her shall be given;
Myriads of ages for her are in store;
She shall enjoy all the blessings of heaven,
Till heaven, and its blessings themselves are no more".³⁹

Moreover, the chorus of women gives us an idealized picture of Sati:

"Happy! thrice happy I thy lord shall there meet thee.
Twined round his heart shalt thou ever remain,
Happy! bright angels are longing to greet thee,
Tuned ate their harp-strings, and ready their strain".⁴⁰

The chorus of Brahmins describes the bustling activity before sacrifice idealizing the custom of 'sati' at the same time. The description is very vivid:

"Scatter, scatter flowers round,
 Let the tinkling cymbal sound;
 Strew the scented orient spice,
 Prelude to the sacrifice;
 Bring the balm and bring the myrrh,
 Sweet as is the breath of her
 Who upon the funeral pyre
 Shali, ere Surya sets, expire".⁴¹

The invocation of the Sun by the chief Brahmin is the climax of the religious custom relating to 'Sati'. The chorus is the relentless conscience of the Hindu traditions presented ironically by the poet to suggest a point of view he does not share. The chorus and the invocation are part of the pattern of superstition the poet wants to expose. Amidst the loud beating of drums and tinkling of cymbals Nulinee is brought to the altar. Then the poet comments on the world's unfeeling way:

"O! this is but the world's unfeeling way
 To goad the victim that it soon will slay;
 And like a demon 'tis its custom still
 To laugh at sorrow, and then coldly kill".⁴²

From the comment made through the above quoted lines it is clear that Derozio wants 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.

Satire becomes a part and parcel of the narrative framework of the poem. The satire is counterpointed by the poet's appreciation of the woman's liberty in matters of choice which is suppressed under the social customs of the time of Derozio in Bengal as "mean ye cruel".⁴³ Since Nulinee, the heroine, loves a person other than her husband, the poet does not approve of the torture that the Brahmins inflict on her to self immolation on the funeral pyre of her husband. The question the poet raises is as follows:

".....Could she be,
While by her husband's lifeless form, unmoved
If ever she that lifeless form had loved?"⁴⁴

Derozio warns all of his time that nobody should tyrannize over the womankind through misjudgement and misrepresentation.

The poet's profound sympathy with the women persecuted under the cruel social customs finds expression time and again throughout the poem:

"Alas! that woman e'er should be
Bowed to the earth with misery,
And that her soul from pleasure's sky
Should like a meteor fall from high
.....
.....
.....
.....
But ah! most sad when woman gay
Must swan-like sing her dying lay!"⁴⁵

Derozio portrays the horrible performance of the 'Satee' with a profound note of pathos and irony as is found in the following lines:

Full soon the link of being's chain
That holds Nulinee yet below,
Shall be for ever snapped in twain –
And then adieu to mortal woe!
Before the pile she bends her brow,
With all affections she must part,
And those that cling to earth must now
At once be severed from her heart. –
And from her head the wreath she takes,
Seven circuits round the pile she makes,
And now with baleful brand on fire.
She slowly mounts the dreadful pyre.⁴⁶

Through the story Derozio has built a poem of love and social prejudices also. Derozio points out the price that socially unsanctioned love must pay.

From section XXII of canto 1 to section XVI of canto 2, Derozio paints an idyllic scene of love and romance between Nulinee and her robber –lover who rescues her from the immolation on the pyre. Derozio portrays the love between Nulinee and her former lover in a very romantic manner. The poet shows that the love between Nulinee and the robber –lover is born of free choice. Derozio conceives love also as a noble passion that transcends the ephemerality of our ordinary existence. Evidently, he wrote under the influence of the Romantics and his concept of love is a synchronism of emotional idealism, mediaeval romanticism, and renaissance humanism.

In 'The Fakir of Jungheera' love as a noble passion ennobles a man and makes him brave. The outlawed Fakir saves Nulinee from the funeral pyre. At that moment Nulinee is overwhelmed by her passion of love and she confesses her love for him.

“Like life to hope, she clung to him
For now was severed sorrows chain.”⁴⁷

In an ecstatic moment of reminiscence and hope Nulinee unfurls the layers of her memory:

“In calm, in shine, in storm and strife
Thou, thou hast been my light of hope”.⁴⁸

In depicting the romantic love between Nulinee and her robber- lover Derozio uses 'moon' and 'moon light' as recurring symbols

“How beautiful is moonlight on the stream
How bright on life is Hope's enchanting beam
.....
.....

How soft upon each flower is fair moonlight -
 Making its beauty more serenely bright",⁴⁹

Again,

"How sweet to sit upon a bank, and mark
 The soft moon looking on little bark".⁵⁰

The poet portrays the pleasure of love between Nulinee and her lover in the following lines

"O! this is joy, like that to angel's given
 Filled to the brim, the heavenliest cup of heaven
 Her Robber – love and young Nulinee share
 Each bliss as perfect as the heart may bear"⁵¹

The intrepid fakir has firm conviction that he will defeat his enemies in the battle against the nawab's soldier. This conviction comes from his love for Nulinee that makes him utter:

"A daring conquest must my hand achieve;
 And 'tis my promise, ere another chief
 Shall be selected for thy love's relief,
 Once more to lead them to their prey alone,
 Then quit forever, and be all thine own"⁵²

The separation between Nulinee and her lover is imminent for a stroke of misfortune which is symbolized by a storm. In section XIII of Canto 2 Derozio gives a touching description of that storm.

The fakir must go to the battle-field. So the words and expressions of the parting moment of the lovers swept by romantic passions are pointers to the realm of love to which they live. They are not willing to be parted but the situation is compelling. Nulinee says,

"And must we part so soon? An hour from thee-
 A single moment – were Eternity
 When thou are gone alas? What Can I Find?
 To fill the dreadful vacuum of mind?"⁵³

Nulinee cannot think of her present existence without her robber lover. Is any other person will fill the vacuum of her mind? Nulinee herself finds the answer in the loving company of her robber-lover. She says,

"Thy home's my bosom – come, and rest the here!"⁵⁴

Nulinee shudders at the thought of being parted from the sweet and loving company of her lover. This feeling leads her to say

"Nay – I will cling to thee – O! tear me not
From thy embrace – is all, is all forgot?
Are those fond vows which once to me were given
Gone like thin clouds by winds for ever driven?"⁵⁵

In Derozio's concept of love Honour is very important. So the Fakir cannot listen to the earnest requests of Nulinee to stay with her and he declares, "Nay, I must leave thee"⁵⁶ as

"Honour at stake, it were degrading thee
Here to remain in soft captivity,
Thou would 'st despise me were I meanly driven
To slight the promise to my comrades given"⁵⁷

So the Fakir with his comrades joins the battle against the soldiers of Shoojah at the request of Nulinee's father to do justice. The cry for battle was in the air; -"The earth convulsed as if quaked with fear?"⁵⁸

The Fakir and his band of outlaws are routed. The Fakir himself falls wounded and the tide of life begins gushing out fast from his heart. Derozio as a poet gives a very touching description of it in some telling words.

Ah! there a bold Moslem writhing lay,
And gasp by gasp was life ebbing away."⁵⁹

At last the Fakir succumbs to the fatal injury caused by valiant battle against the forces of Nawab Shoojah and becomes vanquished. Derozio writes,

"The tide of life fast gushing from his breast –
The spirit struggling for eternal rest!"⁶⁰

Nulinee had fear in her mind as her life was steeped in suffering imposed from without. She was in quest of her lover in the battlefield and found her lover dead. Here Derozio's poetic expression deserves our careful attention not only for Nulinee's plight but also for the poetic beauty:

"She placed his head upon her bosom fair,
Watching the spirit as it ebbed, pale and care
Had steeped her heart in sorrow's bitter stream,
And on her brow a melancholy beam
Like moonlight fell upon a drooping flower."⁶¹

Nulinee's hope and aspiration regarding love and new life with the Fakir have been shattered into pieces. Her existence on earth becomes meaningless. She is also found dead, her arms 'fondly ivying'⁶² the corpse of the Fakir. It is very evident that Nulinee welcomed the new life with the Fakir and she died with the desire and the dreams of life's beauty in her heart. So Derozio writes

"..... all powerful charms
Even death had failed to conquer – her lips seemed
Still parted by sweet breath, as if she dreamed
Of him in her embrace"⁶³

Derozio's concept of love is not only associated with the idea of honour as reflected in the Fakir's resolve to fight, but also with sacrifice as shown in Nulinee's death with the death of the Fakir. This is an example of love idealized and sacrificed "par excellence". In the first part of the poem Derozio tries to show an attempted sacrifice in the name of love and duty falsely

imposed on an unfortunate young woman for some superstitious social customs.

Derozio raises a question about Nulinee's love :

" Think'st thou she dreams of love, and love for whom
The parted dead whose home should be the tomb"?⁶⁴

Then he leaves the matter of love to Nulinee when he writes,

"Hers was a heroine's choice..."⁶⁵

Again he says that Nulinee has been brought to pyre of her dead husband against her will

"And see! she comes unto death's festival
As to her bridal bed."⁶⁶

He does not like to see Nulinee as

"... a toy for others play"⁶⁷
as "The heart is free, and gives itself away."⁶⁸

The superstitious custom of 'Sati' suppressed the desire of her life. He says,

"The various passions in her bosom caged,
All wildly maddening war chaotic waged."⁶⁹

Nulinee's mind suffers from stress and strain for the inhuman torture and while the first part of the poem, 'The Fakir of Jungheera' is, as has been said earlier, an attempted sacrifice, the second part shows a willing sacrifice that glorifies and ennobles love. Sacrifice forced by superstition and sacrifice dictated by love are contrasted. Derozio says,

"Life's sunniest hour is when th' enraptured soul
Yields, willing captive, to Love's sweet control."⁷⁰

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:

"Those wild emotions love alone bestows
Ecstatic fancies which but once can be,
Making us quite forget Mortality."⁷¹

The frequent use of the imagery of heavenly bodies and references to precious stones, flower and dreams in 26 and 27 sections of Canto I underline the celestial nature of the love between Nulinee and the Fakir and endows it with a halo of immortality.

4. The Note of humanistic secularism in the Fakir of Jungheera:

The Renaissance outlook of Derozio leads him to bring in the note of humanistic secularism in his poetry. He always stresses on man and man's fundamental hopes and aspirations irrespective of caste, colour and religion. Pallav Sengupta notes in the union between the star – crossed lovers – a Muslim Fakir and a Brahmin Girl, Nulinee, Derozio's effort at achieving religious harmony, which he calls "progressive harmony".⁷² But the theme of the metrical tale and the sub – plot – 'The Legend of the Shusan', based on 'Betel Puncheesa' which a student of the Hindu college brought to him prove that the metrical tale strikingly reflects Derozio's humanistic secularism, rather than his zeal for religious harmony. In the poem under discussion an upper caste Hindu girl and a Muslim youth fall in love but he is compelled to marry someone else and becomes, out of frustration, a lawless tough. They are united dramatically after she is rescued by him from the funeral pyre of her deceased husband. Her former lover takes her to the safe abode of the rocks of Jungheera with the kindling hope and dream of building home. Their eternal impulse of love breaks the barrier of established custom of society and religion. Nulinee descends from the funeral pyre ignoring the caste of her former lover and the reaction of the society to which she belongs on account of her free-choice Derozio suggests free choice of love of Nulinee in the opening line of section XII, Canto I :

"Hers was a heroine's choice",⁷³

as she cannot think of her love for a man "whose home should be the tomb"?⁷⁴ Similarly, after rescuing Nulinee from her husband's funeral pyre, the Fakir takes a vow by which he breaks the religious barrier,

'No more to Mecca's hallowed shrine
Shall wafted be a prayer of mine.

.....
.....

Henceforth I turn my willing knee
From Alla, Prophet, heaven, too thee."⁷⁵

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's secular outlook, born of humanism, is well reflected in another incident of the poem. Nulinee's father felt humiliated as the Muslim Fakir, Nulinee's former lover, rescued Nulinee from the pyre and went with her to the rocks of Jungheera. So the humiliated father prays to the Nawab of Rajmahal for a redress. The Muslim ruler does not hesitate to help a Hindu subject (Nulinee's father) to get his grievance redressed against a Muslim 'outlaw'. Here 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 that may be traced to his schooling under the care of David Drummond who came to Calcutta bringing with him the voice of the new humanity looming large slowly but steadily in the soil of Bengal at first and championed humanistic secularism.

5. The Note of Mediaevalism in the poem:

In 'The Fakir of Jungheera' ' Derozio's idea of mediaeval romanticism is well expressed in his selection of place for narrating a tale of love and romance against the backdrop of a superstitious religious custom of 'Sati' of the Middle Ages. In the poem we get an episode of love in the sub-plot-'The Legend of the Shushan' which strengthens the idea of love of the mainplot. In his own writing to the notes of the poem he mentions the source of the metrical tale: "Although I once lived nearly three years in the vicinity of

Jungheera, I had but one opportunity of seeing the beautiful and truly romantic spot. I had a view of the rocks from the opposite bank of the river, which was broad and full, at the time I saw it, during the rainy season. It struck me then as a place where achievements in love and arms may take place, and the double character I had heard from the Fakir, together with some acquaintance with the scenery, induced me to find a tale upon both these circumstances".⁷⁶ In building the tale of the poem, he writes, "..... I have taken a licence with the fact which thus assumes a more romantic character".⁷⁷ It is quite natural for Derozio to be romantic in narrating the tale of love, war and battle as he was well – acquainted with the 'Preface to the Lyrical Ballads' published in 1798 by Wordsworth and Coleridge . 'Preface to the Lyrical Ballads' heralded the movement of Lyrical Ballads which was welcomed by Derozio for the first time in India. As a result of the wave of it we get a poem like 'The Fakir of Jungheera' from Derozio's poetic genius.

The Muslim – Fakir, Nulinee's former lover, shows chivalric attitude to love of mediaeval period. Nulinee's rescue by him from the funeral pyre of his dead husband reminds us of the Knights of the Middle Ages of England who used to save their lover braving dangers whatsoever. The Fakir becomes desperate to do as honour is involved with his love. For materializing his dream of love and home he is ready to fight against the soldiers of the Nawab of Shoojah; The Nawab sent soldiers to redress the humiliation of Nulinee's father. Then the battle between the forces of the Fakir and the Nawab takes place. Derozio gives a spirited account of the battle which is surcharged with the air of mediaeval battle. He uses the symbol of 'storm' to suggest the impending battle and writes many lines about it. The battle is heard. Derozio writes,

"And the shout that rushes through silence on high
Like the tempest's voice is the battle –cry."⁷⁸

Again he writes,

"Strike! 't is the demon, deep, in his breast
Let your lances be gilt and your sabres find rest."⁷⁹

Derozio was well-acquainted with Walter Scott's metrical romances and the flash and spirit of battle – action of Scott inspired Derozio in his description of battle between the comrades of the Robber – chief and those of Shoojah in 'The Fakir of Jugheera' He writes about it in section XX, Canto II. Some lines may be quoted from this portion to show his art of description of the battle-scene:

"Each robber has taken his sabre and shield,
And bounds like a blood hound new – split of the shield,
Heard ye the horrible roar of the gun?
Destruction is raging, the battle's begun
Another dread peal! And a flash again
With a flickering light illumines the plain"⁸⁰

As a result of the fierce battle soldiers lose their lives. Derozio gives a poetic description of it in the following lines:

"The youthful, the gallant are falling around
Like corn just reaped on the damp cold ground
And the blood flows fast of the fallen and falling,
As if it came forth at the spear-point's calling?"⁸¹

In the battle Nulinee's lover fights valiantly and his courageous fight dispersed the royal soldiers and caused huge harm. The Robber-chief also dies heroically to the last drop of his blood to emerge victorious in order to come back again to Nulinee for promises to keep but he could not. Derozio's description of the death of the Fakir displays his gift of poetic expression:

"Ah! There a bold Moslem writhing lay,
And gasp by gasp was life ebbing away;"⁸²

Nulinee's reaction to her former lover's death can be felt by the long – cherished love that broke the barrier whatsoever. She is, as if, petrified in grief as her desire and hope of living with the fakir is shattered into pieces and she cannot believe it. Is it not a reaction expected of a lover who has been turned into a toy at the hands of those who negate the eternal impulse of love and life

in youth? In the battle-field Nulinee finds the body of her lover and Derozio expresses her poignant emotion thus:

"She bends her form, beholds, and stands fixed and mute:
Is it a dream, or does the night deceive?
She looks again – she trembles – must believe
'T is he – that robber – not victorious now –
The cold death damp descending on his brow."⁸³

Nulinee cannot bear this stroke of misfortune and she is also found dead embracing the dead body of her lover. In this way he perpetuates her spell of love through her death and her love conquers over death. Derozio writes :

"Even death had failed to conquer – her lips seemed
Still parted by sweet breath, as if she dreamed
Of him in her embrace."⁸⁴

In his description of the royal court of Shooja at Rajmahal Derozio gives us a glimpse of his acquaintance with royal courts of the mediaeval period. About the beauty of the royal court he writes;

"The lamps are lit in the Mussulman's towers
And soft is the song in his emerald bowers!
And sweet's the sitar that the minstrel hath strung
And sweeter the lay that the Georgian hath sung – "⁸⁵

Derozio portrays the beauty and grandeur of the lamps upon each marble wall, in these lines,

"Those lamps are all of glittering gold
Like sunset gleaming o'er the sea,
And scented is the store they hold
As ever maiden's locks may be."⁸⁶

In the royal court of Rajmahal the prince is presented by Derozio typically in the way the Muslim princes are presented:

“On carpet bright of velvet green
Whose broidered rim with gold is shining,
With pearls the glittering lines between,
The prince is all at ease reclining
And golden cups and goblets bright
With spices sweet from Lunka’s isle,
And sherbets all like liquid light,
Sparkle around him there the while.”⁸⁷

In the royal court of the nawabs always maidens stand in welcoming position as mark of royal grandeur and glamour and custom. It is clear in the following lines:

“Behold a young Cashmerian girl
With cheek of rose, and neck of pearl,
Before him stands – the fairest star
Burning in beauteous skies afar.
Might trembling shrink away to vie
With the pure lustre of her eye.”⁸⁸

Apart from the description of the royal court of Nawab Shoojah, Derozio’s sense of mediaeval tradition and custom springs from his use of a side-plot in the narrative that strengthens the theme of love in the main plot. The side-plot is entitled ‘THE LEGEND OF SHUSHAN’. In it we get a sequence when ‘pretini’s (female ghosts) appeared and tried to allure the meditating young man in many ways which included singing seductive songs resembling the ‘tappa’ both in spirit and words. The ‘tappa’ was very popular then.

So in depicting the scenes of love, romance, battle, royal court of Shoojah and using the folktale – like side-plot with a sequence of pretini’s song to allure the meditating young lover, Derozio has been successful in

creating mediaeval atmosphere. In doing so, poetic beauty of the poem is not impaired.

6. The Fakir of Jungheera : Indianness of Theme:

'The Fakir of Jungheera' is remarkable for the Indianness of its theme. Derozio has Indianised his theme of love by relating to a Hindu widow's pitiable plight on the pyre of deceased husband. It shows the prevailing inhuman custom of 'Sati' that led to many deaths. The atmosphere of the poem has been Indianised through a flawless depiction of a Hindu rite being performed according to the shastras. There are some words and expressions in the 'Hymn' contained in the poem which have striking similarity with some Vedic imageries. This 'Hymn' is addressed to the 'Sun- god' in connection with the Sati- rites as narrated in the poem.

The idea of the sun-god is taken from the Vedas. The reference to the 'eternal seven' and ' wheeling minstrels of the court above,' ' giver of good' , ' good of immortal mind', the god who sits on a ' golden thorn', the god who devastates cloud, thunder , and darkness and creates rainbow, fragrance of flowers, sylvan shades of the forest and the beauty of woman – all have their comparable counterparts in Rig-Veda. The following sooktas (Verses) of the Rig-Veda and certain parts of the Upanishad's will give to the allusion made above- Rv. 1/50/8-9; 1/35/2-15; 10/37/1-12; 6/71/13; 7/1; 7/45; 1/22/5-8; 1/115/4; 4/46/6; 1/164/52; 5/41/2; 5/82/1-6; 7/73/1-4; 7/63/4; (Brhadaranyak Upanishad; Janak-Yajan-Balkya sambad: Chhandygyopanishad: Shwetket Upakhyan). Incidentally, there are two more portions in "Jungheera' where similar images and allusions can also be traced out by and large.

In an explanatory note appended to this 'Hymn', Derozio clearly mentions about the Vedas: "The Vedas, which are supposed to contain the essence of wisdom, declare in various places, wherever language of praise is employed, the project of such praise is the Deity of Brihm. Thus fire is Brihm, water is Brihm; a number of other substances are defined in like manner. It is necessary to state that all prayers in the ceremony of female immolation are addressed to the 'sun' ".⁸⁹

Everyone wonders about Derozio's knowledge of it. No record suggests so far that he read the Vedic literature in original. Perhaps he read Sir William Jones' 'Extract from a Dissertation of the Primitive Hindus'(1874) that included a few 'Hymns' addressed to some of the Hindu deities, including 'Surya' that also in turn resemble Vedic hymns addressed to the sun-gold, in nature and expression alike . H.T. Colebrooke wrote an article in 1805, viz. "on the Vedas or sacred Writing of the Hindus." Leaving these sources of the Vedic knowledge, probably the English translation of the Rigveda of Horace Heyman Wilson, a noted vedic scholar came to his hand as it was published in the middle of the nineteenth century. Krishna Mohan Banerjee, Derozio's student, became a Vedic scholar in his later days. From Krishna Mohan Banerjee and the other students of the Hindu College he may get help about the Vedic collection. All these sources were probably utilized by Derozio.

The, 'Hymn to the sun' and other ceremonial details create a very suitable Indian atmosphere in the poem. In 'The Fakir of Jungheera' Derozio 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 that flows on and on. In 'The Fakir of Jungheera' Derozio writes,

"The sun-lit stream in dimple breaks,
As when a child from slumber wakes,
Sweet smiling on its mother –there
Like heavenly hope o'er mortal care"⁹⁰

Really, the music of the murmuring ripple of the Ganges had a healing effect on his poetic bent of mind that inspired him to compose poetry keeping the background of the Ganges in mind. Shivnath Shastri aptly comments, "while staying at Bhaugulpore the boy Derozio used to stroll alone on the bank of the Ganges, and composed poems."⁹¹

Butterfly is an inseparable part of Indian nature and its movement in nature presents a spectacle of beauty. Derozio's minute observation does not miss it. He writes,

"From field to field the butterfly
Flits- a bright creature of the sky;
As if an angel plucked a flower
From fairest heaven's immortal bower."⁹²

The beauty and grandeur of a honey sipping melodious bee as inevitable part of Indian nature does not go unobserved to the eyes of Derozio. He writes,

"And wildly roving there the bee
On quivering wing of melody
From shrub to shrub enamoured his,
Then, like a faithless lover, flies
Giddy and wild even as he sips
Their honey from the flowret's lips".⁹³

This sort of natural description strengthens his theme of Indianness and it comes out of his deep love and respect of his country i.e. India.

7. The Note of Patriotism and Respect for India's past Glory in 'The Fakir of Jungheera':

The culture of Renaissance is not characterised by a single dimension but by a multidimension. As a result of inquisitiveness the humanists began to reveal the past glory and culture as enshrined in the past literature. This tendency led the western scholars and artistes like- Petrarch, Alberti, Picco, etc. to explore the wealth stored in Greek and Latin. This cultural wave came to the shore of Bengal through western education and it changed the outlook of the intellectuals of Bengal at first in India. The intellectuals of Bengal showed a deep interest in the pure and pristine culture of ancient India which lay hidden so long under the veil of ignorance. William Jones and other orientalisists of the West showed great interest for India's past culture as

contained in its classical literature. According to Amalesh Tripathi this tendency may be called 'traditional modernization'.⁹⁴ In Bengal this tendency to trace the past glory of India was turned into a great desire by- 'One of the strangest figures of Bengal Renaissance, an Anglo-Indian Derozio.'⁹⁵ He was so called as he was very popular among his students for his patriotism, profound knowledge and wisdom. This appreciation about Derozio was echoed by Rajnarain Basu later in 1874 in his book, "Ekal Ar Sekal". He says there "Derozio loved this land deeply looking upon it as his own country. Derozio's patriotism, nobleness, his profound knowledge and wisdom impressed some of his students so much that they used to stay in his company. On account of his birth in Bengal and mixing in the company of the Bengalees, he became a typical Bengalee and forgot the fact that he was the son of a fair complexioned man."⁹⁶ Derozio for the first time in Bengal expressed the note of patriotism in his sonnet "To India- My Native Land" which is included at first in his metrical tale, 'The Fakir of Jungheera'. It may seem a matter of mystery that the first poem of patriotic note is composed in English by Derozio. But its historical ground may be traced to the historical thought of Bankimchandra. In an essay, "Bharat Kalanka" included in the first part of his "Bibidha Prabandha" later in "Bangadarshan" in 1872, Bankimchandra wrote, 'We have mentioned in this essay the two of precious gems acquired by us from the thought-store of English—love of all independence and establishment of race. These two were not known to the Hindus.'⁹⁷ With a profound and reverent admiration from the ancient, rich lore of India and in spite of his Eurasian Origin, Henry remained, Srinivasa Iyengar says; "wholly Indian in spirit and aspired to be India's national bard."⁹⁸

Derozio's intense awareness of the greatness of India's past glory is manifest in many of his poems. The contrast between the past glory of India and the plight of the present made Derozio apostrophize his country thus:

"My country, in thy days of glory past
A beauteous halo circled round thy brow"⁹⁹

In 'To India- My Native Land' Derozio goes to the extent of imagining India as a goddess because of the halo of her glory. Derozio is so confident about the greatness of India's past that he desires to review and recollect the same with passionate devotion:

"Well –let me dive to the depth's of time,
And bring from out the ages that have rolled
A few small fragments of those wrecks sublime."¹⁰⁰

The sublime past provides a marked contrast to the decadent and stagnant conditions of the present. The awareness of this contrast leads the poet to a sad lament:

"Where is that glory, where that reverence now?"¹⁰¹

Derozio's another sonnet, 'The Harp of India' recalls the glory of the past of India through an image of the musical instrument which produced sweet sound once upon a time but is totally silent now:

"Thy music once was sweet"¹⁰²

The imagery of an unstrung harp hanging from a withered tree in a deserted place and a young wayfarer stretching out his hand towards it, vividly portrays the Indian decadence at the beginning of nineteenth century. Derozio poignantly describes India as,

"Neglected ! Mute and desolate art thou
Like ruined monument of the desert plain ..."¹⁰³

He finds out the cause of the neglected state of India when he says,

"Silence hath bound thee with her fatal chain."¹⁰⁴

Unlike his Eurasian community which clung more to Europe and the ruling class than to India and her masses, Henry Derozio asserts his love of

India's past glory and tries to revive it in spite of his poor ability. Even he will in his dying breath sing in defence and in praise of his country :

"O! Many a hand more worthy far than mine
 Once thy harmonious chords to sweetness gave

.....

.....

Those hands are cold –but if thy notes divine
 May be mortal wakened once again
 Harp of my country, let me strike again".¹⁰⁵

As Derozio had reverence for India's past glory and culture, he used abundantly Indian myth, legend and imagery. M. K. Naik rightly points out: "Derozio is pioneer in the use of Indian myth and diction."¹⁰⁶ Pallav Sengupta points to this aspect of his (Derozio's) poetry. He quotes Derozio's own note on the poem: "That Derozio adopted the Vedic prayer to the Sun in his poem is a clear indication of this admiration of India's ancient glory as enshrined in her scriptures".¹⁰⁷

Out of Derozio's love for India's past glory his sense of nationalism and patriotism got a new lease of life in his poetry. It made a maiden mark in the journey of Indian English poetry in the dawn of the Renaissance in the early part of the nineteenth century.

8. Nationalistic Feeling in 'The Fakir of Jungheera' :

The discovery of the glorious past of India together with a new awareness of the same led to the resurgence of nationalism and patriotism among all the Bengalees during the early part of the 19th century. This finds an eloquent expression then in English Poetry of Bengal.

Derozio was the first Indo-Anglian poet to give utterance to intense nationalism and patriotism. He was truly an Indian poet in the sense that he identified himself with the Indian ethos and felt acutely about the conditions of his country. In an age when nobody thought of India'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.

Derozio is not only the first patriot –poet of the Bengal Renaissance period but the first champion of reason and progressive ideas in his national and patriotic outlook.

In 'The Fakir of Jungheera' we get flashes of sentiments .Here the beauty and majesty of the motherland are superbly expressed by Derozio :

"O! Lovely is my native land.
With all its skies of cloudless night
But there's a heart, and there's a hand
More dear to me than sky most bright.
I prize them –yes as though they were
On earth the only things divine
The only good, the only fair _
And O!-that heart and hand are thine."¹⁰⁸

Again Derozio says,

"My native land hath heavenliest bowers
Where Houris ruby –cheeked might dwell,
And they are gemmed with buds and flowers
Sweeter than lip or lute may tell."¹⁰⁹

9. The love For Liberty in 'The Fakir of 'Jungheera':

Derozio was born in a transition period of Bengal .Actually from the last part of the eighteenth century reevaluation of the established ideas and attitudes to life and to the world started as an impact of the revolutionary ideas of Western philosophers and thinkers. Its wave naturally came to Calcutta for the first time as any process of change takes place in urban areas for the first time. Calcutta also witnessed this reevaluation of established ideas and attitudes to life as it was culturally in process of change due to concentration of different types of people .Derozio grew up in this period. Education from Drummond's school made him acquainted with the new philosophical ideas relating to life, education and above all the world . So he had profound respect for liberty. The goals of the French Revolution and the teachings of the great

Indian reformer Raja Rammohun Roy inspired Derozio in his involvement with the ideals of liberty, equality, justice and social progress. He was one of the first Indo – Anglian writers to contemplate an intellectual renaissance through literary and philosophical perception .As a teacher he had enthused students with liberal and national ideas. According to Piery Chand Mitra, “He used to impress upon his pupils the sacred duty of thinking for themselves –be in no way influenced by any of the idols mentioned by Bacon-to live and die for truth- to cultivate and practice all the virtues shunning vice in every shape”.¹¹⁰

Derozio's passion for liberty is well-expressed in 'The Fakir of Jungheera'. The theme of this long poem presents a glimpse into revolutionary idea and thought. In the poem a Muslim Nawab sent soldiers to rescue a Hindu woman, Nulinee who was taken away by a Muslim robber-chief. Apart from this matter, both the robber-chief and Nulinee crossed the barrier of their respective religion to build their home for love. Both of them courted death to respect their love. To them loyalty to love is more dignified and glorious than the loyalty to superstitious religion that does not emancipate man and woman in any way. Actually 'The Fakir of Junghreea' expresses Derozio's desire for liberty in a unique way.

Derozio's passion for liberty has found expression in 'The Fakir of Jungheera' from the angle of love between the Muslim robber-chief and Nulinee. Nulinee became a widow when she was young .She was bought to the funeral pyre of her dead husband against her will only to maintain the cruel religious system of 'Sati'. Derozio's mind was moved and he says

“Think'st thou she dreams of love for whom
The parted dead whose home should be the tomb”.¹¹¹

Under the burning spell of liberty Derozio leaves the matter of love to Nulinee and says, 'Hers was a heroine's choice.....’¹¹²

Nulinee was brought to the pyre of her dead husband against her wish:

"And see! she comes unto death's festival
As to her bridal bed"¹¹³

Nulinee's plight is pitiable at the hands of the religious conservatives. Derozio does not like to see Nulinee as "a toy for other's play" as "The heart is free, and gives itself away". The age-old superstitious religious customs of 'Sati' suppressed the desire of her life. He writes,

"The various passions in her bosom caged
All wildly maddening war chaotic waged"¹¹⁴

10. Other Renaissance elements in 'The Fakir of Jungheera':

In Derozio's concept of liberty Honour also occupies a very significant place. He seems to have taken the cue from Moore (After the Battle in Irish Melodies) and Thurtell's 'History of France' (referred to in the hand-note to his poem, "All's lost save Honour), but he elevates it to a plane that neither of them has done. Indeed, honour plays a pivotal part in his concept of love, battle and in his personal life. In 'The Fakir of Jungheera' Derozio's concept of Honour is reflected through love and faith. In this poem the "Fakir" is highly motivated by matter of honour. When Shooja's soldiers attacked the Fakir's cave, the latter prepares to go to battle. He does not waste a moment in spite of Nulinee's entreaties to stay with her, for

"Honour at stake, it were degrading thee
Here to remain in soft captivity".....¹¹⁵

He cannot take the risk of losing the faith pinned on him by not joining the faithful followers in the battle-field. To Derozio honour is very important and this sense of honour leads him to write.

"Thou would'st despise me were I meanly driven
To slight the promise to my comrades given."¹¹⁶

Derozio's sense of honour is wounded when he finds India's spectacle of decay and he laments.

"Where is this glory, Where that reverence now?"¹¹⁷

He not only laments but also promises to bring back the honour and glory of India through these lines,

"Well- let me dive into the depths of time,
And bring from out the ages that have rolled
A few small fragments of those wrecks sublime
Which human eye may never more behold"¹¹⁸

Truth of experience, as has been said earlier, is the very breath of all poetry. Derozio got this experience from his short life which was full of thorns. He lost his parents in his early age and was burdened with maintaining the family. The termination of his service at the Hindu college was a bitter experience for him. In his poetry we feel an intensity of feeling that surrounds his bitter experience. To us Derozio appears to be a poet of human affection, sentiments and sorrow. He has equally a deep awareness of the nature of suffering and the pathos of human existence. He has an intuitive sense of the tragic and reflective awareness of the anguish of life. "The Fakir of Jungheera" is a tale of man's inhumanity to women. A sense of tragedy and melancholy permeates whole of the poem. Nulinee's physical and mental suffering in "The Fakir of Jungheera" during her movement towards the pyre is heart-touching. Derozio writes.

"What though the rose has vanished from her cheek,
Her eye speaks more than ever tongue may speak
That large black orb too eloquently tells
All that within her suffering bosom dwells"¹¹⁹
He also presents a picture of Nulinee's mind in the following lines,
"Her softened glance reveals the suffering mind
Gentle though racked, though agonized resigned"¹²⁰

He can delve deep into the minds of young widow as expressed in Nulinee. In this poem, as in other poems, Derozio deeply sympathises with the mental agony and miserable plight of the widows. V.K.Gokak rightly says, "The championing of the Indian widow starts with Derozio"¹²¹

One of the dominant themes in all Derozio's poetry is the tragedy of unfulfilled passion. Derozio himself led a life of unfulfilled desires and was hunted out by the wrathful guardians of an orthodox society. He was accused of misleading the students of the Hindu College. In 'The Fakir of Jungheera' he (Derozio) presents a picture of unfulfilled passion when Nulinee is found near the funeral pyre. He says,

"As flits the insect round the flame
So wheels the heart round passion's
Their blindness, madness still the same,
Alike in pangs they both expire"¹²²

Tom Paine's 'The age of Reason' was published in 1810. In Bengal after 1810 a sincere effort in building an age of reason was found. It was initiated by Derozio. Derozio read the pages of Tom Paine's, 'The Age of Reason' and he intended to establish an age of reason in Bengal. He was an uncompromising man in whom revolutionary spirit was very dominant. Being inspired by his sense of reason he raised his revolutionary voice against the prevailing superstitions. Hence he was an eyesore to the conservatives, especially of the Hindu society. He paid the penalty of it when his service was terminated from the Hindu college on the charge of misleading the students. The prevailing society of Bengal was in the grip of different superstitions and religious cruelty, child marriage, polygamy, slavery and many other inhuman customs. The overall social situation prompted Derozio to raise voice to relieve the society. The students who got English education in the Hindu College and other seminaries in Calcutta had the taste of European Philosophy and culture. Derozio protested against the inhuman social and religious customs and the English-educated students helped him considerably. Sir Roper Lethbridge aptly observes, "Most of those who had received their education in the Hindu college and the other seminaries in Calcutta were fired with the desire to do away with every thing that was old and embrace every thing that was new. "Cast off your prejudices, and be bold in your thoughts and actions" was their watch word; and there was at the time a new force at work to foster this independent spirit".¹²³

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 Fakir of Jungheera' he voices his vehement protest against the inhuman practice of 'Sati'. This inhuman social custom moved him very much. He was also deeply moved by miserable plight of the Hindu widows that resulted mostly from unmatched marriage and child marriage. The 'Kaulinya' custom in the Hindu society was also responsible for it. In a small article added to 'The Fakir of Jungheera' Derozio raised his voice against the religious superstition of the Hindu society. He says, "Satee" is a spectacle of misery, exciting in the spectator a melancholy reflection upon the tyranny of superstition and priest-craft. The poor creatures who suffer from this inhuman rite, have but little notion of the heaven and the million years of uninterrupted happiness to which their spiritual guides tell them to look forward".¹²⁴

The story element of 'The Fakir of Jungheera' revolves round an incident of 'Sati'. Nulinee, a young Brahman widow is about to be burnt on the funeral pyre of her husband ;but a tremendous conflict between her misplaced sense of religious duty and her own desire to live grows in her mind and torments her. Suddenly she is carried away by a robber-chief, her former lover. In the mountain,

"Her robber-lover and young Nulinee share
Each bliss as perfect as the heart may bear"¹²⁵

Though Nulinee and her lover are found in love-lock in the new abode, their happiness does not last long. With a band of soldiers sent by the Nawab Shoojah at the request of Nulinee's father, a battle ensues. After a valiant battle Nulinee's second husband, who snatched her from death himself, dies. Finally Nulinee also dies and finds peace in death as she breathes her last on the battle field lamenting over her second husband's dead body.

The rescue of Nulinee from the funeral pyre of her dead husband by her former Muslim-lover points to Derozio's fight against religious superstition.

It is not one-sided. Nulinee renounced her religion to respond to the call of love; similarly for love the Muslim robber-chief –turned lover unhesitatingly utters:

"No more to Mecca's hallowed shrine

Shall wafted be a prayer of mine
 Henceforth I turn my willing knee
 From Allh, Prophet, heaven, too thee!"¹²⁶

That Derozio was free from religious superstition is beautifully expressed in these lines. Here he glorifies love leaving aside religious superstition of Hinduism and Islam. Derozio's fight against superstition is voiced in other poems also.

11. Renaissance elements in other poems:

Rammohun Roy fought against the inhuman custom of 'Sati'- burning of Hindu widows. We quoted from the authority of the best religious books against the custom of 'Sati'. Bentinck removed this age-old superstitious custom in 1929 through legislation in the teeth of orthodox protests. Derozio welcomed this historic event passionately by composing a poem named, "On the Abolition of Satee". His onslaught against 'sati' is sharper than before. He begins his poem in this this way.

"Red from his chambers came the morning sun
 And it frowned dark Ganges, on thy fatal shore,
 Journeying on high, but when the day was done
 He set in smiles, to rise the blood no more,
 Hark! Heard yet? The widow's wail is over".....¹²⁷

In this poem his hatred against the priest-craft, instrumental for materializing this inhuman custom is well-expressed in the following limes:

"The priestly tyrant's cruel charm is broken
 And to his den alarmed the monster creeps".¹²⁸

In the poem Derozio marks the end of this evil custom though the imagery of the rising sun, so long covered with the darkness of the night on the bank of the Ganges. He sang of Bentinick's historic achievement against the evil custom of 'Sati'

"He is the friend of man who breaks the seal"¹²⁹

The helplessness of woman is portrayed here and he dreams of social revolution at the end of the poem when he writes,

..... morning's herald star
Comes trembling into day, O can the sun be far?¹³⁰

Derozio's 'Song of the Indian Girl' makes us feel the excruciating suffering of a widow caused by the heinous custom of 'Sati' as he (Derozio) himself was deeply moved by it. In this poem superstitious religious custom is not only mentioned but the resultant outcome of it is poignantly unravelled through a widow. Derozio's penetrative insight into the simmering sufferings of a widow is presented in these lines.

"My dream was bright, but it past away,
The thought so sweet is gone –
And hope hath fled, like a rainbow's ray,
Or a beam of the setting sun!
But I am left, like an autumnal leaf,
To the Pitiless world, and the blast of grief."¹³¹

The state of a woman before and after the widowhood has been unlocked in some telling words and expressions. This was the general pathetic picture of the Indian widows portrayed by Derozio in the poem. In 'The Fakir of Jungheera' and 'On the Abolition of Sati' his voice against the superstitious custom of 'Sati' is more evident than here.

That Derozio has expressed his passion for liberty in 'The Fakir of Jubgheera' has been discussed before. His passion for liberty is equally well

pronounced in his short poems. Derozio got distinct inspiration from the occidental culture. Greece and its people provided him with the impetus to compose poetry. As teacher of the Hindu college Derozio used to teach Greek history and the two epics of Homer. Even prior to that, during the formative period of his poetic career, he composed a number of poems which derived lot of inspiration from the brave and patriotic anecdotes of the Greek history. In this regard mention may be made of the poems, 'The Greeks at Marathon', 'Address to the Greeks' 'Thermopylae' and 'Freedom to the Slave'.

For Derozio Greece was a symbol of liberty, a glorious civilisation which valued freedom better than life. The ancient battle of Thermopylae (480BC) and the recent battle of Marathon (1825AD) are simply historic instances to show the Greek's love of freedom, courage and sacrifice. The Greeks seem to believe that.

*"He who dies his land to save
Rests within a glorious grave."¹³²*

In the "Address to the Greeks" the same sentiments are repeated with more militancy. The fighting Greeks are encouraged, the tenacity of the ancient Greeks is recalled and the historic role of Greece in preserving freedom is eulogized:

*"The ground that ye tread, by your fathers was trod
Their bloodshed for freedom has hallowed the sod"¹³³*

In "Address to the Greeks" Derozio inspired the Greeks to the march of victory in battle:

*"Strike, strike, as your fathers of old would have done
Unite and the field with your liberty's won!"¹³⁴*

Derozio reminds the Greeks of their past glorious history for inspiring them in the battle against the Turkees. The background of the poem "Greece" is this: two women, some children and a few non-military persons are arrested

by the Turkees and later brutally burnt to death. On this ghastly incident the European countries remained silent and it moved the poet very much more so as Greece contributed a lot to the European civilization.

Derozio wrote this poem to express this hope that Greece would attain freedom surely one day by her own effort. Derozio's passion for liberty visualizes the ultimate victory in the freedom struggle against the Turkees :

"Will Europe hear? Aye No-ah! No-
She coldly turns from thee,
Thine own right arm, and battle-blade
Must win the victory"¹³⁵

To celebrate the victory of the Greeks in the battle of Marathon Derozio composed the poem, "The Greeks at Marathon" The triumphant march of the Greek has begun and the heroes of Sparta will never bow their heads; by *courting death for the freedom of their country, they will take abode in a place where fame will always prevail.* So he writes,

"This is freedom's hallowed earth,
Hallowed by a deed of worth;
Let another such be done
On the field of Marathon,
Seek we freedom? Grecian, on!
Freedom's field in Marathon."¹³⁶

Derozio ventilated his passion for freedom and liberty in his poem, "Independence". At the outset of the poem he compares the inherent human urge for freedom with the flame of a tiny earthen lamp. The flame after glowing temporarily succumbs to a stormy wind. At this point the poet utters,

"My heart and shall that little lamp".
"My glorious image be....."¹³⁷

He visualizes the universal spirit of independence in the mirror of his own heart. And as his heart "Will" not "Tremble", thereby, the spirit of "Fearlessness" would be intertwined with the emotions for independence.

The very indomitable spirit of independence is reflected equally in the poem, 'The Freedom to the Slave'. In 1827 when it was written, the ugly system of slave trading was in full swing in a number of countries including India. Contemporary newspapers in Calcutta regularly carried advertisements of selling and purchasing of slave in and around the city. One shudders to read the accounts given in the Bengali newspapers like 'Samachar Darpan' of official records preserved in the Calcutta-High Court. 'The Very words denoting slaves came to be used as synonym for servants (Dash, Dashi) and they were treated as such though they had no civil liberty, or right to leave their master's service'.¹³⁸ To start with Derozio quoted a line from Thomas Campbell :

"And as the slave departs, the Man returns".¹³⁹

Campbell was a special source of inspiration to Derozio. Here he took a cue from him and thereby echoed the spirit of humanism. A slave is told that he has ceased to be a slave there after. Henceforth he won't have any master and would be regarded a free person. Different feelings that gradually overtake the mind of the slave are portrayed by Derozio in an emotional yet sombre and resolute language :

"He knelt no more, his thoughts were raised
 He felt himself a man
 He looked above the-breath of Heaven
 Around him freshly blew
 He looked upon the running-stream
 That 'neath him rolled away
 Then thought of winds, and birds and floods
 And cried, "I'm free as they".¹⁴⁰

The slave who attains freedom at first thinks of winds, birds and flood; then an awareness grips him:

"Oh Freedom there is something dear
 E'en in thy very name,
 That lights the altar of the soul
 With everlasting flame"¹⁴¹

The poet then pays a glowing tribute to the men who all over the world have been fighting against slavery :

"And glory to the breast that bleeds
Bleeds nobly to be free !
Blest be the generous hand that breaks
The chain that a tyrant gave,
And feeling for degraded man
Gives freedom to the slave."¹⁴²

The note of humanism that we find here forms the core of Derozio's progressive philosophy and his world view, too has been very distinctly reflected in these lines. Derozio believes that emancipation from slavery ennobles a man. This is not true about a slave only, it is true about all persons as freedom is the greatest possession of all. In his another poem "Anecdote of Francis – I." Derozio presents the French emperor who after being released from the Jail of Spain enters into his own land and this joy is only comparable to the joy expressed by the released slave after a long slavery. In the third stanza of the poem "Anecdote of Francis – I" Derozio describes his feelings in this way:

"Before him, all was fairest France;
Behind his dungeon Spain;
Above him was the light of hope
And he was king again."¹⁴³

In Derozio's concept of liberty, as has been discussed earlier, Honour is an inseparable element. The sense of honour is profoundly felt with the passion for liberty. Honour and liberty are interlinked. Derozio's idea of honour is tinged with a colour. The heroes of Derozio's poem, though vanquished are very careful about 'honour'. Francis, the vanquished hero of the poem, "All is Lost, save honour", for example, does not feel ashamed in his defeat, for he knows that though every thing is lost to him, in him "Honour remains".¹⁴⁴

Francis also tells others not to shed tears for those who have laid down their lives for saving the honour and independence of France.

"We should not weep for them; they rest
Unconscious of our cares;
Who envies not their bed of death?
For Honour still is their's!"¹⁴⁵

Francis' sense of honour kindles his mind to regain his lost kingdom and Derozio presents this picture of his mind in these lines:

"Save Honour, all is lost, but still
While Honour yet remains,
It fires me with the hope to break
The conquering tyrant's chains."¹⁴⁶

He (Francis) is proud to think that neither he nor his men flee from the field, nor does anyone submit to the enemy ignominiously:

"Against my warrior band was laid
Full many a lance in rest,
But every foeman's lance was broke
Within a hero's breast!"¹⁴⁷

Francis brings back his liberty and associated with it the sense of honour. Derozio presents a pen-picture of Francis' joyous mind in the following lines,

"A King again, a king again!
What joy was in his breast!
Possessing all that e'er his heart,
Could wish to have possessed."¹⁴⁸

Francis now compares his state of liberty to the state of bondage and describes his pent-up feelings in these lines and feels himself honoured:

"But late a captive in his cell,
 Now broken was his chain;
 What were his feelings when he cried,
 "I am a king again!"¹⁴⁹

The tragedy of unfulfilled passion is linked with Derozio's life. He led a life of unfulfilled desire and was haunted by the wrathful guardians of an orthodox society. Though young, he could delve deep into the mysteries of worldly life and had a sensitive awareness of the cruelty, sorrow and anguish of the world. There is a touch of *inexplicable pain in his meditations*:

"Mark this bleak world, ye shall find,
 'Tis cold, relentless and unkind,
 The sufferer rarely meets relief,
 But, like the yellow autumn leaf
 Is driven by every fatal gale.
 Where sorrows wound, and woes assail"¹⁵⁰

A strain of inconsolable anguish is born out of a sense of shattered dreams and it pervades Derozio's poetry. The pain of loss, frustration for emotions and a growing consciousness of the futility of human efforts are present in most of the poems. The pensiveness of a pentup nostalgia is seen in sonnets like 'Yorick's Skull', 'Dust', 'The Poet's grave and larger poems like 'Song of the Indian girl' and 'Hope'.

"I've dreamed of better days; but when
 My joys were in their birth
 The blast of ill blew wild and then
 My castles fell to earth"¹⁵¹

The imagery of the autumn leaf violently tossed about in the blast of grief repeatedly appears in Derozio's poetry.

'The Poet's Grave', 'Death', 'My Best Friend' are sonnets in which Derozio is concerned with the theme of death as the deliverer. Death comes as a happy release from this mortal life. Only in another life man could attain

the full knowledge and truth which he has been diligently seeking throughout his short life. Through the doors of death one enters a sunnier world.

Though acutely conscious of the suffering and sorrow of human existence, Derozio does not relapse into a mood of despair. Even in death man is likely to resore the 'Vanished bliss'.

"But man's eternal energies can make
An atmosphere around him, and so take
Good out of evil"¹⁵²

In fact Derozio approached death and suffering fearlessly and calmly as is evident from 'The Poet's Grave'. Derozio lived life intensely; his sensitive mind was alive to the sadness of things and the tragedy of experience to lead a happy life. Yet he writes,

"O tyrant Fate; thus shall I vanquish thee
For out of suffering shall I gather pleasure."¹⁵³

A paradox in Derozio's faith is his occasional wooing of Hope. Love and hope are the preludes to a life of unearthly bliss. The life-long quest of the poet had been to discover some sort of an imperishable love-hope syndrome in a black and murky world of insidious human environment. Thus the poet accepts that life is a mixture of sorrow and joy, pain and pleasure.

"The roses of our life must have their thorns
And storm and sunshine burst on us alike."¹⁵⁴

Derozio's meditation on the mystery of death on the one hand and his concern with beauty, love and hope on the other hand lend a peculiar charm to his poetry discernible only in the poetry of the metaphysics like Donne and Marvell. His poetry is a harmony and his life was a simple and courageous one and even as he had lived, so he died brave noble in death.

D. Summing-up:

An analysis of the Poems of Derozio shows that his poems reflect all the characteristic features of Bengal Renaissance. Through his poetry Derozio spreads the ideals of nationalism and universalism in our country. He initiates the struggle against the religious fundamentalism through his poetry. His relentless quest for Truth and Reason is also expressed through the poems and last, but not least, his poetry is vibrant with the spirit of patriotism and ideal of humanism.

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 unflinching 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.

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