DEROZIO: THE RADICAL ROMANTIC

Umo Rao “Writing in colonial space: A critical evaluation of the early nineteenth century Indian poetry in English” Thesis. Institute of English and Foreign languages, University of Calicut, 1999
Chapter - III

DEROZIO : THE RADICAL ROMANTIC

It is however one of the curiosities in the history of modern India that a great pioneer of the New Learning in that country is a young intellectual born of a Portuguese father and an English mother. He made India’s aspirations his own while he bemoaned its fallen state.

R.K.Das Gupta

My country! in the days of glory past
A beauteous halo circled round the brow,
And worshipped as a deity thou wast,
Where is the glory, where that reverence now?

Henry Louis Vivian Derozio was born on 18 April, 1809, in Calcutta. He was born into a Eurasian family, a family of mixed origin, one of the many such families that came into existence in India after the British colonization. The tragic focal point that bound these families -- call them Anglo Indians, Euro-Asians or Luso-Indians -- together was their sense of homelessness. To be true to oneself in borrowed robes: this was the core dilemma of the colonial nationalists, most particularly of the colonized native (Boehmer, 115). These families of a mixed racial nature were as
European as they were Indian, as British as they were Indian. Seeking recognition from either of the races and receiving none, discarded by both the nations on the very basis of their hybridity, such families have been permanently and pathetically cast in a no-man's land. Thus Derozio was born into a zone of dual allegiance. This pertinent feature formed the very basis of development of Derozio as a student, a poet, a teacher, a reformer, who was finally cast away as an infidel.

Derozio is the only poet of real distinction whom the Anglo-Indian community has produced in all its three centuries of existence (Bradley-Birt, iii). This community was not just racially left unwanted by both its parent communities, rather, socially and culturally too, the community was looked down upon, despite the English lifestyle and Christian religion the members followed. Physically too, some of them "inherited the weakness of the constitution that but too often descends as a legacy of mixed European and Indian parentage . . .(Bradley-Birt, v). It was more of a curse than anything to be born a Eurasian mix that adversely affected the physical, social and cultural growth and development of the progeny.

Derozio had his education in the famous Drummond's Academy from 1815 for a period of eight years. These were the formative years for the future poet, years that witnessed his evolving love for literature and philosophy and that built his ideals
of liberty and almost radical thought. This was also for Derozio a period of realization of his marginalization, a period of dawning awareness of his inability to identify fully either with the East or the West. Basically a sense of marginalization was experienced by all the poets of the early nineteenth century, but differently in each case. As Ngugi wa Thiongo' among others describe, one of the more damaging effects of colonization was the psychological dissonance and alienation experienced by colonized peoples (Boehmer, 188). The native poets like Kashiprasad Ghose and Madhusudan Dutt were led to believe that the native element itself was derogatory, was something to rid oneself of. This line of thinking swept them away from the general stream of thought in the then society. Derozio's was an example of marginalization arising out of an identity-crisis. The sadness, the melancholy that resulted out of this awareness underline most of Derozio's poems.

Beneath the impulsiveness and vivacity of enjoyment of the boy there lay the depth and strength and broad-mindedness of the man, and it was this happy combination of the grave and gay, of the spontaneity of youth and the wisdom of age that constituted something of the secret of his wonderful charm (Bradley-Birt, i).

On completion of his education, he was placed by his father to work in a mercantile firm, an experience most ill-suited for a person of Derozio's temperament. Soon realizing this, Derozio was sent, after a couple of years, to Bhagalpur to his aunt and
uncle, where the latter had an indigo factory. Though the work in the factory was no improvement on the work he had done in Calcutta, the place, Bhagalpur, and his stay there proved an enriching experience, a feast to the senses that aroused the poet within Derozio. Its rustic charm, the picturesque quality of the location, the lingering aura of a typical Indian village with its red mud roads, the swaying green fields changing colour with the turn of every season, the farmers at work, the young sun-kissed children at play, the veiled wives engaged in the various chores around the farm houses, the Ganga, a silent observer, flowing past the village, with many a boatman traversing her waves, the raw, rich, rustic music in the beating of the drums and the clashing of the cymbals, the changing dimensions of life's drama unfolding before young Derozio's eyes with the festivities of births, the celebrations of marriages and the lamentations of inevitable death, the customs, rites and rituals steadfastly adhered to during every event proved a very potent, heady presentation for the poet. The young poet desired and believed himself to be a part of this bit of earth, this slice of humanity.

His stay at Bhagalpur affected him deeply more than words could describe. It was not merely the rich dialogue with Nature in all its vibrant hues and colours that left a mark in his mind and heart, the human relationships that he witnessed there, the sense of belonging which he tangibly though momentarily felt there, left an indelible impact on the poet and motivated him,
involuntarily urged him into writing some very heartfelt, truly poignant verses. These verses are the first example in Indian poetry in English of a successful and conscious blend of English rhythm and metre with native theme and imagery. As Amalendu Bose puts it, "the earliest among the Bengalis (Derozio was a true Bengali and knew the language although English was his mother tongue and he was of Portuguese descent) to write imaginatively in English was Derozio . . ." (Harmony 11). The dual force of Derozio's Occidental learning and his Oriental leanings, the striking influence of Indian rusticity and native traditions that resulted out of his stay at Bhagalpur were notable aspects that led him to write the way he did, in his unique Indo-Anglian blend of theme and style. These verses are also, on the other hand, reflections of the poet's sense of being marginalized which naturally lurked within as a constant reminder of his very being.

If his eight-year period of education at Drummond's Academy initiated Derozio into literature and philosophy, into the values of liberty and equality, his two-year stay at Bhagalpur brought the poet in close encounters with those ageless, priceless, undying ideals of love, pity, faith, companionship, forebearance and sacrifice. The desire for freedom for one's motherland, the mixed elements of anticipation and joy in the birth of a new class of youth, the strong sense of optimism for the future of this nation are some of the strains that flow in and out of most of Derozio's poems.
Derozio’s biographer Thomas Edwards says:

It was here at Bhagalpur that Derozio realized what it is to love and to be loved. Here he saw that light which never shone on land or sea and which only beams from the eyes of those whose lives are intertwined in the bonds which love alone can weave. Who the lady was, or what the circumstances were which parted their lives, will probably never now be known, but it is very evident that this episode in his life made a lasting impression on him and he steadily refused to marry. \textit{(Henry Derozio 26-27)}

This reveals a lesser-known aspect of Derozio's personality and this explains the inspiration behind the themes of some of his poems.

Derozio has also been criticized, like Kashiprasad Ghose, for merely copying Moore and Byron, for writing ineffectual verses abounding in imagery and pretty turns of phrases with hardly anything original in them. It might be correct to say that he was influenced considerably by these poets. They were the poets then fashionable, and to depart from their models was, for a young unknown writer, to court defeat (Edwards, 192). One should also bear in mind that this sort of criticism came with Derozio’s publishing his first volume of poems at a very young age, -- when he was still in his teens -- a period when one does get influenced by a
class of writers who signify as being the ideal class, a period when one justly believes that the ability to write in the imagined particular style is an achievement. Charged with a rare intensity of passion and embodied in hardly improvable diction, imagery and rhythm, Derozio's poetry, at its best, impresses one with a sense of fulfilment and maturity astonishing for a man of his age (A.Bose, 12).

Derozio's first volume of poems was brought out to cater to the existing taste of the people which happened to be the contemporary Romantic style of poetry. Had Derozio lived longer, his poetry would have without doubt, opened itself out to wider and deeper vistas of experience and he might have grown into one of the greatest poets of Bengal irrespective of the language used (A.Bose, 12).

A perusal of his largest narrative poem 'The Fakeer of Jungheera' would make it hard for us to believe that it was written by a person who was not a native; so Indian is the poem in its theme, imagery, vivid portrayal and spirit. Derozio himself says,

"Although I once lived nearly three years in the vicinity of Jungheera, I had but one opportunity of seeing that 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
might take place, and the double character I had heard of the Fakir, together with some acquaintances with the scenery, induced me to form a tale upon both these circumstances." (Edwards, 23-24)

Basically 'The Fakir of Jungheera' is a long, undulating poem with just two events. Nuleeni, the heroine who is a young Hindu widow is on the verge of mounting the sacrificial pyre, when her former lover who is none but the leader of a bandit-gang comes to her rescue and saves her from death. But presently in an encounter, predicted to be the last after which he intended to put an end to dacoity, the bandit leader gets killed and the next morning, Nuleeni is discovered dead in the arms of her dead beloved. Derozio has woven all his imagination, his feelings of love, sacrifice, courage, his beliefs on social revolt against obsolete customs, his philosophy of love and life and his vision of the wonders of nature into these two events and has formed a romantic narrative in the process.

Affections are not made for merchandize,-
What will ye in barter for the heart?
Has this world wealth enough to buy the store
Of hopes, and feelings, which are linked for ever
With woman's soul?
The opening query speaks volumes. It affords a fleeting glimpse into the turbulence within the heart of Derozio the man, and his unfulfilled love. The poem opens with the promise of love, hope, happiness and abundance that charges the Nature around with a power unsurpassed and which brings a wistfulness within the poet's heart of the missing elements of his own life.

How sweetly wove might be the theme
Of gifted bard's delicious dream!
His temples fanned by freshening air,
His brain by fancies circled fair,
His heart on pleasure's bosom laid,
His thoughts in robes of song arrayed-
How blest such beauteous spot would be
Unto the soul of minstrelsy?

The description of the Fakir is suggestive of a dual-sided nature like two sides of the same coin, like the human spirit itself that embodies the right and the wrong, the good and the evil, the divine and the demonic aspects.

The light of day may never shine
Upon an aspect more divine;
The Pilgrim Moon may never see
A heart with more of purity,
Pure as her own unearthly beams,
Or brightest angel's blissful dreams!
His spirit's sacred rays are given
To one perpetual thought of heaven;
In prayer for all the sin that lies
Beneath the soft and pitying skies.

.......................................................... 
And never earthly life has seen
His hallowed form, his saintly mien;
Some say its holy heavenly light
Would be for mortal view too bright!

..........................................................
But others tell of deeds of death,
Of blood-stained hands, and broken faith,
Of outlaws leaugued, of foemen slain,
The hamlet burned, the plundered swain,
The peasant forced his home to flee,
The princely maiden's treachery,
Her youthful lord's untimely fall
And he, the demon - cause of all!

The poet mocks at the ceremonial procession with all
its glitter and dazzle that arrives to celebrate the snuffing of a
woman's life. The poet's values of life and liberty for all, his
degradation of superstitions and other meaningless and harmful
beliefs come out strong in the poem. Through the two events
mentioned earlier, the poet seems to exhort the people to give up
the old conventions and take up useful new learning. He strives to make them see through the shallow but cruel facade of these abominable practices.

And these the priests with triple thread
And saintly mien, and solemn tread,
Pronounce their Golden God to please,
Religion's holiest mysteries;

The Brahmin priests with their holier-than-thou attitude, who deem it their right to judge that a woman should die on her dead husband's pyre are lashed at.

Even in the structure of the poem, one can visualize the two opposing aspects, the two different mental states. The poet brings in the chorus to represent the traditional conventions, the superstitious beliefs that trick the innocent people into wrong conclusions:

Joys are immortal, hopes never decay,
    Onward from glory to glory they fly!
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.
Happy! thrice happy! thus early to leave
Earth and its sorrows, for heaven and its bliss!
Who that hath known it at parting would grieve
Quitting a world so disastrous as this?

The chorus thus makes it appear that given the visions of the temptations in store for us in heaven, it would be blissful to die. The irony of the entire situation is exposed in the line 'The cymbal twinkles and drum beats loud', where it seems as though the act of sati is a celebration to be looked forward to rather than a deed to be condemned. But then,

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

Through every word the poet endeavours to stop the society in its retrogression and exhorts the society to give up this inhuman practice. He questions their sense of sympathy and brotherhood and wonders how such base rites could be perpetuated. A tone of cynicism enters the lines making him declare:

... but 'tis vain -
Sure social love dwells not beneath the skies,
Or it is like the bird of paradise,
Which lights we know not where, and never can
Be found alive among the haunts of man.
As Nuleeni mounts the funeral pyre, the poet creates an aura of expectancy, he builds a sense of hope, of promise in the minds of the readers of some unexpected act to occur:

And now with baleful brand on fire
She slowly mounts the dreadful pyre!
Now all is silent, sad, and still,
As moonlight on a heath-clad hill;
No insects wing is heard to whirr,
The very air has ceased to stir,
And expectation breathless bends
To watch the pile that grief ascends.

The very stillness in the air is akin to the calm before the storm -- the storm that breaks when the bandit-king, the secret lover of Nuleeni, in one sweep, takes her and escapes to the rock of Jungheera. The sudden tilt in the tone of the poem from the heavy one to that of gay abandon is perceptible in the song of the bandit troop:

Our toil is done, our treasures won,
And now we homeward glide;
Our hearts are light, our hopes are bright
As this transparent tide.

What follows is an idyllic picture of love, its fond dreams and hopes as treasured in young Nuleeni's heart, moving the reader to wish:
O! that the gems in pleasure's ring
   Might never fade or fall away;
But 'tis, alas! a fragile thing
   Breaking too like a rainbow's ray -
And oh! were bliss to mortals given,
   Who, who would leave our earth for heaven?

The final lines whisper a sense of foreboding, of sad tidings to come, for after all, 'Life moves on constant, like the rippling rill'.

The bandit chief's begging an hour's time away from his beloved for the last raid of his career, his departure, the ensuing battle and his resulting death form a major part of the second half of the poem.

The philosophical lines :

Life's light and shadow ne'er must separate,
Life's sunniest hour is when the enraptured soul
Yields, willing captive, to Love's sweet control,
But 'tis that noon-tide hour which ever flings
The darkest, gloomiest shadow from its wings.

seem premonitory of the doom to occur. The death of the bandit leaves nothing for his young beloved Nuleeni to live for, who eventually gives up her life in his arms -- the real, true sacrifice for
the sake of love unlike the mockery of a sacrifice that the society forced upon her earlier on the funeral pyre of her husband.

The poem is a celebration of love, of sacrifice and of the liberty evolving out of love. The poem is also a call to shed the fetters of orthodoxy and to march ahead. An unbiased study of this one poem alone would expose the weakness of those arguments against Derozio to be a poor imitator of Byron and of including Eastern imagery in good measure in his poem. Derozio's finest and longest poem 'The Fakir of Jungheera' is a classic of new spirit which found its most powerful expression in the Romantic Movement (Das Gupta, I). . . . What was missing in the perfection in diction and style, was more than made up in the reality of experience which is the very breath of poetry. There is an intensity of feeling in Derozio's verse which is unmistakable. It is a feeling which gives his lyric utterances their power, which gave conduct its grace and its nobility and gave him the courage to hold on to his convictions when they were assailed by his adversaries (Das Gupta, H).

Even though Kashiprasad Ghose happens to be the "first Hindu who has ventured to publish a volume of English poems" one has to acknowledge Derozio to be the first poet to choose nationalism as his theme.

In 'The Harp of India' Derozio laments the degraded state into which his country -- India -- has fallen. Recollecting her
rich heritage, he considers it his prime duty to regain the country's noble culture:

Those hands are cold -- but if thy notes divine
May be by mortal wakened once again,
Harp of my country, let me strike the strain!

Derozio stands out different from the rest of the Anglo-Indian community, which, out of a sense of shame, tried to desperately cover up its matrilineal origin and made futile attempts to be English, to look up to England as its native country and lost in the bargain, belonging nowhere. Derozio recognizes India as his country and shows the concern for her condition even when most of the Indians themselves were either not aware of their heritage or had not risen up to acknowledge the rut the country had fallen into.

In 'To India - My Native Land' the poet asserts:

My country! in thy days of glory past
A beauteous halo circled round thy brow,
And worshipped as a deity thou wast.
Where is that glory, where that reverence now?

The poet's sense of duty towards his motherland surpasses all else:
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;
And let the guerdon of my labour be
My fallen country! one kind wish from thee!

In such verses that ring with true patriotic zeal,
Derozio comes out as an Indian poet and not an Anglo-Indian or a
Eurasian poet. Though a Eurasian by birth, Derozio identified
himself with India. His poems on India and on freedom for the
country reflect this oneness that he experienced with India, the
oneness he felt with an entire generation subject to colonial
subjugation. His short life was constantly dogged by the memory of
his mixed ethnic background and the distress it caused surfaces
unknowingly in most of his poems.

In 'Freedom to The Slave' he declares passionately:

Oh freedom! there is something dear
E'en in thy very name,
That lights that altar of the soul
With everlasting flame.

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

The poet thirsts to be free from the chains of the race, the blood and the tongue. He longs to be able to come out of the chains that bind him, that compartmentalize human beings into castes, creeds, religions, nationalities. He aspires and dreams of the ultimate liberty of man and the supreme recognition of the person as a human being. Derozio's poetry reveals the poet's mood—swings from hope to despair, from liberty to suppression, from love to death. The poetry enables us to witness the spiritual struggle experienced by the poet who longed to achieve liberty, but courted subjugation both racial and colonial. Derozio's poetry has a style of moving on twin, parallel aspects of a single theme. This yoking of conflicting features is indicative of the poet's own ambivalence, his own dialectic nature. His poems reveal the conflict in his life between his ethnic background and patriotism for India, his pro-West attitude and his state of suppression under colonialism. This passion for liberty is observed in certain other poems like 'Greece', 'The Greeks at Marathon', 'Address to the Greeks', and 'Phyle'. For Derozio, Greece signifies liberty, Greece embodies a glorious civilization and the valour of Greeks is the epitome of courage desired by every man.
The poem 'Heaven' contains some haunting lines that hope for an ideal state of being:

Where grief is unfelt, where its name is unknown,
Where the music of gladness is heard in each tone;
Where melody vibrates from harps of pure gold,
Far brighter than mortal's weak eye can behold;

Where truth is no name, and where bliss is no dream?-
'Tis the seat of one God! 'tis the land of the blest-
The kingdom of glory - the region of rest-
The boon that to man shall hereafter be given -
'Tis Love's hallowed empire - 'tis Heaven! 'tis Heaven!

The lines spontaneously bring to our mind a similar poem written by Tagore many, many years later, "Where the mind is without fear...".

Derozio brings out the same sentiments of absolute liberty and freedom of thought in 'Poetic Haunts' where he portrays the ideal ambience, the dream-like nature of existence which would be best suited for a poet:

Where the billow's bosom swells,
Where the ocean casts its shells,
Where the wave its white spray flings;
Where the sea-mew flaps its wings;

...........................................
Where the spirit of the sea
Wakes its matchless melody,
While the Naiads gather round
Gladdened by the magic sound;
Far from human hut or home
Let the gifted Poet roam.

Another poem on this theme is 'The Poet's Habitation'.
The power of his verse comes from the power of this poetry of his
life and we may miss that power if we fail to relate it to that life
(Das Gupta, G). The agony of a poet longing for freedom and his
inability to break absolutely free from the chains of imperial control
get implanted these lines. Bearing this in mind, one cannot help but
feel sad upon reading 'To my Brother in Scotland'. Despite his
strong nationalist feelings for India, the ambivalence in Derozio's
mind is beyond his control. His fear for the future thus surfaces in
the lines:

Th' uncertain future wakes the fear
I feel, but must not, dare not tell-
Yet Hope's sweet voice rings in mine ear,
And whispers - All shall yet be well!
These thoughts are strangers to thy breast
Where all is pleasure, peace and rest.
These thoughts - but let them pass away,
And Hope shall linger here alone -
In these few lines themselves, the alternate tones of uncertainty, fear and hope reflect the conflict in the poet's soul. An identity, a sense of belonging is an element of utmost importance to any person's being, which in its absence affects a person's thought, his happiness, his growth, his spirit, his very existence. Without it one is incomplete. This feeling of incompleteness coupled with a tangibly ingrained sense of marginalisation is felt by the poet which very naturally spills out in his poems.

In the midst of this profound sensation, which has to be borne by the poet alone, his role as a teacher to the students of the Hindu College forms a rewarding respite. The poet's melancholy vanishes when he is among his beloved students. These are the few precious moments in his otherwise troubled life, moments that witness a glow of fulfilment, a spark of happiness on the poet's visage, moments that instil meaning and essence in his life. These were some of the few sunny moments in the short life of Derozio.

What joyance rains upon me, when I see
Fame in the mirror of futurity,
Weaving the chaplets you have yet to gain,
Ah then I feel I have not lived in vain.

- Sonnet 'To The Pupils Of The Hindu College.'

Quite a few poems of Derozio are replete with his obsession with the darker side of life, with the inevitability of death, with death and all its paraphernalia of the skull, the grave yard and
the tomb. These poems are but a reflection of the suppression experienced by an artist and his art struggling under a colonial power.

'Tis the house for dust and ashes
   Which the white worm revels o'er;
   ...'Tis the dreary, dismal ocean
   Which we all must travel o'er
   ... Where the conqueror is conquered
   And the captive breaks his chain.
   ... Where the wicked cease from troubling,
   And the weary are at rest.
   - 'The Tomb'

The four final lines of the poem show the desire, the hope within the poet's heart of one day being able to break free from the chains of colonial subjugation. There is a constant tension between hope and despair in Derozio's poems. The whisper of hope as glimpsed in the final lines of 'The Tomb' battles with the sense of defeat, the sense of passiveness in 'Yorrick's Skull' ("Despite of all his glory, he must fall") and 'Leaves' ("Here today,...Gone tomorrow..."). 'Yorrick's Skull' exposes the fickle, weak nature of man's pride and glory which with death is turned to nought, which truth at least should make man curb his superior ego.

Despite of all glory, he must fall
Like a frail leaf in autumn; and his power
Weighs lighter than his breath in his last hour;
The fact that we live for just a brief spell on this earth and that life is effervescent compared to death surfaces in many of his poems:

Brown, and withered as ye lie,

This, ye teach us, 'tis to die;

Blooming but a summer's day,

To fall in autumn quite away.

... This is life - some smiles and tears,

Joys and sorrows, hopes and fears,

Here today, all fresh and rair,

Gone to-morrow - where? Oh! where?

And in my war with her, I've felt and feel,

Grief's path cut to my heart by miser's steel,

But man's eternal energies can make

An atmosphere around him, and so take

Good out of evil, like the yellow bee

That sucks from flowers malignant, a sweet

treasure,-

Far out of suffering shall I gather pleasure.

- Sonnet, 'Death! my best friend if thou
dost ope the door'.

In the above poem, the anguish in the poet's life caused by his birth, his race and his identity, the poet's effort in overcoming his pain and his destiny by giving his best to his students, to his friends and watching their growth, the poet's
experience, through their development, of a rejuvenation in life are all hinted at. The poem is multi-dimensional where the 'grief', the 'good', the 'evil', the 'tyrant', the 'suffering' represent all this and more. It represents the poet's ultimate situation under colonialism.

. . . . . . O! Life
Why dost thou love me so - do I no hate
Thee, and thy gifts accursed? -- but there's a strife
My soul has long engaged in -- 'tis with fate,
And in my sorrow, I am half elate
With something kin to joy, that I must be
Soon in that conflict vanquished -- then from thee,
Loathsome existence! I separate.

- Sonnet - 'Where are thy waters, Lethe? -
I would steep'.

Once again the poet portrays his battle with life, his desire for death; for the poet, life with its veneer of civilization, with its facade of equality and freedom, with its artificial hues is stifling to the core, where he feels himself a misfit. He believes himself to be most suited in the land of Death where the ideal of equality is upheld in a complete sense, where no distinction is made between man and man.

Derozio has a penchant for love in its multiple colours: the first love, the unrequited love, the unhappy love. 'Here's A
Health To Thee, Lassie!' takes us in a flashback to the days at Bhagalpur, into a very personal, private facet of the poet's personality.

We've smiled together -- but 'tis past:
We've wept -- those days are o'er, Lassie,
'Twas too much happiness to last,
Its loss we now deplore, Lassie.
.... But we, alas! shall smile, and weep
Together ne'er again, Lassie.

The lines suggest some unknown, unfulfilled relationship, the memories of which have been locked in a corner of the poet's mind but which come unheeded into his love-poems, as seen again in the 'Ode From the Persian of Hafiz'.

The brightest, fairest works of art
That skilful hands devise
Are nought, without the hand and heart
Of her I fondest prize.

'The Fakeer of Jungheera' itself as 'Ada', 'Song of the Hindustanee Minstrel', 'The Neglected Minstrel', 'Evening in August', are some of the poems where Derozio sings of the purity in love which is too blissful to last, before separation casts a blight on its sublimity. Of course, one must admit that in the poems on love, as on the moon, the moonlight and the night, the poet leans heavily on his Romantic masters.
In 'The Eclipse' through the religious overtones given to an eclipse, the poet goes on to describe "the sickly" moon and "her cold inconstancy" while in 'A Walk by Moonlight' he recollects one of those lovely moonlit nights.

Derozio was the first to introduce the sonnet form into Indo-Anglian poetry (Nair, 43). In the sonnets, Derozio has written extensively on the subjects of hope, love, dreams, wishes, moon, death and memory. The sonnets are among the best of Derozio's poems. In the sonnet 'To those who originated and carried into effect the proposals for procuring a portrait of David Hare, Esq.' the poet takes a dig at the orthodoxy and the blind practices of conservatism and encourages his young students in their crusade against this.

Your hand is on the helm -- guide on young man

The bark that's freighted with your country's doom

...............................

And when your torch shall dissipate the gloom
That long has made your country but a tomb,
Or worse than tomb, the priest's the tyrant's den,

...............................

Best formed for deeds like those which shall be done
By you hereafter till your guerdon's won
And that which now is hope becomes reality.
Most of his sonnets have an autobiographical element in them:

Regret has ne'er brought back a vanished day,
And sighs are vain for dreams that pass away
Even like themselves; then let me cease to mourn
For those bright visions Time can ne'er return,-
For those warm fancies, aspirations high,
And thoughts that gleamed like rainbows in the sky,
Where are they now, those air-built visions strange,
Why should they perish, wherefore should they change,
And henceforth Hope with faithless meteor ray
Shall never cheat, or lure me from my way.

The poet who is but a man also hopes, aspires,
cherishes his dreams only to have them shattered by reality.

My aspirations mounted, but in vain -
They fell like wounded birds to earth again.

This oscillation between hope and despair once again brings to surface the poet's complex framework, the inner battle between the desire for promises, 'those bright visions', '... warm fancies, aspirations high' and the inability to actually achieve them in life.
Unlike the other poems on love, in the sonnet, the poet casts love in an ethereal light, full of promise where despite being unfulfilled, the memory provides succour enough to the poet.

Fair lady, I was but a minstrel boy

When first thy dark glance told my soul, that joy
Might be, perchance by heaven bestowed on me,

Why should my spirit deem its lot unblest,
For, however 'tis now robbed of rest,
And forced to war with a malignant world
Whose blood-red banner, against me unfurled,

Still faithful memory will fling back her beams
And bring to light those wild, unearthly dreams
Which were, in mercy, to my spirit given
When thou didst teach me all I know of heaven!

The love portrayed here is definitely more ennobling, bright and optimistic when compared to the dark, brooding hues of the previously mentioned love-poems. It is this love that helps the poet sustain his ideals, his principles, that enables the poet to pass these same beliefs to his students who mirror the poet's hopes and promises.

The sonnets are more attractive to the reader because the same theme of love, hope, dream or death is depicted in a far better, polished style and in a crisp tone which make the lines
linger in the reader's mind whereas in the larger poems, the poet, with his tendency to describe and narrate, tends to digress from the theme very often.

In the sonnet 'Misery on Misery :- I soon shall be,' the lines:

... Human ill
Is with one nature linked eternally
Man and misfortune are twin-born - I feel
This to be true, at least, 'twas so with me!

are very profound and touch the reader deeply. Derozio possessed in a remarkable degree the power of linking and transferring to inanimate nature the living feelings of human nature (Madge, 20).

Another very touching poem is 'Sister-in-Law', where the poet is requested by his sister to get her a sister-in-law unknowingly putting her brother in consternation for that is not destined to be.

After a study of Derozio's poems, after passing a judgement on him to be a trailblazer or on the other extreme to be of the shallow imitative class, one can only conclude that:

What English Literature lost through the early death of Keats . . . Indian literature in English lost, in lesser degree when Derozio died; for in both men there was a passionate temperament combined with unbounded
sympathy with nature. Both died while their powers were not yet fully developed. (Subba Rao, 63)

Derozio was the first nationalist poet, one of the group of early nineteenth century poets who through his poems on India, made India available to the future poets. It was this early poetic effort which enabled the later generation of Indian poets to stay in India, to use India, to write on India instead of looking abroad for themes. He had succeeded in catching the minds of the young students of Hindu College and in igniting the spark of inquiry, of reason, of liberty in these young minds when he himself was barely out of his teens.

Derozio had, in this tender age, acquired many firsts to his credit. He is modern India's first patriot to give expression to that patriotism in verse, the first to sing of 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 (Das Gupta, C). What social reformers and political leaders fought for in the parliaments and meetings, Derozio fought and obtained by his debates with the students. Derozio caught them young -- showed them the right from the wrong, pointed out the bigotted orthodoxy of the society and religion. In a word, he was "a teacher and journalist who wielded a cultural and ideological influence that made itself felt in Bengal for the next fifty years" (Sunder Rajan, 43).
In a word, he practised, he proved practically what the others fought for in theory. This of course resulted in his losing his job but even that did not disappoint him. It was through Derozio that the intellectual revival reached the students and thus the society. Of few men may it be said more fitting than of Derozio "Here lies one who never feared the face of man", who sought for truth faithfully, fearlessly and with all diligence, chivalry and charity and after searching for it here awhile, "went to find it in another world,", who during the short morning glow of his brief life, worked diligently to cultivate the intellect and purify the life of all his pupils, and who spared neither care nor sacrifice to raise the native people of India, and the men of his race to a social, moral, intellectual and political position which one day sooner or later they shall retain (Edwards, 171-172).

It is no doubt true that it was the efforts of our own Raja Rammohun Roy, David Hare, Justice Hyde and among many others Derozio too which resulted in today's prestigious educational institutions of Calcutta. It is their undaunted work and struggle that brought forth the Presidency College, the Medical College, the University itself. But while due recognition has been given to most of these pioneers, the name of Henry Vivian Derozio seems to have silently vanished from history. As Das Gupta declares, it is due to the fault of the early biographers that Derozio's reputation and claim as a national poet stands damaged. Both Thomas Edwards and E.W.Madge declared H.LV. Derozio to be a "Eurasian" poet and
reformer. It would do well for us to accept that "... Derozio is not one of the poets of John Company, he is a Bengali poet who wrote his poems in English" (Das Gupta, K).

In the early stages of Indian poetry in English, Derozio formed the crucial link between the East and the West. He was the first poet who served to connect the traditional with the modern, the Oriental with the Occidental. This was made possible due to his Eurasian background which created a natural affinity for the English language and literature on one hand and an ability to relate to the Indian culture and the Bengali spirit on the other. The poet's desire to be recognized and regarded as an Indian got complemented by the society's acceptance of the poet as an Indian and a Bengali instead of a Luso-Indian. It was the poet's ability to handle both the traditional and the modern principles of culture with equal ease which enabled him to help the society bridge the gulf and get acquainted with the Western principles of liberalism and equality, the tools with which one could stop the regression and bring about a progressive climate in the society. As a philosopher, Derozio possessed a radical line of thought which he infused into his students, which manifested itself in the reformatory zeal of the Young Bengal movement. Derozio was the first Indian poet in English who identified the social and nationalistic spirit of the times and transformed this spirit into art. With his bicultural background which dogged his conscience constantly, with his identification with Western philosophy and Eastern culture, with
his allegiance to the pro-West attitudes of imperialism opposed to the oppressive nature of imperialism, Derozio symbolizes the basic dialectic impact of colonialism. His poetry is significant as the first perceptions to register the ideology of a new genre in Indian Writing in English.

Did this first patriotic poet of Bengal, this founder of Indian English poetry foresee his own future when he wrote:

Be it beside the ocean's foamy surge,
On an untrodden, solitary shore,
When the wind sings an everlasting dirge,
And the wild wave, in its tremendous roar,
Sweep o'er the sod! - There let his ashes lie,
cold and unmourned;

..........................................
No dream shall flit into that slumber deep -
No wondering mortal thither once shall wend,
There, nothing o'er him but the heavens shall weep
There, never pilgrim at his shrine shall bend,
But holy stars alone their nightly vigils keep!