CHAPTER 1

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French literary historian, M. Taine, said that literature is the creation of three factors: the race, the milieu, the moment.¹ This need not be accepted as the whole truth, because individual too has his own part to play in literary creation. As regards Indo-Anglian literature, the "race" is the mixed Indian race, the "milieu" is the variegated Indian subcontinent, and the "moment" is the meeting of the West and India. The beginnings of Indo-Anglian literature coincided with Indian Renaissance whose sparks were lit in the first half of the 19th century in Bengal. The term "Indian Renaissance" is a disputed one, with scholars differing in opinion as to the propriety of applying the term "Renaissance" in Indian context. As has been pointed out by Sri Aurobindo, Indian Renaissance was not so much like Renaissance of the European kind but was "the attempt of a reawakened national spirit to find a new impulse of self expression which shall give the spiritual force for a great reshaping and rebuilding."² There is no denying the fact that socio-cultural-literary ferment of the time was the result of English education, which was in turn concomitant with the consolidation of British rule in India. The father of Indian Renaissance, Raja Rammohun Roy, is also the fountainhead of creative Indian English writing. His essay, "A Defence of Hindu Theism," may be regarded as the first original publication of significance in the history of Indian English literature.

The birth of Indo-Anglian poetry had its humble beginnings in the environment of growing craze for English education and English literature among the newly emerged Bengali middle class. The foremost influence on early Indo-
Anglian poetry was that of English Romantics like Scott, Byron, Keats, and Shelley. A new Indian sensibility which was an admixture of local cultural tradition and modernising influence of English education began to emerge, and along with it surfaced the need to express this new phenomenon in an alien tongue. The challenge was responded to with great gusto by the pioneers of Indo-Anglian poetry, who sought to overcome the lack of tradition and the burden of expressing oneself in a foreign tongue, by assimilating the sentiments of the English Romantics and imitating their poetic styles. These pioneers were the forerunners of a great intellectual stirring which reached its zenith in the poetry of Sarojini Naidu, Rabindranath Tagore, and Sri Aurobindo.

1.1. The Pioneer—Henry Louis Vivian Derozio (1809-1831)

The history of Indo-Anglian poetry begins with Henry Derozio. Born on 18 April 1809, in Calcutta, his father, Francis Derozio was Indo-Portuguese, and his mother, Sophia Johnson was English. Thus, Henry had very little Indian blood in him. But he was born and brought up in India, taught Indian students in an Indian college, was inspired by Indian themes and sentiments, and was a great patriot whose heart bled for his motherland; hence he may be considered as an Indo-Anglian poet.

At the age of six, Derozio was sent to Dr. David Drummond’s Academy. He spent next eight years of his life there. It was under the inspiring guidance of its Principal Dr. Drummond, the “grim, Scottish, hunch-backed schoolmaster”\(^3\) that Derozio’s “naturally imaginative, impulsive and powerful mind... was quickened and spurred into action.”\(^4\) Close association with Dr. Drummond had far reaching consequences on Derozio. It was from him that Derozio acquired a
taste for literature and philosophy. Years spent at the academy shaped Derozio’s humanistic and rationalistic outlook, and above all his fervour for freedom; which was to be the recurrent theme of his poetry later on.

At the age of fourteen, Derozio left the academy and joined a Calcutta based firm as a clerk. Dull routine of clerical duties proved to be a burden for the young, enthusiastic, Derozio. After a stint of two years, he resigned. After resigning from Calcutta firm, Derozio was sent by his father to work in an indigo factory owned by his maternal uncle Arthur Johnson, near Bhagalpur in Bihar. Though the job at the indigo factory was as distasteful for Derozio as the one at Calcutta, however, the picturesque and primitive scenes on the banks of the Ganges left a lasting impression on his mind. Idyllic country life provided necessary impetus for the precocious youth to blossom into a poet. Dr. John Grant, the editor of India Gazette was quick to recognise the genius of Derozio and invited the young poet back to Calcutta and thus began the remarkable career of the “National Bard of Modern India.”

A scholar and a poet beyond his age, Derozio received appointment as Assistant Master at the Hindu College when he was barely nineteen. Derozio loved India and loved his students whom he addressed thus:

Expanding like the petals of young flowers,
I watch the gentle opening of your minds,
And the sweet loosening of the spell that binds
Your intellectual energies and powers
That stretch (like young birds in soft summer hours)
Their wings to try their strength. O how the winds
Of circumstances and freshening April showers
Of early knowledge and unnumbered kinds
Of new perceptions shed their influence,
And how you worship truth's omnipotence!
And 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.⁸

As a teacher of the Hindu College, Derozio inspired a number of young Indian minds with a love of the English language and literature. Derozio took a rather large view of his duties as a teacher; he not only taught English literature, but also made his pupils ask questions, think for themselves, and not shirk from right answers. Ruling ideas of French Revolution and the poetry of great English romantics fired his imagination, and this he communicated to his pupils. The old order came in for much castigation, Hindu beliefs and customs were subjected to withering ridicule. Finally, Derozio was compelled by orthodoxy to give up teaching and he had to turn to journalism for a living. Derozio died of cholera on 23 December 1831. In the words of Oaten, "What English literature lost through the early death of Keats, Anglo-Indian 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."⁷

In his brief poetic career, Derozio published two volumes of poetry, Poems (1827), and The Fakeer of Junghera: A Metrical Tale and Other Poems (1828). The volumes include narrative poems, ballads, lyrics, and sonnets. Derozio's creative faculties were under considerable influence of English
Romantics like Lord Byron, Sir Walter Scott, Thomas Moore, John Keats, P.B. Shelley, and Robert Burns. C. Paul Verghese says, "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." In a sense, Byron was Derozio's spiritual mentor. Byron's love for freedom and liberty, his admiration for the grandeur of ancient Greece, his journey to participate in the Greek War of Independence against the Turks, all appealed to Derozio. Not only Byron, but Thomas Moore and Campbell's passion for freedom and liberty, Wordsworth's keen sensibility towards nature, and the poetry of Keats, Shelley, and Scott, all held Derozio in thrall. However, it needs to be recognised that, Derozio was not a mere copycat. These poets merely enlarged his poetic vision and sharpened his sensibilities—the seeds of which were already there, perhaps sown during his Drummond Academy days. A short study of his poems should suffice to show his indebtedness to other English poets and his greatness as a poet in his own right.

The Fakeer of Jungheera is Derozio's most sustained and ambitious poetical effort. Describing the tragedy of a Brahmin widow Nuleeni, through fifty-two sections, it has been acclaimed as "a classic of the new spirit." Nuleeni is rescued from the funeral pyre of her old husband by her Muslim lover just when she was to commit sati. The two young lovers are briefly united, as Nuleeni is carried away by the fakeer to the rock of Jungheera, the haunt of outlaws—whose chief he is. But the relatives of Nuleeni are determined to reclaim her. After a complaint by the enraged father of Nuleeni, Shooja, the ruler of Rajmahal, raid the fakeer's den and in the ensuing battle, the Fakeer is killed. The following morning, Nuleeni is found dead in the arms of her dead lover.
The Fakeer has been hailed as the “first epic of the Indian renaissance.”

In its scope and treatment, the poem embraces a whole range of human emotions. Widow Nuleeni, the victim of an age old social custom, finally attains peace in death alongside her deceased lover. The fakeer finds fulfilment of love through sacrifice and death. Love, sacrifice, and a bold look at social prejudices of the day, are the themes of the poem. While in the first part, the poem outlines an attempted sacrifice falsely imposed in the name of love and duty, the second part is a picture of willing sacrifice glorifying love. Sacrifice enforced by superstition and sacrifice prompted by love are contrasted:

Life’s sunniest hour is when the enraptured soul
Yields, willing captive, to love’s sweet control.\(^\text{11}\)

Nuleeni, the hapless widow, is presented in ethereal outlines:

One lovely form is gliding there
As if ’t were pure embodied air,
With face half veiled, enrobed in white,
She, like a blessed child of light.\(^\text{12}\)

Delicate Shakespearean lines are to be found at the beginning of Section XII of Canto II:

’Tis sweet upon the midnight moon to gaze
As o’er the waters shoot her trembling rays.\(^\text{13}\)

Websterian echoes can be cited in the description of dreadful storm in the next section:

How dreadful is the storm, with flag unfurled
And sheathless lightning warring with the world.\(^\text{14}\)
The Fakeer is remarkable not only for its descriptive prowess, but also as a showcase of Derozio's secularism, his reformist zeal, and Indian-ness of his theme. So far as technique and form of the poem is concerned, Derozio is indebted to English poets like Sir Walter Scott, for his metrical romance form, and description of battle between Shoojah's army and fakeer's band of outlaws; Thomas Moore, for his patriotic sentiments; Shakespeare, for his idea of 'star-crossed' lovers. Echoes of Byron may be heard in the impassioned style of the poem. Yet, Derozio is not the one to adorn and parade himself on borrowed feathers. He was inspired to write the poem after seeing the hauntingly beautiful rocks of Jungheera near Munger, which in Derozio's time, was the stamping ground for fakirs and outlaws of all hues. He has Indianised the theme of love and sacrifice by basing it on a Hindu widow's harrowing plight. Derozio has flawlessly described the ceremonial rites of sati, hymn to the Sun God, and other ceremonial details, to create a suitable Indian atmosphere in the poem.

Beauty of the poem lies not in its plot, but in the forceful presentation of the cruel practice of sati, the poet's humanistic beliefs, his reformatory zeal and patriotic fervour. Its beauty also lies in its melody, and Derozio's dexterous use of different metres and rhythms to match the varying tenor and temper of the poem. "He uses the iambic four-foot couplet for straight-forward narration, but adopts a slower line for the descriptive passages and the anapaestic metre for the spirited account of the battle, while the choruses of the chanting priests and the women round Nuleeni's funeral pyre are in trochaic and dactylic measures."  

Derozio was the first Indo-Anglian poet to sing of India's freedom. This was "somewhat surprising in a Eurasian at a time when the average representative of his class was prone to repudiate his Indian blood and identify
himself with the white man, for eminently practical reasons.footnote At a time when nationalism was still unborn, Derozio sang about the glory of his country with rare patriotic ardour. His heart bled for his motherland which was once encircled by a halo of glory but now lies unattended. The sonnet "The Harp of India" is a beautiful example of the above statement:

Why hang'st thou lonely on yon withered bough?
Unstrung for ever, must thou there remain;
Thy music once was sweet— who hears it now?
Why doth the breeze sigh over thee in vain?
Silence hath bound thee with her fatal chain;
Neglected, mute, and desolate art thou,
Like a ruined monument on desert plainfootnote

A poet of human sentiments, Derozio shows a deep understanding of the sufferings and pathos of human existence. One of the dominant themes of his poetry is the tragedy of unfulfilled desires. Hunted by infuriated custodians of an orthodox society, Derozio himself led a life of thwarted dreams. He was however not the one to be cowed down by life's injustices. Courageous unto his death, a more fitting tribute to him cannot perhaps be there than the one he paid to the poet in "The Poet's Grave."

There all in silence, let him sleep his sleep.
No dream shall flit into that slumber deep
No wandering 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.
1.2. Imitative Verses—Kashiprasad Ghosh (1809-1873)

Indo-Anglian poetry was born in Bengal, and the first Bengali publication in English verse belongs to the year 1830, when Kashiprasad Ghosh published his volume of poetry The Shair and Other Poems. The book was dedicated to Lord William Bentinck. It had several poems on Indian festivals after the manner of Sir William Jones's hymns to the Hindu deities. Influence of Sir Walter Scott is also apparent in this work.

Captain D.L. Richardson, an officer in Bengal Infantry, and later the Principal of Hindu College, sponsored Kashiprasad’s literary efforts just as Dr. John Grant sponsored Derozio’s. Richardson wrote appreciatively of Kashiprasad’s poetic forages in the Literary Gazzette of 1 November 1834, “Let some of those narrow-minded persons who are in the habit of looking down on the natives of India with arrogant and vulgar contempt read this little poem and ask themselves—could they write better verses not in a foreign tongue but their own.” Modern critics are however no so well disposed towards Kashiprasad. Referring to the flattering opinion of Richardson, Lotika Basu expressed her view that “removed as we are from contemporary influences our judgement of Kashiprosad’s verses will scarcely be a flattering one.” T.O.D. Dunn labelled the verses in The Shair as “agreeably imitative and everywhere pleasing. There is no real originality either in the form of the poem or in its subject.” Kashiprasad’s poetry seems to have been composed under the shadow of Derozio. However, unlike his more illustrious contemporary, Kashiprasad could not blend the musings and themes of others in his intellectual landscape to provide them with any appreciable degree of originality. Hence his poetic faculties appear barren except for a few borrowed blossoms.
Likeness with Derozio starts right from the titles. Not only the titles, even the theme and the tone of Kashiprasad's poems are a veritable echo of Derozio. A short comparative study of the poetry of Derozio and Kashiprasad will illustrate the point. In "The Vina", Kashiprasad addresses his motherland thus:

Lute of my Country! Why dost thou remain
Unstrung, neglected, desolate, and bound
With envious Time's and Ignorance's chain
Ah lonely lute! Who heareth now thy sound?22

Derozio's anguish for the fallen state of his motherland is expressed thus:

Why hang'st thou lonely on yon withered bough?
Unstrung for ever, must thou there remain;
Thy music once was sweet— who hears it now?23

Kashiprasad's "The Haunt of the Muse" is modelled after Derozio's "The Poet's Habitation: A Fragment." The faraway world of imagination as depicted in Derozio's poem is re-created by Kashiprasad with different words but similar ideas and images:

Where boundless ocean rolls his waves,
Not in his usual frantic mood
When wild and restlessly he raves;
But like a river in a wood,
Whose music sweet delights the ear,
Which simple shepherds love to hear;
There is an island of the blest,
Where fancy's children love to rest.24
This opening passage is comparable with Derozio's opening lines:

It should be an Aegean isle,
Where heaven, and earth, and ocean smile
More like an island of the blest
Than aught that e'er this world possessed.\(25\)

Similarity between seventh line of the first extract and third line of the second is notable. Kashiprasad was the first native Indian poet to sing the praise of his motherland in English verse. However, here too, he could not escape from the influence of Derozio. Similarity of thought between the valedictory song of The Shair and a passage from The Fakeer are striking enough:

Farewell my lovely native land!
Where roses bloom in many a vale;
Where green clad hills majestic stand.
Where flowers woo the scented gale;\(26\)

Derozio refers to his motherland as:

O! lovely is my native land
With all its skies of cloudless night.\(27\)

In later part of his life, Kashiprasad published a long poem titled India. The poem highlights his patriotic spirit as well as his realisation that independence is a dream which would take a long time to be realised:

But India! Fair India! Though dark is thy fate,
Though sadly and totally altered art thou,
Yet glory perchance at a period, too late,
Again like a halo may shine round thy brow,
For hope that hath long lain in deep-quiet sleep.\(28\)
This poem, as well as several of his shorter lyrics, more notably, “Song of the Boatmen to Ganga,” and “Storm and Rain,” display flashes of originality which are however lacking in majority of Kashiprasad’s poetry. Commenting on Kashiprasad’s poetry, K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar says, “His was derivative and imitative poetry, made up mainly of conventional descriptions and a tedious moralizing, but it is a tedium brightened by odd flashes of originality, and thus a bright poetic phrase or line occasionally glistens amidst the heap of the utterly prosaic and the inane.”

1.3. Indianisation of English Verse— Michael Madhusudan Dutt (1824-1873)

Indo-Anglian poetry moved into the realm of originality with Michael Madhusudan Dutt. Derivative though he was in his early period, yet, Michael Madhusudan Dutt was neither a mere echo like Kashiprasad Ghosh nor an extensive borrower like Derozio. Michael Madhusudan Dutt published his best known English poem The Captive Ladie in 1849, which according to T.O.D. Dunn “at once demonstrated the ability of the Bengali educated in Bengal to capture the elusive spirit of English metrical form. This demonstration has been repeated time and again; but the honour of its first performance rests with Michael Madhusudan Dutt.”

The poem narrates the story of Rajput King Prithviraj, his abduction of the daughter of Kanoje, and his unsuccessful battle with the Muslim invader Mahmud of Ghazni, ending with his and his queen’s life. Written in octosyballic metre, the poem has the distinctive mark of Scott’s ballad “Lochinvar.” T.O.D. Dunn noted that “the style throughout the poem is remarkably consistent [. . .] The description
of Mahmud of Ghazni's marauding host is well done; and the dramatic representation of his murderous intent towards the besieged Hindus of Delhi is in the very spirit of Byron's eastern tales.\textsuperscript{31} The passage referred to by Dunn is given below in brief:

\begin{quote}
A thousand lamps all gaily shine
Along the wide extended line;
And loud the laugh and proud the boast
Swells from that fierce, unnumber'd host
And wild the prayer ascends on high—
Dark vengeance thine impatient cry—
"Oh! for a glimpse of a Day's fair brow
To crush yon city towering now,
To make each cafir-bosom feel
The unerring blade of Moslem steel!
By Alla! How I long to be
Where myriads writhe in agony.\textsuperscript{32}
\end{quote}

In creation of \textit{Captive Ladie}, Madhusudan Dutt has taken liberties with history. While in the poem, both Prithviraj and his queen kill themselves by mounting a funeral pyre, history tells us that Prithviraj was captured and put to death by his Muslim conquerors. As a critic rightfully commented, "in contrast to his history, his prosody is pure, and his octosyllabics move with almost as much vigour and energy as in his models— viz., Scott and Byron."\textsuperscript{33}

Technically accomplished though Madhusudan Dutt's verse is, it cannot claim greatness on this ground alone. No poetry can be great unless it is original. Madhusudan Dutt's importance lies in the fact that he initiated the process of
breaking free Indo-Anglian poetry from its imitative mould. He achieved this with his bold experiments in the use of English verse and stylistics in the treatment of Indian theme and imagery.

1.4. Coming of Age for Indo-Anglian Poetry—Toru Dutt (1856-1877)

Born on 4 March 1856, in the Dutt family of Rambagan, Torulata Dutt was the youngest child of Govin Chunder Dutt and Kshetramoni Dutt. They had two other children, Abju and Aru. Attracted by the glamorous west, some members of the Dutt family embraced Christianity in 1862. Toru was then only six years old. Govin Chunder Dutt was a tenderly loving father, of Toru he wrote thus:

Puny and elf-like, with dishevelled tresses,
Self-willed and shy, ne'er heeding that I call,
Intent to pay her tenderest addresses
To bird and cat,—but most intelligent.  

Abju died in 1865 at the age of fourteen. The tragedy brought the two sisters closer and they found consolation in each other's company and in literary studies. Sailing for Europe in 1869, the family stayed for a few months in France, where the two sisters went to a school at Nice and learnt French—a language in which they attained proficiency within a short time. After the short stay at Nice, the family sailed to England in 1870. In 1871, the family moved from London to Cambridge. At Cambridge, Toru struck an enduring bond of friendship with Miss Mary Martin, who was to be the recipient of most of her letters. Toru's correspondence with Mary Martin reveals the young writer's childlike joy in life and her intellectual maturity. They speak of flowers and birds, of artistic vision, scholarly pursuits, and morbid illness.
While in London, the girls' began to turn their knowledge of French and English to good use by translating French lyrics into English verse. Aru and Toru adored France, and next to India, they were inspired most by France. Toru learnt French with remarkable ease and speed and throughout her life drank deep in French romantic poetry. Toru's love for France is evident in the poem "France 1870." Written at the age of fifteen, she hails France as the "Head of human column," and expresses her sympathy for the country during its troubled days of Franco-Prussian War. The last stanza of the poem expresses this fervent hope of the young poetess:

Lo, she stands up—stands up e'en now,

Strong once more for the battle-fray,

Gleams bright the star, that from her brow

Lightens the world. Bow, nations bow,

Let her again lead on the way! (p. 463)

The family sailed back to India in 1873, after a sojourn of four years in Europe. Though Toru had written many letters to her Indian friends and relations when abroad, very few have been preserved, these could otherwise have given us a more detailed picture of her life during those exciting years. On their return, Toru and Aru began a period of intense creative activity. Soon, their translations of French poetry began to appear in The Bengal Magazine. But, familial bliss was destined to be short lived. At the turn of the year, quite early in 1874, both sisters fell ill. Death cast its dark shadow on Dutt family for the second time when Aru succumbed to consumption on 23 July 1874. "The Lord has taken Aru from us" wrote Toru to her Cambridge friend Mary, "It is a sore trial for us, but His will be done. We know he doeth all things for our good [. . .]."
Up to the time of Aru's death, the two sisters had together published fourteen poems in the *Bengal Magazine*. Continuing with her literary forages despite the haunting memory of a lost sister, Toru got ready for the press her poetic renderings from French into English; these appeared in 1876 under the title *A Sheaf Gleaned in French Fields*. Of one hundred and sixty five pieces contained therein, eight were by Aru. Toru also added notes on the French poets contained in the volume. The *Sheaf* had a good press in India, and Toru's efforts were praised in generous terms. In England, the book fell in the hands of Sir Edmund Gosse. Opening the book, he read with “surprise and almost rapture” the following verse, which is a rendering of Victor Hugo's “Morning Serenade:”

Still barred thy doors! The far East glows,

The morning wind blows fresh and free.

Should not the hour that wakes the rose

Awaken also thee?

All look for thee, Love, Light, and Song,

Light in the sky deep red above,

Song, in the lark of pinions strong,

And in my heart, true love.

Apart we miss our nature's goal,

Why strive to cheat our destinies?

Was not my love made for thy soul?

Thy beauty for mine eyes?
No longer sleep,
Oh, listen now!
I wait and weep,
But where art thou?

Quality of the verse enamoured Sir Gosse and he commented ecstatically, "When poetry is as good as this it does not much matter whether Rouveyre prints it upon Whatman paper, or whether it steals to light in blurred type from some press in Bhowanipore." The above poem is actually a rendering by Aru. The mistake was later recognised and rectified. The Sheaf is the only work Toru saw published during her lifetime.

It seems that Toru felt translations to be insufficient substitute for genuinely creative work and her maturing poetic sensibilities craved for an outlet. This restlessness is discernible in concluding sonnet of the Sheaf titled "A Mon Pere." It is not a translation, but an original:

The flowers look loveliest in their native soil
Amid their kindred branches; plucked, they fade
And lose the colours Nature on them laid,
Though bound in garlands with assiduous toil.
Pleasant it was, afar from all turmoil
To wander through the valley, now in shade
And now in sunshine, where these blossoms made
A Paradise, and gather in my spoil.
But better than myself no man can know
How tarnished have become their tender hues
E'en in the gathering, and how dimmed their glow!
Would thou again new life in them infuse,
Thou who hast seen them where they brightly blow?
Ask memory. She shall help my stammering muse.\textsuperscript{40}

In November 1875, while at the garden house of Baugmaree, Toru felt the urge for discovering her roots and took up the idea of studying Sanskrit—the fountainhead of Indian civilisation. Dreading the loss of his only remaining child, Govin eagerly helped Toru learn the classical language. He felt that the bond between him and Toru would grow stronger if they together undertake the journey into the annals of India’s collective psyche by learning the language and studying its classics in original, and thus commenced a remarkable chapter in Toru’s life.

On 4 December 1875, she wrote to Mary Martin, "We have begun Sanskrit: the pundit is very pleased with our eagerness to learn, and hopes great things from our assiduity. It is a very difficult language, as I said before, especially the grammar, which is dreadful."\textsuperscript{41} Less than ten months after, despite failing health, Toru gained sufficient knowledge of Sanskrit, laved in the Ramayana, the Mahabharata, the Vishnu Purana, and other classics of ancient India. In her letter dated 6 September 1876, to Mary Martin, Toru says, "I hope I shall be able to bring out another ‘Sheaf’, not gleaned in French but in ‘Sanskrit Fields’! […] as it is, I have only as yet gathered two ears […]"\textsuperscript{42} However, the proposed ‘sheaf’ could only be published posthumously in 1882 under the title Ancient Ballads and Legends of Hindustan. The book consists of nine ballads and seven miscellaneous poems of non-mythological character. These miscellaneous poems are personal in nature, and are "Toru’s chief legacy to posterity."\textsuperscript{43} Among these poems, "Our Casuarina Tree," is the most famous. It is more than mere poetic evocation of a tree. It is recapturing of the past and immortalising moments
of time so recaptured. The tree has dual significance— as a tree, and as a symbol, in it is implicated both time and eternity:

May'st thou be numbered when my days are done
With deathless trees—like those in Borrowdale,
Under whose awful branches lingered pale
"Fear, trembling Hope, and Death, the skeleton,
And Time, the shadow;" and though weak the verse
That would thy beauty fain, o fain rehearse,
May love defend thee from Oblivion's curse. (p. 467)

Legends selected by Toru have been a part of India's social consciousness for centuries, but it was Toru, who first interpreted and presented them to the English speaking world. "From the nursery, the children live with these heroes and heroines, and neither maturity nor sophistication does much to lessen the hold of these tales on our imagination. It was thus with a sure instinct that Toru sought in these deathless stories the right material for the expression of her own maturing powers." Though Toru's range of selection was limited, her poetic vision embraced the whole religious culture of ancient India. Each legend exemplifies immortal values of life as conceived by sages of yore. In these legends, we find the poetess "no longer attempting vainly, though heroically, to compete with European literature on its own ground, but turning to the legends of her own race and country for inspiration." 

When Toru died on 30 August 1877, she was all of twenty one years and six months. Toru Dutt's place in the chronicles of Indo-Anglian literature is assured, not just because of her deft handling of the tongues of the East and the West, but because of her freshness of approach and creative handling of themes.
T.O.D. Dunn fittingly remarked, "Toru Dutt did not wilfully anglicise her ideas. For the first time in the literature of this kind there is struck a genuinely Indian note; and through the medium of a perfect English expression, there is conveyed something of the sincerity of a mind proud of the intellectual traditions of its native land." 46

1.5. The Nobel Laureate— Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941)

The youngest of seven sons of Maharshi Debendranath, and grandson of Prince Dwarkanath, Rabindranath Tagore was born on 6 May 1861. By the age of fifteen, Rabindranath had begun his quest for excellence, and by eighteen, he had already composed some seven thousand lines of verse. By the time Rabindranath was fifty, he had a large body of creative work of all genre to his credit. In 1912, his English translation of Gitanjali appeared. The work compelled worldwide attention and won him the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1913. Impact of Gitanjali on the Western mind can be gauged from the introduction to it by W.B. Yeats, "These lyrics [. . .] display in their thought a world I have dreamed of all my life long. The work of a supreme culture, they yet appear as much the growth of the common soil as the grass and the rushes." 47 Written originally in Bengali, the English version is not a literal translation, but what may be termed as transcreations— they retain the original thought in the vehicle of free rendering.

Gitanjali is a collection of devotional lyrics; its central theme is spiritual quest. It is in line with the poetry of Vaishnava and Shaiva saints of medieval ages. K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar says, "The current coin of India's devotional poetry is melted and minted anew by Rabindranath, but the pure gold shines brightly as ever, even though the inscription on the coin is in English." 48 Tagore uses
imagery common to classical Indian love poetry to symbolise his yearning to merge with God and his joy at an imminent union. It celebrates the realisation of the divine through self purification, love, and service to humanity. The title Gitanjali translates into ‘Song Offerings,’ in it the poet does not merely sings, but pours out his heart and soul as an offering to the divine. The collection may be likened to a rose and each poem its petals. Each petal has a message to proclaim—of devotion, of faith, of soul’s purity, and a yearning to merge with the supreme. The poems show a variety of form. Not only do they vary in length; some have lyrical intensity, while others are in the realm of prose-poetry, and as M.K. Naik pointed out, “whatever the mode of expression, there is always a verbal control, a precision of imagery and an unmistakable sense of disciplined rhythm [. . .].”

Songs of Gitanjali are songs of close communion between the poet and the eternal, lover and beloved, wife and husband, servant and master, son and father. They are expressions of the poet’s pleadings to God and his ecstasy at the realisation of his union with the almighty, all integrated into a grand musical celebration. The poet however, is not selfish to seek redemption for his own sake; his prayer seeks for deliverance of his country and of the whole mankind:

Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high;
Where knowledge is free;
Where the world has not been broken up into fragments by narrow domestic walls;
Where words come out from the depth of truth;
Where tireless striving stretches its arms towards perfection;
Where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way into the
Where the mind is led forward by thee into ever widening thought
and action—
Into that heaven of freedom, my Father, let my country awake.50

Phenomenal success of Gitanjali emboldened Tagore and his English
publishers Messrs Macmillan, to bring out other volumes of translations and so
came to light The Gardener (1913), The Crescent Moon (1913), Fruit Gathering
(1916), Stray Birds (1917), Lover’s Gift and Crossing (1918), The Fugitive, and
others. The Gardener, which comes next only to Gitanjali in quality, presents
Tagore as a poet of love; human rather than divine. Many facets of love are
revealed— as intense, all enveloping passion, as a force which compels self
effacement, and as a medium of fulfilment, both mortal and spiritual. The poems
are richly sensuous, and as Prof. Iyengar says, "almost brings us back to
something of the primordial felicity of the Garden of Eden, and once this vision
has come back to us and we are able to see things with a new rapture of
recognition, we are not likely to reject the gift again"51

The Crescent Moon is a book for children, "and those adults that haven’t
lost the child’s capacity for wonder and joy."52 Tagore views childhood from two
perspective— that of an adult, and that of a child’s own. A child’s identification
with his environment is complete, so he can associate himself with the puppy and
the parrot and tell his mother that if they are not treated with affection, he will run
away into the woods. Fantasy and humour mingle together, and mysticism is
revealed through the eyes of a child. "Like Wordsworth, Like Walter de la Mare,
Tagore too found in children a mystic quality. He found in them beauty,
innocence, humour, charity, and a kind of ancient wisdom—and these Tagore celebrated in song.\textsuperscript{53}

"Tagore is one of the supreme lyric poets of the world."\textsuperscript{54} He drew his sustenance from saint poets of medieval era, and his poetic rhapsodies have in them the qualities of great English romantics. Sincerity of feelings and vibrant imagery combine with mellifluous music into a grand celebration of life and nature. A salient feature of Tagore's poetry is its simplicity. Though his earlier poems rely heavily on classical assonances, in his later poems, he sheds all embellishments, and everyday life experiences are used to reveal essential divinity of human existence. "The diction also takes on the directness and simplicity of common speech [. . .] Words have become lucid and transparent, and the purest music pleases us almost everywhere."\textsuperscript{55} Tagore's detractors have often pointed out that his imagery is stately traditional, the expression mellifluously soft and emotions but an endless mist of vague sweetness.\textsuperscript{56} Such a view overlooks almost prophetic compass of his poetic vision. A.N. Dwivedi correctly states, "Whether we find a complete poetic fusion in him or not, he discovered for us a new and deep manner of viewing life, a fresh mode of seeking the infinite and eternal."\textsuperscript{57} Rabindranath Tagore, the poet, dramatist, novelist, educationist and musician breathed his last on 7 August 1941.

1.6. The Milton of India—Sri Auribondo (1872-1950)

Aurobindo Ghose (better known as Sri Aurobindo), the youngest son of Krishnadhan Ghose and Swarnalata Devi, was born on 15 August 1872. Desiring his children to be insulated from "contamination of Indian ways,"\textsuperscript{58} Krishnadhan Ghose sent his children to England in 1879. He left for India in 1893, having
received an appointment in the service of the Maharaja of Baroda. The next thirteen years of his life were spent in Baroda. During his service, he was employed in various departments, but was finally drawn to Baroda College, where he taught French for a while, and ultimately became the Professor of English and Vice-Principal of the college. Drawn to the centre of revolutionary politics of Bengal, Sri Aurobindo wrote Bhavani Mandir—A Handbook for Revolutionaries Dedicated to the Service of Bhavani, in 1905. He left for Calcutta in 1906, where he assumed the charge of the Editor of Bandematram, an English daily started by Bipin Chandra Pal. He was arrested in 1907 in connection with the publication of certain articles in the newspaper, and again in 1908 in connection with Muzzafepore Bomb Case. He was however, honourably acquitted both the time. When he came out of jail in 1909, Sri Aurobindo was a transformed man. Mystic experiences in jail inclined him towards spirituality. He left Calcutta in 1910 and settled in Pondicherry. From then on, Sri Aurobindo led the life of a yogi. Sri Aurobindo, the scholar, revolutionary, saint, and poet, breathed his last on 5 December 1950.

Apart from his role as a spiritual teacher, Sri Aurobindo is today recognised as a stalwart among the who's who of Indo-Anglian literature. A master of many languages—French, Greek, Latin, and Sanskrit, Sri Aurobindo's place in the arena of Indo-Anglian poetry is assured. Among his poetic works, mention may be made of mystical poems like, "Hell and Heaven," "Muse Spiritus," "Thought the Paraclete," "Urvasie," "The Birds of Fire," "Rose and God," "The Tiger and the deer," and the epic poem Savitri. Sri Aurobindo held that poetry springs from a higher plane. In performing his job, the poet becomes a seer and reveals to man his eternal self. Poetry is thus conceived by the soul,
and its pleasure is intended for the soul. Speaking of Sri Aurobindo's poetry, Prof. Iyengar says that his poetry is "an attempt to achieve in English verse something analogous to Vedic mantra." As a mystic poet, Sri Aurobindo's poetry is an expression of his close communion with the divine:

I am the bird of God in this blue;
Divinely high and clear
I sing the notes of the sweet and the true
For the God's & the seraph's ear,
My song is rapture's mystic art,
My flight immortal will.

As a mystic poet, Sri Aurobindo cannot be categorised and studied in the Western tradition. He is essentially in the tradition of 'bhakti' poets. V.N. Bhushan observes, "Sri Aurobindo's poetry is a type by itself—poetry of the highest and rarest kind—the poetry of mystic vision, magical word and mantric vibration [. . .] Born out of deep spiritual experience and self realisation, Sri Aurobindo's poetry is a call to spiritual adventure." Sri Aurobindo is a true interpreter of the Vedas; his poetry takes the reader beyond the impediments of materialism and pangs of sorrow into the dominion of the absolute.

Sri Aurobindo was also a fine lyric poet. He had a fascination for quantitative metre. He held that "the freedom of the use of quantitative verse for the creation of new original rhythms would be enough to add a wide field to the large and opulent estate of English poetry." In this regard, a brief look at his shorter poems should prove fruitful. They are superbly lyrical; rich in imagery and rhythmic lilt, they display his flights of fancy, sense of humour, and a gentle satirical vein. As an example, sonnet "Despair on the Staircase" may be quoted:
Mute stands she, lonely on the topmost stair,
An image of magnificent despair;
The grandeur of a sorrowful surmise
Wakes in the largeness of her glorious eyes.
In her beauty's dumb significant pose I find
The tragedy of her mysterious mind.
Yet is she stately, grandiose, full of grace.
A musing mask is her immobile face.
Her tail is up like an unconquered flag;
Its dignity knows not the right way to wag.
An animal creature wonderfully human,
A charm and miracle of fur-footed Brahman,
Whether she is spirit, woman or a cat,
Is now the problem I am wondering at. 63

The structure is a remarkable experiment on traditional sonnet form. Consisting of fourteen lines, yet it is without the Petrarchan or Shakespearean classification of quartet, sestet, and octave. Except for decasyllabic rhythm, there is little prosodic restriction; allowing sufficient freedom for the poet's reflection on a woman. "A Dream of Surreal Science," is "the fusion of the sardonic and poetry in a sonnet." 64 "The Tiger and the Deer," is a metaphysical lyric that holds the hope for peace over the reign of terror:

  The mighty perish in their might;
  The slain survive the slayer. 65

Questions have been raised about Sri Aurobindo's poetical faculties.

Times Literary Supplement, criticised Sri Aurobindo as a poet saying, "It cannot
be said that Aurobindo shows any organic adaptation to music and melody. [...] Aurobindo is not another Tagore or Iqbal or even Sarojini Naidu." Rebutting the charge, K.D. Sethna wrote, "In poetry, music does not stand just for one particular arrangement and movement of speech... it is inspiration adequately expressing itself." Sri Aurobindo's poetry nurtures and sustains faith in limitless human possibilities. In him, we have the 'rishi;' the seer to whom the ultimate truth was revealed and who in turn sought to reveal it to us.

1.7. The Nightingale of India—Sarojini Naidu (1897-1949)

Younger than both Tagore and Sri Aurobindo, Sarojini Chattopadhyaya, later Sarojini Naidu, won recognition in the West earlier than the two. She started as a poet, but later drifted into politics, playing a stellar role in the Gandhian era. With the publication of *The Golden Threshold* in 1905, Sarojini became a recognisable name in English speaking world. Succeeding volumes of poetry, *The Bird of Time* (1912), and *The Broken Wing* (1917), consolidated her position as a poet. *The Feathers of Dawn* was published posthumously in 1961. Her poems sing of love, of nature, of life and death, of Indian panorama, and of children and childhood. Sarojini's poetry is imaginative, romantic commentary on varied aspects of Indian life.

While, the western critics may categorise Sarojini with Keats and Shelley, Mulk Raj Anand put her in the tradition of Ghalib and Iqbal. In a letter to her English friend and mentor Arthur Symons, Sarojini wrote: "I sing just as birds do, and my songs are as ephemeral." Ephemeral though her poetry may be, they have a dreamy, lyrical quality, which shall guard them from "Oblivion's curse." Sri Aurobindo said, "Some of her lyrical work is likely, I think, to survive among the
lasting things in English literature [. . .]. Sarojini's poems present a feast of lyrical delight to her readers. A true lyricist, she spoke in a private voice. Burning problems of the day which engaged her, could not engage her poetry. Sarojini shed obscurity and profundity in preference to simplicity and directness, and these give a special appeal to her poetry. Perfect rhythm and lively imagery are two prominent features of her poetry. Thus, we have the "Palanquin Bearers:"

Lightly, O lightly, we bear her along,
She sways like a flower in the wind of our song;
She skims like a bird on the foam of a stream,
She floats like a laugh from the lips of a dream,
Gaily, O gaily we glide and we sing,
We bear her along like a pearl on a string.

Softly, O softly we bear her along,
She hangs like a star in the dew of our song;
She springs like a beam on the brow of the tide,
She falls like a tear from the eyes of a bride.
Lightly, O lightly we glide and we sing,
We bear her along like a pearl on a string.

Similarly, we have lyrical poems like, "Indian Weavers," "The Snake Charmer," "Corn-Grinders," "Indian Dancers," "Bangle Sellers," and a host of others. Essentially a romantic poet with lyrical sensibility, she was "so intoxicated with the rhythm and romance of life, that lyrics sang in her mind and overflowed from her exotic and passionate nature into song." Cosmopolitan and Secular in her outlook, Sarojini Naidu is essentially a poet of Indian life. Sensuous, but not
sensual, there is a rush of metaphors and similes; heaped upon them is a riot of colours, sounds, and emotions. According to noted critic and literary historian M.K. Naik, "Of all the English poets of her generation, she has perhaps the finest ear and her mastery of word music is indubitable."  

Modern critics, who are tempted to dismiss Sarojini's poetry as mere copy of English Romantics, tend to overlook her innovative use of imagery drawn from Indian scene. Thus, the moon becomes 'A caste mark on the azure brows of Heaven,' and the white river is 'Curved like a tusk.' The modernists, with their penchant for obscurities, contortions, and Freudian explorations, have tended to belittle Sarojini Naidu as an insignificant poet. However, the poetry of Sarojini Naidu has an irresistible charm and a haunting quality. Her poetry is not an echo of decadent romanticism, but a genuine Indian English voice, recreating for the unprejudiced reader, a world of colour, romance, and pageantry of traditional Indian life.

1.8. Brief Estimation of Toru Dutt's Place in Indo-Anglian Poetry

A brief study of the pioneers and the pathfinders of Indo-Anglian poetry made in the preceding pages make it possible to carry out a general estimation of Toru Dutt's position in the sphere of Indo-Anglian poetry. As has been shown, while the poetry of Derozio was largely on the lines of English Romantics, poetry of Kashiprasad was but a mere echo of Derozio. Michael Madhusudan Dutt initiated the process of Indianisation. But even his poems show heavy indebtedness to Derozio, Byron, Wordsworth, Keats, and other English Romantics, both in form and in style. From Derozio to Toru Dutt, a distinct progress from imitation to authenticity is discernible. H.A.L. Fisher justly commented, "This child of the
green valley of the Ganges has by sheer force of native genius earned for herself the right to be enrolled in the great fellowship of English poets."74 Had she lived longer, Toru Dutt would surely have attained a degree of success whose parallels would necessarily have been few. After her untimely death, Indo-Anglian poetry had to wait for more than two decades to regain its lost melody in Sarojini Naidu.
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