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On Henry Derozio's Rightful Place in Indian English Literature

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Abstract

Indian English poetry begins with Henry Derozio (1809-31). Though he died prematurely at the age of twenty-three, he produced poetry in a huge variety of forms ranging from lyrics to songs, elegies, sonnets and ballads. He also wrote profusely in the contemporary journals as well as journals edited by him. His ballad, The Fakeer of Jungheera is one of the finest and most sustained effort in the entire range of Indian English poetry, and it alone suffices to establish him as an original poet. But it is unfortunate that he has suffered neglect at the hands of reviewers and critics despite all the brilliance of his genius. The paper attempts at an understanding of the circumstances of his life and death (his Eurasian or Anglo-Indian origin) which added to the prejudice that he was a mere imitator of Byron with occasional sparks of original genius. Unlike the recent years when Indians have won due recognition for their writings in English, the time when Derozio wrote poetry in English things were far from propitious. The English reader could not imagine a native or an Anglo-Indian native with English as his mother tongue. The paper also analyses the first Review of Derozio's poetic volumes that set the trend for almost all subsequent evaluations of his poetry, with special reference to The Fakeer of Jungheera, reclaiming his rightful place in Indian English Literature.

Keywords: Reviewers, Anglo-Indian Origin, Prejudice, Colonial Perspective, Byronic influence.

1. INTRODUCTION

In his inaugural lecture on Indian Writing in English delivered at the University of Leeds in 1959, Prof. R. K. Srinivasa Iyengar draws special attention to the unique position of Indo-Anglian Literature and makes a candid statement about it in general:

> To be Indian in thought and feeling and emotion and experience, yet also to court the graces and submit to the discipline of English for expression, is a novel experiment in creative mutation. There are successes as well as failures and the failures are perhaps more numerous than the successes. All the same there are the men and women (necessarily few) who have bravely run the race and reached the goal and they deserve due recognition. (Iyengar 1962, 5)

Maintaining that it is "both an Indian literature and a variation of English literature," (6) he goes on to elaborate the potentials as well as hazards of this duality:

> It has an appeal to Indians, and it should have an appeal to Englishmen as well. Yet alas! This double base, this potential double appeal, becomes really a matter of failing between the two proverbial stools. (ibid, 6)

The pitfalls are caused by complexes on both sides - "the Indian's diffidence and the Englishmen's indifference." (ibid, 7) With the recognition won in recent years by writers like Salman Rushdie, Ved Mehta, Arundhati Roy, Jhumpa Lahiri and others, there appears to be a sea-change in the scene. Keen interest and warm reception on part of the English and American readers appear to replace the earlier indifference and hostility. Although the same cannot be said about the Indian diffidence, yet (perhaps under the impact of the west's new-found interest) there has been a softening of the diffidence. Things however were far from encouraging during the dawn of the Indo-Anglian literature. It was extremely difficult for the English reader to imagine a native, even an Anglo-Indian native with English as his mother-tongue, to write anything other than brief reports and mercy petitions in faulty English. All literature was out of bounds, especially poetry. The reported derogatory remark of Gordon Bottomley therefore that Indo-Anglian poetry was like "Matthew Arnold in a *sari*" (Cited in

Iyengar 1962, 7) is typical of the English attitude prevailing during the 19th century.

2. ANALYSIS OF THE FIRST REVIEW OF DEROZIO'S POETIC VOLUMES

It is not surprising therefore that the first Indo-Anglian poet of substance, Henry Louis Vivian Derozio has been subjected to neglect and prejudices warranted not by his works but the circumstances of his life and death. This is evident from the contemporary writings. The best example is provided by the first Review of his poetic work, which appeared in the July 1829 issue of the *Oriental Herald* and was reprinted again in the *Calcutta Gazette* on Nov 23, 1829. This being the first Review of Derozio's poetic volumes set the trend for almost all subsequent evaluations of his poetry so much so that even those very close and sympathetic to the young poet, like Dr John Grant and Thomas Edwards instead of analyzing the comments of the Reviewer, offer apologies on behalf of Derozio. Thus Dr. Grant declares:

> When the Reviewer blames him (Derozio) for making the Byronic School too much his model, we must say for our young poet that he himself, at the time of publishing his Fakeer of Jungheera, anticipated that an objection against exaggerated passion and sentiment would be made. Why then, it may be asked, did he not adopt a simpler model? This we shall briefly explain. In an article quoted from the *Quarterly Review* it is justly remarked, 'whoever endeavours to rival the best models of ancient and modern times, must be sustained by his own inherent love of excellence, without depending on any other support.' He must give place to others whom *fashion* shines on. He (who would be popular) must be new and striking, or nothing. The consequence is that books are written not in the manner that is best fitted to enlighten and amend, or even to instructively amuse the public, but to *flatter* it. Mr. Derozio was in no condition to be sustained by his inherent love of excellence without depending on any other support. The style adopted in the *Fakeer of Jungheera* is not, we believe, the one most congenial to Mr. Derozio. This is very evident in the first volume he published. To bring out a book was to him, however, a serious undertaking because one of the first considerations

> was that the book should sell. To render this possible, he felt it necessary to give in to what he believed to be the general taste; and he was therefore obliged to adopt the popular and fashionable model. In process of time, however, when Mr. Derozio may be enabled to depend more upon himself than he was then, we have little doubt that he will prove satisfactorily to the public that he is not irretrievably wedded to exaggerated idealism, or pictures of passion. (Cited in Edwards 1884, 192-93)

And Thomas Edwards concurs in full. Referring to Byron and Moore, he simply echoes the words of Dr. Grant:

> They were the poets then fashionable, and to depart from their models was, for a young unknown writer, to court defeat. Derozio's idea was, first, to gain the ear of the public by singing to them in the prevailing fashion of the day; and then, having gained a hearing, to strike out in that style in which his own nature would most vigorously drape his song. (Edwards 1884, 192)

What warrants this line of argument is not known. Even if we accept Dr. Grant's version that at the time of publishing the *Fakeer of Jungheera*, Derozio himself "anticipated that an objection against exaggerated passion and sentiment would be made," it does not necessarily follow that he chose the model simply to gain the ear of the public so that later he could adopt the style more suited to his nature. Had he been even a quarter as calculative as suggested here, he must not have lost his job at the Hindu College. Indeed, poets have been known to start writing in the style prevalent at the time and then go on to develop new styles. The apologies offered by Dr. Grant and Thomas Edwards, therefore, instead of providing any new lead, merely confirm the influence of the first Reviewer. As such we must get back to him. The Reviewer while admitting some poetic merits finds it largely imitative of Byron and hence greatly wanting. However, at the same time he attempts an apology (totally uncalled for) based on the life circumstances of Derozio and strikes a patronizing note. He observes:

> These volumes possess claims to our attention of a very unusual description. They contain the first productions of a young poet,

> a native of British India, educated entirely in that country, and whose character, feelings, and associations, have been exclusively developed there, under circumstances apparently the most unfavourable to poetic excellence. These circumstances are thus intimated, in a letter which accompanied a copy of the poems, recently forwarded by an intelligent friend of Calcutta, to Mr Buckingham:
>
> 'The writer was born in India, has never been out of it, and is now under twenty years of age. You know this country will be able duly to appreciate the difficulties against which he has had to contend. The total absence of almost all objects of natural beauty, the still more complete want of all noble and exalted feelings amongst those with whom the poet must have associated; the very language, which can hardly be called English, that they speak; taking all these things into fair consideration, which you are well able to do from actual experience, we cannot but admit that production of such a poem as the *Fakeer of Jungheera* is very extraordinary…. It is as if a Briton of the time of Severus, had suddenly written a poem in good Latin.'
>
> In this opinion, after a careful perusal of Mr. Derozio's two volumes, we very cordially concur. (*Oriental Herald* 1829, 111)

It is apparent that both the Reviewer and the intelligent friend resent the basic fact that Derozio despite his name and European connections, was a native, educated entirely in "that country" (India), and had "never been out of it." What is more they resent the fact primarily because in "that country"/this country there is "total absence of almost all objects of natural beauty" and of course, "the still more complete want of all noble and exalted feelings amongst those with whom the poet must have associated." We need only remember the fact that those with whom Derozio associated included Raja Ram Mohan Roy, David Hare and Dwarkanath Tagore, the grandfather of Ravindra Nath Tagore. As for the absence or presence of objects of natural beauty, we would do well to remember the fact that it was Sir Edmund Goose who advised Sarojini Naidu to set her poems firmly in the Indian landscape and describe the flowers, fruits, trees and birds of India instead of the

robins and skylarks in the English landscape. But that was much after the turn of the century.

3. THE IMPERIALIST YARDSTICK

As a matter of fact, as noted by Legouis, around 1880s there took place "a cosmopolitan development in literature without parallel in the past." (Legouis 1934, 357) But when Derozio appeared on the scene in late twenties of the 19th century, the British Empire was on the march and as such it was the imperialist's yardstick that was applied to his poetry.

Indeed, the beginning of the Victorian Age marked the rise of the Empire with the white man setting up his colonies all over the globe. The highest praise that the imperialist mind could concede to an Indo-Anglian poet with intense Indian patriotic feelings was a hesitant patronising approach spiced with a high-sounding moral counseling:

> Our censure is designed to induce this really talented and interesting young poet to betake himself to purer models than those which have too long fascinated his juvenile fancy, and to select worthier subjects for his muse than bandit-Fakeers, or Moslem lovers. (*Oriental Herald* 1829, 117)

By purer models the Reviewer means Shakespeare, Milton and Spenser rather than Byron and Moore. While it cannot be denied that Shakespeare, Milton and Spenser stand on a higher pedestal than Byron and Moore, it is open to question how far justified one would be in rejecting Byron and Moore altogether. Moreover, as a matter of fact, Derozio's poetry reveals that the alleged overwhelming influence of Byron and Moore has been exaggerated. The truth is that Derozio belonged to the tradition of the English Romantic Movement and was naturally influenced by the great Romantic poets in general, and the younger ones in particular. The oft-repeated view that he adopted Byron as his model and attempted to copy him is perhaps based on an accidental similarity of the story element between Byron's ballads and the *Fakeer of Jungheera*. However, even the apparent similarity is superficial. Instead of being a fanciful tale, the *Fakeer of Jungheera* is the poetic recreation of a real-life episode heard by and believed in by the poet. The Reviewer also goes wrong in considering "bandit-Fakeers" or "Moslem lovers" as the subject of the poem. The real subject is the prevalent *Sati Pratha* and the contemporary movement against it. The

bandit-Fakeer or the Moslem lover is not invented by the poet, but simply happens to be there as part of the legend. One wonders whether the Reviewer would have approved of it if the lover had happened to be Christian.[1] It is also interestingly ironic to note that the British mind thoroughly regaled by stories of Prince Hal and Robin Hood should raise objections to another bandit, only this time a Moslem Fakeer.

The weird, wild character of the Fakeer might bear some resemblance to Byronic figures, but he is solidly rooted in the Indian soil. What better proof can one have than the poet's own note to the poem?

> A student of that excellent institution, the Hindu College, once brought me a translation of Betal Puncheesee, and the following fragment of a tale having struck me for its wildness, I thought of writing a ballad, the subject of which should be strictly Indian. (Derozio 1828, 135)

Any resemblance that might appear between *The Fakeer of Jungheera* and Byron's ballads is, therefore, coincidental and superficial, and definitely not imitative. The so-called influence of Byron on the impressionistic young poet has been blown up out of all proportion. And the first Reviewer does not stop at Byron, he adds Thomas Moore's *Lallah Rookh* and a certain "Miss Saunder's *Troubadour* and other things of the same seven-times-diluted sort, which have lain in ladies' boudoirs, and been sighed over by drawing-room sentimentalists," (*Oriental Herald* 1829, 116) as formulating influences on the young immature boy poet. At the same time, he offers uncalled for excuses on behalf of the poet:

> It is in all likelihood Mr. Derozio's misfortune than his fault that such flimsy volumes have, in addition to Byron's works, formed almost exclusively his poetic pabulum; but it is a great misfortune, notwithstanding; and it has infected his whole style of compositions to such an extent, as almost to destroy with gaudy verbiage the really beautiful and fragrant flowers of poetic fancy, which are genuine offspring of his ardent and elegant mind…. (ibid).

A dubious tribute indeed to the "ardent and elegant mind" which was after all that of a Eurasian lad. The Reviewer does not take into account the new intellectual movement which flowered into the Bengal

Renaissance and had the seeds of the Indian National Movement nor the fact that Derozio was one of the moving spirits behind it. Despite his young age he had established himself as the leading spokesman of his community as well as an important figure in the elite intellectual circle of Calcutta. What the Reviewer says about Derozio's poetic pabulum (sic) is at variance with the records, for as noted by F.B. Bradley-Birt, "Even in his early school days his knowledge of English literature was amazing." (Bradley-Birt 1923, xx). As for his presumptuous advice to lay Moore and Byron on the shelf, and to read Shakespeare, Milton, Spenser and the old dramatists and Robert Burns one has simply to remember that David Drummond specially encouraged theatrical performances among his pupils and Derozio was the foremost among them. That any theatrical performances must surely have included Shakespeare need hardly be stressed.

4. WORDS OF SYMPATHY BUT INDIRECT DEPRECIATION

The first biographer-cum-critic of Derozio, Thomas Edwards begins his chapter on the poetry of Derozio with the following observation:

> 'Those whom the gods love die young' is a trite saying more or less verified, in some fashion, in the life experience of most men. The promise of Derozio's early years might, or might not, have been realised. Those who knew him best and loved him most believed, that, had life been granted him, he would have achieved for himself the very highest rank as poet and thinker. (Edwards 1884, 191)

Warm words of sympathy for Derozio the man, but veiled indirect depreciation of Derozio the poet has been the stock response of the literary world. The early untimely passing away of Derozio like those of Keats before him and Toru Dutt after him, was extremely tragic no doubt, but the repeated harping on it has done more harm than good to the reputation of the poet. By romanticizing Derozio's death at twenty-three, all the commentators have unwittingly shifted the focus from the poet to the man, and from the actual works of Derozio, the poet to would be poetry of the man. Yet as admitted by Thomas Edwards himself:

> The judgment which an impartial world passes on man, and the position assigned them by an unbiased succeeding generation, free from the beats of personal likes and dislikes and bitter

> controversy, is based, *not* on what a man *might have been, or what at some early period of his life he may have been, but on what he actually was, and what he achieved up to the time of his death.* (ibid, 194). (italics mine).

In case of Derozio, the repeated reminders of the fact that he died too young with a subtle twist, becomes he died so young that he could not attain maturity or that had he lived long enough to fulfil the promise of his youth he was bound to produce poetry of the highest order. This is the approach of one and all, including the Bengali critics who are on the whole more generous in their praise. For instance, we can see Benoy Ghosh's *Bidrohi Derozio* written in Bengali or R.K. Dasgupta's foreword to *Poems of H.L.V. Derozio, A Forgotten Anglo-Indian Poet.*

5. EURASIAN/ANGLO-INDIAN ORIGIN AND THE PREJUDICE

As a matter of fact, it is not the time and circumstances of his death but the time and circumstances of his birth which proved to be more tragic in case of Derozio. To be precise, it is his Eurasian (or Anglo-Indian) origin and that too during the early decades of the 19th century. The point has been hinted at by R.K. Dasgupta when after stating that the admirers caused "damage to his reputation" (Dasgupta 1980, D) he goes on to enumerate the titles with special stress on the Eurasian (or Anglo-Indian) origin, but has been put most succinctly by F.B. Bradley-Birt in his Introduction to the *Poems*:

> There are few facts more pathetic and more deserving of sympathy than the mixed race which Western dominion in India has created and from which Derozio sprang. Closely allied by blood to European and Indian alike the Eurasian community has fallen helplessly between them, failing to win acceptance from either of the great races that gave it birth. Looked at askance by both, it has been denied the advantages that its kinship to both would seem to have given it as its birthright. (Bradley-Birt 1923, ii)

The comic-pathetic figure of the Eurasian Chauffeur left alone on the road by both Nawab Bahadur and Ronnie Adela in Forster's *A Passage to India* comes vividly to mind. So do Victoria Jones and Patrick Taylor

of John Master's *Bhawani Junction.* And this was during the 1920s and 1930s. A century ago during Derozio's time the position of the Anglo-Indians must have been even more precarious.

In the novel entitled, *McCluskiegunj*,[2] the writer, Vikas Kumar Jha deals at some length with the history as well as the present plight of the Anglo- Indians. Referring to Lord Curzon's remark about the origin of the Anglo- Indians, the narrator father enlightens his son:

> It is said that Lord Curzon once said that God made the British and God made the Indians, but we made the Anglo-Indians. That has been the paradox of Anglo-Indians, my son. We are neither British nor Indian…. Our skins had neither the fairness of the British nor was our hair as golden as that of the Sahebs… our language was English… but, Robin our blood was Indian… the blood of the soil of Indian… our minds were British, but our hearts Indian….
>
> … But even the Indians were not willing to accept us as Indians… the British had rejected us already. (Jha 1999, 4)

The difficulties faced by Indo-Anglian literature in general as mentioned by Prof. Iyengar were therefore compounded when the writer happened to be an Anglo-Indian. In the words of an Anglo-Indian of the 20th century:

> There was a very strong colour bar. Conditions in those days strongly resembled present conditions in South Africa, with this difference that while in South Africa it is imposed by the government, in India it was accepted by mutual arrangement and by a tacit consensus. (Moore 1986, 169)

Yet another Anglo-Indian expresses his resentment at the British attitude to Anglo Indian writings:

> Whenever we tried to publish anything from our point of view they would refuse to take it, or tried to excise passages… a case of literary genocide. Who were they to decide we were of no note? (ibid)

But they were the Raj and the Raj appeared to last forever and the half-caste (or outcast) Anglo- Indians were the *chi-chi* and as such of no note. "Attitudes in print to Anglo-Indians," observes Gloria Jean Moore, "can best be described as an area of darkness." (164). As such it becomes

necessary to "look at the literature of Anglo-Indians with this in mind." (165). As a rule, the British "assiduously avoided our brightest and best" (167) precisely because they did not correspond to the stereotype. It is not surprising therefore that Bidwell in his *Swords for Hire* called Skinner "a difficult half-caste." (168). The epithet would apply even more aptly to Derozio. It is absolutely impossible to arrive at any understanding of Derozio the man and the poet without remembering this colonial backdrop. That he himself was fully aware of it is evident from the petitions to the British Government drafted by him on behalf of his community. It is also clearly reflected in the following lines of Derozio's Sonnet entitled, *Misery*:

Man and misfortune are twin-born - I feel
This to be true, at least 'twas so with me! (13-14)

Twin-born with misfortune as an Anglo-Indian child in those early days of the empire, Henry Louis Vivian Derozio, despite all the brilliance of his genius, was destined to be cold-shouldered by the English, the moment he chose to leave the drudgery of the mercantile office and even the adventure of indigo-plantation and try his hand at something better.

6. EXAGGERATION OF BYRONIC INFLUENCE

All this is not to say that Derozio remained untouched by Byron's influence. However, what is apparent is that the commentators have knowingly or unknowingly exaggerated the claim. As a matter of fact, an open-minded first-hand study of Derozio's poems reveals that more than Byron, it was Shelley who did influence him. To quote Shelley, "Poetry in a general sense, may be defined to be 'the expression of the imagination;' and poetry is cognate with the origin of man. Man is an instrument over which a series of external and internal impressions are driven, like the alterations of an ever-changing wind over an Aeolian lyre which move it by their motion to ever-changing melody." (Poetry Foundation, n. d.) Derozio's own definition as provided in the sonnet entitled, *Poetry* reads like a verse rendering of it.

Sweet madness! -when the youthful brain is seized,
With that delicious phrenzy which it loves,
It raving reels, to very rapture pleased, -
And then through all creation wildly roves:

Now in the deep recesses of the sea,
And now' to highest Himalay it mounts;
Now by the fragrant shores of Araby,
Or classic Greece, or sweet Italia's founts,
Or through her wilderness of ruins - now
Gazing on beauty's lip, or valour's brow;
Or rivalling the nightingale and dove
In pouring forth its melody of love;
Or giving to the gale, in strains of fire
Immortal harpings - like a seraph's lyre. (1-14)

The life and character of Derozio also bear closer affinity to Shelley than to Byron. Moreover, it is surprising to note that some of his poems also contain metaphysical elements.

7. CONTEMPT FOR EDUCATED BENGALI

The Empire which was on the rise in Derozio's time had reached its peak by the seventies and found its loudest drum beater little later in Kipling. In the poem titled, *What Happened*, Kipling makes fun of the Empire's Indian Government as well as the subjects, particularly the educated Bengali.[3] To quote part of the poem:

Hurree Chunder Mookerjee, pride of Bow Bazaar,
Owner of a native press, "Barrishter-at-Lar,"
Waited on the Government with a claim to wear
Sabres by the bucketful, rifles by the pair. (1-4)

Then the Indian Government winked a wicked wink,
Said to Chunder Mookerjee: "Stick to pen and ink.
They are safer implements, but, if you insist,
We will let you carry arms wheresoe'er you list." (5-8)
….

But the Indian Government, always keen to please,
Also gave permission to horrid men like these --
Yar Mahommed Yusufzai, down to kill or steal,
Chimbu Singh from Bikaneer, Tantia the Bhil; (13-16)
….

What became of Mookerjee? Ask Mahommed Yar
Prodding Siva's sacred bull down the Bow Bazaar.
Speak to placid Nubbee Baksh - question land and sea -
Ask the Indian Congressmen - only don't ask me! (45-48)

The poem thus celebrates in a light vein the way the Empire was built and sustained. The same theme recurs in a serious vein in the poem, *What the People Said*, where the Empire represented by the Great Queen's voice wins unquestioned loyalty from the people, represented by the simple farmer:

By the well, where the bullocks go
Silent and blind and slow -
By the field where the young corn dies
In the face of the sultry skies,
They have heard, as the dull Earth hears
The voice of the wind of an hour,
The sound of the Great Queen's voice:
"My God hath given me years,
Hath granted dominion and power:
And I bid you, O Land, rejoice." (1-10)
…

And the Ploughman settled the share
More deep in the sun-dried clod:
"Mogul Mahratta, and *Mlech* from the North,
And White Queen over the Seas -
God raiseth them up and driveth them forth
As the dust of the ploughshare flies in the breeze;
But the wheat and the cattle are all my care,
And the rest is the will of God." (41-48)

No wonder the poems of Kipling became huge success among the English readers basking in the sun of the long Indian summer. Derozio too could have paid obeisance to the Empire and the Empire builders. He too could easily have made fun of his Indian (Bengali) colleagues and pupils. But he deliberately chose to cast his lot with the Indians. Instead of singing praises to the Empire, he chose to sing praise to Mother India. Looking far ahead of his time, he could visualize the future resurgent India in the eyes of the young pupils of the newly

introduced English education system of which he, like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, was an ardent advocate. Just as Kipling was the spokesman of the Empire, Derozio was the spokesman of the Bengal Renaissance which had its seeds of the Indian national movement. Looking back at the poetry of these two poets, separated from each other by half a century as well as by Destiny and vision, and yet sharing the same backdrop and milieu, one cannot help concluding that while Kipling's verse despite its higher reputation is strictly time-framed and dated, Derozio's provides a vision of the future and as such continues to be relevant even today.

8. CONCLUSION

A close study of Derozio's poetry with open mind throws light on a number of facts like the oriental influence not only in respect of the legends and the subject matter but also in respect of style. It is essentially the colonial perspective of the imperialists which refuses to recognize Derozio as an original poet in his own right despite his youth. It was extremely inconvenient for the champions of the Raj to acknowledge such original powerful patriotic sonnets like *The Harp of India* or *To India–My Native Land* and passionate tirade against tyrannical slavery like *Freedom to the Slave, Thermopylae, Greece, The Greeks at Marathon, Address to the Greeks, All is Lost Save Honour, Phyle* and a number of other such poems. Hence the first Reviewer as well as all the subsequent commentators almost totally overlook such embarrassing and inconvenient compositions of the difficult half-caste and choose to lap the ballad, *The Fakeer of Jungheera.*

It was impossible to condescend to an Anglo-Indian writing poetry in Her Majesty's language and that too, blasphemously, not in praise of her but of the native mother India. It was only much later that slowly and reluctantly recognition could be granted to the Indians (including Anglo-Indians) writing in English. Even in *The Cambridge History of English Literature,* in the 10th chapter entitled "Anglo-Indian Literature", written by E.F. Oaten there is only a casual mention of the English literature written by Indians. Among these Indians, he includes Derozio, "most famous of those of our Indian fellow men who are neither exclusively European nor Indian but share the blood of both." (Oaten, n.d., Para 11) Later in *A Sketch of Anglo-Indian*

Literature Oaten finally pays the well-deserved tribute to Derozio "The national bard of modern India," (Oaten 1908, 57).

But though the English indifference might appear to thaw, the Indian diffidence persists. Thus M.K. Naik refuses to agree "It is obviously impossible to accept E.F. Oaten's over generous assessment. A poet of slender actual achievement, Derozio, 'a lamp too early quenched,' remains a writer of sadly unfulfilled promise." (Naik 1982, 24). He would rather reserve this title of "the national bard of modern India" for Subramania Bharati or Bankim Chandra Chatterjee or even Sarojini Naidu. Perhaps it is again the prejudice against the Anglo-Indian from the Indian perspective. To compare Derozio with Bharati or Bankim Chandra would be out of place, but a comparison with Sarojini Naidu or any Indo-Anglian poet brings home to us the undeniable fact that Derozio has been the first Indo-Anglian poet of substance.

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[1] It is said that Job Charnok, the builder of Calcutta also rescued a widow from the funeral pyre and married her.

[2] Named after the dream rural colony of Anglo-Indians situated near Khelari in South Bihar, now Jharkhand (India).

[3] The same attitude is reflected in his short story, *The Head of the District*, where the educated Bengali officer, Girish Chunder De, M.A. is heartily ridiculed.