

"To India – My Native land" by Henry Derozio

Derozio (1809-1831) was a Eurasian poet, rationalist thinker and teacher. Henry Louis Vivian Derozio was appointed a teacher of the Calcutta Hindu College in May 1826 at the young age of seventeen. The subjects he taught were English literature and history and his mode of teaching was as unconventional as were his ideas. In fact, Derozio's activities as a teacher were not confined to the classrooms. He was ever willing to converse with his students even outside the College premises, frequently at his own residence, on any matter which aroused their interests. In fact, his discourses covered a wide range of subjects- literature, history, philosophy and science.

Henry Louis Vivian Derozio was born in Calcutta [now Kolkata]. He was a teacher, a scholar, a poet and an academic. Though Derozio had very little of Indian blood in him, his upbringing in India greatly inspired in him Indian themes and sentiments. Derozio is generally regarded as the first Indian to write in English.

Derozio's poetic vocation was very brief stretching forth only for about six years. Derozio, who held great promise as poet, regrettably, died untimely at the age of 23 when he was still at his bloom. He is modern India's first poet to express his patriotism in poetry, the first to verbalise in verse the desire of the Indians for Freedom.

Derozio's poems demonstrate his eager desire to inspire the young Indians to struggle and strive for India's independence from the clutches of the British imperialism.

ANALYSIS-:

To India My Native Land is a typical Derozian poem in its theme and style. The poem laments the degradation and devaluation of India because of her slavery to the British and seeks to regain India's lost glory and reverence.

The poem begins with a grief-stricken utterance *My country!* that reverberates throughout the poem. The poet, with a heart brimming with sorrow, grieves over the lamentable and nightmare scenario of present India. India is trodden under the British feet. The profound patriotic fervor of the poet finds expression in this passionate address. **In thy days of glory past: in the past when India was full of glory**

In the past, India had a rich cultural, spiritual and literary attribute: she was full of glory and was admired and revered all over the world. India was regarded highly by all but now, because of her subjugation to the British imperial intentions, she has lost all her glory and grandeur. The poet then exclaims rhetorically where the glory and reverence that India enjoyed in the past have vanished.

Thy eagle pinion is chained at last: Eagle is a royal bird; pinion is its wings. The poet metaphorically compares India at present to an eagle, a regal bird, which is chained and, hence, cannot fly. The contrast of India at present to the India in the past is obvious. In the past, India was like an eagle regally soaring high up in the sky. But, at present, she has been demeaned to the condition of a chained eagle unable to fly but can only crawl piteously on the lowly rubble.

Thy minstrels hath no wreath to weave for thee: The writing of a poem is compared, using a concealed metaphor, to the weaving of a wreath. In the past, the poets used to compose and sing songs of praise glorifying the greatness of India. Now, the poets can no more write these eulogies since India is in a miserable state having lost all its glory and divine status of the past.

Save the sad story of thy misery: The poets cannot glorify India in their poems but they can only write poems on the tragic tale of India's present misery under the British colonialism. In the octet of the sonnet, Derozio laments the loss of glory and reverence of his beloved country India. The sorrowful strain of the poem carries the poet's deep distress at India's misery.

The poet comes to a decision. He offers his selfless labors to his prized country and attempts to salvage her from the abject abyss of ruination now.

By this means, Derozio hopes to introduce to the present and future generations the dignified status and magnificent grandeur that his country once enjoyed. By making the men and women of now and coming days aware of the bygone grandeur and greatness of India, Derozio expects to regain and re establish India's glory and reverence. His poems of glory, dedicated to his dearest motherland, will inspire the young Indians to break the shackles of slavery under the British supremacy.

Though India is at present in a wrecked and wretched state, she still retains a few remnants of her past nobility and sublime nature. The poet compares India to a shipwreck. Just as a diver plunges into the depths of the sea to search in a wrecked ship for valuable treasures and retrieve them, the poet studies India's past and writes poems about those treasured moments in Indian history.

My fallen country! The poet demonstrates his selfless patriotic feelings by asserting that he expects no worldly rewards for his efforts to regain the glory of his country. He wishes to have only the loving blessing of his Mother country.

The poet is successful in his approach to create patriotic feelings. It compelled to contemplate about the glorious past of mother land and it awakens the energy among the youth about to do something for the nation. Youth of the country must understand imperatives of the contemporary time and should work for the large section of the class of the society. It gives to energy to understand the reality of the society, the poet says many people became martyrs and their martyrdom should not be useless therefore to cherish this valuable freedom people should follow their fundamental duties sincerely.