

Dr. Md Sharique Haider
Assistant Professor
Department of English
Maharaja College

U.G. Semester-III
MJC III
THE HARP OF INDIA BY HENRY DEROZIO
ABOUT THE POET (HENRY DEROZIO)

Henry Louis Vivian Derozio was an Indian poet and assistant head-master of Hindu college, Kolkata. He was a radical thinker of his time and one of the first Indian educators to disseminate western learning and science among the young men of Bengal. He was born on 18th April, 1809 at Entally Padmapukur in Kolkata. His parents were Francis Derozio and Sophia Johnson Derozio.

Derozio attended the David Drummond Dharamtala Academy School from the age of 6 to 14. He was a successful student. The notices in the "India Gazette" and "Calcutta Journal" at that time mentioned Derozio's academic excellence and successful performances in student plays. While a student, he read poetry of his contemporaries John Keats, Percy Shelly and Lord Byron.

Derozio left school at the age of fourteen to join his father's office in Kolkata. He later shifted to his uncle's indigo factory in Bhagalpur. Inspired by the scenic beauty of the River Ganges, he started writing poetry which he submitted to the India Gazette. His poetic career began to flourish, in 1825, with poems published in multiple newspapers and periodicals.

He soon became an assistant editor for John Grant and published several of his poems in other periodicals. He founded his own newspaper, the "Calcutta Gazette." Derozio, at the age of seventeen, was appointed teacher in English literature and history at Hindu College. His intense zeal for teaching and his interactions with students created a sensation at Hindu College. He organized debates where ideas and social norms were freely debated. In the year 1828, he motivated students to form a literary and debating club called the Academic Association.

Despite of his young age, he was considered a great scholar and a thinker. He constantly encouraged his students to think freely, to question, and not to accept anything blindly. His teachings inspired the development of the spirit of liberty, equality and freedom. His activities brought about the intellectual revolution in Bengal.

Derozio was generally considered as an Anglo-Indian, being of his mixed Portuguese, Indian and English descent, but he considered himself India. He was known during his lifetime as the first national poet of modern India, and the history of Anglo-Indian poetry typically begins with him. His poems are regarded as an important landmark in the history of patriotic poetry in India. They were influenced by Romantic poetry, especially by poets like Lord Byron and Robert Southey. His notable works include: "To India-My Native Land", "The Harp of India", "The Fakeer of Jungheera" and "Song of Hindustani Minstrel". Derozio died of cholera at the

age of 22, on 26th December, 1831 in Calcutta. His body was buried in South Park Street Cemetery.

"The Harp of India" is a Sonnet by Henry Derozio which dates back to March 1827. The poet uses the conventional apostrophe with a harp (representing poetry), mourning India's recent loss of poetic tradition and expressing hope that he might be able to revive it. The poem is an allusion to Thomas Moore's "Dear harp of My Country" which the poet quotes as an epigraph and the title page of his volumes. The poem reflects the poet's deep love for his homeland, India and its cultural harmony. The poet feels sad about the prevailing condition of India under British Colonial rule. This poem generates a sense of national pride and motivation for India to reclaim its independence and regain its former fantastic glory. The poet uses "Harp" as a symbol for the Indian poets who were earlier famous but under the British Rule they are suffering. As said above that the poem is a sonnet but different from the traditional sonnet.