

INDIAN WRITING IN ENGLISH

*From Colonial Modernity to the
Postcolonial Postmodern*

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CHAPTER 1

Derozio and the Birth of a Nationalist Tradition in Indian Poetry in English: An Overview

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Henry Louis Vivian Derozio was a young educator in the nineteenth-century India who could stimulate immense intellectual curiosity in his pupils to question the standard religious customs, leading to a social movement. He may be known today as a poet of extraordinary calibre, sometimes as the father of Indian English Poetry, but his contribution in the development of Modern India with the rationalistic thoughts and freethinking style made him an iconic figure in the history of Modern India. Henry Derozio was a teacher in Hindu College (presently, Presidency College/Presidency University), whose rationalist philosophy of the age of the Enlightenment and his free-thinking style, created a stir in the youths of the institution. His only aim was to broaden and deepen the knowledge of his pupils in Western thought and literature, as he notes in the poem "Sonnets to the Pupils of the Hindu College."

That Derozio found pure joy in teaching his students and to observe them bloom to their true potential is evident in the poem. According to Derozio's biographer Edward Thomas "No teacher ever taught with greater zeal, with more enthusiasm, with more loving intercourse between master and pupil than marked the short term of Derozio's connection with the Hindu