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SCHOOL OF DISTANCE EDUCATION

"LITERATURE IN ENGLISH FROM 1550 TO 1832 – II"



MA SEM II (PGENG 21)



Bharati Vidyapeeth

(Deemed to be University), Pune

School of Distance Education

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Bharati Vidyapeeth
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**LITERATURE IN ENGLISH FROM 1550 TO
1832 – II
MA SEM II (PGENAG 21)**

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UNIT : 1 History

1.0 Objectives:

After completing the study of this unit, you will

- know about the trends in English Poetry
- learn about Neoclassical Poetry
- learn about Romantic Poetry
- be able to answer the questions on the unit

1.1 Introduction:

In this semester you are going to learn English poetry written by William Wordsworth, P. B. Shelley and John Keats. You can better understand their poetry against the historical background. This unit, therefore, concentrates on two important schools of English poetry: Neoclassical and Romantic.

1.2 Neoclassical Poetry

Introduction

Neoclassicism is a term that denotes the period in the European literature during the 17th and 18th century. The term 'neo' means 'new' while 'classical' refers to the Roman and Greek classics. Neoclassical literature emulated the Greek and Roman styles of writing. One of the most important features of the neoclassical literature is the imitation of the classics of ancient Greek and Roman literature. Whereas Renaissance writers merely derived inspiration from the classics rather than copying the models of the past, the neoclassical writers strictly adhered to the authority of their models. The Neoclassical writers like Dryden, Pope, Swift, and Dr. Johnson believed that excellence and perfection in the literary art have been attained by the Roman writers of antiquity, and they, therefore, emulated these models of perfection and excellence.

Neoclassicism was characterized by a conscious effort to practice restraint, polish and objectivity of Classicism. It was characterized by formal perfection and by imitation of the past masters. The poets made an attempt to follow the so-called 'rules' laid down by the ancient poets. Correctness was regarded as the supreme virtue. Spontaneity was replaced by artificiality. The tone was superficially moralizing.

Neoclassical poetry is the poetry of the town and the fashionable upper circles of the city of London. Neoclassical poets lacked lyrical intensity but excelled in satiric poetry. They used Heroic Couplet as the metre of their poetry with mastery. The Neoclassical poetry was satiric, argumentative and reflective. The language and diction of this poetry is highly artificial.

The English Neoclassical movement was derived from both classical and contemporary French models. Boileau's *L'Art Poétique* (1674) and Pope's "Essay on Criticism" (1711) both provide us critical statements on neoclassical principles. The movement embodied a group of attitudes toward art and human existence — ideals of order, logic, accuracy, correctness, restraint, decorum, and so on. It encouraged the artists to imitate or reproduce the structures and themes of Greek or Roman originals. Neoclassicism dominated English literature from the Restoration in 1660 until the end of the eighteenth century.

To a certain extent, Neoclassicism represented a reaction against the Renaissance view of man as a being fundamentally good and possessed of an infinite potential for spiritual and intellectual growth. Neoclassical theorists, by contrast, saw man as an imperfect being, inherently sinful, whose potential was limited. The neoclassical literature considers man as a limited being, having limited power. A large number of satires and works of the period attack the man for his pride and advise him to remain content with his limited power of knowledge. Thus man in neoclassical literature remains a being of limited means and power. The Renaissance emphasized imagination, invention, experimentation, and mysticism. The neoclassical theorists, however, emphasized order and reason, restraint, common sense, and religious, political, economic and philosophical conservatism. They maintained that man himself was the most appropriate subject of art. They saw art itself as essentially pragmatic, valuable because it was somehow useful — and as something which was properly intellectual rather than emotional. Hence they gave importance to proper subject matter. They made an attempt to subordinate details to an overall design. They employed in their work concepts like symmetry, proportion, unity, harmony, and grace.

The 'Neoclassical period' in England spans the 140 years or so after the Restoration of Charles II in 1660. It is divided into two phases. The first phase covers the Restoration Age from 1660 to 1700 where neoclassicism was liberal and moderate. John Dryden was the leading figure of this age. The second phase covers the first six or seven decades of the 18th century where neoclassical writing becomes more and more narrow, slavish and stringent. Pope, Addison and Dr Johnson were the prominent poets of this phase. Matthew Arnold called the Neoclassical Age as 'our excellent and indispensable eighteenth century'. The Neoclassical Age is known to us by various names. Firstly, it is called the Restoration Age because King Charles II was restored to the throne of England. Secondly, it is called the Augustan Age because the writers of the period believed that their age was the golden age of English literature like the age of Emperor Augustus whose period was the golden age of Latin literature. Thirdly, it is also called the Classical Age as the epithet 'Classical' refers to creative writers of outstanding works of the highest merit. The writers of this period believed that the works of the writers of Classical Antiquity (Latin writers) presented the best models and ultimate standards of literary taste. The principle of classicism is best expressed by Pope in his poetry. Lastly, this period is named as a Pseudo-Classical or Neoclassical Age because classicism of this

period is different from the classicism of ancient Greece and Rome. The works of this period lack inspiration or emotion that differentiates true classics.

After the beheading of King Charles I, the monarchy was 'restored', and so this period got the name 'restoration'. A new era had dawned with epic works such as *Paradise Lost* and *Areopagitica* by Milton. It also saw a new age of both sexual comedy and wisdom, with works such as *The Country Wife* and *The Pilgrim's Progress* respectively. Writers of this age, Dryden and Milton, endeavoured to use sublime, grand and impressive style, scholarly allusions, and mythology and curb the intense use of imagination. Poetry saw the beginning of rhyme schemes. The iambic pentameter was one of the popular forms of poetry, preferred by the poets and the listeners. Odes and pastorals became the new means for exchanging ideas. The poems were mostly realistic and satirical, in which, John Dryden reigned supreme. He further divided poetry into three heads, that of fables, political satire, and doctrinal poems. You will not find any spiritual bias, moral highness, or philosophy in these poems.

The Augustan Age took its name from the Roman Emperor Augustus, whose monarchy brought stability in the social and political environment. It is during his reign, that epic writers such as Ovid, Horace, Virgil, etc., flourished.

Writers such as Pope, Dryden, Daniel Defoe, Swift, and Addison were the major contributors to this era. Dryden's attempts at satiric verse were highly admired by many generations. This era was also called the Age of Pope due to his noteworthy contributions.

This era made its way into the literary world by stepping out of the shadows of its previous age. Shakespearean literature found appreciation during this era. It brought forth the Gothic school of literature. Qualities like balance, reason, and intellect were the main focus of this era. Hence, this age is also called the Age of Sensibility.

Neoclassical poetry is not emotional; the flights of imagination that characterize romantic poetry are missing — as is the exquisitely expressed emotion. The neoclassicists wanted to be realistic and rational, to "nail" life as it is instead of enlarging upon what it may be. Neoclassic poets enhanced their vision of the world by incorporating references to writings of ancients as well as by referencing the deities embraced by ancients.

Characteristics of Neoclassical Poetry

1. Importance Given to Reason

Rationalism is one of the most important characteristics of neoclassical poetry. Neoclassical poets viewed reason as the main source of learning, knowledge and inspiration for their poetry. Neoclassical poetry revolted against the renaissance style of poetry. It was the product of intellect, not fancy and imagination. Neoclassical poetry is a simulated, fabricated and stereotypical type of poetry. In romantic poetry, sentiments play a vital role in writing of poetry, while in neoclassical poetry, reason and intellect are

dominant elements. Such Romantic poets as Coleridge and Wordsworth wrote poetry thoroughly at the impulse of their imagination. They didn't lay emphasis on reason to compose poetry. The neoclassical poets disregarded imagination, emotion and feelings, while composing their poetry.

2. Use of Scholarly Allusions

The neoclassical poets always made use of scholarly allusions in their poetry. All of them were highly educated and knew a lot of subjects. They were well-versed with biblical and classical literature. They tried to convey their message through allusions to their readers effectively and easily. That is why, we find plentiful allusions to classical writers i.e., Virgil, Horace and Homer. They aimed at writing in the manner of their classical masters. Look at the following lines taken from Rape of the Lock by Alexander Pope:

*Safe past the Gnome thro' this fantastic band,
A branch of healing Spleenwort in his hand.*

(Rape of the Lock, Canto IV)

Here, Pope is referring to Virgil's Aeneid, wherein the Aeneas visits the gangland safely just because of having Spleenwort, a magical branch of a tree.

3. Didacticism

The Neoclassical poets rebelled against the poetry of the Renaissance Period which valued spontaneity and exuberance. The neoclassical poets laid stress significantly on the didactic purpose of poetry. They were mainly concerned with freeing mankind from the troubles of life. That is why; most of the neoclassical poetry is replete with didacticism to a great extent. Look at the following lines taken from Alexander Pope's poem An Essay on Man:

*Vice is a monster of so frightful mien,
As to be hated needs but to be seen;
Yet seen too oft, familiar with her face,
We first endure, then pity, then embrace.*

4. Realism

The neoclassical poetry is genuinely realistic. The neoclassical poets, unlike the romantic poets who succeeded them, were not interested in exploring the world of imagination. They were basically realists and they presented the true picture of their society. They would like to study the harsh realities of life. They were keen observers and presented what they experienced in their poetry. These poets were not escapists like the romantic poets, who ignored the harsh realities of life and tried to escape from them with the help of imagination. The Neoclassical poets were men of action and practically lived in the midst of people. They avoided abstract ideas,

imaginative thoughts and idealism in their poetry. The poetry written by Dryden and Pope has many examples of realism. Look at the following example:

*When I consider Life, 'tis all a cheat;
Yet, fooled with hope, men favour the deceit;
Trust on, and think to-morrow will repay:
To-morrow's falser than the former day;
Lies worse; and while it says, we shall be blest
With some new joys, cuts off what we possess.*
(Aurang Zeb by John Dryden)

5. Adherence to Classical Rules

The neoclassical poets were undoubtedly great admirers of classical poetry. They would try to revive Classicism in their poetry by following each and every model of the past. Their highest concern was to adhere to the classical rules and employ them in their poetry as much as possible. That is the reason; the neoclassical poetry is also labeled as Pseudo Classical Poetry. They had great respect for the classical rules. Look at the following example from Pope's poetry:

*Those RULES of old discovered, not devised,
Are Nature still, but Nature Methodized;
Nature, like Liberty, is but restrained
By the same Laws which first herself ordained.*
(Essay on Criticism by Alexander Pope)

6. Use of Heroic Couplet

Most of the neoclassical poets preferred the use of Heroic Couplet as a verse form. The neoclassical poets were primarily responsible for their widespread use of heroic couplets in their poetry. They were the champions of heroic couplet. The neoclassical poets had mastery in handling the form of heroic couplet. Dryden and Pope both had excellent command on the form of heroic couplet. They are considered as the real masters of heroic couplet. What is most important about these two poets is that they corrected it and made it a polished medium of poetic expression. It is said that Dryden wrote almost thirty thousand heroic couplets. His poems like Absalom and Achitophel, Mac Flecknoe and The Medal are all in heroic couplets. Look at the following example:

*Good nature and good sense must ever join;
To err is human, to forgive, divine.*

(An Essay on Criticism by Alexander Pope)

7. Lack of Passionate Lyricism

Romantic poetry is popular for its lyrical quality, while neoclassical poetry is lacking in lyrical features due to apathy of the neoclassical poets for passion, feelings and emotions. They looked at the passion with distrust and suspicion. That is the reason; very few lyrics were written during the age of Pope and Dryden. They didn't give free play to their imagination, rather they dwelt upon the intellectual aspects of poetry. Look at the following example:

*I am His Highness' dog at Kew;
Pray tell me, sir, whose dog are you?*

(Engraved on the Collar of a Dog Which I Gave to His Royal Highness by Alexander Pope)

8. Objectivity

Objectivity is one more important feature of neoclassical poetry. As these poets were completely against subjectivity in poetry, they endeavoured hard to write objective poetry. They avoided giving vent to their feelings; rather they concentrated upon the miseries, hardships and problems of the people around them. That is why; we find very little information about the lives of neoclassical poets in their poetry.

9. Poetic Diction

The term 'poetic diction' is used to refer to the kind of choice of words the neoclassical poets made for their poetry. In romantic poetry, the diction is flexible and easy to use, while in the neoclassical poetry, it is restrained, concrete and rigid. The neoclassical poets were fond of using a different language for poetry. They thought that there should be a dividing line between the language of prose and poetry. That is why; they laid emphasis on the specific style for poetry. They believed that decorum, specific style and mannerism are the vital elements of poetry. Alexander Pope was very conscious about the language of his poetry. He says in Essay on Criticism:

*Expression is the dress of thought, and still
Appears more decent as more suitable.
A vile Conceit in pompous words express'd
Is like a clown in regal purple dress'd
For different styles with different subjects sort,
As sev'ral garbs with country, town, and court.
(Essay on Criticism by Alexander Pope)*

The Neoclassical Poets:

Many great poets such as John Dryden, Alexander Pope and Dr. Samuel Johnson are called as Neoclassical poets.

- 1 John Dryden (1631-1700) was a poet, playwright, and translator. He wrote Heroique Stanza's on the death of Cromwell. He praised the restoration of the king with Astraea Redux and To His Sacred Majesty. He wrote a long poem Annus Mirabilis in quatrains. He became poet laureate in 1668. Dryden wrote his play All for Love in blank verse. His Absalom and Achitophel is a great piece of satire. He also wrote several Pindaric odes.
- 2 Alexander Pope (1688-1744) was a great poet and translator. When he was 16, he wrote 'Pastorals'. He is famous for his poems such as Essay on Criticism, The Rape of the Lock, etc. He translated Homer's Iliad in heroic couplets. He also translated Homer's Odyssey. He wrote Dunciad, a satire on Dullness. An Essay on Man is a moral and philosophical poem. An Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot is one of Pope's most brilliant pieces of irony and invective. With the rise of romantic poetry, Pope's poetry was seen as artificial.
- 3 Dr. Samuel Johnson (1709-84) was one of the most eminent literary figures of the day. He began his literary career by publishing his poem London in 1738. He contributed to Gentleman's Magazine essays, poems, Latin verses, biographies, and Parliamentary Debates. In 1749 he published The Vanity of Human Wishes. He also wrote tragedy Irene. He is famous for his journal Rambler and his Dictionary. In 1759 appeared Rasselas, Prince of Abyssinia. Boswell wrote his biography.

1.2.1 Check Your Progress:

A) Choose the correct alternative.

1. The term ----- refers to the Roman and Greek writings.
a) Romantic b) Classical
c) Renaissance d) Restoration
2. The period of Emperor Augustus was the golden age of ----- literature.
a) Latin b) Sanskrit
c) Greek d) English
3. The Neoclassical poets were highly -----.
a) radical b) progressive
c) conservative d) none of the above
4. The Neoclassical poets viewed man as a ----- being.
a) great b) ordinary
c) limited d) common
5. The Neoclassical poetry was the product of -----.
a) imagination b) intellect
c) fancy d) vision

B) Answer in one word/phrase/sentence.

1. Who was restored to the throne of England in 1660?
2. What expression does Arnold use to refer to the Neoclassical Age?
3. Who divided poetry into three heads?
4. Mention Pope's poem which presents the principles of neoclassical poetry.
5. Mention the verse form widely used by the neoclassical poets.

1.2.2 Terms to Remember:

- Heroic couplet: a pair of rhymed lines of iambic pentameter
- decorum: correctness
- conservatism: conforming to the past
- Antiquity: ancient times
- Pseudo: artificial

1.3 Romantic Poetry

Introduction

Romanticism in English poetry spans the period from 1778 to 1832. It covers the last twenty-two years of the reign of George III and the reigns of George IV (1820-30) and William IV (1830-37). The Romantic poets rebelled against the neoclassical poets. Romanticism is the term applied to the changed movement. It is a tendency of the mind that rebels against any kinds of rules while at the same time it prefers the flights of imagination. On the one hand it opposed classicism and on the other, realism. It fostered the spirit of enquiry, the spirit of curiosity, the love of adventure, the love of the past, the love of the beauty, the love of individualism and foremost of all, the love of humanism. The romantics were humanitarian in their outlook. They felt sympathy for the poor and the underprivileged.

Romanticism in English poetry generally covers the period from 1798 to 1832. It broadly emerged as a literary and philosophical cult on the literary scenario. The terms Classicism and Romanticism are often presented in opposition to each other. Romanticism was a movement which began in Germany in the seventeen nineties. There was one more movement which began in France in 1801. In any case each of these so-called Romanticisms was a highly complex and usually in exceedingly unstable intellectual compound. Mr Edmund Gosse described Joseph Warton's youthful poem 'The Enthusiast' written in 1740 as the first manifestation of a complete revolt against the classical attitude which had been sovereign in all European literature for nearly a century. It was Germany that supplied the new impulse and indeed the philosophical doctrine that made Romanticism conscious of its aspirations.

The English Romantic movement, though more indigenous, was yet a part and parcel of it. In England its highest peak was from 1798 to 1832 that was

from the publication of Lyrical Ballads of Wordsworth and Coleridge to the first publication of Tennyson's poem. The word 'Romantic' stands for the revolt made by Wordsworth and Coleridge against the classical standards of the Age of Reason. Between 1770 and 1850 the intellectual life of England comes to be dominated by the romantic mood. The doctrine it represented and the literary and artistic work it produced come to be known as romanticism. Basically, romanticism was a reaction to the neoclassical age or Age of Reason, the age of Newton and Locke in England, Leibniz and the Encyclopedists on the continent. Romantic revival took place at the end of the 18th century. It was in part a reaction against the structures and formality of the neoclassical school of poetry. This reaction is broadly reflected in the poetry written by such predecessors of the Romantics as Gray, Collins and Blake. The world was ripe for a great rebirth of human spirit. Romanticism appeared as an innovative way of viewing man and his relationship to his environment. The great guiding principle of the romantic revolt was reinvigorated humanism, which was greater than any since Renaissance. It bestowed individualism and Freedom of action. In the political sphere it brought the end of privilege and substituted constitutionalism and extension of the franchise. In the world of arts it brought freedom from the restraint of the long established rules and the unabashed expression of temperament. The romantic revival was primarily a movement for freedom of expression in literature. The poets turned to themselves and expressed frankly their personal experiences. Wordsworth, Coleridge, Scott, Byron, Shelley and Keats are the chief romantic poets. All of them have shown a deep and abiding interest in nature. Wordsworth turned out to be the champion of the poor and the downtrodden. His republican attitude was inspired by the French Revolution. Shelley spoke against exploitation and tyranny. Romanticism was associated with the cult of the common man, the cult of the poor and the cult of the democracy. The writings of Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-78) taught that in olden days men had been free and equal and they had been enslaved by society and human institutions. The old and traditional institutions were to be shattered. Rousseau the father of the French Revolution is considered as the father of Romanticism as well. In 1761 he published two books Contract Social and Emile. They caused sensation in the whole of Europe. These two books of Rousseau attacked society and state.

Romanticism comes from the word 'Romance'. Romance in turn comes from a Latin Adverb 'Romanice' which means in 'the Roman manner'. The etymology of the word "Romance" goes back to the Roman Empire (3rd century B.C. to the 15th century). The word romantic appeared first in the 17th century. The word romantic at the time simply meant the old romances. The word suffered some deterioration during the classical age. It came to mean something false, fictitious, imaginary and fantastic. But with the Romantic revival of the early 19th century the word came to gain importance.

The word Romanticism has been understood in different ways by different critics. Abercrombie says about Romanticism: "It is the evocation of the past, it is the dissolution of form, it is the individual fighting against

tradition, and it is a hundred and one things". Abercrombie takes it to be an attitude of mind. To him, it is a withdrawal from outer experience to concentrate on inner experience. It is the journey into the inner world, into one's own personality. This definition expresses the true nature of romanticism. The romantics take it for granted that reality can be felt only through concentration on inner life. Another scholar Herford describes it as "an extraordinary development of imaginative sensibility". A renowned critic C.M. Bowra commented upon the peculiar Romantic ability as, "to achieve a world of the ideal from particular actuality". For Compton Rickett "it is an expression of sharpened sensibility and heightened imaginative feelings".

The Romantic Movement owes to the Renaissance. The glory and prosperity of Romantic poetry reminded the glory and prosperity of the Renaissance period. Whenever we study the Romantic Movement as a Renaissance period movement, we witness that interest in Hellenism is one of its features. In Wordsworth there is just a vague longing for the primitive religion of the Greeks which might have permitted him to worship nature for the amusement of the upper classes. The Romantic poets liberated the sensibility of the people by rebelling against the authority of the neoclassical school of poetry. This liberation took various forms. The right to express deeply felt emotions was re-established. There was great variety in these emotions from love of nature to love of freedom. What is common to all poets is their love of emotional life. In fact their life is more balanced than that of the so-called classicists of the eighteenth century. It is more balanced because they paid more attention to philosophy, to thinking and they also attended the emotional aspect of life. However, Wordsworth and other Romantic poets did away with survivals of a phraseology that was considered especially appropriate for poetry. The struggle against old culture took the form of a struggle against old religious ideas. Shelley was the most militant of the fighters and he often took the positions of materialism. Byron was sceptic. Keats tried to think out a new system of salvation for humanity. Coleridge was friendly with an atheist and he was extremely tolerant in religious matters. As the Romantic poet found himself in isolation and was also disgusted with his social surrounding he had a strong tendency to idealize things.

The Romantic poets were good patriots even though the government of the day persecuted them in various ways. They combined their patriotism with a sense of internationalism and supported the independence movement of various countries.

The Characteristics of the Romantic Movement:

The most important features of Romantic poetry are as follows:

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i) Individualism: -

Individualism allowed the poets freedom to choose their own forms and their own subject matter. They were not bound to abide by the set rules and norms of the previous age. They were not to conform to any set pattern. Where the form chosen happened to be the same, the treatment was often different. Therefore we witness endless variety in romantic poetry. Wordsworth defined poetry as 'a spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings'. He associated poetry with self-expression. They typical poem makes a reference to the poet, his personality. For example, Wordsworth's "Daffodils" begins with a reference to the being of the poet.

I wandered lonely as a cloud

Keats begins his "Ode on Grecian Urn" with a reference to his condition:

My heart aches and the drowsy numbness pains my sense.

ii) Imagination: -

Imagination has played a very important role in the process of poetic creation of the Romantics. They considered imagination as superior to reason. They preferred the full play of imagination to the adherence to conformity. A glow of imagination can make the things from the common life interesting; imagination transfigures and transforms the common so that it appears to be uncommon. The Romantic poets made the pictures in contemporary poetry different from their originals in nature or life. Emotion and imagination which had been suppressed during the age of Dryden and Pope were let loose and were allowed to play their part in the age of Wordsworth.

iii) Humanitarian outlook: -

In the Romantic period reason was replaced by emotion. A feature of the humanism of the Romantic poet is the development of love for the ordinary and the common in their poetry. Humanitarian outlook increases sympathy for fellow-men and even for lower classes. The Romantic Movement contributed to the liberation of human mind and spirit from the fetters of the dry reasons of the 18th Century. The intellectual heroic couplet which were popular in the neoclassical period was replaced by the emotional lyric in the Romantic period. Thus poetry became more and more impassioned and sensuous.

iv) Interest in Natural and the Simple Life:-

It was Rousseau under whose influence the Romantic poets turned to Nature and the lives of the lowly. The poetry of the 18th Century was concerned with clubs and coffee houses and the city life. In the Romantic period the interest was transferred from town to country life and from the artificial decorations of drawing rooms to the natural beauty and loveliness. The Romantics discarded the glamour of an artificial life and turned to

nature. Nature appealed to them for the same reason: as being 'nearer to the mystery of the universe' in its disarray than man's orderly creations.

- v) **Interest in the Past and the Exotic:-**
Some of the Romantic poets liked to escape to the middle ages in order to avoid the tyranny, squalor and ugliness of the materialistic life of their age. They revived the past, especially the medieval ages, which appeared to them more interesting and more exciting than the sordid present. The enthusiasm for the middle ages satisfied the emotional sense of wonder on the one hand and the intellectual sense of curiosity on the other. The tales and legends of the middle ages particularly appealed to them. Walter Scott and Keats made copious use of them. This led to the revival of the ballad form which the neoclassical poets had completely neglected.

- vi) **Love of the mysterious and the supernatural:-**
Another important feature of Romantic poetry was an expression of the mysterious and the supernatural, the strange and the vague. When we study the poems of Wordsworth, we witness mysticism in it. While studying the poems of Coleridge, we come across supernatural elements in them. Shelley found in nature the spirit of love. Keats presented the principle of beauty in everything. A sense of wonder and mystery coloured the Romantic Poetry. This gave Romantic poetry its strange atmosphere of wonder and mystery, uncanny and eerie feeling. 'The Rime of Ancient Mariner', 'Christabel', 'Kubla Khan' and 'Dejection: An Ode' are well known poems of Coleridge of this type. He took natural subjects and treated them in such a romantic manner that they looked so wonderful.

The Romantic Poets:

The poets of this period fall into two groups: (1) The elder Romantic poets are Wordsworth, Scott, Coleridge and Southey; (2) The younger ones are Byron, Shelley and Keats.

- i) **William Wordsworth (1770-1850)** was one of the greatest poets in the history of English poetry. He expressed the deepest aspirations of English Romanticism. He regarded himself as a reformer of poetry; and in the Preface to the second edition of the *Lyrical Ballads*, he explained the principles of Romantic poetry. Though Wordsworth wrote incessantly for over fifty years, his real great work, as Arnold rightly says, was produced within the first ten years, between 1798 and 1808. Arnold proposed this classification in the *Poems of Wordsworth* edited by him in 1879. Arnold's volume consists of lyrics, lyrical ballads, odes, sonnets, verse tales and reflective poems. Wordsworth is known as the greatest poet of nature. He has the unique power to render in words not only the visible shapes of nature but also what is neither visible nor audible. Throughout his life he remained a true interpreter of nature to humanity. He used language used by ordinary men in his early poems. His important and remarkable poems are – 'We are

Seven', 'Lucy Gray', 'The Reverie of Poor Susan', 'The Rainbow', 'The Daffodils', 'To the Cuckoo', 'The Solitary Reaper', 'Dion', 'Ode to Duty', 'Ode on Intimation of Immortality', 'Lines Written in March', 'Lines written in Early Spring', 'Milton Thou Shouldst be Living at this Hour', 'Lines Upon Westminster Bridge', 'Lines Written near Tintern Abbey', 'The Old Cumberland Beggar', 'Resolution and Independence', etc. For Wordsworth, nature provided not only pleasure but pleasure 'recollected in tranquillity'. Next to nature, Wordsworth favoured man in his natural habitat such as the shepherd, the huntsman, the leech gatherer and not man changed from his natural self by outside influences such as those of rank and sophisticated society. As mentioned earlier, he wrote his *Lyrical Ballads* and some other poems in a selection of language really used by men.

- ii) **Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834):** was a man of varied interests. He explored the supernatural as psychic phenomena and to him it was a symbol of mystery of life. His early poetry is often full of false rhetoric like the similar early attempts of Wordsworth and Shelley. He was deeply influenced by medieval folklore and legend. Dream quality, imaginative power, humanitarianism, music, treatment of nature, narrative skill, simplicity of diction are other distinctive features of Coleridge's poetry. 'Kubla Khan', 'Christabel', 'The Rime of Ancient Mariner', 'Frost at Midnight', 'An ode', 'Love', 'Youth and Age' are some of his famous poems. In 'The Ancient Mariner', Coleridge handles the supernatural element with even greater subtlety than in 'Christabel'.
- iii) **Sir Walter Scott (1771-1882)** was a poet and novelist. He was a great lover of the old songs. He came into contact with the rural people and gained knowledge of their ways of life. He began his literary career as a translator of German romances and ballads. 'The Lady of the Last Minstrel' (1805) contains the old border scenes and incidents. 'Marmion' (1808) is a tale of love adventure and flight. 'The Lady of the Lake' (1819) narrates the love-story of Ellen who is being loved by three persons. The poem depicts the medieval life of Scotland. Like his novels, his poems are all set either in the Middle Ages or some other period of Scottish history. Scott was attracted by the Romantic trend in German literature.
- iv) **Robert Southey (1774-1843)** is one of three Lake poets of England, the other two being Wordsworth and Coleridge. He was born in Bristol and educated at Oxford. He especially wrote ballads. His ballads are comic and humorous. Besides ballads, he produced a large number of epics like 'Thalaba', 'The Curse of Kehama' and 'Don Roderick'. Southey lacked imagination of the elder Romantics. His genius was essentially bookish.
- v) **Lord (George Gordon) Byron (1788-1824)** produced several volumes of verse consisting mostly of satire, narrative poems and lyrics. He produced a series of poetic tales in the manner of Scott. They are known as 'The Giaour' (1813), 'The Bride of Abydos' (1813), 'Lara' (1814), 'The Siege of Corinth' (1815) and 'Parisina'. Some of these verse tales are oriental in spirit. He wrote 'Vision of Judgment' in reply to Southey's attack on him. He also wrote 'Child Harold's Pilgrimage', 'The Prisoner of Chillon', 'Don Juan'. His best lyrics include 'Maid of Athens', 'When We Two Parted',

'She walks in Beauty', etc. In his own day he was considered as great as Shakespeare, not only in England but all over Europe. His lyrics may not enjoy the delicacy of Shelley and the distinction of Wordsworth. However, they have music and charm of their own. While Keats was fascinated by the past and Shelley, by future, Byron was content to live in the present. Byron's love of nature was quite different in perspective from that of Wordsworth's.

- vi) **Percy Bysshe Shelley** (1792-1822) wrote lyrical plays, longer poems, an elegy, lyrics, odes and sonnets. His popular poems are 'Queen Mab', 'Alaster or the Spirit of Solitude', 'The Revolt of Islam', 'Epipsychidion' and 'The Triumph of Life'. His famous elegy 'Adonia' is written on the unfortunate death of Keats. His lyrics and odes include 'Stanzas written in unfortunat death of Keats', 'Ode to the West Wind', 'The Cloud', 'To The Dejection near Naples', 'Ode to the West Wind', 'O World! O Life! O Skylark', 'To Night Music', 'When Soft Voices Die', 'O World! O Life! O Time!', 'When the Lamp is Shattered', 'The Last Chorus of Hellas', etc. His more popular sonnets are 'Ozymandias of Egypt' and 'England'. 'The Revolt of Islam' (1817) depicts the personal love on the one side and the love of humanity on the other. His passionate desire to lose himself in nature, to become one with the spirit of love and beauty in the universe which was to him in place of God is expressed in the 'Ode to the West Wind', his most perfect poem:

*"make me thy lyre even as the forest is;
what if my leaves are falling like its own".*

- vii) **John Keats** (1795-1821) was a great poet of beauty. 'Endymion' (1818), written under the influence of Spenser, deals with a popular Greek myth of Diana and Endymion. 'Sleep and Poetry' has been written in the style of Leigh Hunt. His narrative poem 'Isabella, or the Pot of Basil' (1818) marks a stage of poetic development. 'Hyperion' (1819) deals with a mythological theme, the fall of Hyperion. In this poem he treats an old myth in a new and symbolic way and gives it a fresh meaning. His other popular poems are 'The Eve of St. Agnes' (1820) and 'Lamia'. His great odes are: 'Ode to A Nightingale', 'Ode on A Grecian Urn', 'Ode to Autumn', 'Ode to Psyche' and 'Ode on Melancholy'. He also wrote a lyrical ballad 'La Belle Dame sans Merci' and the sonnets 'When I have fears that I may cease to be' and 'On First looking into Chapman's Homer'. The commonest feature of Keats's poetry is its appeal to the senses. Keats loved the principle of beauty in all things. In a book 'A Critical History of English poetry' Grierson comments that "Like all the Romantics, Keats is a poet of escape". He escapes into nature to get rid of the hard reality of life.

1.3.1 Check Your Progress:

A) Choose the correct alternative.

- The Romantics made a revolt against the ----- poets.
a) classical b) neoclassical
c) metaphysical d) none of the above

- Romanticism began in ----- during the 1790s.

a) France b) England
c) Spain d) Germany

- Wordsworth published his Lyrical Ballads in -----.

a) 1798 b) 1832
c) 1660 d) 1740

- The term 'Romanticism' has been derived from the Latin word ----.

a) Romanic b) Romance
c) Romanice d) Romantic

- For the Romantics, the faculty of ----- was superior to the faculty of reason.

a) imagination b) fancy
c) meditation d) none of the above

B) Answer in one word/phrase/sentence.

- Who did not like to follow the so-called rules in literature?
- Mention the names of the predecessors of the Romantic poets.
- Who attacked society and state in his books?
- Who defined poetry as 'a spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings'?
- Mention the form revived by the Romantics which was completely neglected by the neoclassical poets.

1.3.2 Terms to Remember:

- Medieval Age**:- Relating or belonging to the Middle Age (about 1100 to 1500 A.D.)
- French Revolution**:- was an influential period of social and political upheaval in France that lasted from 1789 until 1799. Inspired by liberal and radical ideas the revolution profoundly altered the course of modern history, triggering the global decline of theocracies and absolute monarchies while replacing them with the republics and democracies.
- imagination**:- The power of the mind to form a mental image or concept of something that is unreal or not present, an unrealistic idea of nation.
- Hellenism**:- An idea or custom peculiar to the Greeks, the civilization and culture of ancient Greece.
- phraseology**:- the manner in which words and phrases are used in speech or writing, a set of expression used by a particular group of person
- supernatural**:- uncanny, weird

1.4 Summary

In this unit, we have read about two important literary movements in English poetry: 1) Neoclassical poetry and 2) Romantic poetry.

Neoclassicism refers to the period in the European literature during the 17th and 18th century. Neoclassical literature followed the Greek and Roman styles of writing. They preferred to imitate the classics of ancient Greek and Roman literature. The Neoclassical writers like Dryden, Pope, Swift, and Dr. Johnson emulated the ancient models of perfection and excellence. The neoclassical principles of literature include order and reason, restraint, common sense, and religious, political, economic and philosophical conservatism.

Romantic poetry is known as a branch of the Romantic Movement. The first generations of Romantic poets were primarily Wordsworth, Coleridge, Scott and Southey. The second generation was at its culmination in the 1820s with poets such as Shelley, Byron and Keats. The movement represented an interest in the gothic, medieval art and nature. The ballad form was reintroduced and poems often took form from fairy tales and folk songs. Poets were enjoying writing for themselves rather than for the senior nobility and later they were the source of inspiration for the Pre-Raphaelite painters. Romanticism is the name applied to the changed outlook. The romantic poets laid emphasis on liberty and freedom of the individual.

1.5 Answer to Check Your Progress:

1.2.1 Check Your Progress:

- A) 1) classical
2) Latin
3) conservative
4) limited
5) intellect
- B) 1) Charles II
2) 'our excellent and indispensable eighteenth century'
3) John Dryden
4) Essay on Criticism
5) Heroic couplet

1.3.1 Check Your Progress:

- A) 1) neoclassical
2) Germany
3) 1798
4) Romanice
5) imagination

- B) 1) The Romantics
2) Gray, Collins and Blake
3) Rousseau
4) William Wordsworth
5) ballad

1.6 Exercises:

A) Answer the following:

1. What are the characteristics of Romantic poetry?
2. Discuss William Wordsworth as the major poet of the Romantic period.
3. What are the characteristics of neoclassical poetry?
4. Write a note on the contribution made by Dryden and Pope.

B) Write short notes.

1. Heroic couplet
2. Dr. Samuel Johnson
3. John Keats
4. P. B. Shelley

1.7 References for Further Study:

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