

Romantic Age

- The period from 1798 to 1832 is known as the period of Romanticism. It came as a reaction to New Classicism.
- ‘Romanticism is the expression of sharpened, sensibilities and heightened imaginative feelings.’
- Therefore it has been designated as a liberalism in literature.
- Let us discuss the main characteristics of Romanticism in details.

❖ Freedom of Expression

Unlike the Classical poets, the Romantic poets seek freedom of expression. The development of new idea brings fresh inspiration for poetry. This is the most fertile period of our literature. In typical Ballads, Wordsworth called,

‘There is not only essential difference between the language of prose and that of poetry.’

Thus, the Romantic poet’s started to write in the day to day language.

❖ Love for Nature and Country Life

The poets of the 18th century were mainly concerned with town life. They depicted human nature. Poetry was considered with coffee houses and drawing rooms. It depicted social and political life.

The Romantic poets turned to nature, Keats, Shelley, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron and Scott were leading figures of this age. The range of their creation was increased in various subjects of nature. The poet's observation became more natural and intimate. Wordsworth said that nature is the best teacher. Nature is amplified and glorified by Wordsworth. Other romantic poets of the period also took keen interest in different moods and forms of nature.

‘The cattle are grazing

 Their heads never rising

 There are forty feeling like one.’

In the works of these authors the treatment of nature is amplified and glorified. It is not only in the flowers and fields but also in-

The light of setting Sun and,

The round ocean and

The living air and

The blue sky and

In the mind of man.

Wordsworth saw God in nature ,Shelley saw revolution in nature, Keats saw beauty in nature, Byron saw love in nature. Nature is the chief inspiration force for Romantic poets.

❖ Escape into Past

Romantic poets sought escape into past. They often select their subject from the middle age. They found enough joy and beauty there. As Walter Pater remarks,

‘The essential elements of romantic spirit are curiosity and the love of beauty’.

❖ Emotional Appeal

Romantic poetry is characterized by imagination, emotion and passion. Romanticism is the expression of sharpened sensibilities and heightened imaginative feelings, Classical poetry was rational and intellectual. It was replaced by the romantic poetry. The year 1798 marks the publication of the ‘Lyrical Ballads’. Here Wordsworth gave a new definition of poetry.

‘The poetry is a spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings and emotions recollected in tranquillities’

This changed the nature, out-look and scope of poetry. Now poetry turned to originality, emotions, mystery, beauty and imagination.

Those are all romantic qualities. So this age is called ‘The Romantic Revival or The Romantic Period’.

‘A thing of beauty is a joy forever

Its loveliness increases

It will never pass into nothingness’.

---Keats

❖ Supernaturalism

Supernaturalism is another quality of romantic poetry. Coleridge and Scott brought supernatural elements in English poetry. A sense of wonder and mystery was given to poetry by mysterious atmosphere.

❖ German Influence

The increasing bitterness of long war with France affected to the French language which has been affecting the English literature deeply, too. In the place of French the study of German rapidly came into favour. The first poetical work of Scott was based on the German and this influence can be observed in the works of Coleridge, Keats, Shelley, Byron and many more.

❖ Subjectivity

Romantic poetry is essentially a subjective and individual poetry. The Classical poetry was the social poetry. The Romantic poetry put external objects in a subjective form.

In short Romantic poetry is characterized by the protest against the bondage of rules—to the return of Nature.

❖ Conclusion:

'Beauty is truth

Truth is beauty

That is all

Ye know on earth

And all ye need to know'.

----Keats.

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