CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Romanticism is an imaginative point of view. It is a kind of expression of intense imaginative feeling and sharpened sensibilities through art.

As far as the age of Dryden is concerned, we can say that order and clarity are the classical qualities which are applied as parameters to this age. As for the Romantic age love of beauty and curiosity are the primal qualities which are attached to it.

Politically the Romantic period coincided with the French Revolution; and the literary movement of the period involved a breaking away from the restrictions of the past. The revolution in America, the wars for independence in countries such as Greece, Spain and Poland had inspired Romantic movement. The movement was a reaction against rationalism and objectivism of the eighteenth century. Emotionally, it was an extreme assertion of the self. The individual's varied experiences received due importance, so also the sense of wonder and mystery and intellectual curiosity.

Characteristically Romantic poetry has some features --

i) Innovation: When a new path is trodden, especially in literature, it inevitably results in new forms. Romantic poetry found new forms and style breaking away from the classical poetry. It treated the
common or lowly subjects through poems, in sharp contrast to the decorum and stiff-neckedness of the preceding age.

ii) **Poet's Isolation from Society**: The Romantic poet looked at society as an evil force which stunts its citizens and became a solitary figure for pursuing personal literary quest. Wordsworth demanded an intuitive outlook and oneness with Nature, Shelley's quest was with the belief that poets are the 'unacknowledged legislators of the world', Keats sought self-realisation in a world created by his imagination. The Romantic poets denounced objectivity and rationality.

iii) **Refuge in Nature**: Rejecting the culture of urbanisation and industrialization, the Romantic writers took refuge in the primitive Nature. They viewed Nature independent of man. Poets such as Wordsworth emphasized significance of 'lesson' from Nature in fulfilling man's spiritual life. Nature became an impulse for the poet to get himself engaged in meditating upon some important problem. Poets like Keats realized the transience of human life in contrast with the perennial and ever-lasting delight in Nature. Wordsworth tried to moralise the various messages from Nature. Thus Nature became an important element in the creative process of the Romantics.

iv) **Imagination**: The rationalism in the age preceding the Romantic revival considered imagination secondary. Poets of that period (the 18th century) believed that the poet is an interpreter of things, rather than a creator of something new. But in the Romantic's view the
value of imagination was much higher. Blake, commenting on the world of Imagination says:

This world of Imagination is the world of Eternity; it is the divine bosom into which we shall go after the death of the Vegetated body. This world of Imagination is Infinite and Eternal, whereas the world of Generation or Vegetation, is Finite and temporal. There exist in that Eternal world the permanent Realities of Every Thing which we see reflected in the vegetable Glass of Nature. All things are comprehended in their Eternal Forms in the divine body of the Saviour, the True Vine of Eternity, the Human Imagination.¹

Thus imagination sees things, rather sees through things (objects). It is the perception of the imperceptible by the senses. Bowra observes very aptly:

It was this search for the unseen world that awoke the inspiration of the Romantics and made poets of them.²

We see that the faculty of imagination, was for the Romantics, an indispensable power to 'transcend' the visible world and to enter into the spiritual world. For a Romantic, an object is not a mere external thing. He has an irrepressible desire for the merger of the
subject (himself) and the object. This is 'imagined reality' of the Romantics.

v) Withdrawal to Inner Experience: As observed by Abercrombie- 'We see the spirit of the mind withdrawing, more and more on the things it finds within self'. The Romantics have a tendency to flee from actuality. They withdraw from outer experience and move toward inner experience. In other words, it is a withdrawal from the things perceived to the things conceived. Thus Keats leaves the actual nightigale bird singing gayly on a tree, and withdraws himself into the imaginary world remembering of Ruth, the faery lands etc. Wordsworth recollects the delightful spectacle of the 'Daffodils', and enjoys the delight created thereof and his heart gets filled 'with pleasure'.

vi) Intellectual curiosity: We see this intellectual curiosity in the regeneration of English poetic style. The break from Eighteenth century conventions led to imitation of Spenser. This imitation is evident in Thomson's 'Castle of Indolence' and Shenstone's 'School Mistress'. The metrical specialities of this poetry freshly inspired poets such as S.T. Coleridge and John Keats. 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner' and 'La Belle Dame Sans Merci' are wonderful examples of this literary inspiration.

Romanticism induces an inquisitive bent of mind, in spite of its aesthetic elements. We find this in Hegel's doctrine, wherein he appeals to the intellect. It is an intellectual attempt to satisfy Romanticism's feature -- idealising passion. As we experience and enjoy the aesthetic
inspiration and startling imagination, the intellectual strain (power) is also found in great poems of Wordsworth, Coleridge and Shelley.

Insofar as literary criticism of this period is concerned, there is a discerning change. The critical writings of Wordsworth and Coleridge enrich us with suggestiveness. Though the basic vision is imaginative, its form is intellectual. Thus the criticism also helps to heighten the intellectual curiosity of the reader through its suggestive tone.

The British rule over India had its inevitable effects in various fields of life. The impact is seen in literature also. In Marathi Literature, the acquaintance of Marathi writers with literature in English got reflected in the writings of some writers in Marathi Literature. Literatures such as the Essay, the Short Story, the Drama and Poetry of the period show such reflection.

In the field of Poetry, Keshavsuta is the pioneer of Modern Marathi Poetry. His poetry changed the direction of Marathi poetry from 'the other-worldly' to 'worldly' and became man-centred. The ancient poetry revealed devotion, God-worship, moral precept, preachings etc, whereas Modern Marathi Poetry centred on commonplace themes - ('साधारण विषयात आशय कविता मोठा किंती आढळे!'). A flower, a brook, the south-west wind, the cuckoo took the centre-stage in Marathi. It is a literary contribution of 'Keshavsuta'. His attitude to Nature revealed his immense faith in Nature's bountiful sources of beauty -- ('जेथे आढळे
वनराणी, वृत्ति रचे तेघे माझी', 'फुझामध्ये प्रकट होय न जे जरानी, सुष्टीत एकूण रहस्य असे न काही! ज्याचा ध्वनी न उमटे किंमतीजिताल, नाही निगूढ इतिहास आरा जगात

) This philosophy of and faith in the transcendental power of Nature, was the influence of his reading of English poets like Wordsworth and Shelley.

Thus the Romantic movement in British poetry has an enriching effect on Marathi poetry. It established its closeness with human life. Its subjectivism and other Romantic characteristics undoubtedly show an indebtedness of the Romanticism in British Poetry. Thus Avinash Sapre is quite right when he observes:

'ब्रिटीश रॉमेंटिस्ममध्ये मराठी काव्यावर आंलेला प्रभाव अणि परिणाम ही अर्थाची मराठी साहित्यातील अत्यंत महत्वाची घटना आहे.'

Conclusion: The French Revolution had a clear effect on the Romantic poets of England. Innovation, Poet's isolation from society, Refuge in Nature, Imagination, Withdrawal to Inner Experience, Intellectual curiosity are some of the features of Romanticism. The Modern Marathi poetry has been influenced by some of English Romantic poets.
Romantic poets

References


3. सच्चे अविनाश, ’तौलनिक साहित्यामयी, तत्वे आणि दिशा’, सौरभ प्रकाशन, कोल्हापूर आ.9 ती, १९९२ पृष्ठ ५५१