CHAPTER III

TRADITION AND CHANGE AS REFLECTED

IN MEIJI LITERATURE
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Books silent, passive and noiseless though they be, they yet set in action countless multitudes and change the order of nations

Henry Giles

The previous chapter gives a measure of the influence of the West on Japan during the Meiji period and the metamorphosis it brought about in every sphere of life. Literature, our primary concern in this chapter; also did not escape the stimulus of the age. Rather the Meiji literary scene was completely revolutionized under Western influence, as Japan tried to assimilate what West had achieved in several centuries. During the course of this period, a vernacular language, literature modern in both form and content, and a much higher status for literature and men of letters were realized through the assimilation of the continental influence.

However, literature, unlike other fields, cannot be changed from without or from above downwards. It has to develop from within. Moreover, innovation in literature and arts was not on the priority list of the government and it was left to the intelligentsia to do it in their private
capacity. Thus, Meiji literature followed rather than preceded the political and social reorientation and naturally its pace of modernization was a gradual one. Nevertheless, modern Japanese literature produced in the latter half of the Meiji was quite different in character from the traditional literature produced heretofore. In order to ascertain the nature of Meiji Literature, primarily fiction, as novel has occupied the chief position in the current of Japanese literature as a whole since the Meiji period, it is worthwhile to first recapitulate the structure of Japanese literature, the pattern of its historical development, and the literary tradition in pre-Meiji Japan, before looking into the development of modern literature in detail.

THE LITERARY TRADITION

(i) Ancient Literature

In the absence of an indigenous script, there was no written literature till the early eighth century in Japan. Chinese language had been introduced around the fifth century but since its knowledge was restricted to a small privileged class of nobility, the only works produced till the eighth century were Kojiki (712 A.D.), a collection of
myths and legends, Nihonshoki (720 A.D.), an official history of the country, and Fudoki (733 A.D.), a record of provinces, their geographical and cultural features. All these works were compiled under Imperial orders and had hardly any literary value.

Compilation of Manyoshu, the largest and the oldest surviving anthology of Japanese lyric poetry in the latter half of the eighth century marked the dawn of native literature. It comprised mainly Waka poems, which became the principal form of lyric poetry for a very long time till Haiku, short poetry of 17 syllables, emerged in the seventeenth century.

It's compilation was also significant in one more respect i.e., Manyogana, in which poems were written, was a new experiment of recording the Japanese language with Chinese characters through phonetic rendering of Japanese syllables. Subsequently, it led to the birth of Kana syllabary (Hiragana and Katakana) in the early ninth century. And soon after, the Japanese language was evolved which was a mixture of Kana and Kanji (Chinese characters); a form that has continued till modern times with minor modifications from time to time.

On the other hand, a method of reading Chinese in Japanese manner through the use of Kaeriten (kind of reading marks) was devised and was popularly known as Kambun.
Hereafter, there were two parallel literary styles, Kambun the official style, and Japanese the popular style. Knowledge of Kambun was a must for advancement in the bureaucratic hierarchy, and therefore the higher nobility regarded it below their dignity to write in vernacular Japanese. Under such circumstances, it was but natural that the intellectuals regarded poetry and learned essays written only in Chinese as literature.\(^1\) Importance attached to Kambun can be ascertained from the fact that three anthologies of poems compiled under Imperial order in early ninth century namely Ryounshu (814), Bunka Shureishu (818) and Keikokushu (827) were all in Chinese.

The turning point came when Kokinshu (905), the first imperial anthology of Waka poetry was compiled. It implied that Waka had been accepted as a legitimate part of official literature. Composing Waka for amusement had already become an integral part of Heian aristocracy and now the ability to compose and appreciate Waka in fact was a sine qua non for success in Heian Society.\(^2\) Moreover, as Waka was in Kana and most of the compositions in Kokinshu were by the aristocracy, Kana's status enhanced considerably as a

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1 Donald Keene, Appreciations of Japanese Culture, Kodansha, Tokyo, 1971, p.28.

popular medium of expression. Kino Tsurayuki, one of the compilers of Kokinshu, later also wrote Tosa Nikki in Kana.

In the subsequent years, there was increased interplay between two traditions of writing, in Kambun and in Kana, with Kana gradually gaining an upper hand. For instance, Waka Roei-shu, an anthology of poems in both Chinese and Japanese compiled in the eleventh century, had Chinese poetry modelled after Waka. Although writing in Kambun and in Kana continued as two parallel streams until modern times, some of the greatest masterpieces of Japanese literature of all times, produced between the tenth and the twelfth centuries, were in Japanese. This trend is also attributable to the discontinuation of embassies to Tang China in 894 which reduced the direct Chinese influence and saw blossoming of native Japanese culture.

Popularization of Kana, led to several epoch making works in pure Japanese prose, popularly known as monogatari, a literary conglomeration of fact and fiction. At the turn of the tenth century, two representative works Taketori monogatari and Ise monogatari were published. In the latter half of the tenth century, Yamato monogatari, Heichu monogatari, Ochikubo monogatari, Utsubo monogatari were published but the zenith was reached only with Genji

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3 ibid, p.157
Monogatari by Murusaki Shikibu, the most celebrated novel of the Heian period. Most of the works in this genre were by women in the Heian court or the lower nobility, and the subject matter was daily life of the Heian aristocracy, specially love between man and woman. For about 200 years after the publication of Genji monogatari, most of the works in this genre were modelled after it, but none came anywhere near it in both literary quality and realistic presentation.

One work that needs special mention for it falls in the monogatari genre but was in sharp contrast with other works, was Konjaku monogatari (1120). It was the first representative literary work outside the court aristocracy, and one of the first whose subject matter was not the court life but popular folklore. Although between late tenth and eleventh centuries, works like Nihonreiiki and Sanho ekotoba, collection of Setsuwa (legendary) Buddhist tales had been produced, but they had excessive influence of China. Konjaku monogatari, divided into three parts India, China and Japan was the first attempt to compile great wealth of legends, folk stories and folk ballads, transmitted orally so far, giving rise to a new genre called Setsuwa narrative (legendary) literature.

Yet another attempt to move away from the romantic fantasy of Heian fiction was rekishi (historical) monogatari from around late eleventh century. Works like Eiga
monogatari, Okagami, Sagoromo monogatari, Hamamatsu Chunagon monogatari and Tori Kaebaya monogatari were all based on facts.

Another form of prose produced by the Heian court was Nikki (diary) literature. Kagero nikki, Izumi Shikibu nikki, Sarashina nikki, Murasaki Shikibu nikki. being the most representative works of this genre. These diaries written in Japanese were exclusively the domain of women and if at all men wrote, they did so in the guise of women. Some works by men to be found in this genre are all in Kambun.

(ii) Early Medieval Literature (13th to 16th Centuries)

When the center of political authority shifted from Kyoto to Kamakura at the end of the twelfth century, new military class replaced nobility as the rulers. For the next about 700 years, Imperial court at Kyoto was relegated to a position of ritual dignity and prestige, while the actual political power was in the hands of the Bakufu. As a result of change in the political and social situation, the literary scene also underwent a sea change. Literature was no longer the exclusive prerogative of the aristocracy and the audience also expanded from the narrow confines of aristocratic society to the society at large. As a result, one finds a reflection of values and feelings of the common
people in the literature of this period, something which was missing altogether from the Heian literature.

Despite having lost the political authority, Imperial court at Kyoto did not cease to be the center of literary activity. The aristocracy continued to produce literary works in the genres of Waka poetry and monogatari fiction. \textit{Shinkokinshu}, a collection of about 2000 Waka poems was compiled in 1205 under Imperial orders. Fujiwara no Teika, one of the compilers of \textit{Shinkokinshu}, also wrote works on the theory of Waka such as \textit{Tsukubashu}. It was also in the thirteenth century that the new concept of \textit{Renga} (linked verse) where first three lines were composed by one poet and the concluding two by another was evolved. However, one noticeable change in the literature produced by the aristocracy was the subject matter. Unlike the predominant theme of love relationship between man and woman during the Heian period, now themes ranged from lamenting the glory of court society of the Heian period, resignation from the world, to popular beliefs and legends. As a result, \textit{Otogizoshi}, simple short stories written in Japanese for the common masses came to replace monogatari genre towards the middle of the medieval period.

With the establishment of the Warrior society, a new genre depicting the lives and deeds of Warriors, called \textit{Gunki Monogatari} (war chronicles) became popular. Some of
the representative works in this genre being *Hogen monogatari*, *Heiji monogatari*, *Heike monogatari* in the first half and *Taiheiki* and *Meitokuki* in the latter half of the medieval period. They were written by Buddhist monks or intellectuals patronized by the higher echelons of the military class and underlying most of these works were the confucianist ideology and Buddhist thought of the transiency of life.

Another noteworthy development closely associated with the Warrior Society was the rise of Zen sect of Buddhism. The Warriors sought their ideological identity in Zen, separate from popular Buddhism. Thus, in the fourteenth century, *Gozan* (five temples) were established in Kamakura as well as Kyoto, patronised by the Bakufu. Zen monks of these temples produced the greatest masterpieces of Buddhist doctrinal writing as well as prose and poetry, popularly known as Gozan literature, normally in the Chinese language. These Zen temples also introduced the printing technique and published not only Zen texts but also Chinese classics and even medieval works. Works like Chugan Engetsu's *Tokai Icho shu*, Kokan Shiren's *Saihokushu*, Sesson Yubai's *Bingashu*, and many more written in the first half of the medieval period were mostly in the nature of appreciation, extension or introduction of Chinese works. But works like Ichu Tsujo's *Ungakuengu*, Kisei Reigen's *Sonako*, Yuzen Keneiki's *Ryusekiko*
etc. written in the latter half had an indigenous flavour and some of the works were in Japanese.

Another genre that took its birth during the medieval period and had considerable influence on later Japanese writing was the Zuihitsu (essay). Two works that need special mention were Kamono Chomei's Hojoki and Yoshida Kenko's Tsurezuregusa. Buddhist thought of impermanence of all things pervades both these works. Specially the latter talks of temporal human life and the renunciation of the world, while having a sense of realism about the world around us, something which most Japanese regard as quite contemporary. This work has influenced Japanese manners and esthetics considerably ever since.

If Zen Buddhism on one hand established strong ties with the state i.e., the ruling military class, Pure Land Sect of Honen (1133-1212), True Pure Land Sect of Shinran (1173-1262) and Lotus Sect of Nichiren (1222-82) took Buddhism to every corner of the land on the other. The collapse of the aristocratic society and a period of warfare and social change after the middle of the twelfth century, coincided with the mappo (the age of decadence) predicted according to Buddhist teachings. In this age of mappo it

4 William Curie; The Origins of Japanese Aesthetics, in An Invitation to Japanese Literature (Japan Culture Institute, Tokyo, Japan 1974), p.69.
was impossible to achieve nirvana (salvation) in this world. Therefore, new Buddhism of this period talked of achieving the same in the next world through the recitation of Nembutsu. A large number of works describing doctrinal viewpoints of each sect like Senchaku Hongan nembutsu shu and Ichimai Kishomon by Honen, Kyogo Shinsho, Taninsho by Shinran and Senjisho and Rissho Ankokuron by Nichiren, to name only a few, were written. At the same time, an attempt was made by several monks and individuals to compile Setsuwa tales to propound Buddhist teachings in a popular form for a wider audience. These were used as materials for Buddhist sermons delivered in the temples. The tradition started with Konjaku monogatari and some of the representative works during this period were Jikkunshu (1252), Kokon Chomonshu (1254), Shasekishu (1279) and Zodanshu. The chief feature of these works was that most of them were in Kana and were aimed at edifying the masses. Besides Buddhist tales, they also contained stories of a secular nature.

In the latter half of the medieval period, this tradition was continued in the form of Otogizoshi, short stories in Kana, written by the nobility, as described earlier, by monks trying to popularize their respective sects and teachings, and the warriors trying to glorify their heroic traditions. Some of the representative works in this genre were Wakagusa monogatari, Sakura no Chusho,
Akizuki monogatari, Hachikazuki by the nobility, Ashibiki, Oyo-no-ama, Sasayakitake, Sanninboshi by the monks and Rashomon, Onzoshishimawatari, Morokado monogatari, Joruri Monogatari, Akashino Saburo, by the warriors.

These attempts by the learned to reach the masses led to Otogizoshi written by the masses themselves towards the end of the medieval period and during the Edo period. Works like Monokusataro, Issunboshi, Sarugenjizoshi to name only a few were written by Chonin and were quite free from any earlier influence. Some of the works were didactic, while some were full of humour and satire, and mostly had illustrations for easy comprehension by the common masses. Thus Otogizoshi became the forerunner of popular fiction that dominated the whole of Edo period.

This dissemination of art and literature at the popular

* Otogi meaning 'companion' and Soshi (or Zoshi) storybook were illustrated books in simple language produced as pleasure books for women, children and the lesser educated. Soon they became extremely popular to the extent that Otogizoshi was used as a generic term to represent all monogatari works produced during the Muromachi period. Nearly 500 works of Otogizoshi have survived to date.

The efficacy of two salient features of Otogizoshi namely use of Kana and illustrations was used to the fullest during the subsequent centuries in the form of Kanazoshi and Ukiyozoshi, Kanazoshi; the books written expressly for townspeople by persons of higher rank, their moral and social duties flourished for about fifty years and then gave way to Ukiyozoshi, gay stories and novels, one of the most delightful genres of Japanese literature.
level also led to the development of drama namely Noh (a kind of opera) and Kyogen, (comic drama) which originated as entertainments for the masses and subsequently gained the support of the upper classes. The repertoire and method of performance of these dramas became fixed between the 16th and 17th centuries which have continued till date in the same form.

The two most representative writers of Noh plays, who established it as a literary art were Kan'ami Mototsugu (1334-84) and Zeami Motokiyo (1363-1443). Zeami not only wrote plays but also treatises on the art of performing Noh. Many of the Noh plays staged these days are those written by both of them.

(iii) **Late Medieval Literature (1600-1867)**

The most distinctive feature of this period was that literature produced during this time was pre-eminently popular in character. A whole lot of factors contributed towards it. Firstly, after a long period of civil war, the country was finally at peace and the Tokugawa rulers, as a means to preserve order in society, encouraged learning and scholarship by the samurai. Secondly, popularization of wood block printing and growth of commercial publishing, witnessed all kinds of books being printed and made available to the masses in early 17th century.
Subsequently, steady rise in literacy, spread of printing, unbroken peace and accumulation of wealth by merchants resulted in the blossoming of culture of urban citizens (chonin bunka), the hallmark of which was that a large number of works in all major forms of literature such as poetry, prose and drama were written and read by the new class namely the chonin.

Poetry which had essentially developed, since the very beginning, under the auspices of the Imperial Court was the first to completely break the shackles of that tradition. Haikai (now popularly known as Haiku), one of the representative genres of Edo period literature and the most popular form of poetry today, developed as a new poetic form, comprising 17 syllables, 5-7-5 syllabic rhythm. Hokku, the first phrase in renga (linked verse), specially the comic ones, became independent poetic form in the late medieval times and came to be called haikai-no-renga.

The earliest known poets of haikai were Yamazaki Sokan (1464-1552) who compiled Inu Tsukubashu (Mongrel Renga collection) and Arakida Moritake (1473-1549) who compiled Dokugin Senku (A Thousand Verses composed by one man). But it was Matsunaga Teitoku (1571-1653), a leading literary figure of the time, who was chiefly responsible for the elevation of haikai as a recognized literary form. Teitoku founded his own school in Kyoto which lasted till the 19th
century. Some of his disciples like Nonoguchi Ryuho, Matsue Shigeyori, Yamamoto Saimu, Yasuhara Teishitsu, Kitamura Kigin to name only a few, were all well known haikai poets and this school published over 260 collections of haikai⁵. Teitoku believed that haikai was more suited for turning ordinary men to cultural pursuits than Waka⁶ and was instrumental in popularizing this new form among the masses.

It was, however, Matsuo Basho (1644-1694), who through simplicity of style and subtleness of content, made haikai an integral part of popular literature. His haikai had new esthetic concept of Sabi (beauty in literature), Wabi (beauty in ordinary life and Karumi (lightness implying quiet, refined beauty of style). He travelled the length and breadth of the country and wrote many travelogues. He became a legend in his life time and so immense was his popularity that wherever he travelled, his admirers made him stay in their own houses. Most of his works have acquired the status of classics but his best known work is Oku-no-hosomichi (Travel to the North).

Basho's tradition was continued on by his disciples like Takarai Kikaku, Murai Kyorai, Morikawa Kyoriku, Hattori

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₆ ibid, p.33.
Toho and Kagami Shoko among others for a while but soon parted ways due to personal conflict.

Therefore, in the first half of the 18th. century, haikai declined. Although it continued to be popular, and ability to compose haikai was regarded as a social accomplishment, this popularization lowered the standards and the poems composed during this time were devoid of poetic quality.

It was Yosa Buson (1716-83) who revived the haikai to its former glory and is regarded as the second greatest of the haikai poets after Basho. And again after a period of temporary decline after Buson's death, Kobayashi Issa (1763-1827) wrote haikai about human feelings in simple language. He along with Basho and Buson, is popular even today.

Popularization of printing and commercialization of writing brought about more far reaching changes in the realm of fiction, than poetry. From 1600 onwards, Kanazoshi books written in Kana (entirely or in a mixture of Kanji and Kana) an extension of Otogizoshi of medieval times, were written in large numbers. In the beginning, Kanazoshi were written by and for the samurai. A number of works written during this period were of an educational nature such as Gion monogatari, Tadasu monogatari, Shichinin Bikuni etc. and even those written for entertainment such as Kiizodansho, Osaka monogatari, Juraku monogatari contained lot of practical
information for the samurai. Gradually as the readership extended to townsmen, more and more works were devoted to them and most were works of fiction intended as entertainment. During this time, Asai Ryoi (died 1691), a samurai, emerged as the first popular professional writer who wrote essays (Kashoki), tales of comic adventures (Musashi Abumi), guide books (Tokaido Meishoki), ghost stories and historical romances. In his best known work, Ukiyo Monogatari, Asai exposed the ills of the feudal society such as exploitation of farmers, greed of the merchants, extravagance of the daimyos. For instance, the following excerpt from Ukiyo monogatari bears testimony to Asai's serious intent at exposing social evils.

Take the case of a man who is so hungry that he cuts a slice off his thigh and eats it. His stomach may feel satisfied, but his leg will collapse under him. The ruler of a country is like the belly, the farmers like the legs. It does no good for the belly to be swollen with food if the legs refuse to stand. Nor can a ruler successfully govern a country if the farmers are weak and exhausted, no matter how prosperous the ruler himself may be. Nevertheless, there are some extremely greedy men who fill their storehouses with huge quantities of rice, and refuse to sell it for years. In the old days people used to pray they would be spared droughts, floods or typhoons, but the merchants today pray for precisely these disasters in the hopes that the value of the rice in their storehouses will increase. Because such men think only about profit, the poor people, who eke out a living from day to day, cannot earn enough to pay even for one masu of rice, no matter how hard they work. They pawn their mosquito netting and spend the summer nights sleepless; they sell their bedding and freeze to death on winter nights. They sell their
children as servants, and they abandon their infants by the side of the road. The five grains ripen every year, but every year sees quite a few people die of starvation. What a pitiful state of affairs!

By late seventeenth century, merchants had started prospering and though they were at the bottom of the feudal order, they had started gaining social prominence on the basis of their financial strength. In the rigid framework of feudal society, artisans and merchants were ignored by the authorities altogether but they benefitted the most from the growth of mercantilism and enjoyed considerable social freedom. This prosperous urban population led a life of luxuries and pleasures, enjoying wine and women at gay quarters. Fiction writers of the time found exciting characters in this urban society and most of the fiction works produced between 1680 and 1760 portrayed the multifarous city life and are better known as Ukiyozoshi (stories of the floating world), erotic or comic novels. The novelist who created this genre and changed the course of Japanese fiction in the sense that he established prose fiction as an art, was Ihara Saikaku (1642-93). In a brief period of a decade or so, he produced two dozen novels, stories and sketches and brought Ukiyozoshi fiction to maturity. His representative works were Koshoku Ichidai ---------------

7 ibid, p.158.
Otoko, Koshoku Gonin Onna, Nippon Eitaigura and Seken munezanyo. He tried to depict human lust and greed, specially epicurean and hedonistic tendencies of city dwellers, in a realistic manner. His works had considerable influence on later writers of this genre such as Nishizawa Ippu (1665-1731) (Shinshiki Gokansho, Gozen Gikeiki, Kankatsu Heike monogatari), Ejima Kiseki (1667-1736) (Keisei Kintanki, Keisei iroshamisen, Seken musuko Katagi) and Miyako-no-Nishiki (born 1675) (Furyu Jindai no Maki, Gensoku Taiheiki etc.).

Although most of the novels in this genre were frivolous and did not have lasting literary value but were undoubtedly important in the historical development of Japanese fiction.

After the decline of Ukiyozoshi genre in the latter half of the eighteenth century, a great variety of fiction was written till the end of the Edo period but it is often described as gesaku flippant writing, lacking in intellectual content and literary quality. Popular novels called sharebon (stories about licensed quarters) Kihyoshi (comic books in yellow cover) and Kokkeibon (funny books) were produced in large numbers in the latter half of the 18th century by men like Santo Kyoden (1761-1816) - chief works Edo Mumare Uwaki no Kabayaki, Somagaki, Keisei Kai Shijuhatte etc., Shikitei Samba (1776-1822) - representative
works being *Ukiyoburo*, *Ukiyodoko*, and Jippensha Ikku (1765-1831) who wrote the monumental *Tokai Dochu Hizakurige* published in 43 volumes over 20 years. Besides these, *Ninjobon* (love stories) *Yomihon* (narrative tales) (so called as they had no illustrations) and *Gokan* (collections of short stories) also enjoyed considerable popularity, leading writers for these genres were Tamenaga Shunsui (1790-1843), Takizawa Bakin (1767-?, Shikitei Samba and Ryutei Tanehiko (1783-1842).

Most of the Gesaku fiction was set in the licensed quarters and was erotic and comical. Government came down heavily on such works from time to time, prohibiting immoral and frivolous works and penalizing their writers. For instance, Santo Kyoden castigated by the Government had to give up writing. And Tamenaga Shunsui was put in handcuffs for 50 days for his work *Shunshoku Tatsumi no sono*. However, in spite of strict censorship, crude works of fiction continued to be produced in response to popular demand before the wave of the Meiji enlightenment struck.

Besides poetry and fiction, during this period *Kabuki* and *Joruri* (later known as *Bunraku*, the puppet theatre), two important forms of drama, were also evolved as popular entertainment and perfected as a theatrical art in the 17th century, and as a literary art in the latter half of the 18th century.
In the initial stages, Kabuki shows were known for their erotic excitement. The Government, therefore, prohibited women from appearing on the stage in 1629, and ever since then women characters are impersonated by men. Thereafter, content was given more importance in order to attract audiences to Kabuki theatres and it was Chikamatsu Monzaemon, who through his plays of distinction, established Kabuki as an art. Some of his best known plays are Sonezaki Shinju, Shinju Ten no Amijima among other works. Other famous playwright and a rival of Monzaemon was Ki-no-Kaion (1663-1742) who wrote famous plays like Yaoya Oshichi, Shinju Futatsu Haraobi. Main themes of Kabuki plays during this time were lovers' suicide plays, and realistic portrayal of restrictions of feudal society.

During the mid-Edo period, Namiki Shozo (1730-73) and his disciple Namiki Gohei (1747-1808) produced some of the most memorable Kabuki plays but it was Tsuruya Namboku IV (1755-1829) and Kawatake Mokuami (1816-83) who perfected Kabuki as a literary art, when other forms of literature were declining in the late Edo period. Mokuami wrote over 360 plays and many of his plays are still being staged and he is regarded as the last great playwright of Japan.

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8 ibid, p.233.
NEW LITERATURE

(i) Edo-Style Fiction in the New Age

Gesaku-style writers were still around the corner but did not survive beyond the first decade of the Meiji, as they merely continued to write Edo-style fiction which, not being in consonance with the times, did not attract many readers. Nozaki Sabun, an early Meiji writer observed in one of his articles entitled "Watakushi no Mita Meiji Bundan" (Personal Views on Meiji Literary Scene) after the Restoration that "the next 7 to 8 years are going to be the starving period for fiction writers as there are no readers."

Among a large number of Gesaku writers who were already established novelists in late Edo, only a few such as Kanagaki Robun, Mantei Oga and Takabatake Ransen were able to survive the onslaught of western civilization simply for the reason that they were quick to detect the trend of the times and tried to depict the changed social environment in their works. For instance, Robun's Seiyo Dochu Hizakurige (Hiking Through the West on Shank's Mare) and Aguranabe (Idle Talks in the Sukiyaki House) which were satires on the contemporary society and ridiculed the superficiality of

blind imitation of the West, enjoyed reasonable success. However, due to revolutionary changes in the society and spread of advanced knowledge, such humorous works also did not arouse much interest of the masses for a long time.

Gesaku writers unable to sell their works, soon turned to journalism. Growth of media after the Restoration provided a new lease of life to Gesaku writers who were on the verge of extinction. Newspapers called Shoshim bun (Small Newspapers) such as Yomiuri Shimbun, Kanayomi Shimbun, Hiragana Eiri Shimbun, Tokyo Nichi Nichi Shimbun and others mushroomed in the 1870s and in order to widen their circulation began to serialize novels called tsuzukimono. Besides, literary magazines like Tokyo Shinshi, Kagetsu Shinshi, Marumaru Chimbun etc. also carried novels. These serialized novels based on real incidents, with an element of fiction to make them interesting, again were in vogue temporarily but hardly had any literary value and failed to make any lasting impression as far as the evolution of modern literature was concerned.

**NEW LITERARY CURRENTS**

The Japanese literary scene at the time of Restoration faced certain pressing problems which needed immediate solution for the resurrection of literary activity, and for a healthy modern literary tradition to grow.
After the Restoration, as Japan discarded the feudal class structure at one stroke and aimed at a society based on equality of status, certain fundamental changes were necessiated in the realm of literature too. It may be recalled that the predominant literary style although had been Kambun (Chinese prose) and anything written in Kambun only was regarded as literature. On the other hand, literature written in the popular language, specially fiction, was held in light esteem and the fiction writers were regarded as riff-raff. As a result, far from receiving Government encouragement, popular literature was an object of suppression and disciplinary supervision. Therefore, the literature produced was also quite different in content and approach depending on the social class it was written for. All this had become a kind of a vicious circle which needed to be broken for the modernization of literature along western lines giving letters its due place in the society. And for that, Japan needed a language reform to not only end this duality in the literary styles but also to have a modern language which could convey the riches of western thought and ideas in the language understood by the majority.

After the Restoration, however, even as Japan turned to

the West for the basis of modernization in all fields, western arts and letters were not included in the priorities, at least during the initial period. In this process of adoption of western civilization when the impetus was on utilitarianism, the intellectual leaders of the Meiji Government simply had no time for something as "useless" as novels.11 And as had been the practice in the past, it was left to the individuals who were eager to keep in step with the advanced ideas of the contemporary world to assimilate western literary trends and theories and modernize literature along western lines.

This intervening period was one of stagnation in the realm of indigenous creative literature on one hand, and one of trial and error with regard to language reform and introduction of western literary concepts, on the other.

(i) Enlightenment Literature

The alternative to Gesaku writers was provided by a number of young intellectuals who were sent abroad for a year or two by various government departments, institutes and public organizations. These individuals got a chance to have a close look at the western way of life and sought to adopt everything that might be of use to the development of

11 ibid, p.11
their country. Upon their return to Japan, in order to acquaint the Japanese with western affairs, they wrote extensively what is popularly known as "enlightenment literature".

The best known educator and advocate of western ideas was Fukuzawa Yukichi (1835-1901), popularly known as minken gakusha (champion of people's rights). Through his works such as Seiyo Jijo (Western Affairs, 1865), Sekai Kunizukushi (All About the World, 1869), Bunmeiron no Gairyaku (Outline of the Theory of Civilization, 1875) and Tsuzoku Minkenron (Comments on Democratic Rights, 1878) among others, Fukuzawa tried to introduce western materialism and bourgeois culture to the Japanese masses. Also in his most popular work Gakumon no Sasume (Encouragement of learning, 1872), tried to introduce utilitarian pragmatism. The opening sentences of this work summed up his philosophy. "The Heavens do not make a person rich and noble, it is only work that makes him so. At his birth, man is neither noble nor lowly nor rich. In fact he is poor. But if he studies and learns about things, he becomes noble, if he does not, he becomes poor and lowly." 12 Besides his numerous writings, Fukuzawa also set up a school Keio Gijuku (forerunner of Keio University), published a

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newspaper Jiji Shimpo and a magazine Meiroku Zasshi, the first Japanese journal on science and public affairs, in collaboration with other publicists of the time.

Other leading individuals who played an active role in popularizing new knowledge were Nakamura Keiū (1832-91), Nishi Amane (1828-97), Nishimura Shigeki (1828-1902), Tsuda Mamichi (1829-1903), Kanda Kohei (1830-1898) and Kato Hiroyuki (1836-1916). Nakamura Keiū's translation of Samuel Smiley's 'Self Help' had profound influence on the youth of the time and along with Fukuzawa's Gakumon-no-Susume was called the bible of the Meiji era. He also translated John Stuart Mill's 'On Liberty'. Nishi Amane introduced western philosophy and aesthetics and wrote works like Hyakuichi Shinron, Chisetsu (Theory of Knowledge) and Bimyogakusetsu (Theory of Aesthetics). Kato Hiroyuki through his writings like Rikken Seitairyaku, Shinseitaii and Kokutai Shinron introduced western political ideas. On the other hand, Kanda Kohei and Taguchi Ukichi wrote extensively on the economic history of the West. Mill's Political Economy, Adam Smith's Wealth of Nations, Spencer's Philosophy of Evolution were regarded as the very essence of western thought. Some other popular writers were Buckle, Carlyle, Guizot, Comte, Disraeli and Macaulay.

In addition to these enlightenment writers, the growth of the media gave birth to a new generation of newspaper
writers such as Narushima Ryuhoku (1837-1884), Fukuchi Ochi (1841-1906), Suehiro Tetcho (1849-96), Nakae Chomin (1847-1901), Yano Ryukei (1850-1931) among others, who were all well versed in foreign affairs and wrote on contemporary social, political as well as literary problems in newspapers and magazines and shaped public opinion.

(iii) Translated Novel and Political Novel

Besides the translation of practical books, western literary works were also translated into Japanese. To begin with, the emphasis was on the classics of western Literature which shifted to modern Literature in the second decade. The translation activity was very disordered and works were randomly selected from diverse sources. Nonetheless, there was a vertible deluge of foreign works ranging from the classics of world literature specially those by Shakespeare, Lytton, Scott, Disraeli and Dumus, to science fiction of Jules Verne and Fables of Aesop were made available in translation to the people thirsting for fresh reading material.

In the second decade, as there was a spurt in the Popular Rights Movement, works dealing with Western political themes - the so-called political novel, enjoyed unabated flourish for over a decade and declined with the movement. During this brief span, hundreds of works (vide
Table 1) based on political themes, specially those dealing with French Revolution and the Russian Nihilists were translated.

The first full scale political novel was *Karyu Shunwa* (A Spring Tale of Flowers and Willows), translation of Bulwer Lytton's Ernest Maltravers by Oda Junichiro in 1878. It went on to become one of the most widely read books of the time and paved the way for many more to follow. Soon works having political themes by Disraeli, Lytton, Scott, Mill, Shakespeare etc. were translated.

Along with the translations of European political novels, original works by Japanese authors were also produced (vide Table 1). Works that need special mention were *Kajin no Kigū* (Strange Encounters with Beautiful Women) by Shiba Shiro, *Keikoku Bidan* (Laudable Anecdotes of Able Statesmanship) by Yano Ryukei, *Setchubai* (Plum Trees in the Snow) and *Kakan no Uguisu* (Nightingale amid the Flowers) by Suehiro Tetcho, *Ryokusadan* (Tale of the Green Raincoat) and *Shinsho no Kajin* (Beauty in Modern Garb) by Sudo Nansui.

These political novels were received enthusiastically specially by the youth. Odagiri Hideo writes as under about the reasons for the popularity of the political novel.

They gave a most direct expression to the 'vitality' of a society and particularly to its youth, which had been roused from the old ways of the age of feudalism by the unprecedented upheavals of the Meiji Resotration and which had just become
aware of new ideas and new ways of life.\textsuperscript{13}

Both translated novels as well as political novels did not have much literary merit but they set the Keynote of the new Literature of the Meiji. They paved the way for novel writing to be a learned man's vocation. Most of these novels were written by intellectuals and therefore convinced the public that fiction writing was not a leisure time preoccupation of writers of melodrama, that reading them was not an escapist pastime, and that literature and literary expression could make its influence felt on society through the depiction of social realities.\textsuperscript{14} Further, since most of these novels contained introductory chapters or prefaces by the translator or author they were instrumental in the absorption of western literary theories and concepts of the novel, thereby paving the way for full scale modern novel after 1890.

\textsuperscript{13} Odagiri Hideo; \textit{Kindai Nihon Bungaku Koza} (An Anthology of lectures in Modern Japanese Literature) quoted in Nakamura, n.9., p.26.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Author</th>
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<tr>
<td>1880</td>
<td>Toda Kindo</td>
<td>Minken Engi: Jokai Haran. (In the Stormy Political Sea).</td>
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<td>Sakurada Momoe</td>
<td>Nishino Umi Chishio no Yoarashi (Bloody Tempest in Western Seas)</td>
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<td>Miyazaki Muryu</td>
<td>Furansu Kakumeiki: Jiyu no Gaika (Stories about the French Revolution)</td>
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<td>Inoue Tsutomu</td>
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<td>Tsubouchi Shoyo</td>
<td>Keimo Kokumin: Seichito Koshoku (Enlightenment Stories and Lectures)</td>
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<td>1883</td>
<td>Miyazaki Muryu</td>
<td>Kyomoto Jitsudenki: Kishushu (Tales about the Nihilists) (Translation of Stepniak's work)</td>
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<td>Inoue Tsutomu</td>
<td>Jinniku Shitsunyu Saiban (Translation of Shakespeare's Merchant of Venice).</td>
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<td>Sakazaki Shiran</td>
<td>Kanketsu Senrigoma (The Bloodshed of the Thousand League Colt)</td>
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<td>Jiyu no Hanagasa (The Flower Hat of Liberty)</td>
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<td>Rokoku Anna Monogatari (Tales of the Russian Anna)</td>
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<td>Yano Fumio</td>
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<td>1884</td>
<td>Komuro Angaido</td>
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<td>Jiyu Enzetsu Onna Bunsho (Women's Talk on Freedom)</td>
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<td>Suehiro Tetchu</td>
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<td>Sudo Nansui</td>
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<td>Tsubouchi</td>
<td>Naichi Zakkyo: Mirai no Yume (Looking Shoyo into the Future from a crowded country)</td>
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<td>1887</td>
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<td>Gaisei Hakai: Teru Himawari (The Song of Lament).</td>
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<td>Tokai Sanshi</td>
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<td>Suehiro Tetchu</td>
<td>Kakano (The Nightingale among the Flowers)</td>
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<td>1885-97</td>
<td>Tokai Sanshi</td>
<td>Kajin no Kigu</td>
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<td>1889</td>
<td>Sudo Nansui</td>
<td>Kuramatsu Misao (The Pines of Virtue).</td>
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**REPRESENTATIVES OF NEW LITERATURE**

Tsubouchi Shoyo and Futabatei Shimei and the New Literary Movement

If the political novel created awareness about the role of fiction in literature, it was *Shosetsu Shinzui* (The Essence of the novel) by Tsubouchi Shoyo which completely
changed public thinking about the novel. Uchida Roan in his biography of Futabatei Shimei writes that:

Tsubouchi's works transformed the novel at one leap into a vital element contributing to civilization which even prominent scholars were not ashamed to regard as their mission. The young men of the time, who until this time had thought that politics was the only possible way to realize their ambitions now discovered this new world, like sleepers who had suddenly awakened, they all rushed towards literature.  

Tsubouchi Shoyo (1859-1935) a bachelor of literature from the reputed Tokyo University published Shosetsu Shinzui in 1885 which is regarded as a landmark in Meiji fiction and for this work, he is called the father of the modern novel in Japan. Tsubouchi was well versed with Gesaku literature as well as with European literature, specially English literature, having translated many of Shakespeare's works into Japanese. This grounding in both types of literatures enabled him to make a thorough comparative study of both, made him realize how the western concepts of literature and attitude toward society and vice versa differed from those prevalent in Japan and impelled him to work for the improvement and advancement of the novel as an art.

In this work, Tsubouchi discussed "what is the modern novel and how it should be written". He strongly attacked the didacticism of Edo-style fiction based on Confucian

15 Nakamura, n.9, pp.35-36.
morality and expediency of political novel of his time inspired by western utilitarianism. He argued that novel is an art and art should not be expedient. It should rather describe human sentiments on the basis of psychology and should not invent, for the sake of amusement a character that would contradict such psychology.\textsuperscript{16} He advocated a consistent, thorough going realism as a pre-requisite for modern novel. In this work, he further described essential features, prime objects, plot, style, characters and types of a novel at length.

In the same year as \textit{Shosetsu Shinzui}, Tsubouchi wrote a novel \textit{Tosei Shosei Katagi} (Character of Modern Students) with a view to provide an actual example of how the theory of novel expounded by him be applied. Although he failed to achieve the ideal novel he described in \textit{Shosetsu Shinzui} and it was not by any means a work of great literary merit, it generated considerable amount of interest. If on one hand, it was criticized by none other than Fukuzawa who strangely blasted the work by saying that "it is disgraceful that a Tokyo University graduate writes a novel",\textsuperscript{17} on the other, it won immediate acclaim from the general reading public and impelled many educated young men like Futabatei Shimei, \textsuperscript{16} Ito Sei, Pioneers of the New Literature, Japan Quarterly, vol.2, no.2 (April-June 1955), p.225. \textsuperscript{17} ibid, p.228.
Yamada Bimyo, Koda Rohan, Ozaki Koyo, Saito Ryokuu, Aeba Koson and many others to take up fiction as a full time vocation. Many of them went on to make it big as novelists perfecting the art of novel writing along the lines advocated by Tsubouchi. And before the end of the century, novelists were to be recognized as respectable members of the society.

Thus, Tsubouchi himself failed to provide a model of modern fiction, yet he was successful in bringing about the literary revolution and even after he gave up writing fiction, he assumed the role of a teacher and guide for young men aspiring to be novelists and played an active role in literary criticism through his journal Waseda Bungaku.

One such young man was Futabatei Shimei (1864-1909) in whom Tsubouchi saw uncommon talent and did everything possible to launch his literary career. Futabatei specialized in Russian at the government sponsored school of Foreign languages and translated works of Turgenev, Dostoevsky, Gogol, Gorky and others into Japanese. He came in contact with Tsubouchi after the latter published his work Shosetsu Shinzui. It was under his guidance and encouragement that Futabutei successfully put into practice theories Tsubouchi was propounding, in his unfinished novel Ukigumo (The Flouting Clouds) published in 1887-88. It holds the double distinction of being the model of realistic
novels and the first work in which the gembun itchi (unification of the written and colloquial language) style was perfected. It introduced some entirely new conceptions into Japanese fiction such as psychological realism, strong characterization, and common man as the subject matter, for which it is rightly called the first true modern novel of Japan.

However, Futabatei himself was not satisfied with the work and he not only left it unfinished but took up a government job in 1889 leaving his budding literary career much to the surprise of one and all. Thus two pioneers of modern literature left the literary scene suddenly but they had definitely created the base for future writers to build

18 Efforts to modernize the literary style were on ever since the Restoration. Several writers experimented with the new literary style but as long as the influence of traditional literature and styles was strong, it was difficult for the writers to adopt a completely colloquial style. It was, however, in poetry that a new colloquial style was first successfully used in 1882 when Shintaishisho (An Anthology of New Style Poems) was compiled by three Professors of the Tokyo University. And later in 1886 Yamada Bimyo and others published an anthology called Shintai Shisen (A Selection of New Style Poems), a collection of poems in free verse written in a colloquial style. In prose also many eminent writers such as Yamada Bimyo, Tsubouchi Shoyo and many others made several experiments but it was in Futabatei's Ukigumo that a new vernacular language is believed to have been perfected. Evolution of this so-called gembunitchi style was also significant in the growth of realistic fiction along modern lines. Hereafter, literature depicted the life of the masses and was instrumental in taking it to the masses.
new literature on. Realism that they advocated was achieved later by the naturalistic writers but they did not have any immediate successors.

GROWTH OF SEMI-CLASSICISM AND THE KENYUSHA

In 1885, young men like Ozaki Koyo (1867-1903), Yamada Bimyo (1868-1910), Ishibashi Shian (1867-1927) and Maruoka Kyuka (1865-1927), formed a literary coterie known as Kenyusha (Society of the Friends of the Inkstone). The group became very popular and dominated the literary world for about a decade till 1896. With the increase in its membership, it started publishing its magazine Garakuta Bunko (A collection of Miscellany), the first literary magazine of Japan which till then was meant for limited circulation among its members only.

The group argued for a return to the styles popular in the Tokugawa period. They considered Saikaku and Bakin and their contemporaries the true masters of Japanese fiction, and most of their works were an imitation of the earlier Japanese writers. But gradually they developed an indigenous semi-classical style, a unique blend of old and modern styles, the main reason behind their tremendous popularity.

They also decried the superficial westernized literary production of their contemporaries and hoped to revive
interest in traditional forms. It may be recalled that the westernizing movement was at its peak around this time, and as a result, a parallel nationalistic movement emphasizing the necessity and importance of preserving Japan's native traditions gained momentum. On the literary front too, similar parallel movements were prevalent. On one hand, Minyusha's *Kokumin-no-Tomo* (Nation's Friend) and progressive writers like Yamada Bimyo, Tsubouchi and Futabatei, through their writings, aided the westernization movement, on the other hand, Kenyusha's *Garakuta Bunko* and Seikyo's *Nihonjin* (The Japanese) (later retitled as *Nihon Oyobi Nihonjin* (Japan and the Japanese) advocated a kind of literary renaissance.

Within a few years of its formation, several of Kanyusha members became distinguished novelists of the day. Ozaki Koyo who was the leader of the group, produced some of the best novels of the time. His *Ni-nin Bikuni Iro-Zange* (The Confession of Love Affairs by Two Nuns) established him as the most popular writer of the time. More than the content, it was the innovative style which met with instant success. He was specially influenced by Ihara Saikaku and tried to rediscover Saikaku's literary essence in a style adopted to the times. Many people found his style more
fresh than that of Ukigumo. His subsequent works specially Konjiki Yasha (A Demon of Gold) and Tajo-takon (Tears and Regrets) among others, are considered as masterpieces and in a broader sense not only determined the pattern of novels by the members of the Kenyusha but also formed the main current of the literary world at least till 1893.

Among the other distinguished writers of this group, specially notable were Emi Suiin (1869-1934), who specialized in short stories written in an elegant prose-poem style, Hirotsu Ryuro (1861-1928), known for his tragic novels, Kawakami Bizan (1869-1908), noted for his elegant style like Koyo and Iwaya Sazanami (1870-1933), who holds the distinction of being the originator of juvenile literature in Japan.

Besides Kenyusha writers, there were a number of other writers who were also influenced by the literature of the Edo period and wrote in the semi-classical style. The leading among them was Koda Rohan (1867-1947) whose idealistic novels written in a peculiar romantic style such as Furyu-butsu (A Buddhist Statue of Romance) and Goju-no-To (A Five Storied Pagoda) are regarded as masterpieces. So great was the popularity of both Koyo and Rohan between 1889

19 Nakamura, n.9, p.59.
and 1893 that it is called Koro Jidai (The period of Koyo and Rohan). It is believed that the sudden rise in the popularity of these two writers implied denial of modernism, though temporarily, advocated by Shoyo and Futabatei as also Yamada Bimyo, compelling them to completely give up fiction writing. While on the other hand, Kenyusha-brand of literary style accelerated in its own way the modernization of Japanese literature. 20

Other representative writers - also contemporary with the Kenyusha - who wrote in the identical semi-classical style were Aeba Koson (1855-1922) and Saito RyoKuu (1867-1904). Aeba was influenced by Takizawa Bakin and his Horidashimono (Lucky Find) which appeared in 1889 was highly praised for its flowing style. His other noticeable works include Tosei Shonin Kishitsu (Character of Modern Merchants) and Kachidoki (Shout of Victory). Saito, a disciple of Robun, wrote Gesaku style short stories and literary criticism in the early part of his career and won recognition with his novels Abura Jigoku (Hell of Oil) (1891) and Kakurenbo (Hide and Seek). However, his popularity as a novelist was short lived though he kept writing till his death in 1904.

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20 ibid, p.53.
Thus, in this tussle between semi-classicism versus westernized literary production, or in other words, tradition and change, tradition gained an upper hand for about a decade, before first Romanticism in poetry and then Naturalism in fiction, essentially under the Western influence, dominated the literary scene. In any case, semi-classicism was bound to decline as it was against the tide of the time. Japan had completed a full cycle of modernization and winds of change in thought were visible in all walks of life. The new generation of writers, born after the Restoration and well versed with Western literature, prepared Japan for a new era in literature, specially fiction in the last decade of the Meiji.

THE ROMANTIC SCHOOL

The intervening period between the decline of neoclassicism, and the rise of naturalism in the early twentieth century is known as the golden age of Romantic literature. While in fiction, it was a transitional period, as primarily social and realistic novels were experimented with by various budding novelists before naturalistic literature was perfected, it was in the realm of poetry that far-reaching changes took place. In the decade between 1893 and 1903, attempts were made to break away from the traditional spirit, expressions, and forms of poetry.
The world of Japanese poetry had by and large remained stagnant after the Restoration. Although poets had adopted new themes, they were unable to break away from the shackles of tradition. It was in the 1880s that several experiments with new style poetry were made by Inoue Tetsujiro etc. in Shintaishisho (1882), Takeuchi Setsu in Shintaishiika (1882), Yamada Bimyo in Shintai Shisen (1886), Sato Yuji in Meiji Shintaishi Kasen (1887) but it was Omokage (vestiges) (1889) by Mori Ogai and others that marked the real beginning of modern Japanese poetry.

Encouraged by the evolution of a vernacular language and such attempts to inject a new spirit into poetry, several groups of promising young poets launched organized movements for diversity in poetic form as in the West. One such group was Asakasha headed by Ochiai Naofumi (1861-1903) which had young budding poets like Yosano Tekkan, Omachi Keigetsu, Hattori Motoharu, Shioi Uko to name only a few. The group tried to modernize Waka. It was, however, Bungakukai (The literary world) a literary magazine launched by Kitamura Tokoku (1868-1894), Shimazaki Toson (1872-1943) along with others, that ushered in a new romantic movement in poetry. Tokoku's Soshu-no-shi (The Prisoner's Poem) and Horaikyoku (The Song of Mt.Horai), besides other works, earned him the appellation of the founder of Meiji Romanticism. He wrote scintillating poems on spiritual
struggles and the chasm between the real and the ideal. In addition, he also wrote forceful essays on literature, religion and philosophy, and had profound influence on the young poets of the 90s.

Shimazaki Toson who later went on to become one of the leading novelists of the naturalist movement, produced some of the best lyrical compositions of the time such as Wakanashu (The Young Herbs Anthology, 1897), Natsugusa (Summer Grass, 1898), Rakubaishu (The Fallen Plum Blossom Anthology, 1901) etc. Toson was a true idealist and wrote European style Romantic poetry in traditional Japanese sentiment.

After 1895, a number of literary magazines such as Bunko, Shinsei, Shiika, Myojo, Shirayuri etc. which all specialized in the new style poetry came into being. All sorts of new poetic forms employing a five-five, seven-seven, eight-six, eight-seven, eight-eight and even three or four syllable patterns were experimented with. Some of the other representative poets of the new style poetry were Ueda Bin (representative work Kaishoon [The sound of the sea tide], a collection of translated French symbolist poetry), Susukida Kyukin (representative works Botekishu (The Evening Flute), Yukuharu (The Departing Spring), Nijugogen (Twenty Five Strings) etc.) and Kambara Ariake (representative works Kusawakaba, Kakino Kara, Kokage etc.).
Another group which dominated the world of poetry in the early twentieth century and led a reformation movement in tanka through its literary magazine Myojo (Morning Star) and later Subaru, was Shinshisha (New Poetry Society) represented by Yosano Tekkan (representative works Tozai Namboku, Murasaki etc.), his wife Yosano Akiko (representative works Midaregami, Korogi, Koigoromo etc.) and Ishikawa Takuboku (chief works Akogare, Ichiaku-no-Suna, Kanashiki Gangu etc.) produced some of the best romantic poetry of all times.

If Ochiai Naofumi tried to reform Waka, Masaoka Shiki (1867-1902), his contemporary, tried the same in Haiku as well as Tanka. His Haikai Taiyo (An outline of Haiku) was of the same significance for poetry as Shoyo's Shosetsu Shinzui for novel. His biggest contribution was objective and realistic portrayal in verse using the Shaseibun (Sketching from life in a polished colloquial style), in place of traditional exaggerated and euphemistic style. This style was soon perfected in prose by his close associate Natsume Soseki. Shiki also launched his own literary magazine Hototogisu in 1897 which produced outstanding proteges like Takahama Kyoshi, Naito Meisetsu and Kawahigashi Hekigoto.

In fiction, Yamada Bimyo, a member of Kenyusha since its inception and a close associate of Shoyo and Futabatei,
is credited with the distinction of being the first romantic novelist of Japan. He had already made his mark with his contributions in the field of language reform and new style romantic poetry, as described earlier. He shot to fame in 1889 with his novel *Kocho* (The Butterfly), known for its refreshing colloquial style and youthful romanticism. One of the other early Romantic novelists was Mori Ogai (1862-1922),* who besides his *Omokage* (1889), a collection of translated Romantic poems by Baron, Shakespeare, Goethe, Hoffmann, Scheffel etc., wrote his first trilogy of romantic novels namely *Maihime* (The Dancing Girl), *Utakata no Ki* (A Record of a Transient Life) and *Fumizukai* (The letter Bearer) in 1890-1891, employing western fiction technique. Ogai also translated many western novels, among which *Umoregi* (The Fossil Wood) and *Sokkyoshijin* (The Improvisator) are regarded as the most representative translated works of Western Romantic literature. These works had considerable influence on the young readers of the time for their high artistic standard and rich and vivid literary style.

Besides Koda Rohan, who has already been described earlier, the other leading romantic writer was Higuchi Ichiyo (1872-96) who enjoyed the reputation of being a

* For a detailed study of Mori Ogai - his life and works, see Chapter IV.
first-rate novelist when she died on the threshold of fame at the young age of 24. In direct contrast to her earlier works like Yabu no Uguisu (A Nightingale in a Bush), Umoregi (The Fossil Wood), Yukinohi (A Snow Day) etc. which lacked in originality, and were poor imitations of earlier works like those of Rohan, in her later works, specially Otsugomori (The last Day of the Year), Takekurabe (Comparing Heights), Yukukumo (Passing Cloud) and Nigorie (Muddy Stream), she showed signs of maturity as a novelist and was rated as an up-and-coming writer of realistic novels when she died prematurely.

Yet another novelist who deserves special mention for developing a peculiar romantic world of his own was Izumi Kyoka (1873-1939). He was a disciple of Koyo but had a distinctly different style with a romantic tendency. Yako Junsa (The Night Duty Policeman) and Gekashitsu (The Surgery) published in 1895 established him as the most popular writer of the time even surpassing Koyo. In both these works as well as later works like Biwa Den and Bake Icho, he disapproved the conventional morality, and revolted against the hypocrisy of the society. Thus his novels are often placed in a separate genre called Kannen Shosetsu (ideological novel), along with those by Kawakami Bizan. His other noted works were Koyahijiri, Teriha Kyogen and Uta Andon which all produced an eerie world of mystic
romanticism.

Another main current in fiction during this period, though for a brief period of 3 to 4 years, was that of the social novel by writers like Uchida Roan, Tokutomi Roka, Kinoshita Naoe and Goto Chugai, who were all influenced by the socialist thought.

Roan was the earliest exponent of the social novel when he published *Kure no Nijuhachinichi* (28th of December) in 1898. It was very well received by both critics and readers as it was a welcome change from the hackneyed love stories of Kenyusha novels. Roan tried to portray the conflict between old and new values, and attempted at social reform based on western socialism in his other works such as *Ukimakura* (The life on the Waves), *Katauzura* (Separated Couple), *Shimokuzure* (Thawing Frost) etc.

Soon this literary trend spread to other writers when Tokuda Shusei wrote *Namakemono* (The Idler, 1899), and Goto Chugai published *Funikudan* (Group of Rotten Flesh, 1900). However, the novelist who enjoyed maximum popularity among the writers of social novel was Tokutomi Roka. Roka was a baptised Christian. *Hototogisu* (The Cuckoo) published in 1898 won him recognition but it was *Kuroshio* (The Black Tide) which was a real social novel. In this work Roka tried to bare the corrupt contemporary political world and the high-society.
Another representative writer of the socialist novel was Kinoshita Naoe who was one of the founders of the Social Democratic Party. In *Hi no Hashira* (Pillars of Fire) and *Otto no Kokuhaku* (Confessions of a Husband), his two most representative works, Naoe tried to expose social evils and tried to bring about social reform from the standpoint of Christian socialism. The social novel was expected to play the same role as the political novel in the second decade of the Meiji but failed to transform into a movement as the literary scene quickly moved on to the naturalistic movement which dominated the last decade of the Meiji, swayed by the rapid changes in the social scene specially after the Russo-Japanese war.

**THE NATURALISTIC SCHOOL**

Western realism that Shoyo had advocated in late 1880s was not realized then as the time was not yet ripe for such progressive ideas, but, in the first decade of the twentieth century the theory advocating that literature is an independent art bore fruit in the form of naturalistic literature. It marked the biggest turning point in modern Japanese literature as it completed the process of modernization of the novel, begun after the Restoration and gave a modern and realistic touch to the Japanese novel. In the midst of Romantic and Idealistic trends in the 1890s,
already some writers like Kosugi Tengai (1865-1952), Nagai Kafu (1879-1959) and Oguri Fuyo (1875-1926) wrote realistic works under the influence of Western naturalists specially Emile Zola. Tengai’s Hatsusugata (The Young Figure, 1900) and Hayari Uta (Popular Song, 1902) were the earliest works of naturalism. In the preface of the latter, Tengai wrote that "the novel is nature of the world of thought. Nobody has the right to say what should be written and what should not be, about anything good, evil, beautiful or ugly". He also held that the description of relations of human life meant freeing it from all relative norms and letting it return to nature. Other works written around this time such as Kafu's Yashin (Ambition, 1902) and Jigoku-no-Hana (Flower in Hell, 1902) and Fuyo's Sametaru Onna (The Cold Woman) were all written along the same lines. However, these works were more theoretical than practical and failed to put naturalistic theory into practice. Nonetheless, they paved the way for the naturalistic movement.

It was Kunikida Doppo (1871-1909) who was the real pioneer of naturalism. Influenced by English literature, specially Wordsworth, and Christianity, Doppo chose to criticize human life using literature as a tool. He

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20 ibid, p.86.
21 ibid, p.98.
started his career as a romantic poet, but later switched over to fiction and within a brief span of a decade produced over 70 works of fiction, some being the best of the naturalistic works. His early works such as *Gyuniku to Bareisha* (Beef and Potatoes), *Tomioka Sensei* (Professor Tomioka), *Unmeironsha* (The Fatalist), *Jansa* (The Policeman), *Jonan* (Women Trouble) etc. all subjectively depict the struggle of common people in the ugly world and the emptiness of their innerlife, something which he himself felt in his own life. After 1905, however, he wrote naturalistic short stories like *Kyushi* (Sudden Death), *Gogai* (Extra), *Take no Kido* (The Bamboo Wicket) and *Ni-Rojin* (Two Old Men) which were all highly objective and close to the true life of commonplace persons. His style and ideas had a profound influence on the subsequent writers of naturalistic literature.

It was after the Russo-Japanese War (1904-05) that the naturalistic movement gained momentum, as it matched with and reflected the spirit of the time. Japanese victory in Russo-Japanese war was a major turning point in the social thought. It triggered off a period of nearly a decade of conflict between social and individual morality. After nearly four decades of modernization, capitalistic urban society had matured in Japan and provided the hotbed for the growth of western ideas of individualism and liberalism.
Further, due to growth of scientific and academic knowledge, intellectuals came to have an independent view of life. The youth had awakened to a new sense of self-identity, and self-awareness and began to question the justification in pursuance of national goals at the cost of individual goals. More the government tried to suppress such liberation of the mind, the stronger became the atomized and self-seeking individualistic tendencies. Such youth not only refused to readily yield to the assertion of authority, but threatened to break through the old convention.

Naturalistic theory which aimed at the liberation of man from the established moral and aesthetic standards by looking at him as a part of nature, became synonymous with something anti-conventional, formal and traditional authority and was therefore, very popular among the youth. After 1905, literary magazines like Waseda Bungaku, Bunsho no Sekai, and Shumi served as strong pillars for naturalism and new naturalistic writers like Tokada Shusei (1871-1943), Masamune Hakuchô (1879-1962), Iwano Homei (1873-1920) and others emerged successively. They, besides Shimazaki Toson (1872-1943) and Tayama Katai (1871-1930) who were already active, produced the masterpieces of naturalistic literature and occupied the center of the literary world for quite some time.

It was Toson's Hakai (The Broken Commandment, 1906)

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which put the tenets of naturalism into concrete form for the first time. Toson began his literary career as a romantistic poet but switched over to fiction writing in the early years of the new century. He was highly influenced by western naturalistic writers and in the first phase wrote realistic short stories. Hakai was his first full-length novel which is the story of a young teacher of the outcast eta class who breaks his father's commandment confessing his eta background, in order to clear his life of hypocrisy. It is regarded as the first true naturalistic work of Japan that matched modern European naturalistic novel. 22 Another epoch making work was *Futon* (The Quilt, 1907) by Tayama Katai. It is about the bold confessions of a middle aged man about his sexual life. The matter-of-fact description was considered to be the hallmark of this work. *Futon* was in the mould of an autobiographical novel and led to the rise of a new genre within the naturalistic literature, popularly called *Watakushi Shosetsu* (The I Novel or the autobiographical confessional novel). Toson's subsequent works like *Haru* (spring) and *Ie* (The Family), Katai's trilogy of *Sei* (life), *Tsuma* (The wife) and *En* (Human Ties) were all autobiographical with the main character modelled after the author himself. Other leading writers of

22 ibid, p.106.
naturalistic works of the time also wrote autobiographical works such as Tokuda Shusei's *Ashiato* (Footprints), *Kabi* (Mold) etc. and Masamune Hakuchō's *Doro Ningyo* (The Clay Doll) and Iwana Homei's *Horo* (Wandering), *Hatten* (Development) etc.

However, though Japanese naturalism cultivated a realistic attitude depicting human life as it is whether ugly, immoral or sensual, it lacked the scientific and philosophical base of European naturalism. Thus its excessive preoccupation with reality killed the fictional quality of the novel in the process. It simply bared the realities and failed to provide a broader view of society and an adequate solution to the problems of life. The majority of works got reduced to author's private mental life and could not avoid creeping in of sentimentalism and emotionalism which destroyed beauty by subjugating art to truth. This led to the rise of neo-idealism as a reaction against naturalism.

**OPPONENTS OF NATURALISM**

Naturalism and anti-naturalism occurred almost simultaneously in Japan. By the time naturalism gained popularity in Japan, post-naturalistic thought i.e., neo-idealism, neo-romanticism, estheticism and symbolism had matured in Europe and thus both were introduced
simultaneously in Japan overlapping each other. Resultantly, there was an animated discussion specially after 1905 between naturalists and anti-naturalists.

The anti-naturalist group had strong exponents like Natsuma Soseki, Mori Ogai, Nagai Kafu, Takahama Kyoshi, Shiga Naoya, Tanizaki Junichiro, Goto Chugai and many others. The foremost among the anti-naturalists was Natsume Soseki (1867-1916) who came to the literary scene in 1905 with his maiden work *Wagahai wa Neko de Aru* (I am a Cat) and in a unique outburst of energy produced, in a short span of a decade, a large number of works, most of which are regarded as masterpieces of modern Japanese Literature.* While in his early works, we find a strong tone of humour and romanticism, his works increasingly move towards objective realism, idealistic rationalism, and humanitarianism. Soseki, dissatisfied with the new cultural milieu that was emerging under western influence, discussed contemporary social problems from the moral viewpoint specially the problem of the modern soul caught between two eras and two worlds, struggling to retain its balance and sanity in a flux of morals and beliefs. It was for his critical writings that always sought solution to the basic problems of man's innate desire for salvation, and his

* For a detailed study of Natsume Soseki, his life and works, see Chapter VI.

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inability to achieve the same that he was different from the naturalists who lacked the will to reform society. Soseki while appreciating naturalism for its frank expression of the true state of things without affectation, attacked it for destroying the beauty, goodness and sublimity due to over-indulgence with truth. In his opinion, morality was the utmost, and literature could not transcend it.

A large number of young literati influenced by his ideas and philosophy, clustered around him. One such group was the Yoyuha (The Leisure School) centering around Takahama Kyoshi, ably supported by Abe Yoshishige, Abe Jiro, Komiya Toyotaka etc. The writers of this school, through their magazine Hototogisu, perfected the Shaseibun (Sketch-writing), maintaining an objective reality as well as beauty and taste, as advocated by Soseki. It was, however, the Shirakaba (White Birch) school and its magazine 'Shirakaba' under Mushakoji Saneatsu which led the neo-idealist movement. This school had powerful exponents like Shiga Naoya, Arishima Takeo, Kinoshita Toshiharu, Nagayo Yoshio, who were not direct disciples of Soseki but were influenced by his ideals.

The other powerful anti-naturalistic stream was the so-called aesthetic group centering around Mori Ogai, the other pillar of modern Japanese Literature. Ogai who had been active on the literary scene since 1880s, from an
essentially romantistic writer, switched over to an idealistic philosophy. Ogai, like Soseki, attempted cultural criticism exposing the evils of indiscreet westernization, and expressed his strong indignation against the government infringement on personal freedom, although only symbolically, as he was an army surgeon by profession. His literary magazine 'Subaru' attracted budding talents like Ueda Bin, Nagai Kafu, Tanizaki Junichiro to name only a few, who cannot be called his disciples as such, because of Ogai's aloof personality but were definitely influenced by his writings, and writers like Tanizaki, Akutagawa and Mishima all acknowledged Ogai as their master. 23

Another anti-naturalist who left his mark on the literary world of the late Meiji as well as the Taisho was Nagai Kafu, who led neo-Romantic and esthetic movements, sort of splinters of the neo-idealist school. Interestingly, Kafu started off as a naturalist under the influence of Zola but after his return from a long stay in America and France in 1908, he assumed an anti-naturalistic posture through his literary magazine 'Mita Bungaku'. In his literary writings too, he showed a mature approach towards western culture, unlike before, and made some penetrating observations on the West. Specially his works

like *Shinkichosha no Nikki* (The Diary of a Newly Returned Traveler) and *Reisho* (The Sneer) were imbued with a spirit of criticism of contemporary civilization.

Soseki, Ogai or Kafu, all wrote works of moral and social purpose, but as the authorities tightened their grip and specially after the Kotoku High Treason case, they realized the futility of their effort and developed detachment from society. Ogai and Kafu turned back to the culture of the past with a nostalgic mood and Soseki moved on to the world of divine purity. Nonetheless, these stalwarts had paved the way for a new literary tradition i.e., the novel as a means of searching for a new, true way of living. Their proteges such as Shiga Naoya, Akutagawa Ryunosuke, Tanizaki Junichiro and Arishima Takeo continued their tradition and dominated the literary scene in the subsequent years.