

DEVELOPMENT OF LITERARY FORMS In
THE ROMANTIC AGE

The amount of actual development during the period was not as great as the immense output. Authors were satisfied with the standard literary forms.

Poetry : It was the golden age of the lyric which reflected the romantic spirit of the time. It showed that exalted passion of Shelley, the meditative simplicity of Wordsworth, the sensuous description of Keats and golden notes of Coleridge.

We get a such harvest of narrative and descriptive poems. Byron's early work, Keats's tales, Coleridge's supernatural stories and Sir Walter Scott's martial and historical romances are excellent examples. Spenserian stanza is the model and ballads come into favour and popularity. In the case of Wordsworth

we find a frequent use of blank verse for meditative purposes such as in 'The Prelude'. During this age we have also satire but this satire differs in tone from the satire of the previous age i.e. Augustan Age. The success of the French revolution led to the expression of new hopes and desires. Outstanding examples are Byron's 'The Vision of Judgement' and Shelley's 'Masque of Anarchy'.

Drama: The age is not suitable to the dramatic spirit. Some attempts here may be mentioned. Shelley's 'Cenci' and some tragedies by Byron may be mentioned in this connection. Apart from these there is no worthwhile in this form.

Prose: Novel shows a marked development. Scott and Jane Austen are associated with the historical characters with living energy.

Jane Austen's achievement was of a different kind: she revealed the beauty and the interest that underlie ordinary spheres.

Literary Criticism: In addition to the words of professional critics such as Hazlitt and the reviewers, some poets and imaginative prose writers have left as critical works of great values. Wordsworth's 'Preface to the Lyrical Ballads', Coleridge's 'Biographia Literaria' and his lectures and Shelley's 'Defence of Poetry' deserve special mention.

Periodical Literature: The new journals were supreme in the literary world. They attracted the best talents and their literary products was worthy of their reputation.

Essay: The essay required additional importance. The purely literary essay exemplified in the works of Southey, Hazlitt,

etc increased in length and solidity. The miscellaneous essays represented by Charles Lamb acquire importance and dignity. Lamb's essays were highly personal and intimate and contain all the manners and the sense of personality of the writer. There are some attempts at biography, 'Life of Byron' by Moore and 'Life of Scott' by Lockhart may be mentioned here.