

# **Precursors of romanticism**

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First half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was dominated by classical ideas. It was mandatory for the poets to compose their works keeping in mind classical rules and regulation subjective ideas were strictly prohibited realm of literature. Poetry was not treated as a platform to express personal feelings and emotions objectivity was craved for in literature. Those who were induced in violating classical norms and principals were accorded unceremonial welcome. Poets of this period were more concerned with depicting the intrigues and conspiracy hatched by the rival forces to usurp the power. Satire has emerged as the accepted genre of literature which helped the poet highlight the political crisis which engulfed the royal circle within its ambit. Emphasis was laid on the outward beauty of poetry and subject matter was forced to the background there are poets who gave epical stature to the ordinary subjects. Alexander Pope, The leading poet of the edge clearly stated the trend of 19<sup>th</sup> century saying 'what oft was thought but never so well expressed.' Pope too has given epical height to his satirical poem Rape of the Lock dealing with a very ordinary subject of the cutting of the locks of hair which finally culminated into a war between two royal families. For the Neo classical poets outward beauty was of great concern. They exhausted their energy in adding beauty to their poem by using metrical devices to make their poetry more polished and refined. Dr. Johnson the leading Augustan critic

praised the poetry of Pope saying 'Pope's poetry is the last word in the poetic art. He further added in his Lives of Pope' If Pope be not a poet where can poetry be found. Dr. Johnson's preoccupation with Augustan ideology severely affected the interest of poets like Milton and Thomas Gray showing dissent with classical ideas.

A new group of poets under the leadership of Gray expressed their displeasure over too much emphasis on objectivity in poetry. They wanted to take their poetry as a medium to express their personal feelings and emotions. They were preoccupied with plenty of subjective ideas and wanted to take poetry as an outlet or a safe refuge and wanted to share their ideas with the masses in their own language. They preferred ordinary language in place of well chiselled and high sounding words. They also insisted that classical ideas should be replaced by romantic ideas where there was ample opportunity for the poet to express subjective ideas which was largely suppressed by the neo classical ideologues. Finally they found an alternative to their problem and decided to express personal ideas under the garb of the metrical composition and structural organisation preferred by the Augustans. Thomson's poetry seasons laid the foundation of new form of poetry which was later developed by Gray, Collins and Burns. Gray's elegy written in a country churchyard is the full flowering of the new school of poetry which in course of time provided the fertile ground for the romantics who followed them.