Good morning, dear students! Today, I am going to make a presentation on the topic: ‘Romanticism and Nature’. This is rather an introduction to the subject.- Hope, you would get some help out of it.

\* \*

\*Romanticism is a literary and philosophical movement that began in Europe in the 18th century and lasted roughly until the mid-19th century.

\*In its intense focus on the individual consciousness, it was both a continuation of and a reaction against the ‘Enlightenment’.

\*Romanticism emphasized-

 -the individual

-the subjective

-the irrational

-the imaginative

-the personal

-the spontaneous

-the emotional

-the visionary

-the transcendental.

Romantic attitudes:

-the deepened appreciation of the beauties of nature

-a general exaltation of emotion over reason and of the senses over intellect

-a turning in upon the self and a heightened examination of human personality

-a preoccupation with the genius, the hero, and the exceptional figure

-a new view of the artist as a supremely individual creator; an emphasis on imagination as a gateway to transcendent experience and spiritual truth

-a consuming interest in folk culture, national and ethnic origins, and the medieval era

-a predilection for the exotic, the remote, the mysterious, the weird, the occult, the monstrous, the diseased, and even satanic.

-Romanticism is anti-intellectualist and anti-analytical.

Historically, Rousseau was the arch-priest of modern Romanticism. The Romantic Movement was in fact directed against the whole Aristotlean tradition which, during its vogue for over two thousand years, had laid paramount importance on the reign of reason and the importance of form. The modern Romanticism is generally viewed as the child of Rousseau and the French Revolution.

The Romantic movement erupted and fulfilled itself in different countries (England, France, Germany) in different ways. In England after the precursors of the Romantic movement(Gray, Collins, Smart, Cowper, Blake), there came Wordsworth, Coleridge, Scott, Byron, Shelley and Keats-the six major figures in the English Romantic movement(first half of the nineteenth century).

A basic impulse of the Romantics was to revolt against the eighteenth century. The revolt was a source of escape into the remote or the regions of fantasy. One type of Romantics (the ‘back to Nature’ apologists0 revolted against eighteenth century urban sophistication and extolled the virtues of naturalism and primitivism. Artifice, even ‘art’ was suspect, for to be ‘natural’ was the truer art.

The Romantic too easily rejected or avoided the present, and was apt to turn nostalgically to a past Golden age or a dim future Utopia.

‘Romantic’, could, then mean a lot of things; emotional fervour, appetite for experience, escapism of one or another kind, and freedom from the shackles of tradition(in the choice if themes, in the use of words, in rhyme and metre…)

Goethe said in 1830 that the difference between classic and Romantic poetry was that the former was ‘objective’ while the latter was ‘subjective’.

In England, Wordsworth pleaded for a return to Nature. He therefore through his poetry celebrated the wilderness of it along with its simplicity and integrity. Coleridge explored the unknown, the magical, and the mysterious. Simple rustic life was presented by Wordsworth with a colouring of the imagination, and the eerie and the supernatural were made by Coleridge to mingle in humanity’s life-ways. The frontiers of poetry expanded to reveal the inner recesses of the psychic self, the outer infinite space…

Love, war, nature, death too made themselves to be the subject matters.

Subjectivity was the keynote of Romantic poetry.

Herbert Read’s comparison between Classicism and Romanticism:

“Romanticism is the expression of personal values, classicism the expression of universal values… the necessities of objectivity imply an ever-increasing tendency towards clarity, simplicity, and universality. There is profundity in classical art, but no obscurity.”

M.R. Ridley on Romanticism:

“The romantic temper questions and rebels: it feels emotion strongly and expresses it with little restraint; it has often a vivid love of the mysterious; and in technique it insists equally upon perfection of form, but it permits, and even prompts, greater elaboration and richness…”

F.L. Lucas on the dangers that lie in wait for the Classist and Romantic:

“… the danger that lies in wait for the Classical Muse is of becoming a blue-stocking and a governess; the danger that besets her Romantic sister is of becoming a drunken libertine.”

\*Difference between Romanticism and Classicism:

‘Romantic’ suggests subjectivity, inner experience, personal values, feeling of inadequacy, excessive egoism, impulse of adventure, spirit of revolt, thirst for freedom. Classicism likewise could suggest objectivity, outer experience, universal values, feeling of broad acceptance of the existing order, sense of detachment, preference for quiet, poise and conformity…. The genuine classicist always puts his main emphasis on design and structure; whereas the main quest of every type of romanticist is rather for the intense and vivid and arresting details. A romantic work seems to seize more than it can quite contain, it thrills us with the suggestion of motion and the flux of phenomena.

Romantic Aestheticism rallies around what is meant by the phrase: ‘art for art’s sake’. This claim usually involves the view of life for art’s sake. Here the artist is visioned as a priest who renounces the practical and self-seeking concerns of ordinary experience in the service of “the religion of beauty’.

Romantic poets nurtured the Romantic belief in the transcendent value of poetry. They lived with the supreme value of the imagination. They turn to imagination, for, to them, the world of imagination is infinite and eternal, whereas the world of generation or vegetation is finite and temporal. They are men of Romantic fondness for the unfamiliar and strange and for the remote in place and time.