Let us remember these points regarding Romantic Poetry:

* In the first thirty years of the nineteenth century, we witness the realization of a type of emotional and imaginative literature that seems to have escaped from the constraining forces of sovereign reason.
* In these thirty years emerged a cluster of poets who are said to have brought about a ‘Romantic revival’.-The label is actually only an attempt to show how their work differed from that of their predecessors.
* They all had a deep interest in nature, not as a centre of beautiful scenes but as an informing and spiritual influence on life.
* These poets were frightened by the coming of industrialism and therefore they were turning to nature.
* The declining strength of traditional religious belief appeared to be motivating these poets to develop a religion from the spirituality of their personal experiences.
* The Romantic spirit can be defined as an accentuated predominance of emotional life, provoked or directed by the exercise of imaginative vision.
* For the Romantics, natural objects could be symbols, in the sense of things through which meaning is flashed transparently.
* It is a kind of literature fed by intense emotion coupled with an intense display of imagery.
* The Romantic poets looked into themselves, seeking in their own lives for strange sensations.
* Wordsworth collaborated with Coleridge for the volume: ‘Lyrical Ballads’(1798)- it was an experiment for Wordsworth in regards to an attempt to make verse out of the incidents of simple, rustic life in a language that was a selection from the phrases of ordinary speech.
* Wordsworth’s ‘Prelude’ is perhaps the greatest of poetical autobiographies.
* Objects and places, for Wordsworth, were nexuses of memory and desire, hope and nostalgia.
* Wordsworth pleaded for a return to Nature. Coleridge explored the unknown, the magical and the mysterious.
* Simple rustic life was presented by Wordsworth with a colouring of imagination. The eerie and the supernatural were made by Coleridge to mingle in humanity’s life-ways. The frontiers of poetry thus seemed to extend in every direction revealing the inner countries of the psychic self, the outer infinite space, and all the diverse realms in between.

BLAKE:

\*Blake’s poems are replete with symbolic (Read his ‘Proverbs of Hell’) and visionary elements.

\*Natural objects are used symbolically with visionary intensity.(Read his ‘Ah! Sunflower’ and ‘The Sick Rose’).

\*As a visionary, Blake was influenced by Boehme, Swedenborg, William Law and other prophetic and mystical thinkers.

\*For him all knowledge came through the exercise of the imagination.

\*To him vision was synonymous with imagination. A quote:

“Vision or imagination is a representation of what eternally exists, really and unchangeably.”

\*The tigers and horses, the lions and lambs, the children and adults, the innocent and experienced are perceived by Blake as integral elements in the dynamic of synthesis which he saw as implicit in creation.

\*There is both beauty and terror in the elemental forces of nature.(Read his ‘The Tyger’. There is a combined suggestion of terror and wonder in the image of tiger.)

\*He celebrates the innocence of objects of nature, as in ‘Lamb’. The innocence of the lamb is impossible in the world of experience – he suggests.

\*Blake was also immensely influenced by the French Revolution. There is also a poem by him : ‘The French Revolution’ in which he shows his imaginative response to the events of his time:

“Again the loud voice of France cries to the morning; the/morning prophecies to its clouds”

(The French Revolution- or at least the idea of the Revolution, and the mystique associated with it was -for a brief period –one of the great stimulating forces on the English literary imagination.)

\*Blake is also known for his strong mythopoeic imagination, his unusual combination of the exotic and everyday(Read his ‘Four Zoas’)

\*Blake was frustrated with the Neo-classical tradition and hence, he tried to work out a new idiom which could accommodate his themes. For example, instead of following the demands of heroic couplet, he worked out his ideas through new rhythms and unconventional rhyming patterns (Read his ‘Poetical Sketches’). His ‘Songs of Innocence and Experience’ is a departure from the Neo-classical tradition in that there are drawings that are loaded with symbolic significance.

\*Blake remained a rebel (religious, political and artistic) all his life. His proclamation of liberty takes many forms in his later mythological work, generally known as Prophetic Book.

\*Blake’s literary sources and inspirations range from the Bible and the epic-structures of Dante and Milton. His works often are replete with symbolism, imagery, and prophetic utterances of the Bible.

\*Blake is specially known for his two books: ‘Songs of Innocence’ and ‘Songs of Experience’. There is a hymn like simplicity and nursery rhyme like rhythms in the poems. The poems in the first suggest challenges to and corruption of the innocent state. Through the poems in ‘Songs of Experience’ he tends to show how the so called wisdom of the old ends up with oppression. Parents, priests, nurses and the calculating force of human reason serve to limit and confine what once was innocent.

\*In ‘London’ the very shape of the city, with its ‘charter’d streets and river, marks its inhabitants with signs of weakness and woe and the ‘mind-forg’d manacles’ tyrannize and terrorize its poor.

\*The poet has to be a prophet- so insists Blake. A quote:

“Hear the voice of the Bard/Who, Present, Past and Future, sees; / Whose ears have heard / The Holy Word / That walk’d among the Ancient Trees.”