

**Sub: ENGLISH**

**Class : B.A. Part-I Hons. Paper-I**

**Topic: THE TRANSITIONAL POETS**

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## **THE TRANSITIONAL POETS**

It was in the late eighteenth century that the poets began tiring with the neo - classical ideals of wit, reason and decorum . The people had become fed up with the rational, intellectual, formal and unromantic poetry of the age of Pope . The people began feeling suffocated with the artificiality of city life and craved for freshness of Nature and naturality. They wished to return to the free and living world of leaves , flowers, clouds, rivers and mountains .The age witnessed the struggle between the old and the new , and the gradual triumph of the latter over the former . Though the poets of this age could not break totally free from the spirit of the previous age of Pope , they certainly foresaw the new world

and worked as a link between the previous age and the Romantic age , hence they are also called the 'Precursors of Romantic Revival Movement' .

### **The eminent poets of the period are:-**

**1. James Thomson**(1700-48) : First of all Thomson came up with new note with his " Seasons"(1726) and " The Castle of Indolence" (1748) . "Seasons" is full of descriptions of refreshing joy of nature written in blank verse while "The Castle of Indolence" is imitative written in Spenserian Stanza creating an atmosphere of dreamy melancholy in the manner of Spenser. Rickett says , " As a writer he signalizes the departure from the town to the country , chose the Spenserian stanza and blank verse as his medium ,and eschewed the stopped couplet that was ubiquitous in the realm of poetry at the time." His "Liberty" (1735-36) proved unsuccessful.

**2. Thomas Gray** (1716-71) : Though he wrote only 13 poems in his life time, he became famous for his poem, "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard" (1751).All his poems are remarkable for their quality and finish and they made the readers foresee the arrival of the new atmosphere .

**3. William Collins** (1721-59): We find romantic feelings in his very first poem "Oriental Eclogues"(1742) though it written in prevailing couplets. .His "Odes" are remarkable for their lyric note while "Ode to Evening" is full of sweet tenderness and

pathos .His “Ode to the Popular Superstitions of the Highlands” introduced a new world of fairies, pygmies, witches and other supernatural elements paving path for the poets for romantic revival. His “Odes to Simplicity ,To Fear, To The Passions ,To Evening” are also significant.

4. **William Cowper** (1731-1800): From the viewpoint of his feeling for Nature and his lyricism he is regarded as an immediate forerunner of the Romantics . “The Task”(1785) is remarkable for his descriptions of homely scenes ,woods and brooks, fountains ,ploughmen and teamasters etc. indicating the dawn of the new era. Cowper is first to preach us the gospel of ‘back to nature’ when he wrote- ‘God made the country and man made the town’ and thus he is said to foreshadow Wordsworth and Byron .

5. **George Crabbe** (1754-1832): Crabbe’s important poetical works “The Library”(1781) “The Village” and (1783) “The Borough”(1810) etc. exhibit the qualities of romanticism as they deal with the lives of simple countryfolk and human nature and behavior though they are written in heroic couplet . Crabbe’s humanism is remarkable for sincerity, sympathy ,attention and acute observation on which Rickett remarks ‘.....no poet has a wider sympathy with his kind than he ,or more snuff of humanity in his writings’.

6. **Mark Akenside** (1721-1770): He wrote “An Epistle to Curio” (1744) a brilliant satire in the Augustan tradition. His another poem “The Pleasures of the Imagination”(1744) contains Miltonic style of blank verse but it lacks Miltonic energy and genius.

7. **Christopher Smart**(1722-1771): His remarkable work is “Song to David” in which he discarded the prevalent verseification .The poem exhibits outbursts of tremendous poetic power of the poet and has quaint touches of imagery.

8. **William Shenstone**(1714-1763): His poems “Odes ,Elegies, Levites or Pieces of Humour, The Schoolmaster” are pastoral in nature but they are unlike the typed and artificial pastoral of Pope. His description of nature are remarkable for accuracy of observation.

9.**Percy, Chatterton and Macpherson**: The role of the trio is even more important in this regard . Bishop Percy published “Reliques” in 1765 which contained some of the oldest and most beautiful specimens of ballad available so far .It proved to be a milestone in the history of romantic revival movement foreseeing Coleridge and Keats. Thomas Chatterton’s “Rowley Poems” are medieval in tone and atmosphere but they essentially exerted considerable impact on the romantic poets.James Macpherson’s “Ossian” is similarly significant in this regard. . It ushered in the Celtic spirit in English literature . It

deals with the tales of the romantic adventures of a mythical figure named Fingal. It is full of the descriptions of wild nature written in poetic prose .

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