

**REFLECTIONS OF RUSSIAN SOCIETY IN  
SELECTED WORKS OF PUSHKIN**

Dissertation submitted to the Jawaharlal Nehru University in partial  
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**MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY**

**DEVJANI RAY**



**CENTRE FOR RUSSIAN AND CENTRAL ASIAN STUDIES  
SCHOOL OF INTERNATIONAL STUDIES  
JAWAHARLAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY  
NEW DELHI-110067**

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# JAWAHARLAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY

School of International Studies

New Delhi - 110067

Tel. : 2670 4365

Fax : (+91)-11-26717586


(+91)-11-26717603

Centre for Russian and Central Asian Studies

Date: 21<sup>st</sup> July, 2006

## DECLARATION

I declare that the dissertation entitled “REFLECTIONS OF RUSSIAN SOCIETY IN SELECTED WORKS OF PUSHKIN” submitted by me in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY is my own work. The dissertation has not been submitted for any other degree of this or any other university.

  
(Devjani Ray)

## CERTIFICATE

We recommend that this dissertation may please be placed before the examiners for evaluation.

  
Prof. Ajay Kumar Patnaik

(Chairperson)

  
Dr. Preeti D Das

(Supervisor)

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# *INTRODUCTION*

*“I don’t understand you”, said Alice  
“It’s dreadfully confusing!”  
“That’s the effect of looking backwards”, the Queen  
said kindly: :it always makes one a little giddy at first..”  
“Living backwards!” Alice repeated in great astonishment. “I never heard  
of such a thing!”  
“but there’s one great advantage in it,  
that one’s memory works both ways.”*

Lewis Carroll, *Through the Looking Glass.*

## INTRODUCTION

Hippolyte Taine, the modern sociologist of literature, analyses a work of art in reference to three factors: its author's race, environment social "milieu" and historical moment<sup>1</sup> or the prevailing circumstances. A society is always reflected in its literature. In any age it is the contemporary society and the ideas held by it that creates the world of literature of that period. Thus a literary text is a product of common beliefs and cultural power relations. By cultural power relations it is meant that an artist's freedom of expression might be limited or curbed by the conventions and the existing authorities.

Pushkin remarked:

“В России «память замечательных людей скоро исчезает по причине недостатка исторических записок...Непременно должно описывать современные происшествия, чтобы могли на нас ссылаться»<sup>2</sup>

He expressed his concern over the fact that the memory of the Great people would soon disappear from the minds of the Russians due to the insufficient historical recordings. Pushkin thus desired to take up the responsibility to deal in his works with the contemporary issues and also the historical events affecting Russia as a nation. He wanted to keep the memory of rich Russian history and life alive in his works which would ultimately become a treasure house of knowledge of the past for the generations to come.

Taking cue from such a proposition an attempt has been made in this dissertation to analyse influence of history and contemporary socio-political condition on Pushkin's development as a 'national poet'. Vissarion Belnisky wrote: "Pushkin belongs to those ever living and developing phenomenon which do not stop short

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<sup>1</sup> Abrams MH (2004), *A Glossary of Literary Terms*. Heinle. pp-249-256

<sup>2</sup> "Vospominania I Dnevnik Pushkina", ("Remembrance and the Diary of Pushkin", Collected works of Pushkin.[Online:web] Accessed 17 July 2006.URL:[http:// www.rvb.ru](http://www.rvb.ru)

at the point where death overcomes them but which continue to develop in the mind of society”.<sup>3</sup>

Literature does not occupy a trans-historical aesthetic realm which is independent of economic, social and political conditions and subject to timeless criteria of artistic value. Instead a literary text is simply one of many kinds of texts-religious, philosophical, legal scientific and so on- all of which are subject to the particular conditions of time and place, and among which the literary text has neither unique status nor special privilege. Thus, the study of any literature if undertaken in the right spirit, it should enable us to follow the successive patterns of life and consciousness of the nation, which gave birth to it. Since patterns of this kind are closely intertwined with economic, social and political factors, such task can hardly be undertaken without an examination of the historical background of the nation or the country concerned. This is particularly true of Russian literature the character of which can only be explained by the vagaries of Russian history from the days when the Russians by becoming Christians joined the comity of European nations. The fact that the old Russia with Kiev as its centre, received Christianity not from Rome but from the neighbouring Byzantium, with whom she had lively commercial contacts, created a cultural gap between Russian and Western Europe.<sup>4</sup> Though such awareness existed for a long time, it got strongly portrayed with Pushkin’s emergence in the Russian social and literary milieu. Pushkin is referred to as the “father” of Russian literature not because he gave a new lease of life to the Russian literature but also expressed her pent up feelings of alienation from the other European countries. Pushkin’s awareness of such a cultural lag made him to produce a range of literary works which reflected conventional use of French and a new language of the common Russian man.

The objective of this dissertation has been to show what has made the social history of 17<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> century Russia integral to the then literature and how the

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<sup>3</sup> Todd William (1986), *Fiction and Society in the Age of Pushkin: Ideology, Institutions and Narrative*, Cambridge University Press: London, Mass. pp 303-335

<sup>4</sup> Lavrin Janko (1947), *Introduction to Pushkin and Russian Literature*, Teach Yourself Library. pp-11-27



historical reality and the new demands by the society produced the literature. Finally an attempt has been made to analyse how Pushkin tried to consolidate and stabilize the great tradition of Russian literature that arose during the preceding centuries. My limited knowledge of Russian language made it difficult for me to refer to various other works of Pushkin apart from the ones which I have dealt with here. To an extent my limited knowledge of Russian language has been responsible for the limited length of chapter titled "PUSHKIN- A BRIDGE BETWEEN THE OLD AND THE NEW" and also because I tried my best to devote more time to read Pushkin's works in Russian language.

A brief analysis of the preceding centuries from the social and literary perspectives have been simultaneously presented to show that even though the issues like serfdom, repression, autocracy remained the same the intensity changed in different ages and got accordingly portrayed in the contemporary literature. In fact the social developments in economy, trade and the peasantry too got reflected in the discussion of the various ages. Pushkin took up issues which were not new but he did so in a novel way. His creativity gave a new dimension not only to the old issues and events but also to Russian literature as such. The chapterisation has been made in such a way that it follows a pattern which merges several centuries together and finally gets reflected in Pushkin's works.

The introductory chapters give a broad over view of the subject of the dissertation and briefly trace the social history of the transitional moment when Pushkin gave birth to a new Russian literary tradition drawing from the history and everyday life of the Russian people. Several literary works like Daniel's *Supplication*<sup>5</sup>- which talks of the period when Russia was under the grip of the Mongol Tartar hordes, *Don Tale*, *Tale of the Battle with Mamai* and the *Discourse on the life of Passing of Dmitry Ivanovich* have been referred to reflect the feats of Dmitry Ivanovich who finally rid Russia of the Tartar yoke in 1380.

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<sup>5</sup> Kuskov Vladimir (1980). *A History of Old Russian Literature*. Progress Publishers Moscow. pp-49-57

The socio economic condition prevailing in any age is reflected in the literature of that age. Russian literature is not deprived of such a phenomenon. The condition of the peasants, serfs, attitude of the boyars and aristocracy, repressive policies of Tsars in various ages, development of industries and trade and thereby a change in the economy of Russia are all reflected in the Russian literature. The study of the literature of different eras gives an idea of the socio economic condition of various phases in Russian history.

Reforms of Peter-the Great in the fields of administration, military and economy; and changes brought about by Catherine in the 18<sup>th</sup> century have been briefly studied. The condition of peasants and serfs have been repeatedly referred to as it reveals the true plight of the poor commoners under the repressive policies followed by Ivan IV (the Terrible), Peter-the Great and Catherine. The sufferings of the serfs became a subject of discussion in various Russian literary works. Radical writers like Radischev and later Pushkin raised their voices against the evils of serfdom and desired to abolish the system once and for all.

The third chapter is an overview of Pushkin's works with reference to *The Captain's Daughter* (*Капитанская Дочка*), *The Bronze Horseman* (*Медный Всадник*), *Eugene Onegin* (*Евгений Онегин*). His various other work such as *Poltava* (*Полтава*), *Boris Godunov* (*Борис Годунов*) and odes like *Liberty* (*Вольность*), *Farewell to the Sea* and *Arion* (*Арион*) have been cited during the discussion. We also get glimpses from the pages of Russian history like the events of the

Battle of Poltava (1709) when Charles I of Sweden invaded Russia; the Pugachov Rebellion (1773-1774), the Holy Alliance of Alexander I (1815), and also the crucial issue of serfdom.

In the concluding chapters Pushkin has been presented as a watershed between the preceding and succeeding centuries. Events and literary genres of the bygone eras have been discussed to show how they were instrumental in shaping Pushkin's career as a poet. They also attempt to portray how the merging of the past and the

present in Pushkin's works led to the emergence of a new literary tradition in Russia (consisting of the historical novel, verse, treatment of the psychology of characters) which became a model and inspiration for writers of the succeeding generation for instance Gogol, Lermontov, Tolstoy, and Dostoevsky and so on.

The aristocratic (*дворяне*) origin of the then writers had a great impact on the literature and culture of the age. Pushkin's awareness of his aristocratic (*дворянских*) pedigree and his pride in his heritage underlies his values especially after 1826. His discussions of the role of aristocracy in Russian history, his general concern with history as well as his aloofness from growing commercialism in literature were all reinforced by his class position in the society.

DD Blagoy in *The Sociology of Pushkin's Creation* argues that Pushkin was Russia's most class conscious writer.<sup>6</sup> On his return from exile in 1826 Pushkin had to start his life anew. When faced with the alternative of continued rebellion or reconciliation he opted for the latter. It was during this phase that he emphasised his noble pedigree. A respect for the past, tradition, and heritage became the very condition sine qua non of civilization. In 1830 in an article defending his pride in the past he boldly asserts: 'Savagery, baseness and ignorance (alone) do not respect the past.' He further asserts that the old aristocracy of which he was a part upheld almost single handedly literature and culture in Russia. Pushkin's class consciousness and aristocratic values are reflected in his sense of personal honour and his disdain for the commercial world. It is noteworthy that there has not really been any professional writer in Russia before Pushkin's time. Almost all writers were drawn from the ranks of aristocracy who wrote for pleasure or interest. According to Pushkin it was this aristocratic nature of the Russian writers that gave Russian literature its independent, anti-utilitarian character.

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<sup>6</sup> Todd William Mills(1978) , *Eugene Onegin: "Life's Novel"* in Literature and Society , ed Todd William Mills. Stanford University Press. p. 213-29

Pushkin's aristocratism is also vital for our understanding of his view of himself as an artist. For Pushkin an artist is essentially nature's aristocrat, he is and should remain aloof, noble, free and independent. In *To the Poet (Поэту)* he exclaims:

*Poet! Do not cherish the love of the people,  
You are a Tsar! Live alone.*<sup>7</sup>

In *The Captive of the Caucasus (Кавказский Пленник)* and *The Gypsies (Цыганы)* Pushkin's approach to character is one of scientific curiosity rather than self projection. His impersonality is noticed in *The Bronze Horseman (Медный Всадник)*. In *The Captain's Daughter (Капитанская Дочка)* he overcame his own class prejudices in his treatment of the land owning class.

The broad social background to the Russian literature in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century can be traced to the rapid decline in the aristocracy yet their stronghold on culture. The aristocratic background had a deciding influence on the type of education the writers received. Pushkin first went to a private school and then to exclusive schools entry to which was the exclusive preserve of the nobility. Pushkin drew his intellectual inspiration from private reading and discussions. It was advantageous to him because the ideas encountered outside official educational institutions were perforce, subversive and usually of foreign origin. In 19<sup>th</sup> century Russia, the repression within official channels of learning bred precisely what the authorities sought to suppress-alternative idea and ways of looking at the world. So Pushkin encountered ideas which were generally hostile to the status quo, when he turned to literature of other European countries like France and England for intellectual sustenance

Pushkin's early radicalism stemmed largely from his private reading of French enlightenment. His close contacts through the Green Lamp-a literary society

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<sup>7</sup> Bayley J (1971). *Pushkin- A Comparative Commentary*. Cambridge University Press: Great Britain, pp-20-25

which may have been a branch of the second pre-Decemberist secret society and other unofficial societies with radical guards' officers, inspired in him an interest in the fashionable liberal ideas of the period.

The liberal and political environment of the period made Pushkin a typical product of his age. The very negativism of the Tsarist tyranny, the censorship that really hampers the free development of literature and culture actually turned out to be the liberating factors.

Pushkin was quick to realize the need for new methods to convey the new facts. He strove to bring Russian literature into a closer contact with Russian reality and accordingly tried to create new genre and refurbish old ones. For the first time problems of everyday life, inner psychological workings of the common men undergoing the tyranny of governmental policies entered Russian literature. Pushkin's "Shakespearean gaze" on everyday, ordinary reality as well as on key moments in Russian History, signaled an end to narrative closure. What Pushkin tried to do was very close to what Lucaks calls "individuals as a whole in the whole society".<sup>8</sup>

Inherent in the 19<sup>th</sup> century Russian writers is a certain tension between the reality they saw around them and their moral understanding regarding the needed reforms in the existing socio-political system. Pushkin in his early works was relatively personally involved in his subject matter, particularly in his revolutionary verse like *Liberty (Вольность, 1817)*, *To the Slanderers of Russia*. But after his initial protest against the reality, he quickly made peace with the *status quo*, became reconciled and sought after 1826 to depict the world with his "Shakespearean gaze".

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<sup>8</sup> Bayley J(1971), *Pushkin- A Comparative Commentary*. Cambridge University Press: Great Britain, pp309-311

Blok in his Pushkin Speech in 1921 referred to the Golden age of Russian literature under Nicholas I as “the only cultured epoch in Russia during the past century”<sup>9</sup>Pushkin himself had prophetically used such an idea in a poem dedicated to his friend Delvig and describing the present he was sending to his friend, a bronze sphinx...:

“Who has grown on the snow Theocritus’s tender crosses? In the iron age ,tell, who has divined the golden age?”

Pushkin’s deep feeling for Russia could identify itself with the new Emperor who had dismissed the clique of reactionaries whose influence had darkened the last years of Alexander’s reign. Pushkin’s growing interest in the figure of Peter the Great projected itself briefly on Peter’s successor and compared the opening of Nicholas’s reign with Peter’s in the poem *In hope of all the good and glory....* In *The Bronze Horseman* ( *Медный Всадник*) we get to see Pushkin’s humanitarian sympathies for Yevgeny and the lost millions he represents, because of his class interpretation of history- (it was precisely Peter’s reign that Pushkin’s own class began the decline) that Pushkin felt so deeply about. His interest in history had now a much stronger hold on his imagination. All his major reflections of the political changes were Pushkin’s increasing identification of himself with his hereditary aristocracy and his defense of the past. It is striking to note his justification of the more reactionary aspects of the political life of his time-of aristocracy, nationalism and finally imperialism.

Pushkin saw the monarchy as an essential part of the future Russia and it is well reflected in *Boris Godunov*. The monarchy, then, was not only a historical process but also a boon to the patriots of the Empire. Pushkin made his patriotism even more evident in his poems defending the Russian suppression of the Polish insurrection- *To the Slanderers of Russia* and *The Bordino Anniversary*. His critical treatment of Ukrainian nationalism in *Poltava* (1828) marks a new period

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<sup>9</sup> Ronen Omry (1997).*The Fallacy of the Silver Age in 20th Century Russian Literature*.Harwood Academic Publishers:Netherlands.pp-34-47

in his work, representing a new identification with the nation, the empire and the state in general.

The historical life of Russia and the state building has been the primary concern of the Russian literature. It is a patriotic and civic minded literature. It is always the people's conscience so to speak. Its place in the country's social life is honourable and influential. It educated people and strove to recognise life in a just and equitable fashion. In the universe of Plato's paradigm of concepts there is a place for the notion of peoples and their national being. It would be legitimate to seek this through the intellectual life of the people, not the least significant part of which would be their creations of artistic genius. This is exactly what Dostoevsky chose to do by declaring the works of Pushkin a symbol of 'Russian idea'. The writer spoke about the 'artistic genius' of Pushkin, 'of the capacity for universal empathy and reincarnation through the genius of another nation...'<sup>10</sup> 'This capacity is entirely a Russian national capacity and Pushkin merely shares it with our people: and like the perfect artist he is, he is the ultimate expression of this capacity...' affirmed Dostoevsky.

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<sup>10</sup> Serbeninko VV, *The Russian Idea: Metaphysics Ideology and History in Social Identities in Revolutionary Russia*.ed Palat Madhavan K. (2001), Great Britain (Palgrave), p. 13-15.

*SEVENTEENTH- EIGHTEENTH CENTURY  
RUSSIAN SOCIETY*



## SEVENTEENTH-EIGHTEENTH CENTURY RUSSIAN SOCIETY

As has already been mentioned in the introduction a broad outline can be provided for the study of the literature and society if we consider brief discussions of the Literature of the medieval Russian state from 11<sup>th</sup> -12<sup>th</sup> century ie, the literature of the Kievan Rus, literature of the period of feudal sectionalism and the struggle for the unification of the North east Russia (13<sup>th</sup> -15<sup>th</sup> century). After considering the medieval Russian literature we arrive at the literature of 16<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> Century, when a centralized Russian state was being created.

The emergence of early feudal state and the appearance of written language led to the conception and formation of the literature of that period (11<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> century). During the 13<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> century, the inexorable process of feudal division whereby the empire of the Rurik dynasty disintegrated into feudal states which resulted in various local literary schools.

In the 13<sup>th</sup> and early 14<sup>th</sup> centuries, the political dismemberment of the country increased. The grand principality of Vladimir was divided into several appanage principalities, ruled by members of princely family. With the development of local economic and political centres the power of great Princes of Kiev declined and Kiev became far less of a centre for the entire Russian land.

In this period culture and literature took on local features. Based on the preceding period each feudal principality developed its own literature. Efforts were made by the feudal leadership to isolate regional literatures of Novgorod, Pskov so on. But the progressive members of the population and the people maintained an awareness of the unity of the Russian land, language and culture, which grew stronger in the struggle with foreign oppressors-the Mongol-Tartar hordes. The formation of the Great Russian people in this period was reflected in the culture and literature of Vladimir, Moscow, Novgorod and Pskov. Daniel the Exile's *Supplication* is one of the finest literary works of the period. It speaks out against

the tradition of judging men according to their rank in the feudal hierarchic ladder. It focuses on the image of an ideal prince, wise ruler capable of establishing social justice. However, Daniel does not pose the question of social equality. He is for retaining “serfdom”.

The formation of a centralised Russian state facilitated the establishment and development of elements of national culture. Construction of a unified state became the main theme of the literature. Vladimir’s Kiev became a symbol of Russia’s independence, glory and magnificence. The idea of the struggle against the hated Mongol Tartar yoke became of increasing concern to the population at large. Moscow’s strength increased abruptly in the reign of Ivan Kalita’s grandson Dmitry Ivanovich (1359-1389). It was an important stage in the process of unification of Russian lands owing to Dmitry’s successful struggle against the separatist actions by local feudal centres and aggressive intentions by foreign enemies. In 1380 Dmitry united almost all of Northeast Rus under his banner and dealt a killing blow to the Golden Horde headed by Mamai. His triumph showed that Russian people had the power for a decisive struggle against their enemy, but only under the centralized rule of the great prince. After the victory at Kulikovo Field, the final defeat of the Tartars was merely a matter of time. The historical events of 1380 were widely reflected in chronicle tales, the *Don Tale*, the *Tale of the Battle with Mamai* and the *Discourse on the life of Passing of Dmitry Ivanovich*.

Born out of the bitter domestic political strife linked to the consolidation of an absolute rule, first by the great prince and then by the tsar of Muscovy and All Rus- was the literature of the 15<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> century. In the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> century the reunification of Russian lands proceeded on a wide scale; new territories were also added to the Russian state. By the end of 15<sup>th</sup> century Russia had become Europe’s largest state. Considerable changes took place in feudal land ownership during that period. The changes in land holdings consisted mainly in the expansion of monastery holdings, largely through seizure of communal peasants’ land. The prevailing corvee undermined the peasant’s desire to raise productivity.

The feudal lords '*dvoryane*' with negligible incomes were interested in increasing the corvee exploitation of the peasants and sought to enslave them and turn them into serfs.<sup>11</sup> The grand prince's state supported the *dvoryane* as they were important for their rule over the Russian lands as well as struggle against the separation of large feudal lords, the appanage princes and the boyars.

15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> century saw the rise trades and crafts in Russia. A large category of "non-ploughing" people arose. There were craftsmen working mostly for the market. However, the strengthening of serfdom in Russia hampered the development of crafts and trade and also development of small scale peasant household economy working for the market. Not only local regional markets were established. Russia's foreign trade with her neighbours increased considerably. A *Trip Over Three Seas* is a travelogue by a 15<sup>th</sup> century merchant from Tver, Afanasy Nikitin. Afanasy made a trip to India where he notes the customs and habits of Indians and how he longs for his motherland Russia in an alien land. In spite of injustices in Rus, he thinks of his homeland and cries "May God preserve the Russian land..."

In the reign of Ivan III (1462-1505) and his son Vasily III most of the territory inhabited by the Great Russians was united under the Moscow Grand Prince who became the 'Ruler of All Russia'. Independence was completely lost by Novgorod republic: the freedom enjoyed by *veche* (popular assembly) was suppressed. The far sightedness of Ivan III rid the Russian people of the Hordes Yoke without any bloodshed. In 1480, hundred years after the battle of Kulikovo Field, the Hordes Yoke were completely defeated..

Another important feature of Russia's historical development in 15<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> century was the fact that the emergent centralized state was not national state, but a state uniting many people and nationalities. Some of them were at a pre-feudal stage.

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<sup>11</sup> Schmidt S. Tarnovsky K and Berkhin I (1984). *A Short History of the USSR*. Progress Publishers: Moscow pp.60-65

State power, the personality of the autocrat and the nature and limits of his autocratic power were the central problems in the then literature. In Archbishop Vassian's *Epistle to Ivan III* (1480), in the *Book of Generations* (*Stepennaya Kniga*) we find a reflection of the then Russian social condition. *Book of Generations* (*Stepennaya Kniga*) attempts a systematic and pragmatic presentation of the history of the Muscovite kingdom in the form of a family tree from Rurik and then Vladimir Svyatoslavich to Ivan the Terrible inclusive. The *Book of Generations* was an official historical document, providing a basis for 16<sup>th</sup> century diplomats to hold talks in the Muscovite princes to rule over the Russian lands once adjoined to the Kievan state and the sovereignty of the Muscovite kingdom, its right to a leading role in European politics.

In the second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, when Ivan IV (the Terrible) reigned, the struggle against Kazan Khanate became the main task of Russia's foreign policy. The conquest of Kazan Khanate saved the inhabitants of Volga and Urals areas from enslavement by eastern rulers. But it did not free them from serfdom and national oppression. However, that offered them the chance to establish closer economic, cultural and socio-political ties with the Russian working population. The taking of Kazan was widely reflected in the oral folk literature: legends, songs and folk tales. *The History of the Empire of Kazan* was composed which tells of events beginning with founding of Kazan in 1172 by the legendary Bulgarian King Sain to the taking of the city by Ivan the Terrible in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Ivan IV was proclaimed the first Russian Tsar. The official acknowledgement of the sole power of the "Tsar and Grand Prince of All Russia" undermined the claims of the large feudal lords to co rule and of the individual areas to retention of political independence.

Ivan's crowning as the Tsar was a prelude to further reforms contributing to the Russian states' centralisation. Reforms were already started by Ivan III : the introduction of legal standards for the whole state (the 1497 *Sudebnik*: a code of law) and the establishment of central and local governmental bodies and the specification of their functions. The reforms were further accelerated by an

upsurge in the class struggle which took shape in the mass uprising in Moscow in June 1547. The threat of anti-feudal movements in towns and villages threatened the feudal classes and led to the unity of the boyars, *dvoryane* and the clergy in the form of *Izbranaya Rada* (Elected Council) under Ivan IV. Reforms were carried in the central and local governments, the courts and military service, contributing to the assertion of military and civil bureaucracy consisting of *dvoryane*, the strengthening of *dvoryanes'* economic and political position. Publication of *Apostel* (first Russian printed book) by Ivan Fyodorov was a successful attempt to organize book printing.<sup>12</sup>

Ivan the Terrible's war with Livonia was opposed by the Boyars. Thus, Ivan IV established *Oprichnina* in 1565, a system of extraordinary measures to prop up his power and crush the boyars' opposition. He even set up a special military force *Oprichniki* directly under his commands undeterred by any laws. The reign of terror let loose by the *oprichniki* brought tremendous hardships and suffering to popular masses in the towns and villages. Thus several thousands died in Novgorod. The positions of the peasants deteriorated abruptly, corvee became increasingly widespread and onerous, and the peasants were completely prohibited from passing from one owner to another. The economic crisis proved particularly grave due to excesses of the *oprichniki* and the Levonian War. Ivan the Terrible's policies oriented to consolidating the autocracy and increasing the role of the service nobility and the infringing upon the interests of hereditary nobility are reflected in *The Correspondence Between Andrei Kurbsky and Ivan the Terrible*.

The 17<sup>th</sup> century is called a "rebellious" century. It began with a cataclysm in the broad social movements, known as the "time of troubles" (*smuta*). These events were triggered off by the end of the ruling dynasty (the last of Ryurikovichi, Fyodor Ivanovich who had no children died in 1598; his brother in law Boris Gudonov, who ascended the throne after he died in 1605). However, the real cause

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<sup>12</sup>Kuskov Vladimir (1980), *A History of Old Russian Literature*. Progress Publishers Moscow. pp-49-57

was mass discontent due to economic oppression and social chaos. Several years of poor harvests in a row and as a result a terrible famine increased the discontent. The situation was made worse by invasion of Poles and Swedes. All these were reflected in the literature which became exclusively topical and polemical. Interests of the boyars were reflected in *The Tale of 1606*. It supports the politics of the boyar Tsar Vasily Shuisky and attempts to depict him as the people's choice, stressing his affinity with the people. The disorder and unrest in the Muscovite state are blamed on Boris Gudonov who according to the author ended the line of lawful Tsars by murdering Tsarevich Dmitry. In *Another Tale (Иное Сказание)* the author defends the position of the boyars and depicts them as the survivors of the Russian state from the adversary.

An important event of *smuta* was the mass popular war led by Ivan Bolotnikov, a former bondman during 1606-1607. The uprising was centred on the state's outskirts inhabited by Cossaks, but its motive forces also included serfs and lower strata of the population. This was the first major peasant wars of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. During the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century peasant uprisings occurred around Volga and Urals. The *Zemsky Sobor* (assembly of representatives from the estates) adopted a code of law *Ulozheniye* in 1649 with the aim of strengthening the power of the feudal serf owners. In 1660s also peasant wars were common. One of the important among them was the peasant war headed by Don Cossack Stepan Razin, who sought to do away with serfdom. The popular uprisings of the 1770s were a crucial stage in forming of the traditions of class struggle of the Russian people and of the joint struggle of different people against the oppressors.

The early 18<sup>th</sup> century Russia witnessed the establishment of Absolute monarchy and the reforms of Peter the Great. The activities of Peter I marked the final establishment of absolutism in Russia. Manufactories appeared in Russia in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, large merchant capital was accumulated playing a considerable role in overcoming local economic isolation. The government was increasingly bureaucratized and development in politics and government could be easily traced from monarchy with the Boyar Duma and the boyar aristocracy to bureaucratic

*dvoeyane* monarchy. The distribution of posts in the military, administrative and court service among secular feudal lords according to the nobility of and the posts of the church assumed subordinate position in relation to the autocrat. Peter sought to strengthen the serf state. Major uprisings broke out in Astrakhan in 1705 and in Bashkiria in 1707-1709 and so on. The central government was reorganized: the Senate with broad legislative, judicial and control functions was formed instead of the Boyar Duma. A system of town rule was organised; town dwellers were divided into categories depending on their material position and occupation. The system was everywhere laid down in numerous rules. The Table of Ranks (1722) laid down regulations for going through the service and made civil service equivalent to military service.

The government paid a good deal of attention to raising the level of education. A system of secular schools and specialized schools in medicine, engineering and navigation was organized. The state widely patronised industry and trade, though, on the other hand, it restricted them severely by regulations such as the Customs Charter. Shipbuilding, textile and iron and steel industries developed considerably.

“Universal welfare” was proclaimed as the aim of the absolute monarchy.<sup>13</sup> However, Peter’s reforms made the people to suffer from conscription, forced labour at factories, mass mobilization for construction, from visits by officials, bribery and embezzlement of state funds. The granting of land with dependent population for permanent ownership increased; peasants also began to be attached to factories.

The reforms of Peter I were aimed at removing obstacles and also intended for long term programme for future political activities. The social changes introduced by Peter I was aimed at overcoming Russia’s economic backwardness and at strengthening the economic and political position of the Russian nobility and

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<sup>13</sup>Schmidt S. Tarnovsky K and Berkhin I (1984), *A Short History of the USSR*. Progress Publishers: Moscow pp.58-67

merchants and the foreign and domestic position of the autocratic state. Under Peter's reforms Russia no doubt became Europe's most powerful state in economic and military aspects. However, the reforms did not transform the nature of the social relations in the country, its serf-social system.

After Peter's death, the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, saw the intense struggle for power between the various groupings of the nobility. It was an age of Palace conspiracies. In the 1740s economic life began to recover from its past crisis. By the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century features of capitalist relations became increasingly apparent in the country's economy. The state saw in the development of trade and industry the necessary preconditions for both national power and its own brilliance. The upper part of the nobility was involved in new branches of economy. They were interested in the monopolization of all kinds of economic activity having to do with exploitation of land and serfs. However, manufacturing on the estates based on serf labour hindered the development of capitalist relations. Before Catherine ascended the throne in 1762, there were seven rulers who had succeeded on the Russian throne. Another major event was the French Revolution and Catherine's hatred for it and her anti-national policy of partitioning of Poland (because the liberation movement in Poland was inspired by French Revolution).

However, reactionary trends increased exceptionally within the country, where members of the progressive public sympathised with the events in France. By the late 18<sup>th</sup> century serfdom and the serf economy reached its peak in development. Symptoms of a crisis of that system became increasingly apparent. The intellectual strata of the nobility produced convinced advocates of overthrowing autocracy.

The crowning achievement of the 18<sup>th</sup> century liberation thought was the book *A Journey from St. Petersburg to Moscow* by A. Radischev. He drew a true picture of the terrible suffering of the people. He filled the notion of patriotism with the



revolutionary content and came to be highly respected by the Russian revolutionaries beginning with the Decemberists.

The 19<sup>th</sup> century dawned upon Russia, “in a rosy light but in flames of war” wrote Alexander Bestuzhev<sup>14</sup>, a participant in the December uprising. The 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century saw the beginning of the crisis of the feudal-serfdom system in Russia. The crisis was manifest, above all, in Russia’s increasing lagging behind countries in Western Europe where capitalism was rapidly developing. The crisis of the system was further reflected in the growing number of the peasant actions increasing unrest in the army. Autocracy was particularly concerned by the uprising of the inhabitants of the military settlements in the town of Chugayev in 1819 and the unrest in The Semjonovsky Guards regiment in the capital in 1820. Another reflection of the crisis was the active rise of the anti serfdom and anti-feudal ideology.

Having started his reign with the suppression of the Decembrists, Nicholas I aimed his domestic policies at fighting revolution and defending autocracy and serfdom. To strengthen the position of the nobility the Tsar restricted the entry into that estate of members of other states. State power was maximally centralized and the Tsar intervened personally in all the affairs of the state. Most of the ministries were headed by generals. Censorship was severe.

Yet the same period was marked by the intense development of social awareness on the basis of which Russian national culture formed and advanced. This process was based on the triumph of realistic principles. The transition to the later from the dogmas of the classicism through sentimentalism and romanticism took place virtually within the life span of a single generation. This transition was expressed most consistently in the development of Russian literature from Karamzin to Radischev and finally illumined by the genius of Alexander Pushkin.

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<sup>14</sup> Schmidt S, Tarnovsky K and Berkhin I (1984), *A Short History of the USSR*, Progress Publishers: Moscow pp.71

The widespread political conservatism in Russia in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century hampered cultural creativity. A necessary prerequisite for an original literature was a modern literary language, whose development owes much to Russia's greatest 18<sup>th</sup> century scholar and scientist, Mikhail Lomonosov, often called the "father of Russian literature" for his linguistic reforms. Lomonosov helped shape the Russian language for poetic expression by developing a suitable system of versification and poetic structure. His text books of rhetoric and grammar became standards for the modern Russian literary language. His poetry in a ponderous classical style demonstrated his theories of versification and became model for subsequent 18<sup>th</sup> century Russian poetry. As a nationalist Lomonosov believed that the Russian language was superior to all others as a vehicle of expression.

Karamzin is an outstanding figure in the development of the history of Russian literature. He was greatly influenced by Freemasons especially, Turgenev.<sup>15</sup> He began his career by translating Shakespeare, Haller, Gessner and so on. In 1792 he published *Letters of a Russian Traveller* an account of his journey through Germany, France and Switzerland. In the *Letters* Karamzin's modestly liberal to conservative position was evident. Later on it formed the basis for the philosophical and historical conception underlying his *History of the Russian State*. He was always against tyranny and despotism of whatever origin, whether they stemmed from the monarch or the rebellious people. He always preferred an established legal system to anarchy or sudden political shifts.

In *Poor Liza* and *Julia*, we notice Karamzin's concern for the romantic experience and inner life of women. He directs his writings towards his female readers. According to Karamzin, it was women who had finally begun to speak and read Russian than French. He also believed that women readers should help writers to create a Russian literary language, a subject on which Karamzin expounded in his article *Why is there so little writing talent in Russia?* ("Отечество в России мало авторийских талантов?"). Through his writings

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<sup>15</sup> Moser Charles A. (1989). *The Cambridge History of Russian Literature*, Cambridge. p.96-104

and depictions of the inner life of ordinary men and women he tried to assert his belief that there exists no social inequality and all men are equal.

*Natalya- the Boyar's Daughter* is about the times of Tsar Alexey Michailovich. This story reveals Karamzin's interest in Russian history which later influenced him to take up the vocation of a professional historian. In his ode "*To Forgiveness*" ("*К милости*"), he defends the Freemasons who were then the object of governmental repression: Karamzin believed that governmental stability is assured by the preservation of the rights of the people as a whole and of each individual in particular. An emergence of the Rousseauian "social contract" is noticed here. Karamzin's literary activities gained momentum under Alexander I's liberalisation (after Emperor Paul I's assassination in March 1801.)

In the *Herald of Europe (Вестник Европы)*, he published the short historical story *Martha the Mayoress (Марфа Посадница)*- dealing with Grand Duke Ivan III's conquest of the Republic of Novgorod. He not only sympathises with the Novgorodians in their struggle for liberty, but also regards Ivan III's victory as historically justified and necessary for Russia's growth. Every nation has its own historical destiny and according to Karamzin monarchy is the most suitable form of state organisation. Ivan makes an appearance at the place of execution where Martha gave her life and promises to the Novgorodians order, justice, and security. Initially people remain silent but suddenly they cry "Glory to the Russian Tsar!" as they bid farewell to their liberties and accept a new form of governance.

Karamzin took up the vocation of a court historian in 1803. He was critical about the radical transformations that Alexander wanted to introduce. According to Karamzin, Alexander's desire to alter the bureaucratic system, introduce constitutional limitations on monarchy and abolish serfdom, were premature and inappropriate to the established state structure. He believed that any change in the state's structure is an evil and time only brings in the necessary stability to the laws. In 1811 he wrote *Memoir on ancient and modern Russia (Записки о*

*древной и новой России*) one of the most remarkable political documents of the 19<sup>th</sup> century which dealt with basic problems of Russian history and current events.

In the *Memoirs* Karamzin uphold monarchy in Russia. He considers enlightened monarchy the best form of government for Russia. He traced the gradual establishment of monarchy in Russia. He opined that any popular uprising against the monarchy (assassination of the False Dimitry, the Time of Troubles) was more harmful for the state than the unworthiness of the rulers. At the same time Karamzin felt that a ruler should seek to meet the ideal of the enlightened monarch<sup>16</sup>. In his *History of the Russian State* he rendered his judgments on moral grounds, attempting to comprehend the inner motivations behind the Tsar's actions.

Alexander Radischev's presence in the history of Russian culture and literature is of immense importance. In *Life of Fyodor Vasilevich Ushakov* Radischev brings to light the fact that rebellion and destruction is the result of absence of specific legislation to define (as in Rousseau's "social contract") the rights and duties of social groups. He blames the rulers for such situations. In *A Journey from St. Petersburg to Moscow* Radischev dealt with state power, situation of the serfs, the governmental reform and literary problems. In a chapter titled *Spasskaya Polest*, Radischev is of the view that proper order within the state would be established if the Tsar would seek truth. The condemnation of the cruelty of the system of serfdom in 18<sup>th</sup> century literature is also present in Radischev's work. Radischev dealt with the likely consequences of cruel exploitation. He predicted a rebellion by the peasants against their masters. He supports such a rebellion as cruel exploitation violates the law and the peasants are deprived of legal protection. Thus, according to Radischev, peasants have the right to violate the law which protects only the masters. However, such an analysis does not mean that

<sup>16</sup> Moser Charles A. (1989). *The Cambridge History of Russian Literature*. Cambridge, p.96-104

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happy. He propounded the idea of the abolition of the Court of Ranks. In an age when Russia was flourishing under Catherine, serfdom was a black spot so it should be abolished. He even concluded his work with a gradual plan for complete abolition of serfdom.

Carrying forward the trends started by Karamzin and Radischev Pushkin emerged in the Russia's literary scene. Pushkin considered as the father of Russian literature is often thought of as the first national writer. Russian culture is best reflected in his works. He represents an ending as well as beginning. The year of his birth is significant-1799- the last year of the century very different in character and outlook from the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Pushkin in many ways remained a product of 18<sup>th</sup> century enlightenment. It was he who translated in to verse the thoughts and emotions of Russia's best people in the struggle against arbitrariness and lawlessness – love for their country combined with hatred of oppression, serfdom and autocracy.

*THE RUSSIAN SOCIETY IN SELECTED  
WORKS OF PUSHKIN*

## THE RUSSIAN SOCIETY IN SELECTED WORKS OF PUSHKIN

The ongoing chapter provides an analysis of few of Pushkin's works portraying the social history of Russia. The works have been selected on the basis of their chronology and relevance on Pushkin's development as a poet.

Russia's geographical position at that period was exposed to continuous incursions and invasions on the part of the nomadic tribes coming from Asia. The Tartar domination, which lasted for some 250 years, not only stopped the promising cultural development of the Kievan Rus but also hindered any sort of contact between her and the West at a time when the mighty wave of the Renaissance was already gathering momentum.

While the Western nations witnessed the flowering of Renaissance, Russia for a long time remained practically untouched either by the Renaissance or by the Reformation. Such circumstances made Russia to assert her creative genius in ecclesiastical architecture and religious art on one hand and in an astonishingly rich folklore on the other hand. Russian literature in its true glory as such came into being only during the later centuries.

Of Russia's two faces, one turned towards Asia and the other towards Europe. Peter the Great (1672-1725) chose and most resolutely, the second. Peter's campaigns helped him to make Russia a part of the civilised Europe, his reforms freed Russia from the weight of her "Asiatic" tradition. Peter travelled extensively studying everything that might be of use at home. He showed a keener sense for practical utilitarian side of life than for disinterested cultural values. To crown it all, Peter built his new capital, St. Petersburg on the periphery of his state as a "*window looking into Europe*".

If Peter I “annexed” Russia to Europe and at the same time turned her into a Great power, A S Pushkin (1799-1837) achieved, just over a century later something similar with regard to Russian literature and for that matter, Russian culture in general. There existed a certain affinity between these two geniuses. Pushkin like Peter the Great typified the belated Renaissance spirit in Russia, while trying to make up for her lost opportunities in the past. They resembled each other in their broadness, their assimilative power their intuitive awareness of the *Zeitgeist* as well as their Russian character. Their cosmopolitan sympathies did not in the least interfere with what was essentially Russian in both. No wonder Pushkin felt curiously drawn towards the monarch whose works he admired precisely because he understood it in all its implications. Pushkin wrote in 1836-  
*“...The tsar brought us culture and enlightenment, which in the end must bring us freedom also. ...”* In *The Bronze Horseman*( *Медный Всадник*) we get a glimpse of Pushkin’s feelings for Peter and Russia-

*Though he: the haughty  
 Swede here we’ll curb and hold at bay  
 And here, to gall him, found a city.  
 As nature bids so must we do:  
 A window will we cut here through  
 On Europe, and a foothold gaining  
 Upon this coast, the ships we’ll hail  
 Of every flag, and freely sail  
 These seas, no more ourselves restraining.  
 I love thee, Peter’s proud creation,  
 Thy princely stateliness of line,  
 The regal Neva coursing, patient,  
 ’Twixt sober walls of massive stone;  
 The iron lacework of thy fences,  
 Thy wistful, moonless, lustrous nights,  
 Dusk-clothed but limped.... Oft it chances  
 That in my chamber ’thout a light  
 I write or sit a book perusing  
 Whilst, luminous, the streets lie dozing  
 Beyond, great, empty blocks.... Up higher,  
 ’Gainst sky, the Admiralty spire*



*Is clearly etched .....*  
*Stand thou, O Peter's citadel,*  
*Like Russia steadfast and enduring,*  
*And let the elements rebel*  
*No more but be subdued; your fury*  
*Contain, O Finish waves, and quell,*  
*And may the feud of old begotten*  
*Now and for ever be forgotten,*  
*And undisturbed leave Peter's sleep...*

.....И думал он:  
Здесь будет град-  
Отсель стеречь мы будем шведа  
И наша пушки (заторчать)  
Судьбою здесь нам суждено  
В Европу прорубить окно....  
(Люблю тебя) Петра творенье  
Люблю твой стройный строгий вид  
Невы державное течение  
И вечный плеск о гранит  
Твоих оград узор чугунный  
И зелень темную садов  
И летний блеск ночей безлучных  
И бури зимных вечеров  
При звуке .....<sup>17</sup>

Pushkin's admiration for Peter made him to side with Peter the revolutionary. As a member of that section of the gentry which was not on good terms either with the court aristocracy or with higher bureaucracy, Pushkin adhered to the advanced

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<sup>17</sup> All original works of Pushkin including Letter and Diary have been taken from *Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenie*, 1978 Vol. – 1-10, Moscow. pp – 442-443

and bourgeois- liberal opinions of his period. Therefore Pushkin wanted to see Peter's work carried to its logical end.

One part of Pushkin's nature was still rooted in the aristocratic 18<sup>th</sup> century with its gallant eroticism and its cult of wit and gaiety. On the other hand Pushkin was steeped in bourgeois- liberal spirit of protest typical of the French revolution and the advanced minds of his generation. He expressed it plainly enough in his youthful "*Ode to Liberty*" (*Волность*) in which he invoked that "dread of the Tsars" –the muse of revolution. As if a new Radishchev Pushkin set one to "sing freedom to the world and crush the vice sitting on the throne." He described his disappointment that befell his generation, which yet refused to submit to its ordeal:

*"Not long have we by love's sweet thrills,  
By hope and fame been led astray..."*

*While we respond to freedom's name,  
While honour still moves heart and hand  
Let us drive our inner flame  
To this our fatherland...*

*Believe me, comrade we shall see  
The dawning of a joyful morn,  
And Russia, from her slumber torn,  
The ruins of autocracy  
Will with our names adorn.*"<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Pushkin Alexander. Selected Works in Two Volumes. Vol. I. Progress Publishers, Moscow.

### 3.1 THE HOLY ALLIANCE (1815):

(Свящённый Союз 14 Сентября 1815)

Russia played a major yet quieter role in European affairs during Alexander I's final decade. Alexander's anxiety to preserve the great power alliance and balance of power, made him to seek good relations with the east European monarchies (Austria and Prussia) and with more liberal France. In his idealistic, mystical quest for European peace and harmony, he formed Holy Alliance in 1815. The Holy Alliance was based on Christian principles of peace and mutual aid. Signed eventually by most of the European rulers, it lacked practical significance. However, it symbolized the unity of conservative European monarchies.

The mood that animated the Decemberists during the political honeymoon of the Holy Alliance is best reflected in *In the Country* (1819) in which Pushkin vented his disgust against the abuse and inequalities he saw around him.

*“...Chosen by destiny to ruin other lives,  
Heartless and lawless, here a race of masters thrive.  
Wielding a ruthless rod it makes its own,  
The peasants toil his chattels and his days...”<sup>19</sup>*

### 3.2 DECEMBERIST REVOLUTION:

The peasantry was ground down by serfdom and military colonies. The opposition that developed at that point of time was within the aristocracy. In the tradition of Radischev, educated noble army officers realised the glaring contradictions and shocking injustices of the Russian system. These young men on their home coming noticed the enormous gulf separating European societies and political life from Russia. These officers were mostly veterans of the Russian army of occupation in France who had the chance to absorb the liberal and radical ideas

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<sup>19</sup> Pushkin Alexander, Selected Works in Two Volumes, Vol..1. Progress Publishers, Moscow.

there and had experienced the freer atmosphere of Europe. These experiences equipped them with heightened social consciousness and greater interest in public affairs. They were acutely conscious of contradictions in Alexandrine policies. Alexander was considered the Blessed abroad but Alexander the despot at home. He was for the establishment of constitution and civil liberties for foreign countries even for Poland and Finland within Russian Empire, but serfdom and military colonies for Russia.

The most powerful country in Europe, Russia was shamefully backward in domestic affairs. Pyotr Chaadaev was one such man who influenced Pushkin during 1810s. He inculcated in Pushkin a sense of serious and independent thought with an ideal of civic virtue. In 1810s the then ideal of civic virtue among aristocratic young was revolutionary liberalism. In *To Chaadaev (К Чадаеву)* we see Pushkin pledging himself to the cause of freedom.

Любви, надежды тихой славы  
Недолгл нежил нас обман,  
Исчезли юные забавы,  
Как сон, как утренний туман;  
Но в нас горит кщё желанье,  
Под гнетом власти роковой  
Нетерпеливою душой  
Отчизны внемлем призыванье.  
Мы ждём с томленьем упованья  
Минуты волности святой,  
Как ждёт любовник молодой  
Минуты верного свиданья.  
Пока свободою горим,  
Пока сердца для чести живы,  
Мой друг, отчизне посвятим  
Души прекрасные порывы!  
Товарищ, верь: взондёт она,  
И на облаках самовластья  
Напишут наши имена!

In such an atmosphere, the idealistic, liberal minded young Russian aristocrats naturally desired to act in defense of freedom and justice. There prevailed feeling that the government's purpose should no longer be to ensure the power of the Russian state. The government should look after the welfare of the Russian people particularly its most downtrodden and oppressed group the serfs. Such was the origin of the Decembrist movement.

The Decembrist revolt is often considered the last of the coups common in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The revolt on the Senate Square aimed at the fundamental alteration of the system of the government not merely replacement of one ruler by another. In this sense the December Revolution began a genuine revolutionary movement led by the intelligentsia which ultimately culminated in the 1917 Revolution. The December Revolution was unique. It was the only time until 1917 that revolutionary ferment centred within the ranks of the army officers. The revolt became a powerful myth inspiring generations of Russian radicals who saw Decembrists as heroic defenders of the rights of man.

Two poems *Liberty (Волнность)* and *The Village* reflect Pushkin's sentiments during these years. Both were extremely outspoken and inflammatory. *The Village* attacked serfdom. Just like Radischev in his *A Journey from St. Petersburg to Moscow*, Pushkin too intended to stir the conscience of his contemporaries. In *The Village* he cries:

*O, if my voice could only alarm the hearts of men.*

*О, если б голос мой умел сердца тревожить!*

There is a note of warning as it were for the Tsar Alexander I in the stark picture of the condition of the Russian countryside. It is as if Pushkin prophesies a bloody revolution if the Tsar does not bring a reform. He appeals to the Tsar to become a liberal monarch and concludes with a rhetorical question:

*Will I see, O friends! The oppression of the people  
And slavery disappearing at the Tsar's command,  
And will at last the beautiful dawn of enlightened freedom  
Arise over our homeland?*

It should be noted here that Pushkin along with other liberals were disenchanted with the disappearance of Alexander's initial liberalism. Pushkin thus talks in terms of natural law and justice and looks for liberal reforms rather than moral radical change.

### **THE PROPHET ( Пророк)**

*Духовной жаждою томим,  
В пустыне мрачной я влачился,-  
И шестикрылый серафим  
На перепутье мне явился.  
Перстами лёгкими как сон  
Моих зениц коснулся он.....  
«Встань, пророк, и виждь, и внемли,  
Исполнись волею моей,  
И, обходя моря и земли,  
Глаголом жги сердца людей»*

*My lonely heart athirst, I trod  
A barren waste when there before me  
A winged seraph, silent stood  
And on the crossroad waited to me.....  
"Arise, o sage, my summons hearing Do as I bid, by naught deterred;  
Stride o'er the earth, a prophet searing  
The hearts of men with righteous word".<sup>20</sup>*

The tale of repression of the period though well known was still remarkable. Pushkin was exiled for six years for a few inflammatory verses and for proclaiming atheism. Even when apparently pardoned he was kept under constant

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<sup>20</sup> Pushkin Alexander, Selected Works in Two Volumes. Vol..1. Progress Publishers. Moscow.

surveillance and resignation. Pushkin's relation with the society moved from one of (partial) rebellion and rejection to one of (almost complete) acceptance

It was probably during the years in Mikhaylovskoye that his liberal enthusiasm and his spirit of protest began to change. Pushkin increasingly became aware of his aristocratic origins. He also realised that the approach of many of the Decembrists to questions of aesthetics and literature was fundamentally different from his own. Eventually the failure of the uprising, served to dim his revolutionary ardour. However his love for freedom both personal and political remained as strong as ever.

### ***FARWELL TO THE SEA***

*Farwell, ye proudly rolling waters,  
Farwell thou glittering, charging sea,  
the blue expanse that knows to fetters,...  
The beauty full of majesty.  
How futile proved my hope this languid and torpid shore to leave fore'er,  
To drink thy beauty in and sing it And fly away over thy winged,  
Thy soaring peaks and reaches bare!  
Ah, wel, what use regret and whither Shall I pursue my carefree way?....  
One speck upon these of water Still holds my anxious heart in sway.  
His laurel wreath behind him leaving,  
He vanished, mourned by freedom.....  
weep For him who was thy bard, relieving  
Thy pain in strom, o mighty deep!  
By these his spirit was enchanted,  
By these 'twas sought, by thee' twas claimed.  
Like thine, 'twas fierce, like thine, undaunted,  
Like thine, rebellious and untamed.  
The world's a void..... where wouldst  
thou labour  
O sea, to carry me?.... Behold!  
Man's fate is uniform all over:  
Where good sprouts forth, child of*

endeavour,

*There either despots rule or gold.  
Farewell, farewell! Forget I'll never  
Thy solemn beauty, prideful sea!  
Where'er I go, my heart aquiver,  
I'll hear thee softly speak to me.*<sup>21</sup>

However his firmness in this respect did not exclude a change of mind with regard to revolution, a change which was not due to the Tsar's magnanimity but to his own study of history during his seclusion at Mikhalovskoye. While going through volumes of history, he could not but meditate upon the cementing and constructive forces in a nation's growth. It was the continuity as well as the stability of such forces that Pushkin now wanted to see working in harmony with the democratic liberal progressive ideas so dear to him. Pushkin was unwilling to confuse democracy with plebeians, that is with the levelling down tendency. Thus he rejected revolution because he realized, levelling down could never lead to true freedom but only to anarchy, or else to tyrannies from below. Just as the fiery Romantic poetry of his youth had simmered down, so had his progressive liberalism moderated. Poetry and the freedom to write poetry were perhaps of more importance to him. After the failure of the December rebellion there was no alternative but to compromise and conform.

In his *Note on Education* for Nicholas I, Pushkin remarks with clear reference to the Decemberists: "The spread of education alone can restrain new insanities, new social disasters."<sup>22</sup> It is possible that Eugene of *The Bronze Horseman* (*Медный Всадник*) is a symbolic representation of his later attitude to Decemberists- although he expresses great sympathy for Eugene's crushed hopes, he equally clearly sees his challenge to Peter I as a senseless act.

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<sup>21</sup> Pushkin Alexander, Selected Works in Two Volumes. Vol..1. Progress Publishers, Moscow.

<sup>22</sup> Andrew Joe. (1980), *Alexander Pushkin in Writers And Society During the Rise of Russian Realism*, Macmillan Press: London. p. 8-9



Pushkin's interest in the perspective of Russian history had now a much stronger hold on his imagination than the liberal *idée reçues* of his youth. He got the opportunity to study history in its actual workings and from the inside. It was a part of the bait negligently offered by Nicholas I to Pushkin to report on the possibilities of educational reform, as well as the opportunity to work later on in the historical archives.

Pushkin was involvement at the centre of a great power can hardly be overstressed. The singularity and importance of this for such a poet in such an age was immense. The politics of *The Bronze Horseman* (*Мѣдный Всадник*) are those of a rapidly expanding and ruthless empire.

Pushkin was never left isolated to work out a personal and complementary vision of his own. The poem in celebration of Nicholas, the mysterious poem of farewell to the Decmberists (*Arion*) and the indignant rhetoric of the ode against European supporters of the Polish Rebellion (*To the Slanderers of Russia*) all possess the kind of authority which comes not from the ideas but from the pressure of the involuntary experience. In *To the Slanderers of Russia*, Pushkin hurls defiance at western criticism of Russia's Polish policy and his letters make it clear that he is not merely speaking as a Russian patriot but giving his own opinion on what he called the 'new European principle of non intervention'.

*"You hate us and for what?" Answer! ..Is it 'coz in the ruins of blazing Moscow we did not recognize the insolent will of him under whom you trembled?...Is it new for us to dispute with Europe? Is the Russian grown unused to victories? Are there so few of us?"*

### **ARION**

*We many were who filled the boat:*

*Some held the sails aloft and flying,  
Some piled the oars, and thus, defying  
The wayward winds, kept us afloat.*

*Our helmsmen steered the vessel, loaded  
Full as she was, and onward sent;  
And I, to them I sang, content  
And unconcerned .... A violent  
Gale overtook the boat and goaded  
The seas to fury ..... All were lost  
By surging waves; my body flinging  
On to the sands, they fled.....Now I  
Sit drying in the sun and my  
Old, well loved songs in relish singing.<sup>23</sup>*

*Нас было много на челне;  
Иные парус напрягали,  
Другие дружно упирали  
В глубь мощны весла. В тишине  
На руль склонясь, наш кормщик умный  
В молчанье правил грузный член;  
А я – безпечной веры полн,-  
Пловцам я пел... Вдруг лоно волн  
.....  
Лишь я, тайнственный певец,  
На берег выборошен грозною,  
Я гимны прежние пою  
И ризу влажную мою  
Сушу на солнце под скалою.<sup>24</sup>*

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<sup>23</sup> Pushkin Alexander. Selected Works in Two Volumes. Vol..I. Progress Publishers, Moscow.

<sup>24</sup> A. C. Pushkin (1986) "Stikhorvoreniya. Evgenii Onegin". Shkolnaya Biblioteka, Veselka: Kiev

### 3.3 RELIGION:

Closely related to the tension between the peasants and the empire's ruling classes was the antagonism between groups of religious dissenters- many of them peasants- and the state. The conflict that involved the greatest number of the people (and antedated Peter I's accession) was that between Old Believers and the official Church supported by the government. The Old Believers' opposition to the establishment deepened as the purpose of Peter's policy became apparent. Peter's introduction of Western dress and manners, the further secularization of public life and the imposition of new heavy economic burden confirmed their belief that the government had become the instrument of Antichrist. The rumour that Peter was not the rightful tsar originated among Old Believers and then spread among the common people who resented his harsh policies and innovations. Ironically, Peter's enlightened and secular reign was a period of most ferocious persecution of religious dissents.

The Petrine policy of persecution was continued by his successors. The "Old Believers" were discriminated against socially, legally and administratively and they were subjected to double taxation. Empress Elizabeth began to relax the legislations against the Old Believers and Catherine II, more concerned with economic progress, followed a tolerant policy, provided the dissenters did not disturb the peace and quietly bore additional fiscal burdens imposed on them. She only continued to persecute the most extreme sects, which engaged, in her opinion, in practices that went against "nature". As a matter of fact to further the agricultural development of Southern Russia, she called back from Poland the Old Believers who had fled there in Peter's and Anna's time. She also settled German pietists (Mennonites) who became an influence in the emergence of the new sects. The policy of toleration was continued in the reign of Alexander I when it reached its high point. The attitude that went into the establishment of the Bible Society in Russia made for an acceptance of religious dissent. The latter even came to be seen as a positive manifestation of genuine Christian religion feeling and a potential tool of popular enlightenment.

Nicholas I however returned to more repressive policies. Discriminatory legislation was introduced and a harsh programme of forced conversion put into motion. The expectation of cowing the Old Believers into submission failed to materialize. On the contrary the disaffection of these groups intensified and alienation from official Russia became virtually complete. Nicholas I embarked on a course of repression and suspicious discrimination, which set the Catholic population as well as clergy against the state for generations to come.

The over view regarding the religion of the preceding ages and Pushkin's age makes it obvious for a brief understanding of Pushkin's feelings towards religion. Religion was something to which Pushkin remained indifferent. He seldom made his ideas regarding religion public. However his works and letters reflect his atheism and indifference.

In his letter to Zhukovskii dated 7<sup>th</sup> march 1826 Pushkin wrote-

*“Каков бы ни был мой образ мыслей, политический и религиозный, я храню его про самого себя и не намерен безумно противоречить общепринятому порядку и необходимости”*<sup>25</sup>

Pushkin makes his intentions clear saying that though he is aware of the ongoing social and political upheavals he prefers not to comment on religion and the commoners are free to follow religion in their own ways.

In one of his letters to his wife Pushkin wrote:

*“Я мало богу молюсь и надеюсь, что твоя чистая молитва лучше моих, как для меня так и для нас”* (3 August 1834).

He feels that his wife's devotion and prayers to god are strong enough to bring peace and well being to both his wife and wife.

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<sup>25</sup> Pushkin A.S(1978). *Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenie* .Vol. 10. Leningrad.

His works: “Remembrance” (Вспоминание (1828), «Напрасно я богу...» (1836) and other works of late 1820s and beginning of 30s show his relation with the Church.

In Russia in the 19<sup>th</sup> century literature came to play the part of what can be loosely termed as an ‘alternative government’<sup>26</sup>. Belinskii was among the first to assert, that given the lack of political democracy, literature became the main forum for discussion of oppositional or even slightly critical ideas. This role was attributed to literature by both the government and its opponents—which is revealed by exiles of Pushkin, Lermontov, Dostoevsky and others on one hand and the intensifying polemics on the social significance of literature on the other.

It was Pushkin’s sense of life’s values that nourished his intuitive understanding of the process of life in their historical and cultural manifestations. This explains his broad universal interests and sympathies, which as a Russian he extended to everything his country was able to absorb creatively. One of his critics in the middle of the last century said “sphere of Pushkin’s inner sympathies excluded nothing that was before him, nothing that will be truly and organically ours after him.” Following him along this path we come, however once again to the idea of a synthesis between Russia and Europe- this time on a purely cultural ground. Nothing illustrates such a notion better than the bulk of Pushkin’s works, in which the finest artistic traditions of the West are blended perfectly with the true spirit of Russia. It was perhaps for this reason that Gogol saw in Pushkin a representative of the Russian man “as he may become in the course of his development, two hundred years hence.” Dostoevsky concluded that Pushkin was the most national of Russian poets precisely because he was so universal.

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<sup>26</sup>Todd William (1986), *Fiction and Society in the Age of Pushkin: Ideology, Institutions and Narrative*. Cambridge University Press: London, Mass. 322-335

When Pushkin began to write, the 18<sup>th</sup> century classicism with its severe division of genre was already disintegrating. So he was destined to play a double role as a poet: while completing the 18<sup>th</sup> century currents, he at the same time led the way to modern Russian literature. Having paid due tribute to the conventional poetry of the previous age as well as to the intimately personal verses of the romantics he even had a brief spell of Ossianism and this at a time when Voltaire and Parny were among his chief influences. As for Russian predecessors, he appreciated what was truly excellent in the poetry of the “Tartar” genius Derzavhin.

Belonging to that portion of the gentry which foreboded the crisis of transition from the feudal agricultural to a bourgeois-capitalistic system of life, Pushkin could not but sympathise with most liberal ideas of that period or for that matter with the prospective Decemberists. On the other hand his creative freedom was even dearer to him than any political activity. It must however be remembered that Russian Romanticism as a whole had neither the broadness nor the élan comparable with the Romantic Movement in some other countries. The severe censorship made even a romantic protest against the official strait jacket imposed upon life a dangerous venture unless it was camouflaged by that “Aesop’s language” in which some of the subsequent Russian authors became great experts. The only outlet was the indirect criticism of the age that is criticism from the stand point of the self centered dissatisfied or frustrated ego and in this respect Byron proved strong incentive.

#### 3.4 PUSHKIN AND CENSORSHIP:

The issue of censorship can be looked at from the perspective of Foucault’s theory on power-relations--that ‘the power relations at any given era in a society constitute the concepts, oppositions and hierarchies of its discourse and in this way determine what will be accounted knowledge and truth.’<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Abrams MH. (2004). *A Glossary of Literary Terms*. Heinle, pp.249

Just after the December Uprising, Pushkin was summoned by the Tsar. In spite of his affiliation with the Decmberists Pushkin's absence from the scene of the rebellion saved him from the death sentence or exile. But censorship in its severest form was thrust upon him by Tsar Nicholas I. But it was received by Pushkin as a relief. Pushkin may have been beguiled at first by the Tsar's diplomatic charm. However instead of being converted to the Tsar's policy Pushkin merely idealised him until such time as fresh disappointments ensued.

In the year 1826 the king had declared to Pushkin that he himself would be his censor. Thus, works like "Gypsies" (*Цыганы*) (1827), 4<sup>th</sup> 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> volumes of *Evgenii Onegin* (*Евгений Онегин*), (1827, 1828, 1831, 1833), *Poltava* (*Полтава*) (1829), 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> part of small poems *Мелких стихотворений*; second edited version of *Ruslan & Ludmila* (*Руслан и Людмила*) (1828), *History of Pugachov* (*История Пугачевского бунта*) and others were published.<sup>28</sup>

In a letter to the Head Department of Censorship on 8<sup>th</sup> August 1833 in Petersburg Pushkin expressed his disappointment over his right to express himself and inability to trust his publisher is revealed in this letter. He is surprised by the fact that in spite of several of his works being published even after censorship, his publisher refused to publish *Angelo* a translation from Shakespeare and did not even return him the scripts.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Pushkin's letters from Collected works of Pushkin at [www.rvb.ru](http://www.rvb.ru)

<sup>29</sup> Pushkin's Letter [Online:Web] Accessed 19 May 2006. URL <http://www.rvb.ru> "...Вследствие высочайшей воли все, что с тех пор было мною напечатано, доставляемо было мне прямо от его величества из 3-го отделения собственной его канцелярии при подписи одного из чиновников: «с дозволения правительства». ... Ныне, по случаю второго, исправленного издания «Анджело», перевода из Шекспира (неисправно и с своевольными поправками напечатанного книгопродавцем Смирдиным), г. попечитель С.-Петербургского учебного округа изустно объявил мне, что не может более позволить мне печатать моих сочинений, как доселе они печатались, то есть с надписью чиновника собственной его величества канцелярии. Между тем никакого нового распоряжения не последовало, и таким образом я лишен права печатать свои сочинения, дозволенные самим государем императором. никакого нового распоряжения не последовало, и таким образом я лишен права печатать свои сочинения, дозволенные самим государем императором. В прошлом мае месяце государь изволил возратить мне сочинение мое, дозволив оное напечатать, за исключением собственноручно замеченных мест. Не могу более обратиться для подписи в собственную канцелярию его величества и принужден утруждать Комитет всеуниженным вопросом: какую новую форму соизволит он предписать мне для представления рукописей моих в типографию?"

Anxious to turn the “most remarkable man” (Pushkin) into a sympathiser with the official regime the Tsar was far from being reassured about the poet’s political loyalties. Thus he put on Pushkin the burden of censorship. Thus, the scope Romantic protest- was provided in Russia by the atmosphere of Alexander’s last years and the “leaden regime” of Nicholas I.

No doubt arises as to why Byron the poet of freedom found some of his most ardent admirers among the Decemberists and above all Pushkin. A poet with Pushkin’s love of independence and freedom was bound to raise his voice in a country where the “Childe Harolde” was not mere abstraction but reflected the warped individual as a reality of the period. It was Pushkin who first nationalized in Russia this “superfluous” Byronic character with his futile nostalgia for something better and more genuine that is more natural, than the system of life in which he felt a stranger.

### 3.5 BATTLE OF POLTAVA (1709):

Charles XII of Sweden invaded Russia in July 1708 with a veteran army. Counting on popular Russian uprising and aid from Hetman Mazepa’s dissident Ukrainian Cossaks, Charles planned to advance to Moscow and partition Russia. But finding scorched earth and a retreating foe, he turned southward into Ukraine to join Mazepa. General Lewenhaupt with reinforcements and supplies sought to join him but Menshikov defeated Lewenhaupt at Lesnaia in September and captured his supplies. Menshikov crushed Mazepa seized his artillery and forced Ukraine to submit. Without needed supplies Charles’ army suffered severely during winter. The following spring as Charles besieged Poltava in Ukraine, Peter’s main army came to its relief. In June 1709 Russians fought a decisive battle with the depleted Swedish army. The Swedes were dispirited and Charles previously wounded had to be carried on a litter. The Swedish army was mostly destroyed and captured; only Charles Mazepa and few followers escaped into Turkey. The great victory at Poltava ended the Swedish invasion, vindicated Peter’s military reforms and confirmed Russia’s rise as a great European power.



It was much more than a source of historical gratification: like most recent events in Russian history it has political implications for the present time. Views of contemporary issues could be expressed in poetry by means of events in the past. The censorship made the historical poem possible vehicle for discreet propaganda. “*The history of a people belongs to the poet*”-Pushkin wrote in 1825. Pushkin did prove that the history of the people belonged to the poet who could use it as a reality coterminous with the present.

### ***POLTAVA:***

*Poltava* was the result of Pushkin’s immense reading of history, especially Voltaire and Karamzin and Shakespeare’s historical plays.

Pushkin had come to feel that fascination with the life and times of Peter the Great which was to retain its hold on him for the rest of his creative life. In Peter’s figure Pushkin saw the source of Russia’s destiny and historical personality, the hand that was heavy in the present as in his own lifetime and whose immense achievement had nourished the pride of national culture and and consciousness. For Pushkin as for his contemporaries, Peter was still very much alive.

Peter’s triumph at Poltava was not only a win over a foreign invader but also over internal separatism and revolt, was as stirring a subject as the victory over Napoleon, with which he was freely compared. Pushkin had finely portrayed the significant event of Poltava in *Poltava*

*Poltava* was Pushkin’s first attempt at *poema* in which he tried to study his characters. Gukovsky pointed out that the characters are not ‘lyric emanations but independent strength in objective realities which shows that Pushkin tried to make his private characters in Poltava as convincing as the public ones.

For Gukovsky Pushkinian realism in narrative poetry means a process of seeing the past by means of the present. As in *Poltava* and *The Bronze Horseman*, instead of ‘tis sixty years since’, we have both in *Poltava* and *The Bronze Horseman* (a hundred years went by) –the century since Peter founded his capital and defeated the King of Sweden’s invasion –and this hundred years does not carry poet and reader back into the past but seems to project them forward into not yet arrived future.<sup>30</sup>

### 3.6 SERFDOM:

For all classes particularly the lower classes life was becoming more difficult and restricted. Service gentry, peasants and townsmen all found their obligations to the state carefully elaborated in the law code of 1649. This code confirmed the long process of enserfment of the peasantry. Hardly any other institution of pre revolutionary Russia has been studied as thoroughly as and as much controversy as serfdom.

Historians disagree on precisely how serfdom was imposed on the Russian peasantry and especially on the government’s role in this enserfment. In the “18<sup>th</sup> century government by series of decrees gradually enserfed the rural population. Other historians argued that the state’s role was minor and that serfdom was produced by environmental factors such as long term residency and rapid growth of peasant indebtedness. Until recently Soviet Historians contended that the Russian peasant had been a serf from the beginning of the Kievan era...”<sup>31</sup> argued historian VN Tatischev.

Gradually the peasantry’s social and economic status deteriorated and the basically free institutions of Kiev yielded to social and economic restrictions. In

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<sup>30</sup>Bayley J(1971). *Pushkin- A Comparative Commentary*. Cambridge University Press: GreatBritain.pp207-219

<sup>31</sup> Mackenzie. D and Curran Michael W.(1999). *A History of Russia, the Soviet Union and Beyond*. West Wadsworth.p.269-273

Kievan times peasants lived in free communes cooperatively working on land owned by the commune. In the Mongol era these communes had to pay tribute, which was collected by the Russian princes acting as the Khan's agents. Responsibility of tax collection gave local princes certain administrative and judicial powers over the communes. As a centralized state formed under Moscow, the prince of Moscow made large grants to noblemen and church officials in return of their support of centralization. More and more land formerly owned by free peasant communes passed into the hands of private individuals or church renters. These communes had to pay taxes to prince of Moscow and rent to the landlord usually a nobleman.

Peasant obligations to the landlords cash payments or payments in kind (*obrok*), labour service (*barschina*) or a combination of both. Despite the growing weight of these obligations, the individual peasant was free to move about as he wished, not being bound to the land, to the person of landlord, or even to the peasantry as a class. The individual peasant could leave the countryside altogether and take up residence in town. This very freedom of movement worked against the long term interests of the peasant class. The Princes and landlords were dependent on peasant labour, which produced much of the revenue vital to the upper class political power and economic well being. Informal prince lord agreements prevented peasants from being lured from one estate to another by more favourable terms.

By about 1500 it was clear that informal agreements were inadequate to curb peasant mobility and compensate for insufficient labour. Ivan III's *Sudebnik* (law code) of 1497, reduced the freedom of peasant movement to a brief period each year, a major step towards serfdom. The peasants who chose to leave then had to fulfill all his legal obligations to the landlord and pay a sizeable exit fee. Furthermore dues and services demanded from peasants increased significantly. During 16<sup>th</sup> century peasant indebtedness rose sharply until it became virtually impossible for peasants to leave their landowners, even in the allowable period around St. George's Day.

Another factor detrimental to the peasant was the rapid growth of “*pomestie*” land tenure in the late 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries. As the Muscovite state expanded, so too did the need for number of administrators and army officers. Unable to pay these servitors the government rewarded them with temporary grants of lands (*nomestue*) to be held and exploited during the term of service. Such grants were valuable only if there were peasants available to work on the lands. The service gentry whose economic well being and the state service depended on successful management of their estates, clamoured for the rigid restrictions on peasant mobility. Despite growing economic burdens and legal restrictions, peasants could still be transferred to estates of wealthy magnates by “exportation” which deprived the service gentry of labour power on their lands. Many peasants also escaped by flight and many fled during the economic and political chaos of Ivan IV’s reign.

### 3.7 PUGACHOV REVOLT: 1773-1774

During the early 1770s the early Cossack tribal and peasant revolt raged from the Volga region threatening to engulf the landlords and Catherine’s regime. Called the Peasant War by Soviet Historians, the Pugachov Rebellion was the greatest rural upheaval of the Russian history down to 1905. “The entire populace was for Pugachov,” wrote Alexander Pushkin. “Only the nobility openly supported the government.” It has often been glorified and considered to be the last spontaneous peasant rebellion against feudalism.

The revolt’s causes were many and deep rooted. The spread of the serfdom to Ukraine and the Don region and heavier taxation produced much peasant discontent. Forced serf labourers in Ural mines and factories worked under frightful conditions. Bashkirs and other national minorities were alienated by Russian seizure of much of their lands and the state had been depriving Cossacks of autonomy and forcing onerous service upon them. Among the Volga and Trans Volga regions were many Old Believers who opposed Church and the State. The

mysterious death of an Emperor who had permitted Old Believers to return to Russia and a foreign woman's usurpation of power gave Peter III undeserved popularity. Rumours spread that he had intended to emancipate the serfs and believing in the Tsar's benevolence, many peasants concluded that their "fine star" still lived. Support for pretenderism was the means of expressing their grievances.

Shaky state control over South east Russia facilitated the revolt. Orenburg was the centre of huge remote province where the Tartars outnumbered the Russians and the latter were mainly Cossacks and factory serfs hostile to the regime. Government troops were few and dispersed among many forts. Insurrection now began among Ural Cossacks whose autonomy had been whittled away and who were conscripted to fight the Turks. In early 1772 brutal actions by government commission investigating Cossack complains provoked open revolt. Its stern repression and the indemnity imposed on the Ural region created an explosive situation.<sup>32</sup>

Early in 1773 a Don Cossack, Emelian Pugachov, came to the Urals and fanned tinder into flame. He had participated in the first Turkish War, then refused to return to army and wandered around the south eastern frontier. He realized how deep popular dissatisfaction was and resolved to exploit it. He was a bold, determined leader with military experience. Proclaiming himself "Peter III" he appeared on the Ural River as the "fine Tsar" of peasant dreams. Led by the clergy the inhabitants of Illetskii Gorodok greeted him with bread and salt as "Emperor Peter Fedorovich" a scene repeated in towns and villages throughout the region. Peasants, Ural workers, lower townsmen and Non Russians joined his artillery and besieged Orenburg. Most of the followers wished to capture Orenburg and seize some property, but Pugachov believed that if Orenburg fell, the road to St.

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<sup>32</sup>Mackenzie D. and Curran W Michael.(1999). *A History of Russia, the Soviet Union and Beyond*. West/Wads Worth.

Petersberg would lie open and Catherine's regime would fall. However, General Al Bibikov's forces defeated him, however and lifted the siege.

With his remaining followers Pugachov moved westward to the Volga region where thousands of peasants flocked to his banner. As indisciplined levies captured Saratov and most of Kazan, panic gripped noblemen and some government leaders. Pugachov's manifesto pledged to free the peasantry from serfdom, recruitment and the poll tax.

The insurgents killed numerous landowners and local officials mostly that summer. But untrained peasants were no match for the government regulars. After a catastrophic defeat near Tsaritsyn, Pugachov fled into the steppe, where some followers betrayed him to the authorities. Chained hand and foot Pugachov was taken to Moscow in an iron cage. There he was interrogated and finally executed. His chief followers and thousands of peasants were also executed.

The Pugachov Rebellion had a far reaching significance. By revealing a chasm of popular disaffection, it drew the nobility and the state together tightening the bonds of serfdom. Curiously the revolt demonstrated the strength of ideals of legitimate monarchy and the Old Belief among the peasantry; in a sense it was a revolution fought for reactionary goals. Whereas many scholars conclude that the revolt was a failure and discouraged mass peasant upheaval for more than a century. Soviet accounts asserted that it shook the feudal system heightened peasant class consciousness and inspired abolitionists such as Alexander Radischev. Revolt apparently induced Catherine to reform provincial and local government and by crushing Pugachov and restoring order, her regime revealed its effectiveness and power.

*The Captain's Daughter: (Капитанская Дочка):*

Pushkin's interest in the rebellion against Catherine II in 1773 under the leadership of Emelyan Pugachov resulted in the laconic historical novel *The Captain's Daughter*. The core of the novel is a revolt against the Petrine system, that rigid and artificial hierarchy of power which has so much in common with the party apparatus in contemporary Russia. The issue of age old serfdom and the resultant dissatisfaction with it leading to Pugachov Rebellion are artistically dealt with by Pushkin.

No doubt Pushkin's portrayal of the causes and events of the rebellion in *The Captain's Daughter* makes the novel a tale of adventure in the recoverable past. *The Captain's Daughter*, substantiates the idea that literary texts represent a diversity of dissonant voices and these express not only the orthodox but also the subversive forces of the era<sup>33</sup> in which the text was produced. Further more what seem to be artistic resolution of a literary plot, yielding pleasure to the reader is in fact deceptive for it is an effect that serves to cover the unresolved conflicts of power, class, gender and social groups that make up the real tensions that underlie the surface meanings of a literary text.

Set in the reign of Catherine, it is a social novel. The archetypes of Russian society and characters which are brought into existence are more important than the story. Pushkin evokes the gentry of the period; the modest ex-officer landowner like elder Grinev, whose estate and family life are similar to Larina in *Eugene Onegin*. The characters created by Pushkin are first of the great 19<sup>th</sup> century portraits of Russian land owners and only ones which make us feel at each re-reading: this is what such men were really like. He is retrospective without being the least nostalgic: he both celebrates and loves, but his circumstances are unobtrusive. Captain Miranov and his lieutenant are not offered to us as characters of courage and the simple virtues of the Russian army. Pushkin's portrait of the

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<sup>33</sup> Abrams MH(2004). *A Glossary of Literary Terms*. Heinle. pp-243-247.

captain is memorable “even though Soviet critics have made Pushkin’s Captain a forerunner of those pattern types whose function is to illustrate people and fully recognized and rewarded only under socialist enlightenment.”<sup>34</sup>

The core of the novel is a revolt against the Petrine system. Its moral background is democratic and ‘human’. With the progress of the plot Shavbrin’s siding with Pugachov becomes inevitable and convincing. He regards the virtues of his unit as beneath him and thus rejects them. He finally joins the rebels among whom he can be a leader without feeling that he is lowering himself. His treachery matches his would-be aristocratic detachment. On the other hand the garrison officers whom Shavbrin despises have strong class solidarity. This makes them to embrace death than to swear allegiance to an imposter and an ex-convict. Similar instinct and background is shown by Old Grinev when it does not occur to him to doubt the finding of an official verdict even though he is overwhelmed by the charge that his son has conspired with the rebels. Though he takes pride in the fact that his own father should have been executed for being on the wrong side of a court rebellion, he is sad about the fact that his son had joined a revolt which sought to ‘exterminate the gentry’ in a class war.

### *Eugene Onegin (Евгений Онегин):*

During the ascendancy of the New Criticism, a number of American and English critics worked to rescue social and historical awareness. Lionel Trilling’s essay, *The Sense of the Past* (1942), Rene Wellek and Austin Warren’s *Theory of Literature* (1949), Irving Howe’s *Politics and the Novel* (1957), Wayne Booths *Rhetoric of Fiction* and the essays of Philip Rahv and Edmund Wilson serve in various ways to reintegrate the work of literature with the historical reality from which it was created with the values of the writer and the reader and with literary tradition. Harry Levin’s institutional approach to literature has probed the differences between literature and “life” by exploring rather than avoiding social

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<sup>34</sup> Bayley John.(1971), *Pushkin: A Comparative Commentary*. Cambridge.p.333



contexts. The conventions of artistic media become the necessary differences, since Levin considers literature not a reflection of life but a refraction of life<sup>35</sup>.

For Blagoi and Guvosky [Pushkin's most prominent 20<sup>th</sup> social critics] an individual's possibilities within the culture are narrowly determined by his class as historical position. *Eugene Onegin*, however invites the readers to consider whether an individual can assimilate the achievements of more than one social class or historical period and can view them not as artifacts of a bygone age or a remote social class, but as models with some relationship to his own life. The possibilities of one historical period or class situation will certainly differ from those of other periods and social classes. But the range of conventions, codes and social patterns within a European culture is likely to be a broad one. George Lukacs speculates that Pushkin can depict the events of his novel with lightness and deftness because they arise from the structure of society and socially determined.<sup>36</sup>

As *Eugene Onegin* develops Pushkin places all his characters – urban and rural, gently and folk- within a cultural framework that includes both social and artistic patterns. Literature, music, dance and play are as inseparable from the lives of serfs as from the lives of gently. Pushkin's servant girls are inevitably singing. Pushkin does not conceal the harshness of social inequality. The berry picking girls are forced to sing so that they do not consume the fruit. But the conditions of their work do not refrain from the frolic charm of their "primate song", which the narrator allows to be theirs not their masters'. Its unashamed but playful attitude toward the battle of sexes stands in refreshing contrast to the other culturally conditioned attitudes that frame it – Tatiana's abstract and lachrymose sentimentality, the stultifying cynicism of Eugene and the narrator, the nurse's quiet resignation. Very often in Pushkin, culture's playful facets humanise the harshness of social and economic patterns. .

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<sup>35</sup> Levin Harry(1945-46).*Literature as an Institution* in Accent.6.p.159-168. A revised version appears in Levin Harry *The Gates of Horn: A study of Five French Realists* ( Oxford,1963).

<sup>36</sup> Lukacs George(1971), *Pushkin's Place in world Literature*. in *Writer and Critic and Other Essays*.New York.,p.333

If culture is not the property of any single class in Pushkin's novel, neither is it the creation of any single class or national group. Pushkin presents culture as a sum of patterns of various times and places superimposed one upon the other in the lives of his characters. This is clear enough for his cosmopolitan gentry, less so for the few serfs who appear in the novel. But their very names testify to the "foreign" component in their culture. As Pushkin reminds us in a footnote "the most euphonious Greek names ..... are used among is only by the simple people". The deterministic power of Pushkin's world of culture is perhaps best discussed by reexamining *Eugene Onegin* as a historical novel, a genre Pushkin himself perfected in prose in the elegant symmetries of *The Captain's Daughter* 1836." In *Eugene Onegin* the shaping force of history manifests itself in the characters' lives not in the guise of a rapacious Cossack horde, seeking vengeance for generations of social, economic, and cultural oppression, but as change in cultural possibilities and, most importantly, as "fashion."<sup>37</sup> Fashion raises Eugene, seems to exhaust his lexicon, builds Tatiana's Petersburg home, and curls her hair, literally and figuratively. Lensky professes to hate the fashionable world, yet his poetry is nothing more than fashionable, with all the negative connotations of superficiality and automation that the word bears. The narrator himself, the most conscious character in the novel, flees the fashionable world into, momentarily, Eugene's fashionable Byronism. Yet for all its ability to pervade the corners of human life, the "whirlwind of fashion" does lack the finality of a Cossack noose or the long-accumulating pressure of social and economic oppression. Tatiana can ignore fashion and later dictate it. The narrator can boldly reject it or, better still, lend it a profundity it lacks in common currency: the word "ideal," which is merely fashionable in Lensky's verse, becomes infused with significance in the narrator's farewells. It is not surprising, because of his power over fashion, that the narrator inevitably colors the word with a certain contempt.

Pushkin treats the concept of historical distance-antiquity, olden times

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<sup>37</sup> Todd William Mills (1978). *Eugene Onegin: "Life's Novel"* in *Literature and Society*, ed Todd William Mills. Stanford University Press. p. 224--35

(старина)-with similar freedom. If "fashion" can be overcome, so can the "olden times" of literature and social custom be preserved. Indeed the noun and the adjective derived from it are inevitably used for the past that survives-'in folklore, social customs, architecture, Eugene's mind, and the poet's conversations with his muse. The ability of the novel's characters to assimilate the cultural achievements of historically distinct situations stands in marked contrast to the limitations of the characters in Pushkin's conventionally historical works. These pieces, unlike *Eugene Onegin*, are based on irresolvable clashes: Counter-Reformation Poland vs., medieval, Orthodox Muscovy (*Boris Godunov*); the westward-looking supporters of Peter the Great vs. the old nobility (*The Moor of Peter the Great*) the Westernized gentry vs. the Cossacks, with their folk culture that the gentry cannot comprehend (*The Captain's Daughter*).

There is one sense, however, in which *Eugene Onegin* shares in the generic features of historical fiction: in Pushkin's use of historical figures (himself and, in brief appearances, two friends). In dealing with a historical figure, the author bears a special responsibility to public knowledge in addition to his responsibility to expectations involving genre, decorum, verisimilitude, and other aspects of his literary performance: he must coordinate his depiction with the reader's "factual" knowledge of that figure's historical existence. To give a rather obvious example of this sort of responsibility, in *The Captain's Daughter* Pushkin could make Pugachov an eloquent folk poet and could let him shape the destinies of the fictional characters, but it is doubtful that he would have wanted or dared to let his fictional Pugachov succeed in overthrowing the Empress.

So Pushkin, as the primary historical figure in his own novel, establishes himself with biographical details familiar to his readers. Few of these involve the historical, political, and economic causality of realistic fiction. The poet hints at his exile and, it is generally thought, at the fate of his exiled and executed Decembrist friends. The position of these biographical elements in the second and final stanzas of the novel gives them special emphasis, but they are balanced, even at these points, by the poet's sense of himself as a maker-of the effervescent

*Ruslan and Ludmila* and of the "free novel" *Eugene Onegin* . Between these bookends the author-narrator (the persona of a living, contemporary poet) can exercise considerable freedom in making his life, and at the same time meet his historical responsibility, for the importance of that life to his audience resides precisely in its creativity, which history has not yet ended. Indeed, Pushkin uses his historicity to delimit for his characters a period in which sweeping events, such as the Napoleonic wars or the Decembrist uprising, do not intervene to prevent him from treating society in terms of conventions, rituals, and festivals. And the class from which Pushkin takes his main characters, the gentry, is precisely the one which had the greatest access to the generous resources of Russian culture, with its folk and European heritage. This class situation, like the historical period, is more an invitation to relatively autonomous action than a deterministic barrier. George Lukacs has very aptly conceded in this regard that "Pushkin knew it was no longer possible, to characterise a figure or integrate him into the plot simply by stating his position in society or his class." Although the narrator presents himself as even less oppressed by the regime of Alexander I than by literary fashions, he seldom forgets that writing is a social act-reviewed by critics, interrogated by the censor, and presented to an audience with its social patterns and its expectations about the decorum that should accompany life into literary form.

The urbane, cosmopolitan audience Pushkin envisions for his work causes him little anxiety, and he treats it with the familiarity of a correspondent. But its presence provides, together with conventional codes, a necessary component of any social act, and Pushkin incorporates it into both the creative (author's) and created (characters') realities of his novel.<sup>38</sup> The characters, like the poet, must reckon with their audience and reach that audience through, and only through, the conventions of their culture. As determining factors these conventions are considerably more elusive than the historical, political, and economic constraints of literary realism or the laws of the organism in which literary naturalism sought to enclose human existence. But in the few social situations depicted by Pushkin's

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<sup>38</sup> Todd William Mills (1978), *Eugene Onegin: "Life's Novel" in Literature and Society*, ed Todd William Mills. Stanford University Press. p. 203-35

novel (the duel, the love quests of Tatiana and Eugene), conventions provide such tension, such problems of timing and understanding, that we, may with little hesitation speak of *Eugene Onegin* as a social novel.

Belinsky endorsed that “society” and “nationality” as concepts which recognized the existence and work of even their most insignificant constituent members. The principles of Russian nationhood however did not reside solely in the illiterate peasant masses of the *narod*, nor yet, in the educated classes; it embraced everybody within the nation. Thus in his article of 1844 on Pushkin, Belinsky championed *Eugene Onegin* for precisely these qualities; it was in his celebrated phrase, “an encyclopedia of Russian life” and to the highest degree a national (*народное*) work.

***The Bronze Horseman ( Мѣдный Всадник):***

The setting is essentially contemporary-- the disastrous flood of 1824 in St. Petersburg – but the theme is historical, for the poem explores the conflict between the individual, represented by the poor clerk Eugene whose lady love drowns in the flood, and Peter the great, the embodiment of *la raison d’etat*, who established a city on the marshes of the River Neva with apparent unconcern for the thousands of victims his project claimed.

*Where lonely waters, struggling, sought  
To reach the sea, he paused, in thought  
Immersed, and gazed ahead. The river  
Swept grandly past. In midstream caught,  
A peeling bark did bounce and shiver  
Upon the waves. And here and there,  
On moss-grown, boggy shores a rare,  
Ramshackle hut loomed dark, the dwelling  
Of humble Finn.... The sun’s bright glare  
In milky fog was shrouded; falling  
On forests dense, its sickly ray  
Ne’er pierced their murk.*

Like *Poltava* here Pushkin's narrative ranges from the individual to the international from the powerless Eugene and his poor Parasha to Peter and his creation of a city intended to thwart the "haughty neighbour" Sweden and break through the window of Europe. The opening apotheosis to St. Petersburg is also a rebuttal of the Polish poet Adam Mickiewicz's harshly critical vision of the city (and of Russia and Peter) in his *Forefather's Eve Part III*'. The polemics between the two poets, who admired each other, arose not because of differing tastes for climate and urban landscapes but over their opposing views on Poland's fate – a long restless thrall of Russia's. This answer to Mickiewicz represents a "personal" element in *The Bronze Horseman*( *Медный Всадник*) not found in *Poltava*.

Another aspect of *The Bronze Horseman*( *Медный Всадник*) is that the poem's vision extends beyond Petersburg and beyond Russia. It includes the modern man's experience, the urban animation and the urban solitude. The images of such feelings are more vivid than those of the statue and Eugene, power and personal fate. We are reminded of Eliot's *Waste Land* and Baudelaire's vision of Paris. Pushkin's subtle sense of the real world reflects his modernity. In a way Pushkin was a modernist even before the modernist tradition began.

*The Bronze Horseman*( *Медный Всадник*) bears echoes of the Decembrists, though their relationship to it is often doubted. 'Lunacharsky, the first peoples commissioner for Education, pronounces that Pushkin had invoked the Decembrists in order to pass judgment on them; for Peter was historical necessity enthroned and his dynamic autocracy a necessary stage on the road to the communist state'<sup>39</sup>. According to Bayley like the Kronstadt mutineers against the Bolsheviks almost exactly a hundred years later, the Decembrists were guilty of what Lenin termed, "infantile disorders", pitting their libertarian instincts against the majestic progress of the dialectic. An earlier generation of liberals visualised Eugene's protests as symbolic of Decembrist uprising: "voiceless and will less" Russia crying out that it was 'even now' going to settle its own fate. Belinsky's

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<sup>39</sup> Bayley John.(1971). *Pushkin: A Comparative Commentary*. Cambridge.p. 127-165

insight that *The Bronze Horseman's* tragedy resides in the conflict between the individual and the collective will is often echoed in all historical and ideological interpretation of the poem.

The poem by merging history and fantasy brings the past into the present. Pushkin through such artistic mingling endows it with yet sharper reality to an actual place and event.

*PUSHKIN- A BRIDGE BETWEEN THE OLD  
AND THE NEW*



## PUSHKIN- A BRIDGE BETWEEN THE OLD AND THE NEW

The endeavours of the founding fathers of Russian literature to evolve a full fledged secular Russian literature, with new genres and forms, reached its perfection with Pushkin. The efforts of Kantemir, Trediakovsky, Lomonosov, Derzavin, Karamzin and so on bore fruit in Pushkin's works. Their internationalism, neoclassicism, an eye for the everyday social reality not only enriched Pushkin's works but also led to the emergence of modern Russian literature. Pushkin was probably the greatest innovator in Russian literature. But for all his innovations, for all his flirtations with Romanticism, he remained true to his literary education of Classicism (both in his restrained style and view of the world). Something of the 18<sup>th</sup> century cynicism always remained alive in Pushkin and he never became a full blown Romantic. In fact Pushkin can undoubtedly be regarded as an end product, heir and beneficiary of Russian poetic development.

Influence of Lomonosov's odes is evident in Pushkin's odes. For instance Pushkin's *Ode to Liberty*. Each of Lomonosov's odes is not only a eulogy but also a programme elaborating those political and cultural initiatives which he thinks the Russian government should undertake if it genuinely has nation's good at heart. Similarly, Pushkin's *Ode to Liberty* preserves that peculiar character of Russian ode with which Lomonosov had endowed it: it always set forth a political programme and was oriented towards the future.

Even in his poem *Poltava*, Pushkin could not avoid drawing upon the Lomonosovian legacy in his article quest. In *Poltava* Pushkin employed the stylistic devices of the Lomonosovian eulogistic ode.

In the *Little Tragedies* and later on in *The Bronze Horseman (Медный Всадник)* Pushkin has dealt with the "little man aspect". Evgeny is portrayed as the helpless and pathetic clerk driven by his misfortune. Pushkin has drawn his

idea of 'little man' from Shakespearean characters like Shylock- whose ruling passion, that of a miser, was less important in the plot than his possessive love for his daughter and his passion for revenge. The way in which the hero of *The Bronze Horseman ( Мѣдный Всадник)* achieves his reality within the brief, compass of the poem's happenings, reminds us of the Shakespeare's *Hamlet, Macbeth, Othello, Lear* or Dickens's David Copperfield or Pip. In all the given instances the unknown previous existence of the character is all the more potent for being undocumented.

*Boris Godunov* draws its inspiration from Shakespeare's history plays. Pushkin desired to develop a model for the Russian drama. the similarity between Shakespeare's contemporary England and Russia in Pushkin's own time was responsible for the similarity between Shakespeare's history plays and Pushkin's *Boris Godunov*. Russia's recent victories and development as a powerful nation in Europe led to the new found self awareness among the Russians ; the contemporary life full of insecurity; problems of succession, threatened rebellion, the oppressed and mutinous peasantry and censorship were common to Shakespeare's England and Pushkin's Russia.

The theme of *Boris Godunov* returns to the epoch old Muscovy before the Romanovs came to power, which was an age far away from the political significance of Petrine era and imperial Russia. Disputed succession was considered to be a controversial theme so the play's ending was modified on the Tsar's order as he himself was involved in one.

Vladislav Ozerov (1769-1816) and Derzhavin were sources of inspiration for Pushkin. The Russian tragedy on lofty political themes failed or could not sustain itself during the times of Ozerov and Derzhavin. But there was a re-emergence of such themes in *Boris Godunov* – which is often considered as the first in the tradition of political tragedy in Russian literature.

Pushkin's *The Queen of Spades* (*Пиковая Дама*) was a parody of the society tale genre began by Nadezhda Durova. Pushkin hoped to become the guide for his contemporaries for the creation of an original independent Russian literature. The historical drama *Boris Godunov*, *The Tales of Belkin* in prose, *Poltava* and *The Bronze Horseman* (*Медный Всадник*) in the field of narrative poems, folk tales and other later works are all marked by an attempt of deliberate experimentation.

Gogol's Akaky in the Overcoat is based on Eugene in *The Bronze Horseman* (*Медный Всадник*). Gogol's Akaky is almost literally what Pushkin's Eugene in madness becomes *ni zver ni chelovek* (neither beast nor man). Gogol too dealt with inner psychology of Akaky. The interest in psychology began with Pushkin's *The Queen of Spades* (*Пиковая Дама*) which was later taken up by Dostoevsky in *Crime and Punishment*. *The Overcoat* is a story of a poor St. Petersburg clerk called Akaky. Akaky saves money to buy himself an overcoat during winter. Unfortunately he is robbed of the coat the very first night he wears it. His vain attempts to retrieve the overcoat fall into the deaf ears of the authorities and finally he dies. He appears as a ghost and robs people of their overcoats until he is able to steal the overcoat of that person whose harsh words had caused his death. After that his ghost disappears.

Gogol's treatment of the inner feelings of Akaky and at the same time his handling of the social themes is marvellous. Akaky becomes the "little man" and Gogol puts all his humanitarian concerns in Akaky's character and activities. The story led to the building up of realistic tradition in Russian literature. Though the ghost sequence subverts the very concept of realism yet it turns out to be an artistic treatment of deeper themes. Gogol shows his human sympathy for the figure whom he has dehumanized. Gogol attempted to hint at the inner psychological matters by resorting to the external material world.

Just as Pushkin, Gogol too displayed to the common man the vile and rotten nature of serfdom and the tsarist regime and also reflected the people's dreams of

the possibility of another, superior reality. Gogol's realism like Pushkin's was inspired by a fearless analysis of the social phenomenon of his age. However in his universalism and perception of contemporary life he differed from Pushkin. Gogol's realism stands apart because of the fact that he expressed the ideal exclusively through a negation of the hideous reality he saw around him. A spirit of negation prevails in his works. With their merciless exposure of the various forms of social evil and injustice Gogol's works also affirm the exalted principles of humanism.

*The Queen of Spades (Пиковая Дама)* greatly influenced Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment*. The *Queen of Spades (Пиковая Дама)* has many levels of interest, including a host of covert references to Masonic symbolism and play with numbers, but its basic contribution is the revelation of the obsessive personality of Herman, an impecunious and cautious man who inspired by an anecdote which others dismissed, aspired to instant wealth on the grounds, as he declared to the countess during their fatal confrontation that he deserved the fortune which she held the key. But he is innately weak and unstrung by his own audacity his over wrought nerves, his superstition and anxiety, he breaks down at the critical moment to become his own victim. Similarly, in *Crime and Punishment*, the protagonist Raskolnikov, is also a would-be superman defeated by his own inadequacies. *Crime and Punishment* tells the story of Raskolnikov, an impoverished student who murders a money lender. At the end he is persuaded by a young prostitute Sonya to confess his crime. The moment he does so he is sentenced to Siberian exile. Though at the surface the work appears to be romantic, it is extremely realistic in nature. There exists no "presence" or "feel" of an author or narrator which makes it all the more realistic. Through Raskolnikov's consciousness the readers feel the reality. When Raskolnikov experiences his nightmares and delirium, the "sickness" associated with his crime, they are so detailed that they appear to be real. By placing Raskolnikov in such a situation Dostoevsky was employing the psychological means which was so much in vogue at that time. Raskolnikov's motives to murder combine a supposed altruistic desire to rid the world of an evil by murdering the money lender and megalomaniac or

Napoleonic concern to prove nihilistically that he is above law and can commit murder with impunity. Raskolnikov does not murder for money, but to prove himself as though he is “possessed” by some “rational microbe” as he himself imagined. In fact, Pushkin can be said to have introduced the theme of the ‘psychological imposter’- (a person lacking natural leadership qualities who strives to maintain ascendancy by calculated role playing), in Russian fiction, which later writers adopted.

Captain Miranov of *The Captain's Daughter* (*Капитанская Дочка*) became a prototype for Tolstoy's self-effacing Captain Tushin (*War and Peace*), the unsung hero of the battle of Bordino..

Along with Pushkin's defense of St. Petersburg and his rationalisation of its human cost, his poem *The Bronze Horseman* (*Медный Всадник*) presages a new assessment of the city, which theretofore had enjoyed poetic adulation as the Venice of north and the eighth wonder of the world. In the eyes of crazed Eugene, the city is a sinister and threatening place, a haunted hells dominated by a demonic force. This interpretation captured the imagination of Russian authors, and almost immediately this new image of St. Peterburg was developed by other writers, notably Gogol in *Nevsky Prospect*, in which the Devil lights the city's street lamps at night to deceive mortals.

Lermontov in his prose masterpiece *A Hero of Our Time* (*Герой Нашего Времени*, 1840) fully developed the novel of psychological realism in Russian literature. In *A Hero of Our Time* Lermontov employs the forms of romantic fiction. Its hero Pechorin is an egocentric young officer who affects a role of innocent fated to destroy the happiness and even lives of others. Pechorin has a rich ancestry and is derived from Pushkin's Eugene Onegin. Pechorin's character is significant as he is representative of the literary type that is that “superfluous man”. The failure of the Decembrist Revolution of 1825 shattered the hope of the emergence of Russia as a freer political regime which would have more in

common with those of Western Europe. Unfortunately the youth of Lermontov's generation found themselves under the repressive isolationist policies of Nicholas I. Young men such as Pechorin, deprived of the multiplicity of opportunities to build their career which the Western society offered and rejected with repugnance the idea of serving the state, could find no outlet for their energies and aspirations, no hope of fulfillment.

Turgenev began his literary career as a poet, a fact of significance for his later prose writing, which is marked by a sense of good Russian style, a search for elegant simplicity: a discipline which he undoubtedly learnt from Pushkin. Turgenev's best known early poem *Parasha* (1843) has polished and urbane verses and in style and conception clearly Pushkinian. It is in fact a rewriting of *Eugene Onegin*, not in Pushkin's fourteen line stanzas, but in a reasonably close thirteen line imitation.

In Andrey Bely's *Petersburg*, a major presence is that of Pushkin whose narrative poem *The Bronze Horseman* (*Медный Всадник*) is among other things an assessment of the place of revolution in Russian history. In Pushkin's poem *The Bronze Horseman* (*Медный Всадник*) is among other things the equestrian statue of Peter the great, who founded the capital to be a *window of the west*, pursues an angry citizen through the streets. In Bely's *Petersburg* the same statue pays a nocturnal visit to the revolutionary who must oversee the senator's assassination. Pushkin had long before foreseen the threat of tyranny from two sources: one the autocracy, the other the people.

The dramatic methods used by Pushkin in *The Bronze Horsemen* (*Медный Всадник*) have inspired many. We are able to distinguish between the dramatic hero, who is fully realized without a background as explanatory antecedents, and the fictional hero, who is build up on the basis of these things. Both Tolstoy and Dostoevsky create their most memorable characters in the same way as Pushkin finally presents his hero in *The Bronze Horseman* (*Медный Всадник*). Pierre,

Prince Andrew, Prince Myshkin, Anna Karenina most remarkable of all – they have no previous life filled in retrospectively: they exist entirely in the actions which the novelist is immediately describing, but they become so real, particularly in Tolstoy, that we understand intuitively how they have grown into what they are and why they act as they do.

*CONCLUSION*



## CONCLUSION

The concluding chapter is a discussion on the impact of Pushkin's work methods and his pioneering literary forms on his successors. Pushkin's ideas, treatment of past Russian society in the context of contemporary Russia, and insight into the inner psychological workings of his characters not only enriched Russian literary genres but also later Russian authors and poets.

Pushkin not only introduced everyday realism but also returned to a seriousness of purpose in literature. The style and versification as developed by Pushkin have been taken up by his successors like Gogol, Dostoevsky and Turgenev. Works like *The Overcoat*, *Parasha* and *Crime and Punishment* can be cited as instances. Pushkin's introduction of the psychological realism in Russian literature is evident in works of Turgenev, Gogol, Dostoevsky and Tolstoy. Pushkin's *The Queen of Spades* (*Пиковая Дама*) has been taken as a model by the above mentioned writers in their treatment of characters like Gogol's Akaky in *The Overcoat* when he turns almost mad; Dostoevsky's Raskolnikov in the *Crime and Punishment* in his inadequacy to understand his own weaknesses which finally brings downfall. In its style of versification Turgenev's *Prasha* is close to *Eugene Onegin's* versification and style. In Bely's depiction of *Petersberg* a strong presence of *The Bronze Horseman* (*Медный Всадник*) is felt and the description of the city comes alive.

If we glance through the entire corpus of Pushkin's works we will observe how the sensitive issues like serfdom, liberty and condition of commoners stirred Pushkin's imagination. Though he was for monarchy and had an aristocratic background, he never forgot the common man. Through his writings he fought for the abolition of serfdom and freedom from the governmental oppression. He appears to have spoken the heart of a common Russian man-his pangs and pains as in *The Bronze Horseman* (*Медный Всадник*).

*...Our Yevgeny  
Can do without. Although of yore  
It might have shone and been accorded  
A worthy place in Russian lore,  
Though Karamzin might have recorded  
Its fame, today 'tis mentioned not  
And is by all the world forgot.....  
A clerk and in Kolomna living,  
Our hero shunned the gentry, giving  
No thought, of proud ambition free,  
To his illustrious ancestry...*

By going back to Russia's past Pushkin wished to express that a common man's suffering and a monarch's whims are similar in any age just that the intensity might be different. There is a sense of nostalgia for something good pervading Pushkin's works. Unless the common men are made aware of their history they would be clueless of their forefathers' struggle for freedom, at the same time the causes which brought misery to their lives, just as Peter's ambitions to build new Russia..

*...The late  
And revered tsar the scepter wielded  
Of Russia then, and grief so great  
Was his that, burdened by its weight,  
He said: "Not e'en a prince is shielded  
From God's displeasure, for is he  
Before the elements defenceless....."  
And standing on his balcony,  
He watched with pensive eye the senseless  
And dire destruction wrought.....*

***[The Bronze Horseman]***

Pushkin by portraying Russian society and history gave the commoner's a voice to fight against the tyranny of the rulers.

Pushkin's writings meant a great deal for generations to come. Russia did witness the abolition of serfdom in 1861. Pushkin's use of simple everyday language contributed in building up the popular consciousness to face the hurdles and finally succeed in erasing the darkest chapter of Russia's social history- that is serfdom.

Pushkin brought Russian language close to the people and gave the language a new lease of life relieving it from the French influences. Thus, in a way Pushkin acting as a responsible successor completed that task taken up by Karamzin to gift Russia a language of her own. Vissarion G Belinskii observed:" To write about Pushkin means to write about the whole of Russian literature; for just as previous Russian writers explain Pushkin, so Pushkin explains the writers who followed him."<sup>40</sup>

Pushkin's genius was manifested in his ability to speak on behalf of all Russians, not just the elite. He is a manifestation of the Russian people and articulated the latent creativity of the Russian spirit.

The brief idea stated above takes its cue from Plato's *Republic* where he points out that poetry is dependent on the world around us, it does not make its object and its strength comes from the depth of its grasp of those objects. Poetry is imitation – a poet's representation is only a shadow of the competent opinion of the artisans. According to Plato the poet's function leads him to be a servant of convention as he bound by the user's art that is the legislator. Man is thus a product of *nomos* ie 'convention'. To an extent critics of the New Criticism school would support this idea. It makes the point valid that later poets of Russia got their model in Pushkin.

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<sup>40</sup> Todd William Mills(1978) . *Eugene Onegin: "Life's Novel"* in Literature and Society . ed Todd William Mills. Stanford University Press. p. 203-35

The simple dualism of Pushkin's poetry between the created and the expository, the personal statement and the impersonal embodiment, may strike us as the very height of sanity and good sense. Thus, Blok's comment: 'in the poetic experience of the world there is no rift between the individual and the general'<sup>41</sup> would have surprised Pushkin. The unique strength of the nineteenth century Russian literature lies in its indifference to bogus ideals of artistic 'wholeness and unification', its ability to speculate and analyze in theoretical terms while engaging simultaneously in prodigies of primary creation. Tolstoy and Dostoevsky have this in common: the strands of theory that intertwine in *War and Peace* with the natural growth of family and fable, are paralleled in *The Brothers Karamazov* by debate and discussion on power and human ideals and necessities.

Pushkin is perhaps more of an 18<sup>th</sup> century than a 19<sup>th</sup> century figure. One of the main shifts between the 18<sup>th</sup> century and 19<sup>th</sup> century approach to personality and to man's position in society is from a moral to a sociological base; and although Pushkin does approach character to a certain extent sociologically as in *Eugene Onegin*, his primary concern is with moral values. It was in this sense that we viewed the 'prophet' in Pushkin –the quest for authentic moral values for a given individual in a certain social and historical context. Such a proposition has also been forwarded by JLI Fennel in his *Nineteenth Century Russian Literature*. He pointed out that Pre-Pushkinian literature, in the 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century obviously dealt with social issues but seldom presented in non-didactic terms moral or philosophical problems to its readers.

In the history of Russian culture Pushkin is the source of debate on any aspect of the national self awareness, just as his works hint at every topic and glance in every direction which the national literature was to take. Dostoevsky implied that European literature too had much to learn from Pushkin, and later Gukovsky and

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<sup>41</sup> Todd William Mills(1978) . *Eugene Onegin: "Life's Novel"* in Literature and Society . ed Todd William Mills. Stanford University Press. p. 203-35

other critics claimed that in borrowing from European literature Pushkin developed forms and kinds which were in their turn to exercise a profound influence on the literature of the west. Alexander Tvardovsky on the 125<sup>th</sup> death anniversary of Pushkin rightly observed: 'From Pushkin we (Russian) have acquired our visual images not only of the age he himself lived in, but of other epochs history as well- the time of Pugachev, of Peter the Great, of Boris Gudonov, and many more remote ages as well. Then with equal ease and competence, he introduced us to other countries, to the inner world and poetry of other peoples, each with their own national particularities and unique cultural history.'<sup>42</sup>

For Dostoevsky Pushkin is the most universal of the authors. 'In European letters there were geniuses of immense creative magnitude – Shakespeare, Cervantes, Schiler ....' But none possessed such a universal susceptibility as Pushkin. He 'reflects universal ideas, poetic images of other nations in which their genius is incarnated'. Dostoevsky further notes that 'whereas Shakespeare's Italians are really Englishmen, Dostoevsky goes on to say that Pushkin's *Stone Guest* suggests Spain almost as if a Spaniard has written it'<sup>43</sup>. Pushkin's kinship with the nineteenth century novel, with its conscious attempts to locate characters in their environment and comprehend them as a part of it, to portray what Lukas calls "Individuals as a whole in the whole of society"<sup>44</sup>. This Realism, the imaginative embodiment in art of the historical process and of the part played in it by classes and individuals in the author's time. Thus, Gukovsky gave Pushkin the title of being first of the European realists. Dostoevsky's remark that "everything we have comes from Pushkin" echoed other Pushkinists that "after Pushkin there was no longer any need to turn to the traditions of the eighteenth century; the work of Pushkin replaced preceding literature"<sup>45</sup>.

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<sup>42</sup> Pushkin Alexander-Selected Works in Two Volumes. Vol.I- Poetry. Progress Publishers Moscow (1974).

<sup>43</sup> Bayley John(1971). *Pushkin: A Comparative Commentary*. Cambridge.p.198-208

<sup>44</sup> Bayley John(1971). *Pushkin: A Comparative Commentary*. Cambridge.p.198-208

<sup>45</sup> Fenell J(1971). *A History of Russian Literature*. Fabers.

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century Anna Akhmatova took over Pushkin's mantle. She bore the same feeling about life, society and impermanence of time as Pushkin had in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Akhmatova's collection of *Elegies* and Pushkin's *Vnov'ja posetil* are similar in their theme of lack of permanence. The passing of time seems primarily concentrated in these poems upon a picture of *unfulfilment* in which the future is recurrently seen as frustrating the hopes and promises of the past.<sup>46</sup> The influence on Akhmatova's style of 'classical' Russian poetry of the past and her awareness of the tragic perspective of time in its manifestations has been because of Pushkin.

*Russkij Trianon*, is a *poema* in which Akhmatova tried to avoid any of Pushkin's ultimately turns out to be an echo of *Eugene Onegin*. To an extent that was a cause of dissatisfaction for Akhmatova.<sup>47</sup> In many of her works Akhmatova has used the local motif of Carskoe Selo which is again connected with Pushkin and through him the theme of time transcending permanence of great art. In her *Gorodu Pushkina* she mentions she mentions Pushkin. In the poem *Naslednica*, Carskoe is connected with the more distant historical past of the splendours of imperial Russia and also Pushkin. Pushkin's shadow largely prevails in Akhmatova's range of poetry.

Pushkin's concerns for social issues are once again reflected in the works of Herzen. Herzen's *The Thieving Magpie (Soroka vorovka)* deals with the humanitarian theme of the evil of serfdom, through the anomaly of peasant theatres which the noblemen kept for their amusement. In *Dr. Krupov*, an idea of madness as purely relative and the presence of epidemic madness in the society itself and the whole course of human history echo *The Queen of Spades* and *Eugene Onegin*. *From the Other Shore (S togo Berega)* is a collection of essays in which Herzen displays a certain of nihilism. His former notions regarding need for Europe for the development of Russian culture seems to be inverted. He believed that it was now Russia's turn to save Europe. He like Pushkin saw in the

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<sup>46</sup>Verheul Kees (1971). *The Theme of Time in the Poetry of Anna Akhmatova*. Mouton: Hague. pp-157-162

<sup>47</sup> Verheul Kees (1971). *The Theme of Time in the Poetry of Anna Akhmatova*. Mouton: Hague. pp-69-73

peasant commune or *mir* a form of cooperation and land sharing which constituted a simple agrarian socialism capable of saving Europe from its bourgeoisie.<sup>48</sup> In *Elena* Herzen's image of man as an individual heroic being<sup>49</sup> as a dominant motif is noticed

Even today Pushkin's presence can be felt in everyday life of Russia. The rich literary heritage which he gifted to Russia is worthy of remembrance. From Russian prose and novel to drama and opera Pushkin is omnipresent. Pushkin's style of versification, of handling emotional issues and important phases of history are still taken as models. Pushkin's greatest quality lay in his capability to voice the common man's concern even when he himself belonged to that stratum of the society which sided with the governmental apparatus. His exceptional ability to feel and empathise with a common man is striking as in his very address to Evgeny as "Our Evgeny" in *The Bronze Horseman* (*Мѣдный Всадник*) His long journey from small love poems to grave descriptions of historical events as in *Boris Godunov*, *The Captain's Daughter* (*Капитанская дочка*) and *The Bronze Horseman* (*Мѣдный Всадник*) not only reveals his growth as an artist but also his increasing intention to make the common man a part of the great Russian culture and heritage.

While describing the historical events and simultaneous reflection of such events in Pushkin's works a pattern has been followed to show his growth as a poet. His initial revolutionary fervor, and his attitudes of a liberal aristocrat who contributed towards the Decembrist movement noticeable in the brief discussion of the Holy Alliance and in his poems on Decembrist Rebellion. His indifference and to an extent his initial irreverence towards religion is observed in his works such as *Gavriliada* (though this work has not been mentioned in the course of the dissertation) which was a victim of censorship and remained unpublished. However from his *Letters* to his friend Chaadaev and his wife, during the later

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<sup>48</sup> Moser Charles A. (1989), *The Cambridge History of Russian Literature*, Cambridge, pp-229-231.

<sup>49</sup> Rzhnevsky Nicholas (1983), *Russian Literature and Ideology Ideology- Herzen, Dostoevsky, Leontiev, Tolstoy, Fadayev*. University of Illinois Press: Urbana, pp-11-14

phase of his life reveal that his religious concerns had softened and he had become more tolerant towards religious aspirations of those around him and public at large. Censorship became a part and parcel of Pushkin's poetic life. Though he was often a cruel victim of Tsar Nicholas's "protection" and censorship, he remained firm in judging his own calibre as a poet and as a speaker of the common man. Such a notion made him not to compromise with his artistic creations and so such works like *Boris Godunov* and *The Bronze Horseman (Медный Всадник)* remained unpublished for a long time as Pushkin refused to revise or rewrite them according to the Tsar's wish. This again shows that as a poet he had started valuing his own creations and was becoming firmer in his assertions in spite of remaining under the constant censorship of the Tsar Nicholas I. Pushkin's patriotism never dwindled and as he aged it became all the more visible in his words and works. This becomes evident when he wrote about the Battle of Poltava in *Poltava*. To an extent it also helps us to understand how much Pushkin desired that Russia should keep all those territories which she had already subjugated and thus he took an anti-Polish view during the Polish Revolution of 1830-1831. Finally, the mention of Pugachov rebellion and serfdom tells us how Pushkin had grown as a poet speaker of the common man's sufferings and desire for freedom. What started as a Pushkin as the rebellious youth who wished for freedom during the Decemberist uprising culminated in Pushkin as the voice of the voiceless that is the common Russian man.

The very purpose of this dissertation would be served only when we understand as to why Pushkin among other Russian writers and few of his works have been discussed here. Though Pushkin is well known all over the world he is yet to become an important poet for the Indian readers. We should learn from Pushkin's patriotism and how he faced all sorts of challenges to make a niche for himself. The utmost that we can derive from Pushkin's personality is that in spite of belonging to the aristocratic society he gave his voice for the downtrodden that is the serfs and the peasants. He always fought for what was right for the society and spoke for reforms in an age when repression was greatest. Though he took recourse to Russian history yet it is of universal relevance for the present day



problems of racism, capitalism and marginalization of the society which are not very different from what Pushkin portrayed or tried to reform. History has always remained an integral part of our society. Pushkin had realised importance of history early in life and through his works made it sure to pass on the torch of history to guide his posterity irrespective of place and time.

*“When in eternal lines to time thou grow’st  
So long as men can breathe, or eyes can see,  
So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.”*

Shakespeare Sonnet XVIII

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