

English (Hons); Part-I; Paper-I, Unit-I; Topic-
DECADENCE; Lec-Seri-41; by-GIANJES KUMAR
AND College
Patory.

DECADENCE

By the 1890s, another term 'Decadence' had become associated with this focus on 'art for art's sake'. The term 'Decadence' has origins with in common with 'aestheticism' and the two terms often overlap and were used sometimes used interchangeably.

The Decadent movement was a late 19th century artistic and literary movement of Western Europe. It flourished in France, but also had devotees in England and throughout Europe as well as in United States.

'Decadence' was the name given, by hostile critics, to several late 19th century writers who valued artifice more than the earlier romantics' naive descriptions. The decadents were also influenced by the tradition of Gothic novels and by the poetry and fiction of Edgar Allan Poe, and were associated with Symbolism and Aestheticism.

This concept of decadence dates from the 18th century, especially from Montesquieu and was adopted

by Critics as a term of abuse after Desire Nisard used it against Victor Hugo and Romanticism in general. A later romanticist such as Theophile Gautier and Charles Baudelaire used the word proudly, to represent their rejection of what they considered banal "progress".

During the 1880s a group of French writers claimed themselves as decadent, and a classical novel "Against Nature", written by Joris-Karl Huysman, one of the members of the French writers group, is considered to be the first decadent work.

Though others attribute this honour to Baudelaire's works. Decadence is now regarded as a transition between Romanticism and Modernism.

In England, the leading figures associated with this movement were Oscar Wilde, Aubrey Beardsley and some other artists and writers associated with The Yellow Book, the periodicals of both Aesthetes and Decadents. In the United States, the Edgar brothers and Francis Cabot wrote decadent fiction and poetry.

Symbolism has often been confused with Decadence. Several young writers referred to

- derisively in the press as "decadent" during the mid 1880s. Jean Moreas' manifesto was largely a response to this polemic. A few of these writers embraced the term while most avoided it. Although the aesthetics of Symbolism and Decadence can be considered to be similar in some respect, the two remain distinct.

Max Nordau wrote a bestselling attack on the movement, 'Degeneration' (1892). A detailed study of the movement which attracted wide attention was the "Romantic Agony" (1933) by Mario Praz, a key text for the idea of decadence as a "falling off" from the Romantic movement.