



A diamond never grows old

—Author

Alexander Pushkin is one of the most creative of all Russian literary luminaries, and modern Russian literature, without reproach, indeed starts with him. Pushkin's unique style of expression and use of language, glorified in its simplicity and depth, acted as a precursor — not mentioning the establishment of a distinct identity in Russian literature, especially in poetry — for later day exponents in Leo Tolstoy, Maxim Gorky, Fyodor Dostoyevsky, Nikolai Gogol, Ivan Turgenev, et. al. It is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to portray a calibre in the stature of Pushkin within such short space and time. Nevertheless, the author would like to take the privilege of paying his personal dues to this phenomenal talent of creative literature.

Pushkin is the beginning of all beginnings

— Maxim Gorky

Alexander Pushkin was born in Moscow on 6 June (Old Style), 1799 of an old aristocratic Russian family. In those 'days of old, and the days of gold', it was a tradition amongst families of the established Russian society to employ foreign tutors, especially French tutors, for the education of their children. Thus, Alexander, and his brother and sister, learned to talk and read in French. The French literature had a further influence on the little Pushkin as he had free access to his father's fabulous library which was studious with an excellent French collection. Besides, Pushkin's father was a lover of the arts for which reason little Pushkin had the privilege of meeting the intellectual elite of the day. All these were to imprint a profound image in the mind of Pushkin. However, the 'Russian' spirit that immortalized Pushkin came neither from his father's library, nor the foreign tutors, but from two women — Pushkin's grandmother, and his nurse Rodionova.

With Arina Rodionova, Pushkin's old nurse, Pushkin spent hour after hour in his childhood listening to Russian folk and fairy tales. Pushkin's grandmother's estate, near Moscow, was another place where the 'Russian' spirit formed its impression in the mind of the little Pushkin. During the summers, it was here that Pushkin spent a lot of time talking with the peasantry and having the chance of gaining first hand experience on the life of 'toiling' people.

When speaking of Pushkin, the word "magic" seems more apt than skill

— Alexander Tvardovsky

"A genius has to be born; one cannot become a genius". Barring very few exceptions, the morning usually shows the day. At the age of twelve, in 1811, Pushkin was sent to the

From Russia with Love:

ALEXANDER PUSHKIN

by Asrarul Islam Chowdhury

Imperial Lyceum at Tsarskoye Selo (which was later renamed Pushkin), an aristocratic boarding school for boys, opened that year under the patronage of Emperor Alexander I. During his days at the Lyceum, Pushkin developed his prodigies in poetry. He was very happy at the Lyceum and the memories of his school days there remained sacred to him throughout his life.

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During his association with the Green Lamp, an underground branch of a society called the Union of Welfare, Pushkin wrote some political verses, of which, in particular, 'Ode to Liberty' arose the anger of Alexander I. Pushkin's poetry, romantic and rebellious as they always were, made him a messiah to those who took part in the The December Uprising of 1825. This unsuccessful uprising found its precursor in the Napoleonic invasion of 1812 which arose a sense of individualism throughout Europe against all autocratic and reactionary regimes. The Emperor, suspecting Pushkin's involvement in the uprising, ordered Pushkin to permanently settle on his estate Mihailovskoe in the province of Fskov in 1824.

Pushkin's days of exile was actually a blessing in disguise for Russian poetry. The exile

Pushkin's immense popularity, allowed Pushkin to return back to Moscow in 1826. Pushkin answered the emperor in the affirmative that he would have taken part in the uprising had he the opportunity to do so. The emperor, bewildered at Pushkin's honesty, granted him a full pardon, but put him under strict censorship and was constantly kept under observation by secret police. Nevertheless, 1829-36 is a period which marks the full flow of the genius of Pushkin, or more broadly speaking Russian literature. Tales of the Late I.P. Belkin (1830); Mozart and Salieri (1831); The Queen of Spades (1834); The Captain's Daughter (1836); etc. were produced during this period. Fyodor Dostoyevsky, another Russian literary virtuoso, was extremely influenced by The Queen of Spades.

Pushkin married Natalya Nikolayevna Goncharova in 1831 and settled in St Petersburg where he took the grand task of writing a history of Peter The Great. Although Pushkin did not enjoy the court atmosphere, he forced himself to get accustomed to it for the sake of his wife, whom he madly loved, although she did not have the intellectual capability of appreciating her husband's genius. The glamour of court life attracted her more than Pushkin's magic. Meanwhile, life was becoming



Russian Genius - Alexander Pushkin

Courtesy - Britannica

Indeed, some of his best known poems are inspired by it.

Pushkin's first publication was his verse epistle 'To My Friend, The Poet' in 1814. The old Russian romantic poets were the main influences in his initial years of writing. It was in 1820, at the tender age of 21, that Pushkin cemented the belief among the Russian literary circles that a new star had risen over the horizon, a star by the name of Alexander Pushkin, through his 'Ruslan and Lyudmila' which was actually written during his days at the Lyceum. Although it was a romantic poem, written in the

style of Ariosto and Voltaire, it nevertheless had an old Russian setting and was eloquent in its expression of Russian folklore. The poem was a turning point in the history of Russian poetry. It broke away from the two dominant trends in poetry in the then Russia, classicism and sentimentalism. With 'Ruslan and Lyudmila' Russian poetry found a distinct new cult. The poem

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