

## Coleridge's Theory of Imagination (4)

S.T. Coleridge is the greatest of the Romantic critics and holds an elevated position among the critics of all time. A critic has rightly pointed out his dual roles. He is the transcendental philosopher, the apologist of Romanticism who revolutionised the literary taste and aesthetic norms. Secondly, he is the general and cosmopolitan critic passing judgement upon art. In other words, Coleridge made criticism a part of philosophical inquiry. He did both the practical and theoretical criticism of everlasting significance. However, his practical criticism of some artists was to establish the credibility of his viewpoints. But his criticism was not understood in its true perspective. That was why his critical opinions evoked a great amount of discussion among the critics.

Coleridge's greatest contribution to the literary criticism as a critic is his Theory of imagination. His theory of imagination, as a matter of fact, is the out-come of his revolt against the mechanical concept of Imagination that was taken as a synonym of fancy. The associationistic thinkers had made association or combination of sense impressions into the images the entire business of imagination. No doubt, Coleridge took some subtle hints from Kant's Psychology in which the mind was active, from Schelling he could learn that imagination is a unifying power, uniting subject and object in the burning glass of consciousness. From Herder he acquired the concept of a work of art being an organic entity. But, the deepest source for Coleridge was Wordsworth. On the basis these sources, as he gave full exercise to his critical genius and gave his Theory of Imagination that caused great upheaval in the world of literary criticism.

Coleridge gave an exaggerated and transcendent importance, a mystic significance to imagination and linked it with the process of fertility. He convincingly argues

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that it is something like a divine potency in the poet that stimulates his creative act. As God ordered the world out of chaos, similarly, the poet makes a good poem out of the materials taking from his surroundings. It is because of this creative power that he transforms the familiar into new and also strange. Coleridge strongly negated the traditional concept of imagination that was quite mechanical in character. He interpreted Romantic poetry, in which imagination plays the supreme part, and pointed out its unifying power. He believes that a work of art is an organic unity and the process of its creation is an organic process. It is done by imagination that enables the poet to unite the natural thought with natural diction and heart and head. **M.A. HAQUE**

This combination of heart and head is the keynote of Coleridge's Theory of imagination. He believes that without it, no real poetry is possible. He comments that the 'continuous' undercurrent of feelings evokes genuine admiration in a great poet. Its lack, which is caused if the poet sacrifices the heart to the head or both head and heart to paint and drapery, generates a great disgust in simple words. Imagination is a unifying power that empowers the poet to reveal the beautiful and permanent forms of nature. Coleridge terms it secondary imagination, distinct from the primary imagination.

According to Coleridge, the primary imagination presents to mind its own world as external to itself and it exists in every human consciousness. It is the great ordering principle, an agency that enables us to discriminate and order, to separate and synthesize. When we employ our primary imagination in the act of perception do not do so with our conscious will but we exercise our basic faculty of our awareness of ourselves and the external world. Whereas

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The secondary imagination is rarer and more active capacity that belongs to the artist. It represents and recreates the external world in its completeness. It projects and creates new harmony of meaning. It can achieve the miracle of breaking the barrier between the mind and the matter. In fact, art is not merely a copy of Nature rather it is a recreation. There is something common between the nature and the Poet's soul that enables the Poet to create the forms of nature according to his ideal. In <sup>short</sup> fact, imagination of the Poet diffuses, dissolves and recreates and works in the same manner as the divine ~~the~~ Imagination works.

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Further more, Coleridge examines and analyses some of the poems of Wordsworth and differentiates imagination from Fancy. The essential difference between the two, as pointed out by him, is that imagination modifies the things, combines them and is a process of living growth. Whereas Fancy, on the other hand, can combine and recombine the things. But, it cannot transform them. The objects which with it plays are 'fixities' and 'definitives'. In fact, it is mechanical in character. It is an associative and associative power, whereas imagination is shaping and modifying power. It is a faculty of bringing together images which remain, when put together, the same as when apart. They are yoked together by the Poet by means of some accidental co-incidence.

Thus, we see that Coleridge is the first to introduce the element of imagination as a criterion in the criticism of Poetry. He lends the charm of imagination to the real and force of reality to the imaginary.