

S. T. Coleridge (1772–1834)

Samuel Taylor Coleridge is one of the pioneers of Romantic Age in the History of English Literature. Born in Devonshire, he was a precocious child with a voracious appetite for reading and writing. He attended Christ's Hospital and Cambridge but left without a degree due to financial issues. Coleridge is known greatly as poet, critic and philosopher. He is a friend to William Wordsworth. With him he has contributed a lot in Lyrical Ballads (1798). He has mastery over deep imagination, supernatural machine, musical verse, nature as living force, emotional intensity and symbolism and mysticism. He is also known as the founder of the romantic movement in English, emphasising imagination, emotion and the beauty of nature. His masterpieces are as follows: *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, *Kubla Khan*, and *Christabel*.

ST Coleridge is best known for his critical autobiography, *Biographia Literaria* published in 1817. The work remains a theory for poetic domain in which Wordsworth and Coleridge together critical reviews. Being influenced with the Kantian view of imagination for a shipping power Coleridge later coined the neologism "esemplastic." for the theory of imagination in the text *Biographia Literaria in which he comes under the influence of FWJ Von Schelling, David Hartley and the Associationist Psychology and explains different types of imagination as follows:*

1. Primary Imagination

- Power of perception
- Common to all human beings
- Shapes raw sensory experience

2. Secondary Imagination

- Creative power of the poet
- Dissolves and recreates reality
- Superior to fancy

3. Fancy

- Mechanical process
- Rearranges existing ideas
- Inferior to imagination

The above critical view is the evolution of the poetic theory in order to discard this mechanical system for the belief that the mind is not a passive but an active agent in the apprehension of reality.

The author believed in the "self-sufficing power of absolute Genius" and distinguished between genius and talent as between "an egg and an egg-shell". The first volume culminates in his gnomic definition of the imagination or "esemplastic power", the faculty by which the soul perceives the spiritual unity of the universe, as distinguished from the fancy or merely associative function. Coleridge writes: "The IMAGINATION ... I consider either as primary, or secondary. The primary IMAGINATION I hold to be the living Power and prime Agent of all human Perception, and as a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite I AM."

Samuel Taylor Coleridge is meant by fancy and imagination in the text *Biographia Literaria*- According to him, imagination is a creative, vital, and organic power of the human mind. It has the ability to shape, unify, and recreate experience, and it is essential for true poetic creation. Coleridge divides imagination into two kinds: **primary imagination**, which is the basic power of perception common to all human beings, and **secondary imagination**, which is the special creative power of the poet that dissolves and re-forms reality into new artistic expressions. In contrast, **fancy** is a mechanical and inferior mental faculty. It does not create anything new but merely rearranges existing ideas based on memory and association. Fancy is decorative rather than creative, while imagination gives poetry its depth and organic unity. Thus, Coleridge clearly establishes imagination as the foundation of genuine poetry and fancy as a lesser, superficial process.