

PREFACE

As a student and lately as a teacher of English literature I felt inclined to be intrigued by the power that makes a man a poet. It has always been a matter of wonder to consider how ordinary language which is tied down to the mundance business of life become at the hands of the poet an all together different utterance. As writers on Sanskrit rhetoric have used two significant expressions to distinguish the power in the poet which enables him to transform ordinary speech into magical accent. What after all is this power or faculty? Two words have been used to signify this power in man, which when properly developed turns the ordinary man into a poet. They are *Pratibhā* which literally means a sudden flash of light, and the other *apurva-vastu-nirman, kasāma*. It is in virtue of possessing *Pratibhā* in order to explain the possibility of man's grasping the super-sensuous truth. The poet is one such individual who is gifted to see beyond the bounds of the emperical. The Vedic adjective of the poet is *Krantā-darsī*, which means one who sees beyond. In short, the poet is a *seer* or *voyant* as the French poet Rimbaud longed to be one. Wordsworth in course of his poem on Peele-Castle has remarked that art invests ordinary things of life with a 'gleam', it illumines the common-place objects with 'The light that never was on sea or land'.

What we have been trying to focus on is the thing, by whichever term we choose to designate the power of the poet, be it *Pratibha* or the light that Wordsworth speaks about, nothing but what we call in English "imagination". The word has a long history, from ancient Greece to the culmination of Romanticism. We have devoted a chapter on the concept of imagination from Plato to Kant, with a view to look into the operation of imagination as a cognitive power of man. It has been agreed on all hands that in matter of creativity imagination is the king. The romantics, beginning with William Blake endeavoured to build a theory of knowledge around the central concept of imagination. In a chapter of romanticism we have taken into account the different shades of romantic movements, in England, in Germany and in France.

The English romantic movement was spear-headed by Blake, Wordsworth and Coleridge. Of these Coleridge was a philosopher of considerable significance and in his '*Biographia Literaria*' one meets with a fully developed theory of imagination. Coleridge has been one of our main figures of discussion

with reference to his theory of imagination and consequently we have a full-length study running into a couple of chapters on Coleridge.

At home, we have selected Rabindranath Tagore philosophical anthropology for the importance that imagination has in his scheme of ideas. In his Oxford lectures, the *Religion of Man*, Tagore describes imagination as 'lumunious' and says that it is most distinctively human of all our faculties. Our discussions on Tagore's ideas has demanded two chapters, one on the concept of creative imagination and the other on his thesis about the imagination in general.

We have attempted to bring together the two poet-philosophers from two different parts of the globe not only because both of them put a premium on imagination in matters of creativity, but also for the reason that both of them put a premium on imagination in matters of creativity, but also for the reason that both of them developed their ideas that have a very strong Kantian ring about them. Coleridges' debts to Kant are well known, but Tagore's resemblances with Kant are knowless. It has been one of our contention to show how the two poets, of two different cultures and languages do and can have a point of meeting in the philosophical writings of a third culture and language, i.e. Kant and the German literature.

We have added a sequel, or a chapter on the Indian Concept of *Pratibhā* with a view to highlights the correspondances between the concept of imagination in one hand and that of *Pratibhā* on the other hand.

Our study has been primarily a study in the history of ideas with special reference to Coleridge and Tagore as philosophers and not as poets. This is done on the conviction which was voiced by Coleridge himself that one could not be a poet unless he were a philosopher as well.

Finally there is a chapter on the workings of the imagination on the language of poetry. This chapter is confined to cases from English poetry. Owing to the difficulties in getting an adequate translations we have refrained from showing how the language in Tagore's poem is transformed into magic speech by his creative imagination. This piece of work is certainly worth-doing and is deferred till a competence and courage grows in me in adequate measure.