CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The concept of the poet is challenging in view of the fact that various traditions of different civilisations along with their approaches to art and life contribute to its formation. However, as we traverse the terrains of Vedic, Greek, Latin, Biblical, European and English literatures we observe subtle changes affecting the attitude towards the poet and his relation to his work but the myth of his imperishability has meanwhile been established. He exists within the well-wrought urn of life and art and yet by virtue of uniqueness eludes easy categorisation, rendering all efforts at conceptualisation challenging.

We can well begin by attending to a familiar remark about Indian civilisation that it had its beginning in poetry. The incipient stages of civilisations owed a great deal to the poets. The Vedic poet regulated the life of the community through ritualistic patterns and through poetry lent a shape to the Indian culture. There is not a single poem that is not connected with a ritualistic situation. This combination is the essence of the Vedic culture; this continued throughout the ages, when the ancient thoughts remained a living force in the nation. In fact the Vedic poets thrived in and were nurtured by a philosophical milieu. In the context of the *Rig Veda* there is a close relation between philosophy and poetry. Art, religion, literature and philosophy formed the potent coordinates of the Indian genius. This sense of totality is characteristic of the domain of the Vedic poet's philosophy. The concept of *kavi* revolves around the extraordinary ability of the individual to see through the miasma of ignorance into the clear ether of wisdom, the sense of ritual and metaphysics, and the adroitness and acumen in the handling of language. The poets always speak about their new contributions to the art of poetry. Thus, there is consistency, continuity and progression in their civilisation. The poets brought under discussion are Dirghatamas and Brihaspati from *Rig Veda*. Also, the relevant contributions of other poets are taken into consideration that inevitably supplement and compliment the whole act of 'theorising'. Also the Atharvanic poets make their contribution toward a uniform and organic concept that primarily hinges on

the rich and exemplary abilities of the *kavi*. Needless to say, a philosopher is a poet. A man who has realised the *truth* is recognised only when he is able to express his realisation through the medium of poetic language. There is also an indication that poetry is the only medium through which truth can be expressed. The concept of the poet in the Vedic aesthetics, thus, is a paramountly significant starting block in our quest. It is richly revealing in its epistemological intricacy as it stands to influence the later 'critical endeavours' towards the magnum query: who is a poet?

This inevitably brings us to dwell on the Greek aesthetics. To the Greeks, the poet has been an enigmatic person, at once looked upon with awe and wonder. It may be noted that since the conception about the nature of poetry has passed through changing phases along with the development of the Greek civilisation, different conceptions of the poet have also originated. Homer's name is used collectively for all epic poets. In the *Iliad* we are told that the Muses were the original poets who experienced the epic events as eye-witnesses and transmitted knowledge of them to later men. In the *Odyssey* the singers boast that they can sing all the events of the Trojan war and all that happens in the world in general. The point is that poetry is a sort of knowledge and the poet when he is blessed by the Muses comes to have a privileged access to this knowledge. This argument carries over from the Vedic poet's remarkable access to truth and wisdom. Our thesis can work convincingly on *Works and Days* and *Theogony* of Hesoid. Hesoid makes a point in *Theogony* that language of poetry is a departure from ordinary speech and that poetic genius is a gift by virtue of which the poet can explore the events in times that have gone and those that are to come. The *Vedas* speak of the poet as *vakpati*, the lord of speech. Indeed the Greeks assumed an elevated position for the poet. Hesoid displays his conviction of a prophetic mission. Sappho was Plato's tenth Muse; Simonides with typical Ionian clarity penned his works that bore *charis* and *sophia*; Theognis professes to enshrine the lessons of life in his verses; Pindar has the architectonic quality and the gift of the interpreting eye coupled with a soaring inspiration that lift him high with a spirit which is strong and sublime. The study will take us into a critical consideration of various issues from the works of various early Greek poets to arrive at a cogent and coherent idea of who the poet actually is.

However, Plato's indictment on the vocation of the poet should be an interesting point of critical departure. The Vedic and the Greek view of the poet can be put under the declamatory hammer. Behind Plato's concerns with art lies a conviction of the unity of all values, as seen in his dissatisfaction with functional and relativist definitions of 'beauty' or 'fineness', and the assumption of the latter's inseparability from goodness. But, from the earliest *Dialogues*, there are tensions visible in Plato's attitude to art, especially poetry. Working in a culture in which poetry was a serious influence on beliefs and ideas, not least through education (*Protagoras* 325e-326b), Plato disputes the ethical wisdom and religious insight traditionally ascribed to poets. He inherited this distrust from earlier philosophers such as Xenophanes and Heraclitus, as well as from his mentor, Socrates (*Euthyphro* 6b-c). Yet Plato evinces a strong fascination for poetry, emulating its dramatic and verbal qualities in his own writings. His Socrates often expresses deep respect for poetry, as well as a range of doubts about its credentials. Most consistently challenged is the idea that the poets possess a rationally explicable craft or 'artistry' (*techne*), though the practitioners of the visual arts are granted this status (for instance *Gorgias* 503e). Set against *techne*, if sometimes disingenuously, is the traditional conception of inspiration (*Apology* 21-2; *Ion*; *Meno* 99c-d). If the poets are inspired, they may offer valuable experiences which cannot be scrutinised with consistent clarity or expected to conform to predeterminable standards. If, however, poets do not know how or what they create, their status as guides to life (cf. *Lysis* 214a 1-2) must be suspect and the powerful emotions which they undoubtedly evoke (*Ion* 535) may be psychologically dangerous. The pleasure of art stands in an uneasy relation to ethical aims (*Gorgias* 501-2). Yet Plato is able to allow for 'internal' aesthetic principles, such as those of form, organisation and coherence (for example, *Phaedrus* 268-9 & the *Republic* 4.4 20c-d). However, if one cares to introspect into the texts of the *Republic*, *Ion*, *Cratylus* and several others of Plato's dialogues, a different kind of judgement about his concept of the poet comes forth. This is not egregiously antagonistic. So an *ambivalence* springs from Plato's tirades against the poets and his effort to place them wisely within the circuit of his republic with the demands of morality and justice.

This ambivalence comes to be clarified at the hands of Aristotle. He defends poetry against the diatribe, though he never mentions Plato by name. He wrote a dialogue *On the Poets*, which is lost, and we cannot make any reliable guess about what it contained. It is necessary to say here that though he shows a tendency to formulate a moral view of poetry, as in his concept of the tragic protagonist, he is not blind to the aesthetic side of imitation, for imitation, according to him, is the basic instinct of the human mind, and is not merely an instrument of instruction but a pleasurable activity that is its own justification. Aristotle works on an undisputed fact that a handful of men are poets and the majority are not. Fortunately, although Aristotle insists on fidelity to truth – or what in his simple, unobtrusive way he calls likeness – he means by repetition much more than a bare repetition of what we have in life. Emphasis on the means of imitation is one of Aristotle's major contributions to aesthetic theory. Poetry, for him, is only a mimetic art that gives us pleasure and is an aid to learning. A poet is just a maker of stories, and like other makers he manipulates his materials and gives them a proper form. He should observe the golden mean in everything. Aristotle's emphasis on form, on the poet's ability to give beauty and universality to his stories, a recognition of the gradual development of poetic activity and the poet's power to organise his materials restore largely the glory of poetry. The neoclassic followers of Aristotle have tried to petrify his observations into hard and fast rules but it is the primary value of his criticism that it provokes questions and doubts.

This assumption that the poet is the 'maker' takes on a different dimension with the Psalms in the Old Testament. Babette Deutsch has defined poetry as "the art which uses words as both speech and song to reveal the realities that the senses record, the feeling salute, the mind perceives, and the shaping imagination orders". (Hugh 1972:405) The Vedic and the Greek poetry amply justify their status and Old Testament poetry, too, cannot be left behind. Scriptures can regulate our interest from the aesthetic to the semantic; but such an approach can cause serious damage to the beauty of poetry itself. In fact, the semantic and the aesthetic are interwelded to spark an interpretation that homes in on meaning and beauty. Scripture tells us virtually nothing about the poets; there are allusions to David, and there are references to what we might call certain "guilds" of poets, such as are probably alluded to in the Psalms to "Asaph" and the

"sons of Korah". Elsewhere (Num. XXI:27) mention is made of *moshlim*, for which a possible translation might be "minstrels". In the absence of any direct information about the poets, we are left completely dependent upon the poems. So the *Book of Psalms*, perhaps the most rhythmic and expressive, has been chosen as the text under discussion to theorise the concept of the Poet. Vedas, early Greek poetry and the Psalms demand a theoretical approach that can *figure out* the concept of the creator underlying the poems. There is no point in burning one's fingers in the intriguing questions of the translatability and untranslatability of Vedic, Greek or Hebrew poetry for, the preponderating thrust of the entire dissertation is not primarily on the rigours of semantics or the stylistics but on the *inherent* theory that supposedly contributes to the ideation of the *creator* or the creative matrix. So we need not cross swords with Frost when he says that poetry is lost in translation. However, a combination of interpretation and rereading of the psalms would invalidate Frost's subsequent remark: "It is also what is lost in interpretation". (Untermeyer 1964: 18) The authorship of the Psalms is not our point of study; but the *interpretation* can surely lead us to the complex ambience of an aesthetics of creation that does not name the poet but brings the creative self and its principles under the rubric of the Poet. This is in consonance with our thesis where the concern is scarcely with the making of the individual poet but certainly with the ontology of the *creative being*.

This was again an important issue in the medieval aesthetics where a school of criticism believed that the problems of aesthetics were not the object of any genuine interests and were most often smothered in theology. Baumgarten described aesthetics by means of such expressions as *scientia cognitionis*, *sensitivae*, *theoria liberalium artium*, *ars pulcre cogitandi*, and *ars analogi rationis* which disclaimed any coherent aesthetic theory, barring a few exceptions. However, when we have the principles of beauty under discussion, an aesthetic theory can obviously be disentangled. *Ars* signified the technique for constructing objects which had been inherited from the Greek word *techne*. And since artistic experience is somehow connected with aesthetic experience it would be profitable to look into the relation between the Scholastic theory of art and the Scholastic philosophy of beauty. Despite the absence of any extensive study of the problems of aesthetics, St. Augustine was an outstanding exception whose energy and

intellectual drive threw up several issues which can become useful in our theorisation of the concept of the creative self. Historiographies from Glunz, Eugenio Garin, or Edgar de Bruyne show a degree of awareness of poetic creation in the medieval artists. Poets were aware of their creative and expressive activity and poetry was conferred with a revelatory value with penetrating insight and rhetorical skill. However, this is beyond our purview. Moreover, the inconsistencies of the texts make the job highly demanding. Our focus then has to be on the philosophy of beauty to arrive at a concept of the creator for, even Thomas Aquinas, whose ideas are our main area of research, had his interests not in poetry but in the ontological character of beauty. Interestingly, himself a poet, he possesses the creative breadth and an innate sense of music. His concept of beauty and ideas on poetry have a rhythm that needs a careful exploration. Harmony, the prime principle for both the writers mentioned, puts them at the hub of a creative process where the accent is on the imperatives of consonance and proportion. So the aesthetics of Aquinas bear a concreteness that is helpful for our study. We can, thus, dwell on Augustine and Aquinas for the theoretical realisation of a concept of the creator which one struggles to arrive at in the rather incoherent ambience of medieval aesthetics.

Things start taking shape with more critical emphasis on the *man* behind creation with the Renaissance which is essentially a revolt against the other worldly view of life. It is a reassertion of this world as a place of boundless possibilities and of man being capable of realising these possibilities in himself. The rediscovery and reinterpretation of antiquity gave birth to a new culture – that of humanism; the general impression is one of free and frank boldness. A wide initiative was left to individuals. In fact it is for the first time in the period of the Renaissance that English criticism develops itself, if not with entire independence, yet with sufficient conformity to its own needs. It was one of the greatest achievements of Renaissance criticism that it made a commendable effort to understand the poetic art and its aesthetic values. What perhaps held the greatest concern for all is the function of poetry. Poetry was taken to be a civilising factor in history. It had refinement and elevation of humanity as its chief function. Action being the test of all studies, poetry was valued in that it conduced to righteous and noble action. Without being caught in the maze of criticism coming from Guarino, Bruni, Ascham, Gascoigne, Puttenham, Campion, Daniel, Webbe and the rest, we can dwell on

Sidney's *An Apology for Poetry* for, it is not only a work of genius but also a very valuable treatise being the epitome of Renaissance criticism. Many fundamental truths and principals of universal importance are enunciated. Aristotelianism, Platonism and Horaceanism are brought into freer play. He defends poetry against the bilious charges of it being immoral, debilitating and provocative of debauchery and in the process holds out a concrete and organic concept of the poet. Our discussion on Aristotle and Plato could be of good use here as Sidney's concept of the poet draws on these two sources in sufficient measure. However, the introduction of Ben Jonson as another segment of discussion, alongside Sidney could be interesting for he balanced the idealising strain and saw danger in its unbridled course. A Bacon and a Shakespeare, the former more than the latter, have their own lights to guide them, but the rest did not have the same advantage. The concept of the poet in Jonsonian aesthetics, thus, changes with ideas taken from Italian sources, especially by way of the Dutch professor Daniel Heinius. Study, practise, imitate, he says. The poet for him is a *maker* as it is with Sidney but the difference is obvious. He has little faith in 'unpremeditated art'. His version of Neoclassicism was strongly oriented towards 'brevity' and 'vigour', in opposition to his contemporaries, the Metaphysicals. (Sidnell 1991:125) And yet as has been seen, he is not against exploring new paths, provoded they conform to nature and reason and are better than those shown by the ancients. So with Jonson's concept of the poet it becomes easy for us to enter the territory of neoclassicism.

As a result of Renaissance extravagance and undisciplined individualism, a need was felt for purging the excess and infusing order, decorum, measure and respect for the general sense. In the effort to obtain them, it appealed to authority and tradition on the one hand and to reason and expediency on the other.

> Be sure your self and your own Reach to know
> How far your Genius, Taste, and Learning go,
> Launch not beyond your Depth (*An Essay on Criticism*, II. 48-50)

In fact, with the French neoclassicists, the aesthetics of neoclassicism was well manicured with the prospect of greater harvest across the channel. The renaissance

theorists emphasised generality but their art was predominantly oriented towards moral improvement in contradistinction to the neoclassical theorists who oriented their aesthetics towards general truths about the world and humanity. There is a control over creativity with the exercise of greater judgement and measure. However, the *escape clauses* complicate the neoclassical aesthetics of creation which obviously become our major points of interest. These variations in principle, thus, affect the concept of the poet with a newfound delicacy. This was an age above all of empiricism, but it is an empiricism that sometimes got modified by an idealism derived from quite a different philosophical tradition. It is from this tradition that Shaftesbury sprang whose ideas on aesthetics, primarily on creative imagination, would be difficult to reconcile with Johnson's distrust of imagination. Dryden, writing within the strict neoclassical perimeter, can still make his spokesman Neander throw emphasis on the "lively" image of human nature and thus on the value of local intensities (Dryden1970:25) to throw, if not heavy handedly, a gauntlet at the principles of decorum. These exceptions keep coming with Dr. Johnson as well and it has been argued in this dissertation that even Reynolds's aesthetics strike new depths with the painter being shown as the *poetical painter*. Johnson, it need to be observed, denies an *a priori* absolute status to the Neoclassical rules. No man has been ever great by imitation done merely under 'rules'. The contours of the creative self are created around a critical vilification for those principles that show utter disregard for life and nature and encourage incredible fictions with sentiments 'which neither passion nor reason could have dictated'. Rambler 37 (Johnson1968:205) Also the new field of philosophical aesthetics adds a distinct intellectual dimension to our search of the concept of the poet. The new aestheticians questioning the nature of beauty in art, literature or music sought their answers in terms of universal human response. The neoclassical sunshine was hard to evade but the internal fissures promised potential future developments. This makes our job even more challenging. With the Age of Sensibility supervening the Augustan Period, the cerebral cognate is displaced by feeling and emotional response. *Enthusiasm* and *sublime* became the key operative words and a new subjectivist appeal emerged to seize the aesthetics of creation. The way in which Joseph Warton distinguishes between different

levels of poetry in *Essay on the Genius and Writings of Pope* clearly reveals the difficulty in our thesis.

> In the first class I would place our only three sublime and pathetic poets: Spenser, Shakespeare, Milton. In the second class should be ranked such as possessed the true poetical genius in more moderate degree, but who had noble talents for moral, ethical, and panegyrical poetry ...In the third class may be placed men of wit, of elegant taste, and lively fancy in describing familiar life, though not the higher scenes of poetry. (Sigworth 1971:293-94)

Without arguing over the justification of relegating Pope to the lowest rung, which is irrelevant to our argument, we can bring home the message of a *contrariety* in the aesthetics of the age that inevitably breeds complexity. Such opposition sends out positive signals for an upheaval that completely alters the concept of the poet with the onset of the Romantic Movement.

Before we figure out the 'change', a critical discussion on Immanuel Kant's views on imagination and genius are required for he remains a key source to the romantic literary theory. For him aesthetic response involves a distinctive bent of mind and aesthetic pleasure is no mere passive reception of sensations. There is the emphasis on the aesthetic perspective that envelops the familiar things of everyday life with an unfamiliar glow. It is the poet's power to *defamiliarise*. Also involved is the unconscious creativity which can be attributed as synthesis. Under the Kantian aesthetics the creative self can be seen to unify the sense-data not as a mere agglomeration but as an incorporation that transcends the matrix of numberless images. This synthesising activity exacerbates the qualitative function of imagination. Kant argues that the poetic use of imagination has significance in its own right. This creative power of the imagination is exhibited by genius which Kant calls the 'faculty of aesthetic ideas'. Rational ideas transcend nature, and aesthetic ideas surpass it by transforming and enriching experience.

With the emphasis on the transforming power of the imagination and the concept of *geist* and aesthetical ideas, Kant, thus, prepares the ground for a discussion of the romantic literary theory. Flushed with irrepressible literary energies, we encounter peaks of poetic intensity and exaltation. The aesthetics of creation concentrates on an inner essence and a quality of thought and vision, rather than on a simple recognisable category of outward form. The poet, hence, shines out in his radical individualism as he stands amidst the 'inner circle' politics of a Dryden and Shelleyan Utopian politics. This is the theory that is all inclusive, believing in wholeness and unity. It was Friedrich Schlegel who first coined the term 'Romantic' as a derivation from the German *roman*. A.W. Schlegel's observation can be quite pertinent:

> the romantic delights in indissoluble mixtures; all contrarieties: nature and art, poetry and prose, seriousness and mirth, recollection and anticipation, spirituality and sensuality, terrestrial and celestial, life and death, are blended together in the most intimate combination. (Foakes 1968:59)

Romantic literary theory, thus, calls for an entirely different concept of the creative self. It was at one with Aristotle in considering delight as the object of literature. But it was achieved not by a mechanical application of rules but by the power of imagination and the poet's intuitive and emotional reaction to his subject. It did not also regard the 'kinds' of literature as immutably fixed, and introduced and revived forms unknown to the ancients. In a word it left genius free to pursue its own course, not minding how it did its work so long as it did it well. The concept of the poet was the culmination of the sporadic protests of the neoclassicists themselves against the rigidity of their creed. The 'sealed patterns' that formulated the neoclassical concept gave way to an aesthetics that was blessedly unsure about the contours of the poet's being. The *freedom*, thus generated, evolved the enthusiasm, the energy, the transforming power of the genius and the momentous upheaval in language to thrash out a new concept with its potentialities and possibilities and the accompanying 'perils' of such responses.

The major peril that such a movement brought was the divisiveness in critical approaches and the validity of continuing with such a concept of the creator. On the question of the function of poetry the Victorians found themselves divided into two groups. Carlyle and Ruskin graced one side of the fence and Pater and Oscar Wilde stood at the other. Arnold may be said to stand midway between the two. Seeing the threat posed by rational scepticism and the Satanic mills of industrialism to the bastion of religion and morality, Carlyle and Ruskin picked up the cudgels in their defence. To them art and morals were interdependent. Carlyle expected the lofty rhyme to communicate a lofty vision to the reader. For him the poet should be nothing less than a seer. Pater and Wilde reasserted the right of art to be a pleasurable pursuit by itself, untrammelled by any ethical or social considerations. As a matter of fact, Arnold's view of the function of poetry takes the middle course between these two extremist stands. While it was not the business of the poet to compose moral and didactic poems, he could not overlook the fact that poetry was the unified expression of thought and art; it is a powerful and beautiful application of ideas to life. Victorian England was most in need of an answer to the question: How to live? Religion and philosophy had both failed her in her hour of need. At this hour, Arnold's poet was to provide the answer. The *Preface* to the 1853 volume of poems – a manifesto of classicism in an age of subjectivism and individualism in poetry – is an important utterance at a critical moment of English literary history. Arnold learnt from the masters of the antiquity the cardinal doctrine that fine bits of thought, however melodious, must be subordinated to the total impression. He writes: 'every one knows how we seek naturally to combine the pieces of our knowledge together... and how unsatisfactory and tiresome it would be to go on for ever learning lists of exceptions, or accumulating items of facts which must stand isolated'. (1953:336) True poetry does not consist in 'exquisite bits and images'. For him 'poetry reconciles [man] with himself and the universe'. (Arnold1962:33) He was always conscious of the noble function of poetry and of its immense possibilities. Poetry needs to follow the principles of poetic truth and poetic beauty where matter and expression, form and content should go hand in hand. He disapproves of strong individualism and dislikes 'our hatred of all limits to the unrestrained swing of the individual's personality, our maxim of "every man for himself".' (Arnold1960:49) So to

deem poetry as a source of consolation and delight becomes the strongest vocation of the poet. It is difficult to see how this approach, though opposed to open didacticism, is basically different from that of the neo-classicists. But he searched for the best that was known and thought in the world, and this he found both in neoclassicism and romanticism. The concept of the poet has the blend of the two traditions – aligning with Wordsworth and Shelley in promoting the general capacity for morality and cultivating a quasi-religious mood of deep solemnity - with the tilt in favour of the classical.

But the aesthetics of the creative self in the Victorian age cannot do without Carlyle's concept of the Poet. He is one of the most powerful transmitters of the German aesthetic philosophy. Condemning analytic science he brings poetry and truth in a hallowed alliance. From early manhood to old age, Carlyle was aware of a vocation and responsibility to bear witness to the Divine nature of the true man and to speak and write of the truth as far as it lay in him to do so, and thus, to transmit the message of God to man in his generation. If *On Heroes, Hero-Worship and the Heroic in History* is not the best work of Carlyle, it is certainly the most popular. Anti-scientific in his reading of history, Carlyle is also antidemocratic in the practical lessons he deduces from it. He teaches that our right relations with the Hero are that of teacher and pupil, that we should acknowledge his superiority and revere him. He insists that the only hope for our distracted world of today lies in the strength and wisdom of the few, not in the organised unwisdom of the many. The burden of history is for him always the need of the Able Man. This should bring us to the third lecture, 'Hero as Poet' where the poet holds the centre stage as the Able Man, the inspired soul vouchsafed to us, direct from Nature's own great fire-heat, to *see* the Truth, *speak* it and *do* it. He has the 'seeing eye' and the 'inspired' vision. Here is the poet-prophet who is sent to diagnose and understand the spiritual malady of the age, to interpret the age to itself by articulating the thoughts which other earnest men suppress or leave unuttered. With the accentuated emphasis on 'individualism', Carlyle's Poet is the Great Man.

Continuing with the emphasis on the poet as the seer or *rishi*, we can analyse Sri Aurobindo's aesthetics for more critical revelation. We can say that in Sri Aurobindo's philosophical anthropology human existence is full of possibilities, that man as such has an unavoidable tendency towards self-exceeding. The growth of man's self awareness is

a growing process of integration. The human quest is a search for a mode of self awareness which can prove more effective in harmonising the lower and the higher. For Aurobindo, 'the rational or intellectual man is not the last and the highest ideal of manhood. The spirit that manifests itself in man and dominates secretly the phases of his development, is greater and profounder than his intellect'.(Aurobindo 1949:124) He believes that 'the intellect is not the poet or the artist, the creator within us; creation comes by a suprarational influx of light and power which must work always by vision and inspiration'.(159) The metaphysical proof of the possibility of art is entailed by his view that the spiritual evolution of man himself necessitates the aesthetic harmonisation of man's complex infra-rational sediments of existence, meditated by the rational in terms of the suprarational. Brushing aside the tradition led by Hobbes and Ryle, he points to the complexity of the creative process. Creative activity does not consist merely in the reshuffling of discrete elements of atomic contents and experienced forms into other combinations. The product of the creative mind is not a mere combination, but a creation in the sense that no behaviourist or mechanist can admit.

It is exciting to observe the remarkable diversity in the principles of creative aesthetics when Tagore is placed within the framework of the modernist poetics. It is really difficult to imagine that Tagore and Eliot, with so remarkable divergence in vision and method, were writing in tandem at the first half of the twentieth century. So, before venturing into the modernist and the postmodernist arena, Tagorean aesthetic remains compulsively as a significant node in our quest .His literary criticism and pieces on theory of criticism comprise an important area of study. He is certainly not a philosopher of art as Hegel is. In fact the question of primary importance, for him, is somewhat Kantian: How is art possible? He uses the term 'art' to include the processes of creativity, communication, appreciation or criticism. Of these the creative process could be considered as the necessary condition of the phenomenon of art. A clue to Tagore's conception of the creative process in art may be found in his identification of the creator with either a child or a woman. This identification is not explained in terms of psychology, it is rather a symbolical interpretation of the creative process. Tagore intends thereby to relate creative work to some fundamental human characteristics. Much of his critical writings on art is symbolism and based upon the primal and

elemental experience of human life. His critical concepts such as 'personality' and 'surplus in man' map, as it were, the twin domains of art and anthropology. As a romantic thinker, Tagore's philosophical ideas evince an increased regard for man's creative capacities, in particular, and a new concept of the human imagination as leading to an autonomous realm of transcendent value. The consequence of Tagore's increased regard for the imagination is the growing subjectivity in art, an increasingly deliberate turn within the mind of man. A poem owes its form to the touch of the person who *produces* it. Tagore's idea of uniqueness of the human person (for us the poet) corresponds to the romantic notion of intensity by way of emphasising personal feeling. Primacy of the person is one of Tagore's aesthetic faiths. The ontology of the creative self is free from the necessity of nature and utilitarianism; it is a transcendent entity which is 'non natural' With his expressionism differing from Croce, Tagore's theory of art is non-hedonistic, non-teleological and based on an argument from freedom.

'The interval between the two world wars was in literary criticism a period of revolution. In this it resembles the first decades of the nineteenth century, when the critical principles of the Romantic movement overwhelmed an older code of polite decorum. Both revolutions were accelerated by all-engulfing warfare and political upheaval in Europe, and both were launched by poets clearing a public space for their own innovations in verse; but whereas the earlier revolution seemed to have behind it the inexorable groundswell of insurgence, the later triumph of modernist criticism gave the appearance of being a sudden putsch. More calculating, more conspiratorial, in its deliberate subversion, the modernist faction of literary criticism emerged at the end of the Great War from the underworld of Ezra Pound's coteries and little magazines with a decisive new leader, cunningly disguised as a London bank clerk.' (Baldick 1996:64) In fact the modernist poetics comes to be represented largely through T.S. Eliot as there is no better poet-critic than this 'international hero'. The attempts to demythify Eliot's reputation have been, perhaps, slightly overdone primarily because of the 'atomistic' attitude of Eliot's critic. In the teeth of the charge of 'cleft Eliot', one can still argue convincingly in favour of a homogenous oeuvre of Eliot which has an ingrained singular unity contributing to a coherent concept of the poet. He developed a critical point of view against the contrary winds of doctrine past and present, and with singular

integrity refused to be side tracked by any one-sided theory or method. His classicism is a living order that engenders an 'integration' in which the binaries of formalism and freedom are reconciled. This principle of classicism is subsumed under 'tradition', the vital principle of growth and order operative in man's spiritual, social and creative spheres. His concept of poetry as an impersonal art mediates between the extremes of uncontrolled automatism and mechanical calculation. He defines criticism as the objective study of art that leads to impersonal judgement and thus mediates between the polarities of undisciplined impressionism and dogmatic fixation of rules. His method and technique which are in accord with his concept of poetry and criticism, scrupulously guards against the two kinds of excess – those of 'anarchism' and 'specialism'. So in an aesthetic that harmonises the contraries, the concept of the poet crystallises with the principles of integration and stability. His aesthetic has a greater stability than Dryden or Johnson or Arnold. He has assimilated and transcended them by grounding his criticism in a deeper aesthetic insight as to the nature of poetry and the poet. It is an insight that he shares with Coleridge and Mallarme into that creative centre of art where vitality and order are one.

With Eliot, the rage of depersonalisation and demythification of the authorial sovereignty catches on a new steam. When Eliot claims that the poet should be the servant of his language, rather than master of it, the first decisive nail in the writer's coffin has been hit. As 'deliberation' in poetic acts gets undermined, the poet is *written through* by language. The poem is said to exists 'somewhere between the writer and the reader; it has a reality which is not simply the reality of what the writer is trying to express'. (Eliot 1964:30) *It resonates with several possibilities of meaning.* It is here that the reader cuts his ground out from the writer's empire. Eliot maintains:

> A poem may appear to mean very different things to different readers, and all these meanings may be different from what the author thought he meant .... The reader's interpretation may differ from the author's and be equally valid – it may even be better. There may be much more in a poem than the author was aware of. (1957: 30-1)

So the genetic relation between the authorial intention and the meaning of the work comes to be subverted. And what applies to individual readers also applies to whole generations – 'each generation, like each individual, brings to the contemplation of art its own categories of appreciation, makes its own demands upon art, and has its own uses for art.'(Eliot 1964:109) In contrast to modernist writer's objective to reinvigorate perception which had been stultified by habit and language left rancid by clichés, the postmodernist critic questions the very nature of perception and language. He reflects upon language and literature and the very *writing* of the text; he cannot conceive of a text prior to his 'production' of it through a critical enterprise.

> But once we deny the sovereignty of consciousness, surrendering its powers to Language, then, just as surely as the individual gives way to the 'subject', so Literature gives way to 'writing'(*ecriture*), and the artistic 'work', considered as the product of an integral mind, must give way to the *text*, that is, to a web of signs with no organizing centre. (Baldick 1996:164)

It appears that our very 'thesis' stands to get dismantled under the heralding banner of an authorial demise. But deconstruction can be *deconstructed* with logical reasoning to turn the tables on those exuberant critics determined to decimate the author. However, we should not assume that the poet remained the same when man's relation to reality has undergone a sea-change. It is the poet who grows complex, as T.S. Eliot has argued, no less capable of giving expression to the present view of reality which is indeterminate, plural and even self-deconstructing. The poet himself has become postmodern in that he exists by dispersing or absenting himself in/from the text. This is not the Vedic *Kavi* - sovereign in his creation – but one who himself becomes the critic; he knows his limitations and understands the privilege to enrich himself from the reader's role of more as a *doer* than a *knower*. Our reading, thus, concludes with the conviction that it is the role of the creative self that has undergone several changes; it has not died. That it has not is evinced by the plethora of 'deconstructive' activity it initiates. The author/poet can be shown to exist even in a text that is riven by

irreconcilable self-contradictions and fundamental instabilities. So although the poet varies in his potency and primacy, his existence can never be questioned.

I change, but I cannot die. (Shelley, "The Cloud" 76)