S.T. COLERIDGE

\*S.T.Coleridge was one of the most vigorous among the first generation Romanticists.

\*He was a poet, a philosopher, a critic, a theologian and a moralist rolled into one.

\*Coleridge, like Wordsworth, went through a phase of revolutionary ardour.

\*Though Coleridge and Wordsworth both were Romantic poets, however, they were poets of different essence. Unlike in Wordsworth’s poems, where the central thesis is nature’s relation to man, Coleridge’s poetry veers around his moral concern and his fascination for the unknown.

\*In his poetry, Coleridge presents natural details with a magic entirely of his own. It is in the subtler, more spiritual. Indeed, the very centre of Coleridge’s art lies in his faculty of evoking the mystery of things, and making it actual, widespread and obsessing. For example, in ‘The Rime of the Ancient Mariner’ the poet makes us to believe that there is an overseeing power/spirit behind all our destiny;- this spirit, in good faith , binds man and bird and beast into one mystical body and fellowship( Besides spirituality, the poem also exhibits romantic matrices such as the emotions of guilt and desire).. Coleridge explores nature in a distinctly supernatural way through references to the Polar spirit and the fate of the vessel. This makes us view nature differently and to see it as something that is at its core supernatural.

\*The most apparent and pervading element in ‘The Rime of the Ancient Mariner’ is the supernatural. The poem narrativizes a journey from innocence to experience and it is from this journey that the poem draws its basic thread of ‘Romance’.

\*’The Ancient Mariner’ is broadly conspicuous by its deeply engaged philosophical import, which is considerably supplemented by the element of magic-supernaturalism.

\*The poem has a ballad-like directness (The poem opens with the abrupt and impersonal third-person narration of the traditional ballad: “It is an ancient Mariner/And he stoppeth one of three….’). At a particular juncture of the journey of the Mariner, events grow to be graver, more strange. An Albatross appears, which is shown to be a bird of good omen; but later, the Mariner’s wanton shooting of it causes a serious crisis. The tone of the poem now grows to be ominous and after the crisis of the action is developed, the poem makes a revelation of sort about the cause of the crisis; it is that: the shooting was a gratuitous act of destruction and a violation of a deep natural sanctity. The poem dwells upon the cause that had fallen upon the Mariner and how the curse later got greatly mitigated as a result of the Mariner’s recognition of the beauty and happiness of the water snakes. Thus the poem is about the power of nature in restoration of hope and regeneration of the living spirit in man. An oversimplified moral emerges from the complex powerful narrative of the poem. The wants to show how the Mariner’s killing of the Albatross violated a fundamental principle in nature, and how he had to pay for it.

\*’Kubla Khan’ presents a metaphysical picture in which the protagonist hears ancestral voices prophesying that war will break out soon.

\*The poem is supposed to be the recreation of a dream that Coleridge saw when he had fallen asleep while reading. That is why, the poem retains the qualities of a visionary dream. The poem starts with the proposed palace of Kubla Khan and ends with the personal reaction of the poet to such a palace.-The poem thus is a unique example of the Romantic imagination.

\*The poem is a true product of Coleridge’s’ poetic imagination (pleasure-dome, sacred river, panting fountain, caves of ice, ecstatic figure with flashing eyes and floating hair etc.). An excerpt from the poem (the opening description of the pleasure-dome):

“In Xanadu did Kubla Khan/ A stately pleasure-dome decree:/Where Alph, the sacred river, ran/Through caverns measureless to man/Down to a sunless sea-“

\*The irregular metre of the poem contributes sufficiently to the dream like ambience of the poem, for in a dream things move quite irregularly.

\*It is the most perfect example of what might be called the purely magical strain in Coleridge’s poetry.

\*Coleridge sought to show the supernatural in nature as being something that was wholly natural, and Wordsworth sought to show the natural as something that was strangely supernatural. One of the primary differences between the two is how each treats nature in his work. Wordsworth, in his self-proclaimed writing like the common man, often expresses a nostalgic appreciation for nature, as can be seen in “Tintern Abbey”. On the other hand, Coleridge’s character, the mariner from “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner,” scorns nature and only learns to respect it, not necessarily to love it. Killing the ‘Albatross’ is committing mistakes against the nature which is needed to be avenged. And the persona is avenged by the nature. In Coleridge’s poem, Nature is placed in god-like position which needs to be respected.

\*A reader seemingly by instinct, Coleridge grew up surrounded by books at school, at home, and in his aunt’s shop. The dreamy child’s imagination was nourished by his father’s tales of the planets and stars and enlarged by constant reading. Through this, “my mind had been habituated to the Vast—& I never regarded my senses in any way as the criteria of my belief. I regulated all my creeds by my conceptions not by my sight—even at that age.” Romances and fairy tales instilled in him a feeling of “the Great” and “the Whole.”