In the preceding Chapters we have often referred to the creative freedom inherent in the faculty of Imagination. There was, however, a misconception during the Romantic period in England regarding Aristotle's definition of poetry as a mode of imitation. By a mode of imitation we mean a mere process of reproduction. But is it really possible for a man of the stature of Aristotle to think of poetry in such low terms? Let us try to find it out from Aristotle himself.

In the very first Chapter of his Poetics Aristotle says:

"Epic poetry and Tragedy, as also Comedy, Dithyrambic poetry, and most flute-playing and lyre-playing, are all viewed as a whole, modes of imitation". (Ingram Bywater's Translation; p. 23).

In the next paragraph again, the definition is extended to all other Arts (excepting Architecture).

'Imitation' in Aristotle's definition is the English rendering of the Greek word 'Mimesis'. Plato in the tenth book of the Republic used the word 'Mimesis' in the sense of reproduction of external realities and sense-experiences. His anxiety to banish representational poetry from the ideal Republic was based on his conception of Art as mere imitation or photographic representation of external realities which themselves are no realities at all. Let us just quote one passage from Plato:
"Then apparently we have come to a thorough agreement on this, that the imitative man has no knowledge of any value on the subjects of his imitation; that imitation is a form of amusement and not a serious occupation; and that those who write tragic poetry in iambics and hexameters are all imitators in the highest degree?"

(The Republic, Book X, pp. 304-305 in Dr. Lindsay's translation in Everyman's Library Series).

Aristotle, however, was no supporter of the banishment of poetry. His Poetics is an exposition of poetry in the spirit of a friend of poetry. It is rather a defence of poetry against the attacks of his master Plato. It seems strange, therefore, at first sight, that Aristotle should deny creative freedom to the poet. If, however, we read between the lines, we shall find that there are so many passages in the Poetics in which Aristotle has definitely emphasised the creative power of the poet.

In Chapter 2, Aristotle has the following lines:
"This difference it is that distinguishes Tragedy and Comedy also; the one would make its personages worse, and the other better, than the man of the present day". (pp. 26 - 27).

Now as soon as Tragedy and Comedy deviate from the world of actuality in making men better or worse, the question of mere imitation does not arise. Both Tragedy and Comedy represent the excess of actuality, accepting the men of the present day as the norm.

Take, again, a few lines from Chapter 9, where Aristotle
speaks of the distinction between poetry and history:

"... it consists really in this, that the one describes the thing that has been, and the other a kind of thing that might be". (p. 43).

The above remark proves beyond doubt that according to Aristotle poetry is never a literal transcript of things. And yet, in the very same chapter, Aristotle speaks of 'Imitation' in regard to poetry:

"... the poet must be more the poet of his stories or plots than of his verses, in as much as he is a poet by virtue of the imitative element in his work, and it is actions that he imitates". (Ibid. pp. 44–45).

Apparently, therefore, Aristotle has been using the word 'Mimesis' in a sense altogether different from that of mere reproduction. This is also clear in the following sentence:

"So that one must not aim at a rigid adherence to the traditional stories on which tragedies are based". (p. 44).

Creative freedom has been granted to the poet in the following sentence of Chapter 14:

"... there is something left to the poet himself; it is for him to devise the right way of treating them." (p. 53).

To take, again, the following remark:

"As Tragedy is an imitation of personages better than the ordinary man, we in our way should follow the example of good portrait-painters, who reproduce the distinctive features of a man, and at the same time, without losing the likeness, make him handsomer
than he is. The poet in like manner, in portraying men quick or slow to anger, or with similar infirmities of character, must know how to represent them as such, and at the same time, as good men, as Agathon and Homer have represented Achilles." (p. 57).

Poetry, therefore, as we have already stated in the previous chapter, has a likeness to the objective world of reality, but it also transcends that.

In Chapter 24 of the Poetics Aristotle tells us that "the marvellous is certainly required in Tragedy" (p. 83), and "A likely impossibility is always preferable to an unconvincing possibility". (p. 84).

Chapter 25 tells us the same thing: "For the purpose of poetry a convincing impossibility is preferable to an unconvincing possibility." (p. 84).

We therefore find a great similarity between the remarks of Aristotle and the theory of Rasa in Sanskrit Poetics which states that the poet may alter anything from the world of reality in order to suit his poetry. Anything that may be transmuted into Rasa may have its place in poetry, whether it tallies or not with the factual world.

The lines already quoted from Aristotle leave no room for doubt that he allows full creative freedom to the artist. But this would be impossible in the context of an exact reproduction of real life. What, actually, therefore, is meant by 'imitation' in the Poetics?
Aristotle does not tell us what it is that the artist imitates. The word 'poet', as Sidney tells us, "cometh of this word Poiein, which is to make; wherein, I know not whether by luck or wisdom, we Englishmen have met with Greeks in calling him a maker".


Making is imitation of actions. But, to the question: making of what kind, Aristotle gives no answer in his definition of poetry. The definition itself, therefore, does not mean a denial of the creative activity of the poet.

Sidney in his Apology for Poetry speaks of poetry as the highest creative art:

"... so as he (the poet) goeth hand in hand with Nature, not inclosed within the narrow warrant of her gifts, but freely ranging only within the Zodiac of his own wit." (op. cit., p. 8).

But even after granting so much of freedom to the poet, Sidney tells us:

"Poesy therefore is an art of imitation, for so Aristotle termeth it in his word Mimesis, that is to say, a representing, counterfeiting, or figuring forth". (op. cit., p. 10).

Sidney speaks of the religious poets in the next paragraph who "did imitate the inconceivable excellencies of God. Such were David in his Psalms, Solomon in his song of songs." (op. cit., p. 10). But the religious poets cannot be called imitators in the ordinary English sense of the term.
Again, Sidney gives an example of the painter who painted "Lucretia whom he never saw". (op. cit., p. 11). There can be no question of reproduction in this case. And yet Sidney goes on speaking of 'imitation' in the context.

While contrasting History and Poetry, Sidney considers the feigned (i.e., imaginary) example of Poetry as better than the true example of History, "sith the feigned may be tuned to the highest key of passion". (p. 21). Again, he calls the poet the monarch of all Science: "Now therein of all Science, is our Poet the Monarch". (p. 25). And yet, all the time, the poet is referred to as an imitator.

Contrasting the poet with other artists, Sidney says:

"Whereas other Arts retain themselves within their subject, and receive, as it were, their being from it, the Poet only bringeth his own stuff, and doth not learn a conceit out of a matter, but maketh matter for a conceit ...." (p. 34).

Sidney, therefore, is entirely on the line of Aristotle. There is no inconsistency whatsoever in his mind between his idea of Art as creation and imitation. Our problem now is to reconcile these seemingly contradictory descriptions of the making of Art.

Benedetto Croce in his Aesthetic as Science of Expression and General Linguistic defines Art as 'expression'; but he does not mention the object of expression. Similarly, when Aristotle or Sidney says that Art is imitation, the object of imitation has not been mentioned. Shelley in his Defence of Poetry considers poetry as "the reflected image of
impression." This, again, is tantamount to saying that Art is expression. But what is this reflected image but imitation? The making of Art, is, after all, an imitation-making, a shadow-making, for the poetic product is never the actual thing of the world of material reality. Here, as a matter of fact, lies the difference between the artists and artisans. The making of the artists is not the actual making. A rose in a picture, for example, is an imitation rose, a shadow rose, if we accept objects in the material world as real. The feelings expressed in a lyric poem or a poem of love cannot be given material existence. The poet cannot create another material world. But he can do the next best thing; he can give a body to his feelings. It is because of this non-material character of Art that Aristotle does not include Architecture within his concept of imitation. Architecture, like the potter's making, is an actual thing open to our sense-tests, and as such, it is not imitation in the sense in which literature is. This cannot, however, be said of sculpture, because the objective form in sculpture is not the real thing, although it is concrete and open to sense-tests. While touching a building, we touch a real thing of the material world; but when we touch a statue, we do not touch the man represented, we touch an imitation making of the man.

The term 'imitation' in the Aristotelian sense is even better than Croce's 'expression' which merely recognises the concretizing activity of Art. Aristotle recognises a special character of such concretization. It is a shadow concretization.
This is really what Aristotle is after; he is simply seeking to ascertain the character of the making in Art. He does not deny the creative activity of Art; he wants to define it. And this definition, in its essence, has no contradiction with the concept of Imagination of the Romantics.

Thus, when Keats writes:

"Huge cloudy symbols of a high romance,
And think that I may never live to trace
Their shadows, with the magic hand of change,"*

he is really following Aristotle without knowing it. Just because Art - creations can only have a non - material existence, they may be characterised as "cloudy symbols".

But if Art is shadow - making, how can it overcome the charge of Plato that it is all a lie and is therefore to be rejected? Aristotle gives us the clue to the solution of this problem in the organic unity or the inner necessity in a work of Art. It was this necessity which struck Aristotle most when he surveyed organic Nature in his biological and philosophical treatises. The seed of a beech, for example, grows into a beech by a kind of inner necessity. Its form and size are not something capricious, but are quite in accord with its function and environment. Aristotle also noticed that each single part of anything in organic Nature is necessary for the other parts as well as for the whole. An organic whole implies logically in interdependence of parts. The world of Art, too, offers such an organic unity.

* From the sonnet beginning with "when I have fears that I may cease to be".
From the above discussions it is clear that Art may very well be described as imitation of Nature. Art repeats on its own plane the vital creative process in organic Nature. Once more, as discussed in the previous Chapter of this volume, Art is a parallel to God's creation.

If we remember now the statements of Coleridge on the Esemplastic Imagination, we shall find that Imagination always produces an organic unity in Art-creations.

Aristotle was the greatest single figure in European criticism for many centuries. There was no subject during his days which he did not touch. And we have found that even after so many days most of his statements may be taken as eternal truths regarding literary creations. But while we have some clues regarding the ideality of Art in his statements, we must also admit that the theory of Imagination during the English Romantic period put a much greater stress on the creative freedom of the poet.

Imagination such as the English Romantics envisaged it, gives Art the character of universality in its transcendence of the particulars or the concrete from which it starts. It is on this point that Shelley puts his stress in his *Defence of Poetry* when he describes the process of the Imagination as "the principle of synthesis" which has for its objects those forms which are common to universal nature and existence itself. Not that however the concept of Universality was unknown before the Romantic period. We have already referred to some of the statements of
Aristotle which emphasize the truth-value of Art. But truth-value may only be predicated of something which is Universal.

"The poet's function", says Aristotle in the 9th chapter of his Poetics, "is to describe not the thing that has happened, but a kind of thing that might happen, i.e., what is possible as being probable or necessary", (op. cit., p. 43).

Thus, what Alcibiades actually did or said is not necessary for poetry, but what such a kind of man would probably do in analogous circumstances. The historical Alcibiades may have lost his appeal, but the Hamlet of Shakespeare is universal. As Anatole France finely puts it: "This Hamlet and we live together. His soul is of the same age as ours. He was a man, he is a man, he will be the whole of man."

We have also noted Sidney speaking of the painter who "painteth not Lucretia whom he never saw", but "the outward beauty of such a virtue."

(op. cit., p. 11).

According to Plato the Idea of a thing is the reality and not our sense-experience of it. A bed in real life is an imitation of the idea of the bed. The picture of the bed, again, is an imitation of an imitation, and therefore Art is neither nor universal. But Aristotle indirectly answers him by saying that Art never deals with the actual, although it may be inspired by a particular fact. The Ode to a Nightingale of Keats was inspired, we know, by a particular Nightingale. But can we
apply the poem to any particular bird? The Mona Lisa of Leonardo da Vinci started as an actual portrait of the wife of a high Florentine official named Francesco, a patron of da Vinci. But the picture has transcended the limits of a portrait. It has become a symbol for all time.

The difference between a story and a poem according to Shelley is that "the one is partial, and applies only to a definite period of time, and a certain combination of events which can never again recur; the other is universal, and contains within itself the germ of a relation to whatever motives or actions have place in the possible varieties of human nature."

The transcendence of particularity inherent in the faculty of Imagination has been recognised by Rabindranath Tagore in many of his writings. According to Tagore there is a three-fold relation between man and the Universe: that of utility, that of intellect and that of enjoyment. In the first two we express our individuality. But sometimes we step out of these two relations and go beyond the practical utilitarian life of the real world. It is then that we establish a joyous communion with the universe. It is then that we have Art or Literature. "To detach the individual idea from its confinement of everyday facts", says Tagore in his Creative Unity, "and to give its soaring wings the freedom of the universal; this is the function of poetry."

Benedetto Croce, too in his Aesthetic, distinguishes the aesthetic activity from the practical and includes it within the theoretic forms of the human spirit.
Literature in Bengali is termed 'Sāhitya'. Tagore goes to the very root of this word in order to show the idea of unity in diversity persisting there. 'Sāhitya' comes from 'Sahita' which means 'Along with', i.e., along with others. The very word denoting Literature, therefore, makes it free from mere personal ends.

We have already discussed the Rasa theory in Sanskrit Poetics. There, too, we have noted the universalisation inherent in the theory of Rasa. A particular emotion becomes impersonal and universal only when it is transformed into Rasa or pure aesthetic enjoyment.

"The fundamentals of Literature", says Tagore, in his essay Sāhityer Matrā (the Extent of Literature), are eternal, i.e., the rules operating in the enjoyment of Rasa are included within the permanent human nature. (Translated from the book Sāhityer Svārāp: Viśvavidyaśamgraha Series: p. 8).

In the essay Sāhitye Adhunikatā (Modernity in Literature, op. cit. pp. 14 - 18), Tagore tells us that a piece of literature lacking generosity cannot be called great. That is why he found fault with much of the twentieth century English poetry, because, their exclusiveness makes them enjoyed only by a limited circle of readers. The attitude of Tagore in this regard is clear in his poem Sādhana. Addressing the Muse of Poetry, he says, "O Goddess, I have sung many songs in this life, and reaped their harvest. But I have given them to all, to the universe of men; I have filled the world with my songs." (Translated).
In his *Creative Unity*, in the chapter entitled 'The Creative Ideal', Rabindranath has emphasized the universality of Art in contrast with the pettiness of our day-to-day existence. To quote a few lines from the book:

"In everyday life, our personality moves in a narrow circle of immediate self-interest. And therefore our feelings and events within that short range, become prominent subjects for ourselves. In their vehement self-assertion they ignore their unity with the All. They rise up like obstructions and obscure their own background. But art gives our personality, the disinterested freedom of the eternal, there to find it in its true perspective. To see our own home in flames is not to see fire in its verity. But the fire in the stars is the fire in the heart of the Infinite there, it is the script of creation."


Actually the greatest products of the Imagination lead us to an infinity. The greatest poets in the world have ever been visionaries and philosophers in the most fundamental sense of the term. They may not be moral or philosophical in the sense that they expound the moral or philosophical creed of a particular sect or a particular time. But they all express, in some way or other, the Universal Religion of man. They are elfin beings as it were, for whom "there are more things in heaven and earth" "than are dreamt" of in ordinary philosophy. In a sense they are all mystics, conscious as they are of the existence of a reality far beyond our senses. They may not
always call it God, but still the suggestion of an Infinite Power and Love, the suggestion of an Eternity is present in their writings. Let us take just a few examples from some of the great English Poets.

Shakespeare believed in an all-powerful Reality controlling the destiny of the Universe. Man with all his glory is yet helpless against that Supreme Power.

"There's a divinity that shapes our ends,
Rough-sew them how we will."

(Hamlet : V. 2. 10 - 11).

Against the vast background of Eternity the few years of a man's life have nothing but a dream - existence. As the Duke in Measure for Measure says:

"Thou hast nor youth nor age,
But, as it were, an after-dinner's sleep,
Dreaming on both."

(III. i. 32 - 34).

Repeatedly do we have in Shakespeare the idea, re-inforced probably due to his connections with the stage, that

"All the world's a stage,
And all the men and women merely players;
They have their exits and their entrances."

(As you like it : II. 7. 139 - 141).

The statement cannot be dismissed as mere cynicism of Jaques. It has been found again in the mouth of Antonio in the Merchant of Venice:
"I hold the world but as the world, Grailano —
A stage, where every man must play a part,
And mine a sad one."

(I. 1. 77 - 79).

Macbeth's description of life as

"a tale
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, Signifying nothing."

(V. 5. 26 - 28)

may not be a universal truth, but there is no denying that
after all

"Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player,
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,
And then is heard no more."

(Macbeth: V. 5. 24 - 26).

But even if the lines already quoted might be dismissed as
effusions of characters suffering from chronic or occasional
of melancholia, what should we do/those magnificent lines in the
Tempest where Prospero rounds off his magic show with a profound
utterance on the insubstantial pageantry of everything in this
mortal world, including human life? It is Shakespeare himself
reflecting on the world and human life in relation with the
cosmic order of things. Let us hear Prospero speaking:

"Our revels now are ended: these our actors,
As I foretold you, were all spirits, and
Are melted into air, into thin air,
And, like the baseless fabric of this vision
The cloud-capp'd towers, the gorgeous palaces,
The solemn temples, the great globe itself,
Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve,
And, like this insubstantial pageant faded,
Leave not a rack behind: we are such stuff
As dreams are made on, and our little life
Is rounded with a sleep;'

(IV. 1. 148 - 158).

The futility of all human power, of all earthly greatness
has been repeatedly stressed by Shakespeare in his History Plays.
The crown does not sit easy on most of the Kings. "Uneasy lies
the head that wears a crown" - says King Henry in the Second
Part of Henry IV, III. 1. 31. Instances can be multiplied.

But it would be sad indeed if faith in the Divinity would
only generate in Shakespeare a feeling of man's helplessness. It
would be a cruel God if man's life would signify a mere nothing.

But as against Gloucester's

"As flies to wanton boys are we to the gods, -
They kill us for their sport,"

(King Lear: IV. 1. 37 - 38)

We have Lear's

"Upon such sacrifices, my Cordelia,
The gods themselves throw incense,"

(King Lear: IV. 3. 20 - 21).
Here of course we have the idea of many gods, but we should
remember that the days of King Lear were the Pre-Christian days
in Britain and the idea of an All-Loving God was yet to spring up in their midst.

Shakespeare, with all the consciousness of the smallness of man, was at the same time conscious that man has been created in the image of God Himself, that man is the best of God's creations. Thus we have the apotheosis of man even from Hamlet who has almost lost faith in the goodness of human character:

"What a piece of work is man! How noble in reason! How infinite in faculties! In form and moving how express and admirable! In action, how like an angel! In apprehension, how like a God! The beauty of the world! The paragon of animals!"

(Hamlet: II. 2).

Throughout his plays, Shakespeare has laid great stress on the divine virtue of Mercy. To quote from the celebrated passage on mercy where Portia in her capacity as a Judge asks Shylock to show mercy on Antonio:

"The quality of mercy is not strain'd; It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven Upon the place beneath. It is twice blest; It blesseth him that gives and hil that takes. 'Tis mightiest in the mightiest; it becomes The throned monarch better than his crown; His sceptre shows the force of temporal power, The attribute to awe and majesty, Wherein doth sit the dread and fear of Kings; But mercy is above this sceptred sway,—"
It is enthroned in the hearts of Kings,
It is an attribute to God himself;
And earthly power doth then show likest God's
When mercy seasons justice."

(The Merchant of Venice: IV, I. 179 - 192).

Mercy is "an attribute to God Himself," and therefore Hamlet asks Polonius to use the players much better than they deserve, for, "use every man after his desert, and who should escape whipping?" (Hamlet, II. 2). Tolerance, mercy, forgiveness — these are the principles advocated by Shakespeare everywhere in his plays. Not to speak of As You Like It or the Tempest where forgiveness plays a major part, even in a dark comedy like Measure for Measure Isabella forgives Angels who was about to take away "the immortal part" of her soul. It is very significant that the play was performed for the first time on the Christmas day. The principle here is not really an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, but forgiving the enemies too.

It is true that even great souls suffer terribly in the Shakespearean tragedies. But here again, Shakespeare in his own way justifies the ways of God to men. We are always conscious of some glaring excess or other defect in his tragic heroes. Besides, the greatness or nobility of a character often comes out only when it cracks in grappling with evil.

"Now cracks a noble heart. Good sweet prince,
And flights of angels sing thee to thy rest!" —
says Horatio at the death of Hamlet (Hamlet: V. 2. 351 - 352). And
this is the feeling of the audience at the end of most of the Shakespearean tragedies. If tragedy would be the last word in his tragic dramas, Shakespeare might have been accused of believing, like Hardy, in a malignant force presiding over the universe. But, as it happens, tragedy is just an eddy in the whirlpool of existence represented by William Shakespeare. Unlike in so many modern dramas, the certain in a Shakespearean tragedy never falls at the climax. Even after the death of the hero, Shakespeare connects the tragic life with the normal tenour of existence. Thus the gulf between the tragic turmoil and the normal day-to-day existence is ultimately bridged up. Hamlet ends not just with the death of Hamlet, but only when Fortinbras takes up the reins of administration in Denmark. So in Macbeth, is restored to his father's Kingdom. After Othello "Cassio rules in Cyprus."

Like all great artists, Shakespeare saw life and saw it whole. And one who sees and accepts life in its totality cannot be oblivious of its evil side. The words put into the mouth of one of the Lords in the Florentine camp in All's Well that Ends Well may well be taken as Shakespeare's own version on Life*

"The web of our life is of a mingled yarn, good and ill together. Our virtues would be proud if our faults whipped them not; and our crimes would despair if they were not cherished by our virtues." (IV. 3. 67 - 70).

Or, as Sir Toby Belch says to the Puritanical Malvolio: "Dost thou think, because thou art virtuous, there shall be no more cakes and ale?" (Twelfth Night: II. 3. 109 - 110).
God is the Transcendent Reality in whom all contradictions between good and evil are resolved. The seer knows that both good and evil are aspects of the same reality. As Tagore has sung: "Glory to thee, O Lord! the Image of Immortality and Death, of Sorrow and Consolation, of Union full of the nectar of love as well as unbearable Pain at parting." (Translated).

The great artist dives deep into the mysteries of existence and attains to a tranquility above all tumult. The Katharsis achieved at the end of a Shakespearean tragedy, the "Calm of mind all passion spent" shows this faith in the Cosmic order of things where harmony and not tumult is the ultimate truth. The sages feel the presence of God in everything and hence they have no other alternative but to love all. The greatest artists almost achieve the same truth by their power of Imagination with which they can place themselves in the position of others. This and this alone can lead one to a universality, to an all-embracing love and tolerance for all kinds of characters such as we have in Shakespeare.

We have spent much time in showing the universal, supra-terrestrial quality of the Imagination of the greatest poet of England and one of the greatest for all time in the whole world. Not to speak of Milton whose express duty it was to "justify the ways of God to men", who lived ever "under the great task-master's eye" and prayed fervently: "what in me is dark illumine, what is low, raise and support", the man whose "soul was like a star and dwelt apart", whose "ocean-rolls of rhythm" constantly touched
touched the shores of Eternity, we have poets in the romantic period itself in English Literature whose poetry often lifts us to the ideal sphere of cosmic consciousness.

Wordsworth's meditation on Nature at its final stage makes him feel:

"A presence that disturbs me with the joy of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime of something far more deeply interfused, whose dwelling is the light of setting suns, And the round ocean and the living air, And the blue sky, and in the mind of man: A motion and a spirit, that impels All thinking things, all objects of all thought, And rolls through all things."

Sometimes it leads him on to:

"That serene and blessed mood, In which the affections gently lead us on, until, the breath of this corporeal frame And even the motion of our human blood Almost suspended, we are laid asleep in body, and become a living soul: While with an eye made quiet by the power of harmony, and the deep power of joy, We see into the life of things."

His reflections on childhood bring him the intuition that
"Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting:
The soul that rises with us, our life's star,
Hath had elsewhere its setting,
And cometh from afar:
Not in entire forgetfulness,
And not in utter nakedness,
But trailing clouds of glory do we come
From God, who is our home."

To take, again, the following passage from The Excursion:

"............... his spirit drank
The spectacle, sensation, soul, and form,
All melted into him; they swallowed up
His animal being; in them did he live,
And by them did he live; they were his life,
In such access of mind, in such high hour
Of visitation from the living God,
Thought was not; in enjoyment it expired."

(Book I, 206 - 213).

Or, the following lines from The Prelude:

"From Nature and her overflowing soul
I had received so much, that all my thoughts
Were steeped in feeling; I was only then
Contented, when with bliss ineffable
I felt the sentiment of Being spread
O'er all that moves and all that seemeth still."

(II, 397 - 402).
According to Shelley "Poetry is indeed something divine". (A Defence of Poetry), Shelley was once expelled from the University for writing a pamphlet on Atheism and yet, through his poetry he has a transcendental quality which is far above the ordinary pettiness of day-to-day life. The following lines from his Adonais show his sense of the one spirit pervading the entire universe:

"the one Spirit's plastic stress
Sweeps through the dull dense world, compelling there,
All new successions to the forms they wear;
Torturing the unwilling dress that checks its flight
To its own likeness, as each mass may bear;
And bursting in its beauty and its might
from trees and beasts and men into the Heaven's light!";

Or, we may take the following lines from the same poem:

"The one remains, the many change and pass;
Heaven's light forever shines, Earth's shadows fly;
Life, like a dome of many coloured glass,
Stains the white radiance of Eternity,
Until death tramples it to fragments. - "

To take, again, the following magnificent stanza:

"That light whose smile kindles the Universe,
That beauty in which all things work and move,
That Benediction which the eclipsing curse
of birth can quench not, that sustaining Love
Which through the web of being blindly wove
By man and beast and earth and air and sea,
Burns bright or dim, as each are mirrors of
The fire for which all thirst, now beams on me,
Consuming the last clouds of cold mortality.

Keats is not so generally known as ethereal as Shelley is.
And yet we turn from Shelley to Keats only to find the following
lines in his Endymion:

"Wherein lies happiness? In that which beck
Our ready minds to fellowship divine,
A fellowship with essence; till we shine,
Full alchemiz'd, and free of space ...........

.......................... that moment have we stept
Into a sort of oneness, and our state
Is like a floating spirit's."

(777 ff.).

One who so loved the earth as Keats and one who wrote
that "the poetry of earth is never dead" was nevertheless
conscious of the sufferings and transitoriness of everything in
the human world:

"Where palsy shakes a few, sad, last gray hairs,
Where youth grows pale, and spectre-thin, and dies;
Where but to think is to be full of sorrow
And leaden-eyed despairs,
Where Beauty cannot keep her lustrous eyes,
Or new Love pine at them beyond to-morrow."

(Ode to a Nightingale).
That is why

"Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard
Are Sweeter".

(Ode on A Grecian Urn).

The same touch of infinity we come across in the staunch faith of Browning in an age when faith was constantly being assailed by material science:

"Our times are in His hand
Who saith 'A whole I planned,
Youth shows but half; trust God:
see all fear by afraid!"

(Rabbi Ben Ezra).

The divine looks into our hearts and aspirations, and judges us not merely by our concrete achievements:

"All I could never be, All men-ignored-in-me,
This, I was worth to God, whose wheel the pitcher shaped."

(Ibid).

Our imperfections will have a rounded finishing in the hands of our Maker: "On the earth the broken arcs; in the heaven, a perfect round."

(Abt Vogler).

Therefore when Browning says through the mouth of one of his characters that "God's in His heaven - All's right with the world!"

it is no mere conventional statement, nor as some modern critics
believe, the result of a good digestion. It is a grand faith for Browning, "felt in the blood".

It is not possible to go on quoting from poets at greater length. Apart from fragmentary quotations, again, the high level of sublimity generally reached by great literary writers all over the world go to prove the power of Imagination. It has already been spoken of as the "divine heritage" of man, and it creates in him an "aspiration after the immense". That was why, even Plato has called poetry a kind of divine madness. The eternal appeal of the Rāmāyana and the Mahābhārata of the writings of Homer, Virgil and Dante, and the constant mood of surrender to and tender communion with the Universal soul in Rabindranath Tagore also point to the same factor.

Let us hear Cobridge as well concluding his *Biographia Literaria*:

"... 0! that with this my personal as well as my Literary life might conclude! The unquenched desire I mean, not without the consciousness of having earnestly endeavoured to kindle young minds, and to guard them against the temptations of scoffers, by showing that the scheme of Christianity, as taught in the liturgy and homilies of our Church, though not discoverable by human reason, is yet in accordance with it; that link follows link by necessary consequence; that Religion passes out of the ken of Reason only where the eye of Reason has reached its own horizon; and that Faith is then but its continuation: even as the day softens away into the sweet twilight, and twilight,

[...]*
hushed and breathless, steals into the darkness. It is night, sacred night! the upraised eye views only the starry heaven which manifests itself alone; and the outward beholding is fixed on the sparks twinkling in the awful depth, though suns of other worlds, only to preserve the soul steady and collected in its pure act of inward adoration to the great I AM, and to the filial word that reaffirmeth it from eternity to eternity, whose choral echo is the universe. (Biographia Literaria, D. R. Wordsworth, Vol. II, p. 218).

The great poets and writers of the English Romantic Revival have not only emphasized this sense of the "Illimitable within the limited", the Infinite within the finite" in poetry, but they were the first in Europe to fix the connotation of the term Imagination so as to include everything inherent in the creative faculty of man. Poetry for them embodies the cosmic consciousness of man. And in a world where Man's scientific aspirations lead him to search and research the vast cosmic Universe, poetry and such other imaginative creations, instead of declining with the advancement of modern civilization, will rather be one of the greatest sources of inspiration for man.