INTRODUCTION

The problem of knowledge is a pivotal issue that concerns philosophy and art. The seminal question in these fields is, what is knowledge? This inquiry is further expanded by investigations into the sources, the means and the validity of knowledge. Knowledge constitutes the awareness of the external world and the awareness of one’s own self. The phenomenal world around the individual and the inner self of the individual are the sources of knowledge. Sense perception, inference and memory are the commonly accepted means of knowledge. The problems regarding the acquisition of knowledge are: how the external reality impinges upon the subjective self, is the phenomenal reality the absolute truth, is sense perception reliable and how far can inference and memory help the individual to cognise the complete reality?

In philosophy, various theories have evolved and attempts have been made to understand the external world and its impact upon the human mind. For this reason, metaphysics, i.e., the study of the external reality cannot be dissociated from epistemology, i.e., the study of the acquisition of knowledge by the human mind. Several theories have evolved to explain the truth about the external realm and the individual’s ability to acquire true knowledge. Yet a consensus for an integrated and comprehensive answer to the problem of knowledge has not been achieved.

In literature, the role of knowledge assumes significance especially in the theory of creativity. The polemic of art imitating either nature or ideas has
concretised into two divergent theories – art as imitation and art as expression. The theory of literature representing the phenomenal reality postulates imitation of the external world. The world, which is grasped by the mind through the senses, is accepted as the truth. On the other hand, the expressive theory of art stipulates the imitation of ideas, whereby the artist imitates, or rather expresses, ideas which are not necessarily evoked by the sense perceptions and are not exact replicas of the external reality. M.H. Abrams defines the expressive theory:

A work of art is essentially the internal made external, resulting from a creative process operating under the impulse of feeling, and embodying the combined product of the poet’s perceptions, thoughts, and feelings. The primary source and subject matter of a poem, therefore, are the attributes and actions of the poet’s own mind; or if aspects of the external world, then these only as they are converted from fact to poetry by the feelings and operations of the poet’s mind.¹

The reality of the poet’s ideas gains significance over the reality of the external realm. Also, it is the reality as inferred by the poet. The expression of the poet is an idea or an impulse which may be the consequence of a priori or a posteriori knowledge.

The issue of epistemology has been a philosophic concern since the Greek era. Literature does not offer a detailed deliberation upon epistemology yet the problem of the acquisition of knowledge is latent in all literature. The manner in which the outer reality is grasped by the writer is evident in how it is portrayed in literature. The hegemony of matter over mind or mind over matter hinges upon the writer’s viewpoint. Does poetry embody a photographic reflection of the outside world or is it shaded by the poet’s
perspective? The portrayal of the inner and the outer realms is influenced by the writer’s epistemology.

In literature, the problem of knowledge is interrelated to the question of creativity. What the writer creates depends upon how the awareness of the outside world and the inner self is acquired, processed and stored. The issue of knowledge may or may not be integral to the writer or the writer’s work. Yet, both the writer’s conscious and subconscious attitude towards the external reality and the impact of this reality upon his or her internal realm influence the writing.

The creative process or the poetic process has occupied literary writers, theorists, philosophers, psychologists as well as neurologists for a long time. The unknown domain of the creative mind is still being explored. The question of creativity evolving from natural genius, talent or formal education has still not been answered adequately. Creativity is often presumed to be a mystic ability that is innate and god gifted. On the other hand, it can also be inculcated by polishing one’s talent with practice. At best, a creative mind is accepted as an amalgam of spontaneity and training.

The mind collects the data; it processes and reproduces the data as creative ideas. But creativity is not mere assemblage and reproduction of ideas. Creativity involves breaking of old moulds, habits and perceptions. Innovation and novelty are the essential ingredients of creativity, transgressing beyond the known and the given.
The purpose of my research is to study the creative process delineated in the nineteenth century theories of Coleridge and Wordsworth. The aim is to study the philosophic influence on their poetic theories and to analyse their theories in the perspective of the Indian theory of knowledge.

My research project involves texts and theories across cultures and disciplines. I aim to analyse Coleridge’s theory of the creative process and Wordsworth’s poetry in view of the Indian theory of knowledge. The comparative connections across temporal and spatial boundaries have given me a wider perspective of comprehending literature as well as philosophy. The association of Romantic literature with Indian philosophy may sound far fetched but there are common grounds which can be explored.

The comparison that I make is not between the different poetic theories of East and West. The analysis is interdisciplinary, involving literature and philosophy. The investigation is into the theory of knowledge and consequently, the theory of creativity.

Traditional Indian philosophy includes six schools of thought that are grouped in pairs:

Nyāya – Vaiśeṣika
Sāṃkhya – Yoga
Mīmāṃsā – Vedānta

All the six systems deal with the issue of knowledge. They are paired together because they complement each other in the formulation of a complete philosophy. Vaiśeṣika, Sāṃkhya and Mīmāṃsā provide the ontological context, whereas Nyāya, Yoga and Vedānta offer the epistemological theories. There are cross currents of common doctrines
among the six schools of thought but their disparities divide them into distinct philosophies. In my analysis, I have mainly referred to the Sāṃkhya-Yoga philosophy because it propounds the most comprehensive theory of knowledge and certain concepts of this philosophy are congruous with the concepts of Coleridge’s and Wordsworth’s theories. I will analyse Wordsworth’s poetry in the framework of the *pancakośa* theory of the Vedānta School. *Pancakośa*, the theory of cognising the self, bases its cognitive structure on the precepts of the Sāṃkhya philosophy.

There are profound contrasts between the philosophies of East and West. The disparity begins with the etymology of the term, “For the Greek the term *philosophia* means literally ‘love of sophia’, of human reason, measure, of judgement and discrimination. On the other hand, the Sanskrit term for philosophy is *anu-ikṣikī*, the ‘survey of, literally the look along (*anu*), all things’, which means ‘along all existent facts’.” Another Indian word for philosophy is *dārsana* which means to see or contemplate. The Western emphasis is upon systematising, organising and categorising. The Eastern concern is with convergence and contemplation. In the Western tradition, man is the centre of all thought. In the Eastern tradition, man is only a part of the cosmos. Yet in the nineteenth century, the German impact upon the English mind began an intellectual tradition that can be paralleled to certain Indian philosophic principles.

I do not claim that the nineteenth century British literature was directly influenced by the traditional Indian philosophy. Ideas are not chattels within geographical boundaries. Similarity does not always denote influence. Common ideas and even theories can flourish independently across time and
space. Similarity also does not indicate identity. Certain strains of common notions do not fuse the disparities between two theories. I do not intend to suggest incredible nexus where it does not exist. But there are undeniable connections in the history of ideas. Since the late eighteenth century, Europe has been studying classical Indian thought, especially philosophy, grammar and literature. Friedrich Schiller’s lectures “On Simple and Sentimental Poetry”\(^3\) are a product of that connection. And we know that Coleridge attended these lectures and his poetic thinking was deeply influenced by them.

My purpose is to comprehend Coleridge’s and also Wordsworth’s theory of the creative process in the perspective of the Śāmkhya-Yoga philosophy. The metaphysical and epistemological context of Śāmkhya-Yoga provides an in depth framework to understand the Romantic theory of creativity. Further, I will analyse Wordsworth’s poetry using the methodology of the cognitive process of the *pancakośa* theory propounded in the *Upanishads*\(^4\) and expounded by Ādi Śaṅkarācārya in *Viveka-cūḍāmani*\(^5\). *Pancakośa* stipulates a methodology to cognise and comprehend the outside world and the inner self. It offers a very explicit framework for the analysis of the process of cognition, inference and also the poetic experience. Using the *pancakośa* methodology, I have attempted to enumerate and distinguish individual perceptions of the poet in each experience of the respective poems. I have also analysed how cognitions are evoked by various perceptions, constituting moods and states of being in different experiences from different poems. In each experience, the various states of being evoke different aesthetic states which have been enumerated according to the Indian aesthetic theory of *rasa-bhāva*. My inspiration to apply the
pancakoṣa framework has been a similar analysis by Kapil Kapoor of Wordsworth's poem, "Daffodils".

The first chapter reviews the history of Western ideas about the poetic process beginning from Plato to the Romantic period in the nineteenth century. The emphasis is upon the epistemological theories and their bearings upon the poetic theories of various ages.

Chapter two describes the poetic theories of Coleridge and Wordsworth. The views of these canonical poets of the Romantic period regarding the poetic process hinge upon their epistemological beliefs. The influence of the existing philosophical trends in the early nineteenth century and the poets' reactions to these trends are also explored in this chapter.

Traditional Indian philosophy that has affinity with the nineteenth century European philosophy, with subsequent formulation of Coleridge's and Wordsworth's beliefs is delineated in the third chapter. The chapter includes the principles of Sāṃkhya-Yoga system that are close to the theories of these poets.

Wordsworth's poetry is analysed in chapters four and five in the framework of the pancakoṣa theory which allows an explication of the poetic compositional process in the given theoretical framework. In these chapters, the analysis includes a scrutiny of the perceptual and conceptual cognitions of the poet's experiences delineated in various poems. Chapter four incorporates poems in which the poet encounters another object, person or being and investigates the impact of the encounter upon the poet. Chapter
five includes poems that emerge primarily from the poet's conceptual cognitions and are more reflective.

There are several poems of Wordsworth that fall in the divisions outlined in chapters four and five. My attempt has been to choose those poems which are clearly illustrative of the categories marked in the respective chapters.