

# Samuel Taylor Coleridge – Inheritor of Unfulfilled Renown

Sumathy. V

Assistant Professor, Department of Languages- English, AJK College of Arts and Science, Coimbatore

## Abstract

Samuel Taylor Coleridge, “logician, metaphysician, bard, is one of the “inheritors of unfulfilled renown” in English literature. The history of Coleridge’s life is one of unexecuted designs, of air- castles and broken arcs. He described himself as a great “tomorrows.” The bulk of his poetry, and the best part of it, belong to his youth. Significance in the study of his attitude toward the sex. The story of Coleridge’s love affairs: Mary Evans, Sara Fricker Clate his wife, Sara Hutchinson, Miss. Nesbite, Miss. Brunton etc. Coleridge’s love poetry was inspired by Mary Evans and his wife. The defect of his love poetry was its want of passion. His love is evanescent and fleeting, and lacking in intensity. It’s dreamlike and quality tender, sentimental and languid, not passionate. There is no well- drawn feminine portrait in any of his poems. None of his characters is fully realized and individualized for us. In spite of the admiration for womanhood that his poetry illustrates everyone are from a far country. Keywords: poetry, love, Coleridge’s life, characters

**Keywords:** poetry, love, Coleridge’s life, characters

## Introduction

Samuel Taylor Coleridge was a major poet of the English Romantic period, a literary movement characterized by imagination, passion, and the supernatural. He is also noted for his works on literature, religion, and the organization of society.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge, the tenth and last child of the vicar of Ottery Saint Mary near Devonshire, England, was born on October 21, 1772. After his father's death in 1782, he was sent to Christ's Hospital for schooling. He had an amazing memory and an eagerness to learn. However, he described his next three years of school as, "depressed, moping, and friendless." In 1791 he entered Jesus College, Cambridge, England. Because of bad debts, Coleridge joined the 15th Light Dragoons, a British cavalry unit, in December 1793. After his discharge in April 1794, he returned to Jesus College, but he left in December without completing a degree.

The years from 1795 to 1802 were for Coleridge a period of fast poetic and intellectual growth. His first major poem, "The Eolian Harp," was published in 1796 in his *Poems on Various Subjects*. Its verse and theme contributed to the growth of English Romanticism, illustrating a blending of emotional expression and description with meditation.

*“The Elion harp” occupies an important position in the body of Coleridge’s poetry. “No one reading the poems in their chronological order,” says Campbell, can fail to observe that the poem marks an era in*

*the development of Coleridge's powers of expression, both as regards melody and individuality', and Harper says that it is "in substance his first important and at the same time characteristic poem." Unfortunately these same critics who have pointed out the importance of "The Eolian harp" have also made several misleading statements about it which had obscured certain aspects in the development not only of Coleridge but also of Wordsworth.*

From March to May 1796 Coleridge edited the *Watchman*, a periodical that failed after ten issues. While this failure made him realize that he was "not fit for public life," his next poem, "Ode to the Departing Year," shows that he still had poetic passion. Yet philosophy and religion were his overriding interests. In *Religious Musings* (published in 1796), he wrote about the unity and wholeness of the universe and the relationship between God and the created world.

The most influential event in Coleridge's career was his friendship with William Wordsworth (1770–1850) and his wife Dorothy from 1796 to 1810. This friendship brought a joint publication with Wordsworth of the *Lyrical Ballads*, a collection of twenty-three poems, in September 1798. The volume contained nineteen of Wordsworth's poems and four of Coleridge's. The most famous of these was "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner." Coleridge later described the division of labor between the two poets: Wordsworth was "to give the charm of novelty to things of every day by awakening the mind's attention from the lethargy of custom, and directing it to the loveliness and the wonders of the world before us," while Coleridge's "endeavors should be directed to persons and characters supernatural, or at least romantic."

*Coleridge and Wordsworth became close friends in 1797; and their friendship, regarded as one of the most important ones in English literature (McFarland 1981:56), gave birth to a joint collection of poems, Lyrical Ballads (1798), whose Page 12 2 publication is generally considered to be the onset of Romanticism*

A second, enlarged edition of Coleridge's *Poems* also appeared in 1798. It contained further lyrical and symbolic works, such as "This Lime-Tree Bower, My Prison" and "Fears in Solitude." At this time Coleridge also wrote "Kubla Khan," perhaps the most famous of his poems, and began the piece "Christabel."

After spending a year in Germany with Wordsworth, Coleridge returned to England and settled in the Lake District. For the next twelve years Coleridge had a miserable life. The climate made his many ailments worse. For pain relief he took laudanum, a type of opium drug, and soon became an addict. His marriage was failing, especially once Coleridge fell in love with Sara Hutchinson, Wordsworth's sister-in-law. Poor health and emotional stress affected his writing. However, in 1802, he did publish the last and most moving of his major poems, "Dejection: An Ode." After a two-year stay in Malta (a group of islands in the Mediterranean), he separated from his wife in 1806. The only bright point in his life was his friendship with the Wordsworth, but by 1810, after his return to the Lake District, their friendship had lessened. Coleridge then moved to London.

Meanwhile, Coleridge's poetry and his brilliant conversation had earned him public recognition, and between 1808 and 1819 he gave several series of lectures, mainly on William Shakespeare (1564–1616)

and other literary topics. His only dramatic work, *Osorio*, written in 1797, was performed in 1813 under the title *Remorse*. "Christabel" and "Kubla Khan" were published in 1816.

Coleridge spent the last eighteen years of his life at Highgate, near London, England, as a patient under the care of Dr. James Gillman. There he wrote several works which were to have tremendous influence on the future course of English thought in many fields: *Biographia literaria* (1817), *Lay Sermons* (1817), *Aids to Reflection* (1825), and *The Constitution of Church and State* (1829).

His last days filled with loneliness depicted his character The Mariner in the poem "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" in which by using the figure of the Mariner Coleridge demonstrates that "loneliness" is essentially the state of humanity divorced from one might call the ideal world. The Mariner experience this loneliness of separation from humanity after killing the Albatross, a representation of the ideal world.

"Alone, alone, all, all alone,  
Alone on a wide wide sea!  
And never a saint took pity on  
my soul in agony." (The Rime of the Ancient Mariner)

## Conclusion

When Coleridge died on July 25, 1834, at Highgate, he left bulky manuscript notes that scholars of the mid-twentieth century found and began editing. When the material is eventually published, scholars and the general public will realize the extraordinary range and depth of Coleridge's philosophical thoughts, and will understand his true impact on generations of poets and thinkers.

## Works Cited

1. Sen, S. S.T. *Coleridge: Selected Poems*. Delhi: Unique Publishers, 2009.
2. Ashton, Rosemary. *The Life of Samuel Taylor Coleridge: A Critical Biography*. Cambridge, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1996.
3. Campbell, James Dykes. *Samuel Taylor Coleridge: A Narrative of the Events of His Life*. Norwood, PA: Norwood Editions, 1977.
4. Holmes, Richard. *Coleridge: Early Visions*. New York: Viking, 1990.
5. Coleridge, Samuel Taylor. *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*. Mint Editions, 2021.
6. Henry J. W. Milley. "Some Notes on Coleridge's 'Eolian Harp.'" *Modern Philology*, vol. 36, no. 4, 1939, pp. 359–75. *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/434197>. Accessed 30 Sept. 2023.
7. "List of Poems by Samuel Taylor Coleridge." *Wikipedia*, Wikimedia Foundation, 27 Sept. 2023, [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_poems\\_by\\_Samuel\\_Taylor\\_Coleridge](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_poems_by_Samuel_Taylor_Coleridge).
8. [https://www.google.com/search?sca\\_esv=569594169&sxsrf=AM9HkKIRAsSmF0wR9vDSuX9AvQ0\\_FGts5Q%3A1696036572552&q=citations%2Babout%2Bcoleridge%2Band%2Bwordsworth%2Bfriendship&spell=1&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwjmiLvLINGBAxVNTmwGHcqsCMwQBSgAegQICBAB&biw=1034&bih=746&dpr=1](https://www.google.com/search?sca_esv=569594169&sxsrf=AM9HkKIRAsSmF0wR9vDSuX9AvQ0_FGts5Q%3A1696036572552&q=citations%2Babout%2Bcoleridge%2Band%2Bwordsworth%2Bfriendship&spell=1&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwjmiLvLINGBAxVNTmwGHcqsCMwQBSgAegQICBAB&biw=1034&bih=746&dpr=1)