JOHN KEATS, A THINKER IN RELATION TO THE CRITICAL APPRECIATION OF HIS VERSE ‘ODE TO A NIGHTINGALE’.

### THE WAY I HAVE TAKEN THIS ANSWER:

Ans. “Here are sweet peas, on tip-toe for a flight

With wings of gentle flush o’er delicate white,

And taper finger catching at all things

To bind them all with tiny rings;”

Keats’s attitude towards nature developed as he grew up. In the early poems, it was a temper of merely sensuous delight, an unanalyzed pleasure in the beauty of nature. “He had away”, says Stopford Brooke, “of fluttering butterfly-fashion, from one object to another, touching for a moment the momentary charm of each thing… he would let things flit in and out of the brain not caring to ask anyone to stay and keep him company, but pleased with them and his game of life.” His attitude was one of unthinking pleasures and enjoyments without thought.

**…..**“To laugh a while at her so proud array;

Her waving streamers loosely she lets play,

And flagging colours shine as bright as smiling day.”

Sensuousness is the key to Keats’s attitude towards nature. He looked with child-like delight at the objects of nature and his whole being was thrilled by what he saw and heard. The earth lay before him tilled, spread out with beauties and wonders, and all his senses reached to them with delight and rapture. Everything in nature for him was full of wonder and mystery-the rising sun, the moving clouds, the growing bud and even swimming fish.

“Adieu! the fancy cannot cheat so well

As she is famed to do, deceiving elf!”

The lines also reveal Keats’s idea that our imperfect nature is not framed to enjoy the eternal joy and beauty for long. In Ode to a Nightingale Keats in his attempt to share the eternal joy and happiness of the nightingale, escapes into the idyllic woodland where the bird sings. The escape brings him the bliss he ever longs for, but he cannot enjoy the imaginative reverie in which state alone he can enjoy this bliss. When Keats is recalled from the world of the nightingale’s song to the actual world, he realizes that fancy cannot make a man forget the realities of life so thoroughly as it is believed to do. In other words, the illusion produced by fancy or imagination is after all, evanescent.

“Was it a vision, or a waking dream?

Fled is that music:-Do I wake or sleep?”

As a poet Keats is enchantingly and abundantly sensuous. His poetry has rarely been equaled in descriptions of the beauties perceptible to the senses. Ode to a Nightingale amply illustrates Keats’s sensuousness -his delight in the sights, sounds, colours, smell and touch. He will ‘taste’ wine “cooled a long age in the deep-delved earth”, he will ‘see’ the beaker “with beaded bubbles winking at the brim” and “purple-stained mouth”, he ‘hears’ the nightingale singing in “verdurous glooms”, and the flies buzzing “on summer eves”, while his ‘smell’ is gratified by the “soft incense” that “hangs upon the boughs” and the fragrant flowers at his feet. In other words, the poem offers a rich feast for all the senses.

“There is a place beyond that flaming hill,

From whence the stars their thin appearance shed;

A place beyond all place, where never ill

Nor impure thought was ever harboured;”

Keats says, “We hate poetry that has a palpable design upon us. Poetry should be great and unobtrusive - a thing which enters into one’s soul and does not startle it” to make beauty, says Bradley, is his (poet’s) philanthropy. He must be unselfish; by refusing, that is, to be diverted from his poetic way of helping by his desire to help in another way. Hence there is no didacticism in Keats as there is in Wordsworth. There is no moralizing in The Eve of St. Agnes as there is none in King Lear; in both, the poets leave their works to speak for themselves.

“Ite domum impasti,domino iam non vacat, agni,

Go home unfed, my lambs, your master now has no time for you,”

Keats often says that the poet must not live for himself, but must feel for others, and must do good but he must do so by being a poet- not by being a teacher or moralist. He must have a purpose of doing well by his poetry, but he must not obtrude it in his poetry-that is, he must not show, that he has palpable design upon us. One of the most striking notes of romantic poetry is that of supernaturalism. Just as the romantic poet looks backward from the present to the distant past, so he looks beyond the seen to the unseen. His imagination is lured by the remote, shadowy and the mysterious among the romantic poets. Coleridge felt the spell of the supernatural the most, and his Ancient Mariner and Christabel are two of his important poems which dealt with ‘supernatural’. Keats dealt with the supernatural in his La Belle Dame Sans Merci, and in that little poem he has condensed a whole world of supernatural mystery.

“Darkling I listen; and, for many a time

I have been half in love with easeful Death.

Call’d him soft names in many a mused rhyme,

To take into the air my quiet breath;”……

Ode to a Nightingale is an escape into the dreamland cast up by Keats’s romantic imagination. The poet hears their song of a nightingale. The song fills his mind with intense joy which borders on pain. Drunk with the delight the nightingale brings him he longs to escape to the cloudland of the nightingale’s song to forget the anguish caused him by “the weariness, the fever and the fret” and the evanescence of youth, beauty and love. At first he seeks the aid of wine to escape from reality, but the next moment he gives up the idea of taking wine as a means of escape into his dream world, and mounts on the viewless wings of poesy to land on the nightingale’s romantic bower. The song of the nightingale perches him on the height of his happiness and he wants to “cease upon the midnight” painlessly with the nightingale still singing to him. The paradox gets resolved when he says that Melancholy

“Dwells with Beauty, Beauty that must die;

And Joy whose hand is ever at his lips

Bidding adieu.”

There are, thus, a variety of topics introduced in the flow of thoughts that constitute the related-poem, but to think that it has no central theme or unifying motif is to betray indifference to the wonderful power of poetic imagination that sustains the entire ode and the unique artistic design that gives an undeniable coherence to its structure. It is true that Ode on a Grecian Urn concentrates only on the pictures of the urn, their effects and significance; and Ode to Autumn is dedicated on the opulence and beauty of Autumn, without much philosophic reflexion, but Ode to a Nightingale, in spite of being more passionate in mood, more complex in psychological probe and more full of sudden twists and turns of thought by way of dramatic reactions to what may follow, does not in any way forfeit its unity of appeal…But of, his escape to the dreamland of his own doesn’t endure long - Reality soon asserts itself and sets his excursion to the cloud land of the nightingale’s song at naught. He is stranded on the hard shores of reality and left to lament. Ode on Melancholy dwells primarily on two fundamental experiences of human life, the experience of joy and the experience of pain. Paradoxically enough he says that real melancholy is there in all that is joyful and beautiful.

“Save what from heaven is with the breezes blown

Through verdurous glooms and winding mossy ways.”

Though Ode to a Nightingale should be read as a poem of escape, we cannot ignore the reflection of human experience in it. Indeed the poet escapes to the romantic bower of the nightingale to quite forget the ills and evils of life which the bird “among the leaves hast never known”. The poem reflects the tragic human experience that human life is a tedious tale of sorrow, of hopes baffled and efforts disappointed. In this world few men live up to old age, and even those who are fortunate to live up to that age are struck with paralysis agitans, and with a few grey hair on their heads , they hobble along trembling and tottering. Youth is transient and repeated shocks to premature death. The world is so full of miseries that no thinking man can reflect on human life, even for a single moment, without being filled with despair. The lot of man is misery even for the best and fairest. The charms of a loveliest woman fade away very soon, and the love of a woman for her lover does not last longer than a single day.

“Swelter in quiet waves of immortality”

The realization that happiness in this world is but an occasional episode in the general drama of pain is too much for them to bear. So to forget their own painful experience and that of others they escape to the ideal land of their imagination. Thus Wordsworth escapes to Nature, the vast world of flowers, trees, mountains, valleys etc; Coleridge to the mysterious world of the supernatural and the Middle Ages; and Shelley to the Golden Millennium of the future.

“Think what a present thou to God has sent,

And render him with patience what he lent;

This if thou do, he will an offspring give

That till the world’s last end shall make thy name to live.”

We read Ode to a Nightingale primarily as a poem of escape, Ode to a Nightingale is a glory of Romantic poetry, and escapism is the distinctive feature of Romantic poetry. The Romantic poets are all fed up with the hard stern realities of life – “its din and bustle, fever and fret”.

“… the fancy cannot cheat so well

As she is famed to do, deceiving elf.”

The allegory in Endymion relates the ‘divine essence’ with concrete, sensuous loveliness but by the time we reach Hyperion his conception of beauty has widened. In the first place, beauty has become the symbol of power born of perfection, which explains the victory of the new creation of Gods over the old one; secondly, beauty has become blended with sorrow in the picture of Thea.

“But saintly heroes are for ever said

To keep an everlasting sabbath’s rest,

Still wishing that, of what they’re still possessed,

Enjoying but one joy-but one of all joys blest.”

The treatment of Keats’s poetic growth will be only half-sided if we omit to trace the influence of other poets on the development of his poetic genius. Keats was educated almost exclusively by the English poets. In the early part of his poetic career the influence of Spenser was immense. “It was the Faerie Queene” says Brown a friend of Keats’s later years, “that first awakened his genius.”

“Better than all measures

Of delightful sound,

Better than all treasures

That in books are found,

Thy skill to poet were, thou scorner of the ground!”

Now his imagination invests the nightingale with immortality with the result that it ceases to be a bird to flesh and blood and becomes a thing of beauty, a voice of romance, regaling the ears of kings and clowns, and women in distress and captivity from time out of mind.

“But Oh: how unlike marble was that face,

How beautiful, if sorrow had not made

Sorrow more beautiful than Beauty’s self.”

In Spenser’s fairyland, he was enchanted, breathed in a new world and became a new being. It is significant that Keats’s earliest composition is the Imitations of Spenser, written probably in 1813; and Spenser never lost hold upon his imagination. There was indeed an essential kinship between the two poets, and that brooding love of sensuous beauty, that frank response to charm of nature and romance, that luxuriance of fancy and that felicity of expression to which the Faerie Queene owes its irresistible fascination, were soon to be re-echoed in the poems of Keats. He also came under the influence of Chatterton. Early in 1815, he came under the influence of Chapman’s translation of Homer. The early works of Milton, and of the poems of Fletcher and of William Browne, while his delight in the seventeenth-century Spenserians remained inextricably blended with his admiration for the most prominent of Spenser’s living disciples, the charming and versatile Leigh Hunt. Spenser and Hunt gave a great impetus to his spirit of romanticism. “Keats was introduced by Leigh Hunt,” says Elton, “to the enchanted gardens of romantic poetry.” -He saw “beautiful things made new.”~~………………..

A marvel of English lyrical poetry, Ode to a Nightingale is one of the greatest odes Keats wrote. It illustrates all main features of Keats’s poetry, namely, his concept of Beauty, his Sensuousness, his Meditation, his Hellenism and his Verbal magic. The Odes of Keats are not only sensuous, but also deeply meditative. Ode to a Nightingale turns on the thought of the conflict between the ideal and the real -between the joy, beauty and apparent permanence of the nightingale’s song, and the sorrow and the transience of joy and beauty in human life, which lends a deep philosophic interest to it. It embodies the thought that however distressful the human condition is, man still possesses the capacity to respond to immortal beauty and thus to establish communion with the unchanging world beyond flux and mutability.

“Qual in colle aspro,al imbrunir di sera

L’avvezza giovinetta pastorella

Va bagnando I’herbetta strana e bella

Che mal si spande a disusata spera

Fuor di sua natia alma primavera,…”

(As, on a rugged hill, when twilight darkens,

The young shepherdess, familiar with the place,

Keeps watering a strange and beautiful little plant

Which feebly spreads its leaves in the unfamiliar clime,

Far from its native fostering springtime….)

Thus in different ages men of different classes and social positions - “emperor and clown”, Ruth, captive princess -had, in certain fleeting moments, glimpses of this unchanging world of beauty. The poem also contains the reflection that death means the denial of sensory experience. In the Ode the poet is still sensuous, but his sensuousness is now touched with “the still, sad music of humanity” and shot through and through with the stirrings of an awakening intellect.

“The same that oft-time hath

Charmed magic casements opening on the foam

Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn.”

It is true that his poetry does not express the revolutionary ideas of his time, as Shelley’s poetry does. But for, Keats was not a revolutionary idealist like Shelley, nor had he Shelley’s reforming zeal. Keats was a pure poet, who expressed in his poetry the most worth-while part of himself and this worst—while part of great poet must follow the bent of his genius:-he has his own vision of life, and he expresses it in his own way. Wordsworth has a spiritual vision and he expresses it in simple style; Shelley has an idealistic vision and he expresses it in musical verse; Keats had the artist’s vision of beauty everywhere in nature, in art, in the deeds of chivalry, and truth were identical………~~

“…the sweet buds which with a modest pride

Pull droopingly, in slanting curve aside

Their scantily-leaved and finely tapering stems.”

This was the profoundest and innermost experience of Keats’s soul, and he expressed it most emphatically: “Where swarms of minnow show the little heads/Staying their wavy bodies against the stream.”The very idea of joy and beauty make one melancholic because the duration of joy and beauty is very short. They must die one moment or the other. Thus we see that in Ode on Melancholy, Keats is purely realistic and there is no question of making an escape into a different world. The poem deals with purely human emotions of pain and joy.

For Keats, therefore, senses were creative as they set Imagination into play and what the imagination gasped as beauty was also Truth. Thus the Ideal was only a sublimation of the real. He sums up the whole matter in one of his letters: **“Adam’s dream will do here and seems to be a conviction that Imagination and its empyreal reflection is the same as human life and its spiritual reflection…The Prototype must be hereafter.”** Shelley soared above the earth in search for the light that never fades but Keats contemplated the dark earth against the polar light of heaven, the two being the opposite sides of the same coin.

The Nightingale also embodies the age-old human experiences that however distressful the human condition is, man still possess the capacity to respond to immortal beauty and thus to establish communion with the unchanging world beyond flux and mutability. Thus in different ages men of different classes and social positions-“emperor and clown”, distressed women, captive princesses-had, in certain fleeting moments, glimpses of this unchanging world of beauty. The poem also contains the reflections that death means the denial of sensory experience.

“Like as a ship, in which no balance lies,

Without a pilot, on the sleeping waves,

Fairly along wieth wind and water flies,

And painted masts with silken sails embraves,

That Neptune’s self the bagging vessel saves,”

To conclude, though we should read Ode to a Nightingale as a poem of escape, we should not neglect the reflection of human experience in it.

“When old age shall this generation waste,

Thou shall remain in midst of other woe

Than ours, a friend to man, to whom thou say’st,

“Beauty is truth, truth beauty?’ that is all

Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.” “

The tale of Keats’s development from his feeble poetic beginnings to the magnificent odes is open of the great stories of literary history. It is remarkable that this achievement is contained in four years. The development, by necessity because of the short period of time, may be incomplete. In Keats’s work, beginning from 1816 and culminating in1821, we see the growth of a high poetic intelligence.

“Now comes the pain of truth, to whom ‘tis pain;

O folly! For to bear all naked truths,

And to envisage circumstances all calm,

This is the top of sovereignty.”

Like Wordsworth’s lark he is -“Type of the wise who soar but never roam/True to the kindred points of Heaven and Home.”But of, this instinctive or sensuous and intuitional perception of the feelings, joys and sorrows of theirs must be balanced and steadied by an intellectual self-awareness.

“Blinded alike from sunshine and from rain

As though a rose should shut and be a bud again.”

In the last book of the fragmentary epic Keats presents the transformation of Apollo through the sudden rushing in of knowledge into his impulsive heart.

“Where we such clusters had

As made us nobly wild, not mad;

And yet each verse of thine

Outside the meat, outdid the frolic wine-“

Keats’s concern for Man simultaneously brings in mind. T.S. Eliot and W.B. Yeats have got to say about the chaotic state of affairs in the world around us, in their famous poems The Waste Land and Sailing to Byzantium respectively. Unfolding deeper mysteries of life, finding the truth of being and the meaning of existence are as much a rhyme of Keats’s poetry as recurrently we see them finding place in the poetry of modern poets. He has in him Wordsworth’s fundamental goodness of human-heart and it is this basic goodness of heart that generates in us a sense of oneness with Keats. He feels for us and in return we feel for him and this accounts for his ever-continuing appeal to his readers. His poetry shows a deep concern for Man, the problems of Man and his pains and joys. We find much of the same thing in the poets of our times. Another feature of Keats’s poetry which has also been employed to a much greater degree by modern poets is Symbolism. Keats has made use of the Nightingale as a symbol of permanence and immortality and the Grecian Urn as a symbol of artistic perfection. There are inspired moments when the present beauty of nature with all its sensuous appeal gives him a fleeting vision of deeper reality. He then in his imagination passes from the world of time to the world of eternity. These mystic experiences are indicated in his Ode to a Nightingale. As Keats hears the song of the nightingale, the barriers of time and space seem to vanish away. He has imaginatively passed through death, flown on the wings of imagination to the nightingale, the barriers of time and space seem to vanish away. He has imaginatively passed through death,- “flown on the wings of imagination to the nightingale’s immortality”. The nightingale will be singing on while he will become a sod. “Then”, says Middleton Murry, “with a magnificent sweep of the imagination, he sees the song and the bird as one. The bird becomes pure song, and inherits the eternity of beauty.”

Keats often asked himself the question, “Where are the songs of spring?” Indeed, the songs of spring do not stay; beauty does not keep her lustrous eyes for long. So beauty is transitory, fleeting -it remains for a time and passes away. It is experience of his senses, but his imagination revealed to him the essential truth about beauty. Though poetry came naturally and spontaneously to him,” as leaves to a tree”, yet he felt that poetic composition needed application, study and thought, and with regard to many passages of his works he took considerable pains to shape his verse. Theobservation that Ode to a Nightingale, unlike Keats’s other odes, has no single central theme is neither true nor desirable. Keats was a conscious artist and his poetry, apart from its other qualities, is marked by its artistic workmanship. He wrote rapidly and many of his happiest phrases came to him in the flush of inspiration; still he carefully reviewed his work, and made alternations, where necessary, to give his conceptions the desired shape. “Keats’s sureness of touch in the corrections of his verse reveals is sense of consummate artist.”

“What men or gods are these? What maidens loath?

What mad pursuit? What struggle to escape?

What pipes and timbrels? What wild ecstasy?”

This is why Keats laid so much emphasis on the ‘negative capability’ of the poet: ‘A poet is the most unpoetical thing in the world because he has no identity he is continually filling some other body…it enjoys light and shade; it lives in gusto, be it foul or fair, high or low, rich or poor, mean or elevated…capable of being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason.’ Again, he is with his fellow human beings to sit with them and hear their groans. He always has a warm corner in his heart for those sufferings from “the fever, and the fret” and palsy.

“Sitting careless on a granary floor,

Her hair soft-lifted by the winnowing wind,

Or on a half reaped furrow sound asleep

Drowsed with the fume of poppies, while her hook

Spares the next swath and all its twined flowers.”

In Ode to a Nightingale, we find that Keats has been deeply grieved by the mental strains of humanity at large. These strains have resulted from the intricate complexities of human life. Some are suffering from palsy, the others are dying young. Everyone has one problem or the other so much so that “Men sit and hear each other groan.” In nutshell, man is suffering from so many that the world has become a place, “Where but to think is to be full of Sorrow”. In order to find relief from the heavy burden of human worries, Keats wants to fly far away into the world of the Nightingale who, “Among the leaves hast never known” as to how miserable is the life of man in the world of reality. The natural beauty of the world of Nightingale also subdues Keats’s mental strain to a large extent. The happy lot of the Nightingale also generates a death wish in Keats and he puts it very clearly, “Now more than ever seems it rich to die”, but finally Keats comes back into the world of reality with the sound of just one word, ‘Forlorn’, a word that reminds him of the human lot.

“In the very temple of Delight,

Veiled Melancholy has her sovereign shrine.”

So, imagination reveals a new aspect of beauty, which is; sweeter’ than beauty which is perceptible to the senses. The senses perceive only external aspect of beauty, but imagination apprehends its essence, and “what the imagination seizes as beauty (Keats says) is truth’’.

“Thou wast not born for death, immortal bird,

No hungry generations tread thee down.”

In so far as they fail to do this, in so far as they are thoughts and reasoning, they are no more than a means to an end, which end is beauty-that beauty which is also truth. This alone is the poet’s end and therefore his law (Bradley). Keats was led to this conviction by the poetic instinct in him. He was more than Wordsworth or Coleridge or Shelley, a poet and simple.

“Follow thy fair sun, unhappy shadow,

Though thou be black as night,

And she made all of light,

Yet follow thy fair sun, unhappy shadow.”

But of, Keats’s aestheticism was not only sensuous -it had an intellectual element. He was constantly endeavouring to reach truth through beauty; he had a conviction that “for his progress towards truth, thought, knowledge and philosophy were indispensible, but he felt also that “a poet will never be able to rest in thoughts and reasoning, which do not also satisfy imagination and give a truth which is also beauty.”

“And ask no questions but the price of votes. “

The ode is an exquisite example of the imaginative adventure of Keats. Nature takes him away from’the weariness, the fever and the fret of the present world to the eternity of beauty represented by the song of the nightingale. Here is the highest nature poetry of Keats, where the inspired imagination of the poet gives him a fleeting glimpse of eternal beauty.

“Hear melodies are sweet, but those unheard

Are sweeter; therefore ye soft pipes, play on;

Not to the sensual ear, but more endeared,

Pipe to the spirit ditties of no tone.”

Keats was a conscious artist in the matter of producing musical effects in his verse. He consciously used language as Spenser, the Elizabethan poets, and Milton had used it, employing all its resources to make his verse musical. He frequently uses alliteration, but it is used with the sure tact of an artist, so that it contributes to the music of his verse:”the marble men and maidens”, “the winnowing wind”, “fast fading violets covered up in leaves”. In his Odes, vowels are artistically arranged so that they do not clash with one another; they bear the burden of the melody, and are interchanged, like the different notes of music, to prevent monotony. Many are the devices employed by the poet to make his verse musical, one of them being to make the sound echo the sense.

“But as I raved and grew more fierce and wild

At every word,

Methought I heard one calling, Child:

And I replied, My Lord.”

The focus is predominately on the ephemeral character of all that is valuable and desirable in life. Human sorrow and suffering and loss are mainly due to the decay and fickleness of youth, health, beauty and love. The quickly perishable charms of life under the ruthless domination of devouring time only leaves an inevitable sense of inconsolable gloom and despair. The destructive process in the life of reality is also expeditedby ‘hungry generations’ treading on the existing beings and things.

“…for heaven’s smiling brow

Half insolent for joy began to show:

And the brag lambs ran wantonly about,

That heaven and earth might seem in triumph both to shout.”

The Middle Ages have been said to be a vast storehouse of romance, and some of the romantics freely drew upon this storehouse for their inspiration. Distance lends enhancement to the view, and so the distant days of the medieval past made a strange appeal to the romantics. Pater says that the romantic quality in literature is addition of strangeness to beauty, and this strangeness, the romantic poets-Coleridge, Scott and Keats, is one of those, who reveled in the past, in which his imagination, loved to dwell are the Middle Ages and the days of ancient Greece, with its beautiful mythology.

“A! fredome is a noble thing.

Fredome maiss man to have liking:

Fredome all solace to man gives:

He livis at ease that freely livis.”

In Ode on a Nightingale, there is sorrow, but Keats, an untiring worshipper of beauty, would not allow his personal sorrow to interfere with his pursuit of beauty. In one of his letters Keats writes: “The setting sun will always set me to rights, or if a sparrow were before my window I take part in its existence and pick about the gravel.”

“Knowledge enormous make a god of me

Names, deeds, grey legends, agonies etc.

Pour into the wide hollows of my brain

And deify me.”………

Every poet is a lover of beauty-but he may have, and often has, other interests and affections. Shakespeare was interested in the drama of human life and in the play of human passions. Milton’s dominant interest was religion, though he was passionate lover beauty. Wordsworth and Shelley had other interests than mere beauty, but to Keats passion “with a great poet, the sense of beauty overcame every other consideration”. Beauty was, for Keats, the moving principle of life; infact, beauty was his religion. He loved beauty in all its forms and shapes-in the flower and in the cloud, in the song of a bird and in the face of a workman, in a work of art and in tales of romance and mythology. And all his poetry from Endymion to Hyperion has one dominant theme- viz. Beauty.

“O cheeks! Beds of chaste loves

By your showers seasonably dashed;

Eyes! nests of milky doves

In your own wells decently washed;

O wit of love! that thus could place

Fountain and garden in one place.”

Like the ancient Greeks, Keats often presents the objects of nature as living beings with a life of their own. As Leigh Hunt said of him, “he never beheld the oak tree without seeing the Dryad.” The moon is Cynthia, the sun Apollo. Keats’s observation of Nature is characterized by minuteness and vividness. Keats’s eye observes every detail, and presents it with a mature touch. He has the knack of capturing the most essential detail and compelling our attention. His descriptions of nature are thus marked by a fine pictorial quality.

Keats remained untouched by the idea of the Revolution which filled the atmosphere of Europe at the time; at least from his poetry we do not find any indication of his interest in the Revolution. Though the contemporary facts of history have not left any impression on his poetry, he deeply realized and expressed in his poetry the fundamental truths of life. Keats was a pure poet, and would not allow any extraneous things like politics or morality to disturb the pure waters of poetry. And poetry is the expression of the poet’s own experience of life. Keats as he developed mentally and spiritually- and his development was very rapid- was searching for truth in his soul. The earlier hankering for the world of Flora and Pan- for unreflecting enjoyment of sensuous delights- is past; he now subjected himself persistently and unflinchingly to life. He faced life with all uncertainties and contradictions, its sorrows and joys.

“Eheu quid volui mihil floribus austrum

Perditus…”

(Alas, what wretchedness have I brought upon myself!

I have let loose the south wind upon my flowers….)

Ode to a Nightingale begins by pitting the poet’s heart-ache against the ‘full-throated ease’ of the nightingale’s song whose joyous melody is symbolic of the undying beauty of art; and by suggesting a reconciliation of the contraries by ‘being too happy in thine happiness.’, but nevertheless the intensity of the contrast between the nightingale’s forest world and the painful, troubled and decaying human world is brought into sharp focus in Stanza Third: the nightingale ‘among the leaves’ is completely free from ~~

“What is love?’tis not hereafter.

Present mirth hath present laughter;

What‘s to come is still unsure.

In delay there lies no plenty;

(…..Then come kiss me, sweet and twenty,

Yoth’s a stuff will not endure.”)!

The contrast between the imperishability of the world of art or the emblem of imagination and the transience of life, is a common theme in romantic poetry and analogies are frequent in Shelley and Yeats, but what gives greater depth to, and accounts for the subtler effect of Keats’s presentation of those contrast is his ironical and paradoxical awareness of the other side of things. The moment, when Keats listens to the superb spell of the nightingale and glorifies its song as well as the singer as ‘immortal’, is not measured in terms of clock-time or calendar-time, it is an ‘eternal moment’ as Foster calls it; and once ‘eternal’, it remains so even after the fading away of the ‘plaintive anthem’, with the flying away of the bird to the other side of the hill.

“The weariness, the fever, and the fret,

Here, where men sit and hear each other groan;

Where palsy shakes of few, sad, last grey hairs,

Where but to think is to be full of sorrow.”

Melancholy arises from transience of joy is transient by its nature. Therefore, Keats accepts life as a whole-with its joy and beauty as well as its pain and despair. It is this alternation of joy and pain, light and shadow, that gives life its harmony, his is the truth of life- and truth is beauty. The poet is wholly in the time and with the things of which he wrote. He lives wholly in the present, and does not look back to the past or forward into the future.

The Greeks were lovers of beauty, and so is Keats. To him, as to the Greeks, the expression of beauty is the aim of all art, and beauty for Keats and Greeks is not exclusively physical or intellectual or spiritual bur represents the fullest development of all that makes for human perfection. It was the perfection of loveliness in Greek art that fascinated Keats, and it was the beauty and shapeliness of the figures on the Grecian Urn that started the imaginative impulse which created the great Ode. The instinctive Greekness of Keats’s mind lies in his passionate pursuit of beauty, which is the very soul of his poetry. It is a temper of unruffled pleasure, of keen sensuous joy in beauty. To him a thing of beauty is a joy forever. Keats enters fully into the life of nature, and does not impute his own feelings to her. He is completely absorbed in the momentary joy and movement of things in nature. He enters into-

“Who hath not seen thee oft amid thy store?

Sometimes whoever seeks abroad may find

Thee sitting careless on a granary floor

Thy hair soft-lifted by the winnowing wind;”

The Greeks did not burden their poetry with philosophy or spiritual message. Their poetry was incarnation of beauty, and existed for itself. Similarly Keats was a pure poet. He enjoyed unalloyed pleasure in nature, which for him did not carry any philosophical or spiritual message. Keats did not know anything of Shelley’s enthusiasm for humanity, or his passion for reforming the world. Keats’s poetry had no palpable design; it existed by its right of beauty. For Keats the sense of beauty overcame every other consideration.

“Go, soul, the body’s guest,

Upon a thankless arrant

Fear not to touch the best;

The truth shall be thy warrant.

Go since I needs must die,

And give the world the lie.”…

Graham Hough perceived that Keats’s major odes ‘are closely bound up this theme of transience and permanence.’ It is his romantic urge that forces him, after acutely feeling the tragic loss of all that is lovable and precious in life in the inevitable flux of the world of reality, to discover an imaginative resource of permanent beauty and happiness, which would defy the decaying power of time. And in his poetry he continually makes an ‘attempt to reconcile the contradiction’ between mutability of human life and permanence of art.

The four major odes of Keats, ‘Ode on a Grecian Urn’, ‘Ode to a Nightingale’, ‘Ode to Autumn’ and ‘Ode On Melancholy’ yield a very interesting study if they are read one after the other. The total impression of these Odes constitutes a very solid and compact whole. There is an element of unity in the final impression that they leave upon the reader and this unity springs primarily from the oneness of themes in these odes. The basic theme, underlying all these Odes can be summed up very briefly like this: The Odes deal with the fundamental human problems of finding a solace from the naked and merciless realities of life. The solace can be found in the objects and beauties of nature, in the world of art, in the world of imagination and in a wish for death but with Keats the solace is always temporary in character and a final come back into the world of realities is very important and essential. In the Ode to Autumn, he asks, the past or forward into the future. The acceptance of life- this triumph over despair attained through deep spiritual experience is expressed most forcibly in his Ode on a Grecian Urn.

“Beauty is but a flower

Which wrinkles will devour:

Brightness falls from the air,

Queens have died young and fair,

Dust hath closed Helen’s eye.

I am sick, I must die.

Lord, have mercy on us!”…………………….

The ode begins and ends in real time and is in a very profound way bound by time. Living in real time and is in a very profound way bound by time. Living in real time, the nightingale provides the plot by impinging on the poet’s consciousness, so provoking the reflections that make up the poem, before flying away…’. This is the fact, as observed by John Barnard in his John Keats that accounts for the thematic unity of the ode. The thought of soporific drug in the first stanza leads to the thought of wine in second stanza and the thought of flight from reality. The reason for this desire to escape is given in third stanza. The escape is achieved through imagination in fourth stanza and this and the next stanza dwell on a peaceful, relaxed enjoyment of the sensuous beauty of nature. The topic of death in six stanzas is allied to the desire to escape already mooted in the earlier stanza. Robert Bridges has complained of an unexpected shift of thought in seventh stanza., but of the key-line, ‘ Thou wast not born for death, immortal Bird!’ has own and of man’s , mortality, a contrast, which is very much the central theme. It is a moment which is timeless, this impression is created by the magical voice of the nightingale and the same spell is conveyed on us by the wonderful song of the poet. So, it is idle to complain that the poem lacks a definite central theme. Rather the unity of the basic inspiration is felt again and again in the depth of our hearts and it is clearly betrayed in the diction as well. The ‘fade away’ of second stanza is echoed by ‘Fade for away’ in third stanza, and ‘Away! away! for I will fly with thee’ in fourth stanza. The ‘hungry generations’ in seventh stanza recalls the sordid picture of life in third stanza. It is the last word, ‘forlorn’ in sixth stanza which is repeated like a refrain at the beginning of seventh stanza to mark a bridge between the land of fancy and the solid ground of reality. What more could be expected by way of thematic unity in a genuine romantic poetry where passion and imagination enjoy the right to blossom fully?

“Sweet Spenser, moving through his clouded heaven

With the moon’s beauty and the moon’s soft place.”

In his Ode to Nightingale, the luxuriance of his fancy carries him far away from the fever and fret of the world to a faery land, where the song of the nightingale can be heard through “charmed magic casements opening on the seas”. He is carried away by his imaginative impulse, but his artistic sense soon prevails. The exuberance of his fancy does not blind him to his classical sense of form and order. He realizes that “fancy cannot cheat so well as she is famed to do,” and he comes back to the world of realities.

“A little lowly Hermitage it was,

Down in a dale, hard by a forest’s side.”

All romantic poets except Keats see in nature a deep meaning, ethical, moral, intellectual or spiritual. For Wordsworth, Nature is a mother, a nurse, an educating influence. He regards it as a living spirit. He sees in it the presence of God. Shelley, too, finds in Nature Intellectual Beauty, but while Shelley intellectualizes nature and Wordsworth spiritualises it, “Keats is content to express her through the senses; the colour, the touch, the scent, the pulsing music; these are the things that stir him to his depths; there is not a mood of Earth he doesnot love, not a season that will not cheer or inspire him.”

“Forlorn; the very word is like a bell

That dolls me back from thee to my sole self”,

Thus we find here a happy blending of the romantic ardour with Greek restraint of romantic freedom with classical severity. Thus “there was in Keats the keenest sense and enjoyment of beauty, and this gave him a fellow-feeling with the Greek masters”, but of it was one side of Greek art he saw. He saw its beauty, but he did not see its purity, its self-restraint and its severe refinement. His poems-barring La Belle, the Odes and the Hyperion fragments are characterized by over-refinement and looseness. They have romantic ardour, but lack classical severity. It is in the Odes that we find a fusionof romantic impulse with classical severity. Here we notice Keats’s sense of form, purity and orderliness. The Odes show an amazing sense of proportion in the Greek manner and present well-designed evolution of thought. They have a close texture and are marked by severe restraint, but at the same time they have all the spontaneity and freedom of imagination that characterizes romantic poetry.

“Mori mihi contingat, non enim alia

Liberatio ab aerumnis fuerit ullo pacto istis.”

(Would I were dead,for nought, God knows,

But death can rid me of these woes.)

The poem ends by admitting in a very sensible manner the impossibility of achieving freedom from the tethers of the struggles and pains and frustration of life through imagination forever, because ‘the fancy cannot cheat so well/As she is fam’d to do, deceiving elf’. The implication in ‘so well’ includes a stress on ‘so long’ too, but the quality and intensity of this joy and freedom achieved through artistic fancy has an eternal value. John Barnard has rightly observed: ‘The paradox of the poem is that by admitting failure it, as if inadvertently, demonstrates the grandeurs of the human singer, who within his limits, gives the bird immortality-an immortality that exists only in the human mind.’ It is our capacity of thought which makes our mortality so palpable to us and makes us ‘full of sorrow’. But for, the nightingale is unthinking, so it cannot possible comprehend the advantage of immortality and accompanying feeling of superiority.

“For Love is lord of truth and loyalty,

Lifting himself out of the lowly dust

On golden plumes up to the purest sky

Above the reach of loathly, sinful lust

Whose base affect through cowardly distrust

Of his weak wings dare not to heaven fly.

But like a moldwarp in the earth doth lie.”

Same is true of the Ode on a Grecian Urn, Keats is acutely aware that in real life everything is short-lived and fleeting, but when he looks at a beautiful pieces of art, the Urn, he is all praise for its artistic worth which has lent a torch of immortality, not only to the Urn itself, but also to all that has been carved upon it, the piper, the trees, the lover and the maidens. Even earthly objects have been immortalized just because they are there on a piece of art that has been very beautifully named by Keats as the “Still unravish’d bride of quietness” and the “Sylvan historian.” Analysing the contents of Keats’s Ode to a Nightingale according to prosaic logic, one may naturally think that the poem is full of diverse thoughts. It begins with an expression of dull pain suffered by the poet which seeks a relief in the joyous song of the nightingale. It draws a contrast between his deep drowsiness and the bird’s full-throated song and Dryad like charm in the beech-green forest. The second stanza records a picture of Dance, and Provencial song, and sunburnt mirth in summer in Southern France, born out of the poet’s desire for a beaker full of wine which he needs to drink in order to forget the world of reality and escape from it to the nightingale’s world. The third stanza concentrates on the misery and plight of human beings on earth, where suffering and death are the only certainty, and youth, beauty and love are constantly facing extinction. The fourth and fifth stanzas contain the poet’s imaginative experience of sitting on the leafy tree with the nightingale in the embalmed darkness and anticipating the beauty of the moonlit sky above and the charm of the fragrant flowery garden below. The sixth stanza brings back his focus on the nightingale’s song itself and triggers off his constitutional desire for death, which flares up at this opportune moment, when the bird’s song can serve as a requiem. The seventh stanza contains an emphatic assertion of the nightingale’s immortality, and the poet, flying on the wings of imagination, traverses an unending amount of space and time to affirm that the same nightingale sang from days immemorial to persons of all kinds, in life and in fiction. Finally, in the last stanza the poet wakes up from his dream, at the fading away of the nightingale’s song, as the bird flies across the hills. He is faced with stark reality and realizes that fancy cannot prolong its spell on human mind.

The beautiful sensuous lines on the Queen Moon, ‘Starry Fays’ and the scented flowers of the season, bear eloquent testimony to his love for and intense appreciation of the gifts of nature which he wanted to explore and cherish. The spirit and attitude betrayed here is positively youthful and enthusiastic. His whole being is involved in this eternal celebration of life. No idle escapist has the capacity to think, as Keats has done in this ode, about the relation of ideal art, represented by the nightingale’s song and transient, ever-changing life of reality. The nightingale was ‘not born for death’, he asserts and immediately re-asserts his conviction by calling it ‘immortal Bird!’, but man is simply mortal and in his world of mortality nothing lasts long, being devoured by time and treaded down by ‘hungry generation.’ Moreover, if the escapist mood had become dominant for some moments due to frustrations and vexations of life, Keats finally does not fail to realize that escape from reality is absurd and realistically he can feel that the nightingale’s song is nothing as joyous as it pretended to be, but a ‘plaintive anthem’. At the end of the poem he wakes up from his indolent dream to face actual life on its terms.

“Love, the delight of all well-thinking minds;

Delight, the fruit of virtue dearly loved;

Virtue, the highest good that reason finds;

Reason, the fire wherein men’s thoughts be proved;

Are from one world by Nature’s power bereft,

And in one creature, for her glory, left.”

Moreover, it is the bard, a human creator, who invests the nightingale with immortality by glorifying its song in his song that hopes to attain immortality. In reality a nightingale’s life-span is much shorter than a man’s and its song survives only in the sense of a kind of song by successive generations of nightingales; whereas in case of a great poet like Keats, his individual song endures.

“Ecce novo campos Zephyritis gramine vesit

Fertilis, et vitreo rore madescit humus.”

(See, the bountiful daughter of Zephyr dresses the fields in new grass, and the earth is moist with glistering dew.)

In Ode to a Nightingale Keats shows his deep sense of awareness for “the fever, and the fret” of men and women of the world of reality. The poet thinks of forgetting his personal loss and suffering in life by drinking and sleeping under the influence of the liquor. He thinks that the sweet song of the nightingale is a sure testimony of the absolutely happy world of the bird. The poet, therefore, eagerly wants to escape from the life of reality, which has given him a surfeit of torment and misery in the forms of ill

health, unsuccess in poetic career and in love and bereavement of a younger brother and seek refuge in the forest world of the nightingale. His personal afflictions are also seen as part of the sad lot of humanity as a whole. The general picture of malady is undeniably moving in its pitiful starkness. Thus, Ode to a Nightingale may truly be described as a wonderful poetic record of the poet’s reflection of human experience.

“The Lord thy God I am,

That Johne dois thee call;

Johne representit man,

By grace celestiall.”

The pattern of thought in the Ode is apparently complex and not smoothly linked in parts, but the occasion as well as the basic impulse and atmospheric effect, externally spelt through the music and the imagery , secure unity and solidarity of this creative artistic production. It starts with a feeling of drowsiness and ends with the final clearing of that smokiness of the brain. The entire period in between was a spell cast by the nightingale’s melody on the highly sensitive and imaginative mind of the poet. One of the main ideas in this romantic poem is a sincere yearning to get away from the miseries and frustrations of life, to escape ‘the weariness, the fever and the fret’, which the poet experienced from his failure to achieve fame, love and health. What he generalizes as the lot of humanity is authentically based on his personal afflictions. It is therefore impossible to escape from inevitable pain in life. Shelley says of the dead Adonias:

“He lives, he wakes-his Death is dead, not he.”

It is the thought of death or mortality that naturally leads to its opposite thought, that of immortality. It enables the poet to highlight the contrast between the world of man and that of the nightingale in a climactic manner. With a philosophical imagination Keats calls the nightingale ‘Immortal Bird’. The phrase has been variously interpreted, the most common of them being that the poet is called not a particular bird, but the nightingale as a species, immortal. Some think that it is not the bird, but its song which is immortal in its appeal, but it is more reasonable to agree with Farrod who points out that the particular nightingale is addressed as ‘Immortal’ because Keats has called it ‘light winged Dryad of the trees’ at the outset , a creature of myth, like nymphs and fairies, which being purely imaginary, are not subject to death.

“Who brought me hither

Will bring me hence, no other guide I seek.”

Ode to a Nightingale has a note of searching melancholy and is inspired by the poet’s personal sufferings and disappointments in life, the latest of which was the death of his brother, Thomas Keats. Not only does he want to escape to the nightingale’s forest, but he also yearns for death. Life’s torture has taught him to love Death and call him ‘soft names’. The wish ‘to cease upon the midnight with no pain’ and with the nightingale’s song in his ears, is a purely romantic wish. The beginning of the next stanza, contrary to the opinion of some critics, is not at all abrupt.

“Now more than ever seems it rich to die

To cease upon the midnight with no pain

While thou art pouring forth thy soul abroad.”

The thirst for wine brings in the beautiful sensuous image of a ‘beaker full of the true, the blushful Hippocrene/With beaded bubbles winking at the brim/ And purple-stained mouth’. Allusions and concrete imagery reinforce each other to produce the whole sensuous impact as unforgettable. We not only have the rich colour of the wine, but also the emphatic suggestion of its poetic efficacy. The small bubbles with their bead-like shapes and restless movement are compared to curious children peeping at the outside world from the rim of the container and winking. It will be difficult to find in the whole range of English poetry a more truly romantic lyric and a better penetration into the mysteries of life and death in a mood of complete absorption in beauty. The ode is intensely lyrical, yet its thoughts are elaborate enough to form a comprehensive philosophy in combination with imagination and sensuous experience. Keats’s poetic genius attains maturity to find its most perfect expression in a few wonderful odes, and Ode to a Nightingale is undoubtedly at the centre of the selected band. The nightingale’s song, heard by the poet in the Hampstead Garden, triggers a series of sensations and thoughts and builds up imaginative situations, in the mind of the poet. It produces myths, gorgeous imagery, subtle psychological perception and takes us through momentous experience of personal memory and historical imagination.

Still the fundamental fact remains that Keats must not escape to the world of the Urn or the world of the Nightingale for long. In the fourth stanza of the poem he realizes that with all its immortality withit, the Urn will remain speechless. It will remain empty and desolate and the desolation of the Urn, once again brings back on the hard crust of earth on which average man lives. This vivid depiction of the negative side of life makes all readers acutely feel a desire to escape from here. And the poet passionately and emphatically cries out: He decides to fly on the wings of poetic imagination and stays in the company of the nightingale on the shady branch of a leafy tree. He indulges in the contemplation of nature’s beauty and pleasures. “Or new love pine at them beyond to-morrow”, are “thrilled with aching hopelessness”, but this hopelessness, this despair, Keats met squarely. In Ode to Melancholy, he points out how sadness inevitably accompanies joy and beauty. The rose is beautiful indeed, but we cannot think of the rose without its thorn.

“Open the temple gates unto my love,

Open them wide that she may enter in,…”

The nightingale, the source of the purely joyous music, is a symbol of perfect happiness and beauty; and is world amidst the forest is the ideal world offering a total contrast to the sordid, painful and morbid world of man. This purely romantic conception of aspiring for the ideal and bewailing the fact that it cannot be achieved by mortal man, is comparable to the attitude of Shelley in To a Skylark and of Yeats in The Stolen Child. Keats calls the nightingale ‘light- winged Dryad of the trees’, who sings of the joyous summer and whose song is imaginatively associated with the warm Southern countries of ‘Dance and Provencal song’ and ‘sunburnt mirth’.

“So every spirit, as it is most pure,

And hath in it the more of heavenly light,

So it the fairer body doth procure

To habit in, and it more fairly dight

With cheerful grace and amiable sight.

For of the soul the body form doth take:

For soul is form and doth the body make.”

All through the poem, we are keenly alive to Keats’s sensitive study of nature’s charm and beauties, while a poignant sense of melancholy pervades the atmosphere, but above all and, superintending other elements, is the astonishing flight and magical power of imagination. “This joy in present, this absorption in the beauty of the hour, this making of it a divine possession and losing in its loveliness, the pain of life is one of the chief makes of his genuine.”The richly sensuous stanza on flowers where the sense of smell is most exhaustively exercised is justly famous. The poet at once takes us into the enchantingly fragrant atmosphere of the dark garden, where we inhale and identify white hawthorns, eglantines, violets and the musk-rose, astonishingly mythed as ‘Mid-May’s eldest child’. At the same time a unique melodious effect is achieved by the ultimate verse of this stanza: ‘The murmurous haunt of flies on summer eves.’

“her pure and eloquent blood

Spoke in her cheeks, and so distinctly wrought

That one might almost say, her body thought.”

Since the bird is immortal its song is literally timeless and defies the barrier of space. The poet imagines that the same nightingale which is singing to him now had gladdened the hearts of monarchs as well as fools in ancient days, relieved the gloom of Ruth’s mind in the biblical times and even had consoled the captive princess of the fairy tales. The powerful imagination thus sweeps all over the universe and blends together the real and the imaginary. The drab world of reality is linked by its aerial ray with the ‘faery lands forlorn.’ But of, though the wings of imagination float the poet wherever he wishes to fly Keats retains artistic control over his creation. The quick succession of thoughts, spontaneous, rich and colourful, is beautifully stranded together as the colours in a rainbow. The whole effusion is occasioned by the nightingale’s song and at the end, the poet is waked up to reality from his ‘vision’ or reverie when the bird files away and its song fades into silence. Meanwhile his mind has ranged from the garden bench to the farthest ‘charmed casements, opening on the foam of periluous seas’, only to return to the starting point, after completing a circle. Structurally the poetic frame-work, containing the feelings, thoughts and fancies, is admirably sound.

“I envy no man’s nightingale or spring;

Nor let them punish me with loss of rhyme

Who plainly say, My God, My king.”

In sharp contrast to this, the nightingale is called ‘immortal’, ‘not born for death’ and its song, which represents ideal beauty of art, has an eternal and universal appeal. It is omnipresent in all times and places and casts its spell unfailingly on John Keats as well as on kings and Ruth and the captive princes of the medieval Romances and fairy tales. The romantic imagination has lifted the poet far away from the nightingale whose song is the theme of the poem.

“The same that oft-times hath

Charmed magic casements, openings on the foam

Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn.”

Here there is romantic suggestiveness and mystery. The nightingale’s song is the voice of eternity, and the poet longs to die in the hope of merging with eternity. There is, behind the expressed words, a world of mystery. This is a romantic style. The word ‘rich’ is infinitely suggestive-suggestive of the sensuous delight of the poet, his physical comfort as well as the soul’s ardent longing to escape the fever and fret this world.

“And my soul from out that shadow that lies floating on the floor

Shall be lifted-nevermore!”

The beginning of the next stanza, contrary to the opinion of some critics, is not at all abrupt. It is the thought of death or mortality that naturally leads to its opposite thought, that of immortality. It enables the poet to highlight the contrast between the world of man and that of the nightingale in a climactic manner. With a philosophical imagination Keats calls the nightingale ‘Immortal Bird’. The phrase has been variously interpreted the most common of them being that the poet is calling is not particular bird, but the nightingale as a species, immortal. Some think that it is not the bird, but its song which is immortal in its appeal, but it is more reasonable to agree with Garrod who points out that the particular nightingale is addressed as ‘Immortal’ because Keats has called it ‘light winged Dryad of the trees’ at the outset, a creature of myth like nymphs and fairies, which, being purely imaginary are not subject to death.

“Where are the songs of spring?

Ay, where are they?”

He answers, “Why talk of spring? We are in autumn.”

From this stark and gruesome reality the poet wants to escape on the ‘viewless wings’ of imagination to the world of the nightingale. By virtue of his unfettered romantic fancy he can lose himself in the midst of the dark foliage of the trees and sit beside the nightingale. It has a miraculous power to deport him through time and space anywhere in the universe. It is this imagination which immediately leads to the creation of a mythical image of Spenserian sweetness. The note of escapism asserts more strongly in the death-wish of the poet. The soothing darkness brings up his desire for dark death.

“With beaded bubbles winking at the brim,

And purple-stained mouth;

That I might drink, and leave the world unseen,

And with thee fade away into the forest dim.”

A drowsiness steals over him as if he has drunk an opiate. He wishes for a draught of vintage, which would carry him out of the world into the abode of the nightingale. He would thus leave behind him the sorrows of the world. He thinks of the universal, sorrows of man, and his own particular and personal griefs. The youth that grows pale and spectre-thin and dies, is his own, dearly loved brother Tom who had died few months before, and beauty’s lustrous eyes are according to Middleton Murray, the eyes of Fanny Brawne, whom Keats loved. “This stanza is tense with the emotion of personal suffering controlled by poetic genius.”

“..for many a time

I have been half in love with easeful Death,

Call’d him soft names in many a mused rhyme,

To take into the air my quiet breath;

Now more than ever seems it rich to die,

To cease upon the midnight with no pain…”

A highly imaginative and purely romantic poet like Shelley or Keats cannot be reconciled with the real life which they feel as oppressive and restrictive in every way. In all their representative creations an urge for getting rid of the tyranny and bondage of social life must be inevitably betrayed. Ode to a Nightingale being one of Keats’s most significant poetical utterances, does illustrate an escapist trend of the poet. However before making any final appraisal of this feature in the poem, we have to consider what the term ‘escapism’ implies and whether in Keats’s poetry it is a passing mood or a permanent obsession. ’Escapism’ is usually a pejorative term; it is used to denote a strong reproof, a criticism of the habit of shrinking or avoiding duties, a failure to face life’s trials. Escapists run away from harsh, unpleasant acts and duties and try to hide themselves in their idle world of dream and peace, like an ostrich hiding its head in the sands during storms on the desert. It implies cowardice and spinelessness.

The first and foremost quality of his odes is their unity of impression. The major odes of Keats-Ode to a Nightingale, Ode on a Grecian Urn and Ode on Melancholy have a common subject and theme. They have a common mood to depict and last but not the least in all these odes the development of mood is more or less similar and the mood develops , in the shape of a drama, i.e. first the mood takes birth, it develops, reaches a climax and finally the anti –climax takes place. Thus when we read Keats’s odes, we feel that we are reading an abridged drama, and in this lay the secret of their success. In so short a form of writing, Keats been able to give an impression of the kind that plays of Shakespeare produce, but for it shall be an over-simplification of facts if this statements of ours is taken to mean that Keats has reached the Shakespearean heights of literature’s perfection. No doubt it was Keats’s most cherished desire to be remembered with Shakespeare in the rank of men of letters, but unfortunately Keats could not perform this feat. Might be, if he had not died young, he could have had been able to probe better into his poetic wealth.

“She found me roots of relish sweet

Of honey wild and manna dew.”

Yes, a note of escapism is sounded clearly in Ode to a Nightingale because the poet wants passiately to ‘leave the world unseen’ and with the nightingale ‘fade away into the forest dim.” Thesetting of the poem, La Belle Dame Sans Merci is medieval. We have here also medieval accessories-the knight-at-arms, the cruel mysterious, lady, ‘a faery’s child’, the elfin grot, and the spell and enchantment and general supernatural atmosphere. La Belle is one of Keats’s great achievements. It is medieval in its setting and atmosphere and has the simplicity of the medieval ballad. The Eve of St. Agnes, on the other hand, is overloaded with excessive details and is marked by gorgeous, high-flown style. La Belle is in the simple style of a ballad, and tells a supernatural story with a medieval atmosphere.

“Since then ‘tis centuries; and yet each

Feels shorter than the day

I first surmised the horses’ heads

Were toward eternity.” …………

The other element of drama to be found in the odes of Keats is their drama-like development. A mood takes birth, it develops and reaches its point of pinnacle and finally it drops from that high point to its lowest position. The climax is reached when the mood of escape goes to the extent of a wish for death and at that moment Keats finds it richer than ever to die but the word ‘forlorn’ reverts the whole process and the anti-climax takes place with Keats’s return to the world of reality.

“Sleep after toil, port after stormy seas,

Ease after war, death after life does greatly please.”

This temper of spontaneous joy changes with the coming of pain and sorrow in the poet’s life. He has his brother die and his love doomed to disappointment. The temper of the poet becomes grave and imaginative, and his note towards nature is mixed with sorrow, which seeks to lose itself in joy. Now there is deep spiritual union between the soul of the poet and the soul of nature. Nature does not merely gratify his senses -she now goes deep into his soul. In the joy of nature, Keats forgets his sorrow. This is the spirit that informs the Ode to Nightingale. The poet has felt the burden of sorrow in his own personal life and the whole world of full of sorrow, but of then there is the nightingale also in the world, and the nightingale is the very symbol of joy. The imagination of the poet is set aglow by the song of the bird, and he forgets his sorrow and joins the nightingale in spirit. This is the moment when nature, with her moon and stars and flowers, enters into his soul, and his soul is merged in nature. Keats and nightingale are one; it is his soul that sings in the bird, and he sings.

In one of his lad poems- Ode to Autumn, he describes the sensuous beauty of the season-but here the tone is one of joy mixed with the sadness of thought. The poet is and to think of the passing away of beauty, though he soon overcomes the feeling of sadness.

“Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness,

Close bosom-Friend of the maturing sun.”

The most characteristic quality of Keats’s poetic art is power to paint pictures by means of words. His poems may be said to have been painted with words. His words and epithets call up vivid pictures to the mind: “beaded bubbles winking at the brim; anguish moist; full throated ease; soft conched hushed, cool-rooted flowers fragrant eyed.” The abstract ideas in Keats’s poetry assume a concrete, corporeal form; for instance, he gives a concrete living image to express the idea of earthly joy which is transitory;

“Think not of them, thou hast thy music too.”

Keats was extraordinarily endowed with a native gift- viz. that of feeling acutely with his senses. All his five senses reacted quickly to the beauties of the external world, and these sense-impressions are transmitted into poetry by his imagination. The first line of Endymion strikes the keynote of Keats’ poetry..

Even in the midst of his pains of disease and his sufferings and disappointments of life, this joy of beauty came to him through his senses. In one of his early poems-Sleep and Poetry, he wrote-

“First the realm I’ll pass

Of Flora and of Pan, sleep in the grass,

Feed upon apples, and strawberries

And choose each pleasure that my fancy sees.”

So Keats drank in the beauty of the external world with all his senses, and his whole being was excited by it and he sang out with wonder and delight,

“The Ocean with its vastness, its blue green,

Its ships, its rocks, its caves, its hopes, its fears

Its voice mysterious.”

Thus throughout his brief career, Keats’s poetry reveal sensuousness aspect of his love of beauty.

“How sould I rewill me or in quhat wys,

I wad sum wyse man wald devys;

Sen I can leif in no degree,

Bot sum my maneris will dis pys.

Lord God, how sould I governe me?”

The poetic genius transports him. Not with the help of wine but on the wings of poetic imagination, he flies to the realm of forgetfulness-viz, the romantic world of the nightingale. This world is “a heaven of joy”, where the poet listens to the song of the nightingale. Now more than ever it seems to him rich to die, and cease upon the midnight with no pain. But if, he was indeed to die, he would not hear the song. Thus, morality has its poor advantage, in that he, while living, can hear the enchanting song of the bird. “Morality is re-asserted against the immortality of which the bird’s song is at once the symbol and the elixir.”

“Joy whose hand is ever at his lips

Bidding adieu.”

The poetic equivalent for an emotion with Keats is commonly a picture; he hardly expresses a thought or feeling in abstract terms; his thought leaps into visual forms the chill of winter is thus expressed by means of picturesque images.

“A dram of sweet is worth a pound of sour.”

Keats is a Greek in his manner of personifying the powers of nature. The attitude of the ancient Greeks in the presence of nature was one of childlike wonder and joy, and they defined the powers of nature. This imaginative attitude of the Greek created their “beautiful mythology”. They felt the presence of Proteus in the sea, of Dryads in the trees and of Naiads in the brooks. Keats’s instinctive delight in the presence of nature led him to the heart of Greek mythology. What Greeks felt, Keats also felt. The rising sun for Keats is not a ball of fire, but Apollo riding his chariot. He sees the moon as the goddess with a silver bow coming down to kiss Endymion. Infact, the world of Greek paganism lives again in the poetry of Keats, with all its sensuousness and joy of life, and with all the wonder and mysticism of the natural world, Autumn to Keats is not only a season of mists and mellow fruitfulness, but a divinity in hunshape. Autumn sometimes appears as a thresher.

“St. Agnes’ Eve- Ah, bitter chill was:

The Owl for all his feathers was a cold,

The hare limp’d trembling through the frozen grass

And silent was the flock in woolly fold.”

The imagination of Keats came to be elevated by his sense perception and sense –impressions. His poetry is not a mere record of sense-impressions. It is a spontaneous overflow of his imagination kindled by the senses. He hears the song of nightingale and is filled with deep joy which at once kindles his imagination. He has been hearing the actual song of a nightingale, but when his imagination is excited, he hears the eternal voice of the nightingale singing from the beginning of time. He sees the beauty of the Grecian Urn and of the figures carved upon in. His imagination is stirred, and he hears in his imagination the music of the piper.

“Because I could not stop for Death,

He kindly stopped for me;

The carriage held but just ourselves

And Immortality.”

Indirect contrast to this is the world of the Nightingale who, “Among the leaves has never known” what it is to sad and unhappy. The nightingale is singing the happy and melodious songs of summer “in full-throated ease.” She is an immortal bird as compared to man who is ever prone to death. It is here that the real drama takes place. The poet, already quite tired of the worries of the real world, wants to fly away to the world of the Nightingale “on the viewless Wings of Poesy.” He wants to make an escape to the care-free surroundings of the Nightingale, but the drama does not end with the escape. It touches their heights of climax with the sound of a single word; and that word is “forlorn!”, the very word is like a bell.“To toll me back from thee to my sole self”with this the poet is back on the hard crust of earth. He accepts the world of his fellow beings with all its pains and worries. In nutshell, he does not allow the deceiving elf, and fancy to cheat him. The ode presents a living picture of Keats’s state of mind. It shall, therefore be in fitness of things to say that the ode takes birth from the inner conflicts of Keats’s mind.

Sometimes, as a reaper, sound asleep on a half reaped furrow, or as a gleaner, steadying the laden head across a brook. This is the typical attitude of the Greeks, who attributed human qualities and shapes to gods and demi-gods. The Pan of Greek myth was half human - any one wandering in the lovely woods, may expect to meet him playing on his pipe. The Pan of Keats’s ode is also half human, and he sits by the riverside, wanders in the evening in the fields and meadows.

“Heard melodies are sweet, those unheard

Are sweeter; therefore, ye soft pipes, play on

Not to the sensual ear, but more endeared,

Pipe to the spirit, ditties of no tone.”

Keats’s greatest achievement, however, is in his presentation of pure beauty. Beauty itself was his interest, not beauty to point a moral or to carry a message. Keats had no lesson to teach. He did not want to call his readers’ attentions to social wrongs as Shelley did; to the corrupt state of society as Byron did, to nature as a great moral teacher as Wordsworth did. Because of this lack of bias, his poems have an objective beauty which is especially attractive to young people. But for, to readers of all ages Keats sings enduring music.

“I cannot see what flowers are at my feet,

Nor what soft incense hangs upon the boughs,

But, in embalmed darkness, guess each sweet

Wherewith the seasonable month endows…”

Keats’s influence has been very strong from Tennyson to the present time. His emphasis upon craftsmanship has had excellent following. Many a poet has been led through the example of Keats to perfect verse that might otherwise have been carelessly written. Keats also turned attention to richness of verse, unlike the simplicity of Wordsworth. Again, he taught a new use of the classics. Instead of finding in the classics models for restraint he found a highly coloured romanticism. Restraint of form he did emphasize, but for his material he chose the legends ofEndymion and Lamia rather than the tales of Greeks and Romans of inspiring deeds.

“Where Beauty cannot keep her lustrous eyes,

Or new Love pine at them beyond to-morrow.”

The underlying principle of all Keats’s poetic thought is this: ‘’Beauty is Truth, Truth Beauty”. In one of his letters he says: “I have loved the principle of beauty in all things”. But of, his “passion for the beautiful “was not that of the sensuous or sentimental man, it was an intellectual and spiritual passion. There was a deep melancholy about him, too; pain and beauty were the two intense experiences of his mind. “Do you not see”, he writes, “how necessary a world of pains and troubles is to school intelligence and make it a soul?” Keats studied the Elizabethans, and “caught their turn of thought, and really saw things with their sovereign eye.. He rediscovered the delight and wonder that lay enchanted in a dictionary” (Lowell). “There is something innermost soul of poetry in almost everything he wrote.” (Tennyson).

“Away! away! for I will fly to thee,”**…**

The English Romantic Movement was the movement in literature which started towards the end of the 18th century and continued till the thirties of the 19th century. It can be roughly dated from 1780 and it ended round about 1830. Of course, there were poets of 18th century who showed romantic tendencies in their writings before 1780. Thomson, Dyer, Akenside etc. wrote in a manner which anticipated some features of romantic poetry. But of, true romanticism, though it sometimes flings our imagination far into the remote and the unseen, is essentially based on truth- the truth of emotion and the truth of imagination. Keats was a true romantic-not a romantic in the hackneyed sense of dealing with the unrealities of life. He loved not merely beauty but truth as well, and not merely the world of imagination but that of reality; and he saw beauty in truth and truth in beauty. He never escaped from the realities of life in pursuit of the beautiful visions of his imagination; in fact, the visions of his imagination are based on reality. He persistently endeavoured to reconcile the world of imagination with the world of reality. Therefore, Middleton Murray calls Keats “a true romantic.”

Shakespeare and Wordsworth developed his intellect and style though in different ways. The vocabulary and phraseology of Endymion differ from that of the 1817 volume in the influx of Shakespearian words, allusions and reminiscences, drawn from a large number of plays while the influence of Shakespeare’s poems is shown in the fact that though the large number of Keats’s sonnets are in Italian form, all the best, with the exception of the Chapman’s sonnet which belongs to an earlier date, are written upon the model of Shakespeare. At the same time that he was finding in Shakespeare the greatest examples of the imaginative presentation of life, he was turning to Wordsworth whose teaching had seemed to Wordsworth a pretty piece of paganism, yet it was Wordsworth’s interpretation of Greek mythology which revealed to Keats the spirit which informed the poem. Furthermore, Keats owed much to the spirit and vocabulary of the old English poets especially those of the Renaissance. The influence of Paradise Lost is visible in Hyperion.

.“**Thou wast not born of death, immortal bird.**

No hungry generations; tread thee down.”……………..~~~

Written in the spring of 1819, this Ode “was inspired by a song of a nightingale that had built its nest close to the house” of a friend in Hampstead. The bird’s song, we are told often threw Keats into a sort of trance of tranquil pleasure. The proper subject of the poem is not so much the bird itself as the poet’s “aspiration towards a life of beauty away from the oppressing world”- a beauty revealed to him for a moment by listening to the bird’s song. This glimpse of the Infinite, revealed to Keats for a moment by the song of the nightingale, is also suggested in that bold line, Then with a magnificent sweep of the imagination he sees the bird and the song as one. “The bird becomes pure song and inherits the eternity of beauty.

“A thing of beauty is a joy forever.”

Like all romantic poets, Keats seeks an escape in the past. His imagination is attracted by the ancient Greeks as well as the glory and splendor of the Middle Ages. Most of his poetry is inspired by the past. It is rarely that he devotes himself to the pressing problems of the present. Endymion, Hyperion and Lamia are all classical in theme, though romantic in style. The eve of St. Agnes, Isabella and La Belle Dame Sans Merci are medieval in origin. Keats thus finds an escape to the past from the oppressive realities of the present. The poetry of Keats shows a process of gradual development. His earlier experiments in verse are products of youthful imagination, immature and overcharged with imagery. The youthful poet has abnormal sensibility, but lacks experience of life. Endymion opens with the famous line-‘A thing of beauty is a joy for ever’, it is full of glorious promise, but it is lost in shadows and uncertainties, because it is not based upon experience of real life. In the tale that follow-Isabella, Lamia and The Eve of St. Agnes, the poet has not come to grips with real life: his imagination plays with the romance of love. In the Odes, Keats’s poetry assumes a deeper tone. There he faces the sorrows and sufferings of life. He would wish for a life of joy and happiness, like that of nightingale.

“My heart aches, and a drowsy numbness pains

My sense, as though of hemlock I had drunk,

Or emptied some dull opiate to the drains

One minute past, and Lethe-wards had sunk:”

The effect of listening to the song of the nightingale is that the poet’s heart is full of aching pain and his senses are dulled, owing to the very happy participation in the happiness of the bird. The pain is the outcome of excessive joy of the poet to think that the nightingale should thus sing in full throated ease in the care-free manner. The poet longs to lose himself into the happy spirit of the bird, and leave the world unseen and fade away into the dim forest. At first proposes to do with the help of a cup of wink that has been cooled a long age in the deep-delved earth, and is rich with all the associations of the songs and dances of Provence, its country of origin. If he can do so, he will leave behind him all the woes of the world, the weariness, the fever and the fret of the world where we sit and hear each other groan, where youth grows pale all too soon, and beauty fades in no time. But in, on second thought he understands, wine is not potent enough to transport him into the ideal region. Poetry alone shall transport him. For a moment he mistrusts his own power, but the next moment he finds himself in imagination by the side of the bird, listening to the bird’s song in the wwoodland.The poet describes the romantic forest into which he has flown on the viewless wings of poetry. In the darkness he cannot see the flowers, but can guess each of them by its peculiar fragrance-the hawthorn, the eglantine, the violet and the musk rose. The illusion is broken; the poet comes back to his daily consciousness and regrets that imagination has not the power to beguile him for ever. In this beautiful romantic scene the poet thinks of many associations of the bird’s song as he listens to it. “In his joy he remembers how often the thought of death has seemed welcome to him, and thinks it would be more welcome now than ever.” The nightingale would not cease her song- the poet will die but the bird will sing on-the contrasts the transitoriness of the individual human life with the permanence of the song-bird’s life, meaning the life of this type. The bird was not born or to die; the voice that the poet hears was heard in ancient times by damsel kept captive in some medieval castle. The Ode to a Nightingale is “a poem of midnight, and sorrow and beauty”. The poet hears the song of a nightingale when the night is tender.

“That leaves a heart high sorrowful and cloy’d,

A burning forehead and a parching tongue,

Thou, silent form: doth lease us out of thought

As doth eternity; Cold Pastoral:”

The stanza-form, with its intricate rhyme-plan is a beautiful invention of the poet. It has a sustained melody the rolling music of the lines being variegated by the introduction of a short line in each verse. The rhyme scheme of each stanza is a b a b c d e c d e. There is a Shakespearian felicity of expression in the telling epithets and picturesque compounds throughout the poem.

“Where palsy shakes a few, sand last grey hairs,

Where youth grows pale and spectre-thin and dies,

Where but to think if to be full of sorrows

And leaden-eyed despairs.”

To Wordsworth, the cuckoo becomes a wandering voice, which turns, this world into a faery unsubstantial place. In the Immortality Ode, Wordsworth passes from the finite to infinite when he says:

“Hence in a season of calm weather

Though inland far we be,

Our souls have sight of that immortal sea

Which brought us hither.”

The nightingale whose song the poet hears is suddenly transported in a flash from the world of time to the world of eternity; it has been singing for ages and ages. Thus to the poet in that moment of imaginative ecstasy the nightingale is not a solitary bird swinging from its hiding place in the tree; the bird is turned into song; the bird and the song are one- therefore the bird is immortal, “not born finite, from the world of the time to the world of eternity is a marked feature of the greatest romantic poetry. Blake expresses his imaginative vision of eternity in a wonderful manner:

“To see a world in a grain of sand

And a heaven in a wild flower,

Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand

And Eternity in an hour.”……………

Some superficial critics have complained of the logical fallacy involved in the contrast between the transitory life of the individual man with the permanent life of the nightingale, conceived not as an individual but as a type of the race; but such critics, led by their prosaic method of criticism, have missed the real significance of the great line-“ Thou wast not born for death, immortal bird.“

“And haply the Queen Moon is on her throne,

Clustered around by her starry rays.”

“I could not name”, says Bridges, “an English poem of the same length which contains so much beauty as this Ode.” Middleton Murray says: “For sheer loveliness this poem is unsurpassed in the English language.” It reaches the peak of romantic poetry in the lines……………..

The poetic style of Keats reaches its peak of glory in the Ode to a Nightingale. As an example of almost perfect execution, the ode is one of the very greatest that has been written in the English language. It shows a perfect blending of classical balance and romantic inspiration. Every word is in its place, and there is a restraint of expression from the beginning to the end; yet it grows with emotion, which is romantic to the extreme. Starting in a mood of despondent contemplation of life, in which beauty perishes, the poet has a fleeting glimpse of a world- the world of eternity- where beauty does not perish. Behind the seen world, he has a vision of the unseen-and this is the verb quintessence of romance.

“Provencal song and sunburnt mirth,

With beaded bubbles winking at the brim,

Where but to think is to be full of sorrow

And leaden –eyed despair.

Now more than ever seems it rich to die.”

The poem represents the fleeting experience of the poet- an intense imaginative experience in which sorrow is fused into joy, and the world of time merges into the world of eternity. It is a romantic poem, but it denies nothing of human experience; it tells of the sorrows of life and it reveals also that the bitterest human experience can be transmuted into beauty, which is truth. The Ode to Nightingale is one of the greatest lyrics in the English language.

“So hand in hand they pass’d, the loveliest pair

That ever since in love’s embrace met,…”

Keats is pre-eminently a poet of sensations, whose very thought is clothed in sensuous images. The epithets he uses are rich in sensuous quality- watery clearness, delicious face, melodious plot, azure-lidded sleep, sunburnt mirth, embalmed darkness, anguish moist. Not only were the sense perceptions of Keats quick and alert, but he had the rare gift of communicating these perceptions by concrete and sensuous imagery. How vivid and enchanting is the description of wine-bubbles in the line:

“With beaded bubbles winking at the brim.”~~~……………

He contemplates the sorrows of the world to which all mankind is subject, and longs to get away from them. How? By means of his imagination which reveals to him the truth of beauty, he at once passes from this physical world –the world of time-to the world of eternity. The song of the nightingale represents beauty- ideal beauty that never fades. It is the eternal spirit of beauty; it is the voice of eternity that transcends the bounds’ of space and time:

“Thou wast not born of death, immortal bird.”……………….~~

Keats was passionate lover of Greek literature, mythology, sculpture and almost anything Greek. It has influenced his attitude to nature and life immensely. The temper of the soul with which he has looked on nature betrays all the simplicity, the same feeling of joy and worship wrought together, which a young Greek might have had before Socrates. In his world of poetry the sun is not a mere ball of fire, but Apollo himself burning in with ardour; the moon is the sweet love of Endymion. Pan’s sweet pipings are heard among the oaks and olives, along with choirs of fauns. Trees and brooks are full of dryads and naiads. The immortal knit relation with the mortal. This Hellenism accounts for the charm of concrete beauty and mythical loveliness of his lyrics, narrative poems and odes alike.

“Insuffishaunce of cunnyng & of wyt

Defaut of language & of eloquence,

This work fro me schuld have withholden yit…” (!....)

This delight in pure sensation was, however, but a passing phase with Keats. As his mind mature, his sympathies broadened, and he felt at one with the human heart in travail. Sensuousness is still there, weaving its fairy tissues as before but the colouring is different. In his maturerer poems, it is gradually manifested with the stirrings of an awakening intellect, and is found charged with pain, charged with the very religion of pain. His yearning for passing for the beautiful is transformed into an intellectual and a spiritual passion. He sees things, not only in their beauty, but also in their truth. And it is partly by reason of his perception of truth in sensuous beauty that Keats has become the, “inheritor of unfulfill’d renown.”

This mood of serenity is expressed in the Ode to Autumn which according to Middleton Murry, is “the perfect and unforced utterance of the truth contained in the magic words (of Shakespeare): ‘Ripeness is all.’ The Ode to a Nightingale is a vivid portrayal of the drama of pulls and strains, taking place in Keats’s mind. On the one hand, like Shelley he is bleeding after having a fall on thorns of life.”The fever, and the fret” of the world of Man are making him feel uneasy. His dissatisfaction with the world of reality is clearly reflected in what he has got to say about it.

“Songe and prison han noon accordaunce;

Trowest thou I wol synge in prisoun?

Songe procedith of ioye and of pleasaunce

And prison causith deth and distructioun…”~~~

That “sensuousness is a paramount bias” in Keats’s poetry is largely true; even as it is true that he is more a poet of sensuousness than of contemplation.” Yet, like all generalized statements, these remarks are only partly true. Keats’s mind is mainly sensuous by direct action but it also works by reflex action, passing from sensuousness into sentiment. Certainly, some of his works are merely, extremely sensuous; but this is the work in which the poet was trying his material and his powers, and rising towards mastery of his powers, and rising towards mastery of his real faculty……….. In his mature performances in the Odes, for example, and in Hyperion, sensuousness is penetrated by sentiment, voluptuousness is permeated by vitiality, and aestheticism is tempered by intellectualism. In Keats’s palace of poetry, the nucleus is sensuousness; but the superstructure has chambers of more abiding things and more permanent colours.

“The voice I hear this passing night was heard

In ancient days by emperor and clown”~~~………………….

The other predominant feature of Keats’s poetry that holds our attention is its masterly handling of the world of reality and the world of escape. He does not remain uninfluenced by the delights of the world of the Nightingale. He relishes in the carefree life of the bird. At the same time he enjoys the pleasant and beautiful natural surroundings in which the Nightingale has her abode. The sweet fragrance of the white hawthorn, the fast fading violets and the musk-rose fascinates his sense of smell. So he makes an escape into the Nightingale’s world. He fades far away flying “on the viewless wings of poesy, but right after a very brief escape, the anti-climax follows. The very sound of the word ‘Forlorn’ falls heavily upon Keats’s ears. It is really terrible for Keats to stand the sound and he cannot afford to remain in the world of escape any longer though the world continues to remain as beautiful as ever. He tossed back into the world of naked truth. In a sonnet he wrote: “How fevered that man who cannot look upon his mortal days with temperate blood.” Keats was trying to attain serenity of mood in the midst of all the sufferings which he was undergoing in his own life and which he saw all around him in life. Further Shelley passes beyond the bounds of space and time, and expresses his poetic vision of the Infinite when he says:

***“The one remains, the many change and pass:***

***Heaven’s light for ever shines, earthy’s shadows fly.”…………………..~~~~***

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EXCEPT THE DECORUM OF THE SETTING OF ANSWER WITH ADAPTATIONS OF IDEAS OF PLACING QUOTES ON CIRCUMSTANCES, A-MINOR CHANGES OF ORIGINAL- WRITING,--SENTENCES AND WORDS SHADOWED DIRECTLY FROM VARIOUS BOOKS- DR.SEN, DAICHES, M.N.SINHA, AND A.BHATTACHARYYA.

“The poetry of the earth is never dead.” - John Keats

-RITUPARNA RAY CHAUDHURI ..