

B. A. 2nd Year (Part 2) English Honours

Sujaya Chaki, Dept. Of English, Kaliyaganj College

Paper 4, The Romantic period Unit 4

Page1:- JOHN KEATS, ODE TO AUTUMN

The Ode is a lyric poem of some length, dealing with a lofty theme in a dignified manner and originally intended to be sung . The English odes are generally of three types.

- a) The Pindaric Ode, it follows the pattenen of the ancient Greek poet Pindar.
- b) The Cowley style Ode, following the pattern originated by the ancient 17th Century English poet Abraham Cowley.
- c) The Horation Ode, named after the ancient Roman poet Horace

John Keats Ode to Autumn is of the Horation type, in this ode we find stanzas of uniform length and arrangements. The poem was written in 1819 and was published in 1820 in the poetry collection “ **Lamia, Isabella, The Eve of St. Agnes.**”

Page2: “ How beautiful the season is now - How fine the air.

A temperate sharpness about it. Really, without joking, chaste weather- Dian skies- I never liked stubble fields so much as now- Aye better than the chilly green of the Spring. Somehow a stubble plain looks warm- in the same way that some pictures look warm- this struck me so much in my Sunday's walk that I composed upon it.”

The Autumn season has been called the close bosom friend of the sun in that season. The Sun is mature because the sun in Autumn is imagined as old and it causes fruits to mature. The Sun and The Autumn jointly produce and mature fruits in Autumn, fertility is caused by their intimacy and they have been personified here . Autumn marks the end of summer and heralds the approach of Winter with its biting cold and cheerlessness. The first stanza deals with the fruits of Autumn and their ripeness. The second stanza deals with various works of the female Autumn as Reaper, Gleaner, Harvester, Cider Presser. The third stanza deals with the music of the Autumn. This Ode gives the vivid description of the season. It is full of genuine Hellenic Spirit. John Keats uses various rhetoric. Autumn is personified. The very first line of the first stanza is an example of Synecdoche, Abstract for the Concrete. The first line of the second stanza is Litotes. The Autumnal Sun causes all the sorts of fruits to ripen and become sweet to the very kernel. Autumn also causes the honey flower to blossom late in order to provide the bees with honey against the wintry months. The clammy shells refer to honey combs or sticky shells in the bee hive which have become overbrimmed or full to the brim due to the great amount of honey stored by the bees. The Autumn season has been personified and presented in four different forms by the poet . First as a Garnerer who separates the grain from the chaff, secondly as a reaper who reaps the harvest of poppy seeds. Then it is presented as a gleaner who carries the harvest to the granary and finally as an operator of the cider presser. John Keats has divested the autumn season with a lot of human qualities. The poet tells the Autumn season not to worry and not at all think of the various

Page3: songs and songs birds of the spring season like the Nightingale , or the cuckoo. Autumn has its own music makers. Autumn is at the threshold of winter, now the fields have been reaped, winter clouds have appeared. The gnats are active, the full -grown lambs are bleating, chirping songs of the hedge crickets ofr grass hopper. The red breast sings shrilly, twittering of the swallows filled the atmosphere. They produce various types of music which are all at the same time low, loud, harsh and soft.

ODE TO A NIGHTINGALE, JOHN KEATS

Ode to a Nightingale was written in 1819 in the month of May in a garden of the Spaniards Inn in Hampstead and was published in the same year in “ Annals of the Fine Arts .” It was written soon after the death of his brother Tom. Keats had been deeply attached to his brother. John Keats begins his fullest and deepest exploration of the themes of creative expressions and mortality of human life . in this Ode the transience of human life and tragedy of old age is set against the etennal renewal of the Nightingale’s fluid music . The song of the Nightingale which he heard while staying with his friend Brown at WestWorth place, Hampstead in the garden, aroused in him a desire to escape with it from this world of sorrows to the world of ideal beauty. The song of the bird symbolised to him a world of ideal beauty . As he wants to reach the world of the Nightingale he decides to recourse to wine . Hippocrene is the name of a fountain on Mount Helicon in Boeotia which is sacred to the Muses and whose waters were believed to bring about poetic inspiration. Comparing the red wine with the water of the fountain, John

Keats wants a drink as to be divinely inspired . The contrast between the immortal Nightingale and the mortal man , sitting in the Garden, is made all the more acute by an effort of the imagination. According to Charles Armitage Brown, a Nightingale had built its nest near his home in Spring 1819. Then John Keats felt,

Page4:- “ Tranquil and continual joy in her song ; and one morning he took his chair from the breakfast table to the grass plot under a palm tree where he sat for two or three hours. When he came into the house, I perceived he had some scraps of paper in his hand, and these he was quietly thrusting behind the books. On inquiry, I found those scraps, four or five in number, contained his poetic feeling on the song of the Nightingale.” The poem begins with the poet falling into a sort of reverie while listening to the song of the Nightingale. He feels both joy and pain at the same time. At the beginning the Nightingale stands only as a bird but with the passage of time in the poem the Nightingale becomes a symbol, a symbol of joy, of the artist himself, the music of Nature and the ideal beauty. The heart of the poet aches on listening to the song of the nightingale. He does not envy the bird and is so much happy that creates an acute sensation of pain leading to heart ache. The ode is a passionate commentary on the trails of the ordinary world . the world of imagination with its freshness, vegetation , life , vigour is placed against the actual world, full of sadness, disease, death and ugliness . the poet is much obsessed by the song of the Nightingale . he feels as if he had drunk Hemlock or plunged into the Lethe, the river of forgetfulness. Escape from the world can not be achieved through wine or the senses. Only the poetic imagination has the transcendental capacity. This Ode is a remarkable personal lyric. John Keats has lost his loving brother Tom Keats in 1818 on 1st December. Tom died at the very age.

“ Where youth grows pale and spectre thin and dies.”

The element of bitterness and self pity is revealed in this Ode. Keats was very much plagued by harsh criticism of his poetry . According to According to John Keats, both love and beauty are transient on the earth. The inevitable decay of youth and beauty is described in this Ode. Through his poetic imagination and fancy John Keats reaches into the forest. The moon is shining, surrounded by the stars, but the forest is dark because very little can penetrate the rthick leaves of trees. The atmosphere is filled with sweet fragnance of the Whitw Hawthrone , the Eglantine , the Violet, the Musk Rose. Keats wants to die while in the world of the Nightingale. He has often been half in lovewith the idea of dying and called Death soft names in many rhymes . John Keats

Page5: has used many Biblical and Mythological allusions in this Ode. Keats refers Bacchus, the Roman God of Wine who is traditionally shown in a chariot drawn by leopards. The song of the bird Nightingale is 'Immortal' because the bird is not born for death and its voice has always been heard but the ancient emperors, clowns and even by the homesick Ruth. In the New Testament Ruth is the Moabite woman in the 'Book of Ruth'. She was married to an Israelite. After her husband passed away, she immigrated with her mother-in-law Naomi to Judah and used to glean in the barely fields of Boaz. While working in the field she heard the song of the Nightingale and the song reminded her of her motherland. The poet's mood of exaltation is over. He suddenly back to reality. The Nightingale's voice gradually fades away. The poet can not recall himself whether he has been sleeping or awake. The Ode begins on a note of ecstasy and ends on a note of frustration.

Assignments 5x4=20

- 1. What songs can be found in Autumn according to John Keats?**
- 2. Who has "overbrimmed their clammy shells"?**
- 3. When is the ideal time to die for the poet in Ode To A Nightingale?**
- 4. What is meant by 'Blushful Hippocrene' in Ode To A Nightingale?**

Sujaya Chaki, Dept. Of English, Kaliyaganj College

E-mail : sujayachaki@rediffmail.com

Mobile; 9476382573