



## JOHN KEATS: ODE TO AUTUMN / A POET OF NATURE / A SENSUOUS POET

'Ode to Autumn' is a representative poem of John Keats. It is as much representative as to know him as a poet and to know the trend of his poetry. 'Ode to a Nightingale', 'Ode to Psyche', 'Ode on a Grecian Urn', 'Ode to Melancholy' are some of his representative poems. But before one goes to evaluate Keats as a poet or the nature of his poetry, it is essential to present the main ideas of the poem 'To Autumn'.

The poet sees beauty even in the season of Autumn which marks the end of summer and heralds the approach of winter with all its biting cold cheerlessness. The poet says that autumn is the 'season of mist and mellow-fruitfulness'. It is the close bosom friend of the sun. It conspires with the sun and loads the ~~hair~~ plants and trees with flowers and fruits. Fruits like gourd, hazel, apple and grapes begin to swell and ripe to the core.

Then, the poet personifies the autumn season. He presents it as reaper, gleaner and cider-maker. The autumn as reaper is busy amid the store. Her sickle is busy, while reaping the crops. Sometimes she sits carelessly on the granary floor and her hair is soft-lifted by the winnowing wind. Sometimes



she sleeps asleep, being decorated with  
the fumes of Poppies, while the crops waiting  
to be reaped. Later on she can be seen  
as a gleaner, keeping the bundle of crops  
on her head and passing across a brook.  
The poet presents this season also as a  
cider-maker.

The poet finds that autumn has  
also the beauty and music of spring.  
As he puts it—

"Where are the songs of spring? Aye, where are they,  
Think not of them,—they hast thy music too." The poet says that 'the stubble - plains with  
rusty hue', the wailful choir of the  
small gnats, the bleating of the full-  
grown lambs from the hill, the singing  
of crickets, the whistling of the red-  
breast robin and the twittering of swa-  
llows make up a complete world of  
beauty and music. Thus the poet finds  
that the autumn has also beauty and  
music of spring.

Clearly Keats is a sensuous  
poet and a poet of escape. He writes  
poetry for the sake of poetry, art  
for art's sake and escapes from earth-  
ly world to medievalism and hellenism  
to make his poetry romantic with  
a purpose. He thinks that a poet  
should present sensuous imagery so that



to please the readers. In keeping with his views, there is an abundance of sensuous imagery in the whole bulk of his poetry. Speaking of Keats' sensuousness Professor Farred says — "Not in political thinking, nor in tears given to human suffering, but in something else . . . lies Keats' real effectiveness in the exercise I mean of the five senses."

Keats employs vivid sensuous imagery in this poem. The images of swelling fruits, of autumn as reaper, gleaner and cider-maker, of stubble-plains with dusky hue etc give a vivid picture and sensuous delight to our senses.

From the above critical analysis of the poem it is also clear that Keats was greatly attracted to medievalism and hellenism. Among all the romantic poets, it was Keats who drank deep in medievalism and hellenism.

Keats is a great nature poet. He finds beauty in all the natural objects. Although like other romantic poets, he also looks up to nature for the material of his poetry, but for him, nature is a storehouse of sensuous experience. The humming of a bee, the sight of a flower, the glitter of the sun seemed to make his nature tremble. Whereas Wordsworth spiritualizes



nature and Shelley emancipates nature,  
Keats is content to express her  
through the senses.

The abundance of sensuous  
imagery in Keats' poetry leads many  
critics, and particularly Arnold, to  
raise a question - whether Keats is a sensuous poet or anything  
else too." To this, one may simply  
say that Keats is a sensuous poet  
and much more than that.